

## Press Release

For immediate use



### CREATIVE YOUTH LIGHTS UP THE ROSE

Creative Youth, organisers of the International Youth Arts Festival staged one of the most imaginative events yet seen at the Rose Theatre on Tuesday 12 January. Sponsored by **John Lewis Kingston, the Royal Borough of Kingston** and **Lidl**, a specially invited audience comprising the Mayor, local councillors, sponsors, businesses and Creative Youth's President, **HRH The Earl of Wessex KG KCVO**, were treated to an exceptional showcase of work from young people that drew a standing ovation in response to a specially devised performance entitled '**From Amazon**' featuring students from Southborough and Coombe Boys' Schools.

#### Creating a new name and vision

The evening was introduced by Robin Hutchinson, Chair of Creative Youth and Aniela Zaba, Artistic Director. Robin Hutchinson explained that the Charity's new name, Creative Youth, had been chosen to reflect the organisation's three main aims which were to:

- *enable young people to realise their potential through the arts*
- *develop young people by equipping them with the skills and confidence to succeed in business and the arts*
- *celebrate the achievements of young people in the arts worldwide through the International Youth Arts Festival*

He also thanked the borough, the University, Kingston College, Kingston Music Service and sponsors such as John Lewis, BT and HSBC for their tremendous support and vision in helping Creative Youth to develop into an organisation that could plan a year round programme of activities, which would culminate in the annual **International Youth Arts Festival**.

#### Invitation To Get Involved

Both Cassie Johnson, volunteer coordinator and **Chike Okonkwo**, Kingston-born actor and patron of Creative Youth spoke in support of the opportunities that were being created for young people, not just from Kingston, but nationally and Internationally and asked for other businesses and potential sponsors to think about how they could get involved.

Kingston Youth Big Band opened the showcase with a stunning rendition of the Nora Jones classic, "*I don't know why I didn't come,*" featuring a touching solo by Letitia Shiels. The audience were also treated to a breathtaking display of aerial acrobatics on silks by Katie Hardwick from **Circus Suburbia**, accompanied by Festival favourite, singer-song writer Little Sister Blue and music in the Café programmed by **Our Friends Records**.

#### From Amazon – a visual feast comparable to War Horse

However, it was clear from the audience's reaction that the centrepiece of the evening, '**From Amazon**', a story devised in **only 20 hours of workshops**, surpassed all expectations. The piece tells

of the need to respect the planet through the story of a young boy opening a package to discover that the contents contain creatures and the indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest superbly brought to life by an array of colourful puppets, created in the workshops. What the audience hadn't expected, were puppets that would rival the beauty and complexity of those created for **War Horse**.

**Magically lit and standing 12 feet tall, one of the silver puppets was so visually arresting it drew gasps of delight as it glided ethereally across the stage.** Requiring strength, cooperation and a deftness of touch, the five boys expertly operated the puppet, as did all the other boys in this ensemble performance. The climax of the piece included two exceptional dances pieces choreographed by **Bode Lawal of Sakoba Dance** performed by Kingston College students and pupils from both schools.

The performance, imagination and the sentiment behind '**From Amazon**' clearly touched everyone judging by the rapturous response from the audience.

### **Earl of Wessex commends uniqueness of Creative Youth**

The showcase was closed by Creative Youth's President, **HRH The Earl of Wessex**. In his speech he paid tribute to all the young performers involved in the evening's showcase and the energy and vision demonstrated by Creative Youth. The Earl said he was particularly pleased to hear that Creative Youth were branching out to offer year-round opportunities to engage with young people at a particularly difficult time for the arts. However, he said that this was often when ***'great art was produced and what you are doing in Kingston is unique, there is no other festival of its kind in the country and Kingston should feel proud that it is taking place right here, in your town.'***

The International Youth Arts Festival will take place from 1 -18 July in 2011. Applications are now open for companies to participate in the festival. A downloadable application form is available from the IYAF website [www.iyafestival.org.uk](http://www.iyafestival.org.uk).

As always, volunteers are needed to work on all aspects of the festivals in a variety of roles. If you are interested in finding out more please email Cassidy Johnson - [cassie854@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cassie854@hotmail.co.uk).

Any businesses who would like to find out more about sponsorship opportunities, please contact Phil Hetherington, Development Director , Email [phil@iyafestival.org.uk](mailto:phil@iyafestival.org.uk) or phone **0207 778 5510**.

**Donations can be made via [www.justgiving.com/iyafestival/Donate](http://www.justgiving.com/iyafestival/Donate)  
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