ISLA AND PHOEBE'S WORK EXPERIENCE BLOG

INTRODUCTION

ISLA

Hi I'm Isla! Im a 15 year old from Thornton. I came to The Old Electric on work experience because I'm interested in a career within musical theatre and acting. Whether it's singing, acting or dancing I love being on the stage and have since the age of 4. I currently attend NW1 Blackpool every Saturday where we are currently rehearsing for our summer showcase and have also been signed by their acting agency. I also am currently playing the role of "Frenchie" for Emma Louise productions' "Grease" as well as playing the role of "Carmen" in my schools' production of "Fame".

PHOEBE

Hi im Phoebe! I'm a 15 year old from Bolton but I live in Thornton. Similar to Isla, I came to The Old Electric for musical theatre. I have had a connection to music since I was young because I have grown up in a musical family. I only found my love for acting in year 7. I starred in last years school musical in which I played "Rizzo" in "Grease" and am currently rehearsing to play "Mabel" in "Fame". I would consider myself to be more of a singer though as I do paid gigs with just me and my guitar on a stage.

DAY 1

We came in at 10 am and signed in on the sign in sheet. We were made aware we would have to sign in and out every day to make the duty manager aware of who was in the building in case of a fire and when locking up in the evening to make sure no one was locked inside at night. We started with a tour and familiarisation of the building to make ourselves aware of health and safety hazards and where the fire exits are in case of emergency. We then read through the health and safety policies to ensure our understanding of the buildings rules and regulations swell as a discrimination policy to make ourselves aware of how they expect us to behave at work.

We interviewed Mike Cassidy, a ceramics artist, and asked him about his job. We found out that his day to day work varies from being in his

studio, to organising, doing business meetings, and running workshops. When asking about his hours, he said that he is always working but it “depends on what you consider to be work” relating to doing what you love isn’t really work. We asked him about his further education after high school and he told us about his experiences at art college in 2004 and his time in London when he went to Chelsea Art College. He then did a bit of work experience at some studios for other artists and contributed to their sculptures. He then did a PGCE course and taught people for a while doing workshops. We then asked for an insight into what he considers to be the importance of his job, he then replied saying his views on art “evolves” and that it is constantly changing through how people express themselves. He says that working in communities and helping build them is special to him as he feels apart of their expression. He also mentions that he will create a long lasting effect on peoples’ lives.

After the interview, we explored The Old Electric’s socials. There was so much to look at- the workshops, shows, and other opportunities that The Old Electric offers- it creates a comforting work environment for many artists, actors, and participants- including us.

We then interviewed Christine Bradley, a part-time domestic, about her job her at The Old Electric. We discovered that as a part-time worker, she works 6 hours a week and spends her time cleaning the building to ensure The Old Electric is held in a high standard when is comes to cleanliness. She also participates in many activities like playwriting, drama, and singing sessions. For example, she was involved in the promenade style production of “Wonderland” which she got casted in by the artistic director over hearing her singing while cleaning and the production of “Dead Dog In A Suitcase”. When we asked her about how she came to get this job, she said that she met Mel at a drama club while she worked as an air hostess. She mentioned her volunteering work when the building first opened in 2020 helped her mental health improve as she was constantly busy cleaning. On a base level, her job is important as it keeps

everything neat and tidy but it also creates a comforting atmosphere for all participants.

Nearing the end of our first day we interviewed the assistant producer Abi Hellam. Abi told us about how she came to love producing from back when she went to Bispham High School (now Aspire) and did her work experience at the Winter Gardens. During high school, she picked many creative subjects including music, drama, dance and then she did theatre studies and music in college before doing a music degree in rural Holloway university in London. During her time in London, she found her love for producing theatre shows and continued that in future jobs before finding the perfect role at The Old Electric. She claims that her job is important because it brings in extra money from external bookings and that it is helpful to have someone there keeping track of numbers so you don't panic at the end of the year when talking to the council. We then ended our day and signed out at 4pm . This day was perfect for us to settle into our work experience.

DAY 2

After signing in at 4pm, we met duty manager and theatre practitioner Liz Wilkinson and interviewed her about her job. She told us about what qualifications she had to obtain, which included an A-Level and university degree in drama and theatre. She then did a PGCE but decided she didn't want to teach after a couple of years at a high school. Liz then tells us about her time on a cruise ship and how she would sing everyday as entertainment. She then informs us about what she does on a day to day basis which includes keeping the participants and building safe, making sure everything runs effectively, and being a first aider. She also runs multiple workshops as a workshop leader including the drama skills and improvisation club. She says the importance of her job is to help build peoples' confidence and motivating them saying it has a satisfying result.

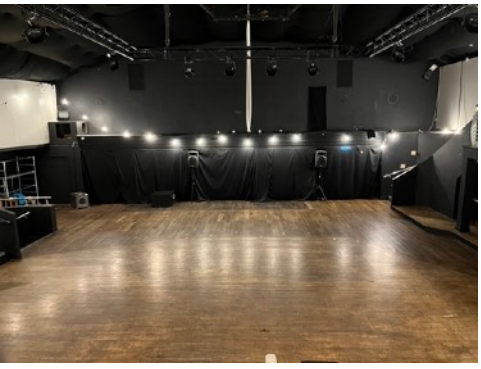
We then participated in the improvisation class that runs from 6:30pm to 8:00pm every Tuesday evening. I would consider this to have been one of the highlights during our time at The Old Electric. It really showed us how amazing The Old Electric community is and how they are teaching a wide range of people to have confidence and pride in themselves. We met a lot of inspirational people at the improvisation group that where lovely to work with in the games. we really enjoyed ourselves joining in with all the activities and improvisation games before signing out at 8pm.

DAY 3

After signing in this afternoon at 3pm, we met with Janine Walker, a freelance artist and duty manager, and interviewed her about her job and her role within the theatre. As well as making props, costumes and puppets for community theatre productions and other things within The Old Electric, she also does things such as run children's art workshops for the council . To get to where she is now, she did an A-level in art before studying at an art college on a foundation course. After that, she did many jobs that she didn't enjoy and then took some time off to have children before delving back into her passion for art. She says the importance of her job is helping people become as inspired by art as she is when teaching workshops and making the community theatre performances look as good as they possible can look by making the necessary. Prior to the interview, she took us on a tour of her workshop and showed us a large Canadian goose she has been working on making over a bike along side two small geese over children's push bikes for an upcoming event.

After our interview with Janine, we learnt how to make rat props for the community theatres next production. This included, cutting thick foam into a 3D oval shape by adding layers and cutting off corners before wrapping it in a soft brown material. We then created a tail by putting wire inside red tube to give the tail structure and flexibility. Finally, we placed the finishing touches such as the ears (made from the same soft brown material), whiskers (made from a less dense wire than the tail), nose, and eyes (both made out of sequins). We were made aware we needed to make 33 rats before the end of our work experience at The Old Electric.

Rat count: 4

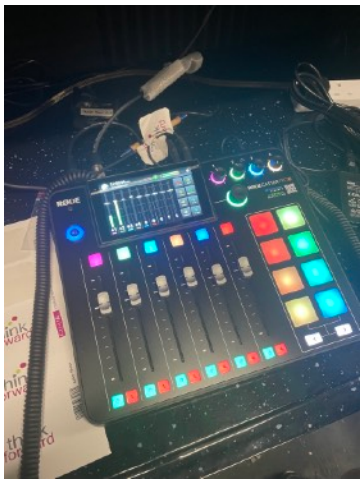


Nearing the end of the day, we went to attend the clubbercise session ran by Gemma Sweeney. Clubbercise is a fun exercise class that runs every Wednesday evening at The Old Electric. we were both unsure about attending this but in an unexpected turn of events, we loved it. We had a blast doing different workouts to club tracks with glow sticks in our hand. There were only four of us attending but the energy in the room was high and

everyone was having fun. We had both never attended a clubbercise session before but would definitely go again. The time flew by while we were exercising and having fun and before we knew it the hour was over. We then signed out at 9pm

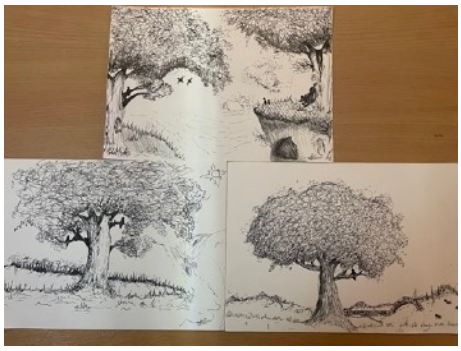
DAY 4

Today we signed in at 12 pm and met Buzz Bury, a workshop organiser and duty manager here at the theatre. He jobs includes things such as planning and preparing meetings and writing reports. Every fortnight from 9:30 am until 11 am on a Thursday, Buzz runs the non-working mens club, in which they are currently working on creating top trumps cards for male role models and how good they are for influencing the younger generation, as well as running the lunch and lyrics monthly where people can bring their lunch along and join in with some karaoke. Along side working at The Old Electric, he is a youth and community worker as well as a director for the charity 'think forward', who support those who work with young people and communities in making sure their programs are up to the standard they should be at. Buzz told us about all the different places he travels to train youth workers such as Lithuania and Slovenia. To get where he is now, Buzz did an apprenticeship at a gas company fitting boilers for 5 years until he decided that's not what he wants to do and became a trainee care worker at a children's home. He then went to university and did a degree in youth and community work and has done a lot of work in public health. He believes the importance of his job is to shape, change and influence the younger generations by getting people out of their shells and getting people to say what they believe in. After our interview, Buzz took us downstairs to look at the podcast studio. We got to go into the studio and have a go at talking into the microphones with the headphones on. When we did this we could hear ourselves very clearly through the headphones and it sounded just like a professional podcast. We had a go at playing with the sound board, making our voices louder or quieter and adding in sound effects such as music or applauses.



We even saw a hidden gem of The Old Electric which was a DJ mouse statue in a gap in the bottom of the wall who had his own disco lights and mirror ball!

We then attended the pen and ink session with artist John Crompton. This was the third out of three sessions for this so whilst other people were finishing off large amazing artworks, we were just starting a few small pieces. John showed us drawing techniques for realistic art work with fine liners which we were surprised to find out is simply dotting, dashing and scribbling. We drew realistic trees and backgrounds using our new drawing techniques. Phoebe enjoyed this because she takes art as a GCSE in school and enjoys drawing. However, Isla did not enjoy this because she does not enjoy doing art or drawing.



We then shadowed and joined in with the community theatre that runs at The Old Electric every Thursday 6:30-8 during their rehearsals for their upcoming theatre piece ‘Memoirs Of A Blackpool Mermaid’. We joined in with making some seascapes with our voices which they recorded to play in the background of the production as well as overhearing the cast practice their sea shanty song. We were also put into some movement in the place of two people who weren’t there. We then signed out at 8pm.

Rat count: 4

DAY 5

After signing in at 10am on the last day of the week, we were welcomed to “Sharing Blackpool’s Stories- National Lottery Heritage Funding Brunch” which is an organisation that connects people and communities together through the power of shared experiences. During the brunch we heard stories from people with different backgrounds and lifestyles telling us about what they do in the local Blackpool community. We listened to Katherine tell us about her past and what she does in the local area. She walked us through what she does in her spare times which included going to renfaires and visiting her family in Uganda. Katherine told us about how she weaves leaf bags and dresses for her family in Uganda.

We also listened to Garth Gratix tell us about his charity *"We're Still Here"* which provides support to the local LGBTQIA+ community. He talked to us about the history of the queer community in Blackpool and showed us many images taken by a famous queer photographer (Stuart Linda Rose) to show how the queer community created a sense of belonging and comfort in their own circle. He told us about the public buffet he set up here at the Old Electric for the LGBTQIA+ community to come along to and share their experiences. He also spoke about how the queer community created their own sort of vibe through their space, clothes, makeup, energy, and style.

After the brunch, we had a relaxing time making more rat props for the show coming up called "Memoirs Of A Blackpool Mermaid" at The Old Electric and add some more bits to our work experience diary before signing out at 4pm.

Rat count: 11

DAY 6

We only had a short day today due to the fact we were preforming at the winter gardens for the celebration of music along side multiple schools in the local area in which we preformed exerts from our school musical "Fame".

After signing in at 9am, we met with Abi who gave us a tour of the tuck shop and gave us a simple briefing on how to run it. We were shown where all the treats were including bags of sweets, cold drinks and hot drink machines as well as homemade baked goods such as Spanish bread pudding. Abi also taught us how to use the card machine which we had to connect to the iPad to use. There were options on the iPad to enter a price or choose a product you have already entered in the app to make it simpler. We also looked at how to lock and unlock the money box and tuck shop to keep everything safe. Abi also told us we would need to make a note of everything bought with cash on a notepad and how much it costs to make sure we have the right amount of money by the end of the day.

Afterwards we only had a short while before it was time to leave so we made a few more rats before signing out at 11:30am.

Rat count: 19

DAY 7

After signing in today at 10am we met with Corey Wong, the Marketing assistant here at The Old Electric. She told us that her job includes promoting the theatre, posting on their social media platforms, creating printed materials in order to advertise shows and sending out emails to people who are subscribed to The Old Electric's update service. Corey told us she works on a freelance basis meaning each day will vary. When she comes in, she will check her emails to see if anyone has sent over any new materials for shows happening at The Old Electric such as new images that Corey can make into advertisements for the show. She also gets in touch with writers and newspapers to get them to come and review shows happening here in exchange for free tickets as well as doing things such as press releases. Corey is also in charge of advertising the building for use outside of projects that happen within the building. In terms of education, after she left Fleetwood high she did photography at college and university before the pandemic happened. Corey then came to The Old Electric on a 6 month kick starter scheme which was created to help young people get back into work after Covid 19. This was completely unusual to Corey because she came having no prior knowledge on marketing. However, After this was over she was quickly asked to stay as a freelance worker. Corey believes the importance of her job is to make sure people know the theatre is here because even though The Old Electric is quite small and out of the way, it does great things for community and some amazing productions are put on here.

After talking to Corey and learning more about the marketing process, we made some more prop rats for the community theatres production of "Memoirs of a Blackpool Mermaid" and work on writing this.

Rat count: 24

DAY 8

After signing in at 2pm, we came into the office to work on making more foam rats and writing more of this diary.

After a while, Lucy arrived and we helped carry her equipment up to the mezzo. We then helped set up for the music and jam session which runs every Wednesday here at the Old Electric from 6:30 until 8. We helped set up amps, connect guitars, connect microphones, set up the electric piano and put together the drum kit. It took a lot of testing to get the sound right on the microphones and guitars to make sure they sounded good and everything such as distortion and bass were in correct proportions. During setting up we tried playing different instruments such as guitar, drums and piano. However, Phoebe plays guitar so she brought her own guitar from home to connect up to the amp and play along with.

We then interviewed Lucy Ray about her day to day working life and her education. She told us that as well as being a freelance musician she also teaches students online who have learning difficulties such as dyslexia and helps them write essays during the day. However in an evening she may have a band rehearsal and most of the time she will have a gig on the weekend. When it comes to education, Lucy told us that when she left school in 1980, there was nowhere she could go to work on her electric guitar skills so she went to art school. At art school, Lucy met other musicians and started playing jazz music. She then moved from Bristol to London and did a jazz course. During that time she played in cover bands, did a lot of gigs and eventually got signed by a record deal with which she made some albums. She then started teaching pop music at a university before she moved to Blackpool and discovered she loved doing community music. That was when she started the music and jam sessions every Wednesday evening at the old electric. She believes that music is therapeutic so the importance of her job is to help other people have the same escape and satisfaction she has when playing music.

After our interview with Lucy, people started to arrive for the music and jam session. We had a microphone to share between us for singing. Phoebe had her guitar and Isla even tried playing tambourine for some songs. To warm up we did some improvisation and made up chord sequences and beats to jam together as a band. We then preformed multiple songs such as “Roar” by Katy Perry, “Titanium” by Sia and “You’re So Vain” by Carly Simon. Lucy wrote the chord sequences on a flip pad for everyone to follow along with on their instrument of choice. Before we new it the jam session was over and we signed out at 8pm.

Rat count: 30

DAY 9

Today we signed in bright and early at 8am. We headed straight into the mezzo to set up the tuck shop for the networking breakfast. We switched on the urn and collected the tea bags, decaf tea bags, coffee and decaf coffee from the kitchen to go with the urn. We also made a cafetière of coffee in case people wanted some of that. We put out mugs, milk, oat milk and sugar so that people could help themselves to hot drinks as well as some Spanish bread pudding as a treat. We then set up the card machine and got out the cash box and note pad incase anyone wanted to buy any extra treats such as chocolate or crisps. At 9am, people started to arrive for the meeting so while Phoebe signed them in, Isla started at the tuck shop. Later on when everyone arrived we both stayed in the tuck shop to help people get what they need during the meeting. We even got involved in parts of the meeting, telling people what our favourite parts of work experience have been so far. When the meeting was over, we helped pack up all the equipment and wash up al the mugs and spoons.

For the rest of the day, we enjoyed making the rest of the rats and writing up the end of our diary.

Rat count: 33

DAY 10

Tomorrow we are working from 12-4:45. Park school are coming in and we are doing a presentation for them about our work experience. Hopefully it goes well.

We've had a great time on work experience at the old electric. We've interviewed Mike Cassidy, Christine Bradley, Abi Hellam, Liz Wilkinson, Janine Walker, Buzz Bury, Corey Wong and Lucy Ray. We've attended things such as improvisation, clubersize, and the music, band + jam session. It was an overall fun and educational experience!