

# Winter 2009 Newsletter



**desperate men**  
STREET THEATRE, OUTDOOR EVENTS & COMMISSIONS

## Big Day Out in Ashton Court

On a very rare, glorious autumn day Desperate Men and the staff of Air Balloon School went out for a big day in the woods. There was darts with Robin Hood, Zimbabwean gumboot dancing, a couple of gold prospectors on the loose, some lovely mulled wine and even an extra special life-drawing class.

Desperate Men were invited to work with the staff of Air Balloon School by the Real Ideas Organisation. The aim was to take the teachers out of their comfort zone and encourage them to play for the day! As they went round Ashton Court they were invited to take up all sorts of challenges and think about new ways of working with each other.

We'll be working with the staff of Sefton Park School in the new year, again courtesy of RiO.



© Simon Williams

Desperate Men have been doing a lot of work with various educational projects recently – such as the 'Find Your Talent' event in Weston-Super-Mare, where our scurvy pirates greeted delegates, and ran workshops for the children on the hot topic of piracy – old and modern. We're also working with schools in North Somerset as part of the 'Network 17' scheme, where pupils from participating schools visit creative businesses to see what goes on behind the scenes, so on 26<sup>th</sup> November we had two groups of schoolchildren witnessing the wonders of the Desperate Men studio. We also worked with The Meriton School in Bristol – a school especially for teenage mothers - to help them stage their annual awards ceremony.



## Pearl Farm Produces Some Gems

The Pearl Farm Project hit the streets in September and October, with performances at the Bristol Do, Stapleton Road Festival and Mivart Street Open Studios. Pearl Farm is a chance for artists from different cultures and nationalities, as well as from different artistic disciplines, to work together. Performances included elements of installation, performance, film, dance and music.

© Richie Smith

Artists we worked with came not only from all kinds of artistic disciplines but also from as far afield as Portugal, Greece, Iran, Iraq, India, Zimbabwe, Peru and Senegal. Audience comments included: "It was so un-contrived, so natural"; "I felt like I really knew something about them..." and "I didn't ever think I'd see you make grown people cry in the streets." Desperate Men hope to carry on working with many of the performers who contributed to the Pearl Farm and to fundraise over the winter for a Pearl Farm II project to take place in 2010.

## Severn Project Wins Award



© Gary Bray

Helen Owen, Gloucestershire County Council's Arts Officer, has won the BBC West Cultural Olympiad Champion award, for the Severn Mudlarks Project in summer 2009. "I really was astonished but delighted to win," said Helen. "The Severn Project was delivered by a team who worked tremendously hard to make it a success, including the arts, library and archive teams here at the county council; our artistic directors, Desperate Men; the Roses Theatre in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire Dance, and all the people in the creative groups who took part."

## Darwin And Dodo Go To China

In September the much-travelled Mr. Darwin and Mrs. Dodo went to Shanghai for a week - courtesy of the British Council - and performed at the Science Museum, where much amazement was caused by their presence. It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our work to an entirely new audience and visit a remarkable city.

## Willis Newson

Desperate Men recently worked with local Arts & Health Consultants, Willis Newson, to help run a public workshop looking at how arts and community activities could be integrated into the brand new 'superhospital' which is planned for Southmead in Bristol.

## Plans for 2010

Desperate Men have lots of plans for 2010, including celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday with a Festival of Desperation and a new project - 'Acts of Desperation', for which we've already received £8,000 from Bristol City Council's Single Project Fund. We also hope to carry on from the highly successful Darwin and the Dodo with a new show for the International Year of Biodiversity - working with previous partners such as the Natural History Museum, Lyme Regis Fossil Festival, and others. Development activity for the Quest - our project with Cirque Bijou for the 2012 Olympics in the South-West - also moves up a gear. We also recently attended the ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network) Conference in Derby, which has already resulted in several invites for Desperate Men to work in Manchester, Cumbria and in London next year. That's not including the usual goings-on - educational activities, pirates gigs, and other strange and wondrous events. In short, our 2010 wall planner is looking busy already!

## And finally...

It is with some sadness that we report the much-loved Desperate Bear has gone missing. We took it to Ashton Court and it escaped into the woods. If anyone sees a little bear wandering through the trees, please bring it back to us!



MISSING



**Merry Christmas And a Desperate New Year**

