



Pirates to Penzance Tour Report





Pirates to Penzance—Project Report

Aims

In 2015, Opera Holland Park delivered a highly successful trial of an intergenerational project in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, which explored a reduced production of 'The Pirates of Penzance' with 40 primary KS2 children and 15 elderly people suffering from dementia alongside a full cast. The project ran over 5 weeks and ended with a performance which united young and old to watch, participate and use their own hand crafted props in the performance. The feedback for the project was so inspiring, that we decided to develop it into a longer scheme which could benefit more people, and take this operetta to children and places that may not have experienced the excitement of a live performance.

In 2020, we will be aiming to visit over 20 schools and care settings beginning in RBKC and then journeying down through the West Country, ending in Penzance itself. We also added a homecoming performance at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital once back in London.

Our aims of the project are this:-

- To bring Intergenerational communities together to watch a performance of the Pirates of Penzance
- To bring Opera to places that may not have had access to it before
- To assist schools in the delivery of the PHSE syllabus in relation to older people and dementia
- To assist schools to develop relationships with local care homes
- To provide an educational experience using music, drama and associated arts
- To support care home staff in their delivery of their activities
- To create valuable resources that may be used again, and serve as a foundation for internal development within schools and care homes
- To provide an experience that includes people with Special Education Needs
- To promote confidence in singing in schools and care homes
- To promote the wellbeing that comes with interacting with the arts, specifically music
- To encourage social interaction between generations

Statistics at a glance

London Schools: 4 planned, 3 took part
 South West Schools: 17 planned, 9 took part
 Older people services: 15 planned, 8 took part
 Cast: 11
 Workshop Staff: 12
 Repetiteur: 3
 Inspire team: 3
 Production team: 7
 Researcher: 1
 Stage Manager 1



Opera Holland Park team after launch performance

Method and Delivery

Resource Pack

Our Inspire team created a resource pack for schools and care homes. It included craft making activities, which could be used as props in the show, music to learn to encourage participation and drama exercises to create interest and character exploration. These were emailed to the care homes and schools, and we asked where possible, that people completed at least one activity before our visit.



Schools Agreement

We also put together an agreement where the photo permissions were approved in advance of our visit, and the clear guidance that facilitators and cast would not be left without a teacher in the room for both the workshop and the performance. It also suggested that the school would approach a care home or day centre close to them, and invite them to watch the performance with them.



Workshops

It was felt that it would be more impactful if members of the cast led the workshops, to enable richer engagement with the children in the afternoon's performance, especially in relation to the participatory activities. On the day of the performance, 2 members of the cast would visit in the morning, with support from a member of the Inspire team and/or production team and a repetituer to deliver a 45 minute – 1hour workshop for no greater than 35 children. Each school also made a flag to represent all the stops on the tour.

Each school was offered a workshop, unless it was a secondary school, where we offered a Q and A session, for young people considering a career in the arts.



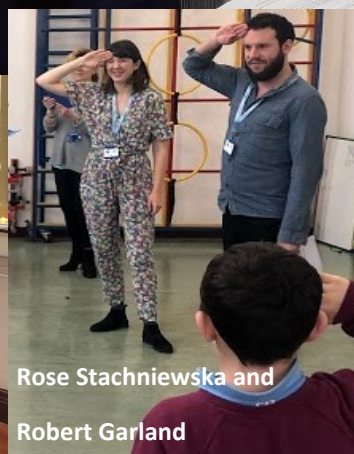
Phil Wilcox and Dan Chappell



Maciek O'Shea, Florian Seubert, Henry Kerswell, Ali Sutherland and Stuart Wilde



Peter Martin, Charles Kilpatrick, Henry Ker



Rose Stachniewska and
Robert Garland



OHP Mascots on tour!

Performances

Each school were offered a 1 hour performance, with full cast. It was reduced by John Savournin, and brought to life by director Rosie Purdie. The children were encouraged very much to participate in the performance, having practised excerpts in the workshop, and cast as characters within the show. The children joined in the opening chorus, cheered the Pirate King and sang to support him, and joined in the policemen's chorus with 'Tarantara' with a selection of pupils joining in the chase scene, led by the Major General and Frederick.

Funding

The project was made possible by generous donations, and an auction at the Gala Dinner in November 2019. By way of thanks, we were able to keep in contact with the donors, by newsletters and invitations to performances later on the tour.

Route

We decided on the route through the Southwest with the assistance of Michael Larsen, a member of the Regional Schools Commissioner's Head teacher Board (HTB) for the Southwest of England. We chose the schools that we felt had the most need, the schools who were most unlikely to have the opportunity to experience a live performance, and certainly with little exposure to opera. The route was plotted around those schools and the care homes suggested to the schools were within a 5 mile radius, to ensure that a relationship would be able to develop our visit.



'Each of the trusts represented by HTB members have schools in really hard areas, with the challenges of rural or coastal poverty founded on industries that today barely exist (tin mining, clay, fishing) with all the associated problems (low aspirations, limited opportunities, etc). Not unusual across the Southwest. '

Michael Larsen



Number of intended Schools on the map: 22

Number of Schools visited: 12

Number of Care Home/Day Centres Confirmed: 15

Number of Care Homes Attended: 8

Schools and year groups who had workshops and paired Elderly Care Group

- * Avonmore Primary School—year 6 - Chelsea Hospital/Age UK K and C
- * St Charles RC Primary School—year 5 and 6 (mixed class) - Chamberlain House
- * St Francis RC Primary School - year 4 - Westbourne Park Day Centre
- Drove Primary School, Swindon - year 4 - None
- Longford Park Primary Academy, Innsworth - Year 4, 5 & 6 (mixed age class) - None
- Writhlington Secondary School, Radstock - year 11, 12 & 13 Q and A Session—None
- Hans Price Academy, Weston-super-Mare - year 3 & 4—Local Sheltered Accommodation
- Wilton CE Primary School, Wilton - year 4— Downside Sheltered Accommodation
- Redstart Primary School, Chard - year 4— Crewkerne After Stroke Club
- WestCliff Primary Academy, Dawlish - year 4—Sefton Hall Care Home
- Padstow School, Padstow - year 6—St Breock Care Home
- St Minver School, St Minver - year 4 - None

Intended schools that we were unable to reach

- * Avondale Primary School n/a
- Nansledan School, Nansledan - year 5 & 6— Local Sheltered Accommodation
- Falmouth School, Falmouth - year 4/5—Penryn Memory Cafe
- St Uny CofE Academy, Carbis Bay - year 6—Trewartha House Care Home
- Ludgvan Academy, Penzance - year 3 & 4 —Penlee Residential Home
- St Mary's CofE, Penzance - year 5/6—Pengarth Day Centre
- * Nancledra/Newlyn/Alverton- mixed years - Ponsandane Care Home



Avonmore Primary School, RBKC 28th February



Number of pupils in workshop:

30

Age: Year 6

Performance: 60+,

Care Home: 20 from Age UK K
& C Social Group

Standout Moments: Seeing
the joy on the faces of the chil-
dren, enjoying the show.

Workshop feedback from pupils and teacher: As this was our first workshop and performance, we didn't actively seek to record feedback. The workshop was also used as a training session for the facilitators to practise under supervision from the Inspire team.

'Some of the children in this class have behavioural issues, and I was worried they wouldn't engage, but they were all transfixed in the workshop and the performance.'

Victoria Vincent, Teacher at Avonmore Primary



St Charles RC and Chamberlain House, RBKC 4th March



Number of pupils in workshop: 21

Age: Year 5/6

Performance:: 50, 9 elderly members

Care Home: Chamberlain House

Standout Moments: A boy singing *What shall we do with the drunken sailor* on his own, unprompted.

A child with SEN staying for the whole of the workshop and performance, despite his support worker warning it was unlikely he would be able to stay.

Workshop feedback from teacher:

Before the workshop we reviewed the story with the class, they were very supportive of service users and understanding of the conditions they experience. In English we are studying Romeo and Juliet so it is nice for children to learn about stories/plays/operas from the past.

During the workshop and performance they enjoyed and joined in with the singing, particularly with the songs they knew. **After the workshop and performance** they talked a lot about it, and were full of enthusiasm, they wanted to join in again- appreciation of opera and music in general. We have worked in a similar project with Chamberlain House, it was great!

Jane Harris, teacher of years 5/6



St Francis of Assisi, RBKC 5th March



Number of pupils in workshop: 33

Age: Year 4

Performance: 33 Year 4

Care Home: Westbourne Park Day Centre—though unable to attend on the day.

Standout Moments: The creativity of the kids in the workshop, creating scenarios for the various characters.

The concentration of one SEN pupil, when marching with the Policemen.

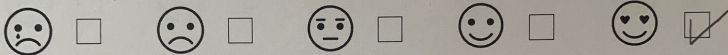
Workshop and performance feedback from teacher:

At the start, the children were very excited, the teachers had been through the resource pack with their classes. The children's opinion of opera changed greatly as it was made more accessible for them. It added to their own confidence when they were performing too. We cannot thank you enough. The children and staff's faces lit up when they were watching it! **Clara Gibson, Music Teacher, St Francis of Assisi Pri-**

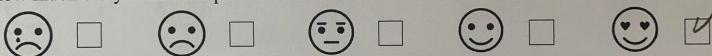


Do you like performing (sing, dance, act)? Y / (N)

How much did you enjoy the workshop?



How much did you like the performance?



What was best about the workshop and performance? Write three sentences:

1. the pirates
2. mabel's sister and the pirates
3. with one of the pirates learn live

Would you like to see the entire production of Pirates? (Y/N)

Would you like to see another opera?

Yes

This extract of a pupil's feedback demonstrates the impact of the workshop. Despite stating that they don't enjoy singing, dancing or acting, they did enjoy taking part in a group activity that required participation in all three. The direct mention of Mabel is also interesting, as she led the workshop in the morning session.

Drove Academy, Swindon 6th March



Number of pupils in workshop: 60

Age: Year 4

Performance: 150 Year 4,5,6

Care Home: Could not link with one

Standout Moments: Despite the large group, Peter Martin was able to involve and engage all 60 children, with support from Henry—the children were attentive and creative!

Observation by **Miriam Verghese**

“Children and teachers both thoroughly enjoyed it, reacting to the performers and applauding after numbers, on their own accord. I handed out the eye patches and policeman hats, there was so many who wanted them, and some were genuinely disappointed when they didn’t get it, or ecstatic when they did!

The enthusiasm after the performance. The head teacher gave a very nice speech. And the singers had about 2 or 3 ‘encore’ bows. Charles also got his own applause for playing piano for the last hour continuously – which was a nice touch. The cast had to rush off for next show, but the school still participated in a group photo as ‘pirates’”



‘It was an absolute pleasure to host you. We were all so lucky to have this opportunity at Drove. The children have very few experiences out of school so to have such a performance was amazing. Please pass on my best wishes and thanks to everyone again.’ **Head Teacher**



Longford Park Primary, Innsworth 6th March



Number of pupils in workshop: 25

Age: Year 4,5,6

Performance: 28 Year 4,5,6

Care Home: Could not link with one

Standout Moment: Wearing the police hats and doing the police march, which always seems to be a high point of the performance! Smiles all round at that point.

The children were very excited! We talked about the theatre and what opera was. We looked at the basic plot on the attachment sheets that were sent to us. We also decided to make fans and swords which the children enjoyed.

For many of the children, this was their first experience of opera so they were totally mesmerised! They enjoyed learning the songs and actions and the older children were able to sing along and perform at certain point in the performance.

The children enjoyed the performance and were excited about what they had seen. Some children expressed a real fascination with the opera and wanted to know more. We do enjoy using drama and song in class when learning so will continue with this to enhance lessons.

Just many thanks to the cast for putting on such a memorable performance. They were fantastic with the children and gave them such a good insight to another kind of art form and expression

Helen Merrett - KS2 class teacher



Writhlington School, Radstock 9th March



Number of pupils in: Workshop: N/A

Age: Year 4-12

Performance: 200

Care Home: Could not link with one

Standout moments:

The students absolutely loved Henry and audibly laughed at all his funny moments, and he got a big cheer at the end.

Feedback from Teacher:

I just thought I'd write a quick email to say how impressed we were as a school with the performance yesterday. Staff and students really enjoyed it and commented on the quality of the performers. It was a fantastic opportunity to bring a performance of that standard into our school. I know many of our students don't access the theatre in our rural setting so we're very grateful for the chance we've had to see it here. Thank you for the time and energy you and your team put into this.

Michael Burr, Deputy Head teacher for Curriculum

Observation from Miriam Verghese

This was our first secondary school and we were expecting it to be tricky for that reason! But it was nice to have a big crowd, so that there is audible laughter to the jokes etc. It was in a proper black box theatre, which was a shame as the singers weren't able to interact with the students at all. It was nice that the students seemed excited and buzzy when they came in.



Hans Price Academy, Weston-super-Mare 9th March



Number of pupils in workshop:

Age: 200 pupils Year 3 -4, 11-13

Performance: 200 pupils Year 3 -4, 11-13

Care Home: 6 from local S A

Standout Feedback -

Adaptability of workshop leaders to working with such a large group of children!

Feedback from Teacher:

It was a good experience for students to improve their cultural capital and experience a different style of performing arts. At first, secondary school students were quite hesitant to take part – possibly through fear of judgement from peers. The workshop worked well to engage students and develop their confidence. Students were really engaged by the performance at the end, despite the fact it was a new style for most of them.

Students definitely gained interpersonal skills from the workshop and were able to improve their confidence. Our students realised that opera, at the very least, could be interesting despite not being something they found popular. One student even said that they were amazed by how much they enjoyed the experience. Students have openly admitted that it is a genre they haven't engaged with but are curious about now.

Carlo Hooper, teacher of music at Hans Price School

Observation from Miriam Verghese

There was a lot of interaction between the performers and the care home groups, and the performers and the children. In general, the groups seemed very relaxed with each other and in the surroundings. I thought there was a lovely mood.

It was nice to have the older group there, and the performers really established a good rapport with them which was really nice. When the children left afterwards to head home, the performers stayed to chat with the care home group which was lovely. They really enjoyed it.



Wilton CE Primary, 10th March Salisbury



Number of pupils in workshop: 36

Age: Year 2-3, 11-12, 36 pupils, 2 teachers

Performance: 80 pupils, 10+ teachers, including two from the trust

Care Home: Downside Sheltered Accommodation were unable to come due to Covid-19

Standout Moments:: Talking to the kids about their own Pirate show.

Observation from **Jimena Meza Mitcher, OHP Inspire**

These pupils were a little younger, in year 4, so they were quieter and more shy than any of the older children so far, but they soon warmed up. They were excited to tell us about their own show coming up in the summer, The Pirates of the Curry Bean! The pupils had made lots of pirate hats, hooks, swords and ladies hats so were well quipped. There had only been time for the teachers to



do crafts with the children so they weren't familiar with the plot or characters but they learnt fast. By the end of the workshop, the mood of the children had picked up a lot and they left demonstrating that they knew the plot and the characters and were excited to watch the



show.

At the end of the performance, one teacher thanked us as he said the children would get a lot out of the experience for a long time. There was also several SEND children in the audience, wearing sensory headphones, who all sat very quietly and attentively and appeared to enjoy the performance!

Redstart Primary School, 11th March Chard



Number of pupils in workshop: 28

Age: Year 4

Performance: Year 4/5/6

Care Home: Chard and Crewkerne After Stroke Club

Standout Moments: Teaching the children opera choruses and performing arias from memory including the pianist.

Feedback from Teacher

I just wanted to say thank you for inviting us to be part of the Pirates to Penzance Project. Our schools had a great visit earlier this week. The singers were incredible, especially as they were on their own with the musicians stranded on route. The children looked on in wonder as they sang and performed an incredible repertoire of songs for us many of which they did off the cuff to keep us entertained. They inspired adults and pupils alike and it was a fantastic experience for all involved. **Suzanne Flack, Principal Redstart Learning Partnership**



Observation from **Miriam Verghese**

They did an outstanding job in doing as much of the show as they could with the three of them, sometimes taking on other people's lines. And for the scenes where they couldn't perform (without the others), they described through story telling.



They also still managed to do the 'singalong numbers' – For I am a Pirate King, Pour oh Pour the Sherry, and When the Foreman Bears his Steel. They followed this by famous opera arias from *Boheme*, *Carmen*, *Traviata*, and slotted in some *West Side Story* too!

The mood of the hall was generally very engaged, and you could visibly see that all the teachers loved it too.

Westcliff Primary Academy, 12th March Dawlish



Number of pupils in workshop: 31

Age: Year 4

Performance: 100 Mixed

Care Home: Sefton Hall Care Home

Standout Feedback: The care home service users were clearing loving the performance too, singing along to the 'old tunes' that a lot of them recognized, and enjoyed seeing the children's interaction and reactions.

Quotes from residents from Sefton Hall

'I thought it was such a treat to see live music, live singing and such enthusiasm, such wonderfully young, operatically trained singers...It was brilliant!'

'Absolutely amazing. These children would never experience this, and have it delivered in a way that appeals to them'

'Some of these children I know, and for them to be engaging in this, is phenomenal. There were two children who didn't move, and they're usually on hot bricks!'

Observation from **Miriam Verghese**

Super excited when hearing Henry and Ali sing. They were well prepared, excited for all activities, some of the children needed a little encouraging, but they got there! They were meant to do a flag and making props during the break between workshop and performance, but that never happened in the end. In general through the workshop they were encouraged to 'be louder', when learning 'Pour, oh Pour', which helped in getting them more energized. There were good play/drama interactions between artists and children. The children would sometimes be a little distracted, but the energy definitely came back during drama activities.



Padstow School, 13th March Padstow



Number of pupils in workshop: 20

Age: Year 6

Performance: Years 4, 5 and 6

Care Home: St Breock Care Home

Standout Moments: One child had dressed as a Pirate Ship.

Maciek used one of the crafted swords in the actual performance

These children had worked through the entire Resource Pack!

Feedback from Teacher

'We prepared by talking about opera and operetta, and the differences between the two. I read the story of the Pirates of Penzance and showed them videos from ENO. During the workshop the children were excellent and enthusiastic. After the workshop and performance they were really positive and inspiring. I would love to do more workshops of this kind with the children, including theatre visits and performing on the stage.'

Annie Gibson-Harrison, year 6 Teacher

Feedback from pupils: (When asked what was best about the workshop and performance)

"We got to join in with the singing in the performance"

"We learnt songs to sing in the performance"

"I would love to see another opera "

"I liked how it was interactive"

"I loved the acting bit with policemen in the workshop"

"It was fun when we sang with them"



St Minver and Breock School, 16th March St Minver



Number of pupils in workshop: 52

Age: Year 6

Performance: 52

Care Home: Could not link with one

Standout Moment: Tarantara, with the Policemen—much merriment!

Feedback from Teacher

Really great experience for the children, who I don't think will have seen a performance like this before—fabulous! **Louise Polak**, Teaching Assistant, St Minver School

Most of the children were amazed by the performance, especially the Pirates. It was enjoyable to watch, though some of the older boys didn't want to participate! **Caroline Hawkins**, Class teacher St Breock



Evaluation Process

Before embarking on this adventure, we were joined by Researcher Dr Mikko Laamanen, who devised the evaluation process with us. We were looking to see how we could measure the potential impact of using opera to bring communities together. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a lot of care homes were either unable to attend as hoped, or we have been unable to collate some of the data for those that were able to. But we hope that we can continue this process when things return to some sort of normal, and gather as much information as possible.

So until we have that information, here is what worked well and not so well.

Communication

We employed Peter Eades to project manage the logistics and communication of the entire project. He worked closely with Monique Foulger in production to organise schools and care homes involved. There was a huge amount of information required and given, and the team decided that a contract would be the best way to ensure the schools would be able to absorb and provide what we needed to successfully run a workshop and stage a performance on site. This worked well, with all of the schools returning signed copies.

Planning

With our associate, we were able to organise the tour in very little time, though the logistics changed on a daily basis, as we were adapting to the school's excitement and requirements. The fact that we could be flexible was vital to the success of the tour.

Travel and Accommodation

This was a challenge, as a lot of the tour was commutable and the cast had London based commitments, until the last week, the daily travel needed to be organised. It involved a lot of creative thinking particularly by Monique and Peter. On one occasion, the hire car bringing 5 cast members broke down in transit. This wasn't due to a lack of planning, and the other cast members did a wonderful job in fulfilling what we had promised the school,, though not in the intended format!

For the last week, the cast and OHP team were due to stay in an Airbnb, in easy reach of all the venues.

Schools

The majority of the schools were able to host us in a way we could accommodate. There were some with a degree of understandable inflexibility, and in these cases, we adapted what we could offer. And there were some other schools that were unbelievably willing to work around us.

The resource pack had been used by most schools, some to a limited degree and some had worked through them intensively. Due to the timings, we weren't able to get them out as early as we would have liked, but they have them as a reflection tool now, and a support to their curriculum during the Covid-19 Lockdown.

Only on one occasion was there a misunderstanding, where a new teacher invited over 200 children to the workshop. It was valiantly led by Florian Seubert and Dan Chappell, and the feedback from the teacher was fantastic.

Care Settings

We have fantastic relationships with the care homes and day centres in London, so it was sad that we lost 2 due to the pandemic. The first pairing was due to be Avonmore with the Chelsea Hospital. They had their own guidelines to follow, and sadly we weren't able to visit them. The AgeUK K&C group were delighted to be able to attend instead, and see some familiar faces from singers who visit them frequently as part of our Out of the Park program. And the final performance was due to be in the Atrium of Chelsea and Westminster Hospital which we sadly had to cancel.

Some of the schools already had relationships with local care homes, and those that didn't reached out to some that we had suggested, as they were local. We hope that they forge strong bonds and continue to visit each other.

The Performance and Workshops

We put together a wonderful cast of singers and répétiteurs. It's impossible to put into words how amazing and adaptable they were. The casting was perfect for each role, and we had at least 4 very experienced facilitators within the cast, who led the workshops. They were accompanied each time by someone less experienced, but who wanted to develop their workshop skills, so the tour also served as a development opportunity for them.

The workshop itself was devised in a way that whoever led it, would be able to follow the same thread, but bring out the characters they played and encouraged the children to get to know them, so in the performance they had a key person to identify with.

The performances were extremely successful, and the participation grew as the cast became more confident in encouraging it.

The overall feedback from the children and teachers, was overwhelmingly positive, many of them feeling a personal connection to the cast, and reporting that the best bits were when they were able to join in.

We at Opera Holland Park cannot emphasise enough the gratitude we have for this team, every single person invested more than we asked of them, and the incredible morale and professionalism they displayed was incredible, especially in the last stages of the tour, when we had to withdraw.

Legacy

With the amount of resources we have created for this project, we have a comprehensive education and outreach package that can be delivered with very little notice required. It can easily be adapted to suit any setting, be it school, or care provider. We hope to get to Penzance once travel limitations are lifted.

Media

We produced a short film to capture the first official performance and reactions of cast and audience. You can see that [here](#).

We also have a film created by Michael Larsen, to commemorate the tour, that involves all of the photos taken along the route. This can be found [here](#).

Publicity

Before the tour began, James Clutton was interviewed on *In Tune* on BBC Radio 3 by Sean Rafferty, to explain how the project would impact on the schools and care settings we would visit.

The project gathered a lot of momentum on social media, with our marketing department using images designed by Rosie Brookes to announce on social media where the pirates were landing each day. Many of the schools also tweeted about the show, and the cast also retweeted so we had a wide reach.



“We will be singing all weekend!!! What an incredible performance of The Pirates of Penzance - thank you [@operahollandpk](#) so talented and inspirational! [#Pirates2Penzance](#) [@Aspire Academies](#)” Padstow School

“ Many thanks to Pirates2Penzance, [#OHPInspire](#) and [@operahollandpk](#) for an inspirational workshop, and a re-sounding performance of The Pirates of Penzance in school yesterday. A great opportunity for our pupils to experience opera!! ” St Charles Catholic Primary

“Thank you to [@operahollandpk](#) for a great performance of Pirates of Penzance. All the children loved it! [#believe](#) [#achieve](#)” Wilton Primary School

And our tour even made into the school newspapers—you can read this lovely article from Hans Price school [here](#).



Cast and Crew at Hans Price with pupils

Creatives

John Savournin—Original Director and creator of 1 hour reduction.

Rosie Purdie—Revival Director

Charles Kilpatrick—Musical Director

Cast

Major General Stanley – Maciek O’Shea, Phil Wilcox

Frederic – Peter Martin

Edith – Hannah Boxall

Sergeant of Police – Henry Grant Kerswell

Samuel – Robert Garland, Matt Kellet

The Pirate King – Alistair Sutherland

Mabel – Rose Stachniewska

Kate – Sophie Dicks, Sarah Parkin

Ruth – Lotte Betts-Dean

Workshops

Workshop Leaders—Non Cast—Florian Seubert

Workshop Repetiteurs– Dan Chappell, Stuart Wilde

Management

Stage Manager—Anna Zentala

Tour Manager— Peter Eades

Research

Evaluation design and future report—Mikko Lammaanen.

Media

Photographer—Sabine Thoele

Film Maker—Revell Dixon

Illustrations—Rosie Brookes

With thanks to all those involved in making the Pirates to Penzance Project possible

