



## Who we are

Square Circle Arts (SCA) is a Sheffield-based, not-for-profit participatory arts company which offers bespoke services using drama and multisensory, interactive storytelling. We have over ten years' experience of using these art forms with children and adults with Special Educational Needs, from moderate and severe, to profound and multiple, to those with speech and language difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Here at Square Circle Arts we believe that the social, cognitive, physical and emotional benefits of the performing arts can be far-reaching and profound.

## Approach

SCA prides itself on its **flexible** and **exploratory** approach which tailors to the needs and dynamic of each group we work with. Our workshops are **inclusive, process-based** and **participatory**. Our **user-led ethos**, for which we place the participant at the centre of his or her own learning or development, has proven to have long-lasting results in terms of **confidence, motivation, achievement** and **improved mental health**. By combining **capacity-** and **confidence-building**, we always aim to leave each project with a sustainable legacy rather than just 'a nice memory'.

## What we can offer you

- High quality, dynamic, engaging, participant-led performing arts activities tailored to the needs of your clients, with the following objectives (the three Cs!)
  - Confidence-building
  - Communication and expressing feelings
  - Capacity building: life-skills and emotional intelligence
- Activities tailored to the specific needs of your client group, including: multi-sensory storytelling, improvisation and devised theatre, image theatre, mask work and puppetry.
- Staff training and consultation.
- **A free taster session before you commit to more sessions!**

## We develop...

- Emotional well-being, confidence, self-esteem and a positive self-image.
- Communication skills and the ability to express themselves.
- Cognitive and motor skills
- The ability to understand, manage and communicate feelings.
- Social skills, team-work and leadership skills.
- Problem-solving, decision-making and independence.
- Self-awareness and reflection.
- Positive relationships.
- Motivation, self-belief and aspirations.
- An emotionally, spiritually, socially, culturally and physically healthier lifestyle.

## Objectives: The Three Cs

Building on the good work your organisation is already doing and adapting to fit in with its own unique character, we have the following set of objectives:

### Confidence-building

Confidence-building is intrinsic to the way we work and is the main focus of every intervention.

Games and exercises build up self-esteem gently and positively. We invest time in developing a positive self-image through activities designed especially to celebrate, and build on, participants' strengths, skills and interests.

Our user-led ethos gives a voice to those who often feel they are not listened to, and a platform to those who often feel on the periphery. By taking possession of the physical space and having their ideas and opinions acted upon, participants learn that they have an important role to play within the group, thus developing a sense of identity and self-worth.

Any performances are devised by the participants, facilitated by the facilitator.

### Communication and expressing feelings

The performing arts can be an extremely powerful vehicle of expression for those clients who find it a challenge to communicate verbally or participate in many other activities. We use drama, movement, music, storytelling, puppetry and mask work, drawing on each individual's sensory learning style and allowing them to communicate through whichever medium appropriate to them, encouraging language where appropriate. We also use these different art forms as mediums to understand, communicate and manage feelings.

The SCA facilitator is trained in providing a safe and regulating space for this to happen.

### Capacity-building: Life skills and emotional intelligence

Activities are designed to develop emotional intelligence and life skills, such as empathy, self-awareness, positive relationships, reflection, (non-violent) communication and social skills, team-work and cooperation, leadership skills, problem-solving, decision-making and independence.



## Techniques used

### Multi-sensory storytelling (PMLD and SLD)

We use an engaging variety of multisensory and tactile techniques which provide for the various sensory, physical, emotional and social difficulties a child or adult with varying degrees of learning difficulties might encounter. Sessions are inclusive and physically involve each participant, offering sustained sensory stimulation and making them feel valued.

Simple stories offer participants unusual experiences involving touch, sight, sound, smell and movement. We use an array of simple visual stimuli, home-made 'musical instruments', household and natural objects, fabrics and interesting materials, ribbons, puppets, essential oils, and human touch. We take into consideration sensory impairment and language delay, using repetitive and rhythmic sound phrases which give rise to feeling and build anticipation.

We involve the more able participants in the process of creating a collaborative story, using sound, movement and the spoken word, and encouraging them to participate through whichever means of communication appropriate to them.

We encourage staff to join in, creating a close physical and emotional connection between participants and carers.

**ASD:** Our multi-sensory activities work very well with people with ASD, because we adapt to their capacity for visual and experiential learning. For people with ASD who can't latch onto concept easily, participating in

Tel. 0114 2508075

Mobile. 07969 433665

a story – by, say, imitating facial expressions and sounds and doing things 'with' the storyteller - leads to joint attention, and therefore, to them 'feeling' what you mean and fixing the meaning in their mind. The SCA storyteller uses tuneful rhythms which are attractive and memorable to the participant, and uses repetitive actions and songs.

### Improvisation and devised theatre (ASD, SLD and MLD)

We use a range of fun, interactive games, exercises and techniques designed to encourage participants to use their imaginations, to think in the moment, or just 'be'. Group improvisation encourages communication, group awareness and listening skills. Individual improvisation encourages independent thought, decision-making and risk-taking, and builds confidence. We use simple exercises which challenge the participants to access their own creative resources and inventiveness. This may be through the medium of music (creating on-the-spot rhythms or expressing an emotion), singing (making up lyrics and actions to songs showing how we're feeling), movement (responding to music or feelings), soundscapes (making up a verbal orchestra to do with, say, the jungle or – more abstractedly - anger), drama (passing an emotion or a mime around the circle) or storytelling (creating a group story). We often use props such as hats, walking sticks and handbags, prompting spontaneous (and often humorous) character work.

Any performances that we create are devised collaboratively and organically between the participants and the facilitator. Process is always as, if not more, important than product. When given full ownership, the end result is richer and more meaningful to both participants and audiences alike.

Email. [shuna@squarecirclearts.co.uk](mailto:shuna@squarecirclearts.co.uk)

[www.squarecirclearts.co.uk](http://www.squarecirclearts.co.uk)



### **Image Theatre\* (MLD)**

In Image Theatre, still images are used to explore issues and abstract concepts, such as attitudes and emotions, as well as realistic situations. Imaging can enable participants to explore their own feelings and experiences in a less forbidding way than that offered by other improvisational techniques. They create physical images, using their bodies, in response to a given theme, for example, bullying. This could lead to an abstract group image or a tableau that is “dynamised” or brought alive through thought tracking or by adding sound or movement. The method is often used to explore internal or external oppression, unconscious thoughts and feelings.

\*Forum and Image Theatre were developed by the Brazilian Augusto Boal, as part of the Theatre of the Oppressed movement.

### **Mask work (SLD/MLD/ASD)**

Masks are used as theatrical metaphors for exploration and expression of feelings and identity. This may involve taking on a different character with a different personality trait (grumpy, friendly, shy) or different parts of the participant’s own personality (‘the angry you’ or ‘the happy you’) and thus offer a chance to talk about when you might feel that way, or who or what makes you feel that way. There are also opportunities to delve deeper, inviting participants to ‘lift their mask’ and question their thoughts and feelings underneath the mask, thus making distinctions between external, evident behaviour and internal experience.

### **Puppetry (SLD/MLD/ASD)**

Puppetry allows people to participate in a drama activity in a comfortable and playful way. The focus is off the participant and onto an inanimate object to which they give life-like characteristics, and ‘animate’ in a way over which they have total control. As well as developing creative abilities and imagination, puppetry is a powerful tool for developing communication and language and, often, expressing their own feelings indirectly. Therapeutically, puppets are ideal for circumventing a reluctance to speak about feelings and for transferring the participants’ world – whatever that may be - onto the puppet. People who often show an inability to express themselves well, have come alive when given a puppet to speak through.

### **Staff training**

As well as working closely with staff during the project to transfer skills, ideas and strategies to help you plan creatively in the future, we offer training and consultation in confidence-building, capacity-building and communication using the above techniques.



## Experience and expertise

Square Circle Arts is run by Drama and Storytelling practitioner Shuna Beckett. All sessions are currently designed and delivered by her.

Shuna has fifteen years' experience of working with vulnerable children and adults in both school and community settings, including four years in some of the most deprived areas of South America. She trained with Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed, Rio de Janeiro, where she also worked as Drama Outreach Worker for children living and working on the streets. Shuna has a Masters degree in Theatre and Development Studies, for which she studied participatory and human development and explored in-depth how the performing arts can empower children and young people. She also has a Diploma in Child Psychology.

As well as her extensive experience working with children and adults with SEN, Shuna has worked with both children and adults who have/are: emotional and behavioural issues, mental health issues, Black and Minority Ethnic, English as an Additional Language, refugees and asylum seekers, survivors of torture and abuse, offenders, in care, on the streets, substance and alcohol misusers. She founded and project managed the community arts organisation, Side by Side, which aims to promote intercultural understanding, integration and cohesion between people of all social, ethnic, cultural and faith backgrounds. There, she ran a project with young students with ASD, for which Side by Side won an Award for Bridging Cultures from the Institute for Community Cohesion.

Tel. 0114 2508075

Mobile. 07969 433665

**Projects with SEN – past and present:** Shuna has worked as storyteller and trainer for Bag Books (national charity offering multi-sensory stories to children and adults with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties) for over two years, and is currently working as Drama Facilitator at Spectrum Active (part of Spectrum Social Care – for adults with severe learning difficulties). Previously, she delivered drama projects at Freeman College (students with ASD), Doncaster Community Arts' Orangery project (adults with SLD) and several special schools.

*"Shuna is an outstanding storyteller, and is especially skilled at relating to both children and adults with a wide range of learning disabilities and autism. She is particularly good at engaging with the most hard-to-reach individuals, for example, those with profound and multiple learning disabilities."* Stuart Cummings, Director of Services, Bag Books

*"I like drama, I like drama."* Vicky, severely learning disabled participant at Spectrum Active (Vicky used to say she didn't like drama and wouldn't participate).

## Further information

- We can provide stand-alone sessions, short or long term projects where we build upon each session.
- We can come to you or provide our own space at a small extra charge.
- Prices: Negotiable depending on length and duration of sessions
- We offer a free half hour taster session so that we can get to know the participants, and you can be sure of the quality of our service.
- We are fully CRB checked and hold Public Liability Insurance.

Email. [shuna@squarecirclearts.co.uk](mailto:shuna@squarecirclearts.co.uk)

[www.squarecirclearts.co.uk](http://www.squarecirclearts.co.uk)