

**bamboozle**

creating possibilities for disabled children



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

# The River



**A PRODUCTION FOR DISABLED AUDIENCES  
WITH COMPLEX NEEDS (PMLD)  
TEACHERS COMPANION PACK**

# Contents

This booklet is designed to give you some background information about the production and how it was devised along with some suggestions for further classroom work. You will also find information on the courses that Bamboozle runs to share its methodology and creative approach with schools.

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# The Bamboozle Approach

**The River**, as with all Bamboozle productions, has been designed to put the audience at ease from the moment they first enter the performance space. The team of highly skilled performers will guide the students and staff through the production and ensure that they feel safe and comfortable. There is no right or wrong way to experience the show and, at various points during the piece, the performers will invite the audience to get involved. The performers will be sensitive to the students' reactions and will build on what they see; they are not looking for any particular response or result.

The show has been specifically designed so that members of the audience can engage with the different elements on offer in whatever way is appropriate for them. At the very beginning of the performance the company will meet the students informally, find out their names, and find out what the team can do to make each individual audience member's experience of the show as enjoyable as possible. The team will make sure they bring elements of the performance close to the students and give commentary on what's going on. They will use touch to convey the rhythms of the music and will offer a variety of sensory ways of experiencing the different parts of the show. They will always approach members of the audience sensitively and take the time necessary for everyone to feel comfortable.

# Some of the Techniques at Work in the Show

- The show's narrative is simple in structure and uses few words; the multi-sensory and interactive elements bring the story to life in meaningful ways and provide opportunities for engagement and interaction.
- Key words and phrases are accompanied by signs to give as many ways as possible of accessing the performance.
- Live music, songs and soundscapes help tell the story and add depth and atmosphere to the environment as well as providing insight into the feelings of the characters and the nature of the narrative at different moments throughout the piece.
- There are opportunities for sensory experiences and interaction throughout the show; students are free to access the performance in whatever way is meaningful for them. Their reactions may sometimes be unexpected but they will not be right or wrong e.g. shouting during a quiet moment is an opportunity for someone to make their voice heard, rejecting something offered is an opportunity for someone to exercise their freedom to choose.
- Opportunities for interaction are approached sensitively – if a student does not wish to get involved there is no pressure on them to do so – the team make invitations and offers without encouragement or direction so that the choice is always with the student. The team will seek the guidance of supporting staff if they need help with indicators for communication.
- The performers use a technique called *hand under hand* in order to explore textures with touch – instead of placing a student's hand on an object they will place their hand under the student's hand so that the student can feel the texture with their finger tips and the performers can feel any intention to move towards or away from the object – if it feels like the student wishes to explore the object the performer will remove their own hand.
- The performers will not praise or encourage students to get involved nor will they draw attention to students who choose not to be involved. This supports the principle that the students are free to engage in their own way because it communicates that they don't have to achieve anything in order to earn praise and that they don't need to avoid doing something for fear of "getting it wrong" or simply of being watched.

These are just some of the techniques we use at Bamboozle to enable students to engage with our performances. We explore these and other techniques in more detail through our training courses (see course information at the back of this document).

# The River – The Journey

**The River** is an interactive, multi-sensory performance which includes music and sound, sights, textures, and experiences of three characters who convey a journey from the source of the river to the sea.

Welcome	<p>The students and staff gather in the performance space. The company meets the audience, finds out everyone's name and makes sure everyone is comfortable.</p> <p>The performers introduce their characters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The River Spirit</li> <li>- The Ferryman</li> <li>- The Salmon</li> </ul>
The swallows arrive	Swallows arrive and fly in curving patterns around our audience members.
A song of greeting	The start of the performance is marked by the singing of the hello song.
Through the waterfall	<p>Two performers: The Ferryman and The Salmon bring our audience members through the waterfall one at a time. Each child meets the River Spirit who indicates the place for them along the riverbank.</p> <p>When she greets each child she says: <b>"The river has taught me to listen. You may learn from it, too".</b></p> <p>Once everyone is in position, the River Spirit speaks again:</p> <p><b>"I am the Spirit of the river. I will find a way. You will find your way".</b></p>
Dragonflies and Kingfisher	<p>Fluttering dragonflies fly between each child.</p> <p>The Kingfisher arrives and darts between each child, hovering close, and then flying on.</p>
The Ferryman and The Salmon	<p>The Ferryman arrives and sits in his boat. He begins to fish.</p> <p>The spirit says <b>"Shivering the spine of the river".</b></p>

	<p>The Ferryman says: <b>“There’s a salmon that quivers in the pool – against the flowing stream”</b>.</p> <p>The salmon appears and the two dance together.</p>
The otter	<p>The Ferryman returns to his boat. The music changes to announce the arrival of the otter.</p> <p>The otter jumps from the water onto the Ferryman’s knee.</p> <p>The otter launches from the Ferryman and swims between each audience member.</p> <p>Water is gently splashed towards the audience.</p> <p>Silk ribbons twirl around the audience.</p> <p>The otter leaves and the music shifts in tone to signify a change is on its way.</p>
The heron	<p>The characters repeat the phrase:</p> <p><b>“Change is coming”</b></p> <p>The music shifts and the waterphone is heard.</p> <p>The Salmon introduces the heron: <b>“Silent hunter of the marches”</b>.</p> <p>The heron arrives on her nest and circles around to each audience member.</p> <p>The heron leaves and the Ferryman and Salmon repeat: <b>“Change is coming”</b></p> <p><b>“It’s time”</b>.</p>
The Ferryman	<p>Large blue silks unroll and become the water of the river. The Ferryman wades down the river.</p> <p>Each child – one by one – follows with their accompanying adult.</p> <p>At the end of each child’s journey down the river, they have crossed to the other side of the riverbank.</p>

<p>The Salmon and the Wind</p>	<p>The Ferryman changes his costume – he puts on a long flowing silky floor-length robe with large draping sleeves, extended using poles. He represents the wind/current.</p> <p>Dramatic music starts up and the current engulfs the salmon. In turn the current engulfs each child by surrounding them in the fabric. The salmon, who crouches in front of each child, reaches out and conveys the struggle to swim upstream.</p> <p>Gradually the wind/current subsides, followed by a moment of silence.</p> <p>The Salmon says: <b>“I have found my way”</b>. <b>“We have found our way”</b>.</p>
<p>The closing scene and goodbye song</p>	<p>The end of the performance is marked by the goodbye song. As each child is sung to, they move into the centre of the river one by one to form a circle.</p> <p>Long lengths of blue silk are raised high above everyone’s heads and is animated into the river flowing above us.</p>



# Where The River Began

The artistic stimulus for the piece includes:

- The anthology of poetry *River* by Ted Hughes with photos by Peter Keen, published in 1983.
- Anthony Gormley's sculpture *6 times*; a "series of standing figures" who "watch over the river [Leith] as it winds its way through Dean Village and down to the sea", ([www.waterofleith.org.uk](http://www.waterofleith.org.uk)).
- *Siddhartha: An Indian Novel*, Hermann Hesse's 1922 novel which depicts a spiritual journey of self-discovery in which the titular character ultimately becomes a ferryman, connecting with cycle of nature and finding wisdom through listening to the many voices of the river.

Here, we've featured some images of our designer Nettie Scriven's concepts for the performance space and costumes. There are two distinct areas; the first where our audience will gather with our characters before travelling through the waterfall to follow the river. (The squares represent the spaces for our six audience members, placing them in the heart of the performance).





# Engaging the Senses

The setting for **The River** provides opportunities for multi-sensory experiences and exploration. The show is visually engaging and rich in its use of different sounds and sensory stimulus.

- The set design for **The River** is in part inspired by a line from Hughes' poem *The Kingfisher*, as the bird darts 'beyond the water/ **Shivering the spine of the river**' (25-26).
- The colour palettes for the show are inspired by the work of artists' Anish Kapoor and Matisse. Nettie Scriven, our designer for the show, uses heightened colours – vibrant greens for the Heron's nest and rushes, deep blues in the silks and Spirit's costume, earthy yellows and browns for the Ferryman and bright reds for the Salmon to add vibrancy to nature's more muted tones.

The costume designs also have hints of the Pastoral genre which create a timeless feel which nods to our enduring spiritual and physical relationship with rivers.

- The three characters describe themselves and what they're wearing. Throughout the show there are sections of narration which describe the action when change is coming. Performers describe the arrival of puppets, and describe the actions of the other performers – for example during the dance of the Salmon and the Ferryman.
- As well as audio description and narration, quite a lot of the piece is underscored with atmospheric soundscapes. Sometimes these are sound effects are used to create an unsettling atmosphere – for example when the Heron arrives - and sometimes music or rhythms are played – for example the otter puppet appears with its own jaunty musical theme and song.
- Along with recorded soundscapes the show includes a lot of live music. The songs vary in pace and dynamics to suit the action and atmosphere. The hello song introduces the live music with the sound of an upbeat accordion, and a motif which evokes the start of a journey with tumbling water. The song 'The River is Everywhere' creates a reassuring, relaxed atmosphere. The music which accompanies the otter is jaunty and fun which reflects the otter's playful character. The song of the Ferryman is more dramatic, using an ominous tone on the accordion, and a steady beat on the djembe which draws us onwards. The strength of the singing increases, which evokes a rite of passage through the river – a ritual of change crossing from one side to the other. The Goodbye song differs in tone to the Hello song – a slowing down of pace – elongated notes from the accordion - creating a feeling of openness and space - symbolising the river reaching the sea. It features the same tumbling motif from the hello song which brings the journey full circle.
- Live music is also useful because it can accompany action and pieces can be shortened or lengthened to suit the interactions taking place. Different instruments are also used; the water glass harmonium is played by the River Spirit and is a sound we come to associate with her character, the waterphone accompanies moments of change / otherworldliness.

- The puppets bring a new dimension to the performance – we have swallows swooping overhead, dragonflies which flutter up close, a playful otter who visits everyone, a stately Heron on her nest, and a kingfisher. Kingfishers are known for their extraordinary speed; we have slowed down the kingfisher in motion to facilitate interactions with this elusive bird.
- There are various other sensory experiences during the performance from the movement of the salmon and ferryman during their dance, the texture of the River Spirit's costume: silk gloves and velvet skirt are used for tactile interactions to bring the character to life. Immersion in the river with the blue silk fabric surrounding audience members during the river crossing, the salmon's struggle, and at the end of the show.

# Ideas for Further Exploration

All Bamboozle's work, whether in performance or workshop, has a strong legacy element – we aim to share our methodology with as many people as possible with a view to reaching as many children and young people as possible. Many of the sensory experiences from the show can be broken down and replicated in the classroom. We hope that you have seen some ideas in the show that you might be able to use in your own learning environment.

The performance itself provides many opportunities for capturing evidence of the seven aspects of engagement. Elements of the show fulfil many curriculum areas for students described as having complex needs in terms of responsiveness, curiosity, discovery, anticipation, persistence, initiation and investigation. The show also provides opportunities for interaction and sustained engagement.

## Activities for the Classroom

Creating a setting and giving it atmosphere are effective ways of enabling and supporting engagement and focus; they provide a way of facilitating an immersive, shared experience that can capture all the senses. Here are some suggestions for classroom activities:

### **Activity 1 - Exploring the River - A Simple Immersive Sensory Narrative**

In The River we use minimal language. The words that are spoken help to give the show a narrative and structure. Using narrative is a very simple way of turning a sensory exploration into an immersive story that the children sit within, as they do in the show.

### **Resources**

- A length of blue fabric (long enough to seat 3-4 children either side)
- Liquid Bubbles / Bubble Wand OR Ping Pong Balls OR both.
- Hot stones – Created by wrapping them within towels and a hot water bottle.
- Small bowls with a little water and a lump of clay in each.
- Spinach in trays of water – to represent algae.
- *You can of course add alternative resources to this sensory buffet.*
- 'The River is Everywhere' Audio

### *To create a storm:*

- Fans with strips of foil attached.
- Rain Stick or tube/box of dry rice.
- Water in spray bottles. Add in a couple of Basil essential oil drops for an extra fresh experience.

### The Activity

This activity starts with a simple length of silky blue fabric to represent a river. You can play 'The River is Everywhere' audio as the children enter the space. Alternatively, you can have some river sounds playing. Sit the students either side of the river. You will need a member of staff holding on to each end of the fabric.

If you think the students will enjoy the dynamic - you can slowly build up to introduce a storm.

By introducing the sensory resources and adding in a very simple narrative (below) and some commentary, the students are taken on a sensory journey where they are also part of the story. Getting the resources ready so the narrative is not interrupted is an important element. Once established, the river can be lowered to the floor which frees staff up to support with the sensory aspect. *See info on using commentary below.*

### The Narrative

**The children sat by the river – *lift river up.***

**There were bubbles on the river – *introduce bubbles.***

**The stones by the side of the river had been heated by the sun – *introduce stones.***

**There was algae on the river – *introduce algae.***

**The children dug for clay in the river – *introduce clay.***

**The weather began to change. There was a storm! – *deliver the storm building it gradually.***

**The storm calmed down and the children all sat and wondered about what had just happened – *Thinking and Talking circle. See Activity 4***

### Supporting information for this activity

- Commentary – this is the voice in the room that describes what is happening and builds the children's responses into the story. For example: **'Anna squished the clay in her hands and it made her smile'**. Commentary lets the children know that what they are doing is noticeable and has an impact. It demonstrates that how the pupil is, how they are being and what they are doing, is valid and valuable to us. It removes the need to use value judgements like 'good' or 'well done' which, when used, signal that there is a right way of doing things, which of course there isn't. What the children are doing is what they want to do, and we show value by noticing and sharing that with the rest of the group.
- One Voice – decide who is going to lead the session. This person delivers the narrative and commentary.

- Minimal Language - all other staff stay silent or use minimal words. This creates space in the room for the children to hear each other's vocalisations.

## **Activity 2 - A River Ritual**

In the performance, when the children enter through the waterfall, they do so one by one. They approach The River Spirit who says to them "The river has taught me to listen. You may learn from it, too". They then take their place by the edge of the river. Before she greets the students, the River Spirit is playing the water harmonium (several glasses with different amounts of water).

This is a very simple example of a ritual. A ritual is a very useful device for giving structure and focus to a session. Every child has their moment where they are given individual attention. In that moment they can engage on their own terms. The ritual has a set repetitive pattern, but the children's responses are their own. There is no right or wrong way of responding and there is no insistence that anything should happen.

Adding ambient sound to a ritual or sound effects helps to indicate that something different is about to happen.

## **Resources**

- Blue fabric placed along the floor to represent the river.
- A bowl of water, (metal bowl works well as it has a reflective surface).
- A jug or amphora filled with warm water. A few drops of essential oil can be added to the water. Lavender and Ylang Ylang are both very calming oils.
- Under water tea lights or a torch (LED works best).
- Chimes or simple percussion – to punctuate each interaction.
- Water Harmonium – glasses filled with different levels of water. We have several in the show, but you only need one or two. If the glasses present a risk for students who are ambulant, you can replace this with background music or a river sound effect. See below for how to create and play a Water Harmonium.

## **Preparing the space**

Getting the space prepared is an important element. It will help everything to run smoothly and adds to the calming atmosphere. A clear, calm space helps the students to focus on the ritual. It also enables them to sit either side of the river, leaving enough space for the adults to move around.

Decide who is going to deliver the ritual. You will need:

- One staff member to do the chimes.
- One staff member to hold the bowl – The River Spirit.
- One staff member to pour the water and shine the torch (if using).
- The person doing the chimes can stand behind the students or away from them if space is limited. They can also be the person who plays the Water Harmonium when the children come in (if you are using).

To link in with 'The River,' the River Spirit can add in one line of narrative from the show. *"The river has taught me to listen. You may learn from it, too"* before the water is poured. It can be done without this if preferred.

### Performing the ritual

- A key element of performing a ritual is the focus of the adults in the room. Make sure everyone is ready to focus on the activity and on how the students respond. Leaving some space (a long pause) before you start can help with this.
- Make it a rule that apart from the one line of narrative (if you are using it) none of the adults speak (unless absolutely necessary). The only sounds staff make are to match vocalisations made by the students. If there is a student in the room who has a visual impairment, then have one adult in the room next to that student giving gentle commentary describing what is happening in the room.
- Entering the space is an important aspect of a ritual. If you are carrying it out in the classroom, explain to the children that we are leaving the room and when we re-enter, we will be taking part in a water ritual. While they are out of the room lay the fabric down and start the background music (Water Harmonium or recorded river sounds).
- Once in the room, position the children either side of the river. Any staff not performing the ritual, can position themselves either side of the river between the students.
- When everyone is ready, the chime/percussion marks the beginning of the ritual.
- The two members of staff with the bowl and the jug visit each student one by one. The bowl is held in front of the student (if you are using the narrative - the water spirit then delivers her line). The water is then poured from the jug into the bowl. There is no rush with this. The invitation is for the students to interact (or not) with the bowl and the water. Once the water has been poured, the torch (if it is being used) is then shone on the water. Staff can join the students in their interactions by responding to what the children are doing without encouraging them to do anything. Everything is on their terms. Where a pupil has no movement, the bowl or jug can be moved to a position where they can access them with their hands (or feet) or use hand-under-hand to enable them to explore with touch.
- Give each student plenty of time with the water. When their movement is finished, sound the chime/percussion to mark the end of the interaction before moving on to the next student. The individual interaction might end with someone drying the student's hands. This is done with the same reverence and time as the other elements of the ritual.
- Once everyone has had their moment, take some time to be still, calm and quiet (adults), to let the impact of what has happened sink in and be reflected on. This allows space for the students to respond to what has happened.
- Where possible, try to maintain the sense of calm and reverence when clearing away the resources, after the ritual has finished.



### Creating and playing a Water Harmonium

Each glass is tuned to a different pitch by filling them with water until the desired pitch/pitches are achieved. Experiment with the different pitches and choose the one you think suits the room best.

To play your Water Harmonium, continuously run a moistened or chalked finger around the rim of each glass. It may take a few circles around the glass to get the sound going.

### **Activity 3 - Kingfisher Chill Out**

During the performance, the Kingfisher accompanies the dragonflies and visits the students one by one. The artist with the Kingfisher shines a torch on the bird which helps to highlight its beautiful colours.

Using light in this way helps to place focus on a particular aspect of an activity. It also looks beautiful.

We carry a lighting rig with us, but it is possible to create some lovely light affects using simple domestic household lights and torches.

### Resources

- LED torches
- Angle poise desk lamp
- Peg Birds made by students – see below
- Metal colanders
- Metal silver flowerpots
- Downloaded river sounds
- Bean bags
- Black sugar paper for blackout if needed

This chill out relies on having a space with no natural light coming in OR a space that can be blacked out using sugar paper. The children can come out of their chairs if that is appropriate, but the chill can still happen in chairs. There is a ritual element to this activity as the children's individual birds are flown around the circle one by one.

### Setting up the space.

- A clear space works best for this activity. It means the children can sit in a circle and watch the light reflecting on the floor as well as the walls ceiling and themselves.
- Tape the sugar paper against anywhere that is letting in light.
- Point an angle poised lamp into the centre of the room to create a focused pool of light. It may need to be on a table.
- Have the torches and colanders to hand.
- Decide who is going to do the narration.
- Decide who is going to fly the birds.
- Prepare beanbags if children are coming out of chairs.

- If you are doing the chill in the classroom, tell the students that we are going out of the room and when we re-enter the space will look different.
- Put on river sound.
- The bird flying staff member sits in the pool of light prior to the students entering the space, with the birds around them and the torch.

### Activity

The students enter the space and are positioned in a circle around the staff member with the birds.

Allow time for the students to absorb the environment and listen to the sound of the river.

Bird flyer stands and says, “The Kingfisher darts and hovers”.

Bird Flyer flies the Kingfisher (peg bird) around the circle to visit the children. The torch light is used to highlight each bird. The Peg birds might open their mouths, peck on trays and arms, and fly over hands and faces.

The narrator says that (for example) ‘Oliver’s bird had green and blue feathers. It flew over to Heena and hovered over her head’. The narrator can add commentary where appropriate for example ‘Heena reached out to Oliver’s bird and felt its feathers’.

This is repeated with each of the children’s birds.

After the birds have all flown the narrator says ‘After the Kingfishers had flown to all the children they returned to their nests where they rested. The children rested with them’.

Turn off the lamp. Staff shine the torches through the colanders away from the children’s faces, to create patterns on the floor, ceiling, wall and the children themselves. The metal flowerpots can be placed in front of the children with the torches shining into them. If they have a hole in the bottom, torches can be shone through to create a shaft of light. The river sounds can be turned off and replaced with a relaxed ambient soundtrack to accompany this part of the experience.

Bring the chill out to an end, gradually and fade the music out slowly. Then leave time for some silence (adults) before finishing. This allows the students time to absorb, reflect and respond to the experience.

### **Making Peg Birds**

#### Resources

- Pegs
- Feathers
- Glue
- Tray

Each child has a peg, a tray with some glue and some coloured feathers. How each bird comes together will very much depend on the child. Whether it comes from sensory exploratory play, making choices, or completing independently, it is important for when the birds fly, that the child - however they do it - is responsible for their creation as it is them who will be credited when they are in flight.

#### **Activity 4 - Around the River Talking Circle**

At the end of the show, we allow time for the children to absorb and respond to what they have experienced. This activity is an extended version of this. It can be done as a stand-alone activity or after Activity One

If you are doing it after Activity One, bring the children into a circle close to each other with staff after the children have experienced the river. The fabric can be moved or reshaped into a pool of water.

The narrator says, 'The children sat together and wondered about what had just happened'.

The adults then go quiet. The only sounds they make are to match the students' vocalisations or movements.

After a little while, when everyone has had a chance to get used to the situation, the staff move their chairs back and move the students closer together. The staff are now silent, but they remain on the periphery of the circle to observe the students' reactions.

The students are free to relax and observe or to vocalise or to move or to make contact with each other in their own way. After a period of time, (if it is a standalone activity allow at least 20 minutes) the narrator announces that the experience by the river has come to an end. Then there is a slow and quiet transition out of the activity.

If you are doing this as a standalone activity you might want to create a campfire for the students to sit around and introduce it by saying "It's campfire time".

When we have run these sessions in the past we have found that, at first, the students constantly look round for staff and seek their attention. But, with repetition, the students understand that this is a time for them to spend with their peers, they forget about the staff and they begin to reach out to, and communicate with, each other. Some schools we've worked in have weekly circle time sessions, where students get the opportunity to communicate with their friends without any staff intervention and without distraction or interruption. The staff are always watching quietly from the periphery to see what happens.

# Tips for Getting the Most out of Your Sessions

- Allow plenty of time – take a whole morning or afternoon so that everyone has time to explore at their own pace.
- Let go of expectations - if we go into an exploration session with no expectations and simply see what happens we are able to look at what interests each student and build on *their* engagement and responses rather than trying to get a particular result.
- Say as little as possible – even if you’re the facilitator – this will give the students the space to explore on their own terms. (Some schools that we work with run exploratory sessions in which no adult in the room is allowed to speak!)
- The teacher or facilitator can narrate what’s going on in the room so that everyone can be involved in the whole experience and be kept up to date with what’s going on with others in the room. A single voice giving commentary is easier to focus on than multiple voices – particularly for students with visual impairments.
- Students can be exploring different stimuli in different ways at the same time – it isn’t necessary for everyone to explore everything in turn – if a student doesn’t wish to engage with a particular resource, try something else.
- Accept any response – if a student pushes a resource away, try bringing another resource to see if that is pushed away too, and build it into a game. If they scatter resources, try finding something for the resources to fall into so that they make a sound and then explore the different sounds.
- When we create an atmospheric environment and set aside time to explore it, we communicate to the students that something special is going on and that they are worth everything we have done to make it as rich as possible. Our efforts and our attention are strong indicators of how much we value our students.

# The Music of The River

The inspiration for the music in the show is based on exploring the mythic and tactile qualities of “The River” and its poetic place in the various “cycles” of life.

The music reflects these ideas with a variety of themes and textures inspired by the impressionistic music of the early 20th century, music from cultures from around the world that “migrate” and interact with ours in the way birds, fish and a river itself can travel over thousands of miles. There are also more abstract electronic sounds reflecting the “other worldliness” of life beneath the river’s surface.

The characters of a River Spirit, a more grounded Ferryman, and a shape shifting Salmon are also reflected in the light and shade, epic and comic shifts in the mood and tempo of the music.

## Musical instruments used in the show:



**An accordion:** a portable bellows instrument with 34 piano keys and 72 bass buttons. The instrument presents many tactile opportunities with its smooth plastic exterior, plastic piano keys, tightly packed buttons and expanding concertinaed bellows. It can be quite loud and the bass frequencies can be felt while touching or being very near to the instrument.



**Waterphone:** a bowed or hit percussive instrument comprising of a resonant steel chamber pan partially filled with water and brass tuned prongs tilted inward to a centre steel rod. The instrument creates very ethereal sounds when bowed giving off harmonics that can be bent by tilting the water filled chamber. The prongs and metal pan can also be hit with hands or a beater creating sounds similar to gamelan pans. The instrument has an intriguing and unusual shape and its vibrations can be felt when pressed against the body.



**Djembe:** an African drum played with the hands. It has very resonant low notes and short sharp high tone. The bass frequencies can be felt when touching or being near to the instrument.



**Water Harmonium:** 6 or so wine glasses firmly attached to a table that are rubbed with a wet finger creating a variety of tuned harmonic rings. The amount of water in each glass creates the different pitches.

**Because of the glass material we won't be encouraging a tactile experience of this instrument.**

As well as these instruments, there will also be close harmony singing and a variety of hand percussion instruments.

In addition, a recorded soundtrack helps to shift between different atmospheres as we journey above and below the river, traveling both up and downstream from the mountains to the sea.



# The Touring Company

## Naomi Sparrow – The Salmon



Naomi first began performing professionally from the age of 16 with Chicken Shed Theatre Company. It was here that she first realised her skills for working with young people with additional needs. She later went on to train at Arts Educational Schools, London, graduating with a BA Hons in Acting. Since then she has worked as an actress for many companies, as well as a learning support assistant in a Special Needs school. She also writes and performs her own poetry, all of which have a strong message about society today. Naomi has acted in various music videos and

commercials & had her debut T.V appearance in Eastenders in 2019. In 2021 Naomi performed a one woman show 'All in Your Head' about coercive control. This was live streamed in February 2021 during the Pandemic and in July 2021 went to the Camden Peoples Theatre as part of their 'Calm Down Dear' festival. She first began performing with Bamboozle in 2018 in the show *Pulse* and since then has done many performances with Bamboozle, including family residencies and being part of the cast of *Storm* at Hakaway festival in Egypt and Bibu Festival in Sweden.

## Ravneet Sehra – The Salmon



Ravneet is a British South Asian Actor. Her talents were noticed at a young age, leading her to early acceptance at Stratford Upon Avon College to study Acting at the age of 14. She further trained at Birmingham Ormiston Academy which was co-founded by Maverick Television and The Brit School. Her recent work includes Bal in Bafta Nominated Short 'I Choose' (BBC), Simran in Radio Drama 'Queens' (Tamasha & Holy Mountain Studios) and lately filming 'Welcome to Birmingham' (The RSC & Everyone To Everybody). She has acted in key

classics by Shakespeare, such as Queen of the Fairys Titania, in a multilingual site-specific adaption called 'Merely Players'. Her roles in contemporary theatre include playing Baby in Meera Sayal's world premiere of 'Anita and Me' (Birmingham Rep), Girl on a UK tour of award-winning play 'The Vultures Song' (Blah Theatre), and Malaika Jamil in 'The Walls Between Us' (Sampad) to name a few. Alongside her acting, Ravneet is also a vocalist. She's under the musical guidance of one the UK's most profound musicians Ustad Kirpal Singh Panesar, learning Gurmat Sangeet. Her vocalist and acting skills have led to performances across the globe. Collectively, these skills have given her the opportunity to tour with Bamboozle on *The Girl and the Goat* (2015), *Down to Earth* (2018) and *Rain Rain* (2022).



### **Amy Whittle – The River Spirit**

Amy received a 1st Class honours Degree and a Post Graduate Diploma in Music Performance from The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Since then, she has performed worldwide as a Singer, Dancer and Actress, most recently playing the role of Jennyanydots in Andrew Lloyd Webber's hit musical CATS. Amy is a Vocal Coach, currently teaching Musical Theatre performers of all ages and is also a member of teaching staff at LAMDA. Amy has worked with Bamboozle for many years – first in the production 'Light as a Feather', followed by 'Moon

Song', as well as delivering creative theatre sessions as part of our family residencies and online music experiences.

Visit Amy's website: [www.amywhittle.com](http://www.amywhittle.com) to watch Amy perform Series 2, Episode 6 of BBC1's most popular music game show 'I Can See Your Voice'.



### **Ben Moores – The Ferryman**

Ben specialises in physical theatre, singing and acting. He trained in Ballet and then in theatre where he achieved an MA in Ensemble Theatre from Rose Bruford College. He is artistic Director of Theatre Elliptical where he wrote and performed in their latest production called 'Absence Of Separation' that premiered at the Edinburgh festival 2016 followed by a UK tour. He is also Artistic Director and cast member of Just Add Water Theatre Company who have been creating original physical

theatre for the past twelve years including production such as 'Bobby' and 'Why Me'. He has been Movement Director and Drama Facilitator for many companies including: Hijinx, CYAC, Library Theatre company and Small Things. As a singer he received tuition at the Royal Northern College of Music and has performed in choirs and bands as well as his own solo shows for private parties offering songs that span many genres.

Ben has also recently published a book: *Whirlpool People Deconstructing the Illusion of the Self* and toured with his one man show and book talk.

Ben has worked with Bamboozle since 2016 on the production *Storm*, touring throughout the UK and internationally, and since then has worked on many different projects including our family residencies.

# The Company Behind the Scenes

## Christopher Davies - Director



Christopher Davies is a teacher, trainer and theatre director and author of two books: *Creating Multi-Sensory Environments*, *Practical Ideas for Teaching and Learning* and *Dramatic Starts*.

He co-founded Bamboozle in 1994. As Artistic Director, he writes and directs many of the company's touring shows, leads the training programme and continually seeks ways in which we can improve our methods of communication with young people for whom making themselves understood is a daily and life-long challenge.

Christopher runs Bamboozle training courses and workshops nationally and internationally: including for the National Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, New York University, Sydney Opera House, Melbourne Arts Centre, Singapore, Shanghai Children's Art Theatre and for Assitej in Sweden.

## Sue Pyecroft – Puppet Designer & Puppetry Direction



Sue Pyecroft co-founded Bamboozle Theatre Company in 1994. As well as being the lead theatre designer for Bamboozle's highly acclaimed touring shows for many years, she has also developed the use of puppetry as a way of connecting to students in performances. Sue was involved with development of Bamboozle's programme of work with students on the Autistic spectrum and continues to be fascinated in this area of Bamboozle's work. Recently Sue has been more involved in the production side of Bamboozle's touring shows.

## Craig Byrne – Composer and Musical Director

Craig trained at The University of Manchester and at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. He has spent the last twenty years working as an Actor/Musician, Composer and Sound Designer, working often with Devising and Movement based companies. Craig worked for 6 years with improvising company Cartoon De Salvo, he also toured London's Parks during the summers for several years with The London Bubble Theatre Company. For 6 years he toured the UK, Europe and the world with Strangelings street theatre company. Craig's work as a Sound Designer and Composer has led him to collaborate extensively with contemporary Circus performers and companies, cabaret artists and fine Art installations. Craig first worked with Bamboozle in 2016 on their production *Hansel and Gretel*, and has since worked with Bamboozle on many productions including, *Gentle Giant*, *Storm*, *Down to Earth*, *Makara and the Mountain Dragon* and *Firebird*, as well as delivering our creative education projects and family residencies.

## **David Hately – Technical Manager**



David joined Bamboozle in March 2021, having previously worked with them as both a freelance technician and on the staff of the venues Curve (Leicester) and Lakeside Arts Centre (Nottingham). He has been very pleased to have been part of the team getting through the pandemic (Moon Song online and Sing a Song) and back into presenting our work to audiences in real-life (Down to Earth, Backyard, Firebird, Rain Rain and now The River). Prior to joining Bamboozle he has experienced a wide range of theatre and music, touring nationally and internationally with both: notable shows were with Aakash Odedra (Rising, Murmur and Inked) and Curve (with too many shows to mention, highlights include The Twits, Chicago and Westside Story).

**Designer:** Nettie Scriven

**Assistant Designer:** Connie Burley

# The River – Producing the Show

Producing **The River** involves a whole team of Bamboozlers led by the Director and supported by administrators at Bamboozle HQ who make sure that the show gets out on the road and into schools once it is ready.

The research and development team spent a few days at Bamboozle HQ working on various concepts for the show. They then workshopped their ideas with children and teachers in schools to explore the central narrative, try out different multi-sensory experiences and look at how these could be incorporated into a performance piece. The designers came up with the setting and props and the composer wrote the songs and music. During the rehearsal period the directors and performers honed the ideas into the final production which included taking elements of the show into local schools to see how the students responded to it. The final version of the show was previewed at a local school and then sent out on the road where it spends a number of weeks visiting schools up and down the country.

Each day the stage manager and performers unload the van and put up the set in a new school. They get ready for the performances with physical and vocal warm-ups. These are important for reducing the risk of injury, for making sure that the performers are comfortable on stage and for protecting the performers' voices as they are on tour for quite a long time. The show is performed four times a day in each school and, at the end of the day, the stage manager and performers take down the set, re-pack the van and drive to the next venue ready for the next day's performances.

# Credits

**The River** was devised by the company.

## **The Team**

Director: Christopher Davies  
Composer & Musical Director: Craig Byrne  
Designer: Nettie Scriven  
Assistant Designer: Connie Burley  
Theatre Design work placement students:  
Faye Durkin & Alexandra Hopkin-Spratt

## **Puppetry:**

Designer & Direction: Sue Pyecroft  
Makers: Heron and Otter – Sue Pyecroft  
Kingfisher – Connie Burley  
Swallows and Dragonflies – Faye and Alexandra  
Dance & Movement Director: Pete Shenton

## **Performers:**

River Spirit: Amy Whittle  
Ferryman: Ben Moores  
Salmon: Naomi Sparrow / Ravi Sehra  
Stage/Technical Manager: David Hatelly

## **Research and Development actors:**

Neyire Ashworth, Rosie Fox, Alexandra Hofgartner

## **The Bamboozle Office Team**

Tour Co-ordinator & show resources: Jade Frost  
Teachers' Companion Pack: Nicole Arkless & Dawn Bowden  
Project Manager: Jennifer Murphy  
Company Administrator: Kit Fordham  
General Manager: Rob Holsman  
Relationship Development Co-ordinator: Tina Smith  
Education Development Co-ordinator: Nicole Arkless  
Director: Family & Community: Sue Pyecroft  
Artistic Director: Christopher Davies

## **Acknowledgements:**

We would like to thank the staff and students at Nether Hall School and Ash Field Academy in Leicester for letting us explore elements of the show with them during the initial development phase, and the later rehearsals.



# Bamboozle Training Courses

## An Introduction to the Bamboozle Approach

### Practical training courses for staff in using Bamboozle's Approach with students

Bamboozle produces interactive, multi-sensory theatrical experiences exclusively for children and young people with learning disabilities. All of Bamboozle's work, whether performance or workshop based, is underpinned by an approach that we share, as far as possible, with the schools that we visit. The Bamboozle Approach is a series of behavioural and linguistic strategies that are designed to put students at ease and enable them to engage comfortably and meaningfully with the world around them. Fundamental to our way of working is the use of creative ways to engage students. These techniques can be used in any setting whether it's in the classroom, in the drama studio or out in the world.

We offer training courses for staff to explore the strategies in more detail. These courses are available in a variety of different formats from staff INSET days to workshops with students where staff observe the techniques in practice and then analyse them with Bamboozle facilitators afterwards.

#### Each course incorporates:

- An explanation of the fundamental principles of Bamboozle's Approach and the thinking behind it
- Practical demonstrations of the strategies at work
- Techniques that you can begin using in the classroom straight away
- Practical demonstrations and group exploration of creative ways to engage students

#### Course formats include:

- Whole or part school introductory INSET training days **from £795**
- Three-day workshops which include an introduction/planning day with staff and then two days of contact time with students in the mornings and staff in the afternoons **from £2,500**
- Week-long residencies where Bamboozle works with a group of students and their teachers and support staff for the whole week on an immersive drama-based experience **from £6,950**
- Bespoke long-term culture change projects where Bamboozle works with a school at regular intervals throughout the year to embed The Bamboozle Approach along with a creative process of teaching and learning **from £10,000**

All of Bamboozle's courses are tailored specifically to the needs of the school and its students. We have delivered this training to meet a variety of needs including: **working with challenging behaviour, engaging students described as being at the hard-to-reach end of the autistic spectrum, seeking greater engagement with students described as having PMLD, adopting a creative approach to teaching and learning**, and many more.

## Multi-Sensory Environments

### Practical Courses for Staff on Creating and Using Multi-Sensory Environments

Staff in special schools know the power and value of Multi-Sensory Environments; the trouble is that there's not enough time to set one up and never enough budget to acquire the necessary materials. Bamboozle's courses explore how environments can be created quickly, easily and cheaply and how they might serve to deepen the impact of the story or theme you are exploring to make it more meaningful to the students you are working with.

#### The courses include:

- Looking at different materials, building strategies and where and how environments can be set up in your school
- Practical sessions where you can create your own multi-sensory environment with ways to stimulate all the sensory channels – auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, olfactory and gustatory
- How to get the most out of your multi-sensory environment and create stimulating and meaningful learning opportunities for your students

#### Course formats include:

- Whole or part school introductory INSET training day **From £795**
- Design consultation and gathering of materials on a theme defined by the school followed by INSET training day **From £2,200**

#### Also available:

##### ***Creating Multi-sensory Environments*** by Christopher Davies

This highly practical guide to creating and using multi-sensory environments is packed full of ideas for low-cost, easy to assemble multi-sensory environments, accompanied with suggestions for use with clear learning outcomes linked to the P Levels for children with special educational needs.

The book is available from our website ([www.bamboozletheatre.co.uk](http://www.bamboozletheatre.co.uk)) **priced at £18.99**

##### **Multi-sensory Environments created for you by a Bamboozle designer**

Following a period of consultation, a Bamboozle designer comes into your school each half term, or term - as required, and creates a new multi-sensory environment tailored to your needs.

**Price variable according to requirements.**

## Engagement for Learning

### **Creative ways to engage students working outside a subject-specific curriculum**

One of the fundamental aspects of Bamboozle's work - whether in a performance, in a workshop, or in the classroom - is the focus we place on engaging the children we work with. Once we have hooked a child's interest and nurtured their engagement we have the potential to open up a world of possibilities. All of Bamboozle's education projects use creative engagement as the foundation for learning. We facilitate creative learning sessions, explore what the children choose to engage with and then build their learning around that.

Bamboozle's courses cover:

- Creative approaches to facilitating immersive and engaging learning sessions
- How to hook interest and develop engagement
- Using characters, multi-sensory environments and narrative scenarios to sustain engagement
- Behavioural and linguistic strategies that promote child-initiated learning
- Developing learning scenarios to enable sustained engagement and deepen experiential learning
- Techniques for group focus
- Enhancing observation skills
- Developing differentiated learning pathways

For more information contact: [nicole@bamboozletheatre.co.uk](mailto:nicole@bamboozletheatre.co.uk).

## Storytelling and Building Original Narrative

### A Practical Course for Staff to explore a creative, multi-sensory approach to storytelling and building original narrative

Many of the storybook packages available to schools offer a few props or flash cards to accompany a particular story but what they don't do is give advice on how to enhance the storytelling or how to explore the story in more depth. The more students engage with a story the more they will get out of it. Bamboozle has a wealth of experience in working creatively with existing stories and devising and developing original narrative. This course will give you an insight into Bamboozle's way of working and provide you with practical tools for continuing your work with students.

#### These courses include:

##### Using existing stories

- Choosing a story or elements of a story to explore
- Bringing a story to life and hooking the students' interest
- Exploring creative ways of developing the story and devising practical activities to accompany it

##### Creating an original narrative

- Starting points for a narrative
- Using a person in role as a character in the narrative
- Ways to develop the narrative and keep the students engaged and invested in it
- Practical activities inspired by the narrative

#### Course formats include:

- Whole or part school introductory INSET training days **from £795**
- Three-day workshops which include an introduction/planning day with staff and then two days of contact time with students followed by discussion sessions with staff **from £2,500**
- Week-long residencies where Bamboozle works with a group of students and their teachers and support staff for the whole week on an immersive drama-based experience **from £6,950**

**Also available: *The Bamboozle Book of Dramatic Starts* by Christopher Davies**

This simple, practical book guides teachers through creative ways of beginning a narrative and encouraging students to engage with it. The book covers a number of different activities and gives:

- A clear explanation of how to put each activity into practice with students
- An explanation of how each element of the activity works and the thinking behind it
- Examples of how Bamboozle has used each activity in practice

The book is available from our website ([www.bamboozletheatre.co.uk](http://www.bamboozletheatre.co.uk)) **priced at £14.95**

# Contacts

More resources for **The River** are available for download from Bamboozle's website:

<https://bamboozletheatre.co.uk/events/resources-for-the-river/>

If you would like any more information about the show or on any of the courses mentioned in this booklet please do not hesitate to contact us.

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