

## Family Arts Standards

with Family and Childcare Trust

The Family Arts Campaign and the Family & Childcare Trust have developed the Family Arts Standards to address a need for guidance on how best to welcome families to arts organisations. This case study is part of a series that supports the Family Arts Standards and accompanying guidance for arts organisations. To find out more about the Family Arts Standards and how to implement them visit [familyarts.co.uk/family-arts-standards](http://familyarts.co.uk/family-arts-standards).

### English National Ballet

#### **Dance into the Fairytale Workshops: Coordinated and delivered by English National Ballet's Engagement Department**

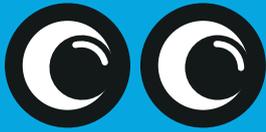
Alongside English National Ballet's and English National Ballet School's tour of *My First Ballet: Coppélia*, from April – May 2014, the Engagement Department ran a series of on-stage family dance workshops, for children and parents to take part in together. Workshops were one hour long and took place between the morning and afternoon performances at each venue.

Led by an English National Ballet Dance Artist, the participants took to the stage surrounded by the set of the village square. The workshop included a technical ballet warm up, which introduced the key characters of *My First Ballet: Coppélia*; the chance to learn some of the repertoire from the production; and a creative exercise to explore the themes and characters further. During the workshops, the accompanying parents were encouraged to get involved and help the children in the activities.

#### **My First Inclusive Ballet Project**

As part of our My First Inclusive Ballet, English National Ballet and English National Ballet School worked in partnership with the Cultural Institute at Kings College London, Widgit and Sign 2 Learn to make ballet more accessible to children with learning difficulties. A number of symbol resources were developed, to download for free, and in print at performances. Additionally, Sign 2 Learn worked with an English National Ballet choreographer to incorporate sign language into the performance. More information can be found on the English National Ballet website ([www.ballet.org.uk/whats-on/my-first-ballet-coppelia/](http://www.ballet.org.uk/whats-on/my-first-ballet-coppelia/)).

During the Dance into the Fairytale workshops, the Dance Artists used the character symbols, which had been designed specifically for the *My First Ballet: Coppélia* production, as visual aids.



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Coppélia

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Dr Coppélius

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Franz

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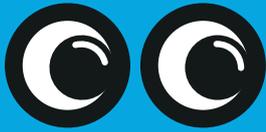
Swanilda

## What Went Well

- **Venue** – Having the workshops delivered on-stage at the theatres, with the set displayed worked very well. It provided excitement and magic for the child participants, an inspiring experience dancing on the same stage as the ‘real’ ballerinas. It also created a unique opportunity for the adults; glimpsing ‘behind the scenes’ was a keen point of interest for those taking part.
- **Timing** – All workshops followed straight on from the morning performance. This allowed participants to only have to make one trip to the theatre, watching both the performance and taking part in the workshop on the same day. This made organising the workshop very easy for families, particularly those coming from a greater distance.
- **Symbols** – Using the symbols as visual aids helped to engage the younger participants with the characters and performance further, and having tangible resources encouraged parents to interact further with their children.
- **Cost** – Prices were limited to no more than £12 per person.

“They [participants] both had fantastic experiences and are even more motivated in their ballet classes after school now. I think they also have a better understanding of how movement and actions show different aspects of a character and will be able to use that knowledge in watching future performances.

I do hope you’ll be offering these workshops in future as they were both educational and inspiring.”



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## Challenges

Older participants/parents occasionally want to observe, rather than participate, in the workshops. It is important to make clear at the point of booking the nature of a participatory family activity, and to encourage everybody to participate as much as possible, without it being compulsory.

## Top Tips for Family Dance Workshops

- Encourage older participants to interact with younger participants as much as possible and in different ways, through a friendly open approach
- Help to make the experience easy to organise with convenient timing, and affordable prices.
- Create different ways for the family to continue to learn and experience after the workshop, e.g. creative tasks and resources to use at home, extending the legacy of family activity.