



<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish>

**LearnEnglish Central
Articles**

THEATRE

by Chris Rose

In many parts of the world, and not only in the UK, “going to the theatre” is seen as an activity which only a very few people do.

“Theatre” is not often seen as being a pastime that many ordinary people do. Ordinary people watch tv, or go to the cinema, or go out to eat with friends. The theatre is for rich, upper class intellectuals.

Like a lot of clichés, there is some truth in this. Theatre tickets are quite expensive. They cost more than cinema tickets. Theatres which show new plays are usually only in big cities.

However, even though this is true, there are a lot of theatre companies who are challenging this idea. And the way they are challenging this idea is by working with schools. In the UK, many theatre companies now have an “educational department”. Companies such as Complicité, Northern Broadsides and Shared Experience go into schools and help students to understand and enjoy the plays they do.

One company that has made educational work their speciality is the David Glass Ensemble. The work they do, however, is quite different. The David Glass Ensemble run an ongoing project called “The Lost Child”. “The Lost Child” is not a play which they travel around the world to perform. “The Lost Child” doesn’t even have a script. What exactly is “The Lost Child” then?

“The Lost Child” is a series of activities which actors from the David Glass Ensemble do together with children who are in difficult situations. They have worked with refugees and victims of child abuse all over the world, mostly in South East Asia, but also in Europe and South America.

Three or four actors from the company spend a period of time, usually three or four weeks, starting from games, drawing and singing to develop the children’s confidence and give them a sense of security. Out of the childrens’ drawings, and from talking to them, the actors identify some of the children’s problems and ideas, and then they develop a play based on these ideas. Sometimes they have made short films. Sometimes the plays are a series of sketches and songs. Sometimes the plays tell one story.

Children who have taken part in “The Lost Child” almost always end up with a better sense of security, and feel more confident about themselves. They can show that they have intelligence and creativity, no matter what has happened or is happening in their lives. They also have more interest in theatre and film.

In Shakespeare's day going to the theatre was an activity which everyone did. There were expensive seats for the rich people, and other people could buy a cheap ticket to stand up and watch the play. (This still happens at the rebuilt Globe theatre in London – a theatre which is exactly the same as it was in Shakespeare's time. The Globe, of course, also has its educational department). Even though today's world is very different, companies like the David Glass Ensemble are helping to create a situation in which the theatre is for everyone.