

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Water From Space: Societal, Educational and Cultural Aspects (6)

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ARTISTS AND SCIENTISTS: EXPERIMENTING TOGETHER - INSPIRING PRIMARY SCHOOL
CHILDREN ABOUT SPACE AND SCIENCE USING ART AND PLAY

Abstract

The focus of Unlimited Theatre's work (led by Artistic Director Jon Spooner) has been to inspire children and young people about science. Their developing reputation as pioneers in this field led to a commission in 2010 from the world renowned Polka Theatre in London to make a play "to inspire children about science".

"Unlimited have been pioneers in combining theatre and science for audiences, fearlessly going where few other companies have gone before in exploring the metaphysical and everyday impact of scientific advances on our lives... "Mission To Mars" is great fun and if there's a sudden interest in science in the coming years among children it may well be traced back to Unlimited's show for 7-11 year-olds." *The Guardian (UK national newspaper)*

"Mission To Mars" was written in close consultation with Dr Gail Iles (an ESA astronaut instructor who the company members trained with at the EAC as part of their research) and Dr Andrew Newsam (of the Astrophysics Research Institute at Liverpool John Moores University and Director of the National Schools' Observatory Project).

The play ran in London for five weeks in 2010 before going on a tour of the UK visiting major theatres and attracting many thousands of children, their parents, teachers and carers. To accompany the play Unlimited also created a role playing game at the National Theatre for families to play set on an earth orbiting space station and an extraordinary six week Alternate Reality Game for 20 primary schools using game design, storytelling and secure social networking websites for each school for all "in game communications". In the process the Unlimited Space Agency has been established which has recruited 600 children aged 7-11 as members.

"I loved the whole programme. It made science exciting and fun and the lesson plans were a fantastic help. The children were extremely motivated by the whole thing, every aspect excited them and they were engrossed in the characters created and the sense of competition." *Teacher, Holy Trinity School*

Throughout the project Unlimited conducted in depth evaluation gathering evidence and feedback from participants, children, parents and teachers and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

This paper presents a compelling case study of how artists and scientists can work together in primary school settings to reach and inspire the scientists of the future at a crucial age in their education experience.