

In October three older performers from Entelechy Arts devised a play to illustrate the Mayor of London's Older People's strategy to members of the European Parliament in Brussels. They write about their experiences:-

We had just finished the show. We were tired and excited. One of the members of the audience came up to us. She was from the European Commission. She was really enthusiastic.

"You did more in this little play than in so many speeches" she said.

To be asked to make and perform a play in Brussels was quite an exciting and daunting task. It was a great opportunity to communicate issues faced by older Londoners in a clear and concise way to an audience of people from all over Europe.

We put show together in about three weeks. The Mayor's office wanted something about fifteen minutes long. We jumped in at the deep end and started throwing ideas around. At a couple of stages we showed the developing work to people for their thoughts and ideas. We showed it to people at the GLA who had been involved in writing the Mayor's strategy and to an audience of people our own age from south London. We listened to all of their views and criticisms and made several changes. It felt like the show belonged to loads of people by the time we had finished working on it.

We were rehearsing up until the last minute. On the Eurostar over to Brussels, on park benches and finally with three hours to go in hotel rooms.

We decided on a clear and simple theme. Older Londoners want to make a contribution to the life of their city. They want to contribute their time and their energy and their experiences to making a difference. The problem is that so often things get in the way. We selected some of the issues faced by people of our generation. So much time is spent supporting families by looking after grandchildren whilst their parents are at work. So much time is spent caring for elderly relatives or neighbours. There are still long waits to get some treatments in hospitals. And many people still have an 'attitude' towards the elderly. They look right through you as if you aren't there, invisible. All of this happens at a time when you haven't got the same energy as when you were younger and your health often starts playing up. We squeezed all of these issues into a series of short sketches. Though it was about often quite disturbing issues we did it in a way to make people laugh washing the points down with a bit of humour.

We wanted to show that London is a diverse city. Many of its older population are from all over the world. There were three of us in the group and we spoke three languages: English, Yoruba and French. We used all three languages in the show.

And in the end it was all worthwhile. The audience seemed to be impressed. They asked us if we were professionals. We are all looking forward to the next European Tour.

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