

YDE @The Peacock Theatre, London 2008

**report by Curious George, Mar-Shki, RascElle
and guest Soopa Noodle**

The National Youth Dance England Festival is a massive event that celebrates the nation's youth dance activities. After a stringent selection process up and down the country, the JNR Sinstars were invited to represent the eastern region with their new piece "The Quiet". This was an extremely exciting opportunity and would mean a weekend away in July, in the big smoke, staying and working next to the Thames on the Southbank and under the watchful Millennium Eye.

The weekend started on Friday 4th July with a half-day at school to allow us to meet at Cambridge train station ready to catch the 12.28pm train to Kings Cross. We each got our AMTs and headed to platform 3. We got on the train with plenty of time to spare, "This is the first time we've never had to rush and been on time!" said Mr Mar-Shki.

Little did we know that we were in fact on the wrong train...

After settling down we had to grab our bags and run! Unfortunately the train we were aiming to catch had already left so we had to wait for the next. When we were certain that we had caught the right train we sat in relief and then, without realising, all of us, excluding Mr Jammin', got out our i-pods and sat there each looking like the whole thing had been choreographed!

From Kings Cross, to dump our luggage at our accommodation, and out again to the Southbank with our lino and i-pod speaker, very old skool! To raise money to help pay for this trip, we tried busking. We unrolled our lino on a patch of concrete opposite the skate park and showed off some of our sets. We gave out flyers for the Summer Show and were surprised at how much we raised before getting moved on. After our ice-cream break, we didn't get round to setting up again but planned to do it another day, somewhere different. Busking was a good laugh except we kept coming off the edges of the lino and kicking our flyers everywhere in the process but it didn't matter because the audience still enjoyed the show.



Friday night we were all looking posh in our posh outfits to see the National Ballet. We jumped from bench to bench and every other object we could find on our journey to the Royal Festival Hall.



The venue was big and bright – we'd never watched a show there before and never been to the Ballet so we were all surprised.

There were three pieces to the Ballet. The first one was good because it was new and different but we felt that the second one was too similar so we were a bit on the bored side but then it picked up for a strong finish. After the show Mar-shki, Curious George and Soopa Noodle made a fool out of themselves by trying to do what they thought they had seen, but NO.

On the way home we saw a Jamaican man busking with a guitar, singing the lines that Mar-Shki was yet to make famous “There’s so many beautiful woman out tonight... I just can’t believe my eyes” and then we got food.

With satisfied tummies, everyone helped in the most painful way possible, to massacre Soopa Noodle by giving him a massive afro while TrubL did RascElle’s braids, then in tears, we all split off to our separate rooms. Once we’d finally overcome the hyperness, we managed to get to sleep at about 2.00am. Suddenly a high-pitched screech began to sound. The fire alarm was going off at 3.00am in the morning!!!

TrubL and Ben Jammin’ managed to evacuate outside with everyone else and RascElle slowly followed as she’d slept through it until she was woken up by her room mate. After about 15mins standing outside in the cold there were still no signs of Mar-Shki, Curious George and Soopa Noodle. They had managed to sleep through the fire alarm and lots of banging on the door...
... What a peaceful night!

After our short sleep, we grabbed a takeaway breakfast and made it over to the Peacock Theatre. We arrived ready for a short stretch and both the rehearsal director and the technical manager kept calling us J-N-R and however many times we said JNR Sinstars, they still called us J-N-R! Our performance was second in the show, which made it quite nerve-racking. Our tech run was really bad because we were tired but some of us were just lazy. It didn’t go anywhere near as good as we had hoped – our timing and spacing was all off. We got to see some of the other pieces tech’ing and we really liked the spoken word piece by the Devon group because it had good ideas.

After a full warm up, the actual performance went well and our curtain call went brilliantly. It seemed that as soon as we walked on stage the audience screamed even louder!



For some of the JNRs, this was the biggest audience we had ever performed for – a very proud moment for us. We decided to keep our costumes on so people would recognise us, but we didn't need to because as we walked out the door we had fans everywhere! It was a fantastic feeling. We gave out lots of flyers for the Summer Show and felt that we had done good, so we could finally relax with a spot of pool.

Mar-Shki and RascElle teamed up to face Curious George and Soopa Noodle. It started off equal but Curious made the first pot. As the game went on, we realised that the Noodle wasn't potting any balls. His excuse was "I am only good at snooker". His excuse wasn't true because he couldn't actually hit the ball! Even though Curious George potted first, Mar-Shki managed to pot the black. The champions faced each other. RascElle took the lead but then the flukemeister Mar-Shki took over. Mar-Shki won the game with ease. Curious George's bid for success against Mar-Shki turned into a bid for disaster because he potted the black before any other balls!

In the morning we left Bankside with all our stuff and went back to the Southbank centre for an Indian dance workshop. We started off with some language and we were clapping and stomping our feet to the beat of the words. We done some routines with loads of spins in and we all got very dizzy! Most of us had a good laugh and we all tried something we had never done before.



After a very hard weekend, we'd finally reached our rest point – the time to just chill and enjoy other people's work. We ate a delicious meal, dinner at 3.30pm(!) and then made our way to the coach an hour later, which would transport us to the Peacock where the other groups were performing. As per usual, we were the last group to get on the coach as running late is nothing new to us. We arrived at the Peacock Theatre and went straight through to the auditorium. As we sat there watching contemporary and other various dance forms, it felt strange, almost sad that it wasn't us up on the stage again. Anyway, after an evening of cheering for people we didn't even know, screaming whenever possible, and joining the lively finale vibe, we left our fellow groups to travel back to the Bridge, inspired, thoughtful and exhausted!