

Performers Without Borders Alumni Survey 2018

Compiled by Matt Morris via online survey – Aug 2018 – 22 respondents – names and DOB removed.

Time	Gender	Country of residence	Which tour(s) did you participate in?
10/02/2018 16:40	Female	United Kingdom	India 2009/2010 - Faridabad, Varanasi, Kolkata, Siliguri
10/02/2018 17:34	Female	United Kingdom	Kenya 2016 - Nairobi, Nakuru Sierra Leone 2014 - Freetown, Bo, Kamakwei
10/02/2018 19:35	Female	Sweden	Kenya 2017 - Nairobi, Nakuru
11/02/2018 01:31	Female	United States	Nicaragua 2016 - Granada, Leon, San Marcos Nicaragua 2014 - Granada, Leon, San Marcos
11/02/2018 04:53	Female	Australia	Nicaragua 2015 - Granada, Leon, San Marcos
11/02/2018 19:31	Female	United Kingdom	India 2012 - Varanasi, Kolkata, Darjeeling
12/02/2018 11:45	Male	United Kingdom	India 2014 - Kolkata, Varanasi, Darjeeling
12/02/2018 14:44	Male	United Kingdom	India 2017 - Amedabad, Varanasi, Kolkuta, Darjeeling
13/02/2018 23:58	Male	El Salvador	Nicaragua 2017 - Granada, Leon, San Marcos
14/02/2018 09:39	Male	United States	Kenya 2018 - Nairobi, Nakuru India 2016 - Amedabad, Kolkuta, Darjeeling, Varanasi
14/02/2018 12:40	Female	United States	Kenya 2018 - Nairobi, Nakuru India 2017 - Amedabad, Varanasi, Kolkuta, Darjeeling
14/02/2018 12:44	Male	United Kingdom	Sierra Leone 2014 - Freetown, Bo, Kamakwei
14/02/2018 22:04	Female	United Kingdom	Kenya 2017 - Nairobi, Nakuru Kenya 2016 - Nairobi, Nakuru India 2014 - Kolkata, Varanasi, Darjeeling India 2013 - Kolkata, Varanasi, Darjeeling
15/02/2018 17:16	Male	United Kingdom	Kenya 2016 - Nairobi, Nakuru India 2014 - Kolkata, Varanasi, Darjeeling

16/02/2018 13:06	Female	United Kingdom	Kenya 2017 - Nairobi, Nakuru Nicaragua 2013 - Granada, Leon, San Marcos
16/02/2018 15:56	Male	United Kingdom	India 2009/2010 - Faridabad, Varanasi, Kolkata, Siliguri
21/02/2018 20:00	Female	United States	India 2016 - Amedabad, Kolkuta, Darjeeling, Varanasi India 2015 - Kolkata, Varanasi, Darjeeling
06/03/2018 13:25	Male	United Kingdom	The Silk Route Circus 2008 - China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan India 2007/2008 - Faridabad, Varanasi, Kolkata, Vijayawada
21/03/2018 13:29	Female	United Kingdom	India 2011 - Vijayawada, Varanasi, Darjeeling
22/03/2018 00:33	Male	Australia	Nicaragua 2017 - Granada, Leon, San Marcos
30/04/2018 13:05	Female	United Kingdom	India 2012 - Varanasi, Kolkata, Darjeeling

Looking back at your time working with PWB, what would you say was the most significant change you saw in yourself which you attribute directly to that time?

Much greater confidence in myself - in many ways - from confidence in my ability as a performer to confidence in my teaching skills to confidence travelling and adjusting to a new culture while being in a far away land for a long time.

PWB inspired me to follow my passion of using performing arts to change vulnerable youth's lives. They were the first company who gave me a stepping stone into the world of performance outreach, teaching me that play therapy is vitally important. Everything I have done since my PWB days has been inspired by lessons I learnt on tour and not a day goes by when I don't think how grateful for the experience.

I became very aware of the privilege you have as a white European doing a project in a country with a strong colonial history.

I felt like we gained so much and got so much help just from the fact that we were white, and thereby in a position of power, rather than our performing arts skills.

My first tour changed the trajectory of my life for the last few years completely. It was fulfilling to allow myself to be of service to something that was ultimately outside of myself and my growth as an artist. I think since the tours, I've grown more as a person than as an artist. It has been bittersweet and comes with many challenges, and I've definitely felt disconnected from the opportunity I had/have to advance in my field of art, but that's mostly because coming to Nicaragua each year and being an inspiration and example here has taken precedent over being that for people that I witness having access to more resources and privilege in my own country.

Being able to soften, to go with the flow more and to be proud of the fact I can improvise on stage a lot and i'm not afraid of that.

PWB showed me that I was capable of more than I thought. It showed me that the qualities and characteristics that I have are valuable and transferable across different paths and it taught me that team work can move mountains. PWB gave me courage and confidence on myself.

There is not really one significant change as it were, i learned a great deal and i still reflect on my experiences on tour to this day and i imagine i will be discovering how i have changed as a result for some time into the future.

while on tour my teaching abilities developed immensely and it really gave me an opportunity to further my understanding of my work and allowed me to question and understand its value, both to me personally and within the context of India and the world.

I really felt like a failure at the end of the tour and for quite some time afterwards and perhaps i still do to a certain extent.

mainly i feel that it has changed the way understand myself and other people and taught me to be more aware of my expectations of a situation and to be more sensitive to the expectations of others.

More organisational skills due to my responsibility for equipment checking for the shows. There were many experiences which were more significant but that was the most significant change.

During my time in Nicaragua I've learned three major things:1. No matter how big is your problem, always face it a smile and a prop (the kids at "El Fortin" gave me this lesson)2. If you wanna change the world, you must do it through arts.You've gotta become a human rights artist.3. It's great to have a plan, but in case of emergency, improvisation it's your best friend. You're capable to adapt to any situation.

Working with Performers Without Borders has allowed me to share my passion with thousands of children while introducing me to new cultures. My most profound personal growth always occurs outside my comfort zone, and PWB has allowed me the opportunity to safely experience parts of the world that I would never have access to on my own. Through working with the local communities and getting to intimately know the children living there I have had the opportunity to expand my understanding of the world and my place in it.

After traveling through India and Kenya with PWB, I am very hesitant to travel as a "tourist" ever again. I am constantly looking for ways I can contribute to the places I visit now (Thailand, Central America, SE Asia, and beyond) to better understand and experience the cultures I visit. Through offering my talents and passion with others altruistically I have been open to new experiences and adventures I would never have imagined possible.

I have gained confidence by teaching children and realizing the universal need for PLAY. Through Social Circus I have truly found my calling in life.

We all smile in the same language

I experienced true and life changing love. Sorry, that probably isn't helpful to you but it honestly was the most personally impactful part of my India experience. It opened up new ideas about what I imagined could be possible for me and how love could be experienced when shared with another who is truly capable of meeting me on my level.

On a more professional note, my experience in Kenya thus far has inspired me to question my heart in search of how I might re-invent my work at home to give in ways I have not yet.

I became more aware of how important making people happy was.

There have been multiple changes to my life through pwb projects. The ability to take on new challenges in teaching and performing, navigating group dynamics in terms of knowing myself in a group and facilitating others to achieve their best. Learning and exploring new cultures with the support to travel and connect with people from many different backgrounds and situations.

To learn that to believe in yourself is a gift for yourself, and also a gift you can share with others, no matter your ability at the start.

Being part of a PWB project made me realise the power of social circus which has made me take part in other projects such as a circus volunteering project in Indonesia and taking PWB to Calais a few times in various forms.

I also became a better and more professional circus performer due to taking part in a tour, having the opportunity to perform regularly and devise shows, spending time training with circus performers and learning new disciplines from various people on my tours. I was gained more confidence as a clown, as a circus performer, a deviser and a busker.

Additionally, when I was on my first project in Nicaragua in 2013 I conceived of an idea for a new project which I am in the process of applying for funding for - The Sexual Health Circus!

It made me look at wealth and ownership of stuff differently. You don't need all the stuff you think.

It also brought in the real life how hard life can be for vulnerable children, it greatly intensified my empathy for vulnerable children. It has probably been a large factor it me and my partners decision to Adopt a child too.

During PWB India I learned so much more than I knew before about clown, showmanship, group cohesion and collaboration - just at boot camp. On tour I saw myself capable of navigating large crowds with entertainment and joy. As a teacher I didn't know how to manage a large group of students, and after two PWB tours I feel very capable of leading and teaching groups with or without sufficient props ! India taught

Me so much about patience and persistence, and adaptability . Because of the high stress of train travel with lots of bags and people, I now feel confident not only doing this kind of thing anywhere in the world- but under similar stressful and vulnerable situations. After working with many partner organizations and arranging outreach , I can see how I've become more confident to reach out and find avenues to share circus or any passion.

PWB taught me that I can be a capable and courageous group leader and I'm proud to have led a tour

The voluntary work I did with PWB gave me very valuable professional work experience, both in teaching circus arts and co-ordinating overseas projects. The tour helped me to transition from an amateur performer, with experience working with young people, into an independent circus practitioner who could manage big groups of children and adults, co-ordinate large events, whole school workshops, communicate with a range of teachers, students and community leaders. During the Silk Route Circus tour, the opportunity to document our progress helped me apply my written and visual communication skills as we posted on our website. I also gained a platform to develop foreign language learning skills. The India 2007/2008 tour gave me many insights into Indian social life and taught me much about poverty, inequality, development and education in the region. These are issues that have continued to fascinate me since then. When I returned home I began a BA in Social Anthropology and focussed on India in my dissertation. I am currently pursuing a PhD degree at the London School of Economics, which is part of programme of research funded by the UK Economic and Social Science Research Council. So the impact of my time volunteering with PWB cannot be underestimated. I can honestly say that my experience touring with PWB has given me a unique exposure to a developing country, which I doubt I would have gained volunteering with a larger organisation. Above all the most significant change I saw in myself was my confidence in my ability to learn languages as well as confidence as a performer.

Confidence; I'm a nervous performer and it really helped.

Belief in my ability to succeed; The support and help from members of the team, alongside their belief in my ability to succeed was both confidence building and touching.

I experienced increased confidence in working with children, holding a class and most importantly pulling something out of a hat, figuratively speaking, at the last minute because everything we'd planned for had changed.

My time with pwb was a life changing experience! It helped me grow in confidence on a personal level and as a teacher and performer. The experience taught me that any thing is possible through practice, perseverance and support from your friends! Learning and sharing circus skills illustrates this perfectly where the impossible becomes possible through practice and fun! I was not the only one to benefit from this experience, seeing the positive impact it had on the children we were working with was so powerful and inspiring.

How would you rate your performance and skill development whilst on tour?

Which of these performance skills would you say you developed whilst on tour?

How could tours be designed better to help volunteers develop their skills?

Pretty good	Routine building solo Routine building group Improvisation Acro-balance	
Pretty good	Clowning/physical comedy Acro-balance Routine building solo Stage craft Object manipulation Fire	
Pretty good	Clowning/physical comedy Music Singing Acro-balance	
Pretty good	Acro-balance Clowning/physical comedy Other: Juggling clubs!	
Pretty good	Routine building group Stage craft Improvisation Clowning/physical comedy	

Pretty good	Object manipulation Fire Theatre Acro-balance Routine building group Clowning/physical comedy Improvisation	
Really great	Costume/make-up Fire Theatre Improvisation Routine building group	
Pretty good	Improvisation Set/prop design Fire Theatre Routine building solo Dance Routine building group Object manipulation Stage craft Acro-balance	
Pretty good	Object manipulation Improvisation Routine building group Set/prop design Acro-balance Costume/make-up Clowning/physical comedy	
Pretty good	Theatre Improvisation Routine building group Costume/make-up Clowning/physical comedy	

Pretty good	<p>Object manipulation Routine building group Clowning/physical comedy Stage craft Other: Certainly many of the things mentioned here were a part of my pwb experience. For example, dance, acro, fire, theater, etc. However, as I have fairly regular routines with many of these things at home, or a long history of already practicing them, I wouldnt say that my time on tour had "developed", or stretched, these unchecked particular skill sets.</p>	
Pretty good	Other: Show production and compeering	
Pretty good	SingingAcro-balanceClowning/physical comedyAerialObject manipulationRoutine building soloMusicCostume/make-upTheatreDanceTumblingRoutine building groupVocalisationFireSet/prop designImprovisation	
Ok	<p>Object manipulation Clowning/physical comedy Improvisation Routine building group</p>	
Pretty good	<p>Singing Fire Acro-balance Clowning/physical comedy Improvisation Music Object manipulation Routine building group Theatre Dance Other: Spanish! Games games games...</p>	
Pretty good	<p>Routine building group Object manipulation Routine building solo Theatre Tumbling Clowning/physical comedy</p>	

Pretty good	Improvisation Theatre Acro-balance Routine building group Clowning/physical comedy	
Pretty good	Object manipulation Clowning/physical comedy Routine building group	
Pretty good	Object manipulationFireTheatreRoutine building group	
Ok	Routine building group Stage craft Clowning/physical comedy Improvisation Acro-balance Other: Audience interaction	
Pretty good	Improvisation Stage craft Object manipulation Fire Routine building group Clowning/physical comedy Acro-balance Vocalisation	

What would you say was the degree of personal growth that you have made whilst on tour with PWB?

How can PWB create environments that support the personal growth of their volunteers?

Really significant	Offering many varied opportunities for performers and teachers with different skills during tours, working with many different people/groups, in different contexts, locations and for different outcomes. Fostering an environment in which each participant can take responsibility for some aspect of the tour's success.
Really significant	Be honest about what the experience will be like from the start. Have a tour leader who personally picks the people going on tour (from auditions not just friends) and who is very experienced to give a feeling of trust.
Not much	The Kenya tour specifically would gain a lot from presenting the the week visit with the Sarakasi trust as an exchange rather than a teaching opportunity for us. Cause it was not, they were a lot more skilled than most of us and already have a really great program going on. It felt a bit ridiculous that we came there, pretending to teach them about circus.
Really significant	I think through encouraging communication and acknowledging the difficulties & challenges in what we are doing on tour, being honest about the charity we are offering (not sugar-coating or glorifying ourselves in it) and truly assessing how we are enriching or falling short of our goals can make us more honest and self-aware.
Significant	I think having good debrief after tour helps. I think that picking the right group helps. I think you have a good model and good policies and procedures in place. I think when issues arise it's normally to do with the personal conflict between individuals. I think if volunteers are able to see the bigger picture (it's not actually about them), that helps. I think if people come to do PWB thinking they can just work on their own skills and stage time the whole time, then that is not a healthy attitude for the group, and will cause problems. People need to have space to grow and train their skills, but they also need to be committed to creating a group and sharing skills in the arts with the students in the countries you go.
Significant	Delegating and sharing roles between all the team. Assuming capability and allowing volunteers to meet those assumptions. Giving space for volunteers to be their authentic selves and bring their personal experiences and qualities to the table.
Really significant	keep providing the opportunity for people to go on tours and provide a place where participants can reflect on their experiences post tour, either alone or in groups

Really significant	Continue as they are doing. Continue to select people from all over the world with a variety of skills. Potentially seek partner organization so PWB groups from all historic tours can meet up with each other before the new groups head on tour. Could do this with other organisations.
Really significant	Honestly, I think that the sharing circle it's important. Being available to express yourself without being judge. Reinforce that! Everyone in the group should be part if this activity! Communication its the key to a healthy mind and great relationships
Really significant	PWB is providing the opportunity of personal growth for teams and individuals to develop as they wish. By providing the structure to teach and perform with children in various cultures around the world, PWB is allowing volunteers to step outside their comfort zone and have a lasting impact on the world at large
Really significant	Continue to offer a platform for people to have these experiences. As we all know, the tours far from "perfect" but my feeling is that they offer a rich opportunity for people to grow in such a myriad of ways, intimately, professionally, creatively, pertaining to circus and not. Somehow the degree to which anyone experiences personal growth, and in what particular capacity, is the result of both chance and the willingness/capacity of each individual to honestly reflect upon themselves. So, at the end of the day, I don't know what PWB could, really do to facilitate this - it seems somewhat out of PWB's hands. But if the platform was gone - meaning the chance to go on tour - then the opportunity would be gone with it.
Really significant	Better positive feedback during tours and engagement afterwards.
Really significant	Clear goal setting and support for each volunteers journey.
Significant	Perhaps develop a framework to be achieved for each project which can include personal development goals.
Really significant	Setting goals during a project to focus the volunteers on choosing what they want to develop and achieve. Having (optional) group discussions on topics such as volunteering in a children's home, living in poverty etc as a way of reflecting on the life impacting experiences they are having. Reflection after tour is a great tool focus on how the tour has impacted your life. I liked the concept of each person running a workshop for the team so we can all have a chance to share and learn and grow.

Significant	coaching, not just someone showing you how to do something. but people getting to really coach you how to do a trick or move. It was a very new experience to me and one I still draw on. Continue this. Those on the course just have to want to share their passion. Everyone I met exceled at this.
Really significant	I like that there is some support from hq but not too much as to empower the team to grow themselves. I like the idea of making goals or tracking growth and if this can be worked into the tour structure more and teammates can help hold each other accountable to goals and personal commitments to growth.
Really significant	Continue to build the network of PWB volunteers so that there is a larger group of peers and mentors for pre-tour and post-tour personal development.
Significant	
Significant	I think the program does so already, I think encouraging volunteers to take on roles they are not accustomed too with appropriate support such as MC'ing, curriculum design even cooking. More coordinated focus on setting goals and devising activities to reach those goals across projects would help.
Really significant	I thought the use of group roles was really effective, sharing circles and the way it was so much group led. setting out personal targets and getting the group to help monitor them was very helpful.

Have you requested PWB to be a reference for a job application?	Do you include your participation on your CV and/or on job applications?	Is the performing arts (performing and/or teaching) your main source of income?	If so, for how long have you been sourcing income from the performing arts?	Are you thinking of making the performing arts your main source of income?
No	Yes	No	Part-time since 2009	No
No	Yes	Yes	5 years	
No	Yes	No		Yes
No	Yes	Yes	2011-present	
No	Yes	Yes	14 years	
Yes	Yes	No		No
Yes	Yes	Yes	Five Years	
Yes	Yes	No	My income from the performing arts is sporadic. Sometimes I go busking, sometimes I work professionally.	Yes
No	Yes	Yes	Since 2013, the time I started working in a ballet school.	
No	Yes	No	10+ years	No
No	No	No	NA	No
Yes	Yes	No	Was for about 8 years. Now is only a minor source of income.	No
Yes	Yes	Yes	6 years	

Yes	Yes	No	seconday income for approx 10 years.	No
No	Yes	No		Yes
Yes	Yes	No		No
Yes	Yes	No		No
No	Yes	No		No
Yes	Yes	No	I did so for two years	No
No	Yes	No		No
Yes	Yes	Yes	4 years	

What do you think are the main barriers to stopping you from making the performing arts your main source of income?

I am more interested in other careers (academic teaching/education and teaching yoga anatomy/philosophy)

Job opportunities

I have a career path that I love, so I have no need to change. I didnt choose performong arts as a career path because it appeared lonely and challenging and insecure.

Ability to drive. A partner to pass clubs with. Guarenteed return on Public Liability Insurance.

Money available in the industry

The difficulty of earning a livable wage in the United States as a performance artist, and my diverse set of interests that call me passionately and genuinely in several other directions.

Available funding.

No barriers simply a choice.

I am a sexual health educator first and my secondary source of income is circus. This may change if I get funding for The Sexual Health Circus (and if I loose my job!).

too little money to support my family

I don't feel very passionately about self promotion and I prefer daytime work. I also would love to be a part of a group again, and it's been challenging to find other performers who would commit to this.

Performing arts has been my main source of income for some periods since the tour but is not now. One of the reasons I have decided to focus on my academic career is because I think I could keep doing it for longer than performing arts. I don't know if this is the same for others who have moved to other fields. I found that when I was earning from performing arts I needed to spend most of my energy on promotion, which at the time I felt was not one of my strengths.

I have focused on a path that requires a specific skill set different to performing arts. Performing arts is my hobby.