

## PEACE CHILD HISTORY – CHAPTER TWO

# NARRATIVE HISTORY 1982-2024

by

David Woollcombe, Author *Peace Child*,

President & CEO, Peace Child Intl. - 1982 to 2014; Chair, Peace Child Intl. Trustees – 2015 to present

After the Royal Albert Hall show, I went back to my job with TransAtlantic Films in Holland Park. That was it, I felt. Job done. But David Gordon, Eirwen Harbottle and my wife kept saying: “Next Step – America!” Some weeks later, David introduced me to a couple of friends of his, Peter Jacobs and Johnny Toogood – who agreed to buy me a ticket to the USA to explore doing it over there.

### **The Kennedy Center Show**



*Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts*

I went over for a week in November 1981 – chiefly to see James Grant, the legendary director of UNICEF. But he cancelled our meeting at the last minute, apparently because one of his sponsoring governments did not think that it was UNICEF’s business to work for Peace! Instead, I had fruitful meetings with the World Federalists and various Peace activists – but it was Gerry Jampolsky’s introduction to Molly Whitehouse, a supporter of his Centre for Attitudinal Healing who gave the most support. It was she who booked the Kennedy Center for Peace Child on 3rd December 1982 before we’d remotely figured out a way of doing it.

I made a second trip in June ’82 – when I had had the good fortune to meet John Marks, founder of Search for Common Ground – which at that time was called the Nuclear Network. It had a small office in the Dupont Circle Building – and I met John by chance at a party Gerry Jampolsky had sent me to. It was hosted by Marty Dutcher – a teacher and child specialist who lived on Macomb Street. Marty was involved with Werner Erhardt’s EST trainings – and it was EST graduates, like John Marks, who were the initial driving force behind the Peace Child show. And all they had to work with was the first Peace Child video.

John and I had a \$7.00 chinese meal at the Nanjing restaurant off Dupont Circle where we struck a \$100,000 deal. Rosey and I would produce the show at the Kennedy Center; he and the Nuclear Network would fill the hall. He would raise the \$100,000 budget for the show from selling tickets; I’d work the other side of the footlights and create a great show.



Rosey and I + 19-month old Alexander came to the USA in July 1982 ( – planning to stay for 5 months but we ended up staying for 7 years.) I think it was Molly who introduced us to Mike Malone, one of the co-founders and directors of the Duke Ellington School of the Performing Arts – which operated in a big old building in upper Georgetown.



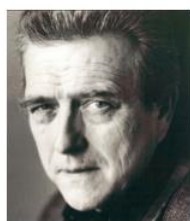
I have no idea how we persuaded Mike to choreograph the show – but we did. And he persuaded Mark Eldridge, the Principal, to give us access to Ellington’s brilliantly talented dance students. He also introduced us to Tony Booker – a wonderful musician and choral trainer / arranger. He got us the DC Chorale (director, Edward Jackson), the band and the orchestrator, Chris Royal. David Gordon recruited Jessy Dixon, and Rosey arranged auditions around the city to find children to perform the key roles.

We toyed with the idea of getting the Soviet Ambassador’s daughter, Yelyena Dobrynin to play the part of the Russian girl – but, though there was some interest from the Russian Embassy, such were the restrictions on Soviet children in Washington DC at that time, it was never going to work.

Instead, we had a series of auditions with very talented children across the Washington area – and came up with an obvious choice for the Russian girl, Bridget Condon from Rockville, Maryland – and a hard choice for the Boy between Marco Clarke, an African American boy from 14th Street, and Andy Green, a white boy from Columbia, Maryland. We went with Marco – with the result that, though the story was about Russians and Americans coming together, visually – for a Washington DC audience just a decade after the riots that convulsed the city following Martin Luther King’s assassination – the play was all about healing the racial rifts across the city.



Jessy Dixon



Stanley Anderson



Marco Clarke



Bridget Condon



Alan North



Susannah York

Susannah York had enjoyed the Royal Albert Hall experience so much, she returned with her two children, Orlando and Sasha, to reprise the Story-teller role. Two fine actors from the Washington Arena Stage, Stanley Anderson and Alan North, took on the roles of the US and Soviet Presidents. The lighting was managed by Jeff Grandel from Gallaudet University for the deaf – which was interesting as, though they couldn’t hear what was going on, Jeff and his students were meticulous about every lighting effect so the show looked brilliant.

Mike and his team rehearsed endlessly at the Ellington school – where Rosey and I rehearsed the Core Cast and the Story-teller’s group. It was interesting to us that the opinions of the US youngsters on US-Soviet and Nuclear issues were different from the UK young people: in the UK show, we had not identified the USSR and USA. It was an East-West conflict – but the US kids were having none of this: it was all about Russians and Americans. And – in a country convulsed by the Nuclear Freeze movement with thousands of Russian missiles targeted right on Washington DC, there was considerably greater passion about the need to eliminate nuclear weapons. The only real problem was the care-taking staff –

many hours were wasted sitting on the steps of the Ellington School entrance waiting for some one to turn up with the right key! That – and the fact that we kept having to move house as one house-sit after another came to an end. But Rosey and I were very happy, buoyed up by our own, beautiful little boy, Alexander, and by the welcome we felt from everyone in Washington. We also had the wonderful Tessa Marsh, who looked after Alexander brilliantly during rehearsals, nursing her thermos flask – which was usually filled with gin and tonic, rather than coffee!

Start-up funding was always going to be a nightmare – and, in this, we were rescued by an incredibly generous loan from Josie and Bill Jordan. Their loan was all the more generous by the fact that they had just adopted an Indian baby, Josha: essentially, they agreed to adopt two Peace Children at the same time – and nurture both of them. That Josha is now a very successful young man, and that Peace Child Intl. is still with us – proves what good parents they were to both of us.



But it was John Marks and the Nuclear Network staff who really made it work. John was indefatigable, organising presentations in people’s homes, selling the \$25 tickets to this unknown show, one by one, family by family. The “EST-ies” helped with their evangelical belief in the power of individuals to change themselves and the world. John filled the hall by telling a story of how the nuclear situation was like two people standing up to their knees in gasoline, each holding a box of matches, each daring the other to strike first.

The danger was very great – and young people were genuinely scared. A Boston professor, Robert Jay Lifton, was peddling the concept of ‘Psychic Numbing’ – suggesting that people were in denial about the threat. There were movies about Nuclear Winter, and the Pentagon was promoting the strategy of ‘Mutual Assured Destruction’ (MAD) – which, they argued, was the ultimate deterrent that had prevented a 3rd World War. So the appetite for Peace was very great – and Peace Child was lucky to be ahead of the curve.

The day of the show approached – and disaster: Susannah York got terrible tooth-ache and had to go to New York to visit her dentist. She missed the Dress Rehearsal – which was just as well, as it was the most disastrous cacophony of mis-haps and snafus it was possible to imagine. But the show itself went off almost without a hitch: Jessy Dixon’s microphone popped loudly on the first number, but after that – the show flowed like clock-work.

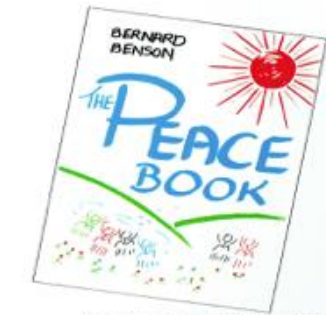
No one put a foot wrong. As one stage-hand said to me at the end: “The difference between the show tonight and that Dress Rehearsal this afternoon is the best possible reason for believing in God that I have ever seen...!” It was a miracle! – Marco was a revelation – the singing was inspirational.

The dancing was spectacular! As Peggy Cooper Cafritz, Mike’s co-founder of the Ellington School, said: “This is some of Mike’s best work ever...” A professor of Theatre Arts at Washington’s Catholic University, brought in to advise us where to go next with the show, told us: “Don’t change a thing! Just carry on doing what you’re doing.”

Right wing Republicans weren’t happy with kids telling us to make peace with Russia: Rep. Stan Parris put down a motion in the House of Representatives criticising the newly formed Peace Child Foundation, and the Washington Times wrote a scathing review, saying that “Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings comes complete drivel some times....”

But veteran peace activist, Cora Weiss, saw it – and vowed to bring it to the Riverside Church in New York where she was sure she could persuade her friend, the Pastor there, William Sloan Coffin, to stage it. Also – very helpfully – National Public Radio did a lengthy piece with the kids on their ever-popular All Things Considered news show. That went out nationwide and generated a ton of interest from schools and community groups wanting to do the show. All that effort, and money, from the good people of Washington DC – led by the Ellington School and the Nuclear Network, paved the way for the next stage in PCI’s evolution.

[Read More: Kennedy Center Archive – Playbill, Flyers, Press & Photos](#)



*"No doubt the concept of this great book will help contribute to preaching peace in a story that touches the hearts of millions thirsty for seeing it established and widespread."*  
The Late President Anwar Sadat

*"This imaginative book tells the story of two children who, using modern communications, persuade the nations of the world to give up their arms and so usher in an era of Peace for Mankind."*

*A fairy-tale?—yes, but there is a wisdom in the children that men and women would do well to ponder."*  
Donald Coggan, former Archbishop of Canterbury

*"It is my fervent wish that everyone in the world would open their hearts to let in the child of the Peace Book."*  
His Holiness, Pope John Paul II

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**AMERICAN PREMIERE**  
The Kennedy Center  
Washington, D.C.  
December 1, 1982  
8:30 p.m.

**A GALA PRESENTATION**  
starring  
**Susannah York**  
as the Story-teller

and an international cast of more than 100 children

Proceeds will be donated to the fund for the Duke Ellington School and The Peace Child Foundation.

Tickets: \$100, \$50, \$25, \$15

**The Riverside Church Show:**

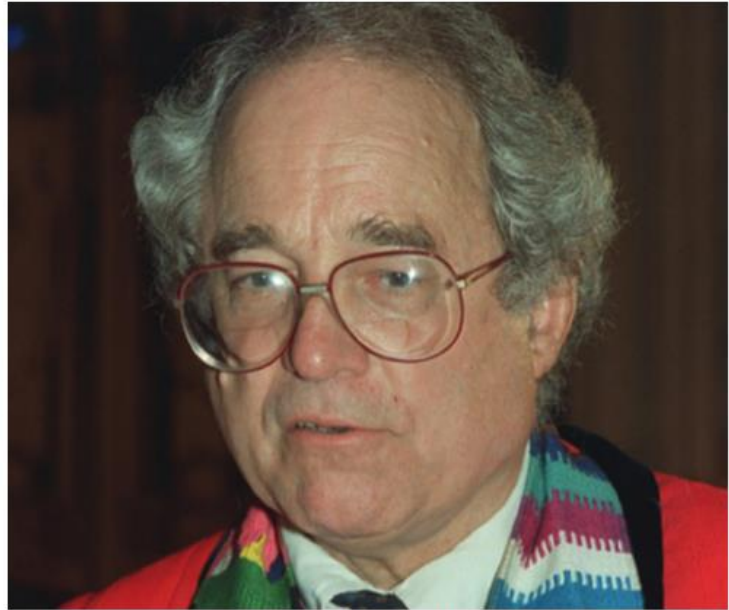
The journey to the Riverside Church in New York was one of the more traumatic memories in the Peace Child story. Two friends of Tessa’s had joined us for the Kennedy Show having driven across America in a classic AMC Ambassador car – which Rosey immediately christened the “Yuck Car.” It was big and very ugly, but I loved it and had driven it to New York to finalise the details of the production with Cora, rent a flat, find a school for Alexander, and generally get things set up. I then drove back down to Washington to pick up Rosey, Alexander and all our clobber to drive them back up to New York. It was a glorious, clear, moonlit night when I arrived at our home in Takoma Park. But – when we woke up the next morning – the world looked like this:



About two foot of snow had fallen over night – and I couldn't get the yuck car out of our road: it just slid back down the hill. So – we set off for the Metro with our 19 bags and suitcases, carrying them in shifts down the street. Alexander, by contrast, rode in considerable comfort on his toy police car. We got to Union Station and found the trains in chaos: we would have given up, but Cora had invited us to a party at Harry Belafonte's apartment to launch the show, so I felt a duty to get there. We got the last train to New York – and stood in the corridor on a 6-hour journey – only to find the same snow had fallen there and the city was in complete paralysis. It was Rosey's first time in New York – and the Subway seemed to her like something out of a mediaeval vision of Hades: bravely, she agreed to go on ahead with Alexander to the house we were staying in in Brooklyn, while I found a taxi brave enough to take all our stuff up to our Flat on the Upper West Side. "You need U-haul!" said the taxi driver surveying our 19 bags. We did – but in that snow, it wouldn't have been much good to us.



***Cora Weiss***



***The Rev. William Sloane Coffin***

It was great to be around legendary peace activists like Cora and Bill – especially when Reagan and Oliver North were revealed to be complicit in the Contra-gate scandal. Bill Coffin's excoriating rebukes delivered to the Reagan administration were inspiring – and that passion found its way into the *Peace Child* show. The Harry Belafonte party was a bit of a blur: we were so exhausted by our journey the day before. But we met some great people – and set to work the following day with a round of auditions in New York City Schools, getting a small but talented cast together. Marco was to come up from Washington to reprise his role as the Boy – but we found a new girl, Alison, to play the Russian girl. It was great to be at the glorious mock gothic Riverside Church – which sits so majestically over-looking the Hudson River.



The Church has a resident theatre company – and a theatre in the basement. They didn't have anything to do with us as we were performing in the main body of the Church – along with a specially built stage and sound system. Built in the 1930s, it is an extraordinary mix of ancient and modern – with stone stairs and windows, and modern phones throughout. I saw Bill taking a call in the Chancel – and asked if he had a hotline to the Almighty? “Sure,” he said, “And from here it's a local call...!”



It was a tricky show to produce – with Marco only being available at week-ends for the Rehearsals. Also, New York was an exhausting place to be – and the children were a whole lot more materialistic, and less idealistic than the Washington DC cast. They kept talking about which car they were going to drive – and how they were going to get rich on Wall Street. Those topics interested them a whole lot more than the threat of nuclear war.



But Cora, through Robert Benton, had persuaded Oscar-winning actress, Jane Alexander, to be the Story-teller for this performance. She brought a grace and beauty to the show which inspired all who attended. “This must go around the world,” she told us: and years later, when a friend told her that Peace Child was working on sustainability issues, she said: “Oh good! That means that, like the Cold War, the children will sort it out.” Her presence also ensured that the show was a sell-out. Many church staff still remember it.



*The Maypole Dance – Peace Day at the Riverside Church*

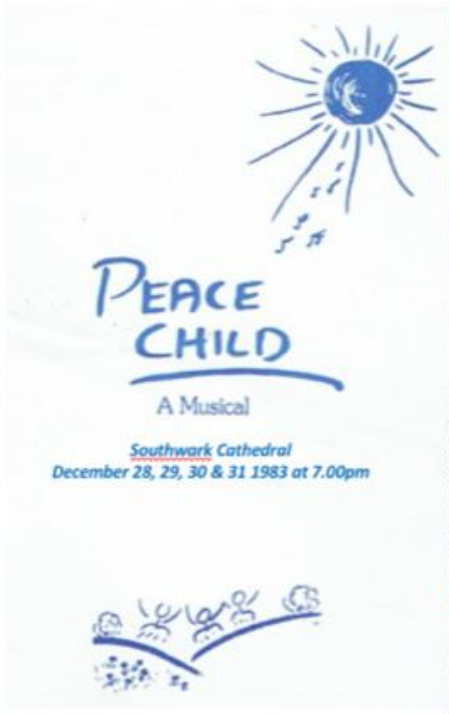
Though the new Peace Child Foundation in Washington was intent on doing more productions – and we had “Tour Dates” for shows in York, Pennsylvania, Princeton New Jersey, and a network of DC schools, there was a clear demand for the script and music across the USA. So – on coming back to Washington DC after the New York show, to the McIlvaine’s lovely home off McArthur Blvd, ( – so lucky that they were always off sailing!) I started work on what would become the *Peace Child Study Guide for Schools*. This allowed schools and communities across the USA – and around the world – to do their own versions of the musical, studying the issues, and imagining that they were the Peace Children of the story. It was hard work – very hard – and sometimes, teachers stood back and let the children write, direct their own shows – as they did in Roanoke, Virginia and Minneapolis, Minnesota. A colleague in the Peace Movement, Chris Senie from Connecticut, agreed with me that “*Making peace should not be too easy...*” He proved the point by cycling the land bits from Moscow to New York – possibly even harder than doing *Peace Child*! Peace Child was hard because you had to assemble a cast, put together a band, choreograph and rehearse dances and – most important – re-write the script and learn the lines. Then you had to empower the kids to stand on a stage ( – *really scary for some!*) – and recite those lines and sing those songs to an audience of their parents and peers. Much easier to write an essay, paint a picture, or give a talk! But, like Chris’s cycle ride, doing *Peace Child* was much, much more impactful – which is why so many people who did *Peace Child* when young still remember the experience years later.

*Check out the History of Peace Child as it happened through the 27 Peace Child’s Progress Newsletters, produced from the Fall of 1983 through December 2000. In the days before the Internet, Peace Child was promoted by sending out hundreds of copies of Peace Child’s Progress around the country, as thousands of schools and communities took up the challenge of producing the Peace Child musical.*

*The Peace Child Study Guide for Schools & The Peace Child Music Score*

**Southwark UK Show:** David Gordon, Bernard Benson and the Harbottles – the four other Peace Child founders, were not about to allow the USA to make all the running. So – they arranged for a Christmas performance of Peace Child in Southwark Cathedral which got some notice in the media.





### **The Washington DC Schools Tour:**

“Peace Child is a process, not just a performance,” said Lucia Effros – who became our Administrator, and massive friend and supporter of Peace Child – in 1984. Her husband, Steve, gave us our first office in Fairfax. With her calm demeanor, and total commitment, Lucia kept us grounded and focused – and made sure that we had a Board of Directors who met regularly and kept us in order.

However, we wanted to demonstrate that there were simpler ways of producing the Peace Child show than mega-budget Kennedy Centre or Riverside Church shows. So – in the Spring of 1984, we produced the DC Schools Tour, performing a 60-minute version of the show with a cast of 10 actors – 8 x professionals & two children. We then took that show on the Road – to York, Pennsylvania and Princeton – with a rotating cast of children, including Garth Kravits (*from the original Kennedy Center show*) and Caitlin Siegel.



*Finale with the York Pennsylvania Chorus*



## **First tentative steps into the USSR:**

It is almost impossible to remember how distant and mysterious the ‘USSR’ seemed to us back in the 1980s. There hadn’t been a summit meeting of US and Soviet leaders for about 20 years; phone calls had to be booked a week in advance, and were notoriously unreliable; Russians almost never travelled to the west, and only a handful of Americans ever went to the USSR (*Only 400 Russian entry visas were granted to Americans in 1983!*) And yet, as *Peace Child* began to take root in the USA, Eisenhower’s old dictum about ‘people-to-people’ diplomacy was re-emerging as ‘citizen diplomacy.’ And many professional people – doctors, eye surgeons, vets, dancers and artists, business people and – particularly – young people realised the truth of the *Peace Child* message: *it’s not the bombs that separate us. It’s whatever it is in our minds that make us think we are enemies.* Whatever it was, it was costing us all, big time! The famous author and astro-physicist, Carl Sagan, calculated that the Cold War had cost the USA \$43 trillion dollars – more than the value of all the real estate, all the stuff and all the infrastructure in the USA. Any way to bring to an end this haemorrhaging of money and talent had to be worth pursuing. So there was considerable public support for *Peace Child*. Also, the USSR was still, in Churchill’s phrase: “a riddle, wrapped in mystery inside an enigma.” People were eager to see what it was actually like. *Peace Child* rode this wave, feeding on the interest that ‘meeting the enemy’ had for so many Americans.

# ***PEACE CHILD’S PROGRESS...***

*Vol. 1, No. 2*



*June, 1984*

*“PEACE CHILD” is a musical fantasy which tells how children bring peace to the world. The Peace Child Foundation has been set up to promote that fantasy and play a part in preparing people for it to become a reality.*

## **“Peace Child” Set for Russian Translation**



### **Snippets**

#### **Capitol Hill...**

Members of the PEACE CHILD PLAYERS company performed extracts from the show in the main dining room of the Cannon Office Building on Capitol Hill. The occasion was a reception for delegates to the IMPACT conference, and chance for them to meet Senators and Representatives. Unusually, for such gatherings, all fell silent during the Peace Child performance, and applauded warmly at the end.

The detailed History of Peace Child – as it happened – is recorded in the Peace Child’s Progress Newsletters produced at the time – like the above one recording my first trip to Moscow. In the days before the Internet, the Peace Child Foundation had to promote and send out copies of this all around the country. Here, I shall simply tell the story briefly, as I remember it, linking you to the records of various key, landmark productions. For the detailed history, consult the Newsletters!

I cannot remember how many copies of the Study Guide we sold – but it was hundreds. Our office was busy sending them out most of the time. At \$30 a package, it was a nice little earner. And every production was a triumph in its own way. Interest came from a variety of sources: places we’d never heard of emerged as ‘early adopters,’ enthusiastically producing everything from whole shows with casts of hundreds, to one or two songs sung in Sunday Schools. One of my favourite early ones was done by a Catholic School in Southern Virginia. Sister Claire had already produced *Godspell* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* – and didn’t really want to do another. But her children so enjoyed reading through *Peace Child*, and their pianist was enthusiastic about the songs, so she agreed to do it. And they pretty much got on and did it themselves – as she sat at the back of the hall and watched. That – of course! – is the perfect way to let *Peace Child* happen: letting the kids feel total ownership of the show, introducing their own crazy ideas: in this case, it was sparklers bursting balloons during Fireball, and a Chinese Boy, who couldn’t really hold a tune, reciting the words of *Look at Life* over the music. All very moving.

## The San Francisco Show 1984



Following the DC tour, and the Princeton and York PA shows, we were invited to do a performance at the Democratic Convention in San Francisco. I can’t recall how we got the invitation to perform at the Democratic Convention: perhaps it was through Senator Alan Cranston’s office – or one of our supporters in the Bay Area. At any event, it was a golden opportunity to spend the Summer of 1984 in San Francisco – and nurture contacts and relationships throughout Northern California which would reap massive dividends for the Peace Child Foundation in the years to come.

We got a connection in Princeton to Warren Buffet’s wife, Susie – who lent us her San Francisco “2nd Childhood flat,” perfectly located on Nob Hill. Artfully decorated in with Peanuts wallpaper and furniture, our 3-year old son loved it, and we did too. We’d been given a lead to George Manier, a music teacher at Marin Country Day School whom we’d thought to use as MD. But when we met him, he urged us to use Steve Riffkin, as he was “*younger, very cool and very talented, with a strong background in musical theatre...*” Steve became Peace Child royalty – and a key component of our *Finest Hour!*

Again, Rosey did the recruitment campaign across the Bay Area. We’d found a place to rehearse in Berkeley – so every one from Marin had to schlep across the Richmond Bridge to come to rehearsals.

We quickly found two leads – Melissa Anderson as the girl, and Mark Mendonca as the boy. Melissa was a typical stage school kid: she'd just played Dorothy in Wizard of Oz. Mark was more rough and ready – but really got the peace message. Melissa was bemused that there was no script when she arrived for first rehearsal. She was happy to sit and listen to the conversations about war, peace, the environment etc. – with which we started all productions. She was even OK to do a few improvisations – but her lack of enthusiasm in those early days was palpable. Mark was great – sparking new ideas and lines all over the place. Melissa tolerated the madness, but basically was waiting for some one to give her a script so that she could learn her lines.



She was an exceptionally talented young actress / singer. So I made it my business to get her engaged and interested in the issues: the danger of accidental Nuclear War; the threat from the Soviet Union; what it might be like to be a girl of her age there – what might she be thinking or doing about these issues over there. I got her to read Jonathan Schell's book, "The Nuclear Winter" – so that she could get a sense of the threat we were addressing in the play. And, overnight, she seemed to get it: she came back after the weekend a different person. She was on fire. Suddenly, she understood why we were doing this play: it was not just an opportunity to show-case her considerable talent. It was an opportunity to get Americans thinking about how we could end the Cold War. Poor Mark was gobsmacked when, in an improvisation they did that day, she laid into him like a harridan on speed: she had all the answers and a very convincing Russian accent. She laid into poor Mark: he was silenced. She ended up being brilliant at the democratic convention, and went on to be the 1st Peace Child to go to the USSR later that year. She played the lead in both the '85 and '86 tours – and was arguably the most effective *Peace Child* cast member of all time.

Also in this show, we used Nina Gallen to play our 1st female US President. This was appropriate as Geraldine Ferraro was the 1st female vice presidential candidate – and a Democrat! We had a small chorus – and we performed on the Arts Stage at the Democratic National Convention Trade Show. Alan Cranston and – to our delight – Carole King, dropped by to see the show, along with Dharaj Maxfield from the Theatre of All Possibilities in Santa Cruz – whose contribution to *Peace Child* would later prove tremendous.

See: [San Francisco Album](#), – prepared by Zizi Mott, whose daughter played the Story-teller. This is one of the loveliest records of any of the US Peace Child shows.

## **Twin Cities Show, Minnesota – Fall 1984:**



Again – I have no idea how we got the invitation to do the show at the Theater Arts School in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis / St Paul but it was a wonderful chance to sink roots in this most creative of cities – which became a keystone in future Peace Child projects. The Rev. Sally Hill of the Church Resource Center invited us, and arranged for us live in a basement in South Minneapolis. She also made the design of the Peace Child ‘football & duck’ logo which we have used ever since. We picked up the most crappy small Honda car with which we drove Alexander to his school each morning, and ourselves to rehearsals. Rosey was pregnant with Natasha during this production – so was taking things a bit easier. Happily, the school was very supportive.

It was a good-ish show – about which I have zero recollection. I do remember that Alexis Vaubel and Laurie Tucker were key cast members. Alex and her mother, Carole, became long-term PCI supporters – working on the ’85 Tour, the Space Bridge and the ’86 Tour. And we ended up donating our car to Laurie. Which is why, for years after, she would go round telling people: “Do Peace Child – get a car!” – but she failed to tell them that the car was an absolute death trap – with holes in the floor.

From Minnesota, we returned back to the UK, enrolled Alexander in the local primary school in South Hampstead, and waited for Natasha to be born.



Meanwhile, Lucia was keeping the show on the road in the USA – supporting massive numbers of local shows, and assembling plans for Peace Child shows at two important festivals in 1985.

### **Peace Child, Santa Rosa, California:**



*Village Elementary School, Santa Rosa, California*

### **THE PERFECT “PEACE CHILD”**

Initially, Tom Crawford, principal of the Village Elementary School in Santa Rosa, California, was not enthusiastic about doing Peace Child. He thought the name sounded sappy – and feared that some of the more right-wing parents in his Republican Northern California town would feel resistant. But – eventually, he capitulated to the persistence of teacher, Joanna Panas – and agreed to play the part of the US President. The entire school was involved – the staff, the children in the chorus, parents back stage – everyone. And the performances were magnificent, apparently, and changed the school for-ever: now when they need to deal with bullying, playground brawls, bad grades etc. – they use the conflict resolution tools they learned working through the Study Guide on Peace Child. And – by acknowledging his own stage fright before going on as the President, the Head-teacher found himself in a much closer, sympathetic relationship with his student body – and the rest of his staff. For that, and his courage in bringing Peace Child to Northern California, we dub this: “The Perfect Peace Child....”

It was not surprising that the children were the most enthusiastic supporters of Peace Child:

# What The Children Think...



Caitlin Siegel, Katya of the Peace Child Players Company, wrote:

*"What I got from "PEACE CHILD" was a message of hope for my future: a message that allowed me to stop walking alone and frightened with blinders on; to turn and look around, - see the world as we know it now, and then imagine how it could be. To always keep ahead of you the thought that the world can be saved; to stop dividing people into different races and come to the human race; to face the problems of today and tomorrow together, while learning from the mistakes of yesterday so they won't be repeated. This is what being a Peace Child means to me."*

As hundreds of letters and essays came in from around the country, we asked Caitlin to select those which said something to her.

*"My suggestion for peace is for all the leaders of the advanced countries to have a big meeting and have nobody leave until a decision had been made about getting rid of all nuclear weapons."*

David

*"Doing "PEACE CHILD" was fun. Not to brag or anything but I think that this was the best program at this school, or anywhere else, especially when all these school kids can co-operate with each other. If this world was like our play, I know everyone would be more than happy."*

Lisa

*"How refreshing it might be if the "PEACE CHILD" could be played out on the world stage rather than that of the Roosevelt Middle School."*

Erie Daily Times

*"I think it would be very nice to go to Pittsburgh to spread Peace"*

Jenny

*"We must remember that it is not only weapons that destroy peace, but also people, drugs, alcohol and other things"*

Debra

*"How do I feel about "PEACE CHILD" right now? - Well I'm kind of glad that we did it because maybe the adults would stop and think what they are doing to each other, and what they are going to do to us - the children. Must we grow up hating each other too?"*

Daniela

*"As I sang - "Will I be the only survivor, lost in a world of burning fire!" all alone in the spotlight at center stage, it hit me how little could be left with no breeze, no sun, no friends no family just cold hard light and gagging smoke. How could we be this blind? We must reach out now to our Soviet brothers and sisters who want to live too. "Believe in me - I believe in you."*

Valerie



*"What would be my suggestion for peace throughout the world? I suggest that the play "PEACE CHILD" should be put on through the world so that everybody gets the word of peace."*

Erin

*"It helped me because I was kind of nervous to sing out in front of people but if a lot of kids around you are singing out, you will too."*

Ethel

*"Before I heard about "PEACE CHILD", I never really paid much attention to war. I just thought, "Let the leaders solve their own problems." Now I know that it's not only the leaders problem."*

Hal

*"PEACE CHILD" affects me in many different ways. 1) I really thought about peace. 2) I was happy, sad, full of laughter and at points my eyes were filled with tears. 3) In the production, I felt as if our world was a world of caring and sharing."*

Terry

*"Being in "PEACE CHILD" means a lot to me because it makes me feel that this really could happen in the near future and I hope that it turns out as good as the play did."*

Pam

*"Every time the production of PEACE CHILD" is on, I get a feeling I want peace all over the world. It changed my life in a way I can't explain. I feel I could love the world, but the world doesn't have the peace I wish it would have."*

Bryon

*"PEACE CHILD" has taught me that if we really want peace, there's still hope for it. If we tried, maybe our world could learn different ways of life, and how to be friends. We also can hope that the nuclear bomb will NEVER be used. I feel that if everybody in the world saw this play, they might give "peace" a second thought!"*

Kim

*"As a teenager in the 80's I'm usually very wrapped up in my own personal world - that is, myself, my family and friends, and what I'm going to do on my summer vacation. My involvement with "PEACE CHILD", however, has changed my perception of life. A sense of reality hit me. Forget planning for the summer, what about tomorrow. We live on a planet that could be destroyed instantly, without any warning. We need to live for each day and to work so we can see future days together in peace."*

Michael

*"Peace is defined in the dictionary as: 'a state of quiet and calm, especially public quiet and security. I hope we have this security some day, so that hopefully - possibly soon - we have a "Peace Day"*

Debra

*In my opinion I don't think anything that can destroy the world can protect anyone... No one owns this earth. What right does anyone have to try to destroy it? We children have as much right to live as they do. I feel that if we work hard together we can change the fantasy "PEACE CHILD" into a reality."*

Rhonda



Look at the quotes above! Back then, it was much less common for teachers to ask children what they think – and, of course, when Peace Child did – the flood gates opened, and torrents of advice and

opinions flowed into the play. Sometimes – this was overdone, as in a famous performance in Ojai, California – where most of the cast spent the 2nd Act in floods of tears as they shared and improvised their opinions on peace, and how to create it. But if the children and their producers felt it appropriate for their community, that was enough: it wasn't for us, the authors and composers, to tell them what was good for them.



*Theatre of All Possibilities – Peace Child Show – 1985 (Dharaj Maxfield with the Top Hat!)*

### **Chapters emerge: –**

We hadn't seen this coming – but all of a sudden, Peace Child Chapters were emerging across the USA. Rochester, Santa Cruz, York Pennsylvania, TWO in Los Angeles!! It was amazing. And some – like the [Theatre of All Possibilities in Santa Cruz](#) were touring their shows, just as successfully as we were doing in Washington DC. Dharaj Maxfield had seen the show at the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco – and realised that the goals of his Theatre of All Possibilities were precisely aligned with those of Peace Child. We were so fortunate that we had his talents – and those of his great theatre company – to advance the Peace Child process and message up and down the West Coast. They also started a tradition –adopted by several other chapters – of celebrating the [UN's International Day of Peace](#). (21<sup>st</sup> September)

This idea was adopted by several other chapters and was developed by other organisations like Peace One Day and Pathways to Peace into fully-fledged movements. Of course, the original inspiration for Peace Day came from Bernard Benson's *Peace Book* and David Gordon's *Peace Day* song which opens every *Peace Child* show. Other important chapters from which we have materials are the [Minnesota one](#) and the [Toronto Chapter](#). If any other chapters have archive material that they would like to be archived on this website, please send it to me: [david@peacechild.org](mailto:david@peacechild.org)

### **The Festival Shows – 1985: –**

I had been commuting back and forth to Moscow since 1983 – establishing connections with the authorities, artists and theatre people – massively helped by citizen diplomats like Cynthia Lazaroff, Anya Kucharev, Vladimir Posner, Misha Shevelov, Stas Namin and others. Together, we had hatched a plot to bring a US cast over to do a joint Soviet-American show as part of the Moscow World Youth Festival – a deeply socialist event which brought young people together from all over the world to celebrate international socialism!

In order to balance the Communist colouring with which our involvement in the Moscow Festival would inevitably brand us, especially in the USA, our US directors encouraged us to send a Peace Child delegation to the Jamfest Festival of the Arts the US State Dept. was co-hosting in Kingston, Jamaica. Here's our report of that event:

# JAMFEST85

## WORLD YOUTH FESTIVAL OF ARTS KINGSTON, JAMAICA

Gritting her teeth, National Administrator, Lucia Effros, concedes: "On balance, I think it was worthwhile; but the trip was not without a good share of frustration . . ."

Lucia had assembled a crack team of Peace Child singers from Washington DC to create a Peace Child presence at JAMFEST 85 — A World Youth Festival of Arts, held to mark the International Year of Youth and timed to coincide with a major International Youth Conference in Kingston, Jamaica. Both conference and Jamfest had been dogged by bad press, a result of not-so-covert USIA financial support and poor organization ("Jamaica was all about waiting for busses that didn't come," said one of the Peace Child team.)

Over seven days, the seven-person group gave seven performances to about five thousand young people. The performances were at the National Gallery of Art, the Prime Minister's Residence, and International 4-H Club Celebration, and three high schools. The pulsating gospel rhythms of "I BELIEVE" and the high falsetto wails of "MILITARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX" made the Peace Child group known and recognized throughout Kingston. "We definitely made our presence felt in Jamaica," said Lucia, "We were forever being recognized and asked to perform in airports, cafeterias, on beaches. At our final performance, the audience began to whoop their applause as soon as we were announced. They certainly got the message."

The group stayed in a convent with some German and Nigerian entertainers: both groups were anxious to have the Peace Child troupe visit their countries, and many people were anxious to know more about "PEACE CHILD" and how it could be brought to their countries. Many addresses were exchanged and intercultural bonds established.

Summing up, Lucia feels, "Our participation in the Festival was especially important because we presented a message of friendship and co-operation between children of the USA and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union—indeed all socialist nations—were conspicuous by their absence from the Festival despite its theme of "participation, development and peace." They had been deliberately excluded, and it was upsetting to see anti-communist slogans daubed on the walls in Kingston.

"Originally, this had made us hesitant: our message is about *all* children joining together to lead the world to peace. We made the decision to go because we felt that this message needed to be there; to be shared, - to be sung out joyfully, just as it will be sung at the World Youth Festival in Moscow later this summer. It is my hope and dream that "PEACE CHILD" will be heard and sung in ALL nations, in ALL languages, - that we will assist in breaking down, not maintaining the barriers that divide us, so that together we can create a world that resolves its differences by co-operative, peaceful means without the threat of nuclear violence.

"To this end, I believe JAMFEST 85 was a good initial step for us into the broad international arena."

Both were propaganda exercises, but both would bring Peace Child to the world's stage and, in the case of the USSR, fulfil the goal which – since our inception in 1981, we had dreamed of doing. However, we had no intention of parroting their politics – just making an appeal for Peace. And they seemed ready to accommodate us – and even planned a tour for us to different stadia around Moscow, and to Artek in the Crimea. We rehearsed the Americans at a Field Centre across the street from the US President's retreat at Camp David – an appropriate location, we thought, as it was close to where Jimmy Carter had agreed the Camp David accords. We then did a performance for DC Audiences at St Mark's church on Capitol Hill – a Video of which still exists. See Here: ([link to video 3](#))



When we got to Moscow, we incorporated the Russian children into the show. Steve Riffkin and the Russian Band learned the songs – and introduced some new ones, particularly "*Mwi Zhelayem Schastya Yam*" (We wish you happiness) – which the cast sang and recorded for Stas's Festival Album – along with *I have a Vision* and *Mr President* with the Leningrad Philharmonic! We ended up performing the show in front of legendary Russian poets, Yevgeny Yevtushenko and Andrei Voznesensky at the famous Natalia Sats Children's Theatre. Natalia welcomed us personally – and, when Gorbachev had his big Glasnost Assembly with Yoko Ono, Norman Mailer and the rest, she invited me to come as her guest as a pioneer of Children's Theatre. This was an astonishing privilege from the lady to whom Prokofiev dedicated his masterpiece, *Peter and the Wolf*.



Rosey Woollcombe, Natalia Sats and David Woollcombe – with a picture of Lenin in the Background

As I wrote in the newsletter: “The most thrilling part for me was that it was all so normal. Though, in many ways, children and musicians from the USA and the USSR walking out on stage together was as unlikely as children walking on the moon together, when it came down to it – they all learned their lines, rehearsed their moves, sang their parts and had a great time together on and off the stage.”

The Russians audiences LOVED Peace Child and its songs – nowhere more surprisingly than at the Olympic Stadium when Sasha and Gwen performed the lyrical “*I have a Vision*” at the end of a punk rock concert by the German band, the Scorpions. I watched the punk rock audience rocking out to every Scorpions’ song and feared that they would boo Gwen and Sasha off the stage. I couldn’t have been more wrong: they listened, spell-bound, tears in their eyes as the heavily pregnant Gwen sang her heart out – with Sasha supporting her with his powerful baritone. The whole audience stood as one at the end and cheered for fully ten minutes.

“I felt excited and honoured,” said Gwen Ross – whose nerves and morning sickness evaporated as waves of love and admiration flooded over her from the wildly appreciative young audience.



It was while we were in Artek that we heard the dreadful news that Samantha Smith and her father had been killed in an air crash. Samantha was a figurehead for Peace Child: she had written to Chairman Andropov, asking him why he was planning to blow her, and all her friends, off the face of the planet. Andropov replied, and took the precaution of copying his reply into ABC, NBC, CBS and all other media channels in the USA. There was a collective harrumph from the US establishment – which the Soviets gleefully exploited by inviting Samantha to the USSR and showing her a great time with other Soviet children in Moscow, St Petersburg and Artek. When she died so tragically, of course, the Soviets wanted to do a ‘Telemost’ – which is what the Russians had been doing to bring together women’s groups, business people and other sectors of society. This paved the way for the Landmark [Peace Child / PBS Space Bridge](#) of December 2nd 1985.

## Royal Albert Hall Peace Day Concert – October 1985:

As though we didn't have enough to do, we + the wonderful organising Team from the Ockendon Venture(below), took on the management of the UN Year of Peace Launch Event in the Albert Hall.



*Eirwen Harbottle, David Gordon, Oliver Hall, Roger Daniel, Rosey Simonds & Diana Haydon*



*Calvin Samuel and Faruza Balk – star of Wizard of Oz*

## **United Nations Peace Day Festival Royal Albert Hall, London, September 17th 1985**



1 - Bob Geldof, founder 'Live Aid'; 2 - Fairuza Balk & Calvin Samuel in "Peace Child"; 3 - Sir Shridath Ramphal; 4 - Heritage Ballet; 5 - Environmentalist David Bellamy; 6 - Ralph McTell; 7 - Children's Chorus; 8 - Kodo; 9 - Top of the Bill, Chris de Burgh.

This was the biggest, most star-laden event that the Peace Child team has ever attempted anywhere in the world. A 560-voice children's chorus was gathered from all over England, including representatives of 40 national embassies, to sing "Peace Child" songs; star of Walt Disney's "Return to Oz," Fairuza Balk, was engaged to play Katya in an extract from "Peace Child"; singing stars, Ralph McTell and Chris de Burgh; the BBC's environmental protection spokesman, David Bellamy; founder of Live Aid, Bob Geldof; Commonwealth Secretary General, Sir Shridath Ramphal; two live Dance Companies, and the extraordinary Kodo Drum Group from Japan—all came together to launch a new concept for the word 'Peace' as Britain

moves toward the UN Year of Peace in 1986—a concept of 'Peace' in its broadest, widest sense; "Peace that is sourced in the energy of human love and compassion," said the late Joyce Pearce, "an energy far stronger than the nuclear energy we fear so greatly." Joyce, founder and director of the Ockendon Venture, conceived the original vision for the Festival, though tragically she died in July before she could see it fulfilled.

But fulfilled it was! The Albert Hall was packed to capacity, and the audience was moved and enthused by the varied show, seamlessly put together by producers David Woollcombe and David Gordon, ably assisted by a small but dedicated team of volunteers from the Peace Child Charitable Trust,

the Center for International Peace-Building, the Ockendon Venture and the UN University of Peace. But amid all the power and pyrotechnics of Kodo and the pop stars, perhaps the most powerful moment was when a handful of the youngest children from the chorus, some in their national costumes, sat with Jerry Jampolsky and Diane Cirincione (co-directors of Children as Teachers of Peace), and shared their ideas about the priorities required for a peaceful world. Their tiny figures in the heart of that huge arena, watched intently and at times applauded by the vast audience, represented the essence of Peace Child—children of different nations speaking straight from the heart about their hopes and yearnings for peace.

It was an extraordinary event – as the report above shows. The Kodo Drummers from Japan were electrifying, and Sonny Ramphal, S-G of the Commonwealth gave the speech of the evening, winning applause for practically every line he spoke. Sadly, the video made of the event appears to have vanished – but we have [the programme](#). It paved the way for the even bigger challenges of the Moscow-Minneapolis Space Bridge and the breakthrough US-Soviet Tour coming up the following year. All three helped Peace Child win the UN’s prestigious Peace Messenger award the following year.

### **Soviet-American Space Bridge, December 1985:**

With Natasha now 9-months old, we took the decision to return to the USA where we had been invited to do a production in beautiful Santa Barbara at the Lobero Theatre. Steve Rifkin, who had earned his spurs doing both the San Francisco show and the 1985 Soviet Festival show, agreed to MD.

Before that, there was the small matter of the US-Soviet Space Bridge – for which we had signed a contract to do between WCCO-Minneapolis and Gosteleradio in Moscow. The deal had been brokered by the wonderful David Speer, of Padilla & Speer – Minneapolis’s premier PR Agency. Dear David, now sadly departed, shouldered the entire financial burden of producing the show and bringing to it the best PR and news coverage Peace Child had ever had. We did it at the famous Minneapolis Children’s Theatre linking to a studio in Moscow – and, under the skilful management of Kim Spencer and Evelyn Messenger, the link up was flawless – especially the moment when a Soviet and American child, linked on a blue-screen image, reached out, touched hands – and sang “Reach Out for a Star!”



*David & John Denver discuss the Script*



*Vlad Posner & Pavel do sound checks in Moscow*



*John Denver talks to the Press afterwards*

But the most remarkable thing about it was the presence of John Denver. The American cast members had rehearsed at a farm some 100 miles north of the city. And – when it came to drive back the night before the show, it was snowing heavily. We worried that we were not going to make it back on the Freeway – and that our entire cast would freeze to death in a snow-drift! Much worse – how on earth was John Denver going to fly in from Aspen – with the Airports all closed to commercial traffic? Sure enough, in the morning, we had a message from Denver’s office saying that there were problems landing in Minneapolis – but that, as it was a crystal-clear morning, he was still hoping to fly in. And fly in he did – arriving on stage at the Children’s Theatre about 3-minutes before the link was due to go live. No time for rehearsal – Nothing. Just go for it – and, supreme professional that he was, he was word perfect – and wonderful. And, at the end, he sat amongst the American kids and chatted about his beliefs on camera. It was a deeply moving moment.

On Christmas Day 1985, the Space Bridge was broadcast nationwide on the PBS network – garnering an audience of millions. It didn’t raise the millions of dollars that we’d hoped – but everyone said that we were bad about asking for the funds. It was true – we were always lousy fund-raisers. But we kept working – and surviving, and affording the endless trips to Moscow.

Moscow-Minneapolis Children’s Space Bridge – [Short-Form Video](#)

### **Lobero, Santa Barbara – 1986:**



Christmas 1985 – with our new baby girl, and our eyrie up in Painted Cave on the hill above Santa Barbara, was gorgeous. The photographs show the staggeringly beautiful position, looking down over green hills to the Pacific. It was a magical place to be – but hard work to cast and produce in such a laid

back town. We did so with considerable assistance from local troubadour, Chic Streetman. Chic's wonderful *Peace in the Heart* song – a canon in 7 languages, became a staple of the *Peace Child* shows for ever after. It is a superb collective experience singing for peace in different languages all at the same time.



Chic Streetman



Steve Riffkin came down from San Francisco to direct the music, and two new friends from the Space Bridge, Barbara and Howard Katz, flew in for the show. [Lobero Programme](#). As ever, Rosey, produced the show, balancing Natasha on her hip as she made phone calls from a wall phone in the Kitchen in Painted Cave. The person from whom we'd rented the house in Painted Cave came back just after we'd done the show and – as we hadn't got anywhere else to go – we moved into a temporary home, first in the Trout Hatchery, then in Goleta close to where Alexander was going to school.



The Lobero Finale

Meanwhile, I was commuting back and forth to Moscow as we now had the possibility of a US-Soviet Tour to bring the first soviet youth and rock band to the USA on a Youth Cultural Exchange to do *Peace Child*. Laurie Tucker had issued the invitation on the Space Bridge and, though the Soviets had cut the invitation from their broadcast – the fact that the show was repeated 7 times on Soviet Television, showed the Soviet authorities just what a fine propaganda tool they had in *Peace Child*.

Still – the bureaucratic constraints to allowing Soviet children to tour a 'decadent western musical' to the USA remained formidable. It took the combined energies and creativity of Stas, myself, Vlad Posner and many others to figure out how we could do it. The key was to find a sponsor who was not part of the government. The International Trade Center was independent and set up to promote global trade – for which peace was a necessary pre-condition. So, if they wanted to promote a Soviet-American peace musical to boost trade, there was, in theory, nothing the government or communist party could do to stop them. Also – in the era of glasnost and perestroika which was convulsing the arthritic Soviet bureaucracy

– something like the *Peace Child* exchange programme was the flavour of the month – supported at the highest levels. Even so – as you will read – it was touch and go up to the last moment.

As well as trying to produce the show in Santa Barbara, navigate the resistant authorities in Moscow, raise funds for the tour and keep our young family together, I was also working to jolly along the 12 x tour hosts in the USA and Canada whom we needed to host our performances. A HUGE job for them, and us. We hired a tour manager, Michael Lindeman, who scored an early success by raising \$100,000 from Steve Wozniak – co-founder of Apple Computers. He helped enormously – but the faith of the hundreds of American men and women who supported the tour – which I was not at all sure it would ever happen – was extraordinary!! We were used to being blessed with Miracles in Peace Child – but in planning the 1986 summer tour, I felt we were stretching the powers of the Almighty perhaps a step too far!

## **OUR FINEST HOUR – Summer 1986:**

The whole story of the 1986 breakthrough tour, written up from my diaries of the whole experience + the funding proposal, the press reports, some of the thousands of photographs that were taken during it, can be found [here](#). More photographs can be found [here](#). The experience of the tour was distilled in this [13-minute documentary](#) which was shown, endlessly, throughout the USA and Soviet Union to drum up support for the subsequent tours – about 100 of which were organised between 1987 and 1994. Most of them used a variant of the **Tour Script** written for the 1986 tour – improved and adapted for the different provinces in Russia which our tours visited.



The Archive and the Video will give you a sense of the joy and sense of achievement we all drew from the Tour – and what follows is just a brief impression of the story that convulsed our lives for ever after. It was the FIRST Soviet-American youth musical; it was the FIRST time a Soviet rock group had toured the USA. It was the FIRST US-Soviet reciprocal Youth Exchange – an effort that every one from the Scouts to the American Field Service had been trying to pull off for years; and it did set up the Peace Child Foundation as the world's premiere youth / cultural exchange body dedicated to furthering people-to-people ties with the USSR. But most of all, we wanted to bring down the Iron Curtain which had disfigured relations between East and West for far too long. And faced with the joy and smiles of children – that ridiculous Iron Curtain melted away!

July 1986 found me in Moscow waiting for the US Cast to arrive and suffering from the frustrations of not being able to phone or e-mail any one in the USA. Even fax was challenging! And there were almost no computers in Moscow! So – everything was being typed up on my Mac Classic or portable typewriter! We had found a Russian cast, and the Americans were set to join them on the Friday night to co-create a show!

The Soviet Ministry of Culture had gotten in on the act – not in itself a bad thing as they could, if they wished, smooth several of the government obstacles that would stand in our way. But – it rather gave the lie to our show being a 'cultural promotion for the Trade Centre!' The Minister of Culture was supposed

to see the show on the Thursday – giving us only five and a half days to write and rehearse, the entire 2-hour musical. And in Russian!! With only one Russian-speaking American in the Cast!

But then North-west Airlines let us down – with not one but TWO broken planes, meaning the US kids did not get to Moscow until late on the Sunday night, dog-tired having had to take a bus from London to Cardiff to get a flight to Moscow at all, having missed their connection in London. That gave us just 3 and a half days to prepare the musical.

We had the rough plan for the show – but it needed a lot of fleshing out. And we had two directors – myself and Vladimir Alenikov, and a choreographer, Vlad Druzinin, who was not good under pressure. And pressure did not come much greater than getting a 2-act musical up and running in 3 days!

But the kids refused to see the problem: they got up bright as buttons on the Monday morning, and dived right in to a read-through, vocal warm-ups, and improvisations of the scenes that needed re-writing. Supported by an amazing team of Steve Riffkin, Tony Booker, and Stas himself, they pulled together all but one scene of the show, mostly in Russian, ready for 14.00 Thursday.

Spot on time, the Soviet Minister of Culture turned up. He was a bullet-headed man, with a deeply-tanned bald head and leathery expression. He looked as though the last thing he wanted to be doing was watching a children's musical. But – a job's a job – and he sat patiently waiting for the show to begin. And, as it played out, his face melted. When it was over, there were tears in his eyes as he came on stage and hugged and congratulated the kids. It was only later that we learned that he had an autistic child whom he'd cared for most of his life as a single parent: his love for children was the greatest gift of his life. A gift for us too, as he approved the tour – allowing us to travel to Ulyanovsk and Artek.

The tour itself is a blur in my memory: little snippets stand out. First – we all realised that we needed a better choreographer than the one we had – so we called up Mike Malone, the excellent choreographer of the original Kennedy Center show. And we got him a visa and a flight, but he couldn't join us until Artek. So – he had to get a train from Moscow to Simferopol, and then a taxi to a bus-stop in Yalta – where I was supposed to meet him. And – being an African-American in the USSR was not a comfortable experience – and the lack of mobile phones or any way of reaching him easily was a nightmare. So when I came to the bus stop in a taxi at the appointed hour and found Mike, cowering in a door way, waiting for me – I was more relieved than I'd ever been that whole tour. So was he!



*Mike Malone, Tony Booker and members of the Cast in Yalta, Crimea*

Mike transformed the show – disciplining the whole cast, and tightening up the music and the dialogue. By the time we did our final show in Moscow, it was not half bad – and, heading out to the USA, we felt buoyant and confident we had a good show. The business of getting exit visas from the USSR, transit visas through the UK, and entry visas to the USA was a complete nightmare – and we didn't know until the last minute who would get them. (*Stas and Ludmilla did; Alenikov and Druzinin didn't – crazy unfair! But that's the USSR*) All that – and booking 21 flights for each person around the USA was a logistical horror story – but, somehow, we did it. And we got on the plane, travelled to London, had a great night out in London climbing on the lions in Trafalgar Square and arrived in York Pennsylvania, all set to conquer America.



York PA was a perfect place to start a tour. The Russians loved it – a small town on the edge of the Amish country with lovely people like Bill Schintz, the local photographer to welcome them. An abiding memory is of the Russians and Americans dancing wildly to “YMCA!” – and the po-faced Russian Ministry man doing the ‘Funky Chicken’ with a fluffy chicken on his head. Slava, one of the young Russian cast members was asked on a TV interview in California which his favourite city had been on the tour: “York,” he said. “Oh, you mean New York...” said the interviewer. “No – York Pennsylvania. That was the best city...” As the slogan says: “America starts in Pennsylvania” – and nowhere was that more true than our own, and the Russians’ experience in York. It is seared on our memories as a happy, happy place.

We had three days to re-write and rehearse the show in English – but that was easier as most of the Russians spoke pretty decent English. And Mike was working in his mother tongue – so he rose to the occasion brilliantly, tightening up the choreography – making numbers like Fireball and Reach Out sensational. And the Russian music was delightful – the Siberian folk songs sung by Sasha Malinin, and Eta Musica sung by the lovely story-teller, Ludmila Senchina, affirmed the beauty of the Russian Culture.

We have a recording of the [whole show from the Wilton Theatre, Los Angeles](#). It is introduced by US talk show host, Casey Kasem, Stas and myself and, though just a single camera shoot – you will get a sense of the vibrancy of the music, and the passion of the young performers. They knew they were making history and it shows in their commitment.

It also reflects a golden moment, not just in Peace Child’s, but also in World History. This was the first “Soviet-American youth / cultural exchange” since the Russian Revolution of 1917. For most of us, that phrase would conjure up a vision of an earnest seminar of young academics, or jolly games at a New England Summer camp, or po-faced musicians playing classical music. The US State Department would have preferred us to do any of those things: Staff were told NOT to attend our final show in Washington DC – as we had dared to prey on their territory and talk about nuclear disarmament. We did talk about that because both the Russians and American youth WANTED to talk about that: this was their show – and they had a great time together doing it, singing and dancing their hearts out in a story that showed their commitment to a future of peace and co-operation. What’s sad is to reflect that now – nearly 40 years on – we are no closer to the peace we created on stage between Russian and American youth. The need for peace and co-operation is possibly even more necessary than it was then back.

*[Which is why the work of Peace Child is never done! See our new 2024 [Peace Child](#) story here.]*



*The Woollcombes new home in Poplar Court, Falls Church, Virginia*

## **Falls Church, Virginia:**

Another wrinkle in the 1986 tour was that Rosey and I bought a house during it in Falls Church VA. We didn't really have time for this – but it was important to have a home, so we pooled resources and made our commitment to staying in America by buying a house at 7326 Poplar Court, Falls Church, Virginia deep in the DC Suburbs, just inside the Beltway. Such was the pace of the life we were living, I'd viewed it, but Rosey had not: she collected the key and moved in without ever having seen it before!



## **There was blood....**

I should also mention the blood that I shed for this first Soviet-American Youth Exchange: one morning in the Trade Center Hotel, I was hurrying along an upper gallery to a meeting. The Atrium has a very elaborate clock with a cock that emerges to crow on the hour. That morning, I happened to be passing as it struck. I was transfixed seeing the mechanism in action for the first time – so I stopped looking where I was going and slammed into one of the lampstands on the balustrade. Blood poured from my forehead! Steve, who was with me, was concerned to call an ambulance – but I was determined to get to my meeting so, jamming a handkerchief to my forehead, I arrived, bloodied but unbowed, and carried on my effort to get the 1st Soviet-American Youth / Cultural exchange out of the starting gate.

## **Endorsements & Support Letters:**

We were encouraged that so many former Presidents, Senators, NGOs and individuals cheered us on from the side lines. You can read some of the letters [here](#) – and you'll get a sense of how many Americans wanted Peace Child to succeed. Our children were carrying the hopes and dreams of millions of Americans – none more so than the children themselves.

## **1986 / 1987:**

Away from the excitement of the Soviet-American tours, Peace Child shows were being produced across the USA – in practically every state it seemed. Chapters were springing up, and Peace Child choirs singing David Gordon's lovely songs were a feature of Peace Marches and religious gatherings almost everywhere. Two playbills give a sense of the kinds of productions that were typical:

Eltham, [Massachusetts Show](#) and [Des Moines, Idaho](#).

Both were started by schools wanting off with a show then, finding it so popular, they were able to take it around to communities and local chorales eager to sing along with the choruses to the songs about Peace and Love. A similar phenomenon started in Green Bay, Wisconsin Show – 1987 – but this one ran and ran, for months. They started doing three shows, then every month, they'd write to us telling us of other performances they'd given at schools, universities, churches and synagogues around the great state of Wisconsin! At last count, they had done about 50 shows. *(If any one has information about this, or any other domestic US tour done in the 1980s, please send me – [david@peacechild.org](mailto:david@peacechild.org) – information for this archive.)*

Peace Child rode the wave of Gorbachev's re-invention of the USSR as a place of openness and reconstruction ('glasnost & perestroika.') It was, indeed, "Morning again in American-Soviet" relations. The Meeting in Reyjavik and the START nuclear agreements seemed to mirror the détente we were witnessing between the children on Peace Child stages – and between Peace Child and its American audiences. Peace Child became iconic for that generation of Americans.

## **Theatre of All Possibilities, Santa Cruz Show – 1987:**

Dharaj Maxfield followed up his West Coast tour in 1985 / 86 with a Northern California Soviet-American Tour – bringing Soviet kids to enjoy life and create a show in the Santa Cruz mountains above Silicon Valley. As he wrote in the Playbill for the Soviet American Tour: *“The dream of Peace Child is happening – you will see it take place before you tonight. Children from “Enemy” nations are becoming friends, learning about each other, and cooperating on a creative venture to grasp for that elusive thing called ‘peace’ and seeking to make it a tangible experience in our lives. These peacemakers are becoming the new leaders of our world, growing up with the knowledge of their individual contribution and importance to the world as a whole.”* Check out the playbill he forwarded to the Office.

## **East Coast Tour – 1988:**

I have to say that, by 1988, I was getting a bit sick of the “Soviet-American” focus: the world was bigger than the two super-powers – and I was longing to introduce new characters, new nationalities into our stories. So – in setting up the East Coast tour, we actively recruited, along with Russian stalwarts from the '86 tour, Ella Vituk and Slava, Japanese, Dutch, Polish, Belgian, Australian, Irish and Papua-New Guinean young people – who sang a song, DmBga, which we all came to love.



And we were richly rewarded: Miki, our Japanese cast member, organised 7 International shows in her home town of Hiroshima, mostly with Japanese students – but also with visitors from other countries. The Polish cast member, Pavel Sydor, rewarded us with one of the best songs ever contributed to Peace Child, the lovely *“We want this world to survive for ever.”* And – through Amber, the Dutch girl who played the lead, we found, in her father Ludo, a friend who has stayed with us ever since. And he was a major reason for us moving to The Netherlands a year later.

But the show was .... Interesting. We did it first in Harrisburg PA – because we had a place to rehearse there. And it really, really did NOT work. I was scrawling all over my note pad on the first night, “THIS is SHIIITTTTTEE!!!!” – and it really was. A horrible, horrible show – that didn’t work on so many levels.

After the show, Steve and I – and some key cast members, sat round looking at each other. This had never happened before: a show that really did not hang together. Drastic surgery was needed – and we agreed to meet the cast the next morning for the notes – and the cuts, and the re-writes, and the re-ordering. It was brutal – but everyone knew that it had to be done. David Gordon never agreed with the dictum that: *“Peace Child is more a process than a performance...”* – and, in Harrisburg, he couldn’t have been more right: if the process leads to a terrible performance, dump the process. The cast agreed – and so we started shaping the new show. In fact – it didn’t take much: to Steve and I, it was clear where things were going wrong. So we sorted them out – laid them on the cast, and in 48-hours, a brand new show emerged.



The next stop was Gettysburg – where we were scheduled to join a centenary celebration of the famous Civil War battle. First we had to do the show – and Ludo, Amber’s father, was there – beaming in the audience. He’d come all the way from Amsterdam to see his daughter – and, if she was as bad as she had been that first night in Harrisburg, I feared he would never speak to me again.

But it wasn’t! She was WONDERFUL!! The Peace Child magic worked again – and the show was as good in Gettysburg as it had been bad in Harrisburg. Amazing what you can do with wonderfully flexible kids, and brutally firm directors cutting the crap bits. It was really a wonderful show – and it played well in Pittsburgh, Chautauqua, Baltimore and all the other towns and cities we took it to. And the March for the centenary of Gettysburg was wonderful too – with the only slight embarrassment that the best voice we had to sing the US National Anthem was a Canadian. But she looked lovely – and Carl Sagan, also on the platform, congratulated her warmly. Dear Ann Cummings: her mother was to lead the Toronto-Volgograd show – but her presence in that magnificently talented cast enriched us hugely.

I loved this show – for several reasons. First it came back from the dead; second, the MD, Craig Lindvahl – played all the music on an Apple computer; third – we had actual Papua New Guineans acting out the story of the central *Peace Child* myth. And Fourth because we had the amazingly talented Pavel – who not only composed one of Peace Child’s best songs. He also sat down and played the 2nd Movement of Beethoven’s 3rd Piano Concerto in the interval of one show. He was that kind of talent.

And the cast formed such close bonds: there were tears and fears about separating from each other even when we got to Chautauqua – and there were three more shows to go after that. But the hugs and the weeping was all part of the closeness we felt for and with each other. Brilliant! East Coast Tour



### **Central America Show:**

We did one of the loveliest *Peace Child* shows ever at the Sidwell Friends theatre: it was our first show about something totally other than the US-Soviet relationship. It centred on the civil wars of Central America – and was about some Americans who went there on a work camp, and about a relationship that developed between a young American girl and a Central American soldier – who got killed. It was lovely doing it around the corner from where we lived with the wonderful Lib Segal – a quaker who’d supported *Peace Child* since the first Kennedy Center show. She welcomed many of the cast into her home – including the wonderful Melissa Anderson and Jamie Lopez from the ’86 tour, Steve Riffkin and his friend, Jimmy Reitzel – who did some of the most lovely guitar accompaniments for the *Peace Child* songs. Beautiful! And Rachel Riddle narrated the Video about it. One of the best things was a young Nicaraguan who had never seen snow before: her father was an American – and very knowledgeable about the politics of Central America – and helped a lot with the development of the script.



This is surely one of the weirdest photos in the entire Peace Child History – Daniel Ortega, the revolutionary leader of Nicaragua and film star, Kris Kristofferson with long-time Peace Child supporter and Trustee, Neil Biddle. She had always wanted to go and find out what was happening in Central America. So – as preparation for our Tour, I went with her. And somehow – we got to have lunch with the great revolutionary! I don't remember much about the meal except that, Castro-like, Ortega talked non-stop for about 4 hours as the translators struggled to interpret his ramblings to Kris, Neil and me! But it was a fascinating insight into the revolutionary fervour, and anti-American / Anti-capitalism that drove so much of the politics of Central America.

I had had such a good time developing this show and learned so much about the history and politics of the region, I really didn't want any one else to direct the first Central American tour. Dharaj Maxfield was set to direct it – and he might have done a better job. But – having done so much work on the DC-based pilot show, I really didn't want to give it all away. Big mistake, given the enormous hassles, visa problems, nightmare of doing it first in Spanish, then in English... It was a nightmare I could probably have done without, especially after the stress of the East Coast tour.

But – the family, Rosey, Alexander and Natasha were all quite keen to go to Costa Rica, so we set out en famille on what was to be a tour of mixed blessings. Far from being a tropical paradise, it rained almost every day we were in Costa Rica. We stayed up in the mountains outside San José in a hostel type of place with very limited washing facilities. The Costa Rican co-director was not an easy person to work with. I fear I am not either – but the relationship was never positive, and thus difficulties and disagreements became fairly insuperable. She complained about the International Cast's 'bad Spanish' – hardly surprising given that none of them were fluent Spanish speakers. For me, it became a question of getting through the days, getting the production over with – and trying to transform it into a half-decent English Language show by the time we got to San Francisco.

The best thing about the show were the new songs composed by Walter Flores Mora, a friend of the musical director, Amelia Barquera. "Somos Futuro" and others were absolute favourites – and if any one has recordings of them, please send us copies so that we can mount them on this webpage. [Central America Show Tour](#)

By a series of miracles, mostly coordinated by Rosey, we got the entire cast to the USA and mounted a great show in Berkeley, and then in Santa Cruz and Palo Alto. We also encountered, for the first time, the Peace Monster syndrome. One of our young cast members was somewhat over-empowered. One of the reasons was, perhaps, that she got into a relationship with one of the Costa Rican band members; another was that, unlike most of the US cast, she did speak pretty good Spanish. Whatever – she became a royal pain-in-the-ass, trying to force the whole cast to re-write the play in her way, and not taking “No!” for an answer.

She finally got her come-uppance in Santa Cruz where, without consulting me, she decided to add a song that she thought would be a good end to a scene. She arranged with her boy-friend, the pianist, to play it – but omitted to tell the lighting director of her new cue. Thus – the black-out happened at the end of the scene, as per the cue-sheet, and the lights didn’t come back on until the start of the next scene. So – she sung her song in total darkness! – and the lighting director, one of many victims of her Peace Monster attitude, was not about to favour her with a spotlight. Eventually, realising that she was never going to get her moment in the spotlight, she gave up and retreated from the stage. It was a cruel lesson to her – but one worth teaching because, as we found many times before and since, young people can be as cruel and venal and impolite as the rest of us. And when Peace Children become Peace Monsters, ways must be found to dis-empower them!



## **Teens On Stage**

This photograph of the Teens Onstage Peace Child was one of the most used, best loved of all our Peace Child stills. Featuring Laura Solomon – who was one of our greatest cast members, the cast also included Coleen Barry – one of the few Peace Child cast members who actually spoke Russian. Betty May, the

director, became a Peace Child obsessive – and did far more performances of the show at her theatre than she'd ever meant to. It was a good, competent, work-man-like show so – when she told me she wanted to take it to Geneva to do it at the UN there, I encouraged her. Sure enough, she raised the money and, as luck would have it, her cast were routed through London. St James Show

So – we invited her to do a show at St James Piccadilly where we managed to get a full-house to witness her scantily-clad cast dancing up and down the aisles of this famous old church. What happened at the Geneva show, history never really told us. But the cast had a wonderful time – and Betty said: “It was a three-hanky show.... Many tears were shed!” Peace Child does have that effect on audiences.

### **Toronto-Volgograd Tour – 1989:**

My sister used to live in Toronto so I have a special affection for the city, and was delighted when a Toronto chapter, under the guidance of Ilene Cummings, took root in the city. Ilene has an incredible family: I have already mentioned her daughter, Ann, who was such a significant part of the 1988 East Coast tour cast – but the whole family, the whole community in Toronto came together to make this one of the more wonderful, and unusual, tours and shows in Peace Child history: first, it was centred on two cities, Toronto and Volgograd; second it told an entirely new story – developed by the cast and production crew; and – third: it was immensely popular in both cities.



In her letter and the attached file of photographs and press clippings, you will get a sense of the story – and the excitement that the project generated in both cities. I have only one story to add which, to me, sums up the immense value of people-to-people connections and citizen diplomacy: Quite early on in the rehearsal process in Volgograd, one of the Canadian girls fell sick and had to be rushed into hospital. The doctors quickly diagnosed acute appendicitis – and urged the tour leaders to authorise an immediate appendectomy. The tour leaders were terrified of what a mad communist might do to their precious Canadian child – but, as luck would have it, her father was a doctor, so the English-speaking Russian surgeon suggested: “Why don’t I talk to him?” Mercifully, they were able to get a call through to Toronto and find the father at his surgery in Toronto. The two doctors spoke for less than two minutes on the phone, then the Toronto father asked for the phone to be given to the Tour Leader: “Of course,” he said, “Go ahead with the operation. This man knows exactly what he’s talking about it – and I trust him completely. He sounds like a superb surgeon and my daughter is very lucky to have him to do the operation...” So – it went ahead. The girl was fine, and after a few days, was out of hospital and back on stage with the rest of the cast members. At a professional level – like medicine – politics is not even

an issue. Doctors like them just get on with the job of healing people: why can't politicians bring the same intelligence and professionalism to their jobs?

## What is Peace Child For?

This is a question we agonize about even now – 40 years after we started the organisation! Very easy to quote our Mission Statement: “Empowering Young People” – but empowering them to do what? Since 2000, we have added the Gandhi aspiration: “Empowering Young People to Be the Change they want to see in the world...” I have often talked about “Empowering Young People to leave the world a better place than the one they were born into...” In the early days, it was all about ‘wanting to live’ – and delivering humanity from the scourge of war. Making Peace! (See Archived statements on ‘What we are about?’) But since we stopped doing the musical and started creating books and training programmes, Peace Child is much more about supporting and enabling young people to prepare themselves, and their peers, to live worthwhile lives – to espouse decent values, to care for each other – create jobs and livelihoods for each other. To me – this was the endless fascination of Peace Child: it was never a simple goal – looking after battered women, teaching children to read, protecting orphans. Peace Child always aspired to make the world a better place – and it’s slogans: “Youth-led Development” – “Building the Green Economy!” – “Harnessing the Arts in the Service of Peace” – “Empowering Young People” – point towards what may have been unrealistic aspirations, but aspirations that, none-the-less, are more important to youth than making war or making money.

## Peace Child People

I’ve mentioned many who had an impact on Peace Child’s development – but there are so many others: Josie Jordan, Canon Kenyon Wright, Danaan Parry, Lucia, my father, Frank & Florence Weisfeld, Steve Riffkin, Stas Namin, Vlad Posner, Dharaj, Lib Segal, Bill Schintz – and the performers – Susannah York, Jessy Dixon, Marco, Melissa, Bridget... But there were so many wonderful, wonderful people who put their hearts and souls and money into this effort. Some I have photographs of (below) – but many I do not: people like Vicki Lewin, Sandi Croan. Some are famous – some not. All were inspirations and engines of Peace Child’s development – and there were thousands of them. Without them, ALL of them, none of this incredible story would ever have happened. So – THANK YOU!!



Steve Riffkin



Norma



Linda Sorenson, Nadia, Rosey, Danaan



Lib Segal



Peter Seeger



Rupert Woollcombe, Frank Zappa, Stas Namin & me



Ludmilla & Peter Yarrow



Katz Family & Family Tour Group



Canon Kenyon Wright



Frank & Florence Weisfeld

## **International Outreach**

As word spread about Peace Child, we kept hearing of new shows happening in different parts of the world. Bendigo, Victoria, Australia – 100m north of Melbourne – was a hive of Peace Child activity, ([Peace Child Australia Flyer](#)) and a source of many wonderful Australians: Craig on the '88 East Coast Tour – the Central America and East European tours, all benefited from their participation. We also heard tell of a German translation – done in Basel – and another in Mumbai about one set in Kashmir about the Indo-Pakistani conflict, but we never got the scripts. We did get the Belgian Programme – with all the songs translated into French ([See here](#)). And we do have some information on the [Peace Child Argentina chapter](#) and some material from the [show in Wanganui, New Zealand](#). And – of course – we have some records and photos of Miki's [wonderful productions in Hiroshima, Japan](#).

A further development was the [Family Tour](#). Several parents asked us why it was only their children who should have all the fun – going to Russia, meeting great Russian rock stars, going to concerts, plays, performances etc. We did several of them. My father, Rupert Woollcombe, suddenly realised that I was not being a total wastrel, doing this 'Peace Stuff' – instead of following him into his lawyer's practice. Steve Riffkin's parents, the Katz's and the Matsers all came with their families to experience a taste of the Peace Child magic. It was the start of the tourist boom to the former Eastern Bloc....

Perhaps the most important international outreach was being done in Israel, where David Gordon had moved with his Israeli wife, Yael, and their daughter, Naomi. [Peace Child Israel](#) was the brainchild of a wonderful Israeli actress, Yael Drouyanoff, who saw in Peace Child an opportunity to bring together Israeli Arabs and Jews to workshop / improvise their fears about each other, and their different hopes for the future. With her relentless energy, she built Peace Child Israel into a robust component of the Israeli peace movement, which – in the 1980s and 1990s – was showing signs of making an impact. She died, tragically young, but Peace Child Israel lived on under the leadership of Melisse ??, until the prevailing attitudes, wall-building etc. starved it of funding and popular support.

## **Monkton Heathfield, UK International Show – 1990:**



Steve & Helen Elliott's 1990 international Peace Child production at the Monkton Heathfield School in the Summer of 1990 was one of the most prestigious, best-documented productions ever done. Performed first in Taunton, near the school, it was then taken to London where it was performed at the Shaw Theatre in the presence of Prince Edward, Jonathon Porritt and other celebrities.

The playbill with all its celebrity endorsements, the BBC documentary about the show, and the photographs – all testify to the immense power of the show, in particular, the extraordinary staging. It was visually magnificent, and the music, arranged by Julian Breeze, was also amazing.

It was a little unfortunate that the Shaw Theatre show fell on August 3rd – the day after Saddam Hussain invaded Kuwait, triggering the 1st Iraq war which was backed up by UN resolutions and thus, perhaps, a perfect example of a “just war”: the Taunton Peace Child show might have seen this coming – and made some script reference to it but it didn't. As it was, the experience sat some what oddly in a Post-Cold War, pre-Mid East conflagration – in which the search for Peace was somewhat out-of-place. However, the whole initiative gave rise to the building of the Tacchi Morris Peace Theatre in the grounds of the Monkton Heathfield school which goes from strength to strength. Peace Child is most proud to have given an impetus to this incredible development.

View the BBC Documentary – [here](#)

View the Playbill & File – [here](#)

## **Ireland Tour**

Many had asked us why we, as Brits, were so focussed on building peace between the USA and USSR – when a 700-year old battle had been tearing our people apart right on our own door-step in Northern Ireland. Fair point – but it took an American, Jennifer Reese, living in Cork to put together our first Ireland tour – which travelled an international cast from Cork through Dublin to Galway, Enniskillen and finally to Belfast. [Ireland Tour Programme](#). The ebullient Frank Buckley trained the singers and led the band with a musicality that only the Irish seem to possess, and the tour was a happy continuation of the first Irish participation in Peace Child – when Kiera O'Sullivan from Kerry joined the East Coast Tour and sung a beautiful song in Gaeltacht as an unaccompanied solo.



The 1992 Irish Tour was followed up by another International Programme that Rosey put together in Derry / Londonderry – with a grant from the European Commission's Kaleidoscope programme. Pauline Ross(?) put together a beautiful version of the play and, though no causal link could be proved, it was interesting that these two productions came at a time when John Hume and David Trimble were, with John Major, putting together the first outlines of the plan which became the Good Friday agreement – just as our show had foretold.

We'd had the experience by then of watching the US-Soviet Peace Child story come true with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. And no sooner had we done the Central American tour to Costa Rica and Nicaragua, the Escipoulas accords were signed by Oscar Arias and others bringing peace to that

region. And Steve Riffkin led a tour to South Africa just months before Nelson Mandela walked free and the scandal of apartheid was finally buried in that country.

Was there a pattern here? We like to think so: if enough people believe in peace, the ‘100th Monkey syndrome’ takes hold and our inner feelings become our outer realities. I fear that the reverse may also be true: I write this memoir at a time that Donald Trump is trashing the Iran Peace Deal – Israel is bombing Iran, Russian bombs are flattening Syrian cities and Saudi Arabia is perpetrating a genocide in Yemen with British and other weaponry. Some protest – but very few. Millions marched for their lives, and for Black Lives Matter, across the United States – but even there, no one seems to be listening.

Peace Child, with its core values of caring, selflessness and integrity – stands for everything that many current politicians do not. Which is why it is time to re-invent Peace Child – and bring back that amazing spirit that smashed down the Iron Curtain – and liberated millions from the scourge – or at least the threat – of catastrophic war.



At the same time as Peace Child was reaching out internationally, we were encouraged to reach in – and use the musical to solve some of the conflicts that were ever-present in our own, inner-city communities across the USA. City at Peace came about when a young, African-American girl from Rochester, New York told her Chapter president, “I now feel closer to my Russian friends, than I do to the white kids here in my own city...” Rosey was inspired by this – and put together a production team, led by Carlo Grossman, who, like Steve Riffkin, had emerged from the successful Kid’s Rights TV show. He, along with Rickey Payton and Rosey put together a cast of young people from the inner city and the Suburbs and toured the show to different schools and venues across the city. City @ Peace It demonstrated, yet again, what a great leveller and peace platform the stage is: in deepest South-West Washington, a 14-year old mother of two from the projects sang and danced on stage with Rockefeller’s grand-daughter – and to this day, I don’t know which was which.

Katie Christie took the concept and developed her own show and theatre company, Voices United, around City at Peace in Miami. A brilliant documentary was made about her, and her show, which you can see [here](#). After we left the USA, a City at Peace Foundation was set up and, for a time, promoted shows and workshops in many cities across America. In many ways, City at Peace was one of Peace Child’s most successful legacies.

## A Kremlin Interlude

As Glasnost took hold, and Mikhail Gorbachev was hailed as the “Man of the Century” – a huge reception was held at the Kremlin. The Kremlin leadership flew in icons of culture from all over the world. Norman Mailer and Yoko Ono came from the USA; a plane load of us were flown in – first class! I got to go because Natalia Sats invited me – as a representative of Children’s Theatre! I sat next to Graham Greene on the way home. Two other Peace Child founders, Michael and Eirwen Harbottle, were there for Generals for Peace, and Canon Kenyon Wright came representing Churches for Peace.



David



Kenyon Wright



Gorbachev



Yoko Ono & Raisa Gorbachev

It was a stellar gathering, memorable for Gorbachev’s speech in which he told us the solution to all the world’s problems was: “More socialism....” Slightly ironic, given that two short years later, his socialist empire would fall to be replaced by a coterie of some of the most rapacious capitalists the world has ever seen. But – they brought prosperity and middle-class comforts to millions of Russians in a way that socialism was never able to.

## Move to Europe

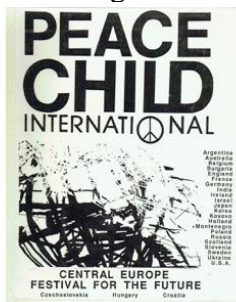
Rosey and I had never really planned the move to Europe. It happened because the wonderful Fred Matser invited us to come help start his Environmental Education Centre in the Netherlands: the “Milieubewustsein.” Fred was a property developer who, at the age of 40, had moved into philanthropy, supporting people like Gerry Jampolsky and the World Game project. Bringing us to Holland was a difficult move for the family: for a start, it meant a new language, new schools, new home – and a detaching from the people and places who had given birth to *Peace Child*, and given us such wonderful support and friendship. Rosey had just started on *City at Peace*, and wanted to help it develop. But she agreed: our children might benefit from being closer to their grand-parents and their cousins + getting an experience of living in Europe.

It was doubly difficult because, a few weeks after we moved – shifting all our stuff in a succession of flights! – I went back to manage the UN Peace Day Concert in New York. The first house we had was, apparently, built on a place that the Nazis used to execute prisoners during the 2nd World War – and Rosey was spooked by the place, especially when the 1st Hurricane Europe had experienced for decades swept through the flat landscape.

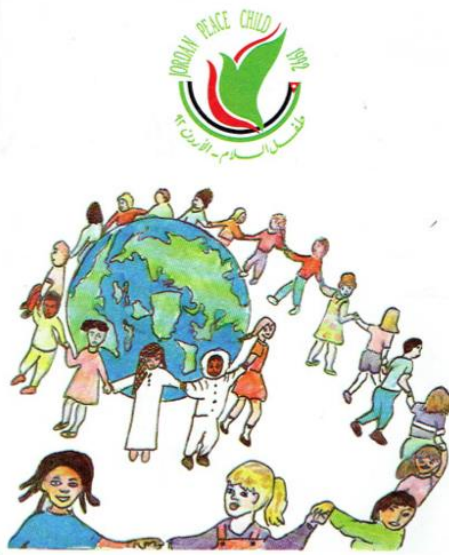
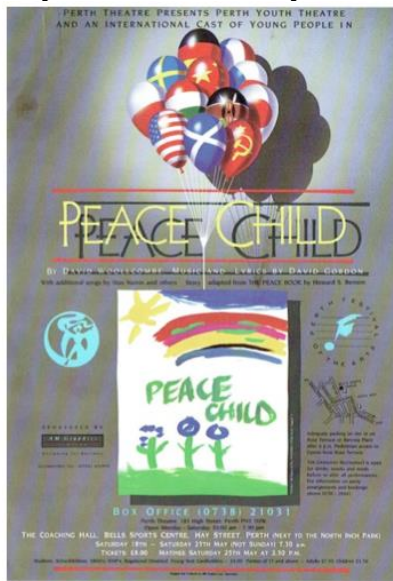


Things got better when we moved to our home in the woods and started producing the *Peace Child* show in Arnhem, Die Brug. This was an unusual show in that, I think, it was the only time that we produced a story that had an unhappy ending: the Dutch children were not about to be persuaded that things would turn out well. Rosey felt it was a very depressing *Peace Child*. I thought it was very honest.

More surprising stories were to come in the Central European Tour: the Arnhem show had happened while the Berlin Wall was coming down. We had some East Germans in the show – and they were understandably disturbed by the disappearance of their country, the DDR. The Central European Tour happened as the war was getting going in former Yugoslavia: Slovenia had already detached itself – and Croatia was on the point of doing the same. Bosnia was descending into chaos and bloodshed – and the young people we gathered in a castle in Trakorscan, Eastern Slovenia – were more compelled to seek peace than most other youth we’d encountered on the Peace Child journey. In the Czech Republic, still Czechoslovakia, Carlo Grossman was even more surprised to find out that the object of the children’s fury was their teachers: the show ended with the offending teachers being captured in a net on stage – and being drawn up into the fly tower – and left dangling! I don’t think they used any of David Gordon’s music in that show – but it did deliver an abiding image of a child dressed in white, emerging from the chaos on stage – a pristine *Peace Child*. Fascinating!



In Hungary, they decided that the *Peace Child* story was similar to the famous Hungarian fairy tale: *Csongor és Tünde* written by Mihály Vörösmarty. So they adapted that – and worked it into a strange set that looked like a globe. All three productions were extraordinary and novel takes on the *Peace Child* story, and an immensely valuable, if strange, experience for we, the Brits and Americans, involved.



## **Perth and Jordan – and back to the UK: Eastbourne**

In 1991, the Rev. Michael Hare Duke, inspired by my father, Rupert Woollcombe and a brief encounter with me, decided to produce *Peace Child* with the Scottish Churches in his home town of Perth. It, like the Monkton Heathfield production, was a joyous, international event – with some really good performances. I don't remember much about it – except that the Duke of Argyll and Crown Prince of Jordan were there – and it was almost like a state occasion! I then had to drive back to London through the night – which was all rather exhausting. But it was a landmark *Peace Child* show – our Scottish Premiere – and it earned some good press. ([Read More](#)). It also led, directly, to an International Production in Amman, Jordan – produced by the Crown Princess. This was a spectacular affair – with massed bands of bagpipers, vast choruses, and *Peace in the Heart* with Arabic verses added. Young people from across the world flocked to the show – and, to Rosey's eternal regret, only I went to see the show – travelling through Israel and across the Allenby Bridge to Amman (*a journey that could take just half an hour but which, with the border check points, takes most of a day!*) The Jordan show was another landmark event. It could have led to a whole new Peace Movement in the Middle East. But – by this time, I felt that the returns on *Peace Child*, the musical, were diminishing. And the priority of solving the Hot War between humanity and the environment were dominating my mind.

## **Eastbourne**

In 1992, we moved back to the UK. My parents had moved to Scotland, and wanted to sell their home near London – so we moved in and helped to sell it, while looking for a house to make the new Peace Child Headquarters. David Gordon had been doing great work with Peace Child Israel, and we'd just done the show in Jordan – so we thought: where would be a safe place to bring together the young people from Jordan and Peace Child Israel. Where better than the sleepy British seaside town of Eastbourne – where we had long time Peace Activist, Howard Kensett, who had always dreamed of producing *Peace Child* in his home town, ever since seeing it at the Royal Albert Hall in 1981. Rosey and Eirwen arranged with Howard who – at the age of 92, had just got married for a second time to a lady 5 years older than him! His energy amazed us all – and the fact that the production happened at all was entirely down to him.

The tension between the Jordanians and the Israelis never entirely disappeared – but the show did move towards a resolution. And the vast cast and chorus made them feel very safe – and joyous as they looked towards a future at peace, with some elements of a 2-state solution – and the right of Jordanian Palestinians to return to their farms – which they could see, but never visit, across the Jordan river.

## *The White House*



Perhaps the most significant moment in the History of Peace Child was the purchase of a sad, old regency villa on the High Street of the provincial town of Buntingford. It had lain empty for almost four years, and was rotting. BUT – it was called “The White House” so I could imagine confusing all our American friends by issuing White House declarations on all manner of things. The equally derelict stables (see below left) could, in my imagination, be transformed into excellent student accommodation, The students would work in the basement, while Rosey and I lived and worked in the upper stories, transforming the top floor into a huge office.



The transformation of the Stables was, in itself, a wonderful example of Youth-led development: we’d had plans drawn up by a local architect to re-build them and the son of one of our Czech contacts had dropped by while on holiday in the UK. As he was training to be an architect, he asked to look at the plans: “Oh,” he said, “Young people wouldn’t like living here!” So – he set about re-drafting them – and then decided to learn the UK Planning procedures by working through the submission process with us. Permission granted, he returned to the Czech Republic where his professors wisely told him: *“You can sit in our classes and you will learn something – but not nearly as much as if you go back to England and help build the building you have designed.”*

So – he came back, and created the Stables where young people from around the world lived happily for 23 years, and created 30+ Peace Child books, 6 World Youth Congress, + countless youth-led development and peer-to-peer education programmes.

## **The Book Creation Business**



During the Central European Tour our First Book, the *Children's State of the Planet Handbook* was created in a project led by an incredible young Argentine American, Analia Penchaszadeh. Desk-top publishing was in its infancy – and this whole book was put together on Cardboard sheets. It invited schools and individual students to submit stories, paintings and poems + answers to questions on “*Everything you wanted to know about the Environment but were afraid to ask....*” We then put those questions to a number of experts, taking young people with us, to ensure that they understood the Experts’ answers. The finished book, though short, is one of our best – and, when distributed to officers of UNEP, UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO at the Rio Earth Summit – it won us the chance to make our second book. *Rescue Mission : Planet Earth* – which went on to sell over half a million copies and be translated into 23 languages. That set up PCI and its White House headquarters in the Book Creation business – which kept us busy for the next ten years – producing all the books which are [archived here](#). Several Flyers and Brochures promoted the work of Peace Child at this time, [See Here](#):

## **Uniting Europe Peace Child Games**

On arriving in Europe, we had organised a meeting of all the European partner organisations we had encountered while working in the USA. Fred generously sponsored this meeting at a castle in Haarzuilens. At this meeting, we met Werner Greis and Miclos Banhidi – co-founders of United Games who were determined that the old barriers between East and West Europe could only be dissolved by having young people play games with each other. They became wonderful partners – and great friends to us, and Peace Child over the years – and are still! We also met there Kristin Eskeland whose “Voice of the Children” programme got us involved in the build-up to the Rio Earth Summit – and, later, in the Post-Pessimist movement in the former Yugoslavia. It was a landmark meeting – and you can read the Report [here](#).

In 1995, for the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, United Games decided to do simultaneous productions of the Peace Child musical in each of their six partner countries.



So, following multiple trips across Europe by Rosey and I to supervise productions, at 8.00pm on Saturday 10th June 1995, six casts took to the stage in Murzzuschlag, Austria; Berlin, Germany; Gyor, Hungary; Subotica, Yugoslavia; Olomouc, Czech Republic and Izola, Slovenia. [Read More...](#)

## **Peace Child Habitat – Istanbul**



Again, I have no idea how we became involved in this – but I suspect it was some link I made doing the Rescue Mission book. We worked with UNEP which was headquartered in Nairobi – and UN Habitat worked in adjacent offices. So – as their 2nd Habitat Conference, scheduled to be held in Istanbul, had a strong youth focus (“HABITAT TWO – YOUTH CAN DO!”) – they agreed to sponsor an international Peace Child show as part of the cultural offering of the Conference. Rosey took the lead on this – flying out to Istanbul in January – waiting in a snow-storm for a music director who never arrived, and having to ease blood from Ottoman stones to make the whole thing happen. It was a wonderful international show – with the cast all staying in a boarding school near the Grand Bazaar – and doing the production in the Ataturk Centre on Taksim Square. Istanbul 1996 Programme

The cast were somewhat alarmed when they read that thousands of stray dogs and feral cats had been herded off the streets of the city and destroyed – so as not to give a bad impression to the diplomats visiting for the UN Conference. This seemed to them very bad manners – so we included a scene in the show with several members of the cast dressed as cats and dogs, protesting that they had Habitat rights too. It was a fun and moving show – with a great delight for Rosey and I that it was the first Peace Child show that our daughter, Natasha, had taken part in. Our son, Alexander, had taken part of many Peace Child shows – to the point where he once said, plaintively: “When Peace breaks out, can we stop doing Peace Child?” Sadly, that day has never dawned – and today (2024) seems less and less likely to!

### **The Hague Appeal for Peace Show – 1999:**

Each of these paragraphs compresses months of activity, tons of letters and e-mails, countless phone calls and faxes, and legions of dedicated people – all of whom, magically, came together to produce these extraordinary shows. Nowhere was this more true than of the Hague Appeal for Peace show – written after the landmark Rio Earth Summit of 1992 – which had been through several iterations, “The Bridge” / “The Eastbourne Show” / “Greenpeace Child” and “Peace Child 2000.” It was this final one that a Dutch School in the Hague agreed to produce, in English, for the enormous Hague Appeal for Peace meeting – designed to celebrate the centenary of the meeting convened in 1899 by Tsar Nicholas II and hosted by the young Dutch Queen, Wilhelmina. The commitments to disarmament expressed at this conference were astounding – and unreal, given the speed and intensity of Germany’s re-armament programme. But the conference did result in the International Court of Justice – or Peace Palace – which is why PCI agreed with Cora Weiss, that the centenary was well worth celebrating.



# **Peace Child 2000**

We secured Peter Ustinov to play the part of the Story-teller – which was good. He could only do one of the performances, so for the second, the school recruited a Dutch comedian who, in many ways, was a more sympathetic story-teller than Ustinov who never appeared happy performing with children or animals! Also – the practice of bringing in a Story-teller at the last minute to narrate the show is not one we would recommend: every cast builds up its own dynamic – and having such a significant role be played by some one who only turns up an hour or so before show-time is never ideal. It didn't work with Ustinov who, I fear, did not enjoy the experience. [See Playbill.](#)

## The Children's Earth Summit and World Youth Congress Business

1999 was a busy year for many reasons. First, there was the Hague show (above) – then we were finishing off our most expensive book, *Pachamama*, for the UN Environment Programme – funded by the Ted Turner Foundation whom we'd asked for \$100,000 but who ended up giving us \$250,000.

Most significantly, we were preparing for the Millennium Young People's Congress (MYPC): on the eve of the Millennium, we were canvassing the young people of the world for their Millennial Priorities – what were the ten most important issues that they wanted the UN, and their governments, to address in the new Millennium. We reached millions of young people in what became our biggest outreach effort ever: the buy-in was extraordinary, from the King of Morocco, to WWF in India canvassing the views of 5 million young people. Having had such a success with *Rescue Mission*, we were well-placed to reach out to UN networks in almost every country on earth. And the fact that the Congress was being held in Hawaii made it a very attractive prospect for young people everywhere.

And we had fantastic young people working on it everywhere – including Alexander, who – almost single-handedly – held together the administration in Honolulu. (*"The worst job I've ever done!" he said. "I've never worked so hard in my life or been so frustrated! I'm never working for my Dad again!"*) Marina Hermann, from Argentina, was only 19 – but she assembled a delegation of 40 from her country who were always the noisiest group in the canteen.

The Top Priority turned out to be: "Education" – but not education as we know it: Education about the priorities that we will face in our lives in the new millennium: environmental education, education for entrepreneurship, education for peace, population control, sustainable behaviours etc.

It was a magical Congress – and so much enjoyed by everyone there, we went on to do five more – in Morocco, Scotland, Canada, Turkey and Brazil. The inspiration for it was that the Rio Agenda 21 process – in which we had invested so much with our Rescue Mission Indicators Project our [School Agenda 21](#), our Ambassador programmes and so much else, was being wound down by governments.

They had moved on to the next thing. Which – in this case – turned out to be the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs). Interestingly, the UN's 8 MDGs turned out to be pretty much the same as the top ten priorities selected by our MYPC the year before, leading Noel Brown of UNEP to tell our delegates at a meeting in New York to launch the Congress Book, *Be the Change*, *"Your priorities are our priorities," he said. "We must work together to see them realised...."*

But the UN left out two of the most important priorities agreed by our young delegates to the MYPC: combatting government corruption & protecting everyone's Human Rights.





# BETHECHANGECHALLENGE

Be The Change! See The Change! Live The Challenge!

## Project Aims:

- To work with **children** to develop quantifiable **sustainable lifestyle habits**.
- To affect not only the children but their **families**
- To train up young Be the Change! Ambassadors – **peer to peer** education
- To create a programme that can be **easily be replicated**

## What we did:

- We made **assembly presentations** to 8-11 year olds - a mixture of drama skit and visuals
- Then gave one hour **workshops** on waste, climate change, Fair Trade, ecological footprints
- Followed it up with a **lifestyle contract** where pupils signed up to do 5 pledges for a month.
- Came back** one month later to see how they had done and awarded certificates

Ambassador Programme: We trained up around **340 Ambassadors** who went into local schools and gave workshops.

Total of **18,800 children** worked on lifestyle contracts.

## What makes the Ambassador Programme special:

*"Because it comes from young people and is therefore infinitely more effective in actually getting kids to sit up and listen and follow the advice than if it comes from a teacher/another adult."*



## My Pledges

On the right hand side mark off what you already do. On the left hand choose 5 pledges you will keep for 4 weeks and highlight the ones you have chosen.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. I switch off the lights when leaving the room if I am the last person in it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I turn off the TV, Stereo or Computer switch rather than 'leave it on standby'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I reduce the amount of water I use by not letting the tap run when I brush my teeth or wash my hands.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have a short shower instead of a bath.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I walk or use a bike for shorter distances and think before going by car.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I use rechargeable batteries whenever I can for toys, camera, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I unplug my phone charger when my phone has finished charging.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I help sort out the rubbish we put in our dustbin and make sure we recycle cans, glass, paper, vegetable waste etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I say no to plastic bags in shops and take my own bags from home. (ie. "bags for life")	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I choose fruit/veg with as little packaging as possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I buy fair trade products whenever possible and tell my family about them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. My personal pledge (for those who already do these things)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



On our main visit we conducted a questionnaire to find how sustainable the children were. We asked them the same questions on our follow up visit to see if there had been behaviour change.

## We found out:

- 1) That children find it easier to do things over which they have direct control.**  
Eg. Turning off lights, turning off taps, switching off TV.
- 2) It was harder to do things like:**  
use less packaging, buy Fair Trade.
- 3) Pester Power is persuasive.**  
They got their parents and family involved too.
- 4) Having something you do each day helps create lasting habits.**

## Messages for Policy Makers

- Don't charge** schools for recycling collection. Prices vary even within counties or boroughs.
- Include sustainability into **teacher training**. Pupils are often more sustainable than teachers!
- Include **sustainability into core** subjects.

Contact Details:  
[esd@peacechild.org](mailto:esd@peacechild.org)  
[www.peacechild.org](http://www.peacechild.org)

SUPPORTED BY DEFRA'S ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION FUND

## Peace Child / Alpha Omega Show – 2009-10:

Peace Child International presents

# PEACE CHILD ALPHA OMEGA

*A Musical Journey through Faith*

When catastrophe strikes, four young people from different religious backgrounds are forced to re-examine their identities and belief systems. Join us in this musical conversation, followed by a question time with distinguished spiritual leaders.

MUSIC AND ORIGINAL PRODUCTION BY DAVID GORDON MUSICAL DIRECTOR ANDREW PARNELL  
 DIRECTOR OF SCIENCES ABDUL SHAYEK  
 STORY ADAPTTED FROM THE ORIGINAL WORK BY DAVID WOULLCOMBE AND ROSEY SIMONDS  
 NARRATOR GEMMA CRAVEN  
 WITH ELY CHORAL SOCIETY AND  
 CHOIRS FROM SOUTHFIELDS JUNIOR SCHOOL PETERBOROUGH  
 AND WITCHFORD VILLAGE COLLEGE

**Ely Cathedral**  
**Saturday January 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 - 7.30pm**

Tickets: £20; £15; £12; £5; £4.50 for students available from  
 Ely Cathedral box office on 01353 660349 (Mon-Fri 11am-3pm)  
<https://tickets.elycathedral.org/>

## PEACE CHILD - ALPHA OMEGA

RELIGIONS SHOULD UNITE NOT DIVIDE PEOPLES

*"I, who am I? What is this world?  
 Why am I here?  
 I, what am I? What is my cause?  
 What must I be?"*

DAVID GORDON – "PEACE CHILD - ALPHA OMEGA"

**PEACE CHILD - ALPHA OMEGA:** The magisterial music of **ALPHA OMEGA** was first heard as a rock opera, produced by David's brother, Yusuf Islam (formerly Cat Stevens). Telling the story of humanity from the birth of the universe through to the final apocalypse, the songs were re-scored for symphony orchestra and chorus for a stunning performance in Coventry Cathedral. This became the basis of the Peace Child musical which was performed all over the USA and USSR as part of the citizen diplomacy effort that helped end the Cold War.

**PEACE CHILD - ALPHA OMEGA** is a further incarnation of the same, powerful music in a totally new show that links people of different faiths, through a discussion of current threats ranging from climate change, war, racism and other issues to see how faith helps us, or fails to help us, find solutions to these challenges - some of which threaten the very survival of humanity. This is a musical conversation for our modern age. Multi-faith dialogue is encouraged at all stages of development - before, during and after the event: the script is developed for each performance through improvisation with the young cast members. Peace Child International's goal is to encourage schools, faith and community groups to do their own performances of all or part of the show to get them and their families thinking about these issues.

Funded by the European Commission's Culture Programme, this performance in Ely is the first in a series which will take the show to Tallinn, Estonia and Istanbul, Turkey.

After the performance refreshments will be served and the audience will be invited to submit questions to a Question Time Panel that will include distinguished representatives of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths.

**WHO ARE WE?** Peace Child International is a registered British Charity and one of the largest networks of youth-led organisations in consultative status with the United Nations. PCI's mission is to 'empower young people' to address the most pressing global challenges they will encounter in their lifetimes - peace, human rights, climate change, ending poverty and the achievement of sustainable prosperity for the entire human family. PCI does this through supporting young people to undertake small youth-led development projects, running trainings/educational programmes on sustainability, gender, conflict resolution and producing youth-created books and teaching materials. PCI also runs the bi-annual World Youth Congress series on Youth and Development.

The *Peace Child / Alpha Omega* show described above is still available for performance by school orchestras, choirs and community groups. Unlike any other *Peace Child* show, this one deals with inter-

religious mis-understanding – and, through a child’s eyes, sees ways to find a deeper harmony. As the Jewish Rabbi who spoke at our post-show discussion, said: *“Every time I encounter a passionate believer from another faith tradition, I find my own belief enriched and strengthened.”* That is the purpose of Peace Child / Alpha Omega – and we urge schools and communities to dive in and make their own version of this challenging and fascinating show.

1. Script
2. Choral Score
3. Orchestral Score
4. Lesson Plans
5. Production Notes
6. Video – Show
7. Video – Discussion afterwards

### **The Geneva Show – 2013:**

It was always a bit of an unknown about Peace Child – how much Mikhail Gorbachev knew about the musical – and whether or not he raised it in his meetings with Ronald Reagan. Some say he did – others keep silent. But – when it came to the 20th Anniversary of his Green Cross organisation, it was he who approved the decision to do a new version of the musical that addressed the issue of Climate Change. This version of the musical is the current generic, High School version of the musical: it tells a very cogent story of what needs to happen to avert the biggest existential crisis facing the human family on the planet: the threat of massive climate disruption.

With the support of the Green Cross Organisation and their contacts at the UN, we were able to set up a ‘one night only’ show in the Grande Salle of the UN Building in Geneva. We lodged the international cast members with local Geneva families and rehearsed the whole show at a Stage School just outside Geneva. It worked really well.



Richard Sharpey. David Gordon’s long-time collaborator and arranger, took on the role of MD – and a wonderful Devon-based choreographer, Claire Parker, created amazing dances and injected massive energy into the Show. Rosey Simonds was the story-teller – and I wrote and directed.



The show was something of a triumph. It was the first time since the end of the Cold War that I'd felt that *Peace Child* actually still had relevance to the hopes and dreams of young people facing an uncertain future. We were lucky to have a spectacular cast of extremely talented young people from all over the world: USA, Ireland, Denmark, Saint Lucia, Belgium, Portugal, Poland, Ukraine, Japan, UK, China, Indonesia, Ghana, Syria, Argentina!



The greatest compliment was the audience – mainly staffers at the UN. They stood and applauded at the end as the young people has done on stage what they found increasingly hard to do in their day jobs: to unite nations in pursuit of the common good.

You can -

- View the Cast List – [here](#)
- View the playbill – [here](#)
- View the Script and Score – [here](#)
- Study the Lesson Plans & Production Guide – [here](#)



## Be the Change Academies: Kenya to West Africa 2010 to the Present:

- **Kenya:** The idea of a youth-led business start-up college with its own training, mentoring and incubation services, plus its own revolving loan fund – has been around since the former Peace Child India director, Jagan Devaraj, came up with the idea in 2009. Thanks to funding from the International Labour Organisation, the First BTCA in Kisumu, Kenya started in 2011. Managed by the Blue Cross Resource Centre, the Academy was set up in the Nyalenda slum District by David Woolcombe with two excellent young volunteers - Ann-Katrina Bregovic from Germany and Justin Flynn from Canada. Along with Michael Ogweno from Kenya, they prepared and delivered 20-hours of training in business plan development – market research, quality assurance, financial management, customer relations etc.

### Impressions



Training April – June 2012

### Training lessons



1. Market Research: Business Viability & Competition	Market Research
2. Market Research: Market Segmentation & Location	
3. Market Research: Conduction Market Research	
4. Marketing & Pricing	Entrepreneurial Skills
5. Customer Service	
6. Business Ethics	Financial Literacy
7. Life Skills	
8. Savings: Personal and Business	
9. Basic Accounting & General Journal Entries	
10. Sales Forecasting & Break Even Analysis	
11. Income Statement & Cash Flow	
12. Balance Sheet	
13. Introduction to Sustainability	
14. Waste Management	
15. Resource Management & Consumption	
16. Water	Sustainability
17. Food & Agriculture	
18. Business Law	
19. Gender Equality	
20. Presentations	

We called it the “Barefoot Business Academy” – for reasons that this [Powerpoint slide show](#) will reveal. Over 200 young people were trained, of whom about 90 developed fully-fledged business

plans in one-on-one sessions with the trainers. 20 were awarded loans of between £305 - £533. After 6 months, 92% of them had started to pay them off on time 32% of them in full. The Businesses supported included juice-making, sugarcane brokerage, motor-cycle taxis, dress-making, event catering and office services. The young entrepreneurs faced huge problems: broken machinery, regulatory setbacks (government changing retail laws and withdrawing sales spots at markets and bus stations etc.) - + domestic problems, like children falling sick. However, where before the youth freely admitted they would have been defeated by these problems and given up, supported and mentored by each other and the trainers, they have figured out ways to get around such challenging problems.

- **Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia:**

PCI's faith in the BTCA concept was finally rewarded with a major grant from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to start three BTCAs, with the aim of focusing on disadvantaged young women in three of the world's poorest countries: Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.



A 5-Day Training was held in Paynesville, Liberia in October for the staff of each of the three BTCAs and the International Volunteer Trainers. It covered all elements of the BTCA programme delivery. Each group then held well-publicised launch ceremonies for their BTCA – which combined high-level political support with cool, youth-friendly elements.



In Liberia, the keynote speech was followed by an outrageous stand-up comedian. The media for these ceremonies resulted in a deluge of applicants for the first training programme. By the end of the year, each BTCA was up and running, and, together, training over 500 young women entrepreneurs.

*“I've never felt this useful or as committed to something in my life.”* Fred Fenwick, Intl. Volunteer



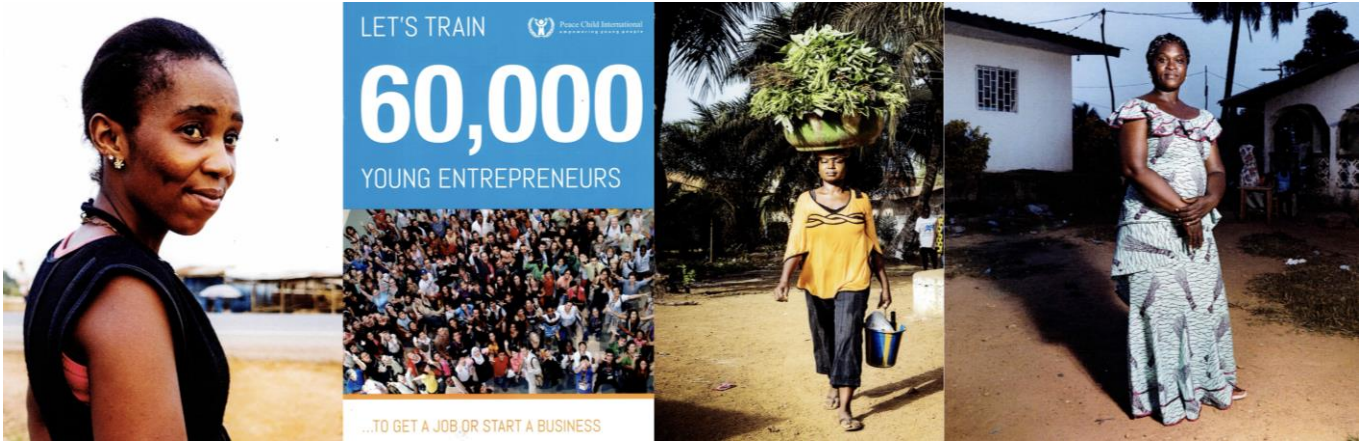
- **Innovations:** We quickly discovered that many of the young entrepreneurs we were seeking to support had never been to school and were unable to read, write or do arithmetic. We therefore developed a system of visual instruction – using dance and singing – which the young women found extremely engaging. We also developed mobile phone apps which the young entrepreneurs with no literacy or numeracy skills were able to use for stock-taking and basic double-entry book-keeping.



- **16,000 Women and counting...** With innovative approaches being delivered in local languages by local staff, take-up of the Be the Change business training increased, and we have now trained over 16,000 women since the programme started. The pre-training questionnaires reveals that, of those trained, 72% had no formal education and 95% stated that they were “Unconfident” or “Very Unconfident” in their ability to read and write. By the end of the training, 72% said they felt “Very Confident” to run a successful business; Trainees had also increased their daily business turnover, on average, from £7.64 to £10.07 per day while their personal daily income increased, on average, from £1.93 to £3.42. These small changes made immense differences to the livelihoods of the young women in these very disadvantaged rural locations as the Case Study (*below*) shows:



Musu Sheriff is a young woman from Mano Junction in Sierra Leone. When she took our training, she sold palm oil. However, palm oil is only produced during the rainy season (May-October) so Musu struggled to make a consistent income across the year. She was unable to support her family and estimated that when she was able to sell, she only made around \$1.35 a day. After the training, she realised that there was no general provision store in her village. People travelled over eight miles away to buy specific products. So using the money that she’d saved up within a local savings group, she rented a small store and started selling essential items. She has continually used local savings groups to expand her business, adding new products to sell to her customers. She now earns \$3.90 a day in profits consistently across the year. With her new stable income, she is now able to feed her children and contribute towards their school fees, clothing and medical costs. “I can give my children a better start in life.”



ROSEY SIMONDS

**New CEOs: Rosey Simonds, Adriana Pogleia:** David Woolcombe retired as CEO of the Charity in August 2014, handing over the day-to-day running of the Charity to Rosey Simonds while we looked for a permanent replacement. The obvious candidate was Adriana Pogleia, who had been a volunteer in Guinea, really understood the Peace Child ethos and she was appointed in April 2015. With her in place, we made bold plans for growing the Be the Change Academy network, as outlined in the Sales Booklet she prepared ahead of her arrival at the Charity. See it here.



ADRIANA POGLEIA

## **Work the Change:**

Work the Change is our tailored employability training programme which uses peer-to-peer education techniques to reach young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. We target youth who face significant challenges when they leave school and start looking for work. In an increasingly challenging post-pandemic jobs market, jobs are even harder for young people these young people to find.



Working with experienced, highly-trained facilitators, Peace Child supports young students to teach and empower each other to build up their CVs before leaving, thereby thereby easing the school-to work transition. Overall, we were able to work with 209 young people in East London, Cambridge and Berkshire. The new training uses a combination of Zoom and an interactive MentiMetor software to ensure that our project is able to engage, communicate, with and receive live feedback from

participants before, during and after the training session. The delivery method varies from school to school, but all students completed 6 x training sessions:

- 1) Know yourself;
- 2) Communication;
- 3) Decision making;
- 4) Inspiration, passion, and values;
- 5) Pathways / Career choices - *and* -
- 6) CV & Personal Statement;

The major beneficiaries are the Year 8 or 9s who receive the training from Year 10s – but the peer educators also get to try out teaching and inter-personal skills which builds their self-confidence and self-esteem + looks good on their CVs.

## **We Love Luton:**

*In the summer of 2019, our Trustee, Vinod Tailor, introduced us to a retired deputy Head Teacher from Luton, Samia Rehman. She, like us, was disturbed by the lack of education in schools about global issues – about the UN and Sustainable development in particular. With the UN 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary coming up, we discussed what we might do in Luton to start inserting presentations and learning about these issues into schools in Luton.*



Celebrating the United Nations 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**STARTING A GLOBAL CONVERSATION**

*“What’s the UN ever done for us?”*

- **UN 75 presentations:** Samia and Vinod introduced us to the Luton Council of Faiths – who worked in primary schools across Luton. We agreed to do presentations at Primary School Assemblies on the UN and its achievements over the last 75 years + the challenges it – and our world – faces in the next 75. We visited 11 schools before the Covid Lockdown struck and schools were closed.
- **Youth Sustainability Action Forum:** Meanwhile, Samia was gathering schools to take part in a celebration of youth actions for sustainability. As the Covid Lockdown struck, she prepared an online event with the Luton MPs, head teachers and the leader of one of Luton’s major school Trusts. The online event, held on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 was a considerable success with the VIP panel very impressed by the students’ commitment to clean their schools and communities. This was followed up by two further Youth Sustainability Action Fora in July 2022 and October 2023.
- **Tree Planting:** Our trustee, Louise Landman, trained as a professional tree-planter and secured a number of saplings from the Woodland Trust. She was able to recruit several primary and secondary schools and get the students planting, and caring for, trees in their playgrounds.
- **Model Citizen Assemblies:**



Peace Child International  
empowering young people

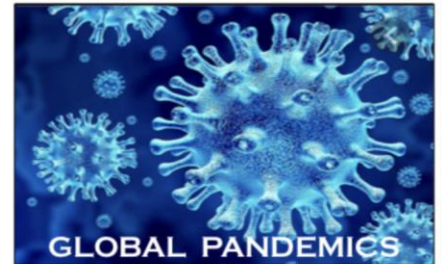
## Model Citizens' Assembly

Listen    Learn    Deliberate    Decide



Ever since the people of Ireland were persuaded by a series of Citizen's Assemblies(CAs) to reverse 1000-year old laws on abortion and gay marriage, citizen groups have looked to CAs to explore serious global and community issues. A group of 50 to 250 citizens are selected to reflect the precise demographics of a city, nation or community; in a 4-stage process of 1) Listening; 2) Learning; 3) Deliberating; 4) Decision-making, they tease out common sense approaches to complex problems. Think of it as Citizens doing Jury Duty for the Community or Planet.

In the best CA processes, as in Ireland, their "Decisions" are then woven into legislation to put before parliament or the electorate to be decided by a vote or a Referendum. But, because a full-dress Citizens' Assembly costs a lot and take months, PCI's Model Citizen's Assemblies (MCAs) are free and take just 3-hours. They can be done online or in person and our "How To..." Manual offers step-by-step instruction on how to set up and run an MCA on one of 3 x global issues that present existential threats to the survival of future generations:



## How to run a Model Citizens' Assembly

*enabling schools, communities and individuals to reach informed decisions on issues that threaten our survival*

- **Intergenerational Conversation Cafés:**

We also prepared a "How to..." manual on how to run an Intergenerational Conversation Café: this is much easier to prepare and run, and the ones we have done have all been student-led. They choose a problem and then invite a panel – half student / half elder experts – to give 2-4 minute speeches on how they would solve the problem. The Panellists then join the audience at Round tables and listen to their solutions. They then return to the platform and summarise what they have learned from their tables. A robust conversation follows, and an Action Plan is agreed.



*The 7 x Peace Child Interviewers*

- **State of the Planet Summer School:**

In July 2022, PCI held its first Summer School at Luton's famous Hat Factory arts centre. 7 x youth from the Luton area interviewed 23 global experts on the "State of the Planet" and what we should be doing about it. A key concern of the young interviewers was that the experts

should not blind them with science or long words so, carefully and respectfully, they asked them for clarification and simplification to ensure that they understood everything. With the addition of link pieces and illustrative videos, Tom Powell created Peace Child's first UN Day State of the Planet Update – which we now incorporate into our Peace Child musicals. Because understanding the state of our planet is step ONE to doing anything about it.

### **An Independent Success Story Prospers:**

By early 2022, it became very clear that PCI was two different organisations: the Be the Change Academy programme in West Africa was becoming a mainstream development programme very different from its UK school-to-work empowerment and UN-linked global education programmes. So we took a decision to spin-off the West Africa programme which is now set up as a separate charity, Prosper, with a [separate website](#). It defines its Mission and Values thus:

*Our mission is to empower women in remote, disadvantaged communities, to escape poverty and build prosperous lives for themselves, their families, and their communities*

We maintain regular contact with our newest offspring – and look for opportunities and funding to enable them to expand the reach and impact of what remains one of PCI's most successful creations.



*The Be the Change Academy Trainings, Kenema District, Sierra Leone*

### **The UN @ 75 – What Next?**

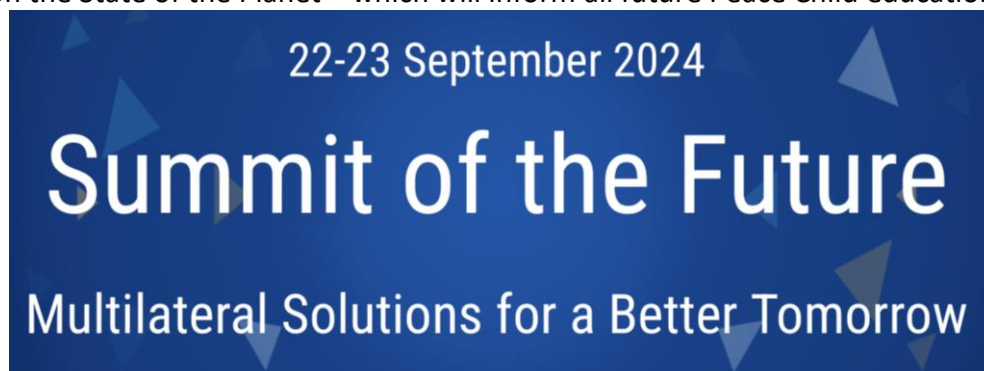
Having published one of our best books for the UN's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, *A World in our Hands*, we decided that, though the UN itself was not planning a massive celebration of its 75<sup>th</sup> (member states didn't feel that it had much to celebrate) – it was a perfect moment to re-connect with the UN and promote its Global Conversation to our membership worldwide. We did this through Community celebrations and a big, online UN75 Festival in the week running up to UN Day – which is the actual 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday of the UN (October 24<sup>th</sup>).



At the first of these, in Harpenden, young people engaged the very eminent, retired UN official, Sir Richard Jolly in a dialogue about the future of the UN: one of the young people suggested that a Digital, People's UN might develop over the next 75 years. Sir Richard was impressed and, having co-authored a 6-volume intellectual History of the UN, he agreed that this might be an important new chapter.



The online UN75 Festival brought together experts and young people from across the UK to discuss the different aspects of Security managed by the UN. Peace Child was delighted to be invited by Patricia Rogers, leader of the London and South-East network of UN Associations to provide youth input to these serious discussions which, because of COVID, had to be online. The [www.whatnext4un.org](http://www.whatnext4un.org) website archives all 6 x seminars and the Closing Concert which offers a review of UN Heroes and Heroines interspersed with songs and messages from artists around the world. It also provides the base information on the State of the Planet – which will inform all future Peace Child education programmes.



But what is next for the UN? Ever since its failure to stop the Rwanda genocide in 1994, the UN has been increasingly marginalised and beleaguered. Hobbled by the P5 Veto which prevents it taking effective action in Ukraine and Gaza, and bullied by the richer member states who pay for its massive bureaucracy and therefore feel that they can control its decision-making, “We the Peoples...” in whose name it was set up justifiably feel short-changed by the institution. The Summit for the Future later this year promotes the idea that we need a “Breakthrough” to the realisation by all nations that we can only solve the triple threats of the Climate Emergency, Pollution and Biodiversity loss through collaboration, or face planetary “Breakdown,” – and yet there is very little evidence to suggest that people, or their governments, are taking these dire warnings seriously. As Sir Partha Dasgupta said in his Biodiversity Review, “The World lacks the institutional infrastructure to protect the Global Commons....” The UN, in its current state, is far from being that institutional infrastructure, and our planet’s Biosphere remains unprotected – putting all life on earth at existential risk. The imperative of effective multilateral / multi-national collaboration to build a more secure world remains the generational challenge to be achieved before the UN’s Centenary in 2045.

### **What Next for Peace Child?**

When we started Peace Child, 45-years ago, there were very few organisations devoted to empowering young people to take on leadership roles. Now there are thousands – and young people like Greta Thunberg, Malala Yousafzai and the young prosecutors of Our Children’s Trust are taking to the centre of the world stage. So – to a large extent – Peace Child’s work is done. We can sign off. Job done!

But – it’s not. It never is: where we dreamed in the *Peace Child* show of 1980 that the world of 2020 would “shine like a star” – that it would be at peace, with poverty a distant memory, the environment on the mend etc. Instead we had a US President signing more oil prospecting licences than ever before, Putin invading Ukraine, Israel committing war crimes in Gaza – and instead of reducing its carbon

output, world emissions were rising – and the dangers of climate catastrophe were becoming more and more visible, daily, in forest fires and extreme weather events around the world.

It's sad to see the world unravel and know that we have very few years left to turn it around. It is even sadder to note how few young people are motivated to rise up in protest against the obvious threats to their survival: the simple Peace Child / Peace Book wish, "I want to Live" – which you might have thought was shared by every child – does not carry the same resonance any more.



## United Nations Centenary

# *Peace Child*

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The UN Centenary Peace Child sees the UN brokering a partnership between youth and enlightened business leaders: that may, indeed, lead to solutions. But young people need to want it badly enough to fight for it. And, on the evidence I encounter, they do not. I am haunted by the stories that emerged of young people's resignation when they received an HIV-AIDS diagnosis. They were going to die and there was nothing they could do about it. So they made jokes about "Mr Slim" coming to visit, as they became more and more emaciated. If that kind of resignation takes hold, there really is very little hope for Life on Earth. I hope, therefore, that this history and the timeless, magisterial songs of David Gordon linked to the *Peace Child* story with its baked-in happy ending, may still have a role in inspiring future generations to resist with all their power, courage, creativity and imagination, that gloomy future.

The resources available on this website are a good place to start that resistance!

*David R Woollcombe, Founder, President and Author of Peace Child  
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