

'Gang Show 90 - Oh, what a night!'

My name is Amelie Thompson, and I am a 15-year-old Young Leader with 1st Copmanthorpe Brownies in York.

Earlier this year I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to be selected to represent Girl Guiding North Yorkshire South in Gang Show 90. I've always had a passion for performing and I've been involved in York Scout and Guide Gang Show since I was in Brownies, so this was a really exciting chance for me.

Both me and an Explorer Scout, were selected from the York Scout and Guide Gang Show cast to perform in Gang Show 90 at London's Eventim Apollo, a huge theatre in London, to celebrate 90 years of Gang Show which is a Scouting and Guiding tradition not only across the UK, but around the world.

The show was to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Gang Shows and was made up of a cast of over 170 Scout and Guide representatives aged 14 to 24 years-old, from Gang Shows across the UK. The selected cast practiced and rehearsed right up to the last minute to put on a show of dancing, acting and comedy on 9 July 2022.



To make sure we put on a great show, I attend rehearsals in a custom-built marquee in the midlands where we had to pitch our own tents and camp 'festival style.' I also attended rehearsals in Edinburgh to practice with some of the northern UK participants.

I was 14 at the time of the show, and one of the youngest cast members so, at first, I was quite nervous and worried about meeting so many new people and I wondered what we would all have to do. It turned out to be amazing fun and a brilliant learning experience for me.

The first hurdle was that all the cast had to take their own tent and camping equipment. It's the first time I've had to carry all my equipment in a rucksack (I don't normally like to travel light!), fitting everything in was a challenge! Who knew bottles of shampoo and body spray weighed really heavy and took up so much space? As well as that, I had to leave the hair straighteners and hairdryer at home too!

Being part of Gang Show 90 not only improved my performing arts skills, but it also helped me build resilience, determination and to grow in independence, as well as gain confidence in talking to new people and doing things on my own.



For example, I'd not had much experience of camping, it's harder than it looks. But I can now pack my own rucksack, carry all my own kit, put my own tent up and take it down by myself and start a campfire, as well as learning a lot of new performing arts tips and techniques.



The worst thing about Gang Show 90 was the rain, wet tents, and wet clothes, at the rehearsal weekends. The few toilets between us all wasn't much fun either, but when you are all in the same boat, you can still make it fun - the show must go on. I do think camping really isn't for the faint hearted and, in all honesty, I've not learned to love it. I might leave it to Bear Grylls from now on.



There were some challenges. Remembering all the choreography for the dances and sketches in a short space of time, doing lots of things remotely and by video and knowing where you were supposed to be standing in such a huge cast was difficult. Racing backwards and forwards from the dressing rooms on show night (ours was in a temporary marquee outside) while taking off your costume on the way, just to make sure you got changed in time to get back on stage for the next item was a feat, but it added to the excitement on the night.

The best thing about the whole experience was making new friends. Camping together, travelling together, a gruelling rehearsal schedule together, having fun together and performing together meant you got to know people really well in a short space of time. We are all still in touch and I think we will be for a long time. I was really sad to leave all the great friends I'd made at the end of the show weekend, but we had a great after show party.

I must admit being interviewed about the show live on BBC Radio York was a pretty cool experience too and not something I imagined I would do.



Would I do it again? Definitely! If I did it all over again, I would push myself harder to do even better, to learn more and make the most of every moment, even the rain.

If you get the opportunity to take part in a Gang Show or in something like this, jump at the opportunity. It's amazing to be able to do what you love and represent Girl Guiding at the same time. It's memories you won't ever forget with the new friends you've made, and for me, it was a great honour to be selected and to perform at the Eventim Apollo and be on a west end stage.



York Scout and Guide Gang Show will be taking place next year and I'd encourage everyone to sign up and get involved. I'm excited about it already as I've been involved since I was in Brownies. If you live somewhere else, ask your leader about your local Gang Show and how you can take part.

I hope we inspired the 1000s of people in the audience who came to watch us on the night and that they enjoyed it as much as I did performing in the show.

A big thank you to York Scout and Guide Gang Show, Girl Guiding North Yorkshire South and to 1st Copmanthorpe Brownies for all their support and encouragement and for making it possible for me.

Amelie Thompson