



■ Pupils board the bus for their big night, left, and right, wave goodbye as they leave *Pictures:Melissa York*

Inspiring a generation ...how our young ones played emotional role

Schoolchildren love their moments of fame

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▶ The key message of the Games in Newham is inspiring a generation and so it was fitting that one emotional part of the Opening Ceremony saw local children take a lead role.

They had the whole world watching them as they performed a 12-minute bed dance scene. They had been sworn to secrecy for months over the show which paid tribute to the NHS as various fictional villains terrorised them before Mary Poppins came to their rescue.

We spoke to the youngsters shortly before they left for the show.

Eyeing up a BBC TV camera filming for a special programme like a seasoned professional, Adam Abdi-Irad, eight, said: "I've been on TV twice before. On the news programme."

Lucky

Adam was one of the lucky pupils at Colegrave Primary School in Stratford performing in the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games.

Going into Year Four at the school, Adam said: "The cameras are a bit worrying but she's been here before" as he pointed to BBC broadcaster Lucy Hockings.

Fidgeting around with excitement, Adam squirmed about as he said: "I'm a bit nervous because millions of people will be watching on TV. But we have practised 17 or 18 times so..."

It all started six months ago for these youngsters at Colegrave when they were selected by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) to be one of six schools selected from the host boroughs through the 'Get Set' Education Network.

Nodding enthusiastically at the mention of Danny Boyle, the Oscar-winning director of the ceremony that will be watched by an estimated one billion people, Adam said: "He is nice and he is a really funny man. I like his movie Slumdog Millionaire. It's hard practising though, much harder than school."

Danny Boyle visited Colegrave Primary in Henniker Road back in January where he met the potential stars of his piece for the first time.



■ Proud to have a starring role. Colegrave pupils show their enthusiasm before they set off for one of the best moments of their lives at the Opening Ceremony on Friday night *Picture:Melissa York*



■ Amazing. The Stadium sequence featuring our young *Picture: Tony Marshall/PA Wire/Press Association*



■ The tribute to the NHS sequence which enthralled all *Picture: Anthony Devlin/PA Wire/Press Association*

Rehearsing ever since, first at the school before moving to the Olympic Stadium, the children were dressed in their multi-coloured 2012 t-shirts today to make their final trip to the venue before their big moment.

Adam, whose favourite sports are football and running, said: "The Stadium is huge! It's as fat as 54 football pitches glued together!"

Also waiting impatiently to board the coach was Bruno Pereira, eight, who agreed with Adam that it's tough work being in a global event.

Amazing

He said: "It means late nights but it's worth it. It's lots of fun. We would do it next year."

"I think the ceremony is amazing, people will really like it, but they don't know about it because it's a surprise."

"It has made me want to do sport more because sport makes you grow strong. I like running and javelin."

As the children line up in a multicoloured cluster for the TV cameras, chaperone Juliana Davies, mother of pupil Alisha Davies-Reaz, said: "Alisha has been working so hard, all of them have been. There have been late nights

and she has come home just wanting a bed but when you say come on, more rehearsals again in the morning, she's up and ready.

"None of them ever moan or complain about the long hours, they have just had so much fun."

As the children finally boarded the coach to the Olympic Park, parents wiped away tears as they waved back in farewell.

They kept the secret for months, and afterwards were "over the moon" as to how it went,

Teachers are so proud of their charges and said the change in them since they started rehearsals has already been excellent. They have grown in confidence and feel they can do anything.

More than 1,000 residents were involved in the Opening Ceremony along with 230 pupils from seven schools.

Mayor Sir Robins Wales has praised all of those who took part for their fantastic efforts.

If the mission of these Olympic Games in our own backyard is to inspire a generation, then they may have succeeded before they started.