

DRAMA MATTERS

MAGAZINE

ISSUE TWO - MARCH 2024



THE CHALLENGE ISSUE

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Issue Two
March 2024

EDITORIAL TEAM

Tracy Dorrington Editorial Director

Tracy is the Head of Drama and Performing Arts, as well as Head of Year at Bishop Stopfords School in Enfield. She is also the founder of Drama Matters. Besides teaching and the Drama Matters forum, Tracy is also the founder of Community Spirit a community led project that supports those in need in her community at the loneliest times of the year.

She truly believes that Drama can change the world, the positive kind, the questioning kind, the kind that says we are being heard and these stories need to be told. Tracy believes Drama Matters can only go from strength to strength, and now with the collaboration with Liam, truly feels anything is possible. She would like to thank him for seeing her vision and wanting to be involved in it. Watch this space as this really is just the beginning.

Liam Greenall Creative Director

Liam is the Director of Creativity and Head of Visual and Performing Arts at International College Hong Kong, one of Cambridge University's 100 most innovative schools worldwide. His role allows him to research, explore and experiment with tools, processes and experiences for innovative teaching and learning.

Besides teaching, Liam was the founder and Director of Black Box Education for 8 years and now works freelance with governments, theatre companies and arts organisations worldwide to develop and design toolkits, curriculum materials and collaborative learning spaces. He is super excited to be working with Tracy, and the Drama Matters team, in bringing this publication to life.

GET INVOLVED

Have you read something that ignites a fire within you? Do you wish to respond to one of the articles in the magazine? Do you agree or disagree? Would you like to have your say in the next edition?

Whether it's an anonymous letter, a claimed letter, or an article, please get in touch. This is not just our story; it is the Drama Matters story, and you are all a part of it. Whether nationally or internationally, your input is welcome.

Drama Matters is a bi-annual publication and we're on a mission to create a platform where the voices of those who live and breathe drama and theatre can be heard, shared and celebrated.

Ready to make your voice heard in the Drama Matters community? Send your article ideas or completed pieces to magazine@dramamatters.org and our editorial team will be in touch.

THE CHALLENGE ISSUE

Editor's Letter

This edition is dedicated to you and all Drama teachers and industry professionals, the very people who run in the face of it all. Please keep going, understand the power of our subject, and together we will change the narrow view that some have of the subject. Is it their inability to see what drama truly is, or is it that they know its power and that is why they fear it? It will only be when people truly realise that they use and benefit from the skills taught in the drama classroom every day, when they actually sit up and take notice, and maybe, just maybe, it's time for a different response, a different approach. Maybe it's time that silence is the only way that we show what they would be missing.

We all face challenges in life and work. The challenge of Drama being recognised for what it truly is has been with us ever since I can remember. Even when I was a child at school, it was seen as the 'soft' subject, for the luvvies, yet English Lit was seen as the academic subject. I never understood this because, after all, English Lit studies the Shakespearean Plays, The 19th Century Novels, Modern prose or drama texts, poetry.

I am sorry, but which aspects of this are not linked to the theatre, linked to what we deliver every day? Shakespearean Plays are theatre; 19th-century novels, nearly all of which that are studied, have been massive performances in the theatre, and in fact, departments often take to the theatre so they can 'understand' the writing more, 'see it come alive'. Then look at the prose again, all have been turned into performances, and the themes for poetry, themes are intrinsic to Drama and theatre education! Yet we are the poor relative. In fact, let's say we are the black sheep of the family, and maybe that's why so many drama teachers actually deal with their own stuff too, because we know the value that it gives to so many.

Forget the fact that the economic climate is bolstered by Drama and theatre, actors and producers, production crews. If you take away television, radio, theatre, artists, gaming, even the monarchy, politicians use people who have the skills to enable them to get their messages to the nation. Unfortunately, they do not necessarily use the skills taught in a drama class themselves. Empathy, vocality, physicality, problem-solving, verbal reasoning, and, most importantly, active listening. In fact, if our 'leaders' had made more of the lessons they could learn in drama, perhaps our whole world would be in a better place.

So yes, this edition is about the challenges, but it's also about the support, the wellbeing, the successes, and the wonderful things that exist in our world. Because sometimes it's hard to see them, and remember, always, you are one of them. YOU are a powerhouse of knowledge, love, empathy, and passion for a subject that can change the world, and together we will keep going to make sure that happens.

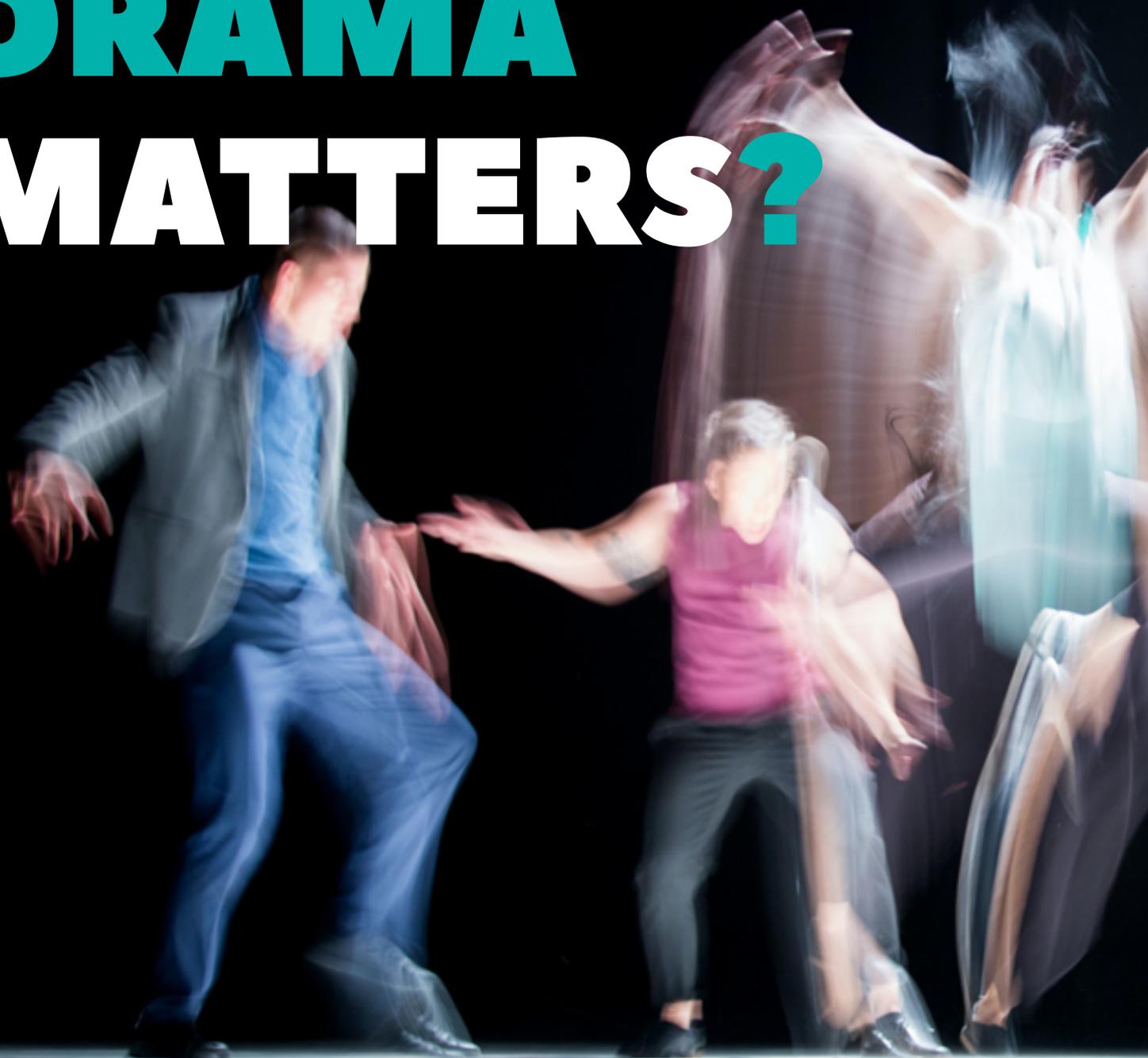
Much love, peace, and understanding,

Tracy

CONTENTS

- 4-6**
Who are Drama Matters?
- 7**
Networking Weekend
- 8 - 11**
Drama Challenges Today
- 13-14**
Reigniting a Sense of Play
- 15-16**
Four Ways to Develop Student Responses for Live Theatre Review 16-17
- 17**
A Season of Change
- 18-19**
Lights, Camera, Education: MN Awards' Screen Acting Exams for Schools
- 20-21**
Bridging Boundaries
- 22**
#SeizeTheDay
- 23-25**
Towers School is Alive with the Arts
- 25-26**
Vamos Theatre: The Positive Impact of Mask and Non-Verbal Theatre
- 27-28**
Playwright in Focus: Mark Wheeler
- 29-32**
The Death of Creativity in School
- 33-35**
An A-Z of Drama Techniques and Devices
- 36-37**
STEAM, not STEM: The Importance of Expressive and Creative Arts
- 38**
Box House Theatre: The National Tour
- 39**
A School's Unwritten 'No Audition' Policy
- 41-42**
Bridge Builders: Meet Megan
- 42**
Plays for Young People: Masking
- 43-44**
Staging Success: National School Theatre Awards
- 46-47**
What? Why? How? A Framework for Drama Analysis
- 48-49**
AI and the Role of Technology in Theatre Making 49-50
- 50-51**
It's Okay to be Creative
- 52**
A Godot Worth Waiting For 53
- 53-55**
The Big Challenge: The School Production, Annie Jr.
- 56**
Downtime Matters: It's Panto Time
- 58-59**
What Support is Out There?
- 60-63**
The Long Read: What Shakespeare Book to Choose?
- 64**
Peer Training
- 65-66**
School Show: After Juliet
- 67**
Speak Out: Drama Matters Performing Arts Festival 2024
- 68**
It's Okay Not to Be Okay
- 69**
Show Spotlight: The Ocean at the End of the Lane
- 70**
Show Spotlight: Wicked
- 72-73**
Final Thoughts: A Carousel of Challenges

WHO ARE DRAMA MATTERS?



Drama Matters came about from a networking weekend that Tracy Dorrington ran to bring Drama teachers together. The aim was to show that we were no longer that single person department. It was a space to share good practice, be a student again, run workshops and debate about the exam boards and changes to our subject. It was also a chance to fight for what we all knew, that 'Drama is key to not only our economy but our life, our soul and of course our children'.

HOW IT DEVELOPED.

Since then, it has kept a solid profile of running various supportive groups on Facebook for teachers, it also supported other groups to try and challenge the EBacc which was killing our subject in schools.

It is important to note we are not a charity or affiliated to any organisations. We are also not here to challenge position with the organisations that do exist.

We are here to bridge, we are here to support, we are here to build.

By working with, and alongside, all of those organisations we are able to do exactly that.

In 2019, Tracy decided to step it up again and started to speak with those that were involved and came up with a stepped plan to get Drama on the map in the minds of all, to enable all to see its worth. With a stepped programme in place, which was started with the core people, alongside meeting with Open Drama and NATD, Tracy discussed the key aspects she thought would help our subject with plans of how to move things forward.

These were:

- * Networking Weekend - which would launch our idea of outreach leaders so we could take our ideas into every county in the UK—April 2020
- * Links to all areas of the Arts - building a bridge between Teachers/ Education and performers, playwrights, directors, producers, designers, actors, technicians and FOH. Basically, anyone that works within the Theatre Industry in any form. After all, there are no small parts in theatre.
- * A display of performance outside Parliament - showing our worth
- * Extra—Curricular for teachers
- * Support and resources by teachers for teachers.



During lockdown this moved in ways we could not even imagine, it has been truly wonderful, to be able to support and come together.

Since Lockdown, we have gone from strength to strength with the #TTTs Talk Theatre Thursdays, the Drama Matters Student Voice Matters Performing Arts Festival and our Bridge Builders initiative, which were officially launched at the Drama Matters Networking Weekend in September.

Drama Matters now has 30 Bridge Builders which you can check out on page 98 and also our website at www.dramamatters.org. If you see your area is not covered then please do get in touch if you want to get involved.

We have had 4 Drama Matters Networking Weekends under our belt and this magazine was officially launched at the 4rd one in September 2023.

We aim to work with all involved in the industry whether it be within education, community, theatre wherever there is creativity and theatre we will do all we can to promote and support. We will not charge for our support, in fact if we are doing something that charges then you will get it at cost or it will be to raise money for arts organisations and initiatives. We are teachers and freelancers who are passionate about our subject and our aim is to make sure that all know its worth and can feel its worth.

One thing is for sure, it's about all of us not just one person - the collaboration and conversations through the TTT's shows so many people have so many strengths and therefore together we can take on all that is thrown at us, you are never EVER alone.

Quite simply, we want to be there for you - an ear to listen, a system to support you, a think tank of ideas. Check out our ethos below.

Drama Matters, why?

**Because it's powerful,
it' doesn't just plant seeds, grow minds,
save minds. It actually has an immense
power to bring about change.**

**Together, we bring about that change, together
we hear you, we see you, we are you.
All of you, never ever the select few.**



Drama Matters - Drama Department Staff Room



@dramamatters1



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THE POWER OF DRAMA EDUCATION

NETWORKING WEEKEND

As I write this article it is December 2023. I am sitting in the lounge of my house, Christmas tree lights twinkling, glass of wine in hand, finally relaxing after a busy but fulfilling term. My mind, for once, seems to have a little space as the whirlwind that lives inside it has calmed for the holidays. I have just bought my 2024 calendar (yes, I'm old school; it has to be a paper one) and am transferring the dates that were scribbled in tiny, indecipherable writing at the end of December. A few though, unable to fit, were still swimming around in my brain, risking being sucked down the plughole of doom and forgotten. I copy the scribbles over to the appropriate month, this time in my neatest A grade handwriting. One particular date suddenly jumps from the page: 26 July 2024. My heart does a little jig and speeds up momentarily. It's the date of the next Drama Matters Networking Weekend! Memories of this year's event come flooding back...

It was my second time attending and it didn't disappoint. In fact, it was even better than the first one I attended and that was hard to beat. For those of us lucky enough to be able to get there on Friday night, Zak hosted a hilarious quiz on all things drama and theatre. We were put into teams for this which was the perfect ice-breaker and started the bonding immediately. I quickly realised that my knowledge of musical theatre was far inferior than I had thought (I'm going to need to get up before the next one) but that didn't dampen my spirits! It was so brilliant to be reunited with friends made at the previous networking weekend and exciting to meet more drama teachers who were new to Drama Matters. I went to bed buzzing and excited for the next morning.

Saturday was jam packed with sessions which we experienced both as teacher and learner. It is testament to our subject that a group of 60 drama teachers can become so comfortable with each other within such a short space of time. Within a couple of hours the incredible Cate Hollis from 'Voices of the Holocaust' had us sensitively moving around each other's bodies creating powerful, emotive physical theatre pieces. Some of the sessions were run by our fellow drama teachers and some were led by industry professionals but all were equally engaging.

The breadth of CPD was impressive; from hip hop Shakespeare to Commedia dell'Arte and MN Acting Academy for Film to finding out about the Arts Report. Lucy from We Teach Drama gave us some innovative techniques for teaching lighting and there was a brilliant session on improving written work that I am sure is going to have a positive impact on my results this year.

One of the highlights though had to be the incredible Box House Theatre who treated us to a performance of their 'Twisted Tales', a physical theatre piece using 'platform theatre', a term that was new to me.

And not only does the weekend encompass a multitude of varied CPD sessions but we also get to let our hair down in the evening with the Drama Matters Ball, dancing and karaoke! The theme this year was musicals and the delegates certainly went all out in sourcing and making costumes and props, my favourite being the extremely creative magic carpet (that lost a wheel and collapsed whilst being pulled along the red carpet resulting in much hysterical laughter!)

Sunday started with a leisurely breakfast and a meditation session, followed by even more CPD. There was Community Theatre, a session on planning your school trip, as well as the amazing Fourth Monkey. New this year was the fascinating 'Drama Behind the Mask' discussion led by a panel of industry professionals and teachers. As if this wasn't enough, the weekend closed with each delegate being handed a goodie bag, generously filled with plays, stationery and discount vouchers from our kind sponsors. After lots of hugs goodbye to friends old and new, I departed the hotel feeling excited and inspired for the new term, and knowing that if at any point in the year my energy wanes, I only have to reach out to the Drama Matters family to refill my cup with dramatic enthusiasm!

I open my eyes, take a sip of wine and look back down at my calendar. I underline the most important date of the year in thick black marker: 26-28 July 2024. Somehow I have a feeling it's going to be a good one...



By Charlie Scherp

For more information on the 2024 Networking Weekend and to book your place, click here.



By Nina Lemon

DRAMA CHALLENGES TODAY:

in the classroom and beyond

When the editor of Drama Matters Magazine posted a question in a Facebook group, asking members to comment on the main challenges faced for Drama and Theatre today, I started typing and quickly realised I couldn't stop. I had so much to say and felt so passionately about the topic that I was delighted when she PM'd me and asked me to write an article.

I am Artistic Director of Peer Productions, a youth arts charity which I founded seventeen years ago. It's a job which I love unreservedly but that comes with many significant challenges.

I have a fairly broad perspective on where the challenges lie. I am a playwright, theatre-maker, facilitator, entrepreneur and researcher and this means that I come into contact with a very wide range of people in my day to day working life.

This includes children and young people, with and without learning disabilities, from age eight all the way through to young adults of twenty five and we work in partnership with a large number of schools through our touring and outreach work reaching in the region of 15,000 young people a year.

As the leader of our charity, I regularly speak to decision makers, partners and funders and, as a PhD student at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, my thesis focusses on playwriting for young people so I am always researching and reading about how both the theatre industry and drama education are evolving.

Sadly, the picture which is emerging is a stark one and the challenges we, as a subject, now face are more complex and multifaceted than ever before.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Young people are not the same as they were.

No. They are not.

There is a very real mental health crisis which disproportionately affects young people and it is playing a significant role in schools and in particular in drama studios.

In a recent participatory research project, which I led with year six pupils, I was firstly struck by how young they seemed and how ill-equipped they are to tackle the next stage of their education. Many expressed overwhelming feelings of anxiety, not only about their transition to secondary school (as you might expect) but also cataclysmic fears about homelessness, the destruction of the planet and even their own deaths.

The way they interact and create could not be more different than the children and teenagers, who were foolish with their own sense of indestructibility, I fondly remember working with ten or fifteen years ago. I am seeing the impact in young adults too. Year on year, and even more so post pandemic, we are seeing a decline in the maturity of the 18 year olds who apply for our training programmes, a decrease in the ability to work with others and a decrease in resilience and ability to take on board feedback and this is in a cohort who are actively choosing to pursue drama.

Our training programmes are free, but whereas we used to have young people relocating from across the UK and beyond to take part, fears from young people and their families about their ability to manage away from home emotionally and financially, means that almost all are local and living with their parents.



Prospects for these generations, who have already lost formative educational and socialisation years to Covid isolation, are extremely bleak with the cost of living crisis, climate change and social media consumption all contributing to a nihilistic sense of hopelessness. It's unsurprising, therefore, that we're seeing an increase in serious mental health problems. Systematic and long term underfunding for young people's mental health services means that all educators, but in particular those of us in drama who deal in feelings, are picking up the strain.

We are also experiencing a change in attitude from some young people, parents and educators.

In the past a young person who was too anxious to perform might have been gently guided to overcome their anxieties and these moments, which led to an increased ability to communicate and self-advocate, for many were life changing.

I am not talking about forcing young people but encouraging, guiding and coaching. Now, young people who feel fear are not encouraged to overcome these fears. Instead "I have anxiety" (even only if self diagnosed) is seen as a get out card to avoid and bow out of situations which might be initially uncomfortable.

This pathologising of feelings results in some young people becoming stuck or entrenched in a position or label which may, under different circumstances, have been fleeting or temporary. This demise in confidence, risk-taking and oracy skills results in a significant group of young people who find drama too challenging to engage with.



DRAMA'S POSITION & PERCEIVED VALUE IN THE CURRICULUM

Drama in schools is vitally important especially for young people from less affluent backgrounds whose families are less able to pay for extracurricular opportunities. However, it has always had its own rules, ideas and modes of expression, which don't always sit comfortably within a wider school community.

I regularly read about drama teachers, for example, whose colleagues refuse to deliver their cover lessons, indicating a fundamental lack of understanding and respect for the value of this kind of learning.

The introduction of the EBacc, lack of Drama specified in the National Curriculum, and a post-Govian emphasis, which devalues creative subjects in favour of science and technology, together with an increased emphasis on secondary education as a training ground for the world of work, have all contributed to drama falling even further down the academic pecking order.

Despite Drama being an ideal opportunity for young people to practice transferable work skills like speaking, listening and team work, many are unable to make that link and instead devalue the subject by pointing to a precarious and oversubscribed profession with few opportunities to forge a career.

The looming spectre of OFSTED and burnt out teachers overwhelmed by picking up on children's needs that should be being served by mental health professionals and social workers, make many secondary schools an inhospitable environment for creativity and Drama suffers as a result.



AUDIENCE BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENTION



“If they don't feel safe in school, how are they meant to access creativity?”

Across the board there has been a decline in audience behaviours with many West End shows having to be stopped due to unpleasant, disrespectful and dangerous audience behaviour.

In a post TikTok environment, where audience attention seems to be fleeting and precarious, I feel as a writer that I am having to work harder to engage the audience. I am writing shorter plays with more changes of tone, tempo and aesthetics and, in the case of my latest work for primary schools,

I'm relying more heavily on audience interactivity. Every year we perform

around 100 times in schools across the South-East and behaviour is definitely becoming more unruly and less respectful.

Our actors are getting the brunt of a rise in discriminatory and sexist views with mainly young male audience members shouting out offensive, abusive things often unchallenged by staff.

If this is what we are experiencing, is it any wonder that some students are resistant to putting themselves out there and performing in front of their peers? If they don't feel safe in school, how are they meant to access creativity?

BEYOND SCHOOL

Every three years, I am tasked to revisit our charity's strategy and business plan. As part of this endeavour, I look into who else is working in the field to consider who our competitors are and where we are positioned within the market.

Every time I do this, I have fewer organisations to research as theatre companies, especially smaller ones, are unable to survive.

The charity sector as a whole is struggling and with so many now relying on food and warmth banks, and local authorities stretched to breaking point, it's not surprising that arts funding is facing unmanageable cuts.

TOGETHER, WE ARE STRONG

So, suffice to say it's not an easy time to be a drama teacher or theatre maker and many are choosing to leave the profession in favour of less challenging or more rewarding career paths.

This article certainly makes for sobering reading but where there is darkness there is always light. So here's a quick survival guide to help you weather the storm.

1) Look for the light. - Yes, it's tough out there but there are still so many glimmering moments worth cherishing. Try to let go of your previous expectations. What might have been unremarkable five years ago, could be a huge achievement for a young person today.

2) Fuel your own subject passion - Remind yourself why you chose Drama. Go to the theatre, read plays, make your own work.

3) Connect - Whatever you are facing professionally, you won't be alone. Especially if you are a one person department, try and find others who are in the same boat. Share your worries but also your thoughts, hopes and dreams. Just having someone to bounce ideas around with can make a huge difference!

Nina founded Peer Productions back in 2006 and leads their creative output and development. She is the founder trustee as well as the resident playwright and oversees all artistic aspects of the organisation. Nina's interests, as both an artist and an individual, lie in the furthering of human rights and she is particularly passionate about improving life changes for often marginalised groups including young people, disabled people and women and girls. Prior to founding Peer Productions, Nina has worked extensively as a director, writer and project manager in a wide range of artistic, community and educational settings.

www.peerproductions.co.uk

www.ninalemon.com



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REIGNITING A SENSE OF PLAY

Enhancing the devising process and moving away from a desire to 'endgame'

By

LES ENFANTS TERRIBLES

One of the key processes in devising is a sense of joyful play. In fact, beyond just our devising process, at the heart of our creative strategy for all projects at Les Enfants Terribles is a fundamental sense of play. But play takes time, so expecting teachers to be able to teach a sense of play in the current digital climate of immediate response challenges the core necessity of play - you can't know how the game ends until you've played it.

This culture leads students towards a desire to understand their whole devising piece before they embark on the process to create it. We call this 'endgaming'. They desire certainty and fight against the feeling of the unknown. This isn't isolated to the devising process by any means, or Drama classrooms but it is the enemy of what is possible if they fully surrender to the creative process. The imagination needs time to develop, that multilayered thinking doesn't happen instantly, however much we wish it could.

In my travels through schools, I've seen a recent trend towards students devising with a laptop/pen and paper in hand, scripting every precise moment before enacting the age-old strategy of 'show me, don't tell me'. It's important to acknowledge that this is by no means as a result of encouragement from their teacher to do so, but clearly as a desire for the security the device/paper is bringing them, making things feel real in writing before they can imagine and play with them in the abstract form.

This is enhanced significantly for neurodiverse or anxious learners who might crave certainty and structure in unfamiliar situations, and the security of a written script is certainly one way to get it. Observing the devising process though, it is clear that the editing phase does (and should) lead to fundamental changes in the original ideas, and some students may feel a reluctance to change what has been set in stone (or ink, in this case) which can limit the potential of a piece.



Images © Les Enfants Terribles, Workshop 2022

If we zoom in to focus on GCSE/A Level candidates facing a devising task, it's possible they might perceive the notion of play to be juvenile, and so resist it as a starting point, mistaking childhood imaginative play for the sophisticated flexible thinking needed for creative play. There is actually very little difference, but for me, the distinction is in the grace needed to know what to keep from the play when it comes to developing the piece in rehearsal. 'Hold on tightly, let go lightly'.

The distinction lies not in the joyfulness of the play, but in the collaborative skills learned during Key Stage 3 to offer ideas, negotiate solutions, adapt to other people's contributions and evaluate success as you're playing.

A perfect argument for a spiral curriculum model in which devising features each year, with added rigour and development each cycle.

Refocusing the initial phases of the devising process to revolve around play can often serve to build that sense of ensemble that less-confident groups struggle to form. When the process begins without play, it is common for more able students to emerge as a 'director' figure within their group and as such, the other students take on the role of performer, and shy away from the creative control really needed to achieve the top band within a devising marks scheme.

By establishing a method for playful experimentation at the beginning of rehearsal processes, there is an increased likelihood that the group will form a collaborative bond for decision making and a more cohesive approach to the process overall.

So how can we get them to explore through play? Keeping in mind you'll have chosen a stimulus, and not to confuse the two, play strategies are 'ways-in' to rehearsal, or the devising of the piece, rather than being a starting point for their themes to develop from. By no means exhaustive, but here are some of our Les Enfants Terribles strategies into play:

- *Start with an object that doesn't belong in your normal lesson workspace and enforces physical engagement. A beachball, a skipping rope or a hula hoop. These will evoke nostalgic play in your students.*
- *Use the space differently, so they enter the room with a sense of playfulness. Turn all the desks upside down and use them as 'boats', use the auditorium (if you have one) as the performance space and allow them to 'hide' within the seats, lift and tie the curtains in your studio to expose all the feet of those waiting backstage and ask them to create a narrative using only sound and feet.*
- *Start with a collaborative game they'll remember from childhood for example; Duck, Duck, Goose, Grandma's Treasure or Wink Murder. Start playing the game and slowly adjust the stakes until the game is representative of real life by adding layers of context.*
- *Give them a 'challenge' and say nothing. Use masking tape to make a maze on the classroom floor. Have them enter the room to a note with instructions for example: You must walk only around the outside of the room, without stepping foot inside 'the zone'. Decide together what is inside 'the zone' and devise a strategy to access 'the zone' without any individual stepping in or on it. Sit silently and refuse to speak while they strategise.*

Let your imagination go wild, the possibilities are endless.

The tendency to 'endgame' - that is, need to picture the final product before commencing work on a piece, can be avoided if we as teachers structure our lessons to prioritise devising as an active verb, rather than an entirely intellectual pursuit. Facilitating risk-taking for our students is the ultimate challenge which can produce rewards for them as performers and designers, if they get it right. Let us know how your students respond to playfulness at the beginning of devising rehearsals. We can't wait to hear how they get on!

For more devising and classroom ideas, visit our free online library of resources TheCuriosityIndex.co.uk or get in touch about a workshop in your school.

FOUR WAYS TO DEVELOP STUDENT RESPONSES FOR LIVE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

By Lucy Bellingham - We Teach Drama

As drama educators, we want students to enjoy theatre and see a range of work, both live and digital. Developing personal, critical opinions about a range of theatre is crucial and will feed into all areas of the drama courses they are studying. Learning to craft responses which are both analytical and evaluative, whilst embedding 'sophisticated' drama terminology is not a skill which can be developed overnight but here are some tried and tested ways which can help to develop students' writing.

PROPS TO DEVELOP ORACY

With younger students, theatre props are a great way to develop oracy and teach the sentence structures for evaluation and reflective feedback. This will help to provide a solid foundation for their writing as they progress. My favourite props to use are:

- A Director's clapperboard
- A Director's megaphone

Year 7's love using the clapperboard for positive evaluative feedback ("I liked.../ one moment which was particularly effective was...") and the megaphone for clarification if any moments in the performance were unclear ("I'm unsure as to why... Can ask why...?"). The use of props reinforces the idea of 'one voice', with all students respecting each other's opinions.

Read more here in the We Teach Drama Blog: Using Props to Develop Evaluative Feedback: www.weteachdrama.com/post/using-props-to-develop-evaluative-feedback



PRE-SHOW: KNOWING AIMS AND INTENTIONS

This is slightly contentious as I know some teachers like students to see a production 'cold' and let the show speak for itself, which I totally understand. However, if students are going to have to write about the production in an exam, I always ensure that they know something about the show, even to just get them excited about going!



I also think it's useful to look at any videos or resource packs online which might indicate the *aims and intentions* of the director or company. If students go into the performance with this knowledge, they can often think more clearly about whether those aims and intentions were achieved and be able to evaluate *how*.

BINGO!

Head of Drama Rob Otton focuses on building the student's confidence with using drama terminology and evaluative language at Key Stage 3 (11 to 14 years in the UK) through oracy and short, focused writing activities (sometimes on the wall of the drama studio or group-writing on large pieces of paper on the floor). These are low stakes activities, which, over time, develop the foundations for writing needed for higher level courses. After seeing a live or digital performance, he gets his students to complete a 'Bingo' board, in which they write an analysis point (in blue) and evaluation point (in red) in each square.

B	I	N	G	O

ANALYSIS

Using a blue pen, write down the drama skills you see as you watch the performance.

EVALUATION

In red, write a brief note on what impact this has on you as an audience member.

The Bingo board could focus on:

- The whole production
- One moment or scene
- One dramatic element (e.g. lighting, set etc)
- One Performer

Once they develop their paragraphs, they can continue to use red and blue colour-coding for analysis and evaluation. This helps them to visually see what they need to develop in their own work, supporting self-assessment and makes your life easier as a teacher when you are marking. These 'Bingo' boards also provide an excellent starting point for practice essays and revision notes!



Lucy Bellingham is a teacher and freelance drama consultant, based in Warwickshire. Since studying Drama at Manchester University and pursuing a PGCE in Secondary Drama, she has worked within the field of drama education for over twenty years, from the rural midlands to inner city London academies. She founded We Teach Drama in 2021 and now creates resources & CPD for drama teachers internationally.

WAYS IN THROUGH QUESTIONS

One activity I always do in the very first lesson, after students have seen a live performance, is to prepare big pieces of sugar paper and scatter them on the floor around the room. Each piece of sugar paper has a specific question about the production written on it. For example, if they had seen the ghost play *Woman in Black* appropriate questions might be:

How did the set designer create a range of locations and settings throughout the production?

Which moment made you feel most scared as an audience member and how was this achieved?

How did the lighting & sound designer create the atmosphere of the church/ graveyard?

Was the performer playing the 'Woman' successful in conveying character through her movement & non-verbal communication?

Give the students time to move around & read to each piece of sugar paper, discuss in pairs or groups, and make notes in response to each question. Encourage them to as much drama terminology as possible and provide practical examples from the show. This exercise provides a good starting point for class debate when discussing the show.



The 'Bingo' template from this Blog is available to download from our free Resource Library, in the dedicated 'Live Performance Review' folder.

Sign up here to access over 150 free time-saving resources: www.weteachdrama.com/get-the-password

If you are already a member, sign in now and download the resources: www.weteachdrama.com/free-resources

We also have 30 free Blog posts to boost your drama teacher knowledge on a range of subjects from practitioners to theatre design and drama pedagogy. Our most popular Blog on Katie Mitchell has been read over 4000 times by students and teachers: www.weteachdrama.com/blog

ANONYMOUS POST - FOLLOW THIS SERIES OVER THE FIRST THREE ISSUES

A SEASON OF CHANGE:

REFLECTING ON MY FIRST TERM AT A NEW SCHOOL

I always look forward to the Christmas break; we all know how busy the first term is! This year, the break is even more welcome as I have spent the last term settling into a new school after 10 years in my previous school, and I think I underestimated just how exhausting the transition would be.

I knew my new school would provide me with more challenges, and I'm not ashamed to admit that a few tears were shed after my first week, and I feared I had made a mistake.

I missed the familiarity of knowing where everything is and how everything works, of schemes of work I had taught before, and as an established member of staff I certainly missed the relationships built over time with the pupils; now I was the stranger who had replaced their beloved teacher! Yet as is so often the case with the arts, I found plenty of opportunity to begin to foster these relationships outside the classroom.

One of the reasons I made the move was to work in a school where drama is really popular amongst the pupils, and my first term has shown this to be the case and then some; my first club with year 7 saw over 60 pupils turn up! The highlight of the term has certainly been the drama festival, a long standing event which sees pupils in Years 8-9 working with Year 12 production teams to produce 10 minute performances, which are rehearsed both in class and after school and then all shared on festival day just before Christmas.

I was apprehensive to say the least about the involvement of some of the more disengaged pupils, but I need not have worried. I soon realised that it is through events such as these that staff and pupils alike get the opportunity to see these pupils with fresh eyes, and the pupils themselves an opportunity to engage with school life in a positive way, and isn't that the power of the arts?

I feel my relationships with the pupils have developed more quickly through working with them on this event, as we worked together to create something with their 6th form teams and the competitive element of the festival certainly brought out the best in many of us!

As I look ahead to my second term, I am not foolish enough to think that it will be plain sailing. But now that I've led my first big school event, cast the production for the end of summer term, and know how to get photocopying done, I feel a little more settled.

LIGHTS, CAMERA,

EDUCATION: Unveiling MN Awards' Screen Acting Exams for Schools

Who are MN Awards?

MN Awards is a new Ofqual-regulated exam board, renowned for our deep industry roots through our affiliation with Middleweek Newton Talent Management. This synergy of practical industry experience and educational expertise, positions MN Awards uniquely in training actors and educators, blending traditional acting methods with the demands of contemporary screen performance. You may have heard of us before via MN Academy - we run Screen Acting courses at our studios in London, as well as a thriving co-curricular programme of Filmmaking After School Clubs in London & the South East.

The new exam board provides Graded Examinations in Screen Acting (Grades 1 - 8, levels 1 - 3). The best way to assess Screen Acting is via the screen, therefore all exams take place remotely via Zoom. This means there are no minimum learner requirements and you can submit students for assessment as and when they are ready. No more waiting for a full cohort to be ready or expensive fees for calling an examiner out to your venue!

No special equipment is needed. Our aim is to make Screen Acting accessible for all students with a passion for it!

How can I use it in my school?

The Graded Exams in Screen Acting are perfect for extra-curricular classes or as an enrichment within your current curriculum.

We provide the specification which outlines the assessment tasks, along with plenty of guidance on our website which takes you through some exercises you can use in your classroom.

What age range are the grades appropriate for?

Grade 1 is suitable for ages 8+, but it's totally up to you how you approach the grades with your learners. You are free to select scripts that are relatable to your learner. This means, you could jump into Grade 1 with a group of year 9s and it still be of interest whilst building a solid foundation.

We recommend a minimum age of 13 for Grade 4.



Do I need to be trained?

We've written the specification and accompanying guidance with drama teachers in mind - if you can teach drama, you can teach screen acting.

We appreciate however, it is a new technique, and as such have provided plenty of guidance for registered teachers, including:

- Task breakdowns (for every task in every grade!), explaining how best to approach teaching it - hints, tips & tricks for getting the best out of your students.
- Technical support - guidance on framing and the technical aspects of teaching Screen Acting.
- Video examples (coming soon) of each task.
- Key exercises you can use in the classroom to support the development of Screen Acting Skills.

We do also run CPD sessions at our studios in Kings Cross and are in the process of organising some sessions in Birmingham and Manchester as well. These one day courses are designed to introduce Screen Acting as a subject to teachers, increasing their confidence and passing on some of our key exercises.

My kids would love it but I bet it's expensive?

The only cost involved is the exam fee itself, starting at £38 for Grade 1, gradually increasing to £83 for a Grade 8 exam. No special equipment is required, although we recommend using a device for filming in class so that students can watch their performances back to evaluate how they can improve, and get a better understanding of how they come across on Screen.

I want to be trained but I bet the CPD is expensive?

Our CPD is competitively priced at £50 for a full day. It is an accredited course with CPD UK. The course takes place from 10am - 4pm, and includes discussions & practical workshops. Our next courses in London are on Monday 8th April & Thursday 29th August 2024. You can book onto a CPD course by visiting our website

What do the students actually get from it qualification wise?

Similar to theatre based graded-exams, students receive a recognised qualification and an E-Certificate. For Grades 6, 7 & 8, students also receive UCAS points in accordance with the qualification credit value. We use a criterion-based approach for assessment and learners are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction. UCAS will be confirming our point allocations for our Level 3 qualifications in April.

Level 1 : Grades 1, 2 & 3
Level 2: Grades 4 & 5
Level 3: Grades 6, 7 & 8.

Each grade is split into through sections- Acting (these are your scripted tasks), Green Screen & Mo-cap (from imagining they are standing on the ledge of a skyscraper, to becoming a mythical beast, this section is all about your students communicating the imagined through their performance) and finally Reflection. The 'knowledge' section of the exam is an opportunity for learners to talk about their performances and reflect on how the context of their chosen scenarios impacted their performance decisions.

What's my next step?

You can sign up as a teacher on our website- it's completely free to register. Just visit the website and hit teacher login.

By registering as a teacher you receive access to our 'Teacher Dashboard'. From the dashboard you can register students, book live exams, register as a Centre, apply for Reasonable Adjustments, enquire about results and more. In the top right corner you'll also find the most exciting bit - the guidance section! Hit the Guidance button and you're transported to your personal guide for introducing Screen Acting in your classroom.

How soon can I start?

Today! You can register as a teacher and start preparing your learners for examinations right now. You can choose when to book your students exams, and can reschedule or cancel them right from your dashboard.

Is it Ofqual recognised?

Yes! We are proud to be the UK's first Ofqual regulated awarding organisation to specialise in Film & TV. Our Graded Exams in Screen Acting are regulated qualifications.

How do I sell it to my SLT?

Film & TV is one of the fastest growing industries in the UK. MN Awards are a fresh new exam board, our objective is to provide students passionate about film, TV & media with a well-rounded education.

The curriculum is innovative, developed by the Film & TV industry, and by introducing it at your school, you can be one of the first schools in the UK providing regulated qualifications in Film & TV for under 18s. It can also boost engagement with the arts... Screen Acting is a great way to capture the attention of students who do not typically view themselves as 'performers'. By including it within your Performing Arts Department, you can boost engagement, and ignite student's interest in the arts and drama.

Technology is here to stay, and it is so important for students to build confidence with public speaking not just face-to-face, but also via a screen.

For more info on MN Awards, visit their Facebook and Instagram pages (@MNAwards), visit their website www.mnawards.co.uk or drop them an email on office@mnawards.co.uk



By Jason Lasky

BRIDGING BOUNDARIES:

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNEY OF MEISNER, LINKLATER AND WELLBEING

In a world marked by shifting geopolitical tides, my journey from theatre student and practitioner to international educator and acting coach has been a testament to the enduring power of the arts. As relations between the US and Russia, and Russia with other parts of the world, have dramatically shifted over the past decade, our student cohorts have continued to grow—a proof that drama unites!

For me, this journey began with studying theatre at Binghamton University and unfolded into a rich tapestry of experiences that led me to the heart of actor training and the development of the Lasky Wellbeing Approach.

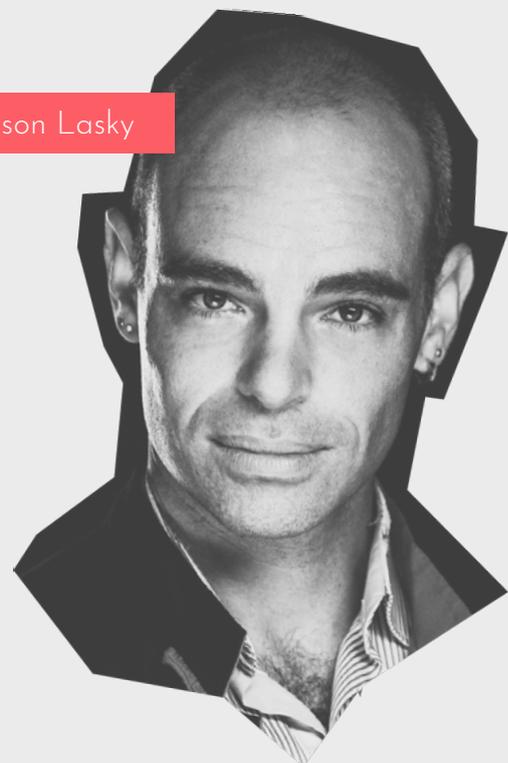
Over the past 12 years, I've completed two master's programs, participated in a third, helped with a fourth, and earned masters degrees in IB Education and Writing for Stage and Screen. My educational journey set the stage for a transition from teaching IBDP Theatre to shaping the artistic narratives of scores upon scores of Russian stage and screen actors, alongside my wife, Svetlana.

Our main focus has been the Meisner Technique, a powerful tool that, when combined with Linklater Voice Training, unlocks the potential for profound personal and artistic growth. This journey started organically, with plans to expand our teachings to Tbilisi and Dubai in the near future.

My early experiences abroad, particularly studying at Nottingham University and participating in a devised student-run theatre company called the New Theatre, laid the foundation for international collaboration. This groundwork solidified when I moved to Shanghai in 2006, establishing myself as a writer, actor, director, and producer.

A major turning point came when I entered the esteemed Actors Studio Drama School in New York City, studying under the guidance of Elizabeth Kemp and Susan Aston, Robert Serrell, and Michael Billingsley, among other luminaries. Despite returning to Shanghai in 2013, my thirst for exploration led to a grant from Theatre Communications Group for the "40 Days of Night" theatre project in Murmansk, Russia, in 2015, for which Svetlana served as international project manager.

A brief stint in Nairobi as the Head of Drama in 2016 presented challenges, but my resilience found an outlet at the Nairobi Performing Arts Studio. Subsequently, my journey led me to UWC Dilijan College, where I served as the Teacher of Theatre and English for three years, contributing to the growth of the program, outstanding academic results, and elevating the quality of productions.



“Our main focus has been the Meisner Technique, a powerful tool that, when combined with Linklater Voice Training, unlocks the potential for profound personal and artistic growth”



A chance meeting with a film acting school sparked the last four years of Meisner training for Russian actors, with the latest session taking place while you're reading this article! What emerged was a revelation about the profound impact of these techniques on the individual, unblocking elements and fostering empathy and emotional literacy.

Against this backdrop of political tension, the Meisner Technique and, later, Linklater Voice Training have become not just tools for artistic expression but also bridges connecting individuals across cultural and political divides. The stage has become a sanctuary where differences dissolve, and common ground is found.

As an American educator teaching Russian actors, the impact of drama education is profound. It defies the geopolitical tensions that may exist between nations. The stage and the body's instrument, our common ground, becomes a space where individuals connect on a deeper, more human level, while at the same time fostering a spread of awareness and expiration of their emotional literacy.

What's struck me most during this journey has been the kindness and acceptance shown by the actors. Svetlana and I have worked tirelessly to expand their awareness of their artistic instruments in service of storytelling across genres and mediums.

The growth of our student cohorts amid political turmoil echoes a universal truth—art and education can transcend borders. Theatre, with its ability to cultivate empathy and emotional intelligence, becomes a powerful antidote to the divisive forces that sometimes dominate the world stage.

This exploration further led to crucial insights about how the Meisner Technique and Linklater Voice Training complement each other, freeing blocked emotional elements within individuals. Svetlana's research into wellbeing in international schools became pivotal, culminating in the Lasky Wellbeing Approach—a solution to the wellbeing training gap and the perceived crisis in international schools.

The Lasky Wellbeing Approach is not just a set of practices; it's a philosophy that integrates seamlessly into actor training, emphasizing the holistic development of individuals. The friendly and personable tone of our teachings reflects the essence of drama—bridging divides, fostering understanding, and creating positive habits for a lifetime.

In a time where bridges seem to be collapsing, the stage remains a sturdy bridge, connecting hearts and minds. My journey from student to teacher mirrors the transformative power of theatre education. Through perpetual learning, international experiences, and a commitment to empathy and emotional literacy, the impact of drama extends far beyond the stage, making it a powerful force for positive change.

To delve deeper into this journey and the philosophy that underpins it, visit www.jasonlasky.com.

Additionally, explore the innovative approach to wellbeing in international schools at www.laskywellbeing.com.

#SEIZETHE DAY

Steve Ball, co-chair of the Drama and Theatre Education Alliance (DTEA), talks about Seize The Day, a national campaign to engage politicians and school governors with drama and theatre for children and young people in schools, colleges, universities and theatres.

For too long we have been in danger of preaching to the converted about the value of drama and theatre for children and young people at the expense of engaging policy makers and politicians who have the power to bring the changes needed for our work to thrive.

Many of us are only too aware of the ongoing decline in the take-up of drama in schools. Between 2010 and 2020:

The number of drama teachers reduced by 18%

The number of hours taught reduced by 12%

Take-up of GCSE drama declined by 40%

Take up of performing/expressive arts declined by 69%. (1)

Meanwhile the Government has imposed a 50% funding cut to arts subjects at Higher Education institutions in England and the proportion of children who have participated in theatre and drama activities has reduced from 69% in 2008/09 to around 53.5% in 2019/20. (2)

With this in mind the DTEA is co-ordinating a national campaign to raise awareness of the value of Drama and Theatre Education in young people's lives, coinciding with World Theatre Day and World Theatre Day for Children & Young People.

(1) House of Lords report "Requires improvement: urgent change for 11-16 education Education for 11-16 Year Olds Committee. Report of Session 2023-24
(2) Statista Research Department, Oct 11, 2023

We are asking schools, colleges, universities, theatres, arts centres and youth theatres to stage a drama or theatre event in the week of 20th - 27th March 2024 and to invite their local MP, councillors, school governors and local media. The events can take any form; a workshop, rehearsal, event or performance for, with or by children and young people and can be something you are already planning to do that week. This will build on last year's Seize The Day campaign when the DTEA co-ordinated 88 events by schools, theatre companies and practitioners, who invited their local MP and press to visit them and witness their experience.

The DTEA website contains information about how you can register your interest in hosting an event, find your local MP and view a template invitation letter. We encourage you to invite your local newspaper or radio station and post your event on social media and highlight it in your newsletters.

Once in your school, college, university or theatre you may want to hand them the Drama, Theatre and Young People Manifesto www.dtealliance.co.uk/manifesto

It can be an opportunity to share the challenges you face but also to present your local MP, councillor or school governor with the reasons why drama and theatre make a difference to young people's lives in terms of improved educational attainment, mental health and wellbeing. You may want to talk about the contribution you make to the Creative Industries, worth £116 billion a year to the UK economy and employing one in 11 working people and the ways in which drama and theatre encourages civic and political engagement.

Given that there will be a general election this year this campaign will be more important than ever. Now is the time to Seize the Day!



Dr Steve Ball is co-chair of the Drama and Theatre Education Alliance (DTEA) and Director of Birmingham Arts School
www.bep.education/bas

TOWERS SCHOOL IS ALIVE WITH THE ARTS



By Becca Gardner

It is our belief at Towers School that all students deserve to experience a rich and challenging Drama curriculum which teaches them about performance, critical analysis, artistic difference and methods of production.

Our thriving and, excitingly, growing, Performing Arts department is at the heart of the decision making at school. We understand that experiences of Drama and the Performing Arts can change lives by offering students a place to belong and a sense of ownership over the work they create. We are a vehicle for social mobility and cultural capital, presenting our students with an insight into the world around them, beyond the limitations of their economic background or home. Furthermore, it is within Drama that students learn skills of rigour and self-discipline; we have an integral part to play in fostering a positive culture and climate within school.

Within our school, but also in schools across the country, it is the unique positioning of Drama and the arts where we deliver a curriculum that sees students out from behind their desk, working with peers, as part of a collaborative and shared experience. It is our duty therefore to deliver a curriculum that is inclusive, diverse and full of opportunities for students to find their own forms of self-expression and identity. Across Key Stage Three, students have an hour of Performing Arts a week, rotating between Drama and Dance.

Within our Drama KS3 curriculum we cover multiple Shakespeare Plays, Performance Skills, Naturalism, Physical Theatre, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, *A Monster Calls* and *DNA*. However, we want to equip our students with the skills required for successful careers in the industry so we also teach Stagecraft, Methods of Theatre and Stage Management. Similarly, we run a vibrant enrichment programme, including a well-attended Stage Door Club, training students in the roles and responsibilities required in theatre production.

Across Key Stage Four, whilst studying for their GCSE qualification, students have three hours of Drama a week and this increases to five in the School of Arts, Sixth Form, where we deliver the Cambridge Technical in Performing Arts and Gold Arts Award.

It is through delivering the Gold Arts Award most recently that we have been able to support our primary school colleagues in ensuring that Drama is confidently taught across Early Years, Key Stage One and Two. Our Drama Ambassadors, and Gold Arts Award cohort, have delivered two programmes across four of our feeder schools, using Drama as a platform for confidence building, collaboration and creativity, benefitting over 1,000 young children.



We pride ourselves on providing authentic experiences of the arts, working as a Royal Shakespeare Company Mentor Secondary School and participating in the National Theatre Connections Festival annually, aiming to immerse our students in cultural experiences and opportunities. Our own school theatre, a 220-seat Proscenium Arch, is named the Rylance Theatre, with permission from Sir Mark Rylance himself, who we had the pleasure of taking our students to see in November 2023 in Dr Semmelweis. It is our work here that we are most proud of.

Last academic year, we produced over 30 public performances, including Brainstorm, Six:Teen Edition and Mary Poppins Jr, welcoming over 4,000 audience members into our school. We are currently working on an RSC Associate Schools' production of Hamlet, the National Theatre Connections play Orchestra and our own school-production of Les Miserables: Schools' Edition opening in two weeks!

It is important to us that Drama, and other Arts subjects, are a vital part of a balanced curriculum. Drama within our school is academically rigorous, and of equal weight, status, value and importance to other subjects. Drama is an essential literacy and numeracy in equipping children with skills for life, and the creativity to contribute to the building of a successful society.

TOP TIPS

- **Say 'yes!'** - The work of a Drama teacher sometimes feels unbalanced to that of our classroom based colleagues but the real joy of the job comes from all of the exciting additional things that we get to do. If offered, say yes! Take part in a new partnership? Sure! Perform at a local event? Great! Saying yes, builds reputation and this has only gone to secure us so many experiences for our students.
- **Find your identity** - our growth as a Performing Arts Faculty has been, in part, down to the establishment of our brand. Get the badges for your students to wear, the hoodies, the t-shirts. Following your own school policies, use social media to promote your work and let everyone know who you are. This has opened so many doors for us. Our instagram account has amassed over 190,000 views and this has contributed to our growth in numbers at GCSE and A-level as well as the opportunities that we are offered by external partners.
- **Enrichment** - Our success is in part down to the ownership that students have of the work we create in school. Our clubs run across years meaning a real sense of family is created with older students working together with the younger years.



TOWERS SCHOOL
AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

It is within the Performing Arts department at Tower School where students learn skills of rigour and self-discipline; we have an integral part to play in fostering a positive culture and climate within school.

To follow us on Twitter, please follow [@PerformingArtsE](https://twitter.com/PerformingArtsE)



VAMOS

THEATRE

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF MASK AND NON-VERBAL THEATRE ON STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE SKILLS AND ENGAGEMENT WITH DRAMA

By Janie Armour, Head of Communications, Vamos Theatre

Vamos Theatre is the UK's leading full mask theatre company and we've been creating performances, workshops and training since 2006. We specialise in full mask theatre, a style that uses no words, but tells its story through body language, movement, sound and visuals. We bring together the exciting elements of physical theatre, mask and performance in an innovative way, exploring themes that are often challenging and emotionally resonant.



Our work taps directly into the power of empathy. Replacing words with visual storytelling, we inspire and encourage awareness of our shared human experience in an increasingly isolating world. Key to our ethos is the idea of nothing about us, without us - our productions are made in consultation with members of the public who generously share their knowledge and experience of particular issues with us. We give voice to those who do not have one, those who are, for whatever reason, unable to tell their own story.

And full mask is a perfect way to do this. Words are not the only way to communicate. When an actor wears a mask that covers their whole face, words are replaced by actions. Non-verbal communication, through gesture, movement, body language and spatial relationships, takes the place of speech in a powerful mix of visual motion and emotionally charged expression. Think of Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, and the other silent movie greats.

FULL MASK THEATRE CREATES ENGAGING AND GENUINE STORYTELLING THAT AN AUDIENCE EMPATHISES AND CONNECTS WITH

To be successful, full mask theatre needs to be performed naturalistically, with physical precision; movement which is perfectly defined, gestures that are specific and controlled, visual expression which is economic and considered. Then, there is full mask technique - clarity in thought and movement which communicates precise meaning. Done well, full mask theatre creates engaging and genuine storytelling that an audience empathises and connects with - all without a word spoken.

These full mask theatre skills are, at whatever level, a fantastic addition to students' drama performance skills, whether or not they are using speech. We work widely with young people, from KS2 up to emerging artists from drama schools and universities, helping to grow these physical skills, as well as the enjoyment and creativity of making non-verbal theatre. Full mask workshops and residencies help all students, but are particularly accessible to less confident students, those whose first language isn't English, deaf and hard of hearing students, and those with additional education needs.

We also train and support teachers in physical and devised theatre, areas which teachers tell us can be challenging, and our workshops are always fun, inclusive and engaging. In 2023, we were awarded the Drama and Theatre Magazine Editor's Award for our learning programme, including our Mask Library (where you can hire a set of full masks for half a term for a very small fee) and award-winning digital learning area mask.ED, which gives lifetime access to

affordable modules, covering mask techniques, performance skills and theatre making. And there are lots of free resources on our website too, including Education Packs, mask performance shorts and more.

Vamos Theatre is currently touring its latest production. *Boy on the Roof*. Exploring what it's like to live with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), it's a dynamic non-verbal performance based on lived experience of young people, with an exciting cast including Gavin Maxwell (Frantic Assembly). Featuring full mask, vibrant projection and an original soundtrack, *Boy on the Roof* is the story of an unlikely friendship, where acceptance, understanding and love find their way to centre stage.

Boy on the Roof tours until March 2024, with an online film of the performance available to schools On Demand from March-June. We're already getting really positive feedback from our audiences, including young people who have ADHD and their families:

“OUR 2 NEURODIVERGENT YEAR 10 BOYS DECLARED IT THE BEST PIECE OF THEATRE THEY’VE SEEN.”

“OUR DAUGHTER WHO IS AUTISTIC REALLY APPRECIATED PERMISSION TO STIM!! IT WAS EMOTIONALLY MOVING IN SO MANY WAYS.”

Whether it's seeing a performance or taking part in a workshop, full mask theatre has so much to offer drama students - it opens up exciting new ways of approaching performance, it teaches clarity of communication beyond words, it grows empathy and connection, it is widely accessible and it has creativity and exploration at its foundation.

If you'd like to find out more about workshops, or to get more information on seeing a production, visit us at www.vamostheatre.co.uk/learning.



(note the double E & L)



MARK WHEELER

Mark Wheeler is a prominent British playwright and drama practitioner, particularly known for his verbatim and documentary-style plays.

He began writing plays while working as a drama teacher in schools. His works often explore social issues and are widely performed by schools, youth theatres, and amateur drama groups across the UK and beyond.

His contributions to drama and theatre education have led to his recognition as one of the most performed living playwrights in the UK. His work in theatre education and his influence on drama within the curriculum have made his texts and workshops a staple in educational drama. Drama Matters got in contact with mark to discuss his journey as a playwright and what he is currently working on.

How did you become a playwright?

I specifically remember, aged 10 walking back from a piano lesson, thinking if I write music I could leave something tangible when I die as other composers had done. I also had a French teacher at school, Mr Antrobus who had written a very popular school French text book (**Longman Audio Visual French**) which made a great impression on me.

I started writing songs, and to get them performed built musicals around them. My play **Race To Be Seen** was published in 1984 (initially by Longman!) and the permanence of a published script outliving me was achieved.

What was your favourite job?

My favourite job was as a Youth Theatre Director - 1979-2016. I loved it and still miss it. Answering this as a playwright... following a Drama Matters TTT, where I talked about my musical theatre background, I was commissioned by a delegate to write a new musical for her school. The result was **9 Teens**, a full length verbatim musical telling the story of nine teenagers from eight decades (1950's - 2020's). I was bowled over by the premiere in October 2023 and it proved ideal material for a teenagers to perform. (Thanks to Kirsten Stafford/Solihull School) My publisher (Salamander Street) has huge hopes for **9 Teens** and believing it has all the ingredients to become THE new school musical!

What was your worst job as a writer?

In 2002 I was commissioned to write a TIE play about truancy. It paid me well but I could muster little interest in "truancy". At that time **Big Brother** was new and I was a fan. I used a version of it as the backdrop to motivate myself. **The Gate Escape** became a successful professional show (with fantastic interactive voting pads). It is currently my 7th most performed play.

Memorable moments?

The forerunner to the current National Theatre Connections programme, *The Lloyds Bank National Theatre Challenge* had, as its prize, the opportunity to perform at the Royal National Theatre. I remember thinking 'what a rubbish prize! I'd prefer a video camera to record our work!' Despite this I entered our production.

There were 375 entries. 13 would be selected. I was not optimistic. I had only ever won a football trophy when I was 12 but... **Hard to Swallow** was selected!

Performing at the Royal National Theatre transpired to be the best prize. I sat in the audience feeling so, so proud of my young cast performing on the prestigious Olivier stage. Unbeknown to me, Ginny Spooner, later the Edexcel Drama Chief Examiner was there and sang my praises... all thanks to that one performance.

Any movie-star encounters?

In my first Drama teacher job (1979) I found myself directing Samantha Gates who had been Elly, in the live action/animated film **The Water Babies**. I was nervous thinking she must know more about acting than me. She was very humble and proved a wonderful asset to our production, **Smike** playing Fanny Squeers. We're still in touch and she's currently writing some great cookery books... check them out!

A few years later I gave another student, Garth Jennings, his first theatrical break in Epping Youth Theatre's premiere of **Too Much Punch For Judy**. Garth went on to win a BAFTA for **The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy**. He subsequently wrote and directed **Son of Rambo** and the **Sing!** franchise. Garth was a fabulous student and offers me a little tribute in his debut children's book **The Deadly 7** by naming a teacher after me!

Some of Mark's most popular plays.



What was your worst moment (as a writer)?

In 2020, Zinc Media (aka Dbda & Ten Alps) published 24 of my plays. Early in the Lockdown, they informed me they were to close... at the end of the week! My work, my legacy was inexplicably to be stifled out of existence. However, the story took a surreal twist. Two days later, my literary agent contacted me to say Salamander Street had made an offer for my plays which I accepted with much relief.

The following week, Zinc decided their decision had been too hasty and wanted everything back! It was too late. I remain grateful to Dbda/Zinc for putting my work out there but Salamander Street have gone on to improve the distribution of my plays both here and abroad.

What are your favourite plays/musicals not by you?

In order of release.

Plays:

Us and Them (David Campton)

Your Loving Brother Albert (Roy Nevitt & Roger Kitchen) **Up 'n' Under** (John Godber)

Goat or Who Is Sylvia (Edward Albee)

Suicide Dot Com (Danny Sturrock)

An Audience With Jimmy Savile &

The Last Temptation of Boris Johnson (Jonathan Maitland)

Our Generation (Alecky Blythe)

Hangmen (Martin McDonagh)

Dear England (James Graham)

Musicals:

Oliver! (Lionel Bart)

Jesus Christ Superstar (Tim Rice & Andrew Lloyd Webber;

Falsettoland (James Lapine & William Finn)

Urinetown The Musical (Greg Kotos & Mark Holman) **London Road** (Alecky Blythe)

What are your future plans?

I have recently completed work on a new commission. A verbatim play **HIV - Just One Of Those Things**. It will be premiered in 2024 in Winchester. Two further commissions are in the pipeline but nothing is signed and sealed so I'd love to hear from any schools able to commission a play or musical... I have a number of ideas!

I continue to promote my plays particularly new work:

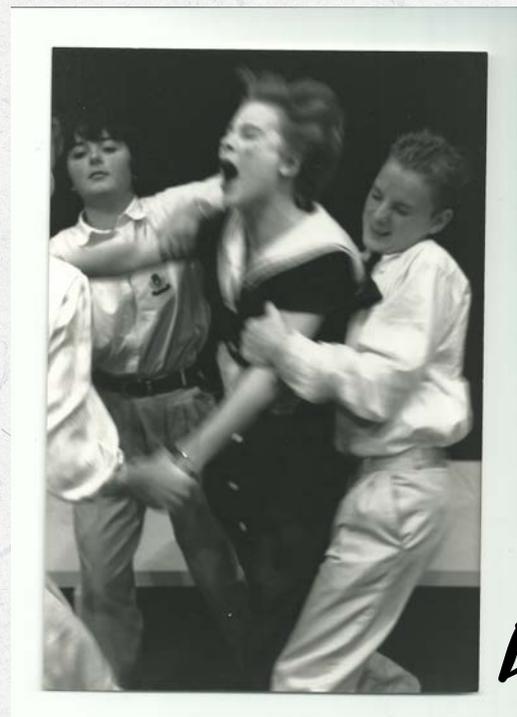
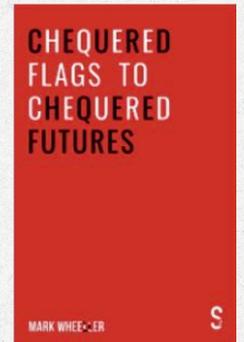
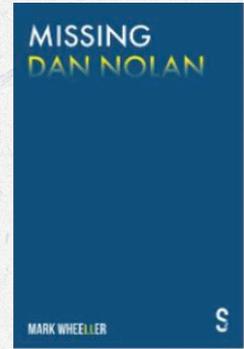
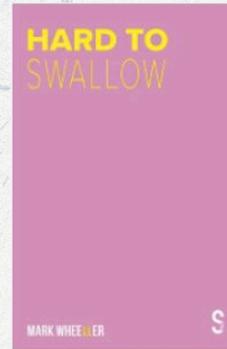
Pandemexplosion - a great offer for schools to premiere this in March 2015 - contact me for a free introductory pack.

9 Teens is currently being developed for publication and we are looking out for schools who might be interested in putting it on.

I'm also re-working two musicals **Blackout - One Evacuee in Thousands** and **Happy Soap** (aka **Wacky Soap**). I'd be thrilled to hear from anyone wishing to premiere these!

I'm also following with interest the professional tours of **I Love You, Mum I Promise I Won't Die** (with a new virtual performance for Scottish students) and **Kindness - A Legacy of the Holocaust**.

My writers life continues to be busy and fun!
Thank you for reading my thoughts.



Hard to Swallow at the National Theatre

You can contact Mark on:

wheellerplays@gmail.com
(note the double e & L)

YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/MarkWheeller>

X:

@MarkWheeller

Please visit www.salamanderstreet.com for his books, playscripts and DVDs

THE DEATH OF CREATIVITY IN SCHOOL



By Tracy Dorrington

Have you been watching...

OMG! Did you see the news...

Have you heard the new song by...

Oh, I read this wonderful book the other day...

I went to the theatre the other day and ...

Oh, have you seen that new designer...

The power of creatives and drama does not need to be preached by me to you, but it does need to be preached by us to 'them', or does it? Is it a case that some know too well the power of the drama student, the ability to question, to argue, to create, to 'see' a different world and most importantly not to be silenced!

The death of George Floyd: people made their voices known by coming together as a chorus, by chanting, by marching, by peaceful protests.

Mr Bates v's the Post Office: through a drama, a true story that has been going on for over two decades, and made our Prime minister have to speak out because of the outrage, had such an impact it was discussed in the House of Commons.

The celebrations of the monarchy: the death of the queen, the parade and the ceremony that followed would not have the impact it did without creatives.

We are surrounded by creativity in every living moment of our lives. From the radio, television and fashion designers to the theatre, cinema and product design, yet, is that the problem? People take it for granted and they forget where it came from. For every person on this planet there was a teacher - there was someone like you that was enabling, motivating and inspiring the next generation of creatives, but it's tiring. Isn't it?

To battle day in, day out, because it is now seeping into our students. They 'don't see the point' and maybe that's because some of us are now stopping to see the point. We have battled for too long, for the same thing, to be seen and heard, which is ironic as it is that which we teach.

When I posted on the Drama Matters forum about the challenges facing our subject these were some of the responses:

(As a side note before you read them, this isn't a case of doom and gloom, it is about moving things forward, getting the change that we want and being pro-active to make the change. These are all elements that we at Drama Matters are also doing to make this happen).

“Underfunding for the sector at national and local level, marginalisation of the Arts through whole school curricula planning and provision which results in fewer students able to opt for the Arts subjects for GCSE and A Level study and a drop in Arts specialist teacher training.”

“Undervalued in school. Particularly by how results are measured. Courses are very written heavy and not practical focused”

“The idea that the arts are somehow less valuable to the health of schools, communities, the bigger picture - and the first thing to go on the chopping block.”

“Some of our language and practices are quickly becoming outdated within education. Let young people lead more, let's explore creative digital technologies within our practise.”

It's a hook for many young people.”

“Respect for the subject. I don't think many people realise what a commodity it is to be able to create and influence face to face.”

THE IMPACT OF THE EBacc

Education is far from being a singular pathway, and the struggle we often encounter can easily lead to a loss of conviction and direction. When we lose our spark, we then lose our way of passing this on to the next generation. While there is a noticeable increase in subjects like Business, IT and Computer Science, these areas of study are not sufficient on their own. The capability to market a business or to bring creativity to IT and computer science is crucial. Without these skills, one might be able to create a plan or a platform, but lack the prowess to effectively sell it.

The charts provided below highlight the impact that the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is having on the decline of the arts subjects. It's clear that while the uptake of certain subjects is on the rise, the essential creative competencies that arts subjects foster are at risk of being undervalued. If this trend continues, we may well find ourselves with a generation skilled in technical execution but lacking the essential creative skills to market and innovate within their fields.

GCSE Entries UK - Creative Subjects

ART & DESIGN	194,040 ('22)	187,710 ('23)	-3.3%
D&T	78,405 ('22)	79,025 ('23)	0.8%
PE	71,215 ('22)	74,550 ('23)	4.7%
DRAMA	53,790 ('22)	49,270 ('23)	-7.4%
MEDIA/FILM/TV	31,115 ('22)	32,905 ('23)	4%
MUSIC	34,130 ('22)	30,115 ('23)	-11.8%
PERFORMING/ EXPRESSIVE ARTS	8,245	6,890	-16.4%

A Level Entries UK - Creative Subjects

ART & DESIGN	42,100 ('22)	40,930 ('23)	-2.8%
D&T	9,725 ('22)	9,000 ('23)	-7.5%
PE	12,000 ('22)	12,035 ('23)	0.3%
DRAMA	8,985 ('22)	8,385 ('23)	-6.7%
MEDIA/FILM/TV	20,050 ('22)	21,530 ('23)	7.4%
MUSIC	5,305 ('22)	4,945 ('23)	-6.8%



Media, film, and TV studies may be on the rise, but without the actors and creativity, there will be nothing to showcase!

You can see from the extract below, taking from a House of Lords debate in February 2024, that the arts are a foundation of the UK

The value of the Arts to the economy

Inclusive economic recovery

Local publicly funded culture is essential to our national economic recovery, particularly in relation to the growth of the wider commercial creative economy and in levelling up economic inequalities between regions. In 2019, the creative industries contributed £115.9 billion to the UK, accounting for 5.9 per cent of the UK economy and accounted for 2.2 million jobs. They grew at four times the rate of the rest of the economy prior to the pandemic and are geographically dispersed in more than 700 micro clusters across the country. Public funding is an essential part of the ecology of the arts and culture in the UK. In 2020, for every £1 generated in the arts and culture, an **additional £1.23 gross value added was generated in the wider economy**. It was estimated in 2015 that Arts Council England's share of public expenditure was 0.1 per cent but the publicly funded arts contributed 0.4 per cent gross value added.

Read the full debate [here](#).

An article from Prospects also stated that:

In fact, the UK's creative industries are vital to our economy - they employ over two million people and grow faster than other industries. According to recent statistics from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) they contributed £109 billion to the economy in 2021. This equated to 5.6% of the total for that year.

Its growth over recent years has been driven by a boom in computer services, highlighting the importance of digital creative industries such as video games.

Read the article [here](#).

The House of Lord's Education for 11-16 Year Olds Committee report 'Requires improvement: urgent change for 11-16 education' stated that:

"The value of the creative sectors to the UK economy is well documented. Evidence highlighted Nesta research that suggests that the creative industries are growing twice as fast as other industry sectors and will create 900,000 new jobs in the next 10 years".

"As well as being valuable to employers and the UK economy, we heard that access to creative subjects and the arts can have profound benefits for individual pupils. A 2021 report by the Independent Society of Musicians cited evidence that music can "enhance language skills and literacy, support creativity, academic progress and attainment, enhance fine motor skills, motivate disaffected students and contribute to health and wellbeing".

"There has, however, been an ongoing decline in take-up of arts subjects in the 11-16 phase, as well as a decrease in wider opportunities to develop creativity... witnesses expressed concern that some academies are using the flexibility they have over their curricula to drop national curriculum arts subjects, such as art and design and music, in key stage 3".

Read the full report [here](#).

AN ARTS EDUCATION CRISIS

I am blessed through the work I do in the classroom to truly see the impact that my subject has on young people. Not just in the exam results but also in the transferrable skills that I know will stand them in good stead for their futures in life and in work. I am also blessed to be on various steering groups that represent the importance of Drama but I do sometimes sit and listen with wonder whether some of the people on the groups truly get it.

Many of us are in the classroom full time and some of them are not. Several of those who are the 'voice' for our subject do not understand the daily frustrations of not being heard. For teachers that are working full time, and are at full capacity, they do not get the opportunity to go to focus groups and steering meetings that have impact on our subject.

The number of schools throughout the country that have removed Drama from Key Stage 3 is troubling, and indeed, some have even eliminated it as an examination subject at Key Stages 4 and 5. We face a continual battle with Senior Leadership Teams to convey the significance of Drama. Often, we find ourselves as the sole member of the department, juggling a myriad of responsibilities from curriculum planning to staging school shows, organising extracurricular activities, and coordinating educational trips.

The disparity between educational institutions is stark. Independent schools may have access to seemingly inexhaustible financial resources, while state schools vary widely; some receive ample support and resources, whereas others are left to fend for themselves. And woe betide anyone who dares to organise a drama excursion during the school day or to take students off the timetable for their examination performances.

The challenges are manifold, reflecting a system that at times fails to recognise the profound value of the dramatic arts in education.

Creativity is dead?

No Music, no theatre, no radio, no tv,
no internet creatives, no new design
clothes, no magazines, no books, no
CREATIVES, no play...

When reading the 'Requires improvement: urgent change for 11-16 education' report, I highlighted key aspects that made my blood run cold. I have included some of them below:

On drama, which is not compulsory for any school, we heard that "from 2010 to 2020, the number of drama teachers reduced by 18% and the number of hours taught reduced by 12% across the nation."

We are dwindling because the battle is becoming too much. It takes every aspect of us to be a drama teacher. This isn't to minimise other subjects but because of the wealth of giving that is taught in drama, we also have to give so much of ourselves and if we are constantly having to battle for the value of the subject with students, with staff, with SLT, with parents, too soon our cup becomes empty and we feel we can not battle anymore.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector, suggested that there has not been a drop-off in take-up of arts subjects but instead a shift from GCSEs to technical and vocational qualifications in these subjects.

There has 'not been a drop off'? Really? Please speak to people on the ground, as it is clear there has been. I am fed up with people spouting rubbish about our subject. We know the impact it has and YOU don't know what you are talking about.

Independent schools tend to ascribe value to arts and cultural education. State school teachers increasingly report that basic resources for the teaching of arts subjects are not available. This divergence between public and private leads to increased inequalities in terms of access to a broad educational experience.

Independent schools ascribe to the value of the arts, because they are free to do so. The education is paid for, they can do as they please. Surely the government should be able to see that if there are people paying for education and they see value, why does the government not? Top grades have dropped in independent schools and pass rates are higher for all subjects, yet part of Business is being able to do a presentation. If that student has had a solid drama teaching experience, whether it is at KS3 or KS4, this will benefit EVERY other subject they go on to do because of the transferrable skills they are taught within drama.



THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING IS WHAT IT TAKES FOR PEOPLE TO REALISE WHAT THEY STAND TO LOSE

I attended the last discussion at the Houses of Parliament. I was eager to get the chance to be in the main room, I was with lots of other creatives watching on the live stream and was delighted to go through. All of us creatives were waiting to hear what they would say and feeling valued because our subject was being heard as to how the demise of the subject would be due to the EBacc. The debate was off the back of the petition calling for the Expressive Arts to be included in the EBacc and it was held in July 2016.

You can watch it here: <https://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/ca06ebdb-0a8e-4867-a9ea-4cc82c94ff54>

We knew that the demise would go even further, as we are now feeling the impact. When you listen to it, Drama is rarely mentioned, Music and Art seem to have more advocates within MPs than Drama does, but why?

I remember Geoff from National Drama feeling elated after he had gone to the most recent debate at the House of Lords and that he hoped there would be change. I didn't have the heart to say it is all lip service and will be thrown back. To hear his disappointment at the recent DTEA meeting makes me sad because there are so many of us that know it's value and I also feel sad for those that don't because if they really realised the potential, the impact and value of our subject the world will truly be a better place. I'm not shy in saying that if there were creatives involved in the governments of the world, we would not be living in the mess that we currently are.

So, what's next? Will change happen by sitting around a table? I'll be honest, the answer is no, I don't think it will. I think ONLY when we bring silence to all the things they take for granted it is only then that we will see change and that means taking to the streets, it means using the skills that we teach and taking it all to the people and making them listen.

If we fail to capture attention and create a stir, the world of creativity will suffer from a lack of diversity. This will, in turn, restrict the range of lived experiences depicted on our stages, conveyed through our music, and represented in our art. To be brief—though this article is not—if we permit this trend to continue, we effectively sanction the censorship of our subject. The narratives will be shaped and dominated by those who have had the privilege of Drama education in independent schools, resulting in playwrights, directors, and visions that emerge from a particular view point.

“Creativity is as important now in education as literacy and we should treat it with the same status

”
Sir Ken Robinson

So first stop, please join us for a protest in London and other locations across the country in June. This protest will not be conducted in the conventional manner; instead, it will unfold in the unique way that artists and practitioners know best: through impactful performances, through potent speeches and also by demonstrating the powerful significance of silence. If you are interested in this contact your local Bridge Builder who will also be leading something in their local area, or you can join me in London. Email dramamatters1@gmail.com and further details will be shared with you, date to be confirmed. This is open to any creative on stage, off stage, classroom, practitioner, writer and designer.

Let us stand together, let us show we are truly one!

We will also be posting out four t-shirts to prominent people in Radio, Television, Theatre and Production. We are asking these to be signed and shared with a photo of those that have signed with tagging in #DramaMatters. Once signed, we are asking that they pass it onto the next person and once the t-shirts are full of signatures, we are hoping that they will be returned to us in time for our Networking Weekend. We will then auction them for charity and the charities will be for those creatives that need support in the areas each t-shirt is from.

On World Theatre Day, Drama Matters will launch a YouTube channel which, alongside the forum, will be there to support and enable you to have a voice. You will have the opportunity to post videos and digital material and some of our Talk Theatres will also move to video format. You can also check out our website and forum for more information on our Speak Out campaign, Drama Matters Performance Festival and our soon to be launched podcast.

Drama Matters says to you to Seize the Day and get involved with the week #SeizeTheDay which is about raising the profile of your school drama department and the importance of Drama, you can sign up here <https://www.dtealliance.co.uk/seize-the-day> and also see their article within the magazine.

Drama Matters also urges you to speak with your local MP. The next step will involve initiating another petition to make our voices heard because it is only by convincing others of drama's value and ensuring they are listening that we can truly be understood.

Sometimes, the absence of something is what it takes for people to realise what they stand to lose. Sadly, the situation may worsen before it improves. However, remember this: as long as Drama Matters exists, you are not alone.

Should your passion ever wane, reach out—because together, we will rekindle that spark. By uniting and collaborating, we will demonstrate our collective strength and show that, as one, we are invincible.

An **A-Z** of DRAMA TECHNIQUES & DEVICES

By Liam Greenall

As drama teachers, we are the architects of imagination, the facilitators of creativity and the guides through the labyrinth of creating devised works. Our mission is to impart knowledge of the dramatic arts and ignite the innovative spark within each student. To achieve this, embedding a diverse range of drama techniques into curriculum planning becomes essential. The 40+ techniques in this article allow students to forge their own paths, crafting original and compelling drama works that reflect their unique perspectives and voices.

The power of drama techniques lies in their ability to open doors to new worlds. They serve as the foundation for students to experiment with narrative structures, explore character depths and express complex emotions. By incorporating drama techniques, we provide students with a vocabulary of expression that transcends the spoken word. These techniques are not mere exercises; they are the building blocks of a language that speaks in gestures, actions, silences and collective voices.

When students engage with **Choral Speaking**, they learn the art of harmony and the potency of a unified message. **Collage** teaches them the beauty of juxtaposition and the narrative potential of simultaneous action. Techniques like **Collective Character** and **Cross-Cutting** challenge them to dismantle traditional storytelling methods and reconstruct them in innovative forms. Through **Vox-Pops** and **Direct Address**, they confront the subtleties of communication and the power of perspective.

By embedding these drama techniques into our curriculum planning, we empower students to not only interpret the world as it is but to envision and enact the world as it could be. They become not just performers but creators, not just students but storytellers.

A Day in the Life

This technique involves working backwards from a significant event to provide context or hints about it. Your group can portray key moments from the past through still images, which can shed light on the event's backstory. Add creative movement between each transition, focus on pacing and experiment with adding short dialogue.

Alive for 5

This is a technique where a frozen image or tableau comes to life for a brief moment of approximately 5 seconds. This gives the audience a brief glimpse into the action.

Alter Ego

In this technique, performers work in pairs where one plays the physical character and the other personifies the character's inner thoughts. The physical character carries out the actions and dialogue, while the alter ego vocalises the inner thoughts and feelings of that character.

Aside

This convention involves a character speaking a line directly to the audience, which is not intended to be heard by other characters on stage. It's a way to reveal a character's private thoughts or intentions.

Choral Speaking

This technique involves a group of performers speaking in unison. They recite the same lines of dialogue together, using their vocal skills to express thoughts, feelings and ideas as a collective voice.



Collage

This convention involves presenting various actions, dialogues and movements on stage simultaneously. It's like 'sticking' different elements together in a single scene, with characters potentially occupying different places, time periods and situations.

Collective Character

In this technique, a group of performers speaks on behalf of a single character. The character in question remains silent, while the group improvises their words. Alternatively, the rest of the group can whisper suggestions and dialogue lines to the person playing the character, who then speaks them.

Cross-Cutting

This convention involves switching between several scenes or episodes of action, all occurring simultaneously on stage. It's similar to a split scene. Cross-cutting can also include the projection of videos or other media on stage.

Dialogue

This is a technique where two or more characters engage in conversation on stage, typically in a realistic manner. The conversation could be pre-scripted or created through improvisation and collaboration between the characters in the scene.

Direct Address

This is a technique where characters on stage converse, but instead of facing each other as in a natural conversation, they look directly at the audience or a fixed point in the space.

Dramatic Pause

A Dramatic Pause is when the action of a scene stops abruptly for a few seconds and then the action carries on. A dramatic pause is often used to allow the audience to digest what is physically happening on the stage.

Exaggerated Movement

Exaggerated Movement includes actions, gestures and movements that are overstated and are drawn and performed larger than life. A caricature is an important element in exaggeration. It can be comic, at times derogatory and with the intention of ridicule.

Flash-forward

This is when a scene jumps forward in time from the main timeline of the drama. It can also offer an understanding about a character's behaviours, feelings and attitudes. Think about how to transition smoothly and creatively to a flash-forward, using elements like movement, words, music, symbols, framing or a narrator.

**Flashback**

This occurs when a scene takes us back in time from the main timeline of the drama, providing insight into a character's behaviours, feelings and attitudes. Consider how you can smoothly and creatively transition into a flashback using movements, words, music, symbols, framing or a narrator.

Heightened use of Language

Heightened use of Language is poetic and exaggerated use of language. It includes the deliberate choice of words whose syntax, alliteration, repetition and rhyming patterns enhance the dramatic statement. The intended meaning is enhanced through the use of non-conventional and non-naturalistic dialogue.

Hot Seating

In this convention, performers on stage question or interview one character to reveal more information, ideas and attitudes about the role. The performers asking the questions may or may not be in character.

Interview

Interview is a drama convention in which a face to face meeting of two characters or parties in role takes place to ascertain particular information for a purpose. Examples could include interviews between two characters or a character being interviewed by a chorus. You could even consider breaking the fourth wall and getting the audience to question the character.

Line of Thought

Line of Thought is a convention in which performers stand in a row to highlight and speak the thoughts that may be in a character's head or offer the character advice. The characters in the line could also make comments about the character, either as themselves or in role as other characters.

Live Sound Effect

Live Sound Effect is a convention that uses objects, instruments and the performers' bodies to create sound effects live on stage. Sound effects are usually pre-recorded sounds and used in scenes, but you could consider creating live sound effects using objects on stage, instruments, body percussion and/or using your voice.

Marking the Moment

This convention involves highlighting a key point in a scene to indicate its importance to the audience. This can be done through techniques such as a narrated announcement, captions, light changes, still images, sound effects and more.

**Monologue**

This is a technique where a single performer delivers a lengthy speech on stage, typically directed at another character. Monologues are often found in play scripts, but you can also create your own monologues when devising or writing pieces of theatre.

Montage

In contemporary theatre, a montage is a rapid succession of dramatic images or short scenes. These images or scenes are closely linked and displayed to create an overall impression, summarise events or actions or introduce new events or actions.

Narration

This is a technique where dialogue is used to narrate the story or provide additional information. Narration can occur on stage, off-stage or be prerecorded. The role of the narrator can be performed by one actor throughout the piece, shared among several actors, or performed by a chorus or ensemble.



News Report

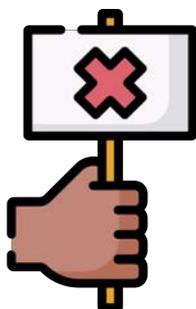
News Report is a performance convention in which a performer takes on the role of a news reporter and reports to the audience about key elements of the plot line, characters, action on stage or narrative. You could also include a cameraperson and sound technician to make it more authentic.

Overheard Conversations

Overheard Conversation is a performance convention in which a conversation that would not usually be heard by others is spoken and disclosed to add tension or provide information. The overheard conversation could be performed in a variety of ways - a telephone conversation, a one-sided telephone conversation, in groups, in pairs or individually.

Overlap

This is a technique where the lines of a conversation are spoken over each other, rather than sequentially. Different characters speak simultaneously, interrupting each other or finishing each other's sentences.



Placards

A placard is a sign with written information presented on stage to the audience. This technique was popularised by Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht in Epic Theatre. The text on a placard could be written on a banner or card.

Reflective Circle

This convention involves characters standing in a circle and each contributing a sentence reflecting on a particular scene, moment of action or the story as a whole. Consider the spacing and levels of the characters on stage.

Sign Language

This convention involves performers creating a sequence of hand gestures to communicate a message, narrative or plot element. You can use official sign language or create your own symbolic language using just your hands.

Silence

This technique involves a temporary pause in dialogue and vocalisation. The absence of sound is used to enhance the dramatic impact on the audience. Experiment with the duration of the silence and stillness on stage.

Sing a Song

This is a convention where a musical interpretation of a text is developed and performed live using the actor's own voice. You can use existing songs with original or rewritten lyrics or compose your own song to fit your narrative.

Slow Motion

This is a technique where a sequence of movements is choreographed to represent the action on stage and then performed at a slower pace. Consider using different speeds and adding music or live sounds to accompany the action.

Soundscape

This is primarily a vocal-based technique, involving the creation of atmospheres, locations and moods using only the voice, and sometimes percussion instruments or objects on stage. Each performer contributes a sound that complements or sets the stage for a scene.

Split Scene

This technique involves the intercutting of two scenes on stage at the same time. The action alternates between the two scenes. This is similar to cross-cutting, with the key difference being that in a split scene, both scenes occur within the same timeframe, whereas cross-cutting can involve more than two scenes across different time periods and historical contexts.

Still Image

This convention involves performers on stage creating a frozen picture to express a moment of action. This picture represents a frozen moment or summarises what's happening in the performance. Performers use their bodies and facial expressions to create an image, capturing an idea, theme or moment in time.

Synchronised Movement

This is a physical technique where two or more performers execute the same movements, sequences or actions simultaneously. This can be performed in silence, accompanied by music or with spoken dialogue.

Verbatim

This is a technique that uses the exact words spoken by real people about real situations and events to construct the dialogue in the drama. The process begins with extensive research and conducting interviews with individuals who are directly connected to the subject matter. These can include victims, experts, witnesses or anyone with a compelling story or perspective on the issue.

Vox-Pop

Vox-Pop is a performance convention that is used to involve the audience in the play or for them to understand a character or a situation better. The action on the stage is frozen and a member of the cast asks a character (usually holding a microphone) an open-ended question about a situation (usually based on what is happening in the scene or performance). The cast member could also ask questions to audience members to involve them in the action.

Zoom-In

A performer uses exaggerated, slow-motion movements to draw attention to a prop, mimicking the camera's mechanical zoom. This may involve leaning in, reaching towards the prop or any other gesture that magnifies the importance of the object. Once the focus is established, the performer delivers an aside or thought track directly to the audience. This monologue or dialogue reveals the background, context, or emotional significance of the prop, often shedding new light on its role within the story.



I am extremely lucky to have a senior leadership team that truly values all areas of education, keen to offer a breadth of subjects at FE, however this does not change the fact that a great many of our students are under pressure from their parents and wider family members to avoid studying a more creative program, one where they could arguably achieve higher grades, family members often lacking understanding of what the arts can offer in the way of both employment and transferable skills, believing instead that they offer nothing more than trivial frivolity, despite the fact that the skills required to succeed in the creative subjects, that of communication, innovation, tenacity and integrity are essential components and qualities needed in STEM careers themselves.

In addition to this, there is an acute awareness of the mental health impact of the pandemic, the results of which have been called a crisis by many in government. Young people need an outlet, a space to explore themselves, their own minds and how they navigate a changing world, allowing healthier relationships, openness, communication and tolerance.

Many discussions with my colleagues centre around the concerns about the amount of students who are finding it increasingly difficult to communicate with each other, articulate or even formulate an opinion on a subject. Creative subjects allow a space for critical thinking, where the status quo can be challenged and beliefs and opinions questioned, exploring alternative viewpoints, cultures and societal norms.

Though this sounds healthy, indeed something many in the creative industries feel sits at the very centre of all art, this openness should not be taken for granted, with many parents and other relatives feeling that they are too provocative, too risky and don't offer enough guarantees of regular, well paid employment.

The benefits of students having a creative outlet, indeed being encouraged to explore their thoughts, doubts and emotions, should never be

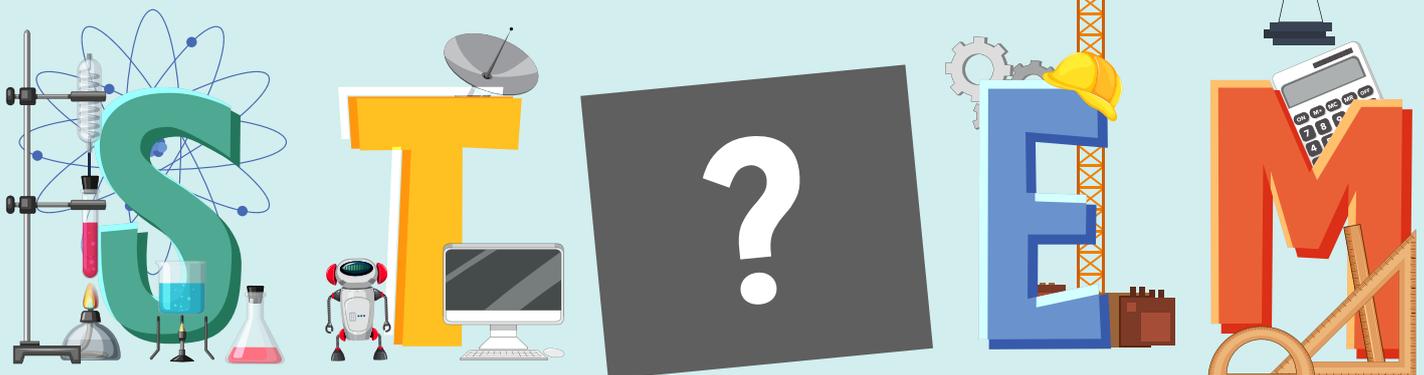
viewed as hollow or irrelevant. On the contrary, it can enlighten, illuminate and inspire young people to think differently and to be a force for change. But "change" is a formidable word, one that can readily be associated with rebellion and insurgency and these words are often the ones that those in authority can dread the most.

STEM subjects are, of course, invaluable. But, in my opinion, they lack value and practicality, unless they are studied by students who also understand the need to express their views in an open and communicative way, commonplace in the arts.

Promoting curiosity and tolerance through the discussion and exploration of other viewpoints means that young people know how to articulate themselves more clearly and effectively. With this in mind, there is no reason why the arts could not be couched within STEM, acknowledging its equal importance and significance in education and the development of young people and creating a new, more auspicious acronym. Not simply STEM, but one that features the arts as equally important; Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths - **STEAM**.



I have worked in drama teaching for over 20 years and am currently Course Leader for Drama and Performing Arts as well as a teacher of English Language at Oldham Sixth Form College. I have directed numerous college productions, as well as written a number of bespoke musical productions for students. I also work as an Advanced Skills Teacher, supporting new teachers on the the ECT programme.



Box House Theatre are launching a regional schools tour!

Box House have been very busy bees following our performance at last year's Drama Matters Networking Event. The support received has been absolutely astounding and we were blown away to find a whopping 60+ enquiries in our mailbox just 48-hours after our appearance!

We are so grateful to everyone involved as this broadened outreach has encouraged drama teachers from far and wide to spread the word about the benefits and need for Platform Theatre to be brought to the classroom.

After receiving many requests from educators for Platform Theatre to be added to the drama curriculum and studied, we are currently in talks with exam boards to make this a reality. This will allow us to work towards fulfilling our primary goal for Platform Theatre which is to make the style accessible for schools and students who have limited funding and resources.

We are proud to announce that Box House will be launching their UK regional tour!

We are now taking bookings for the following dates for schools located within the selected areas. We will be offering our **Twisted Tales** performance alongside our Platform Theatre workshop to provide your students with the best head start in creating their own wonderful Platform Theatre pieces.

"Twisted Tales serves as a reminder of the transformative power theatre holds, using nothing but voice, body, and an undying passion for the craft. They create grandeur out of simplicity, proving theatre's potency isn't confined to budgets or elaborate sets. 5/5"

- Fringe Biscuit

What the package includes:

- X1 50-minute performance of Box House's Platform Theatre piece: Twisted Tales
- Postproduction Q&A with the Twisted Tales cast
- Follow up 70-minute Platform Theatre workshop; which can be run as one group of 50 students or two groups of 35 students running simultaneously
- Follow up Devising Platform Theatre Resource Pack

Dates & Locations:

Box House will be touring the following areas for one week of the stated month. Specific touring dates will be determined upon interest.

West Midlands - March

North-West - May

East Midlands - April Wales - June

London & South-East - All year round

Reduced Rate for Drama Matters readers

Box House Theatre will be offering this Platform Theatre Performance & Workshop Package at a reduced rate of **£695.00 GBP** all inclusive.

For information, availability and to book, please click [here](#) for their online form.

BOX HOUSE THEATRE COMPANY

Awarded Theatre Company of the Year 2023/24



PRESTIGE
AWARDS

**PROUD TO SUPPORT
THE PRINCE'S TRUST**

"Our students gained invaluable skills in creating theatre that will not only support their academic progress but also their holistic development as young theatre makers".



www.boxhouse.uk



Box House Theatre



@boxhousetheatre



A SCHOOL'S UNWRITTEN 'NO AUDITION' POLICY

By Neil Harris

I have been a teacher of Drama at an international school for thirty years, and I retire from full time teaching this year. Naturally, this gives me time to pause and consider what has been done, specifically in the realm of school productions.

Written into my contract is a clause that the Drama teacher is expected to undertake extracurricular commitments for any drama productions. Working alongside some excellent colleagues for decades, and also teachers new to the school, we have somehow established a simple and unwritten principle, if you want to be in the show, then you are in it. We don't turn students away and, in this respect, we do not audition. This article assesses some of the impacts of such a policy and questions its wisdom.

A natural outcome of such a rule is that shows can have a very large cast, with as many as eighty from a school of about 1300 students. Add to this an orchestra and backstage people, and we have routinely accepted over a hundred students into our shows for four months at a time.

There have been times when a large cast has been well suited to what we have chosen and other times, less so. The Ramayana requires the staging of an epic battle involving gods, humans, demons and animals. If you have cast of eighty, this is no problem! But there are times when we are finding things for actors to do, which is both good and bad. The reader won't be surprised that some shows attract more students than others, The Ramayana is a harder sell than Grease, for example, but the choice of show often sets a kind of natural limit to things, forty students for Macbeth and eighty for Hairspray, for example.

Rehearsal weeks usually commence with a workshop in which we engage in games and warm-ups, whilst familiarising the cast with the group and with the text or content. The students are asked to state the degree of commitment they are keen to make and which roles they would like to be considered for. We directors are watching carefully for who might be ready for a larger role. Next, a group of teachers and sometimes students select which role students will play. After casting, there have been few visible upsets.

Over the first month, we have found that a process of attrition occurs, which means that some students drop out, until we are left with a group of keener actors. We do think that our 'no audition' rule creates a sense of inclusivity, which reflects favourably on the school as an institution that values all of its students. Students with learning needs have benefited from being a part of shows. In rehearsals, routine plenary sessions allow all participants to give feedback to each other, offering tips and reminders in the place of teachers and directors. We have noted that some young people on the autistic spectrum find social interactions a challenge, and rehearsals twice a week allow them many opportunities to practise this.

Next, we can consider the impact accepting all comers has on the quality of what is produced. One might argue that a larger cast means that a rehearsal process could be slowed down; this is true, furthermore, a lesser level of polish can be expected. A school stakeholder might ask: Would it be better to showcase a smaller group of performers who are better able to reflect professional standards? I don't deny that this approach might produce different outcomes, but I am reminded of Peter Brook's "The Empty Space" and his references to a 'Deadly' type of theatre with its high production values, versus an 'Immediate theatre' with a level of authenticity and engagement of a community. Our 'no audition' policy draws on the latter philosophy.

I also have concerns about a kind of body elitism that can creep in when participants are selected through audition. Does an audience composed largely of parents and peers really want to see only athletic and skilled student performers dancing, singing and acting at a school show? Can the world of the stage not reflect the world?

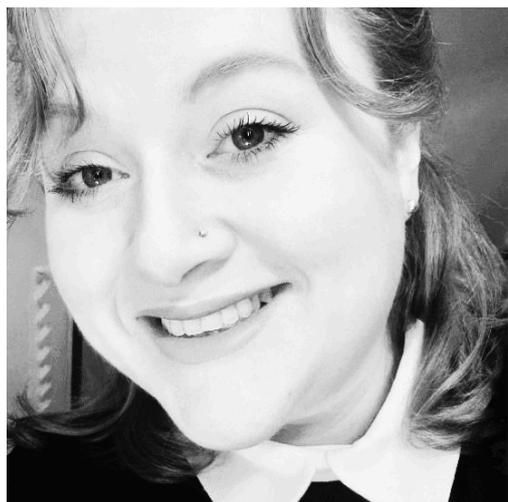
The parents at our school see students of all shapes and sizes and of all performance abilities. There may be performers who are not objectively good, yet the rehearsal process shows evidence that they have become better and better. If these students were rejected at auditions, would they not have had these opportunities, and would they have come back year after year?

The no audition policy really comes into its own when we create our own shows, alongside student directors. Then, a cast of sixty is an advantage, as it can become four groups of fifteen actors who write, self cast and rehearse a quarter of a story together, before we come together with whole cast dances or songs. Frankenstein, Anansi and Grimm's Tales were made in this way.

Finally, there are times when we have questioned our policy for the stress it puts on staff and student directors. It is both a logistical and creative challenge for sure, but one that has created a climate for collaboration that has, mostly, borne fruit.

BRIDGE BUILDER FOR COVENTRY & WARWICKSHIRE

MEET MEGAN



Hello, I am Megan Donnachie and I am a teacher of Drama in Coventry, although I myself live in Warwickshire. I have lived and worked in Warwickshire and the West Midlands for my entire life, performing on stage in Nuneaton and helping to tech shows in the same area.

I wanted to become a Bridge Builder for Drama Matters due to my love of the subject and my links with local universities and theatres. I think the work that Drama Matters does is important for all members; I know that I have reached out for support in the past.

I have studied at Coventry University and the University of both Warwick and Birmingham. This gives me a wide range of links and I am in the process of building relationships with all for further opportunities. As well as the University links, my school is linked with the Warwick Arts Centre and I am personally connected with the Belgrade Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company with my work as part of a Midlands Drama Teachers Collective. All of these links and opportunities I am keen on sharing to champion accessible Theatre for schools in the area.

Hello from Coventry and Warwickshire's Friendly Neighbourhood Bridge Builder. Not a lot has been happening since the last magazine, so I am going to do an update on what is to come over the next few months instead. My New Year's Resolution is to grow Drama Matters in Coventry and Warwickshire; this year will be exciting for our regional network. I have many things planned for next year, in and around my teaching and studying for my masters.

Number 1- Drama Matters Coventry and Warwickshire is now on Instagram. I will post regular updates about what is happening in and around the area. This will be my main area, outside of Facebook, to get the word out, so if you haven't already, please follow DramaMattersCovWarwickshire. Also, I attend the Theatre often, so regular local recommendations will be made.

Number 2- The February half-term will be our first Coventry and Warwickshire TeachMeet. More details will follow on Facebook and the Coventry and Warwickshire Instagram page. It is a chance to meet people in the area and Network. This event will be a social event. However, if the demand exists, we can branch into different things, like moderation.

Number 3- I am keeping my eyes and ears to the ground for different CPD opportunities in Coventry and Warwickshire. When I have these, I will gladly share them with the community. This is something I am passionate about sharing with you all. If you hear anything or are hosting anything you would like me to share, please let me know.

Number 4- I have contacted different Theatre Companies I know of in Coventry. I am hoping to be able to bring them on board with Drama Matters. If you have local companies that you would like to be involved with Drama Matters, do not hesitate to share them with me. I want to get us as involved as possible within the

Coventry and Warwickshire Theatre Scene.

Number 5- I will soon be writing my master's dissertation. For those who don't know, I am completing an MA in Shakespeare and Education with the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford Upon-Avon. My project will be about teaching Shakespeare in the Drama Classroom with a student-focused approach. I will share all my findings with Drama Matters when this is completed.

Number 6- I am so excited to attend this year's Networking Weekend; this will be my fourth with Drama Matters. Last year, I ran CPD sessions on Stage Makeup and Shakespeare. Two great passions of mine within Drama Teaching. I look forward to seeing some of you there.

Number 7- One of the things I would like to set up between our network is a chance to visit different schools for their school shows. If you are interested in participating in this, please let me know. I want to allow other people in our local network to attend our school shows. This is so we can see shows that we haven't thought about performing or, in the case of more technically difficult shows, how we have accomplished things.

Number 8- I have an awesome potential opportunity for a community project in December. I will circulate more information when I have all the details. However, please let me know if you would like to join and create some good in the community.

Thank you so much for reading. I am so excited to begin this journey with you.

BRIDGE BUILDERS

What are they and why have we put them in place?

Drama Matters Bridge Builders are there to build a bridge between you and your local Drama community. You will notice there are National and International Bridge Builders.

But what will they do?

They are there to link your schools together, so that you have a local network of support. This could involve meeting up for social events to enjoy some well-deserved downtime. It could also involve gathering for the moderation of your devised work, supporting each other's school shows, or even attending theatre performances together.

Sharing resources such as sets, props, and costumes could be another aspect of this cooperation. The network could also facilitate your contact with local theatre groups and industry professionals. Essentially, it functions like an in-person, localised version of an online forum.

Is your area not listed?

Check out the Drama Matters info pack for potential Build Builder [here](#).

You can also email Dramamatters1@gmail.com and Tracy Dorrington will tell you about the next steps. You can do as much or as little as you can do because we are all here to support you too.

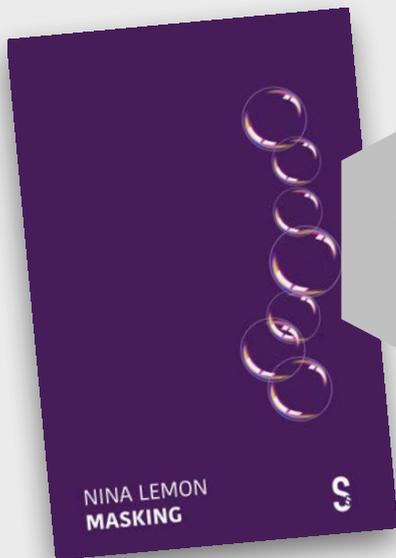
Check out all the Bridge Builder profiles on our website: www.dramamatters.org



ADVERTISE WITH US.

Reach an audience of over 5000 drama teachers from the UK and international schools worldwide.

Email us at magazine@dramamatters.org



Click here for more details.



Play: Masking

Playwright: Nina Lemon

Nina Lemon's insightful play sensitively explores the challenges faced by a group of school kids as they cope with a high-stakes school system in a world that's piling on the pressure.

"It's not really surprising that our generation would be struggling. It's a sane response to an insane world."

When the school's lockdown alarm sounds everyone assumes it's a drill. But soon a group of year 9 students find themselves stuck in a geography classroom with only Deputy Head Prefect Jamie to keep them under control. It becomes clear that the school is in lockdown because of an 'incident with a pupil.' While the group speculates as to the identity of the student and the nature of the 'incident' it slowly emerges that, although no one's talking about it, the students are all grappling with mental health issues of their own.

Nina Lemon's insightful play sensitively explores the challenges faced by a group of school kids as they cope with a high-stakes school system in a world that's piling on the pressure.

Masking is an original play created with and for youth arts charity [Peer Productions](#).

CASTING:

7 actors of equal weight (3 identifying as female, 2 as male and 2 of any gender - playing 13-17 years)

RUNNING TIME: 60-75 minutes

10 Reasons to do Masking with your students.

1. Modern ensemble play.
2. Relevant hard-hitting script.
3. Seven equally weighted roles (3F, 2M, 2 any gender).
4. Seven monologues.
5. Adaptable for small group text work.
6. Includes neurodiverse characters.
7. An example of Theatre In Education.
8. Suitable for diverse practitioners.
9. Written with and for young people.
10. No swearing!

Plus: Detailed Drama Teachers' Pack and full digital version to stream on line - Coming Soon!

STAGING SUCCESS:

Laurence Kavanagh Talks National School Theatre Awards

Drama Matters sat down with Laurence Kavanagh, the driving force behind the National School Theatre Awards and Deputy Head of Sylvia Young Theatre School. With the buzz of school productions and pantomimes in full swing, Kavanagh gives us an insider's look at the magic and mayhem of celebrating the best in school theatre.

Boasting a record number of nominations and a growing list of participating schools, Laurence reveals the intricacies of managing this expansive celebration of young talent and the significance of school theatre in nurturing the next generation of performing arts professionals.



DM

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us, I imagine it is a hectic time at the moment with school productions and pantomimes around this time of year.

LK

That's an understatement but in a truly positive way. The National School Theatre Awards has been inundated with nominations and we aim to see all of these shows in-person. We have nearly a hundred schools registered and the number is growing which is great and we can't wait for the annual award ceremony.

DM

Wow, how do you manage to get to see all of the shows that are nominated?

LK

We're fortunate to have an ever-expanding team of exceptional volunteers, our 'Talent Reps.' Comprising of experienced performing arts teachers and industry professionals across the UK, they attend and evaluate the school productions. We're actually on the lookout for more individuals to join us; anyone interested can find details on our website.

DM

So, in a sentence, what exactly are the National School Theatre Awards?

LK

Think of it as the Oliviers/BAFTAS/OSCARS but tailored specifically for school productions. We have amazing patrons who are all passionate about the arts and this team continues to grow.

DM

It sounds very fun and rewarding; who can enter?

LK

If it's a school, there's an audience and the actors are children, you can nominate. It could be an end of term musical, a Christmas production or a House Drama performance and so on. Nominations are open all year round, so you can still nominate on the website.

DM

How are winners decided?

LK

Our Talent Reps aren't there to find fault or critique the hard work of others and do not have the final say in who wins an award; they make recommendations based on the criteria we provide them which is passed to our anonymous panel. We want the staff and pupils to be relaxed (especially the drama teacher/director!) and the idea of someone sitting there in judgment is definitely not what the National School Theatre Awards is about. We always want the experience to be a positive one. Our Reps are there to watch the show and enjoy themselves and will never speak negatively about what they have seen.

DM

What if a school has better facilities or bigger budgets, does this impact the awards?

LK

We are very clear in our training to focus on the *nomination*. The example we use is that if a Talent Rep is at the school to observe 'Best Actor' they mustn't be swayed by a flying car in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (ha!). We have also separated some awards into independent/maintained schools categories. So if you're nervous your production won't have the budget of others, don't let that stop you from nominating.

DM

What happens if a school does not win?

LK

I know it is cliché but it really is the taking part that counts. I've put on two shows at the Edinburgh Festival and when there is a 'reviewer' watching it feels so different backstage, in a positive way. There is a buzz and excitement when someone is watching your show who isn't your mum and grandad! We've found that since we have been visiting schools, the performing arts teachers have commented that it has elevated the show. Even if a school doesn't win, their production is acknowledged by the National School Theatre Awards. Attending the annual red-carpeted award ceremony becomes a celebration of being an integral part of this vibrant community.

DM

What is the NSTA Fund?

LK

One of the most talented students I'd ever seen, a real triple threat, couldn't go to a performing arts college because he couldn't afford the fees. Money, quite literally, put his dream on hold, whilst others, who were less talented, got places. This didn't sit right with me. I then considered how many incredible young actors across the UK couldn't afford to attend the theatre, let alone performing arts colleges and on-top-of-that the classes you need to prepare you for the auditions into these colleges. The NSTA Fund aims to support disadvantaged students to access the arts and help improve school's performing arts facilities across the UK.

DM

What's the best show you have seen so far?

LK

Nice try! I will honestly say that every show I have seen has been brilliant. Everyone throws themselves into a school production. I watched a show the other day where the camera operator was in year 8 and so dedicated. There is so much great student theatre out there and I am proud to be part of the National School Theatre Awards whose aim is to shine a light on that.

DM

I noticed on your website that you run workshops, what are these?

LK

We conduct workshops and events throughout the year for nominated schools. For instance, if your production is *Les Misérables*, we can arrange for a visit from someone associated with *Les Mis* to lead a session. Whether you require an industry-trained dancer to choreograph a routine for *Matilda* or a tap routine for *Billy Elliot*, we've got you covered.

DM

What does a school need to do to nominate their production?

LK

Visit www.schooltheatreawards.com and register but also follow us on Instagram for updates and workshop offers.

I mentioned earlier that we are also looking for performing arts teachers to join us and watch school productions if you're interested check out the Join Us page on the website.

DM

Sounds great. I think every school should nominate and take part! Thank you for taking the time to talk with us and best of luck with the new year.

LK

Thank you, we've got some exciting news coming up so watch this space! And thank you to Drama Matters, what an exciting and dedicated community you've grown.

To nominate your school:
schooltheatreawards.com/nominate/

To join the team:
schooltheatreawards.com/join-us-2/

Instagram: [school_theatre_awards](https://www.instagram.com/school_theatre_awards)
Website: schooltheatreawards.com
Facebook: [/schooltheatreawards](https://www.facebook.com/schooltheatreawards)



What are the National School Theatre Awards?

National School Theatre Awards is dedicated to recognising the talents of young people aged 11-18 in school performing arts. We provide a platform for young people to showcase their skills and gain recognition from industry professionals.

Who can participate in National School Theatre Awards?

The National School Theatre Awards® are open to young people aged 11-18 with a passion for the performing arts. The awards recognise performances in both full-time and part-time school productions, which must be presented to a public audience.

Step-by-Step Award Process

Step 1:

Register any Year 6-13 production from Independent or Maintained schools. Performances, such as end-of-term musicals or Christmas shows, are eligible as long as students perform to an audience. Productions can occur in autumn, spring, or summer terms before the September award ceremony. Notify us of dates early to assign a Talent Rep.

Step 2:

Complete the Award Nomination Form promptly to facilitate ceremony planning and Talent Rep allocation. Even if you don't win, your school might be invited to perform. Early form completion helps us prepare the awards programme and assign a Talent Rep. We are dedicated to sending a Talent Rep anywhere in the UK.

Step 3:

A Talent Rep will attend your school's performance. Though we aim for live attendance, remote areas may require a recording of your production. Participating schools receive invitations to future NSTA workshops and conferences.

Step 4:

Purchase tickets for the annual awards event, a glamorous night featuring school and industry professional performances. Your school might be invited to perform, regardless of winning.

Step 5:

The prestigious National School Theatre Awards ceremony in London.



DRAMA, DANCE, ART AND MUSIC TEACHERS ACROSS THE NATION UNITE!

All of the hard work, time, commitment, creativity and effort you and your students have poured into school productions will be recognised and celebrated by the National School Theatre Awards.

Join us in celebrating exceptional young performers.

The annual National School Theatre Awards, supported by our industry experienced patrons, is an opportunity for young performers across the nation to be rewarded for their talents.

“ *I am delighted to be supporting the NSTAs. School productions are often the stepping stone for many actors, singers and dancers and it is fantastic to be recognising the hardwork commitment and talent that goes into these shows”*
Kara Tointon, NSTA Patron

NATIONAL
SCHOOL THEATRE
AWARDS

Register & Nominate

Register and nominate your school and let us know the date of your production/s.

Students Perform

A School Theatre Awards Talent Rep will watch the nominated performance.

Finalists Shortlisted

These shortlisted individuals have demonstrated remarkable talent, dedication, and expertise, making them stand out as the most promising contenders in the competition.

Awards Ceremony

A selection of winners and finalists will be invited to perform at the National School Theatre Awards. This prestigious red carpeted ceremony is held at a London theatre.



Register and Nominate now online: schooltheatreawards.com/registration/
For updates follow us on Instagram: @school_theatre_awards
For enquiries email: info@schooltheatreawards.com

WHAT?

WHY?

HOW?

A FRAMEWORK FOR PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

By breaking down the analysis into these three questions, students can systematically evaluate and reflect upon the techniques used, the reasons behind these choices and the execution of the performance. This method not only enhances the understanding of theatre but also equips students with the tools to engage with and reflect upon their own performance material critically.

This framework provides a clear and organised method for breaking down and analysing various components of a performance, which helps students approach their analysis methodically rather than being overwhelmed by the complexity of a production. By starting with the 'What', students learn to observe and note the details of a performance, including techniques, skills and design elements. This practice enhances their ability to notice subtleties that they might otherwise overlook.

Moving on to the 'Why' encourages students to think critically about the intentions behind the elements they've identified. This deepens their understanding of the art form and its capacity to convey meaning and emotion. Students can connect theoretical knowledge with practical application, seeing firsthand how different techniques and methods affect performance.

By considering the 'Why', students interpret the creative choices made by the performers and creators, leading to a richer understanding of the work's themes, characters, and narrative. Discussing 'How' elements are executed helps students to articulate their understanding and analysis of performances with a more developed and specialised vocabulary.

By Liam Greenall

The '**What? Why? How?**' analysis structure is a framework that helps Drama students dissect and understand different components of performance work they have created, devised, rehearsed and/or performed.



WHAT?

This is the identification phase. You pinpoint what is being done or what has occurred. For a drama performance, this could mean detailing the conventions or technique, the performer's physical or vocal skill, the use of space and props, the dialogue or the lighting and sound effects. This step is all about observing and recording the objective facts.

WHY?

This is the interpretation phase. Here, you delve into the purpose or reasons behind what you observed in the 'WHAT' phase. Why did the character behave a certain way? Why was a specific line of dialogue included? Why was the lighting arranged in a certain manner? This step is about comprehending the intentions behind the choices made in the performance.

HOW?

This is the execution phase. Here, you analyse how the elements you've identified in the 'WHAT' phase were carried out. How was a character's behaviour portrayed by the actor? How was a specific line of dialogue delivered? How were the lighting and sound effects implemented? This step involves examining the techniques, skills and execution of the elements identified in the 'WHAT' phase.

In its simple form:

- **WHAT** did you use/do?
- **WHY** did you use it/do it?
- **HOW** did you use it/do it?



WHAT?

TECHNIQUES AND CONVENTIONS

Such as still image, thought track, slow motion, Alive for 5, monologue, cross cutting and so on

PHYSICAL SKILLS

Posture, gesture, facial expressions, eye contact and focus, energy dynamics, gait, proxemics, spatial awareness, body language

VOCAL SKILLS

Clarity of diction, inflection, accent, intonation, pace, pause and timing, projection, pitch, emotional range, volume

INTERPRETIVE SKILLS

Dramatic structure, personal interpretation, themes, contexts, language, imagery, symbolism

SPACE, STAGING AND DESIGN

WHY? AUDIENCE

EXPLAIN its effect on the audience

The intended impact on the audience was to...

...allowed the audience to... (deduce / infer / recognise / understand / realise / question acknowledge / aspire / know)

.....invited the audience to... (deduce / infer / recognise / understand / realise / question acknowledge / aspire / know)

...created an exception that... X and Y will happen

...heightened the sensation of XYZ for the audience by...

XYZ = fear / dread / excitement / passion ect.

...invited the audience to (sympathise / empathise / support / question)
CHARACTER'S NAME...

WHY? ANALYTICAL TERMS

SHOW

Allows something to be perceived and/or displayed

ESTABLISH

Sets up/creates

SIGNIFY

Shows/acts as a sign

DENOTE

Provides a straightforward meaning

CONNOTE

Suggests or offers an interpreted meaning

SUGGEST

Provides a possible interpretation

IMPLY

Provides a possible interpretation

ILLUSTRATE

Provides a clear example of

FORESHADOW

Hints at what's to come

CONTRAST WITH

Offers a different idea to another example

JUXTAPOSE WITH

Creates opposite feelings compared with another

DEMONSTRATE

Is an example

IDENTIFY

Pinpoints/makes clear

STUDENT EXAMPLE

The example below shows how a student has used the 'What? Why? How?' framework to analyse their portrayal of a character named Emma in a performance titled 'Hostage!'. **COLOUR CODE: WHAT? WHY? HOW?**

FOCUS:

Drama Technique: COLLECTIVE CHARACTER (with reference to a still image, too)

Physical Skills: POSTURE, GESTURE, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Vocal Skills: PITCH, PAUSE

In the opening scene of our Hostage! performance, we approached the portrayal of our lead character, Emma, through the technique of **Collective Character**. This powerful technique allowed us to **reveal the complexity and dual nature of Emma's character**, a secret agent in disguise as a high school student, in a uniquely collaborative manner.

The choice to use Collective Character was driven by our desire to **highlight the dichotomy within Emma's character and her circumstances**. We wanted to **communicate the constant inner conflict she experiences**, juggling her secret identity and her guise as a regular student. This technique enabled the group to **voice Emma's unspoken thoughts, fears and desires**, providing the audience with a deeper insight into her character.

To implement this technique, we began by **brainstorming and jotting down potential thoughts and feelings** that Emma might have in various situations. This process was essential in **establishing a collective understanding of her character** within the group.

We started off by using a **still image** to **explore the body language of Emma**. She sat on a chair, legs slightly apart, her elbows were tucked into her ribs, her head and chin were lowered down, and then we **fisted her hands and put them against her temples**. This enabled us to **visually convey the tension and subtlety of her dual identity**. By **experimenting with different postures and gestures**, we were able to **physically represent the contrasts within her character**.

By using the lines we brainstormed, we then **experimented with a range of vocal techniques** to **express Emma's inner thoughts and feelings**. My line was, "I just don't know how long this can go on for!". I started the sentence in a **higher pitch** and **gradually lowered it** to help **convey a sense of desperation and frustration**. I also added a **pause** after "I just don't know" to help **emphasise the uncertainty and inner turmoil of the character**. Each member of the group **called out one line of her thoughts**, creating an auditory collage that **reflected her complex emotional state**. This shared **vocalisation** added **depth** to Emma's character and **highlighted the group's role in her portrayal**.

We then **incorporated a variety of actions and gestures** to **further express Emma's thoughts and feelings**. For my **gestures**, I ran my fingers through my hair to display the frustration and stress Emma was feeling. For my **facial expression**, I opened my eyes really wide for emphasis. These **physical movements** were not merely illustrative but also served to **emphasise the emotional intensity of her character**.

Through the use of **Collective Character**, we were able to create a layered and compelling portrayal of Emma. This technique not only enriched our understanding of her character, but also allowed us to engage the audience in a unique and dynamic way.



AI AND THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THEATRE MAKING

BY EMMA TOMPKINS

Come with me, and you'll be, in a world of frustrated creatives.

Theatre tends to be one of the last industries to mobilise towards technological innovations. We continue to be an industry doing the most on the least. The majority of theatre productions still utilise the classic models of theatre making; for a designer this process always starts with a pen and paper. There are still set designers and builders out there who use the same draughting techniques as fifty, dare I say, one hundred years previously.

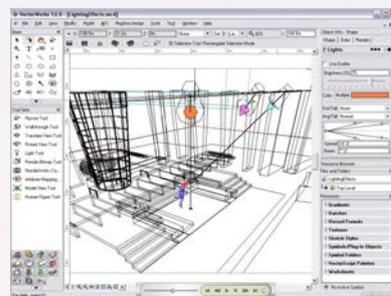
Yet technology is advancing and slowly permeating our walls. We are not yet at the point where I will don my designer's visionboard3000 helmet, dart my eyes back and forth and a perfect representation of my set design idea will print in 3D on a side table, one can dream.

Modern technological innovations have very rarely been designed for the bespoke use of the theatre industry, we simply aren't the money makers technology development needs. More often than not creatives and makers are co-opting other searingly expensive software lifted from architecture, product and graphic design, often with areas of the software not quite covering our unique needs.

Proficiency in Computer Aided Design or CAD (which revolutionised Architecture in the 1980's) has now become one of the many skill sets needed by graduate designers to land jobs as high end assistants. It is not totally universal in the industry, but it is very common. Digitally rendering your designs (predominantly in 2D although 3D modelling is now very much established) can help your process in many ways; Digital drawings can be sent for laser cutting so model boxes can be assembled with precision accuracy and in even more finite detail than a scalpel blade and a steady hand can provide.

The advantage of this innovation can be in our productivity (if repeats are used for example) although the technical skill to master a complex AutoCAD drawing is time consuming in and of itself. Set designs are now being 3D printed, either as full renditions or as individual pieces such as furniture or lighting equipment. It's making things easier and quicker for designers who are often significantly over worked.

Structural CAD drawings can also be used as a base to generate fully rendered 3D images, creating an aesthetic similar to a video game. It can be presented on a 2D screen but also, theoretically, as part of an immersive AV experience (although the number of theatres able to explore this level of presentation can be counted on one hand).



VectorWorks is used by some of the top stage and scenic designers but it comes with quite the price tag.

These options mean your initial designs can be shown to creatives and technical teams working on the production in multiple ways to help problem solve before there is a set piece that doesn't fit through the venue door and the only solution is a circular saw.

Some of the most technically advanced sets are designed on the same software as skyscrapers. Design technology can be especially useful and has brought the world of theatre design forward into a new category for visual spectacle and achievement.

So surely, we ought to be excited about the next advancement in design technology, that of artificial intelligence?

Well, the answer is...

Sort of?

AI as a tool for designers to use for inspiration and productivity, makes it a valuable asset in our process. There are designers who are already integrating AI successfully, but no innovation is without casualties and with AI in particular, freelancers are concerned, and rightly so.

Copyright: AI makes its suggestions based on the data it has mined. This means Adobe's AI images are based on all the photo stock it owns. Not every AI is this ethical and some simply scan whatever available content there is, often with algorithms based on popularity rather than accuracy.

If you ask an AI to produce a costume design for a Tudor doublet, it will scan any image it knows is labelled as Tudor, making a composite guess based on the information available. But there is little knowledge about whether the AI design has based it on accurate reproductions or what it thinks the Tudor fashion period was based on what *we* think the Tudor fashion period was. Faithfulness to original practice isn't always the case in these source images, historical anachronisms creep in for myriad reasons and it's very difficult for AI to know exactly what year people stopped wearing doublets and oversized cod prices.

The same is applicable to any time period because AI, in its current state, is only ever an amalgam. It does not factor in things like material behaviours, functionality, or physics. The image does not have to 'work' in 3D. It just needs to look like an image that might, and the level that AI is currently at, it's barely doing that.

One of the other aspects AI cannot algorithm its way out of yet is budgeting. Designers know how much things cost, and they will know based on their given parameters what they can reasonably achieve. I'm not sure 'Create a brilliant set design for 'Fiddler on the Roof' for £500' is a task an AI bot is capable of achieving, as it's still working on giving chairs four legs in the right place.

The deeper cut against designers and photographers is that we aren't paid for the use of our images fuelling the AI mind. And if images are used by a theatre for a promo, poster image or even a set or costume design itself, the theatre gets content at the expense of both the original creator and the designer they may have employed to create something original in an AI free world.

Theatres are tightening budgets and hunting for shortcuts and AI looks like a solution. As ever, the people losing out are the freelance creatives; we all want the magic bullet, the perfect productivity life hack, and AI offers those who think they can create something that usually needs a full team of professionally experienced and trained individuals at a click of a button. If the now infamous Chocolate Factory experience in Glasgow has taught us anything, we still need the original human talent to use things like physics and three dimensional spatial awareness to create truly accurate and detailed spaces unless you are going to be handing a quarter cup of lemonade to a crying child in a desolate warehouse.

Let AI be the tool of the trained creative, rather than being the untrained tool using AI.



IT'S OKAY TO BE CREATIVE

By Tracy Dorrington

I walk down the corridor, see some of my GCSE or A Level students and shout 'Wahe, huh' at them. I cross my arms across my body, like a judo stance, and they repeat it back at me. Others look at me as if I'm weird and that's okay as it's the way I make it stick. WAHE is actually spelt WWWHI, it's an acronym I created to help with their GCSE or A Level journey. The 'huh' doesn't stand for anything as it's just there for effect.

W - What?

W - When?

W - Why?

H - How?

I - Impact!

What are you doing? When are you doing it?

Why are you doing it? How are you doing it?

The impact it has.

I teach my students to remember this and use it throughout their course, portfolios, written exam and live theatre notes. It is something I created off the back of using GEMS for years. In the classroom, I use it for them to reflect on:

What are you doing?

What is the performer or designer doing?

When? - at what key moment?

**Why? - what purpose does it have for the performer?
The emotion or situation?**

How are you or the performers doing it? What gestures, facial expressions, movement, use of space, levels are you or the performer using?

What is the impact it had on you as an audience member? Or your audience.

We teach creativity, but sometimes people fear being creative. It's okay to be bold and to put yourself out there. As our subject has become diminished, it's as though we ourselves have become smaller. So, cast aside this diminished sense of self and fall in love with your creativity once more. Take a look at the schemes of work you produce; are you ignited by them? If not, how can you expect your students to be? Consider what you teach and why you teach it, which shows you see and why you see them. If it's simply because 'it has always been done this way', ask yourself: does it still work?

The students we teach have changed, and we should evolve with them. Think of different ways to flick the light switch on, to ignite the passion, to ensure that the next generation truly understands what creativity is, what it does, and why Drama truly matters.

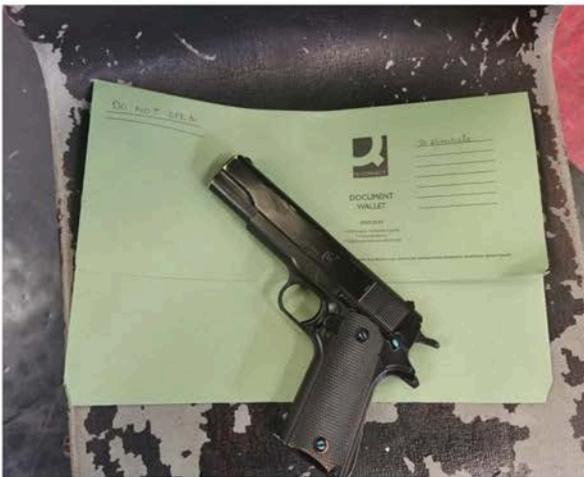
When you have that challenging class, have you become scared to try something different because they are hard enough already? Do you know what they are interested in? Can you use that as a way in?

When you do your devising module, how do you set up the stimuli? You could create an installation, do something interesting, get excited about what you are putting together, look at the different threads and different mediums you can present.

You don't need to reinvent the wheel, there is so much out there on the files of the different groups, but you DO need to be ignited by what you teach. You DO need to believe in what you are delivering. You DO need to have belief in what you are sharing because then you can feel empowered by what you are delivering and in turn you can empower your students.

Take the challenge, be creative, challenge the status quo but most of all remind yourself why creativity is important because first and foremost YOU ARE AN ARTIST!

CREATIVITY IN ACTION



A GODOT WORTH WAITING FOR

BY RORY LANCE

Two very talented students of mine, Ian and Andrew, had great faith that a student production of *Waiting For Godot* was a possibility and campaigned for it in the months leading up to their senior year. Throughout my career as a drama teacher, the list of shows that I thought were beyond high-schoolers had grown shorter and shorter with each demonstration of achievement onstage. A play was too challenging for high-school students only until you came across that particular group who had both the talent and desire to conquer it. So after Ian's and Andrew's very effective pitch, I decided to direct *Godot* for our fall studio production.

After an exceptional set of auditions, I cast Ian as Vladimir and Andrew as Estragon. Pozzo would be played by Sean, a talented comedian and visual artist. Lucky would be played by Daniel, an intense and insightful playwriting student, and John, two years younger than the rest of the cast, would be our Boy. The cast list was posted at 8 a.m. on Tuesday, September 11, 2001. One hour later the lives of these five boys, as well as everyone else in the world, changed.

"We've been attacked!" screamed Rachel, earphones still on her head as she entered my Contemporary Drama class and began giving minute-by-minute updates. So began the most surreal day I have ever spent in a classroom. The administration delayed making an announcement for fear of panicking the students, but of course, that was only making them feel worse. Most students in 2001 were already wired and outside information was constantly floating in. The administration's silence was just adding to the confusion.

One student was twitching in his seat. "What's up?" "My mother works at the World Trade Center." "Go down to the office and tell them you need to use the phone and see if you can get through." Finally, the administration got on the P.A. system and did the best they could to inform and calm the students. After that initial announcement the P.A. did not stop, for every few minutes another student was called to the main office where their parents were waiting to take them home. Finally, the whole school system shut down and everyone was sent home.

When we were allowed to return to school, I was back in my Contemporary Drama class when I saw the boy who had been twitching in his seat. "How is everything? How's your mother?" "She got out safely." "I hope you celebrated." "We haven't stopped." I haven't the slightest memory of what I'd said that day to try to keep my students calm and secure. But many months later, a group of our seniors were discussing their time at Edward R. Murrow High School just before graduation. Tim, a very dedicated theatre student, thanked me for the way I handled myself. "You said all the right things and took some of the fear away."

For the first few days after classes resumed, all after-school activities were cancelled, so we couldn't begin rehearsals for *Godot*. So my five young actors took it upon themselves to meet in each others' homes to start reading through and familiarising themselves with the play. Every day they would report back to me with questions and observations, and I would give feedback as a remote director. Then we were finally able to begin rehearsals in earnest.

The original manuscript of *Waiting For Godot* was written in French in a child's composition book, but the amount of critical analysis of the play takes up two shelves at Barnes and Noble. Where to begin? I read Samuel Beckett's notebooks and other people's notebooks on Beckett's notebooks. We spent the first week of rehearsal talking about everything and anything the students had discovered in their own research.

As we started to put the play on its feet, I decided to try something I never had before. Since there was such an immense amount of interpretation, I decided to keep all options open. When an actor had a question, I would offer three possible solutions. When they asked which one I preferred, I would recommend that they let all three live in their head. Whichever one rose to the surface at a particular moment -- that's the one to follow. Kids love the freedom to participate and make decisions. They were all eager to embrace a method where each moment would be discovered at each performance, the opposite of what they were used to with more traditional plays.

The subway system was shut down for days after the attack, so I had to drive to work. I would ordinarily drive down the West Side and into the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, but the whole West Side was closed off, so I had to travel down the East Side and over the Brooklyn Bridge. When they finally opened up the tunnel, I got my first glimpse of Ground Zero. It was colourless. Everything was covered in grey ash, the only colour you saw. Grey structures, grey road, grey sky, grey everything. I told the boys, "I think I just saw the world of this play today, a world devoid of any colour." My impromptu experience was very effective in helping to "colour" the dramatic world we were trying to create.

These five young actors had a profound and unique experience. They attempted to tackle one of the most influential theatrical works of the twentieth century, open to endless interpretation, at a time when America was forced to reassess every reality it had ever known. The crisis we were facing gave this cast insights no other company had ever had to work with. And the play itself helped us to understand the gravity of the moment we were all living through in real time. The world and the theatre collided -- and these boys, caught in the middle, created something important from it all.

THE BIG CHALLENGE!

The School Production: Annie Jr.

The Drama Studio.
Friday afternoon. The final lesson of the day.

A teacher leads a challenging group of Year 7 students in a practical exploration of the Prologue from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. One group of girls have fallen out with each other and no longer want to work together. Two boys are hiding in the stage curtains and one child refuses to engage because they don't want anyone watching them. The Drama teacher is mastering multi-role as she unweaves the chaos around her into some semblance of creative exploration and calms the waves of unrest, confiscating a packet of sweets from one of the boys she unravels from the curtains. The Headteacher enters for an impromptu learning walk.

Headteacher: Ah, good afternoon year 7, doesn't everyone look happy! *(All students immediately turn and smile at the Headteacher, looking innocent)*. Are we having a whole school production this year? Who would like to be in our school play? *(Lots of students put their hands up and wave for attention)*. I bet we have some brilliant performers in here.

Students (simultaneously): I was in our leavers' assembly! I'm a brilliant singer! I can dance! When is it? Can I be in it Miss? My Mum's in the PTA so I should be in it! Do we have to be in it?

During the following burst of dialogue from the students the Headteacher smiles and nods. The Drama teacher fakes a smile to students and the Headteacher, turns away and eats the sweets she has confiscated.

Student 1: My Mum says I'm a right Drama Queen!

Student 2: I can sing way better than you!

Student 3: Are we getting costumes?

Student 4: Can I be the main part?

Student 5: I'm not being in it if she is!

Student 6: I've got a clown costume I can wear!

Student 7: Is it home time yet?

Student 1: *(to the Drama teacher)* You taught my Mum, Miss!

Student 2: Do you want to see a TikTok of me singing?

Student 3: Are you paying for the costumes? My Dad says the school should give us everything we need and we shouldn't pay for anything.

Student 4: Can I be Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*?

Student 5: She can't sing.

Student 6: Clowns are dead scary.

Student 7: You're dead scary.

Student 4: Or Elsa in *Frozen* (starts to sing the Chorus to Let it Go, joined by some other students).

The Drama teacher calms the class down.

Drama Teacher: Thank you Headteacher for your suggestion. Bradley, come out from behind the curtains please.



By Julie Salisbury

Promotional material for the show

Headteacher: It wasn't a suggestion. Let me know which show you would like to do and email the proposal to me by end of day Monday, complete with costings. Thank you everyone. Have a nice weekend *(exits)*.
The Drama teacher becomes surrounded by students all wanting to be seen and heard.

Student 1: Can I wear a crown?

Student 2: I do karaoke every weekend at my Nan's house!

Student 3: How much are the tickets?

Student 4: I'm good at learning lines!

Student 5: Do we have to be in it?

Student 6: I can be Pennywise - I've got a red balloon!

Student 7: What time is it?

Student 1: *(to the Drama teacher)* You taught my Nan, Miss!

Student 2: Do you want to see a TikTok of me dancing?

Student 3: Can you watch it for free if you're on Universal Credit?

Student 4: Can I be Jasmine in *Aladdin*?

Student 5: I want to be in the *Lion King*.

Student 6: Are you scared of clowns?

Student 7: I'm not scared of anything.

Student 4: I can be Michael Jackson (the students start to do the dance to Thriller).

This scenario would be a great starting point for a comedy. However, this is no work of fiction. This is a true story. I was that Drama Teacher.

As a school we have always produced a range of annual productions, including:

- Whole school musicals
- Shakespeare
- Contemporary Comedies
- Christmas Showcases
- Music Soirees
- Band and Choir performances
-

However, Covid restrictions put a stop to that in March 2020 and, as we remember all too well, all public performances ceased. Putting on a whole school production is a rewarding experience and something that many of us do regularly. However, as we all know, it is never without its challenges. I hereby present to you a snippet of the challenges we faced with our production. I feel confident that we all have a number of these in common.

CHALLENGES: Restrictions in the Department

The return to developing post-Covid extra-curricular cultural activities has been a long and winding journey as we addressed the need for building resilience and establishing social skills, confidence, and self-esteem, with diminishing budgets and tight timetables. The Performing Arts Department staffing had been changed through timetabling which made collaborative work almost impossible as we tried to run a range of creative extra-curricular activities which clashed with those of the PE Department (who ran a different sports activity every afternoon, with a large staff base). We have one Drama teacher, 2 Music teachers and a Music trainee, offering Drama Club, Choir, Band, BTEC support sessions for Performing Arts, BTEC support sessions for Music.

However, the students were excited by the prospect of a whole school production, and the Headteacher wanted the proposal. I had to squeeze this tiny, teeny-weenie little bit of work in somewhere in my timetable.

PROPOSAL

I stated in the proposal that we would perform at our local theatre rather than at school. Despite the resources we have available in school (lighting rig, curtains, tiered seating), we would have to find dates for rehearsals and performances where the space was not hired out by external companies. To supplement the school budget, the income from lettings was notable. However, this impacted on the extra-curricular use of our facilities.

We had formed a partnership with our local theatre which offered us the opportunity to perform in one of their spaces. We would have one of their technicians working alongside our technician, the use of the space for dress and technical rehearsals and access to dressing rooms, costumes and props. Through the partnership we also have an industry professional working alongside me in the Performing Arts Department for one afternoon each week, developing my CPD in addition to enriching the learning experience of our students.

The costing of the partnership was equal to the price we paid annually to participate in the Shakespeare Schools Festival. However, this fee applied to one performance only. With the school partnership we have a number of opportunities to engage in a range of performance spaces, and experience workshops and discounted theatre tickets.

We chose Annie Jr as our whole school musical, having produced a number of the 60-minute shows from Music Theatre International in previous years, including Alice in Wonderland, Aladdin, The Little Mermaid and Mary Poppins. The performance license cost us £500 and we would be liable to pay 10% of ticket sales to MTI following the production.

**CHALLENGES: Licensing**

MTI would not license the show for the main theatre due to a seating capacity of 500-800. Seating was capped at 200 for an amateur/school production. We were only granted the license if we used the smaller Garrett Theatre, with a capacity for 145 seats. However, the performance space matched our Drama Studio dimensions and the Garrett Theatre offered tiered seating, a black box design and large black screens to use as wings.

PRODUCTION TEAM

There was great initial interest from staff in joining the production team when we announced that we were going to produce a whole school musical.

CHALLENGES: Commitment

However, once we had completed the first meeting, outlining roles, responsibilities and commitments, the team quickly shrunk. We went from 14 people to 6. Many of the staff who had initially showed interest were shocked at the level of commitment required and the timescale involved in the production process. The Dance teacher could not commit to being on the team due to a part-time contract and teaching Dance GCSE as an extra-curricular subject when we would be rehearsing. Fortunately, one of our Teaching Assistants is an experienced choreographer and was one of the remaining 6 team members, and I also have some choreography experience.

AUDITIONS

We auditioned through Drama Club which meets once a week after school. We had a great response and cast the show with students from years 7 to 11. We secured a strong cast of 40 students and a stage crew.

CHALLENGES: Commitment from students

The Dance group did not want to be in the show, but the cast were eager to learn the choreography. Some students dropped out as they did not get the role they wanted. Some students were unable to be in the show as they had responsibilities at home and could not attend extra-curricular clubs.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Due to the minimal staffing in the department and the shrunken production crew we scheduled the rehearsals in 2 sections:

- Mondays: Choreography and blocking in the Drama Studio, small group blocking in the Hall
- Wednesdays: Choir and vocal support in the Music room

Lunchtime rehearsals were offered to students with lots of dialogue or blocking of certain scenes, which took place in the Drama Studio 3 times a week, woven around staff duties, detentions and meetings.

CHALLENGES: Rehearsals

The Dance group sometimes used the Hall on a Monday.

Middle Leader meetings meant that the Head of Music and I were absent from rehearsals on occasion and other members of the production team stepped up to run rehearsals.

Staff duties, detentions and meetings impeded the lunchtime rehearsals at times.

MAJOR CHALLENGE!

Reward trips for students were planned by SLT for our production week, despite our dates being on the school calendar. This meant that none of our cast or crew could attend their reward trip to a range of theme parks, museums, football stadiums and National Trust properties. Parents and students were upset and half of the cast dropped out of the production because they wanted to attend the trips.

We had no choice but to change the production dates, which was a major issue as we had to fit in with the production schedule of the local theatre. Our production dates changed from July to December.

REHEARSALS AT THE THEATRE

We booked the theatre space for a full day rehearsal. The most impressive experience for our students was that they had their own dressing room with all the trimmings. They described it thus: 'It's like Hollywood, Miss!' 'It's proper posh in there!' 'That's well cool!' We lost count of how many selfies were shared from that one space.

CHALLENGE: Staffing and transportation to the theatre

We used the school minibuses to transport us to and from the theatre. Health and safety and safeguarding guidelines required one driver and one staff member to be on each minibus. The issue was securing the drivers as the minibuses are in use all day and had to shuttle between a range of off-site visits such as DofE, field trips and College/University open days, in addition to transporting us to the theatre.

REHEARSALS AT THE THEATRE: Set, costumes and props

The partnership has opened up opportunities to access not only theatre spaces, but also costumes, props and set.

CHALLENGE: The sofa

The theatre had promised us a sofa for our set, suitable for the lounge of a 1930s American millionaire. However, the school liaison had some difficulty persuading the Tech Team to relinquish their staffroom seating for 48 hours.

REHEARSALS AT THE THEATRE: Schedule

We planned a two-day schedule as follows:

Day 1: Dress and Technical rehearsal 9.30am - 2.45pm. Running time for full performance set at 1 hour. Students to bring snacks, packed lunch and water.

Day 2: Final runs and performances 12 noon - 8pm. Allowance for comfort breaks, lunch and tea. Students to bring snacks, packed lunch, tea and water. Doors to open 15 minutes prior to performance. Audience to gather in the Theatre Bar.

CHALLENGE: Managing the students and their parents

We had underestimated the sheer excitement of our students and their parents. We had 2 performances at 5pm and 7pm. Parents started to arrive an hour before each performance and some students received messages requesting to see them before the show. Some students had asked parents to bring them meals from Subway, McDonalds and the local Pizza take-away to eat in between performances.

Audience members leaving the auditorium were making requests to secure tickets for the second performance as they had enjoyed it so much. The Theatre Bar was filling up as one audience delayed their departure and another arrived. Food parcels were being passed around between parents, staff and students and it became a game to the students to try and 'escape' from backstage to join the audience in the Theatre Bar, resulting in repeated 'head counts' and impromptu registers being called. Above the melee rang a constant chorus of laughter.

Showtime!

Needless to say, the performances were phenomenal. The students shone, the parents beamed and the staff cried (part relief/part pride). The feedback from students, parents and Governors was that the experience of performing in a Theatre, rather than in school, made the production more exciting and added a professional touch. The students want their own dressing rooms in school. I have already secured further performances at the Theatre. Cinderella was being performed on the main stage in the Theatre on the same evening as our production of Annie. The cast had our production streamed into their green room and were singing along to our musical numbers. The Ugly Sisters held the backstage doors open for our crew to return the rather heavy sofa to the Tech Team's staffroom, and passed on their commendations to our ensemble.

CHALLENGE: 'What are we doing next, Miss?'

Following the final bows of a show, the cast exit the stage and surround the Drama teacher who is trying not to let the students know that they are wiping their eyes.

Student 1: What are we doing next, Miss?

Student 2: Can I have the lead role this time?

Student 3: Can we do Matilda?

Student 4: Do we get a discount for the next show?

Student 5: Can we do High School Musical?

Student 6: Can we do Harry Potter?

Student 7: I've got a Dementor costume!

Would we do it all again?

We are currently in rehearsals for our next show.

Julie is the Head of Performing Arts at Blacon High School in Chester. She recently completed her Doctorate in Education with a focus on the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting.

You can read about her doctorate journey in Issue One of Drama Matters Magazine.





IT'S PANTO TIME!

(OH NO IT ISN'T)

BY JAMES CLARKE

Not enough time?

Far too busy?

I'm just too tired.

No this isn't an article about an energy enhancer pill but instead an insight from me about being involved in a local Panto and why I couldn't recommend enough about getting involved in local amateur dramatic societies.

In true teacher style, I found myself far too often using those lines I started this article with whenever someone suggested doing something outside of my job. I could never comprehend how I could juggle school productions, GCSE rehearsals and marking on top of actually being involved in a production. It's fair to say that when I first started teaching, I let it fully take over my life and would be working throughout holidays and weekends and still felt like I never caught up. But a few years ago this slightly changed, when someone asked me to get involved in a local pantomime and although hesitant, they reminded me: "James, you have to make time for yourself and do something that is for you" and so I caved and thought why not give it a go.

Fast forward the clock and I've since been involved in numerous play competitions around the country and local pantomimes, most recently finishing a Christmas run performing as Harriet (one-half of the ugly stepsisters) in Cinderella with my local group in North London.



As I write this article, I'm halfway through rehearsals for two plays I'm directing to be part of the Weylem and Cambridge drama festivals, come and pop by and say hello if you are local (our group name is SMP - Saint Moncia Players).

But why am I sharing this story? We all know that education can be demanding and as Drama educators, we perhaps give more than most to our job. The feeling though of being surrounded by like-minded people, those being people who love theatre and performing, can make a huge difference.

I did have to make time and slightly force myself to do it but I've no regrets in doing so. Whilst there are bound to be a teacher or two in your local am-dram group (my counterpart for Cinderella was a headteacher!), you will also meet people from all walks of life. I've met: lawyers, charity workers and one lady who owns a treatment centre that offers colonic irrigation! Aside from meeting new people and doing something for yourself, one benefit I have also found is that non-teachers seem to enjoy marking. I learnt this when I rocked up to our dress rehearsal with 100+ year 8 exam papers and I soon found I had an army of markers ready to help, I've never marked so quickly (see image for proof of the operation)

So what's stopping you?

Support local arts and get involved with your local amateur dramatics scene and share your stories when you do!

THE POWER OF PERFORMANCE POETRY

An Interview with Lucas Howard, Founder of Flight Feathers



Lucas Howard, can you tell us a bit about you?

I started writing poetry at 8. Before the age of 6 I had a distinct stutter. To help overcome this I had speech therapy and as part of this we practiced tongue twisters, poems and nursery rhymes.

I didn't discover spoken word until the age of 25 / 26. Part of the appeal is the inclusion element. The history of Slam Poetry started in Chicago in 1985; by a construction worker and poet. The reason he pioneered this movement was because he felt poetry was elitist and non-inclusive for all genders, races and classes.

Can you tell us about Flight Feathers and what inspired you to set up this recurring performance event?

Flight Feather is my third Poetry Slam which diverts from my original format. We have eight poets that compete which are categorised into two formats: Falcons or Fledglings. The Falcons can take the Fledglings under their nest which is apt as the venue is 'The Nest' in Hastings.

Our format uses three judges each time to avoid bias.

The Nest is a creative, social hub which has events during the day for the community. I approached this venue specifically as it hosts workshops and opportunities for neuro-divergent people and those who want help with mental health.

From seeing your work, I can see you have a vibrant, contemporary approach to performance poetry. Can you tell us more?

My first love of poetry was classic verse such as Tennyson, Wordsworth and more recently John Betjemen. I am drawn to the rhyme and rhythm and the playfulness. I grew up in the 80's and 90's when HipHop was prevalent so the two seemed to compliment one another.

What are your thoughts on embedding poetry and performance into education?

It would be great to have more poetry competitions and have a 'slam' opportunity. It is important to make poetry fun. The ability to have the confidence to perform and speak in public is also importance.

Flight Feathers is currently performed at The Next in Hastings East Sussex regularly.



VAMOS THEATRE

Vamos Theatre launches On Demand version of its 5-star touring production about ADHD

Worcester-based Vamos Theatre, the UK's leading mask theatre company, is releasing its 5-star touring theatre production, *Boy on the Roof*, for online viewing - available for schools until June 30th. *Boy on the Roof*, which has recently finished a UK tour, is the story of an unlikely friendship between Liam, a teenage boy with ADHD, and his 91-year-old neighbour, Albert. Performed without words, it features some of the best physical theatre and mask actors in the UK. Playing Liam is Gavin Maxwell, a neurodivergent theatre maker and movement director whose extensive body of work includes five years as a practitioner for Frantic Assembly.

The production was created through Community Conversations across the UK, gathering people's personal experiences of ADHD, in particular those of teenagers and parents. The production, described by British Theatre Guide as "Touching, funny, poignant, clever, insightful and technically flawless—a must-see show" features a full-length soundtrack, innovative film projection and an inventive set. It is accessible to deaf audiences without BSL interpretation.

Honor Hoskins, Vamos Theatre's Creative Producer, comments, "We're delighted to be able to offer schools across the UK and internationally the chance to see our work online for an affordable ticket price, helping to further spread understanding of ADHD. Schools can also access lots of extra resources for free, including an Education Pack, interviews, commentary, mask theatre shorts and more."

Diana, posting online, commented, "I saw *Boy on the Roof* last night with our two neurodivergent Year 10 boys; they declared it the best piece of theatre they've seen. The play is a must for all - a touching and hopeful story of people, isolated by difference, brought together by a fundamental need for connection and understanding." *Boy on the Roof* was filmed live at New Wolsey Theatre Ipswich. It is available to schools between March 18th-June 30th, with unlimited access during that time. The age guidance is 12+.

Tickets are available at:

<https://www.wolseytheatre.co.uk/shows/boy-on-the-roof-on-demand/>

WHAT SUPPORT IS OUT THERE?

By Tracy Dorrington

When at the National Theatre Conference earlier this year, a Drama Teacher mentioned to me that there is so much stuff out there that they didn't really know where to look and what to sign up for, so for ease we have put a little chart together.



National Theatre Drama Online Library

An archive with so much information and you can watch the performances too. Free for state schools unless you want the scripts, there is a charge however for independent schools.

www.dramaonlinelibrary.com



National Theatre Schools Hub

Learning hub of educational resources and teaching tools to support creative learning in the classroom. Free to use.

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/>



National Drama

National Drama is an open and inclusive organisation and we positively welcome as members all those who are interested in drama and theatre in learning contexts whether in the UK or beyond. There is a cost to join, in which you get a magazine twice a year and reduced fees for CPD.

<https://www.nationaldrama.org.uk/nd-membership/>



Royal Shakespeare Company

From events and workshops for students, to lesson plans, resources and CPD for teachers. Free to use, while some events and opportunities costs.

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/learn/schools-and-teachers?from=dropdown>



We Teach Drama

We Teach Drama is an eCommerce company which creates and delivers innovative, high-quality training and resources to drama teachers. Online CPD, resources that you can buy. It does cost but you get some freebies too when you sign up.

<https://www.weteachdrama.com/>



Open Drama

A platform for teachers, theatre practitioners & industry experts to advance, improve and benefit young people through drama. Does cost to join, as does the online CPD but reduced charge if a member.

<https://opendramauk.org/>

DTEA

Drama & Theatre
Education Alliance

DTEA

An alliance of UK associations working in drama and theatre with, for and by children and young people. Membership is for organisations only.

<https://www.dtealliance.co.uk/projects>



Les Enfants Terribles

A Theatre company who have a back room full of resources that enable teaching of design to a whole new level. Some free resources are available. They also have CPD for teachers and the costs vary depending on the course or workshop.

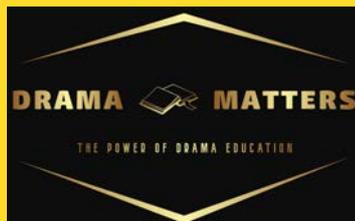
<https://thecuriosityindex.co.uk/register/>



The School Trip

A trip company that gives you free tickets to see the shows, so you get an idea of what is on. Free tickets for teachers to shows, just sign up. They plan the trip for you and help in any way possible. Obviously the tickets for students etc do cost but they will do all they can to keep prices down.

<https://theschooltrip.co.uk/>



DRAMA MATTERS

Are you lonely in your school or community, with no one to share ideas with, to bounce thoughts off or to exchange humorous stories? Do people simply not understand your subject? This is intended to be like the staff room of the Drama/Performing Arts department, but with one key difference - you're not sitting alone. :)

Are you an educator, freelancer or involved in the theatre and arts with connections to education? Do you truly believe that Drama Matters? Would you like to be part of our Drama family, sharing ideas, hopes, fears, schemes of work and resources? Network like you have never networked before?

Completely free networking.
Free sharing of good practice.
Free CPD.

Free wellbeing and support.
National and international connections.
Free Drama Matters magazine twice a year
Monthly newsletter with no direct emails.

Yearly Networking Weekend
Detailed files section on the FB group.
Representation in steering groups.

Links with your local Bridge builder who brings the Drama Matters ethos to you locally.

www.dramamatters.org

The website has links to the Facebook **Drama Matters Drama Department** staff room - the biggest in the UK and across the world



By Megan Donnachie

WHICH SHAKESPEARE BOOK TO CHOOSE?

One of the challenges when teaching Shakespeare is the multitude of choices available when choosing which edition to teach. Many editions of Shakespeare's plays are available to teachers for their planning and teaching. Each edition has its strengths and weaknesses, tailored to specific needs.

As a Drama teacher, I must face another issue when choosing my edition to teach: the marketing of Shakespeare education texts towards the English classroom. Throughout my research, I have been considering what I need from an edition of a Shakespeare play to allow for a full, practical exploration of the text in my Drama classroom. As part of my research, I have selected a range of editions designed for schools or marketed towards education.

For my research, I have decided to focus on *Macbeth* as it is the most popular play taught in UK secondary schools according to a 2019 survey of teachers in which 22% of the sample taught the play. *Macbeth* is also the Shakespeare text that my school's English department teaches. If I were to teach *Macbeth* in my school, I would have two options. Either use the Longman edition, designed for the English classroom and the English Literature GCSE. Alternatively, I could choose a new edition to purchase for my Drama department. The Longman Shakespeare edition of the play is used within my school's English Department; therefore, there are multiple copies in the school that I would have access to. However, if I were to teach using this edition in my Drama classroom, there would be a series of limitations to the edition for my planning and the learning of the students in my classroom.

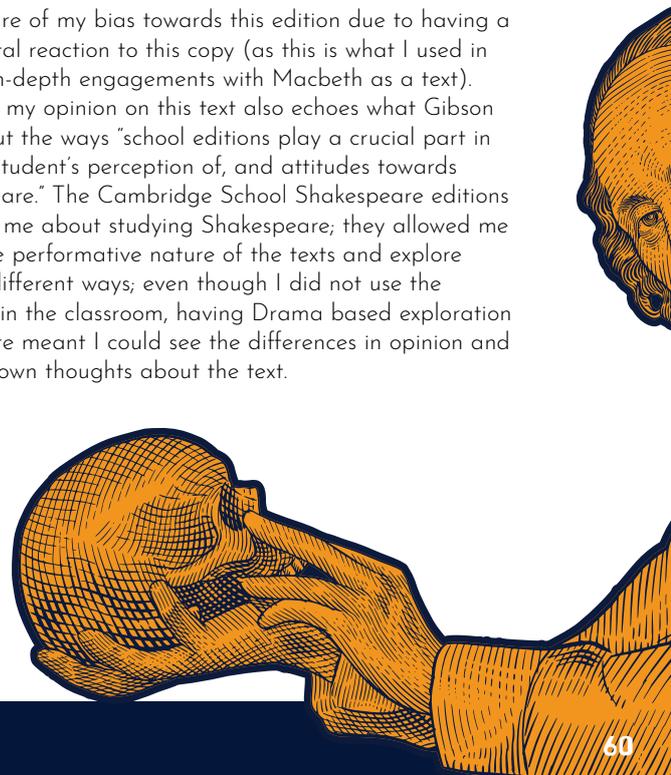
Whilst I prefer elements of the Longman Edition to the other editions I have considered, the critical limitation of this edition in my Drama classroom is the need for more practical exploration without the focus on the English GCSE. In the Longman edition, each page has a "think about for GCSE" section. A task from this section that is aimed directly at the Literature GCSE is when it asks learners to "describe the Captain's imagery." This task on page 12, relating to Act 1, Scene 2, focuses the learners' attention on the linguistic elements of the text, instead of

how this is reflected in performance. This makes the Longman Edition perfect for English teachers; however, my goal is to examine the text practically and not dive into the language choices. After considering this the most significant limitation of the Longman edition in my Drama classroom, I chose three different editions of *Macbeth*: the 1993 Cambridge School Shakespeare, the 2017 RSC School Shakespeare, and the more recent Arden Performance Edition.

I first considered the 1993 edition of *The Cambridge School Shakespeare*. When referencing *Cambridge School Shakespeare*, I will be talking about the 1993 copy, not the more modern reprints. This was the edition that I studied *Macbeth* from when I was in school; therefore, I was familiar with this and the style of the activity within. The main issue with using this edition of *Macbeth* is how out of date the copy is. My copy is the third reprint of the 1993 edition (printed in 1997); due to this there have been educational shifts since its publication.

Linzy Brady discusses the changes made since the first edition and how education shifts in her writing about the publication of the third edition. Brady makes the critical point that although the newer editions still focus on practical exploration, the text is linked to "social and political contexts, issues of production and reception." This differs from the earlier editions of the text, where Gibson primarily focused the activities on practical exploration instead of lots of cultural reference points.

I am aware of my bias towards this edition due to having a sentimental reaction to this copy (as this is what I used in my first in-depth engagements with *Macbeth* as a text). However, my opinion on this text also echoes what Gibson said about the ways "school editions play a crucial part in shaping student's perception of, and attitudes towards Shakespeare." The *Cambridge School Shakespeare* editions enthused me about studying Shakespeare; they allowed me to see the performative nature of the texts and explore them in different ways; even though I did not use the activities in the classroom, having Drama based exploration tasks there meant I could see the differences in opinion and form my own thoughts about the text.



Following on from this, the next edition I considered was the 2017 RSC School Shakespeare. This was the edition I had the most hope for in pursuing my comparison of texts for teaching Shakespeare in Drama. The RSC are one of the global leaders in Shakespeare Pedagogy, with their rehearsal room focus being used more frequently in classrooms. However, I found that the framing of the RSC pedagogy needed to be improved in this edition. Much like the Longman edition, the focus appeared to be on GCSE and the use of the text in English classrooms. Again, whilst there were elements I did prefer in the RSC edition, I found that my needs as a Drama teacher were less considered in the version of the text. I found the use of imagery throughout helpful in sections as it highlighted the performative nature of the work. However, framing activities towards a written task after the practical exploration meant it felt like the edition was designed to be used by English teachers in their classrooms. For this to work in my practice and classroom, I need to reframe all activities into practical explorations with spoken reflection.

I finally considered the Arden Performance Edition as it is a relative newcomer to Shakespeare in education texts. Arden has started to edit the texts in a way that works for performers in a rehearsal room but also markets these to schools for education. This comes from the preface to the edition of Macbeth as it was designed to "best serve actors in a rehearsal room and also students in the classroom seeking to bring the text from page to stage." This has interested me as the use of a book in a rehearsal room is more like how I work in my classroom. This is why I have chosen to consider this edition, as it will allow my learners to explore the work as a script instead of an English text.

Page Layout

Rex Gibson set the benchmark for all future editions of Shakespeare in Education. He is the editor of the Cambridge School Shakespeare and helped popularise the format of current editions and the use of specialist education editions in schools. This is something seen in the design for school editions of Macbeth I have looked at. When designing the formatting of the page, Gibson deliberately chose to have the activities and glossary on the left-hand page- keeping the other side for the text. This was considered a radical change from scholarly editions but allowed for a design that benefits educators in the classroom. This is something I benefit from in my planning; having activities already prepared for you to explore means that learners can get a variety of viewpoints about the text.

Gibson was keen to promote this in his edits of the plays as he strived to promote independent thinking about the text. This format is used across the three school editions I have looked at, with the difference in format only used in the Arden performance edition. Whilst the other editions have a similar format, in the Arden Performance Edition, one of the most significant changes away from the education sphere is changing the layout of the pages. Whilst all other editions I have studied have the script on the right-hand page, in this edition, the script is on the left-hand page.

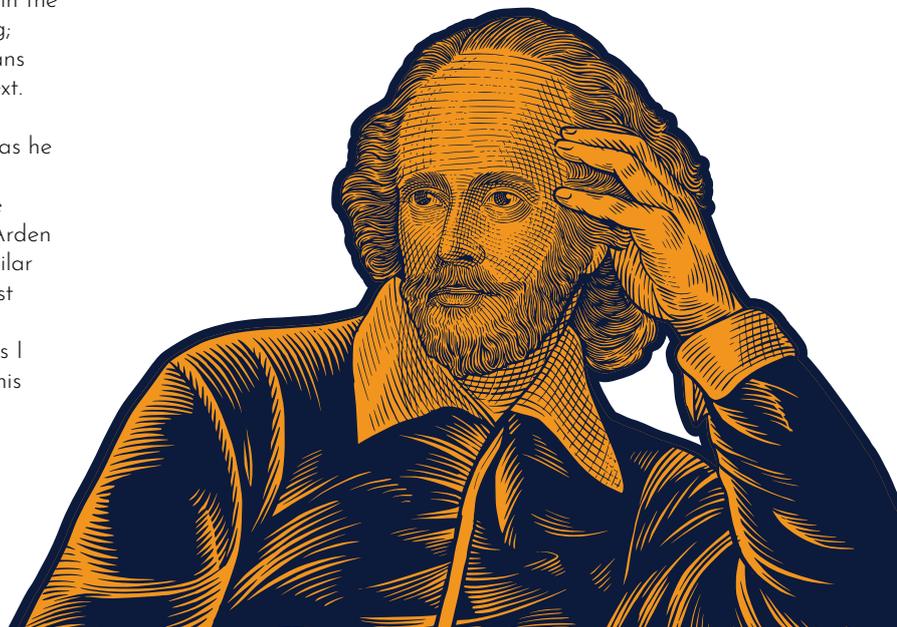
This is an interesting choice made by the editors of this series; however, in practical application, it makes sense. This is a choice I have two opinions on; whilst I like the ability to read along the page to the gloss, this is only sometimes something I want my students to be able to do as we explore the text. The element I like about the format of the education editions is the need to go back to the gloss or the activities.

This prompts learners to think about what the text is saying and helps with developing language skills. Having the gloss following the lines in the Arden edition could create a lazy attitude towards textual exploration, as the definitions are already there. In my teaching of Shakespeare, I choose to have learners work out the meanings of the text by pulling out what they understand. By finding a common language between my learners and the text, I can build a sense of empowerment and thirst for understanding the text without being given the answers.

This is the reason I prefer the layout of the 1993 Cambridge edition, as the gloss is minimal and harder to find on the page. In all other editions, the gloss is beside the text, whereas in the Cambridge edition, the gloss is at the bottom of the page, below the activities. This means that learners must engage with the book in their hands to gain access to the meanings of the words.

The final fundamental change in layout that I noticed was the differences in font across the different versions of the text. This is where I preferred the Longman Edition. The other three editions all use a serif font that, according to the British Dyslexia Association, is ideal for learners with dyslexia. Whereas the Longman Edition uses a sans-serif font, something that is ideal for learners with dyslexia as "letters can appear less crowded."

This use of inclusive font is something that I prefer in the Longman edition as it ensures that all learners can access the text in a way that minimises difficulty. Of all of the editions I have considered, the Longman edition appears to be the most dyslexia friendly due to the choice of font and the spacing of the words and lines. This means that this edition is perfect for the English classroom as it is a highly inclusive edition of the play.



Differences in Glossing

When exploring a text practically, I prefer giving learners only some answers to their questions on language in the gloss of the text. As Gibson says, "Glossing decisions are strongly influenced by the principle that certain words or phrases are likely to be understood by students when they speak the lines aloud". If we gloss every word a learner may not understand, we give learners the answers and run the risk of preventing meaningful language exploration. This exploration is pushed forward when learners are allowed to unpick the text and consider the meanings without a teacher giving them the answers. Doing this enables learners to explore the text and gives a sense of achievement when they put the pieces of the puzzle together.

The use of glossing in a school Shakespeare text is the subject of a 2010 study using cognitive load theory. Oska, Kalyuga and Chandler's study found that learners work best when "not required to engage in unguided search processes, such as searching through endnotes and glossaries, or using elimination or trial-and-error techniques to decipher portions of Shakespearean text." What this suggests is that having a comprehensive can cause confusion with the language. There is also the same issue in an edition without the comprehensive gloss. In this instance, the discretion would fall upon the teacher to implement the correct strategies for their learners.

I find the minimal glossing within the Cambridge School Shakespeare Edition better for my teaching practice. Whilst looking at Act 1, Scene 1 of Macbeth across all four editions, the table below shows the number of words glossed in this ten-line scene at the start of the play.

Longman School Shakespeare	Cambridge School Shakespeare	RSC School Shakespeare	Arden Performance Edition
Five words/ phrases glossed.	Three words/ phrases glossed.	Six words/ phrases glossed.	Eight words/ phrases glossed.

What I find the most interesting about this is the difference in what each edition feels necessary to gloss. For example, in all but the Cambridge School Shakespeare edition, the editors have included "hurly-burly" in their gloss. This is an interesting choice as it is also defined differently in each edition, but the meaning remains unchanged. In the Longman edition, hurly-burly is defined as "confusion- i.e a battle." Whereas in the Arden edition, it is defined as "commotion". This is an interesting difference to consider across both versions of the text.

While confusion and commotion can be considered the same, there is more room for debate in the Arden definition. In Macbeth, there is lots of different commotion at the start of the play, not just the battle. With the Longman edition simplifying this to just the battle, learners may not get the full depth of meaning and equivocation in the play's opening scene.

By having in-depth glosses, editors limit the exploration of language possible in the Drama classroom by giving learners the answer. This is not to say that a detailed gloss is a negative thing in a student copy of Shakespeare, a clear and detailed gloss has the potential to be beneficial when having students write about the language choices; it can just limit the amount of risk taken in performative choices.

The use of Colour and Images

One of the things I have noticed that varies the most across the different editions of the books is the use of colour and images throughout the text. All but the RSC edition use a greyscale colour scheme, which I find the most useful. The lack of colour in the books works in favour of the editions, and I prefer this greyscale colour scheme to the RSC edition. More colour can draw attention away from the script as the eye is drawn to the colour. Giving learners colourful scripts is not beneficial in a Drama setting. The use of too much colour can cause distractions, and the images included can create a lack of focus on the performance work. During independent work in my lessons, I minimise the distraction to my learners so they will focus on the practical application of the knowledge. I also aim to have learners create their own ideas in their practical work.

This use of colour is challenging in the RSC edition; the pages are bright and have images for every page of the script. This has both benefits and complications. The placement of colour does mean that it is clear where certain sections of the supporting content is located. This will benefit SEND learners as there is a format they can easily follow, with precise repetition on each page, giving a clear structure.

In a Drama setting, I like to limit the images used to ones that are beneficial and relevant to the learning. Of the four editions I have considered, only two contain images throughout. These have been used to differing degrees of success, with the quality of educational benefits varying between images. The RSC edition is the only one to contain images on every page of the four I have considered. The choice of images used is beneficial as they are theatrical stills, further emphasising the theatrical nature of the text. This can help the learners in my Drama classroom, as some images give staging ideas.

One key example is the moment in Act 1, Scene 4, when King Duncan addresses Macbeth and Banquo. The image on page 40 shows a 2004 production at the RSC, and the use of theatrical spacial skills is interesting to discuss with a class. I would use this image to discuss the power of King Duncan and how this is communicated to an audience through proxemics and levels. Having images like this throughout the play text can emphasise the use of the script in performance and creates conversations about staging and practicality in lessons.

The Book Itself

One of the considerations I have made about each of the texts is the quality and feel of the books. The Longman and RSC editions feel like sturdy books. The pages are of high-quality, thick paper with minimal movement. They have strong spines that make them difficult to damage. This is all beneficial in an English classroom as often the text will be explored with learners sitting down and reading. This poses a difficulty in Drama as learners will be on their feet manipulating the books as they explore the text in a practical way. This is one of the benefits of the Arden and Cambridge editions. As part of my research, I used each version of the text on my feet, exploring Macbeth's speech in Act 2, Scene 1. Focusing on the first seven lines of the text, I used each edition as my text to aid my performative exploration.

Starting with the Longman edition, I found the book bulky and difficult to use in my hand. The pages are a nice weight for practical exploration as they do not feel difficult to turn or bend. However, the book's spine and size are the most significant limitations of the text itself in practical exploration. The Longman edition's spine is strong and appears reinforced with additional glue. This is fantastic when using the edition in the English classroom, as it allows for multiple uses without the risk of too much damage. Whilst this is needed in a Drama classroom, a too-strong spine can lead to additional damage if the book is bent or carelessly discarded, like scripts often are.

Following the Longman edition, I decided to focus on my Cambridge edition. It is important to note that I have had my copy of this play since 2011, and it was my GCSE and A-level copy of Macbeth.

This is also a second-hand copy, used as a schoolbook before it came into my possession, meaning this copy could be softer than it was upon its initial publication. However, this edition has stood the test of time, as it came into my possession 14 years after its publication. All pages are present, and none are at risk of falling out. This edition also feels like I could take it into a classroom and use it next week with students. I would have no concerns about the damage or use this edition could withstand. Furthermore, this was by far the most enjoyable to use as a performance script. The pages are durable whilst being lightweight. They have a slightly plastic feeling, making them difficult to rip. For me, the essential element is the ability to bend the entire book with no damage to the pages.

The Cambridge Edition was a tough act to follow, something the RSC edition could not do for a Drama classroom. In the RSC edition, the pages are wide, and the spine is sturdy, which makes the book more challenging to manipulate. Again, this makes the edition perfect for the English classroom because the book does not need to withstand the rigorous treatment of constant practical activity.

However, the most significant limitation of this edition is the page quality. The pages are solid and durable; they have a plastic coating that makes them difficult to rip but also challenging to bend. This edition has none of the flexibility needed to use in a practical setting. This is disappointing for the RSC edition as the book is not as easy to use alongside their rehearsal room pedagogy. The key to RSC pedagogy is getting the texts on their feet and experimenting with them; this edition of the text felt like I could not easily play with the script in the way I would like to when I used it in my experimentation.

Finally, I used the Arden edition in the same experiment; the first thing I noticed was how difficult I found the text on the left-hand side of the book to be. This was initially confusing in my practical exploration, as most education texts have a slightly different layout. However, once I got my head around the text on the other side of the page, I began to enjoy this difference. What made this edition challenging to use was the number of pages in the edition. In all of my other copies, the scene I was considering appeared between pages 41-63; in the Arden edition, this speech is on page 112. The book also has 281 pages, making it the longest book of the four I have considered. Unfortunately, the book is not as practical in a Secondary Drama classroom as I first anticipated due to its weight. I enjoyed the feeling of this book in my hands as I explored the speech, but I found that due to the number of pages, it took more work to bend and use in the way I would typically use a script.

Conclusion

Throughout my research, I found that the text I preferred to use was the 1993 Cambridge Schools Shakespeare. This text felt the easiest to use and has the potential to allow further discussions around the play. The minimal glossing of the text, alongside the strategic use of images, makes this edition feel easy to use. Yet, I would not use this in my classroom. The text is now outdated; to make Shakespeare feel relevant to learners, they need to see more recent images relating to their lives. This is something that the edition I have been using does not have due to its age. Practically, it would also be too difficult to find and purchase a class set of them.

Thinking about practicality and what each text offered, I would choose the Arden Performance edition if I were to buy a class set of Macbeth for my Drama classroom. This edit of the text is designed to be used for practical exploration of a text, which means that the thought has been made about how this edition will be used in a rehearsal setting. Whilst I struggled with the layout of this text initially, upon reflection, I have concluded that this change will benefit my Drama learners more instead of disadvantaging them with their exploration. The reasoning for this is that the play text is different from what learners use in their English lessons. This different layout means that learners automatically know that they are going to be looking at Shakespeare differently. This can banish misconceptions about the study of Shakespeare as it will be different from English lessons.

PEER TRAINING

Peer Productions is an award-winning youth arts charity based in Woking in Surrey.

Peer Actor Development (PAD)

Our **Peer Actor Development Programme (PAD)** is a FREE full time, level 4 Actor Development Programme. It's ideal for young actors leaving college and looking to build their practical experience and skills before drama school.

Get Training - You'll dive into a diverse range of classes covering acting, voice, movement, text, and applied theatre-making. But that's not all - we regularly host workshops led by visiting artists who specialise in puppetry, physical theatre, improvisation, singing, poetry, devising, playwriting, and musicality. As you progress, you'll also earn a Level 4 RSL Diploma for Creative Practitioners, a vocational qualification that challenges you to explore, experience, and refine your craft as a performing artist.

Go on Tour - What sets Peer Productions apart is your chance to join us on the road, bringing our impactful plays to thousands of young people in schools and colleges across the South-East. Our thought-provoking, cutting edge productions tackle the issues that matter most to our young audiences, leaving a lasting impression wherever we go. During our tours, you'll experience the real-life demands of a working actor: early starts, travel logistics, setting up, performances, and packing up, sometimes with two or three shows in a single day.

Get into Drama School - Previous Peer graduates have gone on to a range of top drama schools including LAMDA, GSA, Rose Bruford, East15, Royal Welsh College, LIPA, Manchester School of Theatre, Birmingham Conservatoire and more. We have an 83% success rate.

Peer Employment Pathway (PEP)

Our **Peer Employment Pathway (PEP)** is a programme for young adults with learning disabilities and an EHCP who share our passion for and interest in performing arts. The programme uses drama, theatre and creativity to empower participants to develop their confidence, communication skills and abilities to work with others - building transferable skills for employment or higher education, both within and outside of the performing arts industry.

Inclusive Daily Practice: Each morning begins with 'practice', a time for Peer actors with and without disabilities to integrate and warm-up for the day ahead.

Performing Arts Skills: Participants learn how to use their voices and bodies to express themselves, how to work collaboratively as part of an ensemble and how to give and receive feedback.

Industry Awareness: Participants develop the skills they need to better understand the performing arts sector, identify appropriate opportunities and stay safe when attending auditions and interviews.

Projects: Participants have the opportunity to take part in projects creating work to be shared with the wider community building a range of wider skills including communication, team work, planning and time management.

Health and Wellbeing: Using drama as a tool for education, participants learn how to manage stress in the workplace, how to communicate their needs and reasonable adjustments as well as how to stay safe online, in their personal relationships and in the workplace.

Life Skills: Participants develop skills in budgeting and using money, practicing skills in the kitchen (using the kettle and microwave) and travel skills.

Work Experience: As a working theatre company, Peer Productions is able to offer a range of 'in house' opportunities appropriate to the individual learner. These might include working as peer educators on our outreach Generation programmes, working as a director's assistant by keeping notes in rehearsals, or supporting our marketing team with graphic design jobs or filming social media content.



www.peerproductions.co.uk/train-with-us

By Georgia Sidell

I chose this play because it has a strong message of female empowerment and leadership. It's a play that requires excellent actors because of the language, the themes, the tension and the raw emotions. I knew I had an outstanding cast; one of my student's had just been cast in a feature film with Jude Law playing Princess Elizabeth and I knew she had it in her to play the gritty, complicated and nuanced character of Rosaline. The whole cast was exceptionally strong, committed lovely people so rehearsals were a joy.

What's the process?

It took quite a while to unpick the language of *After Juliet*. There are elements of Shakespeare, coupled with modern day slang, which is fun but also requires time to work with. The start of our rehearsals began with read-throughs and 'paraphrases'. The cast were required to translate their scenes into their own language and apply an objective to each moment. Once we understood the language and the meaning, we were able to start blocking.

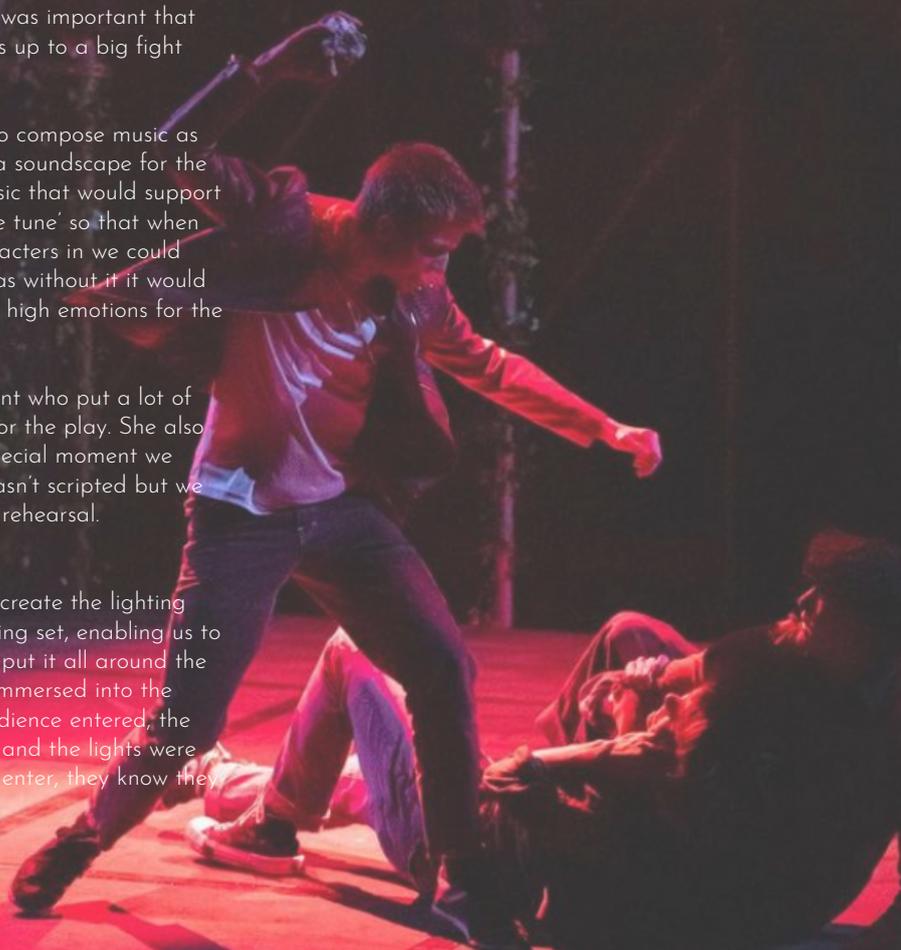
I knew I wanted the whole cast on stage the entire time, so we used Bogart's viewpoint exercises. We explored: spatial relationships, kinesthetic response, shapes, gesture, repetition and architecture to help inform our blocking. I also knew we were going to set it in New York City, with the fire escapes and smoke and a constant soundscape of noise and extreme weather at points, so we used ladders and levels to help inform how I would block it. We spent a lot of time doing scenework and relationship work using Stanislavski's methods, building truthful connections between the actors and creating meaning in each moment. It was important that there was tension in every moment, as the play builds up to a big fight scene at the end which is a release of that tension.

I also worked closely with a music student who had to compose music as part of her course, so we worked together to create a soundscape for the play. She would watch the rehearsals and create music that would support each moment, she also gave each character a 'theme tune' so that when we would transition to another scene with those characters in we could hear their music. Music was a key part of the piece, as without it it would have been impossible to fully sustain the tension and high emotions for the entire play.

I was very lucky to have access to this talented student who put a lot of time and effort into creating a bespoke soundtrack for the play. She also wrote original songs and sang them during a very special moment we created where Rosaline sees Romeo come back. It wasn't scripted but we created the moment through movement and song in rehearsal.

We had a wonderful technical manager who helped create the lighting design for the show, that combined with our scaffolding set, enabling us to perform the show in the round, we also used ivy and put it all around the seats in the audience so that the audience felt fully immersed into the world of the Capulets and Montagues. When the audience entered, the actors were already on stage, the music was playing and the lights were slightly lower than usual, so the minute the audience enter, they know they are a part of that world.

AFTER JULIET





Admin

A good show is never going to work without a water-tight rehearsal schedule and contract signed by all involved. We had a very talented art student who designed the most beautiful posters in line with our colour scheme (red for Capulets, green for Montagues) and those were displayed in the run up to the show. Our tickets were sold by our brilliant performing arts secretary, and we were fully booked within the first two days so we ended up having to add another show night!

Set and Costumes

An intimate, tense, borderline claustrophobic and immersive set was required to truly give the audience the experience we wanted to give them. We hired some scaffolding and covered it head to toe in ivy. We used everything we could find to 'dress' the upstairs part as 'bedrooms'.

Colours were everything: Capulets were all red and Montague areas were all green. The green ivy throughout the Capulets rooms symbolised that they were being 'intruded' by the Montagues.

Costumes were in line with the themes, so that the audience could easily follow who was a Capulet and who was a Montague. We used a smoke machine to help with giving off how 'hot' it was and that it was set in New York. I decided to not go with traditional costumes and to lean into a more modern look inspired by '& Juliet': red leather jackets, tights, leather boots and jeans coupled with corsets. We had to source these ourselves: children bringing in things from home, bits leftover in the wardrobe cupboard and we ordered any other accessories online.

Highs

Relationships between the cast and crew. It was a small cast, they bonded over this experience and it was clear that this was something they would never forget.

Giving the other arts students an opportunity to create something to contribute: like with our soundscape, the original music and the artwork.

Outstanding, gritty performances. The cast were able to sink their teeth into this as actors and explore many theorists which can feed into their school work and help supplement that. They also were able to learn stage combat as part of the fight scene!

The creative freedom to use the text and make it something more modern and new, adding in movement and music as freely as I liked.

The lighting and sound design: there was lots of thunder and heat in the text, so that was fun to play with with strobe lighting and other cool effects.

Lows

There were very few lows on this show, but I could see that by being an emotional piece, some of our actors were quite emotionally drained by the end of the show. Therefore it's important to do lots of fun, uplifting things throughout (like putting singing and dancing in the piece).

There is never enough time, I would have liked more time to explore more movement opportunities but these things can take months.

Would we do the show again?

Yes, absolutely! It was an amazing experience and I would love to do this again.

SUMMARY

After Juliet by Sharman MacDonald

A tense truce holds between the Capulets and the Montagues after the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. Benvolio, Romeo's best friend, is in love with Rosaline, Juliet's cousin; but Rosaline is bent on revenge. AFTER JULIET was specially commissioned by the Royal National Theatre for the BT National Connections Scheme for young people.

<https://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/5679/after-juliet>

DRAMA MATTERS

PERFORMING ARTS

FESTIVAL 2024

Speak Out!

- Our last festival was a great success, yet we also gleaned many lessons from it. As a result, the festival is adopting a new format this year.
- We are encouraging schools to organise a monologue competition, with separate categories for KS3, KS4, and KS5 students.
- Schools should then submit their winning entries to the regional competitions. The victorious entry from each regional competition will proceed to the National finals.
- The material must be original, authored by the student, and centred on a topic about which they are passionate.
- We are eager to listen to their voices!
- Monologues must not exceed 5 minutes in length and should be character-driven pieces, not spoken word. Students must craft a character to convey their message effectively.
- For international schools, the regional rounds will be conducted online.
- International schools are welcome to participate in the finals. The intention is for these schools to perform live virtually, at times that are suitable for their respective time zones.
- The finals will take place at the school that won last year's competition, in October or November 2024.
- Should you require further information or wish to obtain the entry form, please sign up here:

<https://forms.gle/yvDnsQZRczenfxws9>.



It's Okay Not to be Okay

It's Sunday evening, you have had your weekend which may have included doing something, but it would have also included some work, I realise that my life revolves around me being a teacher, my downtime revolves around being a teacher, but I am exhausted, dealing daily with the trials and tribulations of being a middle leader in school, the issues that an inner city school deal with, the issues raising the profile of my subject deals with and I am tired, tired of trying to get my subject noticed, tired of the never ending observations, paperwork, ticking boxes to show that you are doing something that you KNOW you are doing.

I am tired...

I am tired...

We are surrounded by the horrendous world that we see on the news on a daily, the lip service and manipulation done by all to get us to believe that all is happening for the greater good, but as a drama teacher it's hard, we feel things differently, we spend our lives teaching young people how to read society, represent society, challenge society, then you go home and lock your door and you are left alone with those thoughts, left alone with the challenges, left alone with the constant thought that am I doing enough, you are teaching students to challenge that which you have been trying to challenge for years and where has it got us.

The students are challenging, but the work is piling up, there are moments of pleasure but in the grand scheme of things they are small and you notice your spark starts to dwindle, your creativity starts to drop, the I can is replaced with why do I bother. You see the teachers leaving school early, but there you are running your extra curricular club, sorting out the paperwork for exam week, creating the vision for the next school show, planning the school trip, you close the door on the world exhausted and unable to actually partake in the rest of the world, you start to think about your work life balance and you start to wonder whether your life has purely become being a teacher.

You see your family may have grown, or you may not have one, your friends may not understand or the friendships have drifted, then there is the money, everything is getting harder, but wages are not going up, but mortgages and rent are, bills are, when will it stop, when will you feel like you once did that you made a difference, that there was a pleasure in what you were doing, rather than being on a hamster wheel and wanting to jump off.

So you go to sleep, sleep is a wonderful thing as you can close your eyes and dream of the world being a better place, some worry that if you sleep too much it's because you are depressed, but it's ok as it could also be where you can find peace, lets face it as a teacher you can't even be ill without having to do more work, to make sure things are in place for you not being in, how many other jobs do you truly have to plan the work while ill at home for people to do when you are not in, but you can not pour from an empty cup, it's all well and good living in the world from a cup always full basis but if you keep pouring and not refilling your cup becomes empty, you become empty and you become like I feel at the moment, WHAT IS THE POINT?

You feel you are getting quieter because what's the point in talking, people pretend to listen but they aren't, you get smaller, because people are not noticing so no point in being big, you think people care but in the end you are on your own.

Then you catch a glimpse of yourself in the mirror, you wonder where that spark went, who you have become and you decide to meditate, put your big girl pants on, it's at this point that we need to do that which we tell our students to, reflect, evaluate and analyse, start to think about where you are, where you are wanting to go and how are you going to get there.

The world is disappointing, but your life is in your hands and if you are sad more than you smile, then you need to think about how you can change that, you need to have belief that you can, you need to realise that with all the manipulation of Ofsted, of leadership, of the world no wonder we question the worth or the point, how many of us work in schools that have received a good Ofsted and we wonder how the hell that happened, we see it on the front line, we know it isn't but with a little spin it can be deemed good, but as drama teachers we deal with real, we challenge lies, we challenge fake and when we then find ourselves knee deep in it we struggle.

So if you are reading this and nodding, wondering where your behaviour skills have gone, why isn't the passion there anymore, why is it a daily fight with staff or students, understand it isn't you that has changed, the world around you has, it is then you need to realise that although you will feel alone you are not, there are many sadly that feel like this at the moment and it is okay to not be ok, but don't stay there, reflect, re-evaluate and work out the next steps to move forward and move on, don't allow your creativity to die because you are constantly having to prove it to everyone else.

Stay blessed and always know you are not alone.

THE OCEAN AT THE END OF THE LANE

Upon taking my seat for *The Ocean at the End of the Lane*, I was elated as I had truly wanted to see it, albeit disappointed at the ticket prices and initially let down by the seating - except for the company beside me. Thank you, Joe, for joining me. We found ourselves, as they say, "up in the Gods" at the Noel Coward Theatre. We were so high up that, to be frank (and heights do not bother me), I have to say if I had tripped, I would have landed quite easily on the people below. It was a tad scary, and I genuinely wondered whether I would get the full feel for the show, being so high up. How wrong was I!

It's a production I would have loved to take my students to; it is an absolute masterpiece in demonstrating how a creative team on and off-stage collaborate to deliver an extraordinary piece of theatre. It's the kind of show where you know that if you went back again, you would notice something you missed the first time. The acting was sublime, the special effects were awe-inspiring to the point that Joe and I had an extremely animated conversation about how we thought things had been achieved.

We also debated our seating and pondered whether we saw things that others didn't, and whether that's intentional - i.e., is it a nod to the cheap seats? Certainly, if you were in the stalls, you wouldn't have seen the gruesome sight emerging from the plughole. Sometimes, that's the beauty of good theatre; depending on where you sit, your experience varies. It's probably why the shows were always sold out, with people returning, and certainly someone I spoke to during the interval had done just that.

Standouts for me were the puppetry, an outstanding creation, and equally how the actors interacted with them - both those operating the puppets and those acting alongside them. The staging was simply magical, a moment where you are truly transported to another world, escapism at its best. It gave me chills down the spine, moments of 'oo, I don't like it', moments of pure beauty, and moments of 'this is why I love my job', because, as a drama teacher, we don't switch off.

It is rare for us to watch a performance without analysing and evaluating, and sometimes that annoys me. However, with this production, it seemed to add to my wonder, as rarely do I watch a performance and wonder "how did they do that?" - but with this, it seeped into every scene.

No, I haven't picked out and described specific scenes in detail because, quite frankly, if I do, it may spoil your enjoyment of it. I truly hope it comes back; it should. It was a complete masterpiece in theatre, something I'm certain the cast and crew will never forget being part of and something that I would challenge anyone not to be in awe after experiencing.

You see, this is the magic of theatre; sometimes it teaches us, and sometimes it allows us to escape for a couple of hours and imagine a completely different world - not a very nice one admittedly in parts, but one in which you could sit in the safety of your seat and be absorbed for a couple of hours.

Thank you for providing me with escapism. Thank you for showcasing what theatre can truly achieve, and thank you for your masterpiece of creativity to all those involved.

TRACY DORRINGTON



WICKED

"Are people born Wicked or do they have wickedness thrust upon them?" This question is answered in one of my favorite ever shows. One I have been able to see from 3 different seats at three different moments this year.

When I was planning out my schemes of work for Year 8. I decided that the shows with the messages that links most closely to what I wanted Year 8 to learn was Wicked, on at the Apollo Victoria theatre in London. The themes of wicked including those of self-esteem, discrimination and identity means that it makes a great show for students to go and watch.

"The costumes, sound, lighting and actors were amazing" "The atmosphere in the theatre was great" "I loved the music and lights" Part of me thought I was a little bit crazy taking 72 Year 8 students and 6 other staff members to the theatre but the feedback and excitement of my students, some of whom had never been to the theatre before made it all worth it.

Wicked is based upon the 1995 Gregory Maguire novel about the life and times of the wicked witch of the west from the 1935 film, The Wizard of Oz. Most people are familiar with the green skinned witch who tries desperately to get the slippers back from that wretched little farm girl and her little dog too.

The Wizard of Oz tells us just the story of Dorothy while Wicked tells us more about the other characters focusing on the witches Elphaba and Glinda and the story which took them from enemies to friends, to enemies to friends again.

Sitting before the show, I am always in awe of the stage of wicked. A map of Oz with the glistening green light. The stage really sets the tone for what you are about to see, but the opening drums and chords of the music blows me away every time I see the show. It is one of the things which made it an easy decision to take students to see.

The magic of Wicked on stage comes from the exceptional set and lighting designed for the stage. The large mechanical dragon and the cogs and wheels bring together the set.

The lighting design, which brings together the emerald green of the main city in Oz and the colour of our main character extends through the theatre.

Simple yet stunning, words to describe the costume design of Wicked. The costumes evolve for each character as the show continues, the costumes have an elegance and beauty to them which captures the personality of the character wearing it.

All of this means that in my opinion Wicked is the ideal show to take students to, the themes, the set, the lighting, the sound, the costume and finally the fabulous acting means it's a no brainer. While I take a younger year to the show, I wouldn't have any difficulty choosing the play for a GCSE or A Level audience as it has everything needed to complete the live theatre review section of the exam and it ticks all the boxes involved in making that choice.

Wicked are fantastic and going alongside it is the education team. Wicked Active Learning who do all they can to make the booking of wicked as easy as possible for a teacher including a great website and contacts who can talk you through everything. Wicked Active Learning also provides cross curricular lesson plans for teachers who want to make the trip into a series of lessons.

While Wicked does have its show in London and other major cities around the world many people are not in trip distance to London and the show is currently on a tour of the UK which extends into 2025.

CURRICULUM V. NON CURRICULUM

Putting drama on the curriculum could result in some loss of autonomy and could risk becoming a burden to non specialist teachers...

But, as a curriculum subject, drama would become 'certified'. It would gain the kudos that we all know it deserves, and the parity that we all fight for in our own schools.

It would become accessible and acceptable to ALL children, in ALL schools. It would no longer just be rolled out for a hot-seating exercise or role playing task in English. It would no longer be reduced to bookending the primary school experience with a Nativity play and a leavers production. It would become part of the language and ethos of the school.

Imagine the potential for a national cohort of confident, emotionally literate, well-regulated children, who are able to articulate and empathise, experience and analyse because of quality drama teaching that has been embedded into the timetable.

Subject knowledge and skills are best developed with regular, habitual exposure and training. Many of us who are subject specialists in the private sector, get to witness, first hand, the advantages of timetabled drama and seeing drama as a subject in its own right - not only as a facilitative tool but as an expressive art form that is so easily and readily accessible. It can be taught anywhere to anyone!

Providing that it be given due attention and designed by drama specialists, how incredible would it be to see this put on the curriculum map?

FOR BEING A NATIONAL CURRICULUM SUBJECT

A number of people refer to Drama being pushed out due to Ebbac and it not being National Curriculum.

I am a point in case! My academy trust pushed Ebbac and what they called 'academic' subjects. Little time was given to creative subjects. One September, I arrived at INSET to be told Drama was not being offered to Yr7s! I went straight to the Head (who I got on well with), argued the case for the benefit of Drama and got it back on the timetable!

Fast forward 2 years I was asked into his office in May to be told that as Drama was not a NC subject it was going to be removed from the curriculum (and 'taught' through English lessons). This would leave me with just 4hrs GCSE and so I was to be made redundant. (The 4hrs would be taught by someone with no GCSE experience

I had taught Drama (and English) for over 20 years at my school and they could just remove me and my subject just like that! There was no consideration to the impact removing Drama from our pupils would have. It is so sad and makes me so angry.

Have you read something that ignites a fire within you? Do you wish to respond to one of the articles in the magazine? Do you agree or disagree? Would you like to have your say in the next edition? Whether it's an anonymous letter, a claimed letter, or an article, please get in touch. This is not just our story; it is the Drama Matters story, and you are all a part of it. Whether nationally or internationally, your input is welcome.

magazine@dramamatters.org

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A CAROUSEL OF CHALLENGES

By Liam Greenall

As winter draws to a close in Hong Kong, it marks the only season when cold winds enfold the 8,000 skyscrapers that tower over this dense city. During this time, I find myself reflecting on my fifteen years as an Arts educator.

Hong Kong has been my home for the last thirteen years, twelve of which I have spent leading an incredible team of Arts educators at an international school that the research wing of Cambridge University has named as one of the top 100 schools in the world for innovation.

This includes recognition for how we offer students more choice, more flexibility, different work practices and more opportunities to develop skills and attributes not addressed by examinations

ICHK Secondary, situated a stone's throw from the breathtaking Plover Cove and the world-renowned Mai Po Nature Reserve, champions innovation in its teaching and learning approaches and truly embodies it with heart and soul. In my role as Director of Creativity and Innovation, I have the privilege to tinker, explore, fail, experiment and create. With the provision of time and resources, I am empowered to be the best teacher I can be. One outcome of this experimentation is a pioneering curriculum model we call 'The Arts Carousel'.

What is The Arts Carousel?

The Arts Carousel is a unique approach to teaching and learning the Arts in Key Stage 3 (students aged 11-14). Students participate in project-based learning experiences focused on thematic explorations in art and design, creative media and performing arts (dance, drama and music). Students can select and 'carousel' through a range of interdisciplinary projects over the course of the academic year.

The goal of the Arts Carousel is to provide students with varied and enriched exposure to different creative domains in a focused, immersive manner. Students also build skills in individual artistic practices like multi-media collage, experimental filmmaking, music composition using only found elements in nature and physical theatre. The rotation model aims to spark creativity, risk-taking and celebrates experimentation across visual, media and performing arts.

In Term 3, students work interdisciplinary, and across year groups, on a cohesive, thematic and self-directed project. ALL students perform and exhibit their work to an audience in an event we call 'SHOWCASE'. Students get to choose an area of interest and guide their own learning, which builds confidence and a sense of ownership over their work.

SHOWCASE requires students to work collaboratively across disciplinary boundaries. They must combine concepts and techniques from two or more arts areas into a cohesive

whole. This develops collaborative skills like communication, compromise, task delegation and the ability to appreciate different perspectives. Working with peers from other classes also helps students form new relationships.

The interdisciplinary nature enhances the learning experience by requiring students to fuse knowledge and skills from separate art areas into one cohesive work. This mirrors real-world creative processes. We fully focus on 'professional thinking practice', we foster students to 'think like an artist', 'think like a choreographer', 'think like a film composer', or 'think like a theatre company'. We truly believe what sets us apart is our approach to real-world projects and briefs. Students simulate professional artistic work, which ultimately leads to cultivating practical and solution-oriented thinking.

The Challenge

One of the biggest obstacles we face is implementing our school-wide goal of providing students with the confidence to work outside of their comfort zones and in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as often as they feel able. Lev Vygotsky's theories on Learning Zone (ZPD) focused teaching underpins our approaches to teaching and learning in the Arts Carousel and a challenge we had to overcome was how to create a safe environment in which the students can access new material – and where, properly supported and guided, they can move from their current point of understanding or performance to a higher level.

The Arts department first reflected on and evaluated that the ZPD is that sphere of thinking or action immediately beyond what our students are able to do reliably well, without aid or support. We understood that our role as the 'teacher' was that of the 'More knowing Other' and to overcome this obstacle, we had to 'scaffold' this move to act as a 'loaned consciousness', as someone whose greater competence can be temporarily leaned upon to facilitate growth.

We see the culmination of always believing in students as learners – whether in the role of actor, choreographer, set designer or stage manager. We witness students who are carefully challenged out of their comfort zones, respond and develop the resilience and grit they will need to deal with all the challenges that life will present.

The Vision

The vision for education underlying the Arts Carousel at ICHK is to provide students with a rich, immersive and interdisciplinary arts education. This approach encourages creativity, risk-taking, collaboration and self-directed learning, while also preparing students for real-world artistic practices and fostering a sense of pride, engagement and community involvement.

At the core of our vision is that optimal learning occurs just outside one's current abilities, in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), with more knowledgeable others providing support and facilitation. ICHK's Arts Department vision is to celebrate experimentation, expression and risk-taking, and we hope to develop leaders who will draw on their creativity to enrich society.

We believe that learning should foster independence, creativity and ownership through hands-on projects that spark imagination and problem-solving. The rotating Arts Carousel immerses students fully in different disciplines to build deep skills while experimenting across forms. Long-term investigations and interdisciplinary approaches should challenge and push creative boundaries.

This vision places the student at the centre of direct inquiries aligned with their interests, aided by more knowledgeable others. It views learning as an active, social process requiring experimentation and entrepreneurial approaches that mirror real-world problem-solving and professional approaches to practice. The goal is to nurture well-rounded, thoughtful leaders empowered by a growth and innovative mindset.

To read more about ICHK's 5+1 Model, which lies at the heart of learning innovation, visit:

<https://www.ichk.edu.hk/innovation/5-plus-1>





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