

DRAMA MATTERS

MAGAZINE

ISSUE ONE - SEPT. 2023



THE JOURNEY ISSUE

DRAMA MATTERS

MAGAZINE

Issue One
September 2023

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 is also the founder and Director of Black Box Education and works 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.

CONTRIBUTORS

Katie Marie, Charlie Scherp, Holly Merrifield, Ricky Dukes, Natalie Diddams, Clare McAvoy, Rebecca Jones, Kayleigh Jones, Siobhan Fogarty, Zak Lewis, Joe Bullen, Blaize Alexis-Anglin, Jules Salisbury, Michelle Serrechia, Kayleigh Howells

GET INVOLVED

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.

CONTRIBUTORS' INSIGHTS

What's been your biggest journey in Drama education?



Charlie Scherp

"When I think back to my first few years as a drama teacher I'm amazed I'm still here 18 years later! I think it took me a while to get to grips with my classroom management. I always had the passion but I didn't have the confidence in myself to 'own' the space or to follow through with consequences".

Holly Merrifield

"My biggest journey in Drama education was becoming Head of Department. It has given me the freedom to experiment with the curriculum, which has led to innovation and imaginative artistic exploration. There are no rules".



Siobhan Fogarty

"Ah, my drama education journey, a whirlwind of script mishaps, costume calamities, and more late-night rehearsals than I care to admit. I wouldn't trade this crazy, dramatic ride for anything else in the world...except for a dirty weekend away with Mark Strong!".



It is our great pleasure to welcome you to the very first issue of Drama Matters Magazine! We could not be more excited to share this inaugural issue with you.

The theme of this issue is 'The Journey' - a fitting theme as we embark on the journey of launching this new publication. Our aim with Drama Matters Magazine is to bring together the drama education community by sharing knowledge, insights and best practices.

You will find thought-provoking opinion pieces direct from drama teachers, recommendations for new plays and insights into theatre practitioners and world theatre traditions. Our hope is that Drama Matters provides a vibrant platform to share our passion for this vital subject and have our voices heard.

We want to extend our deep gratitude to our amazing contributors who have made this inaugural issue possible. We also want to thank you, our readers, for joining us on this journey. We look forward to growing together as a community through the pages of Drama Matters. Please do reach out with any feedback or ideas for future issues.

Best wishes,
Drama Matters Magazine Team

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www.dramamatters.org

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



@dramamatters1

DRAMA  **MATTERS**

THE POWER OF DRAMA EDUCATION

ALL HAIL THE DRAMA...

All hail the Drama Matters community, a giant thanks from one stressed out NQT.



By Katie Marie

Hello everyone, I hope the summer for you all has been relaxing and you managed to spend time with loved ones. I am really excited to be a part of this community and when Tracey asked if I would write a short article about how I was feeling with the upcoming Networking weekend - which will also be the first time I take part - I knew my answer would be a yes!

I'll start with a little background information, just to set the scene! Before I started teaching in my current secondary school, I got my degree, I freelanced in local colleges whilst I worked in the Film & TV industry. It was marvellous, I was so incredibly lucky, I was with students that loved the subject and on my other work days surrounded by adults that loved the arts. Win, win.

Then Covid-19 came along and with that everything dried up, no income and no governmental support because did you all know with the arts we can all just retrain and get "proper jobs" (I'm still not over it in case the sarcasm wasn't obvious). It was scary, overwhelming - as I am sure it was for many people everywhere. Fast forward some time and I had secured a maternity post in a secondary school teaching Drama & Dance. The head was lovely and agreed to put me through and help me gain my NQT, although once I had started I did find that there was no plans or topics for any terms or year groups I was teaching, and being the only drama teacher here, as you can imagine I went into panic mode - here enters the amazing Drama Matters and Tracy.

I can't even remember how I found the Facebook group - I'm certain it was after a highly caffeinated desperate search - but I remember seeing a post about the previous network weekend and thinking, 'that looks awesome, I wish I had gone' then seeing another post about next year's weekend. I knew I had to try and go, knowing just by the posts on the Facebook community and all that is shared and the conversations within it, that it will be worthwhile.

I'll highlight quickly here that Tracy went above and beyond in the run up to the event and during my first year, not only did she zoom with me and offer advice and help in her own time, we all see the work she puts into this community daily. I can only promise to pay her kindness forward and pass it on to the next teacher in need I meet.

I'm writing this article about a week away from the event, and I feel very lucky that I will be surrounded by lots of amazing teachers all who are going to have had different experiences, preferences of topics/play texts and classroom tips/tools. I am slightly nervous about turning up alone. However, just like any drama classroom, I am certain we'll play an ice breaker that will have us all giggling and feeling more familiar as the weekend unrolls.

I look forward to hearing from all of the visitors and workshops. After reading reviews and feedback from the previous year and seeing all the hard work to create this, I feel confident it'll be a place I can learn and expand my current knowledge and feel a part of a community - which after being a single person department whilst teacher training will be flippin' lovely.

(excuse the photo, I don't take selfies often and yes that is a white chocolate ice cream that I am about to dip into more chocolate inside that bowl - I have no regrets)

FROM VIRTUAL TO REALITY:

The Transformative Experience of Drama Matters

By Charlie Scherp



Several years ago my colleague told me about the existence of Facebook groups for particular exam boards. At the time I had no idea that these kinds of groups existed as, until then, I only used Facebook for sharing holiday snaps and catching up with friends and family. I eagerly joined a group pertaining to my exam board and found it useful in gaining information and resources to support my teaching.

Facebook's clever (but sometimes hugely irritating) algorithm soon suggested an array of other drama related Facebook groups for me to join, but one in particular caught my eye: Drama Matters - Drama Department Staffroom; the biggest drama department in the UK.

Let's think about this for a moment.
Drama Matters.

Finally someone was acknowledging the vitally important role our subject plays in shaping future generations. I read the second part of the title again: 'Drama Department Staffroom'. This immediately conjured up mental images of community, chatting over coffee, sharing a funny story from a lesson, asking advice from a trusted colleague, getting inspiration when you're so exhausted your mind has gone blank, venting when you've had a frustrating day, and telling a colleague about that special moment when somebody in your class does something outside of their comfort zone for the first time.

And this is exactly what 'Drama Matters' is.

It is that glass of wine you need after a challenging day, that bottle of bubbly you pop open when your coursework is handed in, that cup of cocoa that envelops you in warmth to remind you that you're doing something worthwhile. But it is also much more. I feel so fortunate to have stumbled across Drama Matters and to have had the opportunity to attend last year's Networking Weekend.



*Drama Matters Networking Weekend 2022
A bunch of fabulous new friends.*

Imagine that; a room full of drama teachers working together, learning from each other, supporting each other and sharing best practice, all the while having a laugh! I left last year's networking weekend with a pile of resources, some brilliant new ideas to try out, and best of all, a bunch of fabulous new friends.

So, thank you Tracy Dorrington for being the founder and driver of this incredible community. I can't wait for the next networking weekend in September to do it all again! So, how about joining me in raising a glass to Drama Matters!

To find out more information about the 2024 Drama Matters Networking Weekend check out page 97

GIVE US THE TIME AND CREDIT WE DESERVE

By Holly Merrifield



I had the pleasure of attending my son's KS2 carol service for Christmas in which the Year 6s put on a fabulous performance of the nativity. The star of the show was the young boy playing King Herald. His conviction and presence was mesmerising and literally gave me goosebumps as I witnessed him address the sea of parents in the audience with the perfect balance of projection and articulation. I couldn't help but feel disappointment in my own students.

As we prepare our KS4 students for their scripted performances I just had a wave of heartache.

How could this 10 year old boy show me more talent, grit and determination than my whole cohort put together?

As I pondered this and considered for a hot minute that I must not be doing a good job and considered what I could be doing instead. (it definitely wouldn't be teaching primary as I certainly don't have the patience for it) I realised that this boy playing Herald was amazing because he had the time and resources to be the best Herald he could be.

The headteacher didn't hesitate to inform us parents that these nativity students in the drama club had been rehearsing for this 20 minute performance since September. That is 3 months of prep which in secondary terms is no time at all but as we all know that in primary the teachers and students have the flexibility to dedicate A LOT of curriculum time to an extracurricular event.

This brings me to my main point of why us secondary drama teachers are not given the time and resources to produce only the best outcomes for our students. Just to make it clear I am speaking from a State Inner London school perspective....

SLT didn't seem to understand what it takes to get something to the best it possibly could be.



...It still feels like we are playing catchup and after all these years we are still trying to prove our worth to the school community. I can only imagine how greater our outcomes could be if we were given the dedicated time to really rehearse. Don't get me wrong I am a realist and I understand that the reality of getting all the time we desire with our kids is very unlikely in a secondary setting but I would love to have more flexibility and the credit for what we are able to do where credit is due.

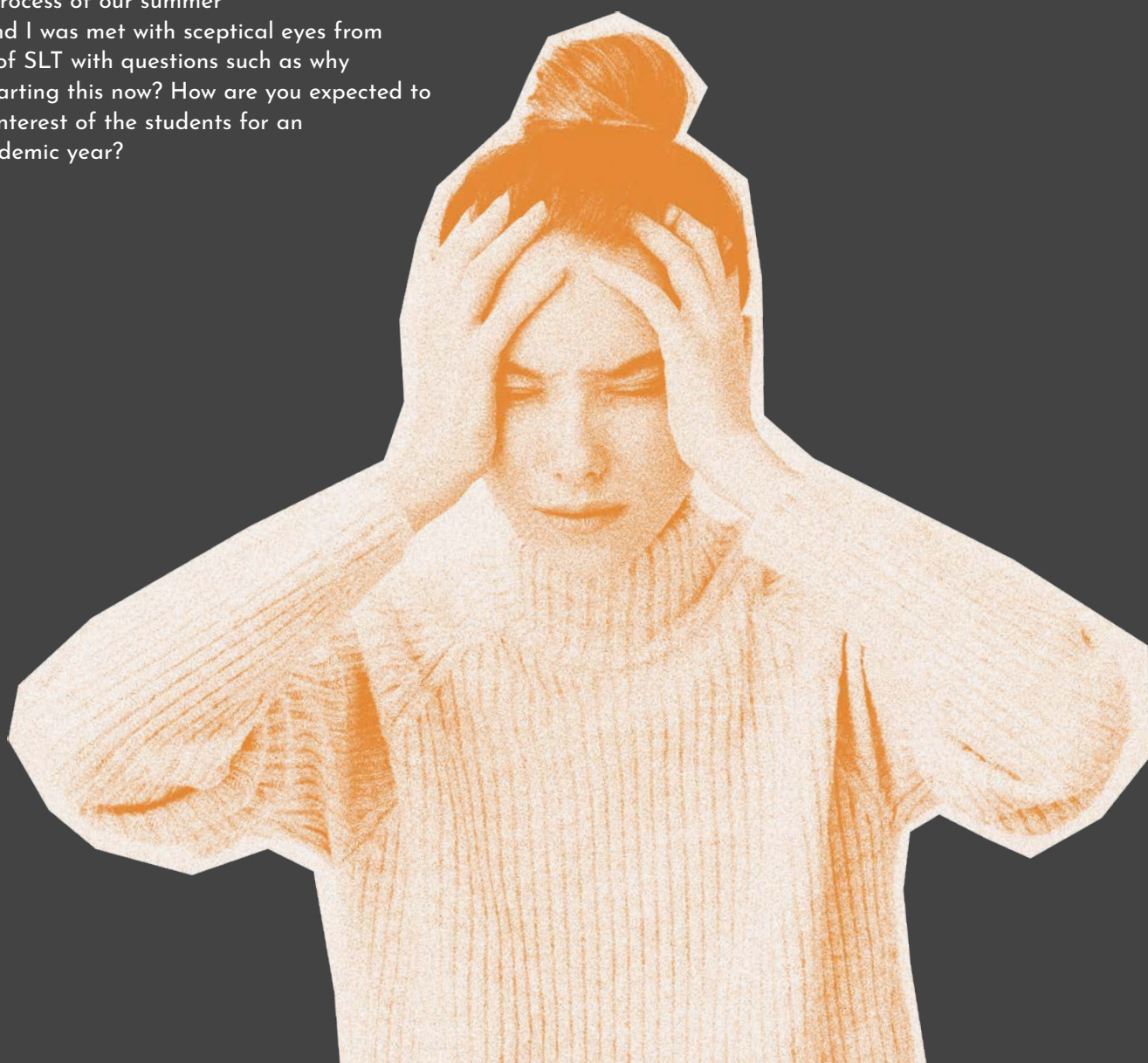
However, secondary extracurricular isn't entirely a level playing field as my inbox is constantly inundated with notifications of yet another sports fixture in which a very long list of students would be missing your lessons with an insincere 'sorry of any inconvenience' tagged to the bottom.

In September the Performing Arts Team started the audition process of our summer musical and I was met with sceptical eyes from members of SLT with questions such as why are you starting this now? How are you expected to keep the interest of the students for an entire academic year?

When I answered these questions with the main reason being time to rehearse to perfection SLT didn't seem to understand what it takes to get something to the best it possibly could be. I know I don't want to be embarrassed nor do I want my students to be disappointed so my team needs to do what they have to do.

And you know what? I am glad I did as already it is starting to stack up against us with the amount of students missing rehearsals for sports fixtures.

And so the vicious cycle continues. Maybe one day we will be given the time and credit we deserve but until then I'll continue to persevere and do the best that I possibly can do for my students and the subject.



OPINION PIECE

Why
does Drama
matter?

By Tracy Dorrington

Why does Drama Matter?

It's a question we know the answer to.

It's a question that we have to answer all too often because people just don't SEE. They don't see that we use the skills that Drama gives us in every aspect of life. Whether it's academically, personally or socially, it provides a unique platform for our growth as human beings.

Off the back of the examination results, where the goal posts are often changing, you need to realise that Drama gives so much more than a grade. You need to realise that for the last 2 years plus you have given that young person a safe space, given them the ability to learn to use and understand their voice and creating a voice to show different emotions. You have also given them the ability to learn, to show and understand their body language and what it says even before they are speaking.

These are skills that will stand them in good stead throughout their life.

Then there are foundational skills such as empathy, inclusivity, understanding and collaboration. We also can't forget storytelling, the power of words, the art of listening and active listening and then being heard. What about the ability to lead and to follow? Drama gives the ability to support and enable a young person to become the best rounded young person they can ever be. To strive, to do better and that it's safe to try things out and get it wrong.

So why is Drama put down so much? A lack of understanding? Or is it that the powers that be understand the real power of Drama? Think about it, we create well rounded young people that are taught to question, to research, to NOT accept just what they are told, to use their creativity to raise awareness, to use their voices to be heard and allow issues that affect them to be heard.



IS DRAMA DANGEROUS?

This makes our subject and our young people dangerous. Think a little further, the next generation grows up questioning and not silently accepting. They challenge what they are told, they raise awareness of that which they do not accept, they have been taught to question any injustices, to play different characters they have learnt to understand what it is to be in another's shoes and to look at things from all sides.

More than this, they are going to be able to voice all of this because of the skills they have learnt throughout their Drama education. Drama is the biggest danger to those that wish to keep all in control. Drama is the power that literally could change the world and bring about kindness for all. Support for all and equality for all.

Creativity drives our downtime. That includes everybody! Think of the Olympics opening ceremonies, the television we watch, the movies we see, the podcasts we listen to, the written word in newspapers and magazines, the influencers we engage with on social media... Even when you go into nature you see the shows of the birds and animals... Even the trees are dancing and playing their part.

LINKS TO CAREERS

In a court room every person, whether it be defence or prosecution, has to be able to tell a story. They have to create the imagery in the jury's mind. In sales and marketing the aim is to sell the pitch. They need to be passionate about that chair they have designed, they have to be able to read people to work out what they want, use their voice and to motivate people to believe in their work or the product they are selling. Consultants at hospitals also have to be able to use their body language and voice to sooth someone with horrendous news. They can't fall apart, think about that for a minute, you are delivering some awful news to a family. How can that medical professional stay strong? They use all the skills they learnt in Drama.

THE FIGHT NEEDS TO CONTINUE

In schools, we often find ourselves working solo in a one-person department. Every day, we advocate for our subject, frequently encountering colleagues who may not fully understand its value, often simplifying it to 'just being a tree'. When students express interest in pursuing this subject at Level 2 or 3, we may find ourselves facing resistance from certain colleagues who attempt to dissuade them.

This is all before we've even begun to persuade the parents of the subject's worth.

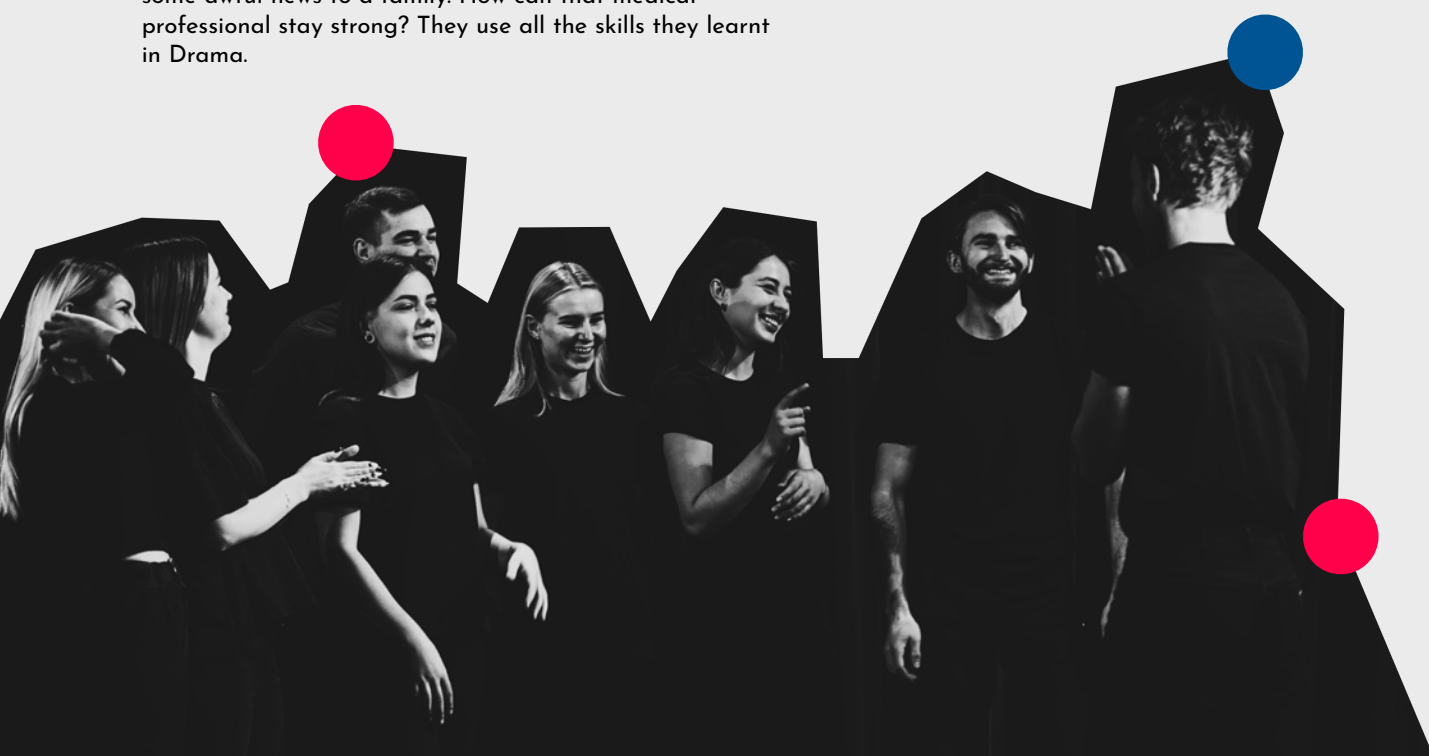
So why do we fight? Because you know all of the above. You see the child that has a stammer and when they play a character the stammer goes away. You see the child that is so creative but they don't want to be on stage. So what do we do? We show them that their creativity can be used in production, you show the child that there is no I in team and always talking is not as important as active listening. You see the child that is going through so much outside of school that by playing a character they get to escape. You often find out safeguarding aspects that no one else is aware of and pass it on to those that need to know.

YOU know Drama Matters but most importantly YOU pass on that passion.

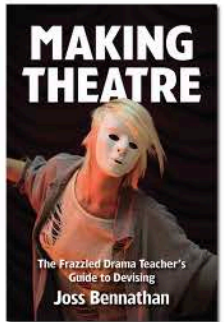
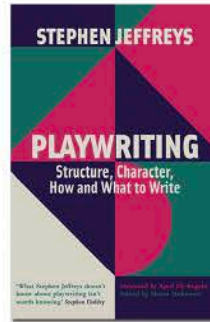
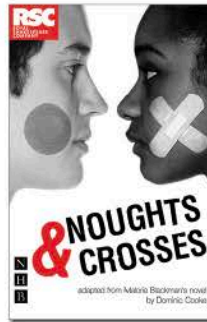
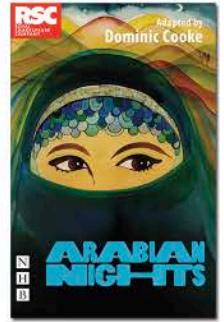
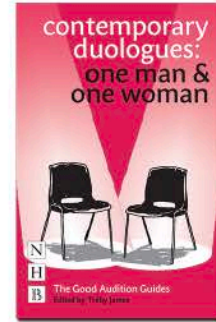
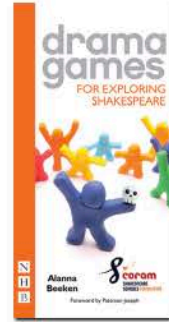
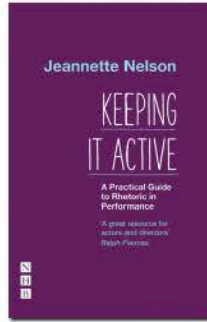
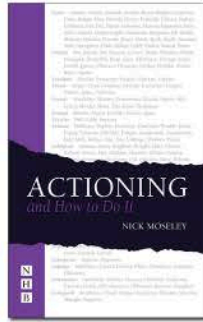
YOU pass on all those skills. YOU give students that safe space and somewhere along the line YOU got into Drama too, maybe because YOU needed all of the above to be given to YOU. Now you get to pass it on to the next generation and truly make a difference.

Drama Matters because you matter!

Drama matters because, quite simply, it does!



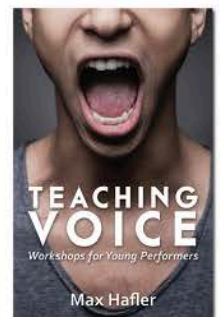
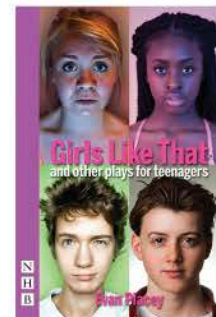
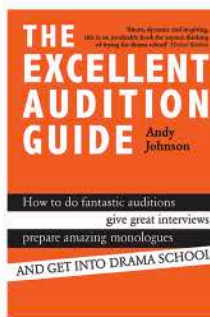
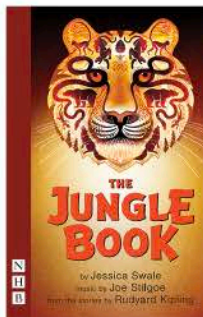
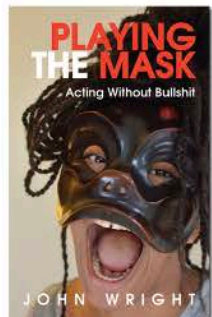
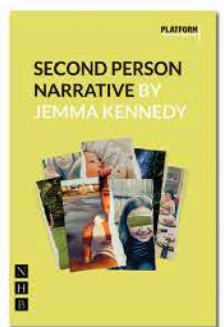
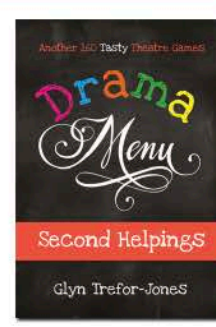
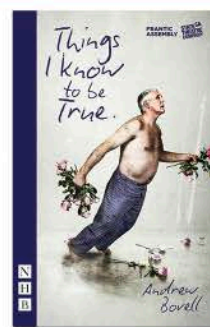
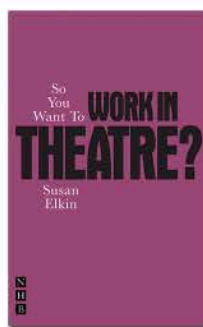
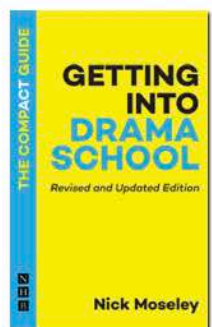
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LAZARUS THEATRE COMPANY

BY RICKY DUKES

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Writing for the first ever Drama Matters Magazine is a real honour, and I am hoping my contribution will open up the conversation between professional practice and Drama in Education – together banging the drum to those outside our own communities to loudly say “Drama Matters”.

I’m Artistic Director of Lazarus Theatre Company – a company based in Greenwich, London, presenting some of the greatest works of the classical cannon in contemporary, striking, visual and visceral ensemble productions.

The key word (of that extremely long sentence above) is “ensemble”, working together, collaboratively, taking collective risk and responsibility, learning from the external experiences of others, seeing ourselves in others shoes, working as a team to listen, understand and collaborate, to share.

You might ask “why the classics?” A good question and one we ask ourselves at the outset of every production. What can we add to the discourse of a plays performance history, what does the play say about us, how does it challenge us, how does it speak to us in our time?

Lazarus Theatre Company is an award-winning ensemble, reimagining and revitalising classic plays in visual, visceral and vibrant productions.

Our Mission. For the classical canon to be experienced and explored in politically charged and theatrically daring ensemble productions by a diverse audience and artists representative of our community.

We seek to reach those who have barriers to experiencing live theatre by celebrating cultural diversity, expanding audience’s and artist’s horizons.

We celebrate artists from all backgrounds and experiences with an emphasis on ensemble, working collaboratively and collectively. We acknowledge and celebrate that we are all richer if everyone has access to great theatre.

For us the classics operate in a heightened state of theatricality, they talk of big questions of humanity, politics and society, they allow us to examine the extremes of what it is to be human. Is Shakespeare (or his contemporaries) our contemporary? In short - no.

Much has changed over the 500 years since his players trod the boards, but he and so many of the classical writers speak of larger, existential questions, bigger than us as individuals, and in the current world of individualism offers us all a bigger, epic (in a Brechtian way) alternative view. The classics can speak to us in a deep, affirmative, political, spiritual and human way. Sure - they talk of Kings and Queens - perhaps a little out of reach for us mere mortals, (I grew up on a council estate in a town called Sedgley near Dudley - they felt out of reach to me), but when we look at them in detail, when we boil them down, they are just like you and I, floored, facing impossible choices, managing external challenges, in search of fulfilment.

OK, ok so you get why we love classics, but we as a company are about to go on quite a big experiment - new writing! That might not seem a big deal for many but for a classics company it's a whole new world!

In Summer 2020 I set the company a challenge - create a brand-new piece of epic theatre, created with the scale of the Elizabethan theatre, inspired by the work of Brecht, Brook and Rice. The play is called "Allotment" and I'll be talking much more about it over the next few months.

I will be sharing more of our making process on classic plays too, from the perspective of performers sure but that of those other vital creative departments such as design, lighting, sound, music, stage combat, puppetry, dramaturgy. We shall be dipping into the business side too, marketing (engagement) budgets, funding and programming. Hopefully something for all of you and your students.

Please do bring us into your classrooms / studios via our social media platforms - we share images, interviews, videos and materials for all of the above - you can find all the links on our website. Via Drama Matters we are keen to learn how we can help you, so please do get in touch.

Well that's it for my first piece, again I can't tell you how fantastic it is to be part of our community, a real honour. Wishing you all a creative and fruitful new academic year.



The Company, Hamlet, William Shakespeare, Southwark Playhouse, 2023. Image by Charles Flint



Henrietta Rhodes & Jordan Peedell, Doctor Faustus, Christopher Marlowe, Southwark Playhouse, 2022. Image by Charles Flint



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ANONYMOUS POST - FOLLOW THIS SERIES OVER THE FIRST THREE ISSUES

BACK TO SCHOOL... BUT NOT QUITE!

The summer holiday always feels a bit like New Year in our house; myself and my husband are both teachers and we often find ourselves reflecting on the previous academic year and setting new goals for the next. This year my thinking has been more profound as I prepare to move schools after 10 years as Head of Drama in a selective girls school. Yet whilst my role remains the same (well, I'll be Subject Leader but what's in a name?) and despite my 18 years teaching experience overall, I find I am filled with a certain amount of apprehension.

I never actually thought I would leave my most recent position; to the contrary, I imagined the time when my daughter would come with me every day and the opportunities attending such a school would give her! It has been without a doubt a brilliant place to work.

But various things have changed since I first took on the role, not least adding my own children's school drop off to my commute, pushing my drive to 50 minutes and leaving me arriving just in time to go to form with little time to prep for the day ahead and often leaving me chasing my tail, and that's before factoring in the return journey which is often affected by football matches at two nearby stadiums, and events at a large arena nearby.

As time has gone on I've felt guilty that I can't always stay after work to support colleagues with events, or help out with uniform sales, needing to leave to beat the traffic instead of staying to offer an extra club. I knew I wanted to do more and we even considered moving closer to work, especially as there was only one school in the local area where I live that I would consider moving to; yet lo and behold, a job there came up!

I owed it to myself to go for it, to give myself the chance to change my working day and get back precious time when I could plan, photocopy, run activities, stay for meetings, volunteer for events etc without anxiously clock watching and worrying my own kids would be the last ones left in after school club again!

Once I got the job, I began to worry about the small things I take for granted; ready access to the photocopier (it's practically next door to my studio), knowing how to place orders, who to see about going on a trip, and of course the big things like changing exam specifications at A Level, producing a bi-annual musical (we only produced straight plays in my most recent school) and of course getting to know the pupils themselves.

But as I began to share my news, I realised how ready I was for a change and that these were the things I was excited about; this was an opportunity to reinvigorate my teaching.

I've been encouraged to read up on some educational theories that underpin my new school's approach to behaviour, and I'm really enjoying it, and my new school is culturally more diverse, so I've been reading some new plays to explore in class.

I always thought it was better to live and work in different areas to avoid bumping in to pupils at the local shop, or worse still in the pub, but the reduced commute aside I'm hoping that living and working in the same area will help the sense of belonging to a school community in a way that I haven't experience before.

So it is with some trepidation, and a lot of excitement, that this September I'll be back to school...but not quite! And just like the new year 7's, I'll be hoping I've got the dress code right, worrying about where I'll go for lunch, and hoping I make some new friends.

THE UCU STRIKES

By Natalie Diddams

Like a lot of events at the moment, our most recent open days have been fraught with difficulties. Trains have been cancelled due to strikes, and higher levels of traffic on the roads have made it difficult for prospective students to get to us. Parents are worried about the cost of living crisis, and whether their children will be able to register with doctors' surgeries near to campus.

The sense of public services breaking down has made for some difficult conversations around the realities of life as a drama student, particularly at a time when university lecturers are also going on strike. With the national teacher's strike coming up, I have been thinking about how we, as educators, should broach the topic of industrial action with our students and their families.

In what follows, I have tried to explain what's going on in the higher education sector, in the hope that it will help us to have conversations with our young people as they make one of the most important decisions of their lives.

So, what's going on?

Universities - like lots of other sectors in the UK at the moment - are in an industrial dispute. In October, the University and College Union (UCU) won a national ballot to initiate industrial action 1. This resulted in three strike days (on 24, 25 and 30 November), as well as a host of other measures including working to contract, not covering for absent colleagues and refusing to reschedule classes that were cancelled due to the strike. The UCU is now setting out a potential strategy for escalating action in 2023.



This could include more strike days in February, March and April, as well as a marking and assessment boycott.

But I thought that academics had it pretty good...

Well, if you did think this, you're not wrong! Most senior academics take home a comfortable salary. However, as in the school sector, pay for academic staff has fallen by 25% in real terms over the last decade. In stark contrast, the wages of those at the top have continued to rise, with your average vice-chancellor pocketing as much as £269,000 a year.

According to a recent UCU report (2022 [online]), academic staff are working an average of 51.5 hours per week. And, for staff who are new to the industry, pay and conditions have been made worse by the introduction of zero hours and casual contracts.

Under casualisation, work that used to be carried out by staff on secure contracts has been transferred to people employed on a short-term basis. This means that lots of academics are unable to access things like maternity pay and parental leave. Those on temporary contracts find it difficult to fight back against excessive workloads, which means that lots of early career academics are getting burnt out and leaving the industry.

Then there is the issue of inequality. Across the sector, the race pay gap is 17%, the gender pay gap is 16% and the disability pay gap is 9% (Six, 2022 [online]). Don't bother asking who is most affected by casualisation and workload pressure.

Where did all of these problems come from?

I have one word for you - marketisation. When the coalition government raised student fees in 2009, universities were marketized. This means that their income was redirected (via student loans) to students, who were positioned as consumers in a market. In what was probably the the most significant long-term change, that market was then deregulated by the removal of caps on the numbers of students that universities could recruit.

As a result, universities started to be run like businesses. If more students could be recruited to courses, they were. If cuts could be made to staff costs (through casualisation or redundancies), they would be. Unsurprisingly, with more students and less staff, workloads have increased and morale has plummeted across the board.



So, what is the strike calling for?

The UCU wants three things for its members: a pay rise of 2% over inflation (RPI); an end to casualisation and excessive workloads; and action to end racial and gender inequality. However, the dispute goes deeper than it might initially seem. Established academics on comfortable contracts are striking for philosophical reasons. They want an end to the marketisation of universities and a shift in how the government funds higher education.

How many people have been involved?

Over 70,000 staff at 150 universities across the UK have taken part. This makes it the biggest strike in the history of higher education. You can see a list of the institutions affected here - <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/12474/Institutions-affected>.



And how have the universities responded?

The UCEA (the Universities and Colleges Employers Association) entered negotiations with the UCU at the start of December. However, they have said that an offer can only be produced if the UCU ceases all industrial action. In a statement, the UCU general secretary - Jo Grady - said:

Universities are on the brink of facing sustained sector wide action, yet [the UCEA] have refused to make us an offer that could settle this dispute... We entered negotiations ready to discuss pay and working conditions but UCEA refused to do so. Instead, it is demanding we bind ourselves to taking no industrial action as a pre-condition of even seeing its offer. No union could agree to such an absurd demand (2022 [online]).

It is worrying that the UCEA is prevaricating in this way, as it means that more industrial action is likely to take place.

Do the universities actually have any money, though?

Well, it is true that universities are facing a crisis of income. When the coalition government raised student fees in 2012, they did so to a level that was widely understood to be below the cost of delivering undergraduate programmes.

They also capped them. This was a bit of a medium-term issue when inflation was running at historically low rates, but it has become a serious, short-term issue with inflation rocketing in recent months.

Problems have also been caused by Brexit, which has led to a reduction in the number of international students attending UK universities. International tuition fees range from £11,400 - £38,000 (British Council, 2022 [online]), and - because universities get most of their money from student fees - they're missing this extra income.

However, despite this, universities do have the money to improve pay and conditions for their staff. By analysing financial data from each higher education institution in the UK, the UCU has identified that as much as 3.4 billion has been hoarded by universities, with plans to spend much of this on new buildings. In truth, it's not universities who don't have any money, it's their workers.

But what about the students? Won't they be the people that suffer the most due to the strike?

In the short-term, definitely. Industrial action is deliberately disruptive, and you can't disrupt universities without disrupting students. However, one of the reasons that employers have been so successful at ratcheting up workloads is because academics tend to be dedicated to their students.

They work tens of hours over their contracted time every week, and they have been doing so for more than a decade under punishing circumstances. Unavoidably, students have also been suffering as a result. Staff working conditions are their learning conditions, after all, so if working conditions improve, students will ultimately benefit. Unfortunately, it's clear that won't happen without a serious confrontation.

Is there any good news?

Well, I think there is - particularly for drama students! Throughout history, the most innovative and exciting theatre has been made at times of political churn, and this is no different to that. I'd encourage our politically minded young people to forge ahead boldly with their education, to make exciting theatre, and to meet us on the barricades!



Where can I learn more?

British Council (2022) Cost of studying and living in the UK

<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/cost-studying>

Six, Tom (2022) 24 Questions about Universities on Strike

<https://www.tom6.space/blog/24questions>

UCU (2022) Workload Survey Data Report

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/12905/UCU-workload-survey-2021-data-report/pdf/WorkloadReportJune22.pdf>

FEEL THE FEAR BUT DO IT ANYWAY!

In September 2021 I had the great privilege of travelling to Birmingham to attend the Drama Matters Networking Weekend. I never thought in a million years that it would turn out to be as amazing as it was. I connected with my now good friend, Laura McCloskey who travelled from Northern Ireland with me at the time. I have a very fond saying as a Drama teacher, 'feel the fear but do it anyway!' This is how I felt that weekend, I was nervous and I didn't know what to expect.

I put myself forward to deliver a workshop and it turned out to be the very first workshop of the whole weekend. I felt the fear but did it anyway! I delivered a series of Drama Ice Breakers to almost 60 other Drama teachers.

It was amazing! At that stage, I had been teaching for 14 years and had only ever really taught children and young people. This was the first time delivering a workshop to adults, and fellow drama teachers too! I was proud of myself; I was proud that I got through it and proud that everyone was so accepting of me.

As Drama teachers, I suppose some of us have 'imposter syndrome'. I know I do! In saying this, that September weekend in 2021 really changed my outlook on my teaching and that was from the feedback from other Drama teachers.

The other Drama teachers on the course were exceptional - from those who delivered workshops to those who quietly let me know that I was doing really well. Some others let me know via message or in passing conversation that they would love to connect for further ideas or use some of my methods in their classrooms.



By Clare McAvoy

“I was proud of myself; I was proud that I got through it and proud that everyone was so accepting of me.”

These words of encouragement really meant so much to me. These words completely changed my confidence when teaching but even more, reignited my passion for the subject I love so dearly.

I am always talking passionately about Drama, Theatre and Performing Arts. We all know how it boosts children's confidence, communication & creativity. As drama teachers, we prioritise the children we teach, and rightly so.

I wanted to write this piece for the very first Drama Matters Magazine to help us all remind ourselves of the job we do. But also remind ourselves of how important we are to the children and young people we meet in our classrooms every day.

We are the ear to listen to them, we provide a safe space for them to be creative, we allow them to grow and develop their communication skills to make changes in the world but most importantly, positive changes to them and their lives.

I could go on about the importance of Drama teachers to the young people we teach. We all know the major benefits it has on them. But can I just remind us as Drama teachers, we are important to each other. I headed back to Birmingham in September 2022 and again, I delivered a workshop on Improvisation. I was nervous but reassured after my experience in 2021. Like the children we teach, I knew I was in a safe space, full of enthusiastic, encouraging Drama teachers who would make me feel at ease.

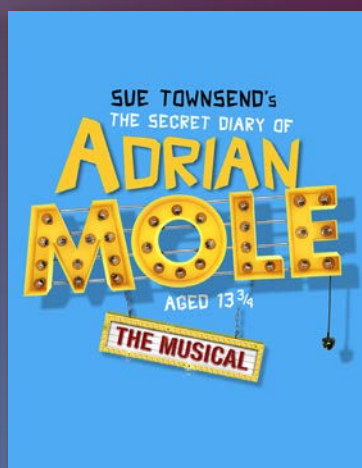
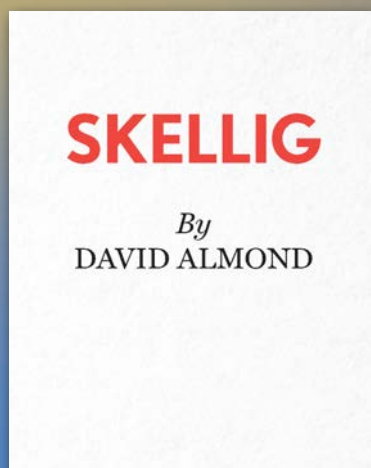
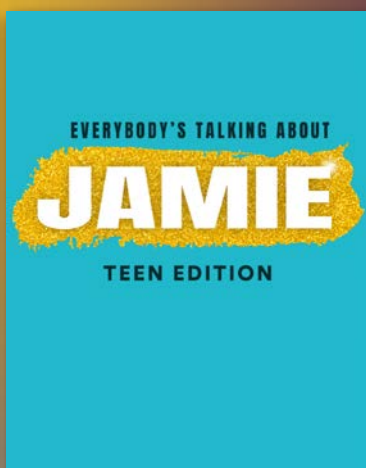
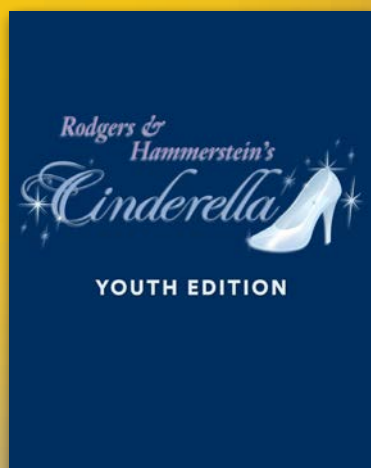
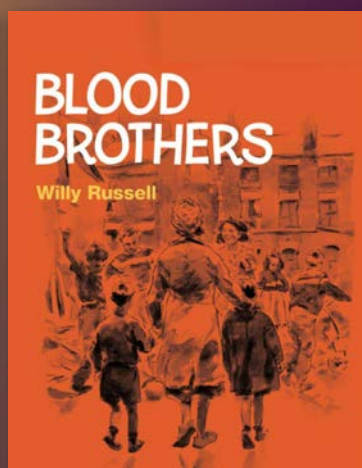
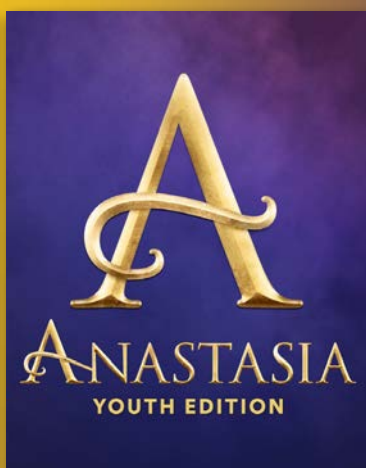
As in the previous year, I was given tremendous support from the other Drama Teachers and positive words of kindness to compliment the workshop or that they would use some of my ideas in their own lessons. I was joined by my past pupil (and now Drama teacher), Conor Braniff in September which was a real honour.

And I suppose when we see our own pupils take on a career, similar to our own, this is real proof that we are making a difference.



“Your support network is the solid ground from which you can propel yourself upwards”.

Anna Barnes, How To Be Resilient



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A MOMENT IN TIME

REBECCA JONES



I have been teaching drama for 10 years and I honestly love it! I feel so lucky to do what I do and I never take it for granted. Teaching is such a rewarding job. And teaching drama, in particular is a dream come true. To take your passion and turn it into paying career is just unreal. I mean, yes, there's the admin, data, workload, observations, learning walks and extra curricular commitments. However, in spite of this, I do feel so grateful to pass on the skills and expertise that I have learnt in my life as an actor, but I also know that being a drama teacher is more than that...

Whilst of course I love working with 'talented' pupils in a drama sense, but for me it is also about developing young people's transferable skills. It's teaching the pupils who don't necessarily love my subject but who grow and develop because of it. It's the confidence building and self esteem raising that I love. It's about the SEN pupil who has gained the confidence to speak in front of others, the ASD pupil being able to express himself through role play and then, of course, it's the KS4 and 5 pupils use of techniques and exploration of practitioners that I relish.

I'm a huge advocate that drama will help you in every single part of life. No matter what career path you want to take, GCSE drama will help you! There are so many careers that will benefit from a candidate who has a performance background; can work as part of a team, think on their feet, be a confident public speaker plus utilising listening skills that are also developed through drama.

I've develop a really robust curriculum at school. We really believe in interleaving. Our lesson structure is the same across whole school and I really believe in this method. Our lessons have a focus on literacy as this is a whole school target. Each lesson, pupils complete an 'unlocking vocabulary' task where they learn a new word and write it into their own sentence.



So each day, a pupil will learn 6 new words, expanding their vocabulary. Each starter involves two recall questions that could be from last year or last week, plus two questions related to consolidating pupils knowledge of key drama vocabulary, skills and techniques. We have a big focus on modelling. At first, I felt this took the exploration out of learning but now I've come to agree that it saves time as we show pupils an exemplar example of X and then they go straight to trying that themselves.

As a practitioner, I love Dorothy Hetcote's 'Process Drama'. I don't do as much if it as I'd like but I have implemented teacher-in-role and Mantle of the Expert into several schemes. I find it's a really engaging way to work and it supports pupil learning when they see their teacher acting and using the characterisation skills that we expect of them.

“SLT and pastoral stuff are visible which I find is absolutely key in running a successful school.”

At key stage 3, pupils have 1 x 60min lesson per week. We cover schemes such as Physical Theatre, Macbeth, Commedia Dell'arte, Frantic Assembly as well as Performance Styles which looks at a variety of practitioners. At Key stage 4 we follow the BTEC Tech Performing Arts Award and pupils have 5 x 60minute double periods a fortnight.

For the last three years, I've worked at an Outstanding 'World Class' (Pearson) large inner city secondary in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Our department is really strong - we have a fantastic director who is driven, empathetic, supportive and who has a great deal of integrity. SLT are focused, driven and supportive. All teaching & learning decisions are backed up with research. The behaviour system is fantastic and it's meticulously followed through. SLT and pastoral stuff are visible which I find is absolutely key in running a successful school.



My top tips -

- 1) **preparation** - ensure that you're scripts, props, costumes are all in some kind of order and easily accessible for lessons.
- 2) **print out** class photos to make notes on using a clipboard during lesson time/rehearsals for when it comes to monitoring progress and inputting data captures
- 3) **always use music and lighting** (if available). There's so many free playlists on YouTube. Music really adds atmosphere to a performance and engages pupils.



Carlton Academy Trust strives for "Excellence for All", providing outstanding educational outcomes for all students, who have the skills, knowledge and attitudes to become successful confident young adults who positively contribute to the communities they serve.

They deliver excellence for all, through a carefully considered and sequenced curriculum offer which is broad, balanced, challenging and fosters a love of learning. They also match their curriculum to the abilities, interests and aspirations of their students to give every child the opportunity to become the best version of themselves.

TADEUSZ KANTOR

Tadeusz Kantor was a Polish artist, theatre director and writer who is widely regarded as one of the most innovative and influential figures in 20th-century theatre. Born in 1915 in Wielopole Skrzynskie, a small town in southeastern Poland, Kantor studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow before turning to theatre in the 1940s.



WHO WAS HE?

Kantor's theatre practice was characterised by a highly individualistic and experimental approach, which drew on various influences, including surrealism, expressionism and the avant-garde. He rejected traditional forms of theatre, instead creating highly visual, poetic and often deeply personal works.

One of Kantor's most famous works was his Theatre of Death, which he developed in the 1970s and 1980s. This form of theatre was characterised by a focus on death and the human relationship with mortality and a highly self-reflexive approach to theatre-making. Kantor used a range of objects, props and visual effects to create surreal and dreamlike worlds, in which the audience was invited to participate and interact with the performers.

Kantor's theatre practice was also marked by a strong interest in the body, which he saw as a tool for expression and communication. He often used fragmented, manipulated and distorted bodies in his works, exploring the limits and potential of the human form.

Kantor continued to work in theatre until his death in 1990, leaving behind a rich legacy of innovative and thought-provoking works that continue to inspire and challenge audiences to this day.

OVERARCHING INTENTION

THE THEATRE OF DEATH

Tadeusz Kantor's Theatre of Death was a highly personal and idiosyncratic form of theatre that was characterised by a focus on **death** and **mortality** and a highly **self-reflexive** approach to theatre-making.

One of the key ideas behind Kantor's Theatre of Death was his interest in the **transformative power** of death. Kantor saw death not as an end, but as a **process of transformation** and **renewal**. His works often depicted death as a release from the constraints of life, a way of transcending the **physical body's limitations**.

Another important aspect is Kantor's interest in **memory** and **nostalgia**. He drew on his own childhood memories and experiences, as well as the cultural and historical memory of Poland, to create deeply personal and emotionally resonant works. His use of **objects** and **props** from the past, often imbued with personal and cultural significance, helped create a sense of **nostalgia** and longing in his works.

Kantor's Theatre of Death was also marked by a highly self-reflexive approach to theatre-making. He was interested in exploring the conventions and devices of theatre, such as **breaking the fourth wall** or incorporating **elements of the backstage** into his works. He saw theatre as a space for experimentation and exploration and his works often pushed the boundaries of what was considered acceptable or appropriate in theatre.

His theatre work challenged audiences to think about life, death and the **human condition** in new and unexpected ways. Through his use of highly personal, **emotionally resonant material**, as well as his interest in the transformative power of death and the possibilities of theatre, Kantor created works that continue to inspire and captivate audiences to this day.

THEMES IN HIS WORK

Death

As the name suggests, death was a central theme in Kantor's Theatre of Death. His works explored the human relationship with death, often depicting death as a transformative process or a release from the constraints of life.

Memory and nostalgia

Kantor's works frequently drew on his childhood memories and experiences, as well as the cultural and historical memory of Poland. His theatre was known for its use of objects and props from the past, which were imbued with personal and cultural significance.

The body

The human body was a central element in Kantor's works, which often featured fragmented or manipulated bodies, as well as strange and surreal movements. He explored the limits and potential of the body, using it as a tool for expression and communication.

Theatricality

Kantor's works were highly self-reflexive, often drawing attention to the conventions and artifice of theatre. He experimented with different forms of theatricality, blurring the boundaries between performance and reality.



Tadeusz Kantor in *Wielopole, Wielopole* (1980). Image: Jerzy Borowski, courtesy of Tadeusz Kantor (c) Maria Stangret, Dorota Krakowska / Tadeusz Kantor Foundation



"Dead class" performance. Image courtesy of Cricoteka.

"I want to create a pure space of imagination, a space liberated from psychologism, naturalism and social engagement."

"My theatre does not rely on literature. In it, objects gain independence, start to live, gain an identity of their own."

KANTOR IN THE CLASSROOM



EXAGGERATION

Taking things to an extreme or amplifying gestures, movements and emotions.

This helps students break out of realism and experiment with dramatic expression.

FRAGMENTATION

Breaking up sequences, narratives and characters when devising material or working on scripts. Using only parts not wholes.

This encourages abstract and non-linear thinking in students.

REPETITION

Repeating actions, words or movements to draw focus and create hypnotic effect.

Repetition can build tension and highlight the absurd.

MANIPULATION OF OBJECTS

Using everyday objects in symbolic, exaggerated or abstracted ways. Consider texture, shape and function.

This prompts imagination and metaphorical thinking in students.

PERSONAL OBJECTS

Using objects and props with personal significance to draw on personal memories and nostalgia associated with them.

This can help students connect emotionally with their characters and roles.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Directly involving the audience in the performance through invasion of stage space, breaking the fourth wall and prompting audience responses.

This blurs boundaries and creates a more immersive experience.

"I transform banal, everyday objects into poetic, unreal elements."

PLAYS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

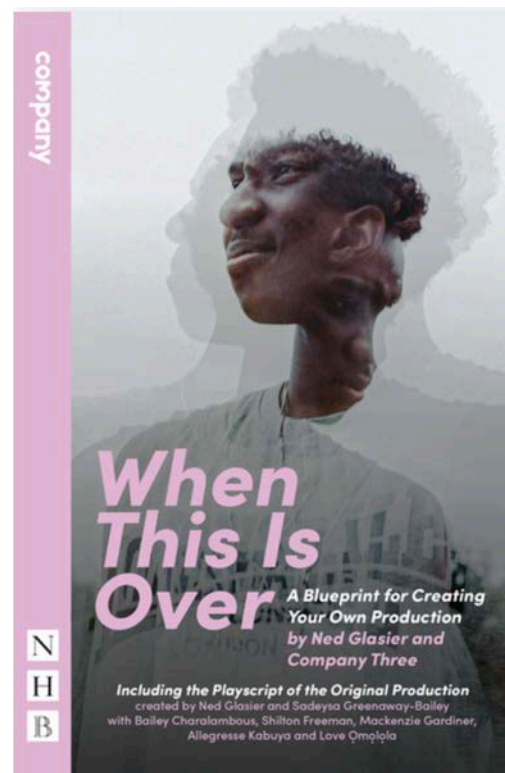
Play:

When This is Over

Playwright:

Ned Glasier and Company Three

A group of teenagers, their lives shaped by billions of seemingly random events going back to before they were born, come together onstage to share stories about their past, their present, and what might lie ahead.



WHAT THE PUBLISHER SAYS

When This Is Over is a uniquely personal, theatrical celebration of hope, possibility and imagination. It's about how we can work with chaos, and embrace our collective imagination as we prepare for a deeply uncertain future - together.

Originally conceived by Company Three - and developed alongside more than fifty other youth theatres across the UK - When This Is Over is a play designed to be created and performed by teenage casts, drawing directly on their own life experiences and the stories they want to tell.

This published edition contains a series of exercises and activities for schools, youth-theatre groups and community companies to create and perform their own unique productions, and also features the complete script of Company Three's version, which was performed at The Yard, London, in 2022.

When This Is Over was named Community Project of the Year at The Stage Awards, and Outstanding Drama Initiative at the Music and Drama Education Awards.

WHAT THE DRAMA TEACHER SAYS

The original play script that is available is powerful and relatable to young people and studying that alone will provide learning opportunities in characterisation, ensemble and skill development.

What makes this publication unique is the blueprint for drama teachers and their students to develop their own material. The blueprint is divided into sections and offers opportunities and activities in getting started, gathering stories, writing scripts and breaking the scenes down with specific advice on how to write each one.

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Imprint: Nick Hern Books
Paperback, 112 pages
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6 Jul 2023



SEND MATTERS



In 2008, I started my PGCE in Drama and have been teaching our wonderful subject ever since. I have loved nothing more than watching young people grow before my eyes, but recently my role changed and nothing could have prepared me for the steep learning curve that I experienced. In 2022 I embarked on my first Leadership role as a SENDCo in a Secondary School in a rural area in the South West of England.

To say I hit the ground running is an understatement, when I took over I was the third SENDCo in just over a year, so I had to learn quickly. I would like to share some of my newly-acquired knowledge with my Drama Matters family, as I am sure that SEND will be an area of focus for many of your schools/Trusts and we all need to ensure that we are doing right by our learners with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) to ensure that we are truly inclusive as practitioners ourselves.

I have learned a great deal since Easter, but there are some key points that I want to share with you today, of course some of you will already have this knowledge, but if it helps one other teacher read one less document/report/article/book then it is worth it.

NUMBERS

Throughout the UK the number of students who have been identified as having Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities has increased to an average of 17.3%, of this figure 4.3% of students have Education and Healthcare Plans (EHCPs) ([June 2023 Summary of Data](#)).

This has increased from an average 16.5% and 4% EHCPs in 2022 ([June 2022 Summary of Data](#)). This means that the number of students in our classes with SEND has increased; so we need to be even more efficient at meeting the needs of everyone in our classes to ensure that everyone that we teach has the chance to reach their full potential.

TERMINOLOGY

Our young people with SEND should not be defined by their SEND, we should always use the language: 'learners with SEND' as opposed to 'SEND learners'.

UNIVERSAL TEACHING

This is the most important thing that we can do to support our learners with SEND, the more I learn about the four broad areas of need and strategies/interventions to support learners with SEND, the more I realise that the universal offer, the way that we teach all students, is the most important thing we can focus on.

Drawing upon different research and guidance I will list my top tips below; these are the universal strategies we can use for all students that will greatly benefit our learners with SEND:



Clear unambiguous instructions. Number the tasks in a list and use clear graphics alongside the text to help communicate meaning (dual coding).

Clear (and high) expectations and routines for everyone in your lessons. We do not necessarily provide 'differentiated' tasks anymore, we should be aiming for the same endpoint for all, but provide adaptations within the lesson to ensure that all learners can get to the same endpoint with their learning.

Break down tasks into smaller steps and do not ask for more than 2-3 steps to be completed at once. This is an area I have definitely gotten a lot better at since becoming a SENDCo, I may have been guilty in the past of giving a long list of instructions without thinking about my students who have a working memory deficit.

Modelling is an important part of the lesson and I ensure that I give examples through the 'I do, we do, you do' method.

Regularly revisit prior learning to support retention in the long-term memory (Ebbinghaus forgetting curve).

Use pastel backgrounds for all slides and minimum 12 point font for paper and 28 for slides. Avoid underlining or capitals, use bold to emphasise text. Use a sans serif font and 1.5 line spacing on slides.

Reasonable adjustments are something that should be considered at a leadership level, behaviour policies cannot be applied without reasonable adjustments for our learners with SEND, for example our learners with ADHD or Tourette's may need reasonable adjustments when it comes to behaviour management and applying the behaviour policy.

As you navigate the next academic year, keep going and keep doing right by all of our learners, including those with Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities, because SEND matters, and remember:

"I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate.

It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration.

I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized."

— Haim Ginott

KABUKI

By Liam Greenall

Kabuki theatre is a form of classical Japanese dance-drama theatre. It is known for the theatrical stylisation and for the elaborate make-up worn by the performers. The theatre tradition began in the early 17th century and developed into its present form in the 18th and 19th centuries.

It began in 1603 when a woman named Okuni started performing dance-drama stories in the streets of Kyoto. Initially performed only by women, kabuki soon became popular and spread to theatres in Edo (present day Tokyo).

Prostitution and scandals led the government to ban women from performing in 1629. Kabuki then transitioned to being performed exclusively by men and elaborate stage techniques, makeup and costumes evolved during this period.

During the Edo period in the 18th and 19th centuries, kabuki developed into a refined art form under the governance of the shogunate. It gained wider renown as Japan opened up to the West during the Meiji restoration in the 1860s.



ACTORS AND THEIR ROLES

Kabuki actors played a crucial role in creating the art form and inventing its role categories. Most actors specialise in one category due to the extensive training required.

WAGOTO

This role features young men about town who are usually elegant and effeminate and often in love with a famous courtesan. They can be heroes, but are often vain and comical. Actors in this role may wear white makeup and costumes based on urban fashions of the Edo period.

ARAGOTO

This role features strong, aggressive male characters who can be good or evil. They have flashy, exaggerated acting techniques, stylised makeup and heavy costumes with high shoes. They are metaphorically and literally, "larger-than-life" characters.

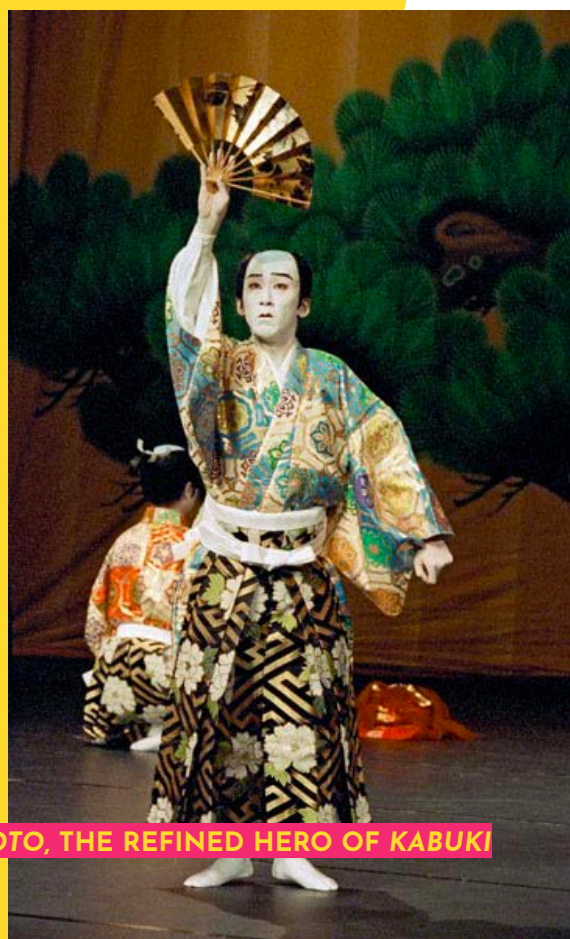
ONNAGATA

This role features male actors who specialise in playing female roles. They are known for their stylised, caricature-like acting techniques and have been stars who have dictated women's fashion. There are many sub-categories within this category, such as Keisei, who is a flamboyant courtesan and Musume, who refers to the daughters of ordinary farmers or townsmen.

Many Kabuki actors come from families with long histories in the art form. They often begin training at a young age, learning from family members who are already established actors.

Training involves rigorous physical conditioning to build strength and stamina for the demanding performances. This includes exercises such as running, jumping, and lifting weights.

Kabuki actors must also develop a distinctive vocal style, which involves a combination of singing, speaking, and shouting. They may undergo vocal training to learn how to project their voices and control their tone and pitch.



WAGOTO, THE REFINED HERO OF KABUKI

Image by SAKARI VIIKA



ARAGOTO IN A KUBUKI POSTER

Image by JUKKA O. MIETTINEN



KABUKI PLAYS AND THEMES

Kabuki theatre draws from a wide range of sources, including the bunraku puppetry tradition. Two important categories of plays that are adapted from the bunraku repertoire are **jidaomono** (history plays) and **sewamono** (domestic plays).

Jidaomono plays are set in the distant past and often refer to the great epics of the Feudal period. The costuming is highly stylised, reflecting the fashions of the early feudal period. Sewamono plays, are more realistic in style and recount the lives of ordinary people of the Edo period. The third major category of kabuki plays is **shosagoto**, which focuses on dancing rather than acting.

SHIRANAMIMONO

These are plays dealing with the lives of famous thieves. The name "shiranamimono" comes from the Japanese word for thief, "shiranami".

They often feature daring heists and other criminal activities and the main character is usually a charismatic thief who is both charming and dangerous.

SHINJUMONO

These are plays involving lovers' suicides. They usually tell the story of two lovers who are unable to be together due to social or family pressures.

Rather than live apart, they choose to die together. These plays were so popular that they were sometimes banned.

KAIDANMONO

These are ghost plays. They often involve supernatural beings and tell eerie stories of hauntings and other supernatural phenomena.

The name "kaidanmono" comes from the Japanese word for ghost story, "kaidan".

SOGAMONO

These are plays with a vendetta or revenge plot. The main character seeks revenge for a past wrong, often against a family member or former friend.

These plays often involve sword fights and other action scenes.

The Kabuki-za Theatre in Tokyo is the centre of the kabuki world



KABUKI STAGE AND SPACING

1: hanamichi pathway

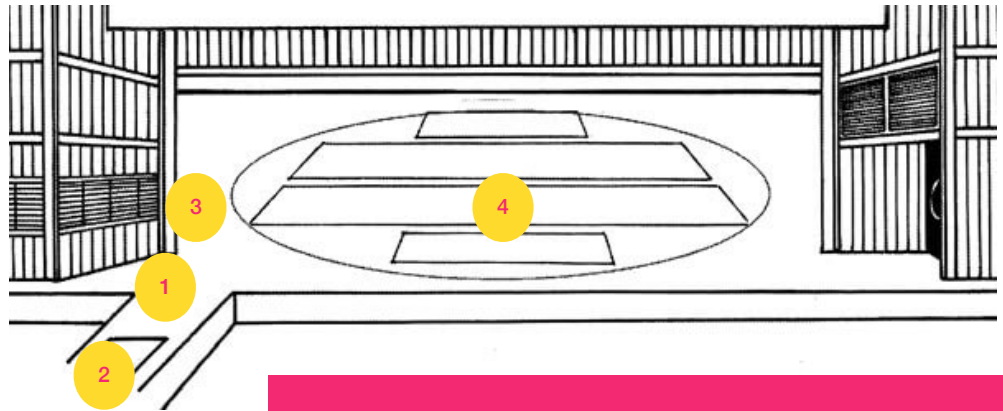
2: trap door

3: room for backstage geza musicians

4: revolving stage with large trap

Hanamichi serves as an important entrance and exit for actors, bringing them closer to the audience.

Special acting techniques associated with hanamichi were developed, and it is connected to the backstage area through a tunnel called "hell".



Complex lift and trap systems allow heavy sets to appear and disappear swiftly, and actors can surprise the audience by suddenly emerging from unexpected places.

The kabuki stage had already invented the full-size revolving stage in 1758, much earlier than its European counterpart. A dual revolving stage was also introduced, enabling even more intricate and rapid stage changes, as well as sensational illusions like sea scenes with moving boats.

WHAT IS MIE?



One of the most impactful kabuki techniques is *mie*, a dramatic sequence of movements ending in an expressive pose with a highly stylised face showing crossed eyes. Male actors perform *mie*, while female impersonators exhibit similar poses called *kimari* that are less exaggerated.

Mie and *kimari* are the highlights of plays, akin to the highest notes in Western operas. The climactic moments are preceded by wooden claps and rhythmic cheers (*kakegoe*) from members of the audience.

The striking *mie* poses and their caricature-like expressions are seen as the most symbolic element and they have been immortalised in old woodblock prints as well as modern kabuki posters.

KABUKI MAKE UP AND COSTUMES

The primary characters in kabuki often apply make-up (kesho) that is predominantly white, a hue symbolising purity, sophistication and nobility. Common folk characters, such as workers and farmers, typically exhibit a more earth-toned make-up, indicative of the sun-tanned skin of those who labor outdoors.

The application of white make-up begins with either shaving or pasting the eyebrows, followed by layering the white base. Subsequently, the eyes are accentuated with black and red, the lips are colored, and the eyebrows are drawn high on the forehead.

Such make-up styling allows for the enhancement of facial features, aligning with the ostentatious aesthetics characteristic of kabuki.

It also emphasises facial expressions, a critical element in kabuki performances, ensuring they are easily discernible to the audience.

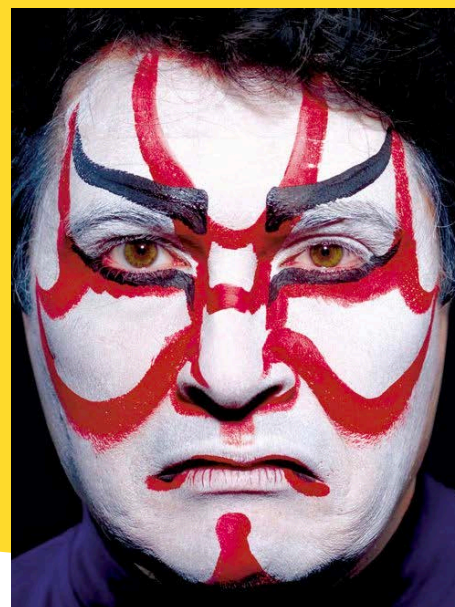
The most stylised and flamboyant make up is kumadori, a make-up technique that developed alongside the aragoto, or vigorous male characters, conceived by Ichikawa Danjuro I.

In kumadori, the actor's face is adorned with make-up lines that overstate the actor's facial features. Red lines denote a virtuous character, while blue lines signify an evil character.

The actor typically applies his make-up himself. In certain plays, especially "transformation" plays where the actor swiftly switches roles, several layers of make-up painted on thin fabric are used to quickly alter the actor's appearance.



For onnagata characters, a red base is applied underneath the white.



Kabuki theatre is renowned for its elaborate and richly decorated costumes, which are often as integral to the storytelling as the performance itself. The costumes help define characters, their social status and to express specific moods and emotions.

The design process is meticulous as they are often hand-sewn and embroidered with detailed motifs relevant to the play or the character. For instance, a costume might be embroidered with cherry blossoms, indicating the play is set in spring or a dragon to indicate a powerful warrior character.

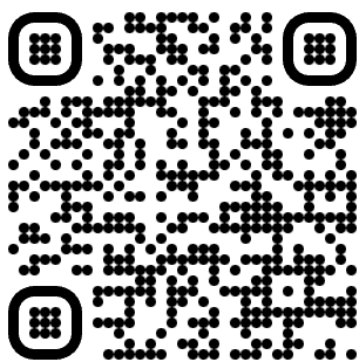
Fabrics used are typically high-quality silks, brocades and satins, dyed in vibrant colours. The costumes are oversized and exaggerated to be visible from a distance and to create a dramatic visual effect on the stage.



WORTH WATCHING

IN SEARCH OF GREEK THEATRE

In Search of Greek Theatre is an amazing collection of short films produced by the National Theatre about Greek theatre and productions of Greek plays they have staged. We have curated a list of videos that you can embed in your teaching and learning along with a list of discussion prompts and questions you can use with your students.



AN INTRODUCTION TO GREEK THEATRE

This film explores the defining aspects of Greek Theatre.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

How do we know about ancient Greek theatre? - What do the ancient sources tell us about drama? - What are the archaeological remains of theatres? - When does the festival of Dionysus happen? - What was the festival of Dionysus like? - What were the three types of drama in ancient Greece? - Why did the actors wear masks? - What is the significance of the chorus in Greek drama? - What were the two fundamental roles of the chorus in Greek drama?



MODERN INTERPRETATIONS OF GREEK CHORUS

This film explores the role of the Greek chorus.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

How does the chorus challenge contemporary audiences? - What role does the chorus play in ancient theatre? - How does the chorus act as a window into other worlds? - What is the significance of the chorus in Women of Troy? - What is the challenge in finding a new language for the chorus? - How was the chorus portrayed in Antigone?

Greek tragedy has been part of the National Theatre's repertoire since the company formed. Its first performance of a Greek tragedy, Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, was in 1964.



Check out the Google Arts & Culture series about Greek Theatre from the National Theatre. The series explores how the National Theatre has staged Greek plays across its three theatre spaces.

<https://artsandculture.google.com/story/owVxhnCOPBOA8A>



WOMEN IN GREEK THEATRE

This film explores female representation in Greek plays.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

Who were the audiences for the plays featuring powerful women in ancient Greek theatre? - **How were women treated in ancient Athenian society?** - **What were some of the powerful female characters in ancient Greek theatre?** - What was the tension between recognising women as important and controlling them in ancient Athenian society? - **What was the issue that the Women of Troy play was originally about?** - **Why is Medea a fascinating character?**

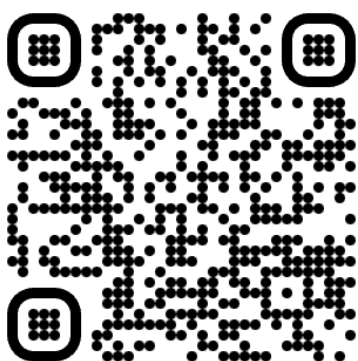


THE ORESTEIA (1981) - MASKS AND CHORUS

This film steps into the National Theatre's Archive to explore the role of masks and the chorus in the 1981 production of The Oresteia.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

How does exploring Greek plays as staged productions change our understanding of them? - **Why were masks used in ancient Greek theatre?** - **What challenges did the team face in using masks in the production?** - How did the creative team explore human emotions in the production? - **What is the role of the chorus in Greek tragedies?** - **How did the use of masks affect the actors' performances?**



MEDEA AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE

This film steps into the National Theatre's Archive and discover the stories behind Carrie Cracknell's production of Medea.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

How did the chorus differ from other productions at the National Theatre? - **What do the costumes that Medea wears in this production tell us about her character and mental state?** - **What was the significance of the chorus's change into matching costumes?** - How did the creative team incorporate supernatural elements into the play?

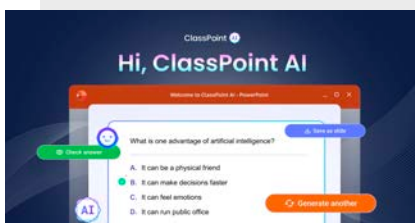
AI TOOLS FOR DRAMA TEACHERS

AI tools for teachers are becoming increasingly popular and accessible. With AI, teachers can maximise their classroom time and resources.

In this article, we will be looking at a range of the best AI tools for Drama teachers that will help you make the most out of the new academic year. These AI tools will not only enhance your teaching experience but also ensure that your students are getting the most out of their Drama learning experience.

ClassPoint AI

ClassPoint AI is a game-changing solution that effortlessly generates quiz questions from any PowerPoint slide in a matter of seconds. It can help you bring innovation & efficiency into your classroom and your prep time.



ClassPoint AI seamlessly examines the content of your slides, transforming it into instant quiz questions.

FashionDraw

FashionDraw App from Fashionary allow teachers and students to design costumes using their AI integrated technical brushes, fabrics and materials.



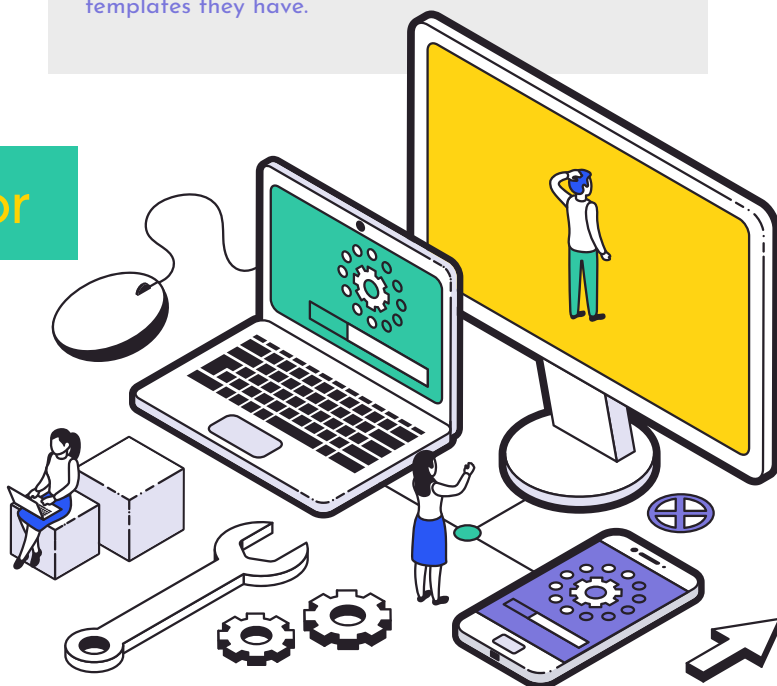
You can create technical drawings of clothing and accessories using the 1,600 templates they have.

Sound Effects Generator

The Sound Effects Generator from Cameralyze is an AI-powered tool that enables users to effortlessly create a vast array of sound effects from simple text inputs. This cutting-edge technology will open doors to Drama teachers and students like never before.



Write a details written prompt of what you want, click start and it will generate a sound effect that you can download.



Twee

Twee is an AI powered tool designed to make lesson planning easier for teachers. It offers a wide range of features that can help teachers create questions, dialogues, stories, letters, articles, multiple choice questions, true/false statements and more in just a few seconds.

Create questions for a YouTube video

Creates a list of open questions, multiple choice questions, or true/false statements for a YouTube video. You can use it to create a listening comprehension exercise.

YouTube Video URL

Paste your link to YouTube video here...

Type of questions

Open questions

Do the magic!

Create open questions to the text

Creates a list of open questions. Ask your students these questions to make sure they understand the text.

Image to text

Text

Paste your text here...

Need a text? [Try to create based on a topic](#) 0 / 1000

Do the magic!

Essential vocabulary on the topic

Suggests a list of essential vocabulary items for the chosen topic and level. Use this list in the other Twee tools to create a variety of exercises for your lesson.

Topic

Paste your topic here...

0 / 100

Part of speech

Any

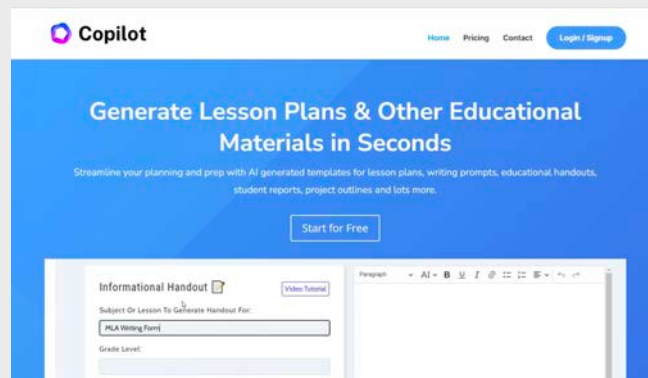
Do the magic!

HOW TO USE AI TOOLS EFFECTIVELY

- Define your goals
- Research available tools
- Integrate the tools into your teaching
- Analyse the results

Education CoPilot

Education CoPilot is an AI tool that teachers can integrate into planning for teaching and learning. The software helps teachers design their curriculum, lesson plans and activities, and track the progress of their students.

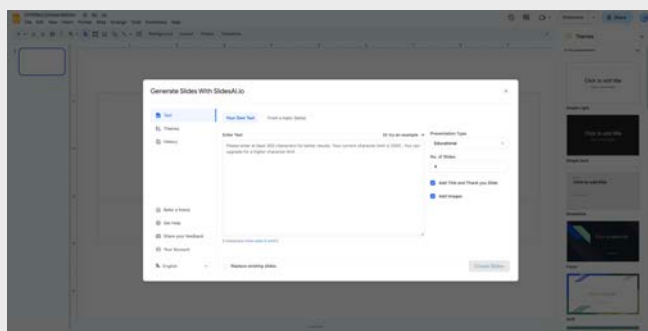


It can also help teachers create custom learning plans to cater to the unique needs of each student in their classes.

SlidesAI

SlidesAI is a powerful AI tool that can help teachers create visually appealing and engaging presentations for their classroom teaching instantly.

It uses advanced AI technology to generate presentations slides and designs based on text input, so you can focus on what matters – the slides content. It also automatically suggest relevant images and graphics based on the content of the presentation.



SlidesAI can also seamlessly integrated with Google Workspace and it offers pre-made templates and themes for you to choose from.

TEN **TOOLS** FOR EXPLORING **STIMULUS** IN THE **DEVISING** PROCESS

Providing stimulus for Drama students is an effective way to spark creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and a deeper devising process when developing new theatre works.

Having some kind of stimulus gives students a foundation to begin the devising process rather than starting with a blank page. It provides boundaries to work within and launch the creative process.

Exploring various stimuli like music, images, poetry and historical events exposes students to new concepts, themes and creative directions to explore. This expands their thinking and possibilities when devising an original theatre piece. It also helps students collaborate and build on each other's ideas.

Looking at a piece of stimulus together allows students to riff off each other and make new connections they may not have found individually. They can blend their interpretations and build on their devised work.

Throughout my teaching practice, I have observed collaborative groups examine stimuli closely but get stuck on deeper analysis and interpretation. I set out to develop a range of tools that would allow students to creatively translate the stimuli into an innovative piece of theatre.

The tools in this article aim to inform and deepen their devising process. They allow students to research and explore a piece of stimulus to give it more context and insight and make their practical exploration more layered and substantive.

5-4-3-2-1



- **Jot down 5 adjectives:** Think about the stimulus and write down 5 adjectives that describe the work. These could relate to the mood, tone or themes of the stimulus.
- **Identify 4 nouns:** Write down 4 nouns that relate to your understanding of the stimulus. These could be objects, people or places that are associated with the stimulus in some way.
- **List 3 verbs:** Identify 3 verbs that reflect the action or movement in the stimulus.
- **Formulate 2 sentences:** Write 2 sentences that encapsulate your overall understanding or interpretation of the stimulus.
- **Choose 1 word:** Finally, choose 1 word that sums up the stimulus for you. This could be a word that captures the essence of the stimulus or your emotional response to it.

A-Z THINKING



- **Prepare Your Alphabet List:** Write the letters of the alphabet in a vertical format on your paper or digital document. This will serve as the structure for your brainstorming activity.
- **Brainstorm Words for Each Letter:** Starting with 'A' and moving through to 'Z', spend a few minutes thinking about words that begin with each letter and are connected to your stimulus. Try to focus on the first word or idea that comes to mind for each letter without overthinking it.
- **Use a Range of Word Types:** Your words can be nouns, verbs or adjectives. They could describe aspects of the stimulus, emotions it evokes or ideas it inspires. The goal is to generate a diverse range of words that reflect different aspects of your stimulus.
- **Take Note of Your Ideas:** Jot down the words or ideas that come to mind next to each letter. Don't worry about making it perfect; the point of the activity is to capture your initial thoughts and associations.

COLOUR-SYMBOL-IMAGE



- **Review Your Notes:** Go through the notes you've made on your stimulus.
- **Select Three Key Points:** From your notes, choose three points or ideas that stand out to you the most.
- **Assign a Colour:** For one of these points, choose a colour that you feel best captures the essence of the idea. This colour should evoke the same feelings or thoughts as the point it represents.
- **Assign a Symbol:** For another point, choose a symbol that represents or captures the essence of the idea. This symbol could be an object, a shape or a sign that you associate with the point.
- **Assign an Image:** For the remaining point, choose an image that best represents or captures the essence of the idea. This could be a drawing, a photo or any other visual representation.

FIND-HIGHLIGHT-CONNECT



- **Find a Source Material:** Identify source material that relates to or makes a connection with your stimulus. Consider: article, webpage, book chapter, interview, journal, etc.
- **Read Through the Source:** Carefully read through your chosen source material. As you read, pay close attention to the information or ideas that resonate with your understanding of the stimulus.
- **Highlight Key Moments:** Use a pen or highlighter to mark moments in the source material that stand out to you, spark your interest, make you think or gives you new ideas.
- **Make Connections:** Consider the information you've highlighted in the source material and identify any connections with what you've already researched and explored about the stimulus.

TEXTUAL ANNOTATION



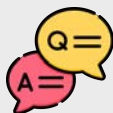
- **Prepare Your Workspace:** Place the printout of your stimulus in the centre of a large piece of paper. This will give you plenty of room to jot down your thoughts and interpretations around it.
- **Choose Your Perspective:** Decide whether you want to annotate from the perspective of an actor, a director, a designer or all three. Each perspective will allow you to explore different aspects of the stimulus.
- **Start Annotating:** Begin adding notes and comments to your stimulus. Use key drama terminology in your annotations to articulate your thoughts clearly.
- **Be Analytical:** Don't simply describe what you see in the stimulus. Instead, aim to analyse and interpret it. Use analytical phrases such as 'this shows', 'this highlights', 'this identifies', 'this establishes', 'this reinforces', and so on.

WORD CLOUD



- **Generate a Word List:** Write a list of words that you associate with your chosen stimulus. This could include words that describe what you see, the emotions it evokes, any thoughts it triggers or specific visual elements. Aim to write as many words as possible that still have meaningful connections to the stimulus.
- **Create a Word Cloud:** Search online for a word cloud creator. Follow the instructions on the website to upload your word list and create a word cloud.
- **Format Your Word Cloud:** Most word cloud tools allow you to play around with the formatting and layout. Experiment with different options until you find a visual representation that you feel best encapsulates your word list and stimulus.
- **Interpret Your Word Cloud:** Look at your word cloud and think about how the words you've chosen inspire ideas for your drama work. The most prominent words might indicate key themes or emotions to explore in your piece.

VOX-POP



- **Prepare Your Questions:** Based on your stimulus, prepare a set of open-ended questions that start with **WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY** and **HOW**. These questions should be designed to elicit detailed responses and encourage the person to share their thoughts and feelings about the stimulus.
- **Find Your Interviewees:** Identify individuals who are not part of your drama process to interview. The goal is to gather a diverse range of perspectives.
- **Conduct the Interviews:** Show your stimulus to each interviewee and ask them your prepared questions. Encourage them to be as detailed and honest as possible in their responses. Think about how you will document their responses.
- **Take Notes:** As you conduct the interviews, take detailed notes on the responses. Focus on any unique insights, recurring themes or surprising reactions that could inspire your drama work.

3-2-1



- **Jot Down 3 Thoughts/Ideas:** Write down the first three thoughts or ideas that come to mind in response to the stimulus. These could be interpretations, associations or insights related to the stimulus.
- **Jot Down 2 Questions:** Write down two questions that the stimulus prompts for you. These could be questions about its meaning, its origin, its context or any other aspect that you're curious about.
- **Make 1 Comparison:** Think of one comparison between the stimulus and something else that you're familiar with. This could be a comparison to another work of art, a real-world event or a personal experience.
- **Share Your Responses:** Share your 3 thoughts, 2 questions and 1 comparison with your group. Listen to each other's responses and discuss any common themes, surprising insights or interesting questions that come up.

WRITE IN ROLE



- **Choose Your Role:** Decide whether you will write from the perspective of a character within the stimulus or from the perspective of the artist/writer/creator of the stimulus.
- **Understand Your Role:** Spend some time understanding your chosen role. If you're writing as a character, consider their mindset, motivations and experiences within the context of the stimulus. If you're writing as the creator, consider their intentions, inspirations and the creative process behind the stimulus.
- **Write a Diary Entry:** Write a diary entry for the day on which the stimulus is set. Use the character's or creator's voice to express their thoughts and feelings about the situation. This diary entry should provide an insight into their perspective and enhance your understanding of the stimulus.

MOODBOARD



- **Collect Images and Visuals:** Begin by finding a range of images and visuals that you feel respond to your chosen stimulus. These could be photographs, illustrations, colour swatches, textures or any other visual elements that reflect the mood, themes or concepts of your stimulus.
- **Create Your Moodboard:** Arrange your collected images and visuals on a large piece of paper or a digital canvas. Try to create a balance and flow between the images that visually communicates your response to the stimulus. There's no right or wrong way to arrange a moodboard, so feel free to experiment with different layouts until you find one that resonates with you.
- **Reflect on Your Moodboard:** Once your moodboard is complete, spend some time reflecting on it. How do the images inspire your own creative ideas? Do they suggest any characters, locations or themes you could explore in your drama work?

BY LIAM GREENALL

"AN OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITY TO EVALUATE LIVE THEATRE
AND THE WORK OF THEATRE-MAKERS, 'WICKED' IS A
MASTERCLASS OF PRODUCTION VALUES AND PERFORMANCE."

Director of Performing Arts, Churchill Academy

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A DRAMA TEACHER'S DECADE:

Trials, Triumphs and Barry

This September marks an important anniversary for me; 10 years since I first stepped over the threshold as a newly qualified Drama teacher, with every pound owed to student finance outweighed with hope, optimism and pride. I think your introduction to Drama teaching really does shape how you see your subject and its place in education.

My introduction was intense but brilliant; we (myself and the other troops) were referred to as 'guardians' of the subject, with the introduction of the Ebacc and a Tory reign imminent, I felt like I was stepping onto the front line and my goodness did I gobble that mantle up! I was and am to this day, militant in my plight, often to my personal and professional detriment.

I was afforded the opportunity to begin my career in a wonderful school, with a skilled mentor and an inspiring Principal. Ten years in, I often romanticise over that time and feel saddened that some of that spark has fizzled. So here it is; my warts and all account of being a Drama Teacher. Strap in.

I am pretty tired, tired of smiling politely when an ignorant parent makes a joke about being a tree, tired of colleagues quiet but definite deflation when I contribute to a calendar meeting, tired of listening to empty (but always public) thank yous delivered by senior leaders at the close of a show, but mostly I am tired of banging that drum. My hands and heart are starting to sting...

A bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Year 7 student only needs to look at their timetable in September to understand that the institution and authority, the 'man', believes Drama to be (if you're lucky) five or four times less important than Maths and English, maybe three times less necessary than History and Geography but just about as dispensable as Art or Music.

Those nails in the coffin are periodically hammered in throughout a child's educational journey; in Year 9 when options are 'chosen' and then again in Year 11, when we try to undo years of messaging by convincing a dubious community of parents that Drama and Theatre actually is **insert relevant superlative**.

My life's work has been to manipulate this narrative and negate this messaging, and I would say that over the years the pendulum has swung from pushing academia as a marketing tactic; stealing English' prestige with overt comparisons, tirelessly persuading critics that those soft skills aren't very 'soft' at all and tying myself in knots with theory maps and writing frames, to leaning into the silliness of the subject, bartering with games of splat and letting that laughter spill out of the studio and float down the corridor daring colleagues to pass judgement on our worth. I like to think I have found a good balance.

"I think your introduction to Drama teaching really does shape how you see your subject and its place in education"

So how have I tried to prove that worth over the years? A couple of years ago you might have described me as 'Type A' teacher; highly organised and a slave to the deadline, however arbitrary or inequitable. As teachers of Drama, you'll know our reach is far and wide but with teaching such a high volume of the student community, those bureaucratic tasks can be all-consuming. Nevertheless, there I was desperate to prove my capability, determined to earn my place amongst the 'grown ups'.

These days I am a little kinder to myself and take a more relaxed approach, having decided that my worth is validated by the likes of Barry in Year 9 who I teach on a Thursday period 5 in a non-specialist space (student has been anonymised with the most unlikely name I could think of for a student in Year 9- if you do teach a Barry in Year 9 please do pass on a sincere apology on my behalf).

Barry is a little bit in love with Drama (although he'd never admit it) but has been burdened with classmates who don't share this sentiment. In fact, they have decided that football and theatre are on opposing ends of the same spectrum and to concede to my will is to irrevocably brand themselves as a 'theatre kids'.

Sometimes I wonder if they think I am heading up some sequin-sporting cult and to be honest, in the midst of a production and after a much-needed Berocca I have pondered this too. But who can blame them? They are so often asked to choose and back in March they did.

They chose PE after having their other three 'choices' chosen for them (thanks Gove). I digress... Barry! Barry deserves my best. After wolfing down something reminiscent of a lasagne from the canteen whilst on duty at lunchtime, I put on my war paint and I enter that classroom ready; cartwheels, backflips, humour, praise, self-deprecation, modelling, warnings, tussles over filling up water bottles, too many references to Drama being a 'team sport' to count and every ounce of energy I have left, all to ensure that the 'Barrys' of this world get a meaningful slice of our world. I can't wait to teach him next year.

To summarise, I feel tired and undervalued. You might be wondering now why I haven't cut my losses and decided to jump ship? Hopefully my last few thoughts will exemplify why. I am in love with my job and will never underestimate that privilege.

I wake up every day and I have purpose; it's not to sell GCSE Drama to Year 9 or to achieve the highest progress 8 score across the school (it would only feed into the 'Drama is easy' narrative), it's not to produce a west-end quality musical with a budget that mirrors my own account by the third week of the month, it's not to convince or persuade anyone, senior or otherwise of my value.

“As teachers of Drama, you'll know our reach is far and wide but with teaching such a high volume of the student community, those bureaucratic tasks can be all-consuming”

I will always commit to growing my department and its profile but I get out of bed to advocate for Barry in Year 9 who worries that his interest in Drama might come at social cost, to encourage Janine in Year 7 who is flirting with the idea of public performance despite low self-esteem and to champion Dirty Den in Year 11 (can you guess the programme I grew up eating my shepherd's pie in front of?) whose thinking has been challenged by the stories we have explored and the characters we've worn. It's time to let those hands and heart heal as in September we go again and that drum isn't going to bang itself. Happy anniversary to me.

CHANGES TO STATUTORY INDUCTION FOR **EARLY CAREER TEACHERS (ECTs)**

The term early career teacher (ECT) replaces newly qualified teacher (NQT). The Department for Education (DfE) rolled out changes to statutory induction across England in September 2021. These changes are part of the government's teacher recruitment and retention strategy and aim to improve teacher training and development opportunities.

ECTs now serve an extended induction over 2 school years. During their induction period, teachers are entitled to:

- a 2-year training programme based on the Early Career Framework
- support from a dedicated mentor
- time off timetable for induction activities, including training and mentor sessions
- regular progress reviews and 2 formal assessments against the teachers' standards

WHAT IS THE EARLY CAREER FRAMEWORK?

The Early Career Framework (ECF) underpins an entitlement to a fully-funded, two-year package of structured training and support for early career teachers linked to the best available research evidence. The DfE's vision is for the ECF to build on high-quality Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and become the cornerstone of a successful career in teaching.

HOW WAS THE FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED?

In collaboration with an Expert Advisory Group, the Department for Education consulted extensively with the sector to design the ECF. This included invaluable input from teachers, school leaders, academics and experts. The Education Endowment Foundation also independently reviewed the framework to ensure it draws on the best available evidence and that this evidence has been interpreted with fidelity.

WHAT IS IT DESIGNED AROUND?

The ECF has been designed around how to support all pupils to succeed and seeks to widen access for all. This includes those pupils identified within the four areas of need set out in the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) code of practice, and children in need of help and protection as identified in the Children in Need Review.

HOW DOES IT BUILD ON INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING?

The content of the ECF builds on and complements ITT. The ECF underpins what all early career teachers should be entitled to learn about and learn how to do based on expert guidance and the best available research evidence. As is the case for other professions, areas covered in initial training will be covered in greater depth as part of induction as teachers continue on their journey to becoming experts.

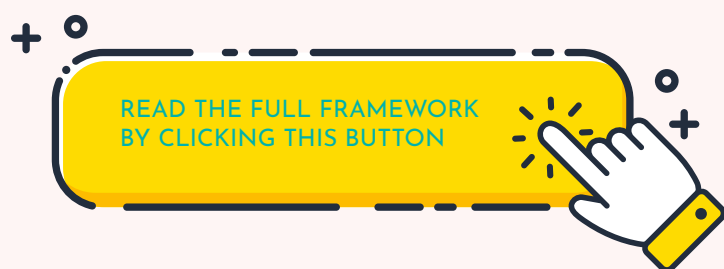
WHAT ARE THE CORE AREAS?

The ECF has been designed to support early career teacher development in 5 core areas:

- Behaviour management
- Pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Assessment
- professional behaviours

HOW DO THE CORE AREAS LINK WITH THE 8 TEACHERS' STANDARDS?

In order to ensure congruence with the 8 Teachers' Standards, the content of the framework is presented in 8 sections. In developing the framework, behaviour management was thought to be encompassed by High Expectations and Managing Behaviour (S1 and S7); pedagogy was thought to be encompassed by How Pupils Learn, Classroom Practice and Adaptive Teaching (S2, S4, S5); and curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours were thought to be encompassed by S3, S6 and S8 respectively.





SIOBHAN FOGARTY

How did you become an actor?

I went to Crewe and Alsager College and got a degree in drama from there. I loved it and after graduating, I decided to try for drama school, but I didn't have the money. I read in a local paper that Albert Finney, being a generous Mancunian, gave grants to a few kids from Manchester every year. Born and bred in Moss Side and Stretford, I could apply.

I met him at a theatre in the West End. He was lovely, and didn't even want me to do a speech, though I insisted. I'd spent bloody ages preparing it! I got the grant and off I went to *East 15* for a year of postgraduate training and then out into the 'business'. God bless you, Albert.

What was your best job?

Working with Katie Mitchell was brilliant. She is a genius. I worked on four of her shows and learnt so much. My favourite was probably an adaptation of *The Phoenician Women* by Euripides at the RSC. Although, not everything went smoothly. Just before opening night at the Barbican, I hurt my back really badly in the dress rehearsal.

Barefoot and still in my full-flowing colourful Greek choral outfit, I was whisked in a cab to a chiropractor in Liverpool Street. Unfortunately, the cabbie dropped me at the wrong address and in my billowing robes, looking like Demis Roussos, I staggered in agony through rush hour London to the right address and then back again to where my bemused cabbie had dropped me. I arrived back at the stage door feeling worse than when I'd left!

What was your worst job?

My worst job ever was on *Eastenders* playing a kidnapper pretending to be a teacher who kidnapped Billy Jackson. The Sun newspaper got a scoop of some big storyline, so a helicopter was flying above us and the producer was getting really stressed.

On 'action' I did my lines with Lindsey Coulson (who was lovely) and the producer ran over and screamed at me, "Why are you saying the wrong f***ing lines!" My lip trembled as everyone looked daggers at me.

I pointed to the lines on the script, gulped and said "I'm following the script". The producer snatched it off me, screamed, "these are the wrong f***ing lines" and ripped out the pages. I have no idea how I managed to do the rest of the scene, but I did. I cried all the way home.

"The Sun newspaper got a scoop of some big storyline, so a helicopter was flying above us and the producer was getting really stressed."



THE DEVIL IS AN ASS AT THE RSC DIRECTED BY MATTHEW WARCHUS

Memorable moments?

King Charles, then Prince Charles, came to Stratford to see *The Devil Is an Ass* by Ben Jonson at the Swan Theatre. We did the line-up thing and he walked along and chatted to us. I was in rather a revealing costume and when he got to me, he couldn't stop looking at my ample bolstered chest. I said, "My eyes are up here, Charles." He grinned and chortled like a naughty schoolboy and we had a brief chat. As he moved on, his aide whispered to me, "He loves it when people are a bit cheeky". Sadly, later that night his royal car ran over my cat and killed it, but that's another story...

I was in the wings, about to go on stage on the opening night of *The Devil Is an Ass* when the leading actress, who had been a bit of a TV comedy star in the 70s and had taken an instant dislike to my northern twang, sidled up to me and said, 'You are a fucking c**t and I fucking hate you.' I then stumbled onto stage completely dazed and somehow got my lines out. She never apologised and when she died quite recently, I didn't shed a tear.

Any movie-star encounters?

I played Jude Law's girlfriend in a play at the Royal Court. He was really gorgeous and lovely, but in fact none of us in the cast fancied him. We all took a shine to this little wiry balding bloke with bad skin, for some reason. Every night when Jude and I had our scenes together, you could sense the whole audience looking at him. He was mesmerising. I was completely invisible next to him.

I was in a fairly dodgy gangster film with Michael Caine. I played Andy Serkis's pregnant wife and Mr Caine had to give me a hard time. What I most remember is his annoyance with other actors for actually knowing their lines. Not a lot of people know that. Sorry.

When my benefactor, Albert Finney, was in *Art*, myself and a friend went backstage to see him afterwards. It was the press night and so it was very busy. As we approached his dressing room there was Sean Connery (the show's producer) coming the other way. It was a very narrow stairwell and we squeezed past each other. I went as slowly as I possibly could. He smelt amazing. I think it was probably the best sex I have ever had.

What was your worst audition?

I still wake up in a cold sweat when I remember this. I had an interview with Mike Leigh for his film *Topsy-Turvy* about Gilbert and Sullivan. I had to sing a G&S song for him. After rehearsing all week with a rather strident teacher, I was ready. I stood at the piano next to Gary Yershon, the MD, with Mike Leigh and casting director Nina Gold, sat just a few feet away.

As Gary played the opening bars, I opened my mouth to sing. Nothing would come out. I was so nervous, so uptight, I couldn't get a word out. It was as if a large pea was stuck in my throat. After several more failed attempts, where I squeaked and squawked like a constipated parrot, Mike Leigh lost patience and just said 'Oh, get out, Siobhan'. Off I toddled into Soho, my chance of being the next Jane Horrocks, gone forever!



(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)

1: Maid Marion and her merry men

2: Live like pigs at the royal court directed by Katie Mitchell (Jude law in the back)

3: Women of Troy at the gate directed by Katie Mitchell, (Emma rice there at the front)

4: Micheal Cain and me 9 months pregnant in the film Shiner



#ARTSINSCHOOLS

FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE



Last year, on the 40th anniversary of the seminal 1982 report, *The Arts in Schools, A New Direction* convened a new conversation on the value of the arts for young people in and beyond schools by examining the current state of play, what we have learnt and lost over the intervening decades, and what a new set of recommendations could look like.

The Arts in Schools: Foundations for the Future is the resulting follow-up report by Pauline Tambling and Sally Bacon, reflecting on what we have learnt and what we need to consider for the future of the arts in schools.

"Access to the arts is not equitable: we have a two tier system, with the arts more highly valued in independent schools"

#ARTSINSCHOOLS
FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

THERE ARE THREE HEADLINE FINDINGS

Arts subjects and experiences make a positive difference to learning and personal outcomes for children and young people, providing them with skills for life and skills for work.

Despite this, there is a lack of value ascribed to them within the state education system in England in which they are devalued due to accountability measures that exclude them, and by a system focused on exam success as opposed to whole child development. And access is not equitable: we have a two-tier system, with the arts more highly valued in independent schools.

The schooling system itself is still running on outdated policies without a clear purpose for what schools are equipping young people with, or why. Our analysis of the arts in schools within this wider context has enabled us to show why change is necessary and how it is possible.

There are five core policy principles to underpin the arts in schooling ...

1. **Rationale:** clear purposes for schooling and a coherent vision for subject areas, with curriculum linked to purposes
2. **Parity of esteem:** equal status for arts subjects with other curriculum areas, within a broad and balanced curriculum
3. **Including every child:** an access entitlement built on inclusion and equality
4. **Whole child and a rounded learning experience:** educating for personal development and wellbeing, not just academic attainment
5. **Education for now:** educating for the importance of the present, as well as for the future

... and five core provision principles essential in enabling a school to become arts-rich

1. **Breadth:** exposure to all art forms and a breadth of work and experiences
2. **Balance:** between knowledge and skills
3. **Inclusion:** embracing the needs of all children
4. **Relevance:** reflective of the world in which children live and will work
5. **Learner voice:** listening to children and young people



The report makes 10 recommendations: scaffolding for the future:

1. A national conversation to consider and define new purposes for schooling
2. A new curriculum area - the Expressive Arts
3. Changes to how we assess arts subjects
4. 4. Creating an arts entitlement within the school day, with extra-curricular arts as additional
5. Representation and relevance
6. Teacher and learner agency
7. Improved and evidence-based narrative case-making
8. Support for the arts in schools from the professional arts sector
9. Schools at the heart of their communities
10. Aggregating the findings of reports calling for education system change

“Arts subjects are vehicles for building self-regulation and exploring issues around society, identity, gender, ethnicity and belief.”

#ARTSINSCHOOLS
FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

“If the arts are to survive in schools in any meaningful sense, then we need a new collective understanding of the purposes of education.”

#ARTSINSCHOOLS
FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The report reflects on policy developments over the four decades since ‘The Arts in Schools: Principles, practice and provision’, the influential 1982 Gulbenkian report, which helped secure the arts’ place in the National Curriculum and contributed to a new ecosystem of education teams in cultural organisations.

Based on research, including a series of roundtable discussions with the heads of schools and multi-academy trusts, teachers, academics, arts educators and young people, the report finds that the arts are vital for young people’s intellectual and personal development, but are marginalised in today’s school system, which itself requires a major overhaul.

What can Drama teachers do?

Read the report, the summary, the Timeline

Share with colleagues: with school and MAT leaders and with governors; with parents (crucially); with the CEOs, chairs and boards of arts organisations; with your MP; and on social media

Share on social media: on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn. Post a message with a link to the full report or executive summary to your followers. Ideally tag specific people #ArtsinSchools40

You can read the full report, the summary and the Timeline here:

www.anewdirection.org.uk/the-arts-in-schools

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SUNSHINE & SARAGERME

BY ZAK LEWIS

In the May half term, I was lucky enough to go on an all inclusive holiday to Saragerme in Turkey staying at the adults only resort called Tui Blue Seno. My partner and I do not have any children therefore always try to book adults only and we have always found Tui Blue hotels to be lovely in the past and it is so easy to book on Tui's website.

Our free transfer was only 30 minutes from the airport which was a lovely bonus. We made friends with a few people who went with a large group of friends and someone else who went by themselves and they didn't feel they were out of place and had a great holiday too.

I did the Dalyan river cruise excursion one morning and on another morning when it rained for an hour, I got a short taxi ride down to the shopping village but I would have quite happily just stayed in the hotel the whole week and actually would have liked to have stayed for longer if I could. I would recommend this holiday to any teacher looking for a relaxing week by the beach or the pool.

I am usually more of a pool person than a beach bather but I was converted on this holiday as the private beach was so impressive. The hotel has 4 swimming pools in total. The hotel is located on a cliff side with lots of trees around so our balcony view was very pretty and had a 'Centre Parcs' feel to it.

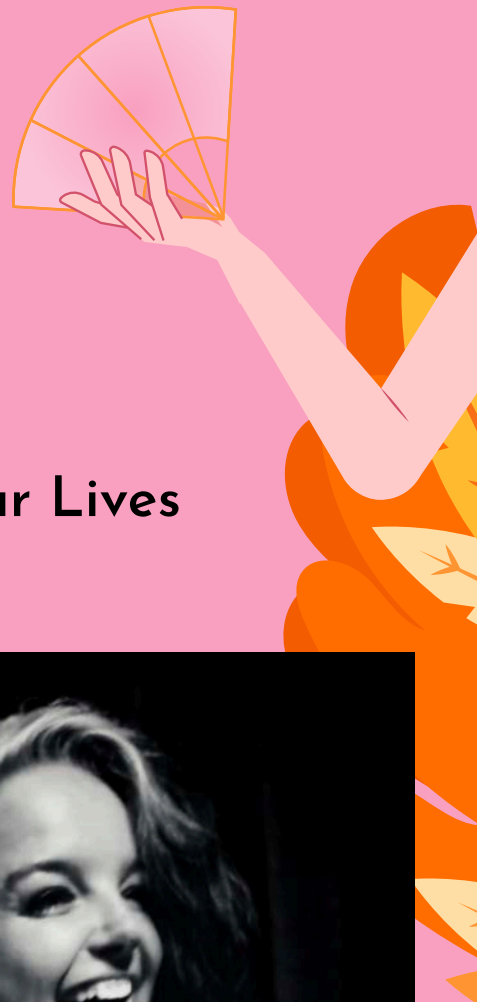
We were lucky as we had a room next to the main restaurant and we were glad we were not too far away as the hills were quite steep but they ran free shuttle buses every half an hour down to the beach for those who were less mobile. We did use the shuttle bus one day to get back up to be lazy.

The entertainment on some nights was brilliant, I enjoyed the Ethiopian acrobat night the most and thought they would make the Britain's Got Talent finals no problem! The Starlight Bar was a drama teacher's dream with breathtaking views and a huge outdoor dance floor with lots of lighting and a DJ that would play your requests.

The only disadvantage was it is quite expensive but totally worth it in my opinion to stumble across this hidden gem. This is the perfect hotel if you want a week to switch off from work and relax by the pool or beach. If you are more of a tourist that explores and wants to see lots of sights, Saragerme might not be the place as it is mostly just hotels along the coast.



EMBRACING DOWNTIME:



The Power of Burlesque in Shaping Our Lives

BY TRACY DORRINGTON

What we do in our Downtime Matters. For me, there are countless times when I return home, utterly exhausted. I slump onto the sofa, too weary to even contemplate making food. When you have family at home, despite the desire to simply sit down, you are compelled to eat, to continue on. However, when it's just me, after a long day of at school with the students, break duties, no wee breaks and a rare lunch, all I crave when I get home is the chance to switch off.

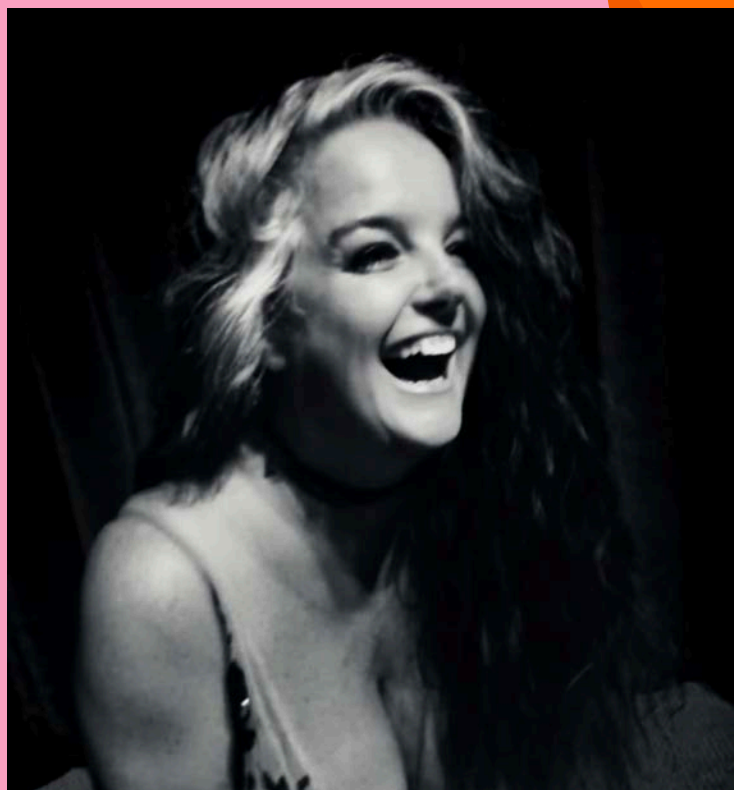
That's when our work/life balance takes a smashing. These last couple of months I have been starting to put into action things that I have always wanted to do. As I sit here and write this, it's the Summer holidays, so that makes it easier. Ask me in a month whether I'm still managing it, but I really hope I will be. I have had to put myself first. I was diagnosed with diabetes nearly a year ago and now something I want to reverse. I need to get fitter in both body and mind. Now that a new Grand-daughter is in the family I want to be able to see her and enjoy her for a long time to come.

I saw an advert for a Burlesque class and after watching Moulin Rouge for my birthday, courtesy of my youngest son Lewis (and prior to that treated to a beautiful afternoon tea at Corinthia by my eldest son), I feel I owe it to them too. I feel I have to keep myself in this world for as long as I can. You see, children do that without realising. Whether it be our own or our students, we may give them all, but they also give us a reason, a reason to be, a reason to try harder, a reason to be here.

So back to the Burlesque class...

I decided to go along and watch. I walked in nervous, not sure what to expect. In my head, I expected judgemental divas. We all have our own thoughts about what we look like, I have never had a good view of my looks or my body shape so this was quite a big step for me.

However, I couldn't have been more wrong! I met was a beautiful group of ladies; all shapes, all ages, all heights, but most of all, all welcoming. It was amazing to experience women supporting each other, giving love to each other and as soon as anyone said anything negative about themselves, immediately fixing each other's crowns.



**“When Becky sent
through my
photographs I
thanked her for
making me feel good
about myself”**

It was the most beautiful situation and if you could bottle it and give it to all the world over then the world would be a better place. It also reminded me of the Drama Matters Networking Weekend and how everyone supports each other there. It made me reflect that having a positive outlook can be infectious!

Did I join up? Absolutely! it's only £20 a month, so workable with the cost of living. It's an hour of fitness and dance and you work towards week 4, the week where you can dress up. You are videoed doing the dance and then have a photo shoot. The key aspect is there is no pressure - if you want your photographs taken then great, if you don't, also great. Everyone just allows everyone to be who they are and are full of acceptance and love.

As I was leaving the session (the one I went along to observe) the instructor said to me 'Tracy, do you remember me?'...

Becky goes on to say 'You were the first person to introduce me to fishnets'. It turns out Becky Johnson is actually Becky Bygraves, a young lady that use to be in my youth theatres all those years ago. I remembered she performed All That Jazz, hence the fishnets. I was in total awe! Here was a young lady that I had known when she was ten years old, who now was my teacher and giving me some confidence and self esteem. So, you see, Drama really does Matter and we impact without even realising it.

When Becky sent through my photographs I thanked her for making me feel good about myself. I also asked how much she had filtered the photos. She assured me she hadn't really, and she just focused on the lighting. I did look closer and saw my wrinkles still, so yep it was all me, but do you know what? I didn't recognise myself. For once, I had confidence in my outer layer just as much as I did of my inner heart and it shines through. That is because of what Becky has created and what the environment the women then create.

It truly is a beautiful thing. When she sent my first photograph through she said 'Sneak peak of you, my absolute Queen! You are so stunning and a joy to photograph, thank you for everything you helped build in me 22 years ago and now being a part of my class'.

So our words matter, Drama Matters and our Downtime definitely matters.

Do you have your own hobby to share? Email us at magazine@dramamatters.org and you may be telling us about what you do for you in the next edition. We're hoping you might spark someone else to take something up, because you matter.



Becky in all her Queendom!

WHY I DID THIS: WORDS FROM BECKY

I have always had a love for the art of Burlesque. It's always been something I've wanted to do but never knew how or where to start. It's the whole glamour of it all, the weird and wonderful themes, the characters and alter egos that are created. Burlesque is a power where we can be free to be ourselves and delve into a side of us we normally have to suppress.

To share this experience in a room full of remarkable women, each with their own insecurities, health issues and unique beauty, is nothing short of a privilege. As an instructor, creating a safe space that empowers women to feel fabulous and free is incredibly rewarding. Witnessing their confidence blossom is an unrivalled joy, and the shared laughter is a bonus.

At the close of 2022, I was offered the opportunity to lead classes after attending them myself. Recognising the positive impact it had on me and the other women I met, I decided to accept the offer. I aimed to make my own imprint on the classes, rather than merely filling the previous instructor's shoes, as wonderful as she was. Fortunately, my approach has been successful, and I'm gradually building something uniquely my own. Every moment is a joy, and it feels like a sort of destiny. I'm honoured to be part of this, to make a difference, and the entire experience feels extraordinarily special.

Get in touch via Instagram [Miss.angelicademon](#) or pop me a message on [07946013588](tel:07946013588).

THE LION KING



I love the theatre and am lucky to go to it a fair amount and live quite close to London and this year I've managed to do a 5 trips to theatres with school. Blood Brothers, The Lion King, Wicked, Frozen and Phantom of the Opera. Today I'm reviewing one of them.

The show itself was fantastic, amazing, phenomenal and incredible and it wasn't just me who thought that "It was amazing. I'm speechless. The music caught everyone's attention. Their costumes were out of this world. The way they acted was magnificent. I couldn't take my eyes off it - no words would be good enough to describe it. Overall such a fabulous show! - A student of mine

The Lion King bought together a very well known story, first written between 1599 and 1601, with brilliant acting showing off the performance skills we all wish for in our students to show, the music was reminding me of the film with the added magic of a theatre orchestra plus new pieces of which were bought in for the stage show added to the

The stand out of The Lion King for me comes in the set, costumes and puppets used to convey animals. The first thing I always do when I go and see a show is take a picture of the stage before the show begins. The Lion King stage and curtain was a pattern of light and it was a real testament to the show which followed which was colourful and full of amazing set and costumes. Even from our seats in the circle we could clearly see the costumes and make up which defined each character.

I was and still am in awe of the costumes used to represent the animals, in particular the headpiece to represent Mufasa and Scar which as show in the picture bend down over the actors face really adding to the atmosphere in the theatre that these two lions are about to fight

It is always a hard decision on what show to take students to and I like many others found myself having to book a show for an exam question in my first year of teaching it. The GCSE choice for live theatre review is one of those decisions we have to make and we have to think about the class, the show and what it offers the students to write about because every year is a new question.

For my year 11s this year I chose to see The Lion King at the Lyceum Theatre in London. I chose it for several reasons, I heard that it had everything my students needed and that none of the questions which I had seen in the past papers I looked at couldn't be covered by seeing the Lion King and I was right. The school I am did the OCR spec before I arrived and I decided to continue after researching through all the specifications and I liked the way that the OCR structured their questions especially the theatre review question.

The theatre review question can ask anything and as teachers we need to make sure we pick a show with the most to write about. The Lion King ticked all the boxes for me both at the theatre and the resources and merchandise available from the theatre can help your students with their understanding of the show further with a minimal amount out of your budget.

If you don't live in trip distance of London. The Lion King is currently on tour around the UK.

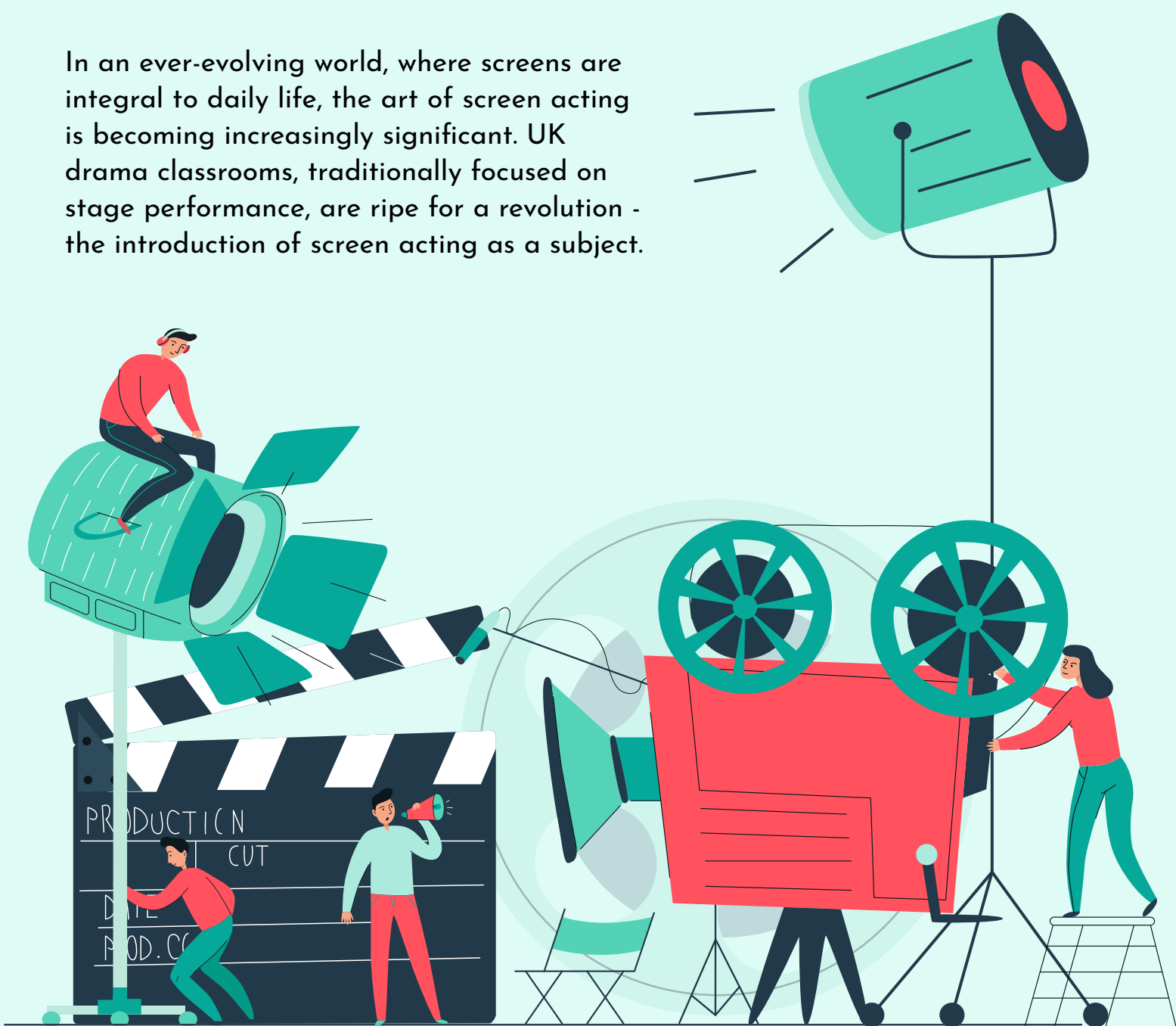


BY JOE BULLEN

THE SILVER SCREEN IN THE CLASSROOM:

A New Chapter for UK Drama Education

In an ever-evolving world, where screens are integral to daily life, the art of screen acting is becoming increasingly significant. UK drama classrooms, traditionally focused on stage performance, are ripe for a revolution - the introduction of screen acting as a subject.



Why Can UK Drama Classrooms Benefit from Introducing Screen Acting?

This shift is not about replacing the time-honoured traditions of theatre, but about adapting and expanding them. By introducing screen acting, students can learn the nuanced differences between stage and screen performances. They can develop a greater understanding of how to use subtle facial expressions and body language effectively, skills that are paramount in front of a camera. This addition to the curriculum equips students with a versatile skill set, making them adaptable performers ready for the diverse opportunities in today's entertainment industry.

The Growth of Screen Acting as a Subject in the UK

Screen acting is steadily gaining recognition as a vital component of performing arts education in the UK. Leading bodies in screen acting, such as MN, are at the forefront of this movement. They are pioneering the integration of screen acting into the broader drama curriculum, reflecting the industry's shift towards digital platforms and the increasing demand for screen actors.

Who We Are: The Journey of MN

MN began as an acting agency, representing remarkable talents such as Sheila Atim (The Woman King, The Underground Railroad & two-time Olivier Winner) and Hammed Animashaun (The Festival, Black Ops, The Bridge Theatre's A Midsummer Night's Dream).

From these roots, MN expanded its horizons, launching Screen Acting courses for adults, a weekend academy for under 18s, and a thriving co-curricular provision running after-school filmmaking clubs in Primary and Prep schools across London & the South East.

MN's CPD Course: Empowering Teachers to Lead the Way

To support this educational evolution, MN is offering a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) course for teachers. This course is designed to equip educators with the skills necessary to deliver screen acting as a subject effectively.

The day-long courses, accredited by The CPD Certification Service, are held at MN's purpose-built acting studios in Kings Cross, London. These courses aim to inform teaching practices, offering practical exercises that highlight the differences between stage and screen acting.

To see what our clients are up to, check out the website www.mntalent.co.uk.



What does the Course Include?

Developing & selecting material appropriate for screen acting purposes

Explanation of camera frames used during training

Practical Exercise - making dialogue personal, removing obstacles

Discussion about the difference between stage & screen

Practical Exercise - working in the moment, taking ownership of dialogue

Practical Exercise - Technique & the ability to control performance in frame

Questions & answers

"Hundreds of thousands of professionals recognise the CPD Certified symbol as the qualitative benchmark that, not only reflects but also sets those standards," the certification service notes.

Teachers who participate in MN's CPD courses are not just learning; they are becoming pioneers in a rapidly growing field. They are preparing to guide the next generation of performers, who will move seamlessly between the stage and the screen, thanks to their comprehensive and modern education.

Courses take place throughout the year, are competitively priced and can be booked online via the website- www.mnawards.co.uk

A Vision for the Future: Co-Curricular Exams for the 21st Century

MN is currently in the process of applying to become an Ofqual regulated Awarding Organisation. This significant step is aimed at developing the next generation of performing arts graded exams for children and young people, further solidifying MN's commitment to nurturing the future of performing arts and screen acting education in the UK. To be the first to hear when MN launch the exams, subscribe for updates at www.mnawards.co.uk

For more information and to book a spot on one of MN's CPD Screen Acting for Teachers courses, please email office@mnacademy.co.uk or visit www.mnawards.co.uk.



SECRET

DRAMA TEACHER



"I love my job"

This mantra seeps in throughout term time when things are getting tough. You look yourself in the mirror and remind yourself why you do what you do, bags under the eyes, tired and overall questioning the career choice - "I love my job." For me, and I am sure many others reading, I work bloody hard at my job and often it doesn't feel like it's enough. When I am teaching a class, I am reminded of being in high school, not fitting in, being bullied my entire school life and getting to my GCSEs and falling in love with drama.

I was able to be myself, find friends with a wider variety of people that you would never put together on the playground and I could express myself. My main drama teacher was my sole inspiration for getting into teaching, she still shapes how I run my classroom and build rapports with my students and when I am asked about why I teach I have to say that I like contributing to who that child is going to become, we see their personality change week to week, we help them grow their confidence and find their voice and we see their opinions develop in a whole world of contexts.

My teachers shaped me and I hope I help shape my students.

But with all that, I also find that teaching year after year chips something away from you, the love for the role and the creativity fades, the stress of the job takes over, the fear of OFSTED and results pushes down on you and that is when the mantra "I love my job" comes back into play.

I have been teaching for four years, on paper that doesn't sound like a long time but it feels like a lot more than four years. I will not pretend to be the most knowledgeable drama teacher in the world or the most experienced, but I hope to share stories from my career the last few years and how it has impacted my love for the job. I cannot be alone when I say so many friends comment on teaching not being a "real" job or it must be a wonderful job because "you get all those holidays".

My reality for most of my teaching years has been stressful holidays full of planning and trying to better myself in the classroom, this year is the first time I really feel I forced myself to take time off to just breathe and not panic about September. I find that the anti-drama opinions in some schools can be so demoralising, students tell you how much they want to take it as an option but it's "not important enough" and how it's okay because they can be in the show, come on the trip or be at the after school club. We are described by some as the "hobby" subject and no matter how successful the results they are not comparative to core subjects.

The difficult reality of being a drama teacher is over a hundred extra hours a year for show rehearsals, then add in exam rehearsal and clubs and trips on top of that - unpaid. I couldn't tell you how many times someone has joked that I am "never in my classroom" and I remind them that trips start an hour or more before school time and finish around 8 hours after school time, so although I am not in my room that day I am providing students with a once in a lifetime opportunity or enriching their love for my subject.

I wear my heart on my sleeve as a drama teacher and the bond I have with my students is unmatched. This year I have left my first school and I am joining a new one in September, branded a traitor by my students of course! Telling my students about my departure was one of the hardest things I think I have ever done. One part of me thought it's fine they won't really care anyway and the other part questioned if I was making the right choice - what about the girl in Year 10 who comes to my room every lunchtime? What about the two in Year 9 who have taken on leads in productions and love performing?

I had to tell myself that there will always be students I don't want to leave behind, but they don't need me anymore because they found their passion for the arts and want to continue to pursue it, for cases like this I am reminded "I love my job."

I have attended a few amazing events this past year and mingled with some incredible teaching staff and leaders in schools.

At one event in particular I was discussing the role I had applied for and was met with a comment about how someone of my body type should get the role as it would inspire the children with no confidence. As someone who has grown up with little to no confidence this was a massive blow to me, but I laughed it off and agreed before parting ways and moving to the next conversation. I pondered that thought for a long time and considered did a teacher's body type truly matter to students? Do they care? Do they judge your ability to teach? And it gave me a complex about how I move in the classroom during practical lessons of dance or physical theatre and I eventually used that as a teaching point for my students, I did a workshop lesson on the idea of throw away comments and statements that some believe shouldn't upset you. To my surprise these students were absolutely appalled that someone had said this to me at a professional event, and we then linked these words to the thoughts and emotions that come after to help us understand why "banter" can be hurtful.

The daily life of a drama teacher is not as wild as you might think. There are of course the more entertaining lessons when students accidentally swear when they've got too into character or the more upsetting lessons when students are struggling with their anxiety. But on the daily it is the same motions and conversations "why do I have to do drama?" "I'm not performing today" "I have a note that I hurt my finger so I can't perform" some of these things will vary depending on how 'valued' drama is in your school. I find that my main classroom battles are not down to the subject itself but the wider school rules and policies, for example, the toilet system. Everyone has their own opinions of it and the phrase "use your professional judgement" is tossed around but in my school it was a use your judgement but don't let them go unless really necessary.

I don't know about you, but often students don't leap and jump around as if they are going to wet themselves they'll storm out in a fit of anger and get themselves into more trouble or the worst happens... an accident. I have always been one of the teachers that uses my judgement and allows them to go to the bathroom, if I notice the patterns of it being at performance time then I of course adjust my thinking and let them go after, however, at the staff training day in September 2022 we were firmly reminded to not let students go to the toilet unless they have the medical passes. Students seen in corridors were questioned what lessons they came from and it started to become an issue. I had a Year 7 student ask to use the bathroom at the start of the lesson, I said no.

This student did not ask to go again and I went on with my lesson forgetting. At the end of the lesson we were packing up and I noticed the student shifting uncomfortably on the floor and not rushing to pack away, slowly they shimmied their blazer off their shoulders to cover their bum and moved towards a wall, I dismissed the class as early as I could get away with and whisked the student to the nurse to change before the halls would be filled with students. This incident absolutely devastated me, I felt like the worst teacher in the world and was infuriated that I let the policies get the better of me.

Some will disagree with me on my final point but I feel it is important to be open about life experiences (in certain contexts) that link to lessons. Students need to know we are human, we make mistakes and we feel the same way they do. You can openly share experiences and be emotional while maintaining professional distance. More and more children in schools are hearing about suicides or experiencing feelings grief and losing loved ones and more often than not they feel completely alone and that no one understands them. I find grief to be so unbelievably complex at my current age, let alone at 11+. I have experienced two major deaths in the last few years, one to suicide and one through illness and on both instances I shared need to know information to some of my classes.

My students could tell I was different and didn't seem as bubbly with them and I felt in that time it was right to explain that the reason I had some time off was to deal with the passing of a loved one, it was still raw, it still hurt but I had to get back to them and continue doing what I loved. The support I felt from my students was overwhelming, the class clown stopped with the jokes about death as he finally realised it could trigger people and the ones who usually talk through assessments sat quietly because they understood the down time was needed, without sharing important phases of our lives like these the students can just put it down to you being in a bad mood and always taking it out on them. The support from staff however did not feel as warm.

After the time off for compassionate leave, I returned and was met with the wall of deadlines coming up and the questions of "where is this?" "Why haven't you done that?" And it felt as though some really did not care how I was feeling unless it was while handing over schemes for the following half term. When you dedicate years of your life to the job, spend half terms working rather than seeing family or friends and choose to give up many hours for extra curricular activities it feels as though that is all you are to the people 'above' you, after a week of compassionate leave it is business as usual and you are expected to be fine, but in reality you're not fine, you need more than a week but that's not how this job works... I went home, went to the mirror and reminded myself, "I love my job."

LOOKING BACK



Blaize Alexis-Anglin looks back at how being a drama student informed his choices in life.

So originally I had no passion for doing Drama at secondary school. During GCSEs I had the plan to study Philosophy at uni and to do that I had to get a GCSE in Sociology. I ended up in Performing Arts because there were no spaces left. Being in the Performing Arts with some friends it began to turn into a free period, with the teacher that we originally had not really guiding us.

At some point during the year we had a monologue assessment where we find, prep and perform a monologue. I chose a monologue from a Far Cry Game and started working on it. Looking back at it I was instinctively using various methods of breaking down a script that I use today, I just didn't know it back then. To my surprise I actually did enjoy working on it and the performance went very well.

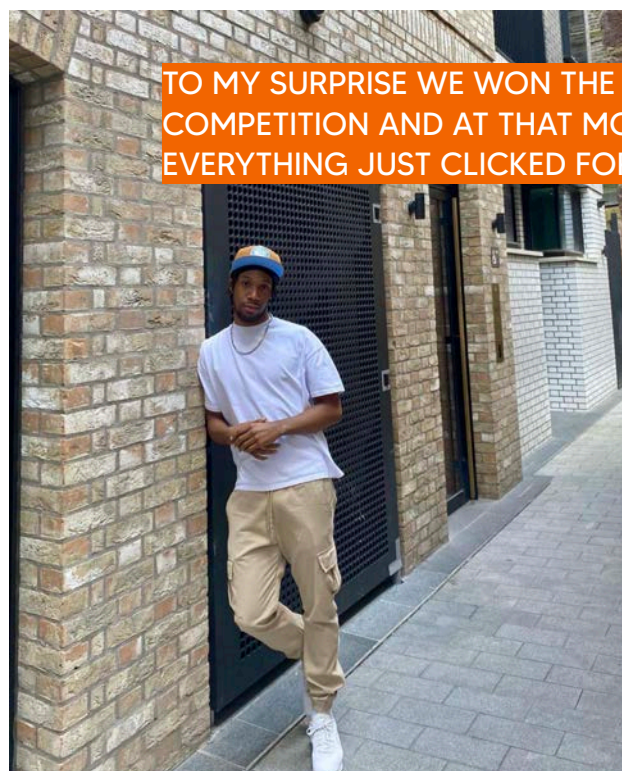
At this point however, I still haven't decided that acting was something I would like to take further into college.

It wasn't until we got a new drama teacher, Tracy Dorrington, where I felt like maybe acting is something I could take seriously. She had me and a few other classmates apply for the Rudolph Walker Inter School Drama Awards and gave us that platform to really express our creativity. We created an original piece and performed it at Stratford East. To my surprise we won the competition and at that moment everything just clicked for me. Everything just made sense and something inside of me was telling me that this is what I am meant to be doing with my life.

After GCSEs I went to Leyton Sixth Form College and did a UAL Level 3 Performing Arts course. Now, my expectation was that the whole course would be acting... it wasn't. I ended up having to sing and dance as well.

In the beginning, I was completely against it. At no point in my life did I ever want to be singing and dancing in a musical. At that age I was definitely worried about how I would be perceived.

As time went on I (somewhat reluctantly) started buying into what the course had to offer and found myself auditioning for the extra curricular shows and even the musical. I found myself playing the Lion from The Wiz in the main musical of the year and that whole process was where something shifted. The cast consisted of other first years and the year above me. The work effort and the dedication I saw from the older cohort really inspired me to up my game and to try much harder. At this point I really couldn't care about how I was perceived anymore because I realised that I was growing as a performer and even though I may not want to be a singer or dancer, I'm going to need these disciplines some day; I was also really enjoying the process.



TO MY SURPRISE WE WON THE COMPETITION AND AT THAT MOMENT EVERYTHING JUST CLICKED FOR ME

The musical went down well and that solidified to me that my worries about how I was perceived was only coming from myself and meant nothing. After the musical I really dived head first into the work and really excelled in everything, I believed due to my work ethic. I would try and be involved in every extra curricular show, stay until closing to rehearse and go over choreo, songs and scenes and even just find myself spending my down time in the building. This followed all throughout second year where I was literally doing EVERYTHING, on top of auditioning for drama schools. That's 3 extra curricular shows, all the dance, acting and singing assignments and the drama school auditions. I survived. And came out with offers from Arts Ed, Mountview and East 15.

I chose Arts Ed because they had a new head of acting Julie Spencer who promised to make the acting side of the school more accepting and welcoming for students of colour, which she did and I honestly couldn't see myself attending any other school purely because of that fact.

Upon starting drama school I found myself struggling because it was like a whole new different world to what I was used to. I struggled navigating these spaces and felt like I had to change who I was and what I stood for to even fit in. There would be times where people wouldn't understand the way I spoke.

I would get the road man "jokes" and teachers trying to police parts of myself and my culture with things like not wearing Durags because of the image it paints. Luckily the faculty was more representative of the direction the school was heading so I found support in some of the teachers that understood me and where I came from. I also had a friend from college who was on the same course and me and that did help a lot.

COVID ruined my first year as I had to spend the entire final term on zoom and that would easily be my darkest time. I couldn't stand it. It didn't make no sense because we were trying to do stage combat, group singing and other things online which just is not practical. I found myself not going to lessons and the lessons I would go to I wouldn't be involved in. I really felt defeated.

I went back in second year determined to make a comeback. Second year is known as the "hardest year" because the workload is INSANE. However, I haven't been a stranger to insane workloads so I welcomed it. I feel like second year was one of my best years in terms of productivity and learning. I committed to everything and found myself learning so much about myself, my acting and life.

Around the midpoint of second year during my American Iconic project, I think everything clicked for me. I found my process, this was the first time I felt like I really became a character and I can honestly say it was one of my favourite performances. From that moment on I never looked back and was only able to build on that feeling for the rest of the year.

Third Year was exciting because this was the final year. What everything has been building to. What we've been waiting for. I was blessed because I was a part of shows that showcased me well. My highlight of third year would have to be my first stage show called "All the conversations we never had" I played a character called Korey who was professing his love to a girl, Savannah, but it wasn't reciprocated. She was very anti love and it left him heartbroken. This character really had me dive deep into myself and look at my perception of love in order to truthfully explore his. To this day I would say that was my favourite character purely because of how much I grew and how the world changed for me as I portrayed him.

I left drama school and signed to Simon&How Agency and have been working, auditioning and performing poetry ever since.

I hope to be an actor widely respected for my craft.

Someone who can be seen as a role model for his people.

An actor with the ability to jump into any role and maximise that role to its greatest limits.

To make a living and provide for my family doing this will be everything to me. I can honestly say if I wasn't acting I don't know where life could have taken me. At the time of GCSEs I was being pulled in various directions, some positive but a lot more negative and if I ended up going down the negative path I don't know I would be here right now.

If anyone would like to contact me here my Instagram is: @balexisanglin

And the link to my spotlight is below:
<https://www.spotlight.com/4412-4503-2679>

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EVOLVING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: My journey on a Doctorate in Education programme

(whilst running a one-person department as a full-time Head of Performing Arts)

My Doctoral journey has not quite been the direct and most time-effective route which I originally planned. However, it has been an interesting journey nonetheless, on a more scenic route with more than its fair share of diversions.

I have always had a passion for Drama and, like many creative practitioners in the Arts, fearlessly defend my subject in the school curriculum, forever putting up barricades against bureaucracy and narrow-minded planning, whilst relishing in the progress of students from all abilities who perceive the Drama Studio as a safe space in which they can learn through practical exploration and creative practice.

I value the power my students have found through using their voices and have completed this research study to provide them with a platform on which to be heard. My planned 5 year Doctoral journey, with its diversions and occasional breakdown, took 7 years from start to finish.

In true Drama style, I present my journey to you in the structure of a play...



By Julie Salisbury



"The Thesis proposal was a challenge for me"



ACT 1: The Exposition.

On receiving my Masters degree in 2015 I had the rather brilliant idea of developing my professional practice further. After all, I had found the workload for the Masters course manageable and the outcome on completion rather rewarding.

I had developed an interest in academic research which was beginning to develop addictive traits. A PhD would be a natural progression from Masters study, but the thought of independent research and study did not appeal to me, particularly in light of being a single-person department with a full timetable and break duties, and extra-curricular Drama Club.

I would prefer to study alongside fellow professionals in the education sector and discovered the Doctor of Education (EdD) programme at the University of Chester. The programme timeline was 2 years full-time, and 5 - 7 years part-time. Surely a part-time EdD would be equally as manageable as a Masters - I would be researching the field in which I worked so it would obviously be a walk in the park, with no added drama (pun intended).

Wouldn't it? I signed up on the programme to begin my studies in October of that year, aiming to complete by 2020. No drama - 5 years would fly by.

ACT 2: Rising Action

Thus I encountered much Drama as I climbed aboard a rollercoaster of emotions, tension and doubt. The first three years were manageable, fun, and enlightening. I learnt so much and studied at weekends to balance my EdD reading, research and writing.

I particularly enjoyed discussing the merits of Drama and the Performing Arts and how valuable my subject is to young people and arguing the theories of philosophers and theorists (many of whom I had never heard of prior to this point) with people who were more familiar with academic practice and had, in some instances, already completed a PhD.

I discovered terminology and methodology with which I was admittedly unacquainted, but slowly began to unpick, interpret, and understand. I could not wait to begin my research and write my 50,000 word Thesis. No drama - it should all be done by the Summer of 2020.

The Thesis proposal was a challenge for me. I knew I wanted to argue the value of Drama and Performing Arts in a time of radical and dangerous cuts in Arts and Education funding, and I wanted to address the mental health and wellbeing of young people in Secondary education, but I struggled to narrow the field down in light of the expansive reading material, lectures and erudite debates in which I had been immersed.

There was so much that I wanted to say (this is not breaking news to anyone who knows me) but I had to be scholarly, focused and persuasive. As a creative practitioner, I work better with mind-maps, sketches and diagrams rather than a linear writing structure. In this moment the 'Thesis Murder Wall' was created. This became a talking point at group lectures and was an effective visual stimulant through which I could link ideas, thoughts and arguments.



ACT 3: The Climax - and lots of drama

Nothing prepares you for the loss of a loved one. One minute you are making memories with those closest to you, and in the next moment you have only those memories because the loved ones are no longer there.

The latter moments consume you. My supervisors and I referred to my work as 'The Doctorate of Doom'. In the space of 2 years I lost both my Mother and Father, and my beloved Doberman, Vlad, my best friend for 9 years. I tried to complete assignments so as not to fall behind on the deadline I had set myself, but my work was not of the scholarly standard required and I took a break from the research. It was clear I needed to take some time out so I parked the Thesis for a while.



The support from my supervisors was excellent and when I recommenced my journey they helped me to replan my timeline. I recommenced the arts-based research with a fabulous group of Performing Arts students and began to analyse the findings, feeling a cold comfort from staying focused, and moving the connecting lines around on the 'Thesis Murder Wall' as my argument developed through writing.

It was all going so well and I was making good progress, balancing my career with my studies. The completion of the Thesis was in sight. Drama over!

However, in March 2020 the whole country went into lockdown in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. Drama reinstated! As the Head of Performing Arts, and a one-person department, I had to learn how to deliver a practical subject online. Obviously something had to give to free up the time required to adapt to this surreal situation which the world found itself in. The Thesis was parked, yet again.

ACT 4: Falling Action

It took over a year for me to finally find my way back to my Thesis. I had become so immersed in finding innovative and effective ways of teaching online that I had lost all motivation. However, once teaching and learning resumed in the Studio it was clear that the research needed to be completed and submitted.

The numerous lockdowns and Government control measures had greatly impacted on the mental health and wellbeing of students which made my research so much more valid and pertinent. I revisited my timeline and discussed options with my supervisors. With their support I began to edit my work and found a renewed vigour and passion for my writing, which had disappeared during the copious lockdowns. The time had come to harness the drama.

ACT 5: Denouement

On returning to face-to-face teaching, I was able to reflect on the findings from my research and adapt my teaching to enhance the learning experience for students returning from long periods of social isolation and presenting with heightened anxieties. This motivated me to get the Thesis journey finished. To help me focus I completed a lot of the final draft in Gladstone Library in Hawarden - an absolute haven for anyone needing an environment conducive to reading, research and writing.



I have submitted the final draft and am currently awaiting a date for the Viva. My journey may have been diverted and I may have parked up on occasion, but the sense of relief and accomplishment in submitting my work is immeasurable.

My motivation was my students, and if my research informs change then my journey has been worthwhile.

Abstract from 'Emancipating Voice: the role of Drama in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting'.

The aims of this arts-based research study are to examine how the mental health and wellbeing of young people in a secondary school setting is supported through a Drama curriculum, using performance poetry, found poetry and verbatim theatre as data. The participants were observed engaging in workshops in which the critical pedagogical approach of Open Space Learning (OSL) was applied. The study was structured through an arts-based methodology, using semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of a sample of Year 9 and Year 10 Performing Arts students; to observe their creative practice in Spoken Word and Verbatim Theatre workshops, from which the data was generated; and to analyse the emerging themes from their creative practice, considering the constraints of curriculum planning in educational policies and Bourdieu's theories of habitus and capital.

This arts-based research is examined through Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, field and symbolic violence and is supported with arguments for a more inclusive curriculum in secondary education by acknowledging the value of Drama in supporting students with their mental health and wellbeing at a time when the Arts are being marginalised in curriculum provision, particularly in state schools in areas of high unemployment and socio-economic deprivation. This approach explores the impact of locality on the aspirations of the participants, in how the extent to which their view of the world is shaped by a gradual internalisation and acceptance of local historical influences which may subsequently have a subordinating and coercive effect within seemingly prescribed or accepted forms of habitus.

The research focuses on two key areas, specifically, Drama as a subject and its value as an aspirational art form, and the mental health and wellbeing of students in a secondary school setting. Both key aspects of the research seek to investigate through an arts-based research methodology, the extent to which habitus and capital may shape the mental health and wellbeing of the students, and how the inclusion of Drama in the secondary school curriculum supports the social and academic development of young people.

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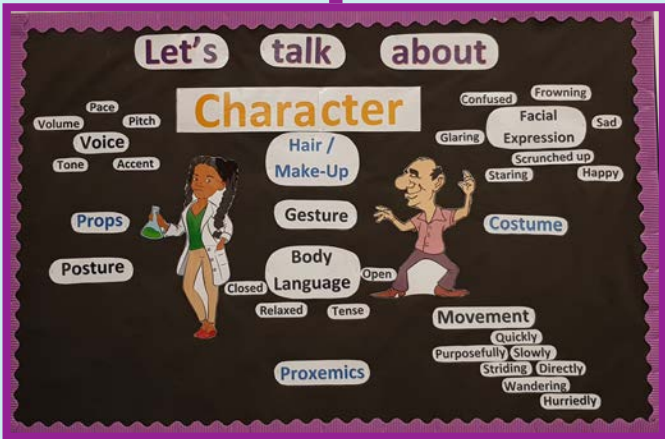
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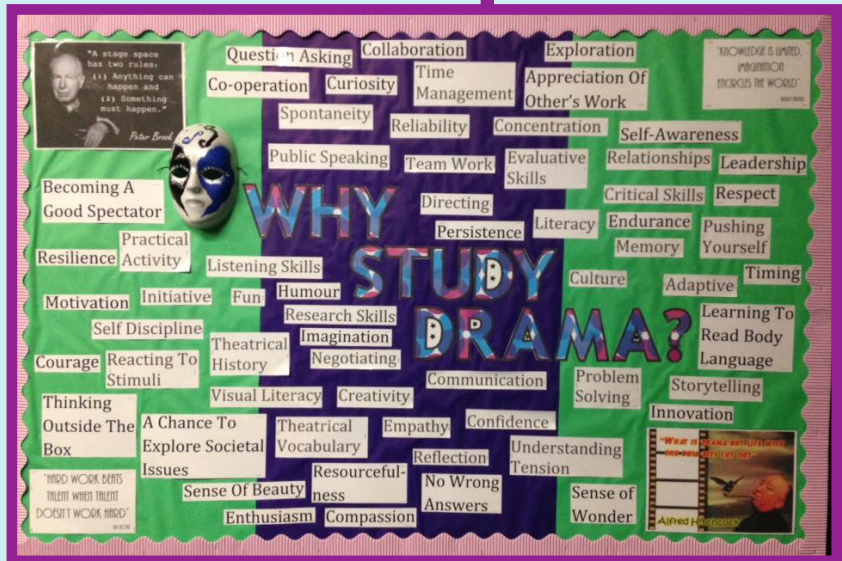
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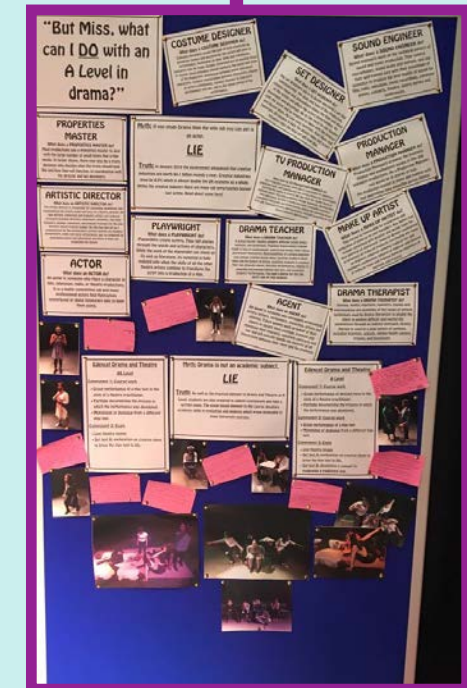
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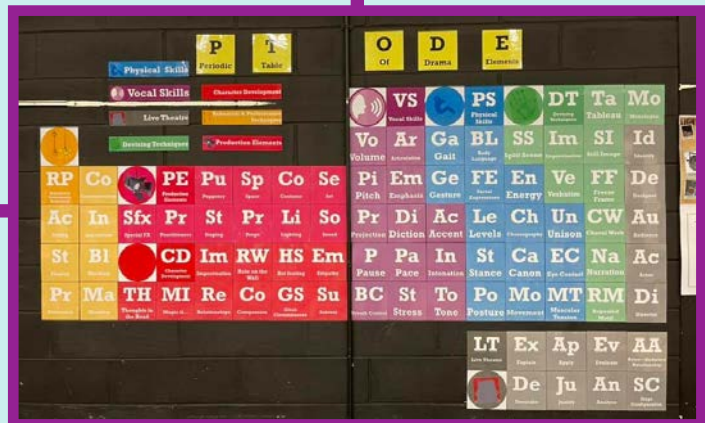
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WHAT SHOW TO PICK?

When deciding on a show, there are many things the department considers: large cast size; an array of named parts available; will it pull in an audience; will it work in our performance space; is it easy to costume; is magic involved and can we think of a clever way to stage it...most importantly, is it right for our students and will they be excited to get involved? All staff involved need to also feel passionately about the choice and as a Drama department of four, we always work alongside the Music department and have a live orchestra accompany the performers. This year was our first production post-covid and we wanted a feel-good show and *We Will Rock You* seemed to tick all the boxes.



BY MICHELLE SERRECHIA

WHAT'S THE PROCESS?

We announced the musical through a range of clues on our social media page, which created quite the buzz and students had the summer to prepare for their audition. Auditions are for named roles, but everyone can be involved in the chorus by simply attending the first rehearsal and signing up. The audition panel involved both Drama and Music staff and as a faculty, we made the casting decisions.

The Drama department develop the overall creative intentions in keeping with the piece, in this case a homage to rock and work on the acting, choreography and production elements, whilst the Music department work on the singing and orchestration. The performers and musicians come together for a band call, expertly conducted by our Director of Performing Arts and Head of Music, Susanna, before the production week. We tend to opt for two or three evening performances, but have the majority of the week off timetable to run tech/dress runs and polish - we are really lucky that our School and Trust strongly supports the arts and understands the value of the big school production for our young people.

As well as performers, we also have a small cohort of students who are passionate about technical theatre and help to design the lights and sound as well as tech it alongside the drama teachers. We have an ex-student who is a trained technician and such a joy to work with and he helps to bring our vision to life! We just have to be super organised to book him early as he is always in demand (it's not difficult to see why).

Like majority of schools, there is no specific budget for putting on a show so lots of fundraising and appropriately priced ticket sales enable us to cover the cost of the license and technical equipment such as head microphones and a mirror ball (surely this is a must for *'It's a Kind of Magic'*).

Michelle is the Head of Drama, Dance and Performing Arts at William Howard School, Cumbria. They recently put on We Will Rock You (School Edition) and in this article, Michelle gives us some fantastic insights on staging the show. If you have recently put on a school show and want to offer the Drama Matters community your insights email us at magazine@dramamatters.org

ADMIN! ADMIN! ADMIN!

We have a super efficient and creative admin team who are always more than happy to help out when it comes to the production. From Typing sending out letters, liaising with Cover for production week to our Online Coordinator, Karen, who designs our tickets, posters and programme with assistance from Kerry, one of our passionate drama teachers. Karen is a wonderful photographer too and took many photos of our rehearsal process for our social media page and of the dress rehearsal which you can see below.

Kerry also uses her entrepreneurial skills by offering local companies the opportunity to advertise in our programme or donate to our raffle, which proved very successful.

For *We Will Rock You*, ticket sales were via email to reserve or purchase from the Drama office. Although we have used this method for many years, for our next show I will be looking into online ticketing systems such as 'ticketsource' to reduce the workload and avoid that sneaky, random ticket reservation email going into junk mail...

SET AND COSTUMES - WHAT DO WE DO?

We often opt for minimal set - it tends to be more representational in keeping with the context of the musical and multi-purpose; this year I was keen to include the trusses to give it an industrial/ futuristic/ rock concert feel.

Having been a fan of the original stage version, the use of tv's created a futuristic setting and this gave me lots of ideas of how to utilise our projections to bring certain moments of the musical to life.

Costumes are usually the students' responsibility, however this year our wonderful LAMDA teacher took on the role of Wardrobe Mistress and my goodness what a difference! She created costume letters for parents if students were required to bring anything in and hired/ sourced key items for some of our principals. Louise ensured any borrowed costumes were returned as I can't tell you how many leggings and leotards we have lost in the past... every show needs a Louise. It allowed the other drama teachers to focus on developing the performance instead.



Techies in the lighting box ready for the final show!



Killer Queen's video chat with Khashoggi



HIGHS!

- Relationships built with the students; relationships built between students in different year groups and our older students acting as admirable role models; relationships built between colleagues creating lasting memories for all.
- Specifically for *We Will Rock You*, we loved working closely with our fantastic Media department and creating the green screen clips for *Killer Queen* and *Khashoggi*. Getting the timing right with the projection when performing these scenes was challenging, but magical when it came together. And the *Killer Queen* literally pixelated!
- Light bulb moments when staging and choreographing numbers such as putting *The Bohemians* on wheelie chairs for *Seven Seas of Rhye* and being moved around by the *Yuppies* - lots of fun and made the song visually exciting to watch.
- The music is phenomenal. We loved being immersed in *Queen's* music, discovering the characters and choreographing to their songs.
- Seeing the mirror ball for *It's a Kind of Magic* and our laser cage lighting special in action!
- Seeing the dedication and the energy our students devote to putting on the best show both performers and musicians. These opportunities give our students a sense of belonging throughout their school life and beyond.
- Celebrating our year 13's performing in their last show, some of whom have performed in every show from year 7.
- Not forgetting to mention our pre-show company dance warm up. Such a giggle and a way to both focus and relax - the techies even got involved!
-

LOWS!

- As this was our first production post-covid, it was tricky at times rehearsing in masks/visors. Safety comes first and we followed the guidance stipulated by our school and the government.
- Covid did affect our students in a number of ways, such as attendance, mental wellbeing and confidence and this meant we had less students involved compared to previous years and a number of students who gave up their role close to the performances. Cue teachers working overtime with the understudies to make sure they felt ready and confident!
- Realising you need electrocuting helmets for *Seven Seas of Rhye* a week before the show... fashioning tin foil on bowler hats.... It didn't look as bad as it sounds!
- When your creative idea that you felt so passionate about, spent lots of time creating and liaising with technicians to realise you need to cut your losses and put your energy elsewhere. It's not failing, it just wasn't right for this production this time. The students were happier taking this projection out which meant it was the right decision and we were able to stage it in a more simplified way.

Every year we want to make our productions better for our students and this wouldn't be possible without a strong team of dedicated individuals coming together.

My Drama colleague, Rikki and I have been leading on the musical for the past 10 years and I'm very lucky to work with a team who I can bounce ideas off, play and share the workload with.

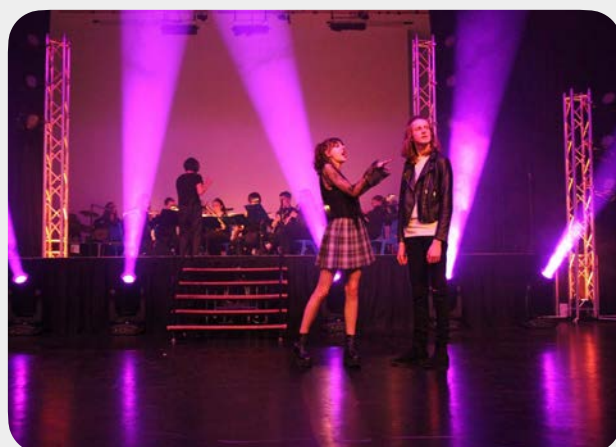
WOULD WE DO THE SHOW AGAIN?

In short, if it's right for the students, YES! The school had previously put on *We Will Rock You: School Edition* ten years before. It's always popular with audiences too despite the storyline being a little odd. However, we would always leave at least a seven year gap to ensure no student would be in the same show twice.

The school production will always be a labour of love; blood, sweat and tears go into it, but it's all worth it for our students - the stars of the show.

TEACHER HACKS FOR PUTTING ON A SHOW

1. Know your students! Are they comedic performers? Strong sopranos? Always pick a show that will showcase the wonderful talents of your students
2. Pick a show with lots of parts so everyone gets the chance to shine. In the past we have double cast the show, which has been a saviour if a student can no longer participate, but can take more time to enable each cast to have enough rehearsal time.
3. Be organised! Sometimes extra-curricular comes lower down on the priority list when teaching, so try to find ways that help you to be more efficient. For this show, I purchased a show planner from KAMT Designs which was fully personalised for our school and *We Will Rock You: school edition*. This included checklists, audition notes, parental letter template to name just a few. This was especially helpful during show meetings for staff to pick what responsibilities they'd like to take on.
4. Clever lighting design - avoids the need for over complicated sets and enables you to keep the pace so less blackouts and lulls. Even more so when your performance space is a school hall with no wings! It's amazing how a bit of imagination and creativity can transform a space. (Wise advice from our previous Head of Drama!)
5. For production week specifically - a reliable techie who can bring your vision to life - if they have a sense of humour that's a bonus as it's natural for this week to feel overwhelming if things don't quite go to plan. Bad dress run means good show, right?!
6. Give your sixth form students extra responsibility - if the musical has dance involved, we assign a Dance Captain, who may choreograph one of the numbers, but ultimately rehearses and polishes the dance numbers on a breaktime.

*All we hear is...Radio Gaga!**Hey! I'm gonna get you too!**Our talented musicians**A lovers spat! It's time for the hammer to fall...*



THEATRE ETIQUETTE

By Kayleigh Howells

I hated going to see Lion King the other day... Trying to keep my students quiet whilst others treated it like a pantomime felt unfair! But in essence, my students were so annoyed by others too!

I even get my students to put their snacks in paper cups because I get so annoyed with crinkling packets!!!! And when they hear others with their snacks, they always comment as to why they know why I make them do it.

I try and tell my students to not give a standing ovation too, as others behind you may not be able to see the actors as they are unable to stand as easily as others. This has gone out of the window on occasions though (mainly at larger venues in the West End) as those in front of them stand in their view... You have to admit defeat then!

I have resorted to teaching students in Year 7 what theatre etiquette is and then they must follow those rules in every lesson as they watch their peers perform. And there is always a reminder on the coach on the way to the theatre and anyone unable to follow this, will not be invited to attend with the school next time. I believe that theatre etiquette maintains the integrity of the experience for everyone and contributes to a positive atmosphere, so if I can at least teach 30-40 students each time theres a trip about etiquette, I hope they will continue to teach others on the future also.



QUALMS, QUERIES & QUIRKS. . .

Editor: Tracy Dorrington

MORE ON THEATRE ETIQUETTE...

When we take our students to the theatre, it's imperative that we explain how things work. We should inform them about the etiquette, such as silencing phones and refraining from talking during the performance.

It's worth noting that their tickets might have been significantly cheaper than those of the person potentially sitting next to them. They need to understand that they've been taught how to behave appropriately, and it's time to put that knowledge into practice.

Young individuals often mimic what they observe, so instead of focusing solely on the youths, consider the role models who have accompanied them. Reflect on the behaviours of the other adults in the audience and the potential influence they may have.

We must also appreciate that young people might not inherently know how to behave in a theatre. It could be their first experience. Theatre shows are evolving, and for some performances, audience participation is encouraged. Was their first theatre experience a pantomime?



We need to explain to our students that while some behaviours are universally acceptable, what they can and can't do may vary depending on the performance. I even instruct my students on how to respond appropriately. They need to understand that while it's fine to react to an exciting moment, they should not linger on it excessively, as they might miss the following scene or distract others.

Theatre etiquette has been a pertinent topic over the past year, with reports of adults being ejected from theatres due to inappropriate behaviour, and even near-brawls occurring in the seating areas. Is this the future of our theatres? We have a responsibility to educate our young people about proper theatre etiquette and to inspire them to be the best audience members they can be.



DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

What actually is it? For some it's having different races in the scripts they choose, for others that would be a token gesture and doesn't actually cover what it means. We are rich in Drama with the extra-curricular shows, trips and text exploration. We have so many chances to make sure every aspect of our students learning is within a diverse and inclusive culture.

Do you allow students in Year 7 to do their baseline monologue in their Mother tongue? After all they can still perform and feel comfortable doing so.

Do you understand the religions that are in your classroom and therefore any restrictions this may place?

What language do you use when you address the class?

Do you get your work translated into the first language of any students who are still developing their English so that they are included?

How do you select your school shows?

Do you make sure that theatre shows they attend sometimes may represent who and what they are? But also attend live theatre that will challenge their own belief system

Do you make sure that the texts you are exploring enable them to explore and really get to grips with certain aspects of different walks of life?

Do you know your SEN children in your classroom? Do you understand what that need means?

Do you know what obstacles some may face before they get to school in the morning?

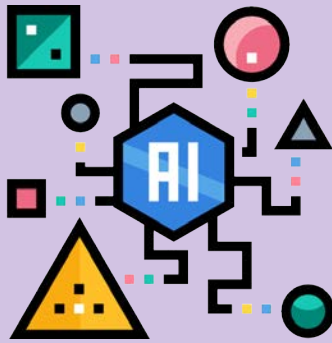
We are lucky because at the core of Drama is the mere nature for it to be diverse and inclusive. It's where young people learn to be part of something.

Diversity and inclusion should not be an add on. It should be intrinsically woven within your curriculum. A student shouldn't just feel they belong, they **SHOULD** actually **BELONG**.

I POSE A QUESTION

I'd like to present a question to you. Many of us are excited about the advent of AI, but have we considered its implications for our subject and for coursework? Will exam boards need to assess the potential impact?

Where do you stand on this - are you for or against AI?



Are you using it as a tool for creation because it simplifies the process? If a robot takes over the creative tasks, thus eliminating the need for us to brainstorm and conceptualise, could our own reservoir of imagination run dry? What impact might this have on our inherent creativity?

Share your thoughts with us:
magazine@dramamatters.org

HOW DO I GROUP MY STUDENTS?



Use a blank piece of paper, get them to write their name on one side, and then on the other side:

- Who they want to work with? (Only one person)
- Who don't they want to work with? (Only one person)
- What genre?
- Large group, small group, monologues, duo?
- Any themes they are eager to explore?

They then fold it up and put it in an envelope that you are holding and you now have the basis of starting to put your groups together. Obviously, if two people don't work together well, even if they chose to put them down, you can override it.

Make sure the students never get to see the choices, make sure that you don't impact one group with a bad attendee. Maybe put them on production or let them do monologues as that way they don't impact.

WHAT DO YOU DO IT. . . ?

CONTENT AND CENSORSHIP

There have been many posts about teachers being called out on the content they are teaching. This is often due to a young person going home and representing something differently to how it actually is.

Don't ever take this personal. You, after all, have taught that person to speak out, which means you are doing your job well. Maybe send a proforma at the beginning of the year home where you list the content areas you are going to teach and explore. Get parents to sign off on it or maybe you pre-warn students about the content, contexts and themes they are going to explore in the curriculum. .

It is crucial that you don't put yourself in a space where you are being censored. We 'currently' are lucky in the UK as there is little or no censorship on theatre. Look around the world, there are theatres and schools being censored, often by governments or school boards and districts. This is a scary prospect and I don't ever want to see in this in the UK.



STUDENTS SHOULD GET THE GRADE THEY DESERVE

It is a long-held belief of mine that the students should get the grades they deserve. yes, this might not look good in my rap meeting, BUT are we not setting them up to fail later on down the line if they get more than they should have?

When you are doing your analysis make sure you are looking clearly and closely at the grades for each component. Think about how well they did in other subjects, does yours stand out either positively or negatively? Exam Boards. WOW! They do like moving the goal posts.

All exam boards are the same but different, make sure you don't just stick with the exam board because that's the one the school have always done. Look at your cohort and decide which exam board suits. If you must change it yearly so be it, you have to do what's right for your students. Keep in mind, you can lead them to water, but can't make them drink. For instance, if Jonny has a habit of falling asleep during exams, he will likely continue to do so. Similarly, if Eman struggles with early mornings and consistently misses Period 1 Drama, that pattern may persist.

Our subject is more than just a subject and our students are more than just a number on the register.

CURRICULUM PLANNING

Where do you start?

You would have been taught in your training how to write a SOW/SOL. You may have stuck to this like glue, maybe you need to ask yourself the following questions.

For your curriculum map across KS3, 4 and 5 where is that golden thread? Are they building on their learning yearly? Are you giving enough time or are you trying to cram too much in? Have you done a baseline at the beginning, so you know where they started at?

Are you delivering mini modules at KS4 and 5 so students can safely get used to the process and they are then able to get their results and build on where they need to improve? Is your curriculum fun? Are you tying it in with other subjects? An example of this is French market stalls where students have to play the role of the French stall holders. Make sure you create modules that enable all learners and have the ability to be differentiated.

Most importantly is to make sure you know when your options evening is. In the term prior do a scheme of work that is so outstanding they will have no choice but to love it. Take them to the theatre in this term too, let them see the power of, and what, Drama truly means.

When developing a SOW/SOL the following questions should help.

- Do I feel passionate about what I am delivering?
- If I was a student in this class, what would I want to learn? (ask them)
- If I was a student in this class am I excited about what it is I'm delivering?
- What's my class's demographic? Are there any issues they are going through?
- Have I included key diversity and inclusion aspects? Consider EAL, SEN, gender.
- How do I introduce the scheme? Make it exciting.
- Look at dates in the calendar, can you tie in any schemes that link?

Do a mind map of all the aspects that you could deliver, put a cover lesson in there too so you are ready should you for some reason become ill.

Now get creating! There are no boundaries only those you set on yourself, use the shortcuts like test quizzes on Google Forms. Be bold in your imagination and creativity, if it bores you, it will definitely bore them. Most of all, know at the beginning 'what do I want them to know or understand?'

They may seem simple checklists but hopefully it will help you create more in depth and creative lessons for your young people to learn from. Inspire and motivate them.

GO LIVE THEATRE PROJECTS

Go Live Theatre Projects (formally known as Mousetrap Theatre Projects) believe in using the power of theatre to create inspiring experiences and unlock possibilities for young people. Schools and organisations can join Go Live to access substantial discounts for theatre trips and workshops in London. They also run brilliant social theatre trips for young people from the age of 15 up to graduate level which allows like minded people to enjoy theatre together at a least several times a month at a highly subsidised rate.



Go Live Theatre Projects also allow young people to be part of the young people's forum and have also a very established teachers forum that allows teachers to collaborate and have a safe space to talk about what's going on in our schools. A brilliant organisation that really creates an opportunity for everyone to be part of the world of theatre inclusively. They also run fantastic CPD opportunities for teachers on technical theatre, live theatre projects and can create bespoke workshops for individual schools.

EVERY CHILD SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE LIVE THEATRE, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

Contact:
<https://golivetheatre.org.uk>

Do you have any Qualms, Queries or Quirks? Or maybe a response to what's been put on our pages? You can email us at magazine@dramamatters.org - We look forward to hearing from you.



A VERY DRAMATIC LOVE STORY

Here we get to know Deborah and Jonathon, brought together by our very own Cilla Black, Tracy Dorrington.

So, how did you meet?

D: OK, funny story...remember that time when everything just stopped for a while and no one to school and we all had to make up results for our own pupils? Well, lovely Tracy Dorrington set up a dating Facebook page called Teach Theatre Love Repeat. I was single at the time - and bored - so had a little look. I think there were 26 people on there at that time which included 25 lovely ladies and one man. His profile read 'I'm 56 years old, going through a divorce and have two sets of twins,' at which I thought something like 'Not on your nelly' (but probably less appropriate). Plus, he also lived 323 miles away. I'm pretty pragmatic so I just thought 'Nahhhh!'

J: When my wife decided that she wanted a separation I had been living and working in East Cornwall for about 21 years. The separation came as a huge shock and I honestly never considered what I would do after it all happened. I had been following Tracy's Drama Matters page on Facebook for a while and contributing regularly when her dating group started. I was among the first handful of people to join but with absolutely no real thought behind it and certainly not to meet anybody seriously. I do remember looking through the profiles and seeing a woman who was clearly lying in bed with what appeared to be a beard made of dog but with startlingly beautiful eyes.

D: A week or so later Tracy organised a Zoom meeting for those of us who wished to discuss what the hell we were going to do about creating grades for Ofqual - that was a fun night! (not)

J: I remember seeing Deborah that night in one of the boxes and thinking that she made a lot of sense so at the end, with no ulterior motive, I private messaged her to say just that.

D: I recognised him from the dating page and we started chatting and carried on until 2am. And the next night. And the next. The following night I thought this is a bit silly and hard work typing, so I video called him and the rest, as they say, is history.



What kind of stuff do you get up to?

D: We have now been together for three years and have done a lot in that time including holidays in Greece, Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland and London and a lot of illegal travelling 340 miles up and down the motorway during the dark times (shhhh!). To be fair, it was an extremely difficult time for Jonathon and the personal circumstances affected his professional life leading to a perfect storm of homelessness and joblessness.

J: So, we see A LOT of theatre, we talk A LOT about Drama teaching and theatre, we now run our own Youth Theatre (Ignite), have run four Summer Theatre Schools, have performed together in Joe Orton's *Loot* and are currently co-directing a fabulous production of *The Addams Family (the Musical)* at Southport Little Theatre. Deborah has also been in a couple of shows on her own, the most recent being *Calendar Girls the Musical*, at which times I tend to do ironing.

What is it like working together?

J: Most of the time it is great fun and we pretty much love it. I think we have quite a unique way of working and we really bounce off each other.

D: We also luckily have very similar demanding and exacting high production and performance standards and tend to generally be on the same page creatively. There are of course times - usually when we are very tired from lots of rehearsing/teaching - when things can get a bit heated but we tend to sort things out quickly.

J: Or just come to the conclusion that Deborah is more right than I am!

ANNOUNCING TRW PLAYS!

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by Kate Hamill

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE ADVENTURE OF THE ELUSIVE EAR

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BACKSTAGE BUZZ

I've 25 years experience as a Drama teacher and purveyor of all things creative in both the state and private sector. Most importantly, I'm still learning... never one to turn away advice or help myself, I'd like to share my advice and help with you!

Drama teacher problems? Let me help you!

No problem too big or small.
Ask away and let me help with it all.

The only person to know who asked will be me - but the advice will be for all to see in the following issues of Drama Matters Magazine.

Problems with Y9?
Issues with the exam board?
Coursework dilemma?

By no means am I the oracle or the perfect teacher but I will do my best to help you.

Whatever your issue or burning question, please ask away and let's get the Backstage Buzz underway!

Miss B, Drama Matter Magazine's agony aunt wants to hear your problems, dilemmas and quarrels. Just email them at backstagebuzz@yahoo.com

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magazine@dramamatters.org

CURTAIN CALL

The Must-See Theatre Shows Coming Up

LYRIC THEATRE BELFAST

HANSEL & GRETAL

24/11/23 - 31/12/23

www.lyrictheatre.co.uk

Join Hansel, his sister Gretel and a mischievous little mouse called Monty, as they tumble through their story book and into an enchanted forest of technicolour. Together with a host of woodland creatures they will take you on a magical journey to defeat the witch in her sweetie house.

Tara-Lynne O'Neill's brand new telling of this classic tale is a spectacular Christmas adventure full of heart, for all the family.

DERBY THEATRE

BRASSED OFF

29/09/23 - 28/10/23

www.derbytheatre.co.uk

Brassed Off is a much-loved tale, full of heart and humour made right here in Derby and this much-welcomed return of the show will feature most of the cast from the Theatre's original production in 2015.

Balancing grit and wit with a poignant look at recent history, the performance also features live music from local, award-winning brass band, Derwent Brass to deliver a thrilling night at theatre.

TRON THEATRE

NAE EXPECTATIONS

19/10/23 - 04/11/23

www.tron.co.uk

Nae Expectations is Gary McNair's fresh look at the Dickens classic, with a Glasgow tongue and a gallus spirit. Young Pip battles with monstrous adults, the class system and most of all his inner demons as he tries to work out who he is, what he wants to be and how to find his own way in the world.

BIRMINGHAM REP

THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

14/11/23 - 28/01/24

www.birmingham-rep.co.uk

Step through the wardrobe into the kingdom of Narnia for the most mystical of adventures in a faraway land.

This breath-taking stage show of C.S. Lewis' classic novel comes to Birmingham direct from the West End. With magical storytelling, bewitching stagecraft and incredible puppets, it is guaranteed to delight audiences of all ages.

NATIONAL THEATRE

THE WITCHES

From 07/11

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

Everything you know about witches is wrong. Forget the pointy hats and broomsticks: they're the most dangerous creatures on earth. And now they've come up with their most evil plan yet.

The only thing standing in their way is Luke and his Gran. But he's ten and she's got a dodgy heart. Time is short, danger is everywhere, and they've got just one chance to stop the witches from squalloping every stinking little child in England.

The Witches is a rip-roaring musical version of Roald Dahl's timeless tale, filled with wit, daring and heart. With book and lyrics by Olivier Award-winner Lucy Kirkwood, music and lyrics by Tony Award-nominee Dave Malloy, and directed by Lyndsey Turner.

TOURING

FRANTIC ASSEMBLY

METAMORPHOSIS

From 09/23 to 03/24

www.franticassembly.co.uk

Frantic Assembly and Lemn Sissay OBE collaborate on this thrilling new version of *Metamorphosis*. Combining the fluidity and lyricism of Lemn Sissay's adaptation and Frantic's uncompromising physicality, this promises to be an unmissable retelling of Franz Kafka's shocking tale of cruelty and kindness; a visceral and vital depiction of humans struggling within a system that crushes them under its heel.

CURTAIN CALL

INTERNATIONAL

SAGEBUSH THEATRE (CANADA)

GASLIGHT
19/10/23 - 28/10/23
www.wctlive.ca

Based on Patrick Hamilton's 1938 mystery play *Angel Street*, where the term "gaslighting" was coined. This gripping new adaptation places female resilience and solidarity centre stage as Bella takes her fate in her own hands to solve the mystery that plagues her mind.

OPERA HOUSE WUPPERTAL (GERMANY)

PINA BAUSCH'S NELKEN (CARNATIONS)
22/01/24 - 02/04/24
www.pina-bausch.de

"Nelken" by Pina Bausch is a poignant dance piece exploring human emotions and societal themes. Set in a field of pink carnations, the performance juxtaposes beauty with brutality, freedom with control. It utilises diverse music and spoken word, reflecting Bausch's unique dance-theatre style, with emphasis on emotional engagement over narrative storytelling.

NEW VISIONS ARTS FESTIVAL (HONG KONG)
VARIOUS COMPANIES
20/10/23 - 19/11/23
www.nvaf.gov.hk

The New Vision Arts Festival is a biennial event in Hong Kong that showcases innovative and pioneering performances from around the globe. The festival aims to challenge traditional artistic boundaries, promote cultural exchanges, and nurture local artists.

This year's highlights: Hofesh Shechter, Dimitris Papaioannou, minimalist music legend Philip Glass and award-winning director Phelim McDermott and Aichi Prefectural Art Theater.

AREA 623 (ARGENTINA)
MUNDO DE MIERDA
08/09/23 - 29/09/23
area623.com.ar

Mariana Bellotto directs and choreographs *MUNDO DE MIERDA*. The bodies in performance challenge their own integrity, putting their forms and physicalities at risk while building tangible features over time.

Neither Antarctica nor Iceland; just a cutout of the world. The model of a laboratory where the artists of the body (the inhabitants) are inextricably linked to the fate of ice in an extreme sensory experience that evidences the passing of time.

THE MARKET THEATRE (SOUTH AFRICA)

THE PROMISE
14/09/23 - 06/10/23
www.markettheatre.co.za

Damon Galgut and Sylvaine Strike stage adaptation of this gripping stemmed from a two year discussion process. They identified a visual language through which this seminal family drama will unfold, supported by a uniquely chorus-driven narration.

On a small farm outside Pretoria, the Swart family - "a typical bunch of white South Africans" - tries to hold itself together through the violent lurches of recent history. They have promised to give a small piece of land with a tiny house on it to Salome, the Sotho woman who has worked for them her whole life. A worthless property, but still, they will not give it up.

MALTHOUSE THEATRE (AUSTRALIA)

HOUR OF THE WOLF
From 19/10/23
www.malthousetheatre.com.au

Building on the landmark success of *Because the Night* (2021), Malthouse Theatre (Melbourne) ambitiously realises Australia's next chapter of large-scale immersive theatre. *Hour of the Wolf* introduces you to Hope Hill, a town that is yours to freely explore on the longest night of the year. Interweaving stories unravel the disturbing disappearances occurring between the hours of 3am and 4am.

Editor: Liam Greenall

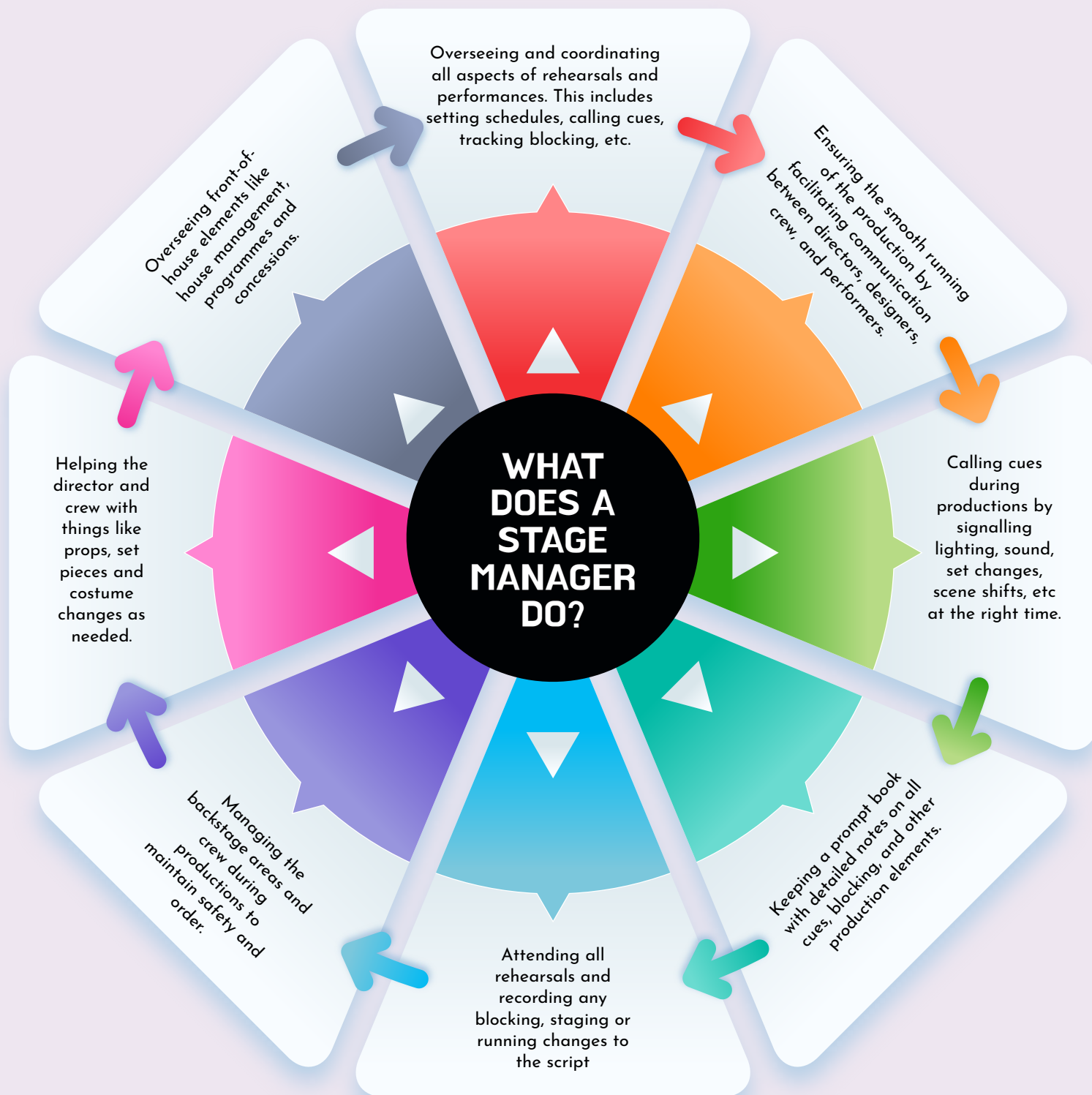
STAGE MANAGEMENT



The stage manager facilitates cross-departmental communication, acting as the director's trusted aide.

They manage various elements such as set design, props, lighting and sound, while also being in charge of all technical cues during shows.

The specifics of the role may differ based on the type of performance and the theatre the stage manager works in. The overarching responsibility of a stage manager across all genres is to ensure a seamless transition from the initial rehearsal to the concluding curtain call.



WHAT IS THE WORK-LIFE LIKE?

Stage managers take on an incredibly demanding role overseeing all aspects of a production. During the rehearsal period leading up to opening night, their days and often evenings are fully occupied calling cues, taking notes and generally keeping the production running smoothly. Once a show opens, stage managers work tirelessly through every performance for the duration of the run.

For stage managers of touring productions, life on the road can involve long stretches away from home. Large-scale shows may distribute duties among a stage management team to help share the load.

For those not employed full-time by a theatre company, balancing stage management projects with other jobs is expected. Additional work could include technical theatre gigs related to their expertise, or unrelated part-time opportunities to supplement their income between productions.

The profession demands extreme commitment from stage managers. Their dynamic, fast-paced lifestyle during rehearsals and runs epitomises the high-energy environment and long hours required to successfully oversee live performances.

PRE-PRODUCTION

During the pre-production stage of a show, the stage manager has several key responsibilities to ensure that everything is prepared and ready for rehearsals to begin. Here's a list of tasks typically undertaken by stage managers in the pre-production stage:

Script Analysis: Stage managers should familiarise themselves with the script, noting potential challenges, technical requirements, and any scene changes.

Production Meetings: They attend production meetings with the director, designers, and other key members of the production team to discuss the vision and requirements of the show.

Scheduling: Stage managers create and distribute rehearsal schedules, ensuring that they align with the availability of the cast and crew, and the requirements of the director.

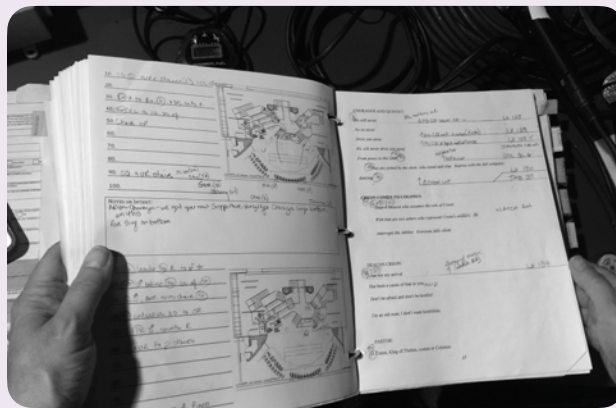
Communication: They serve as the primary point of contact between the production team, cast, and crew, ensuring that everyone is informed about schedules, changes, and updates.

Rehearsal Preparation: Stage managers prepare the rehearsal space, often marking out the dimensions of the set on the floor to help actors understand where they will be moving during the show.

Script Breakdown: They perform a detailed script breakdown, noting all technical cues, prop usage, costume changes, and any other important information that will be needed for the smooth running of the show.

Prop, Costume, and Set Coordination: Stage managers liaise with the props, costume, and set departments to ensure that all elements are being prepared according to the director's vision and the script's requirements.

Health and Safety: They are responsible for ensuring that all health and safety guidelines are followed, conducting risk assessments for the rehearsal space and intended stage actions.



THE PROMPT BOOK

A prompt book, sometimes called 'the bible' in a theatrical production, is a comprehensive document used by the stage manager to store all the essential information about the show. It typically includes a copy of the script with detailed annotations, blocking notes, technical cues, prop and costume lists, set designs and other relevant information.

The Creation of the Prompt Book

Script: The stage manager starts with a clean copy of the script, which becomes the core of the prompt book.

Blocking Notes: As the director works with the actors during rehearsals, the stage manager takes detailed notes on where the actors move on stage (known as blocking). These notes are added to the script in the prompt book.

Technical Cues: The stage manager adds all the cues for lights, sound, set changes, and other technical elements to the script. These cues are usually marked in the margins or on opposite pages to the script, and are highlighted for easy visibility during performances.

Prop and Costume Lists: The prompt book contains a comprehensive list of props and costumes, including details about when and where they're used.

Rehearsal Reports and Production Notes: The stage manager keeps all rehearsal reports, production notes, and other relevant documents in the prompt book.

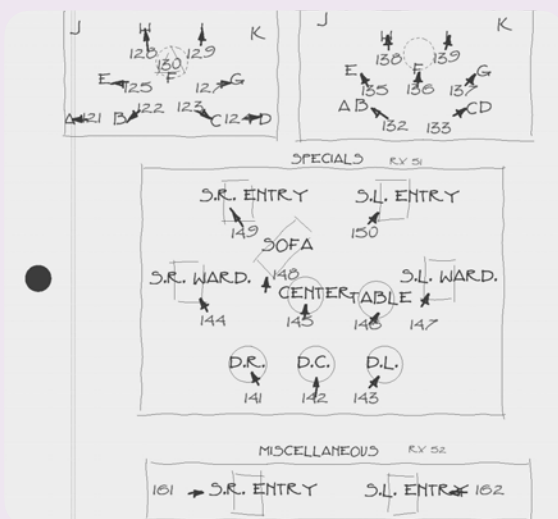
When is the prompt book used?

Rehearsals: During rehearsals, the stage manager uses the prompt book to ensure that actors are following the blocking correctly, and that all props and costumes are used as planned.

Technical Rehearsals: In technical rehearsals, the stage manager uses the prompt book to coordinate all the technical cues with the actions on stage.

Performances: During performances, the stage manager "calls the show" from the prompt book, letting the technical crew know when to execute each cue. The stage manager follows the script in the prompt book closely, ensuring that everything happens precisely when it's supposed to.

The prompt book serves as the master plan for the production, allowing the stage manager to keep track of every aspect of the show. It is constantly updated throughout the rehearsal process and is an essential tool for any stage manager.



REHEARSALS

During rehearsals, the stage manager plays a crucial role in coordinating various aspects of the production. Here are some of the key tasks and responsibilities a stage manager has during this stage:

Scheduling: The stage manager creates and distributes the rehearsal schedule, taking into account the availability of cast and crew, and the needs of the director.

Rehearsal Preparation: Before each rehearsal, the stage manager prepares the rehearsal space. This can include setting up any necessary props, marking out the stage dimensions, and ensuring that the space is clean and safe.

Attendance: The stage manager takes note of who is present at each rehearsal, and follows up with any cast or crew members who are absent or late.

Note Taking: During rehearsals, the stage manager takes detailed notes. This includes blocking (where actors move on stage), changes to the script, director's notes for the cast and crew, and any technical cues for lighting, sound, and set changes.

Communication: The stage manager communicates any important updates or changes to the cast, crew, and production team. They also relay notes from the director to the relevant people.

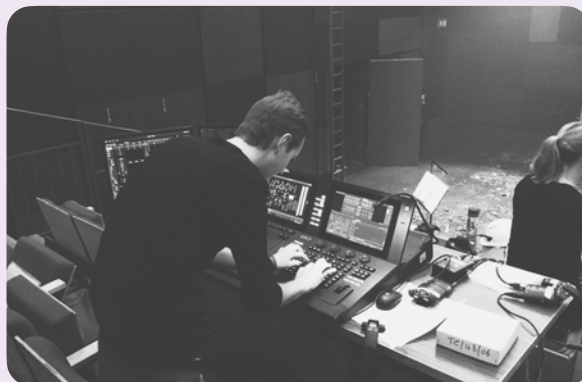
Script Supervision: The stage manager follows the script closely during rehearsals to ensure that lines are being delivered correctly and that blocking, props, and technical elements are in line with the script.

Health and Safety: The stage manager ensures that health and safety guidelines are being followed in the rehearsal space. This includes conducting risk assessments and addressing any safety concerns that arise.

Rehearsal Reports: After each rehearsal, the stage manager creates a rehearsal report detailing what was accomplished, any issues that arose, and plans for the next rehearsal. This report is shared with the production team.

Coordination: The stage manager coordinates with the props, costume, and set departments to ensure that everything is ready for when it's needed in rehearsals and ultimately, performances.

By managing these tasks, the stage manager ensures that rehearsals run smoothly and that the production stays on schedule and on track for successful performances.



TECHNICAL REHEARSALS

A technical rehearsal is a critical part of the production process, where all the technical elements of a show—such as lighting, sound, set changes and special effects—are integrated with the actors' performances. The stage manager plays a central role during this phase. Here are some key tasks and responsibilities of a stage manager during technical rehearsals:

Cue-to-Cue Rehearsal: One of the main tasks of a stage manager during a technical rehearsal is to run a cue-to-cue (or Q2Q) rehearsal. This involves skipping from one technical cue to the next, rather than running through the entire script. This allows the technical team to focus on executing their cues correctly.

Calling Cues: The stage manager "calls" the show during the technical rehearsal. This means they instruct the lighting, sound, and other technical teams when to execute their cues, based on the annotated script in their prompt book.

Coordinating Technical Elements: The stage manager ensures that all the technical elements of a show—lighting, sound, special effects, set changes—are coordinated smoothly with the actors' blocking and performances.

Taking Notes: The stage manager takes detailed notes during the technical rehearsal, recording any changes to cues or blocking, and any issues that arise with the technical elements of the show.

Communication: The stage manager communicates any changes or issues to the cast, crew, and production team. They ensure that everyone is aware of their cues and changes to the script or blocking.

Safety: The stage manager ensures that all health and safety guidelines are being followed during the technical rehearsal. They address any safety concerns that arise due to the incorporation of technical elements.

Rehearsal Reports: After each technical rehearsal, the stage manager creates a rehearsal report, detailing what was accomplished, any issues that arose, and plans for the next rehearsal. This report is shared with the production team.

By managing these tasks, the stage manager helps ensure that the technical rehearsal runs smoothly, and that all technical elements of the show are ready for the final dress rehearsal and the opening performance.



CAREER PATH

Stage managers typically begin their careers by gaining hands-on experience as stagehands or members of a production's technical crew. This allows them to learn the ropes backstage before becoming an assistant stage manager (ASM) on one or more shows. From there, stage managers take on increased responsibilities as the head of a production, overseeing all aspects of the rehearsal and performance process.

Because being a stage manager is a senior role, advancing in the field often means working on larger, higher-profile productions that offer better pay. Some stage managers leverage their diverse technical skills to earn additional income on the side, say as a lighting designer, costumer, carpenter or scenic painter. For those seeking further career growth, it's also common to transition into producing or directing roles that allow creative control over an entire production.

The most well-rounded stage managers have extensive experience across various production disciplines. This makes them ideally suited to take on leadership positions like technical director, where they can apply their know-how to manage all technical elements of theatre productions. Overall, there are many potential paths for stage managers to develop their careers both behind and beyond the scenes over time.

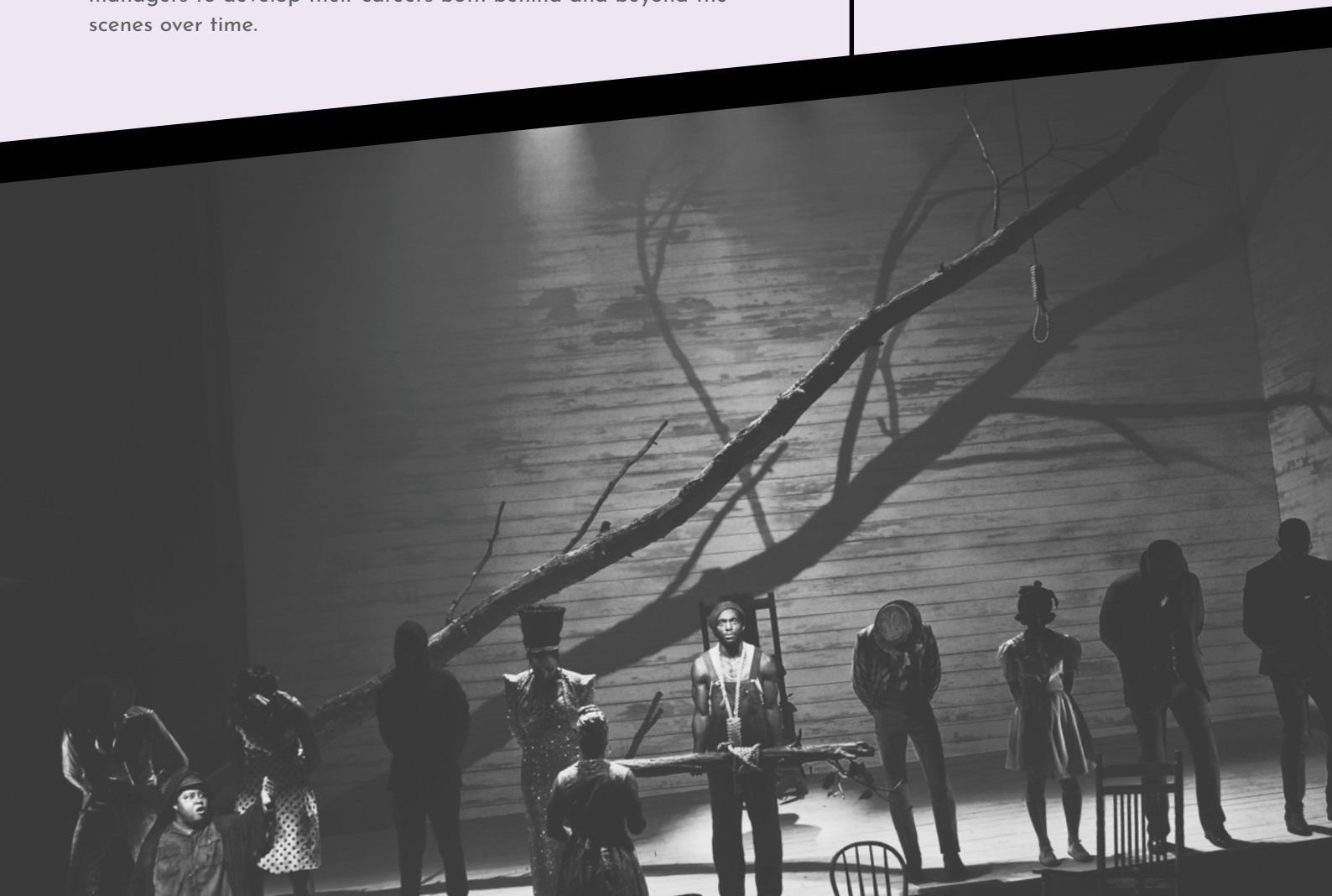
COURSE SPOTLIGHT

Students can prepare themselves for a successful career in Stage Management by studying at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Their BA (Hons) Stage Management degree provides in-depth, practical training. They aim to produce confident graduates who are ready for a successful career in the industry as soon as they leave them. Students will gain authentic industry experience while developing the vital skills needed in each role of a stage management team.

At Birmingham Conservatoire they have a vibrant, energetic and stimulating environment. Students be taught by their team of highly skilled and experienced staff, who also continue to work with industry.

For more information please visit:
<https://www.bcu.ac.uk/courses/stage-management-ba-hons-2024-25>





DOCUMENTARY

THEATRE



This unit, developed by Black Box Education, delves into the fascinating world of Documentary Theatre, a genre that brings real-life stories, events and people to the stage using various theatrical devices and conventions.

Drawing on a range of sources such as archival materials, interviews and other documents, the unit provides a unique and powerful way for KS4 and 5 students to engage with history, society and contemporary issues.

Throughout the unit, students will explore the history and development of Documentary Theatre, from its early roots in the work of figures like Erwin Piscator to its diverse contemporary expressions in forms like Verbatim Theatre, Testimonial Theatre, and the Living Newspaper.

They unit is split into six different workshops and each workshop could span across different lessons, depending on the duration of your lessons.

The unit is designed to be highly interactive and hands-on. Students will not only learn about Documentary Theatre but will also create it. They will engage with archival materials, conduct research, carry out interviews and use these as stimuli to create their own pieces of Documentary Theatre.

They will experiment with various staging and storytelling techniques, exploring how to effectively represent real people and events in a theatrical context.

By the end of the unit, students will have a deep understanding of Documentary Theatre, its potential for illuminating real-world issues and events, and how to create it. They will gain skills in research, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, and they will experience firsthand the power of theatre to engage with and interpret the world around us.

Workshop One: What is Documentary Theatre?

In this workshop, students will define documentary theatre and explore its contexts and conventions. They will engage in practical activities involving historical documents related to the Votes for Women/ Suffragettes Movement and use these as a stimulus for creating their own pieces of documentary theatre. They will delve into key concepts such as still images, moments of action and reflective circles. The lesson also introduces the importance of archival materials and key figures in documentary theatre, like Erwin Piscator.

Workshop Two: Living Newspaper

Students will explore the concept of the Living Newspaper, a form of documentary theatre that presents news and social issues in a dramatic format. They will study historic and contemporary examples and create their own mini Living Newspaper presentations based on current events.

Workshop Three: Verbatim and Testimonial Theatre

In this workshop, students will examine verbatim and testimonial theatre, two significant forms of documentary theatre that use the exact words and testimonies of real people. Students will carry out interviews, transcribe them and use these transcriptions to create short performance pieces.

Workshop Four: The Role of Research in Documentary Theatre

Students will learn about the crucial role of research in creating documentary theatre. They will practice using different sources of information, such as texts, images, videos, interviews and online resources, to gather material for a documentary theatre piece.

Workshop Five: Staging Real Stories

This workshop will examine how real-life stories and events are adapted for the stage in documentary theatre. Students will learn about the ethical considerations involved in representing real people and events, and they will explore different staging and storytelling techniques used in documentary theatre.

Workshop Six: Creating a Piece of Documentary Theatre

In the final lesson, students will synthesise what they have learned to create a short piece of documentary theatre. They will work in groups to research, write, and perform a piece based on a real event or issue of their choice, using the techniques and conventions they have learned throughout the course.

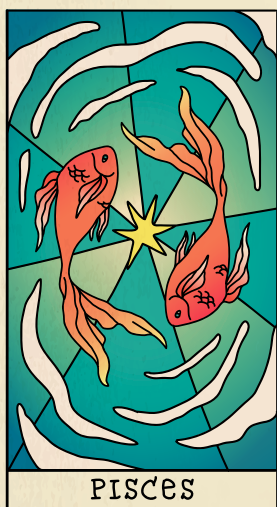


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BLACK BOX EDUCATION X DRAMA MATTERS MAGAZINE

DRAMA-SCOPES



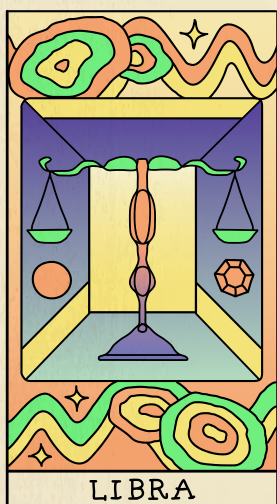
PISCES

The next six months hold the promise of creativity and growth in your career as a Drama Teacher. Pisces, embrace your intuitive nature and use it to connect with your students on a deeper level. You're their artistic journey. Stay open to new teaching methods and explore different artistic styles to inspire your students. Watch out for the student that keeps asking Why? They may annoy you but they will be your shining star.



SCORPIO

The next six months will bring a mix of introspection and personal growth. You may find yourself reflecting on your teaching techniques and exploring new ways to engage and inspire your students. This period could also bring opportunities for professional development or advancement in your career. Trust your intuition and embrace any challenges that come your way, as they will ultimately lead to personal and professional growth. Make sure that the annoying member of staff at work doesn't manage to crawl under your skin too much, smile and be ever powerful in the words that you are keeping locked inside your head.



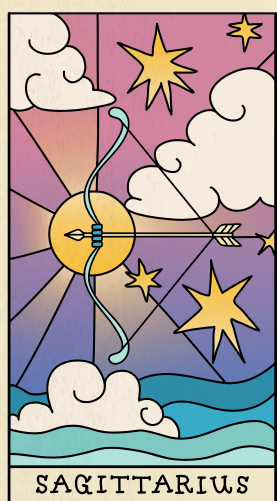
LIBRA

The next six months will bring balance and harmony into your career as a drama teacher. Focus on refining your teaching techniques and creating a supportive and inclusive environment in your drama classes. Your diplomatic nature will help you resolve any conflicts that arise among your students. Embrace collaboration and encourage your students to work together as a team. Take it easy on those steps to the stage, although your presence on the stage is outstanding you definitely want to remain standing.



VIRGO

The next six months will be marked by a focus on organisation and attention to detail. You may find yourself fine-tuning your lesson plans and curriculum, creating a more structured and efficient learning environment for your students. This period will also offer opportunities for collaboration and networking, which can further your analytical nature and be open to new ideas and perspectives. Organisation is all good stuff but make sure you remember where you put everything, you don't want to lose those memory discs because you tidied them away.



SAGITTARIUS

The next six months are full with exciting opportunities for growth and expansion as a drama teacher. Take risks and explore new teaching methods that challenge both you and your students. Your enthusiasm and adventurous spirit will inspire those around you. Emphasise the importance of self expression and encourage your students to step out of their comfort zone. Ask for help if you need it! You are wonderful but you also can't pour from an empty glass.



CAPRICORN

You can expect a period of self-discovery and personal growth over the next six months. This is a favourable time to explore your artistic interests and experiment with different teaching methods. Don't be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone and inspire your students with your passion for drama. Your strong work ethic and leadership skills will shine, allowing you to make a positive impact on your students' lives. Make sure you use the meet and greet as you will spot those issues before they even get into your room.



The next six months will be filled with energy and enthusiasm. You will have the opportunity to infuse passion into your teaching and inspire your students with your dynamic presence. This period may also bring unexpected opportunities for professional growth and recognition. Embrace your natural leadership abilities and take charge of your teaching journey. Remember to balance your intensity with patience and empathy, allowing your students to grow alongside you. Allow yourself time to sleep, being busy is great but even the bee needs to rest.



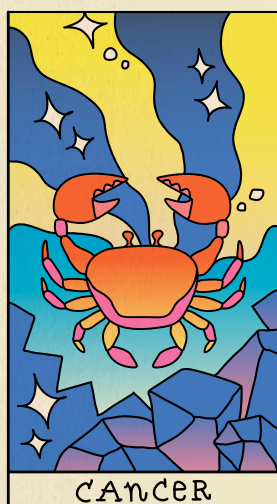
You will experience a surge of innovation and groundbreaking ideas over the next six months. Embrace your unconventional methods and encourage your students to think outside the box. Collaborative projects and experimentation will be highly successful during this time. Connect with like-minded individuals who can offer fresh perspectives. You may be breaking the ground up but make sure that you not stepping on any toes to do so, sometimes bouncing your ideas means they are amazing, and they will just get greater.



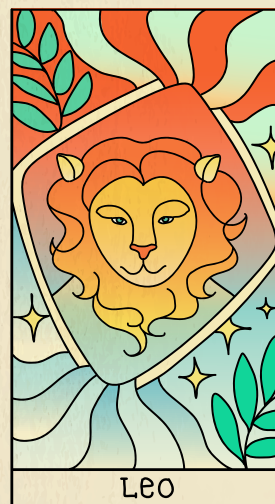
Over the next six months Gemini drama teachers will find themselves bursting with creative ideas and an abundance of energy. Use this period to bring new techniques into your classroom and explore different styles of theatre. Your students will be captivated by your enthusiasm and will thrive under your guidance. Remember to take breaks and rest when needed to avoid burnout. Life work balance is key, yin yang, you can't ever have too much sleep.



You will find the next six months to be a period of stability and growth. Focus on nurturing your students' talent and helping them build a solid foundation in acting. Your patience and persistence will be key as you guide them through challenges. Maintain a balanced approach and don't be afraid to push your students out of their comfort zone. Take the credit where credit is due you are ace at this if only you would believe in yourself.



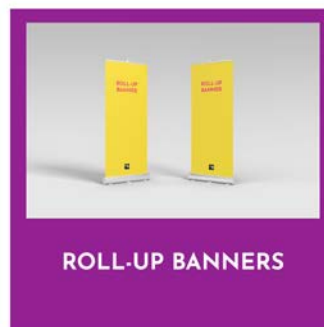
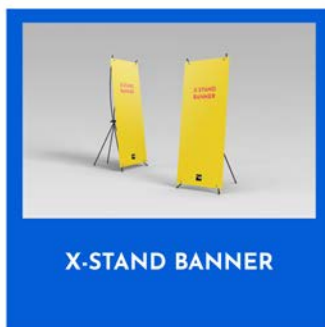
You will find the next six months to be emotionally fulfilling and deeply rewarding. Your intuitive nature will help you better understand your students' needs and guide them through their emotional journeys on and off the stage. Stay connected with your own creativity and inspire your students to express themselves authentically. Take up a class for you, of an evening and if you have little ones and can't go out then make sure you do a meditation on YouTube or yoga or even some art skills classes.



You will shine brightly over the next six months, attracting attention and admiration from both students and colleagues. Your charisma and natural stage presence will inspire your students to believe in themselves and their abilities. It's essential to maintain a balanced ego and share the spotlight with your students. Stay open to feedback and encourage constructive criticism. Roar like the lion that you are, you can look after your pride but make sure you don't let anyone dent your pride in the process.

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NETWORKING WEEKEND

DRAMA  MATTERS

THE POWER OF DRAMA EDUCATION



What is it?

You are no longer one, we come together yearly. Colleagues never met, friends to make and the best of outstanding practice to explore and take, add to that the laughs and smiles too, you will be richer for this weekend, because Drama Matters but so do you.

How does it work?

For the last 3 years we have met in Birmingham (although I am looking at changing it for September 2024). The Friday evening is all about networking, the Saturday is about sharing best practice, tailor made for what you have said you would like. You also get the evening on the Saturday where we have a themed ball and the Sunday is about sharing best practice too. We throw some quirky bits in throughout the weekend and send you off with your goodie bag in hand and your heart full of love. Love for yourself, for your new friends and for your subject (and possibly a tired face from smiling so much!)

How much does it cost?

You pay a nominal charge that covers the incidentals of the weekend. This year it was £30 and I am hoping to keep it there for next year. On top of that, you only pay for the hotel. This year it was £210 for the whole weekend. The cost includes your food and bed for the whole weekend and then just your travel to pay on top.

I don't know anyone!

Nor do most people, this is one of the wonderful things about the weekend.

How do I sign up?

On the 3rd September 2023, the sign up Google Form will go out and you then sign up by answering the questions. There are only 60 places as we like to keep it intimate so everyone gets to be involved. You can bring your partner, who can join in the evenings. We aim for the venue to have spa facilities so you get the relaxation too.

BRIDGE BUILDERS

Over the next few pages you will hopefully find your area and your Drama Matters Bridge Builder.

But 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.

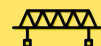
Sharing resources such as sets, props, and costumes could be another aspect of this cooperation. The network could also facilitate your contact with local theatre groups and industry professionals. Essentially, it functions like an in-person, localised version of an online forum.

Is your area not listed? 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



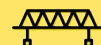
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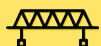
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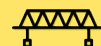
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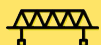
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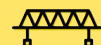
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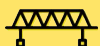
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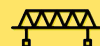
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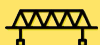
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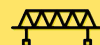
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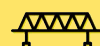
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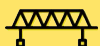
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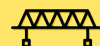
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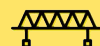
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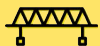
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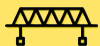
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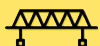
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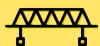
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CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

WWW. dramamatters .org

Over the next few months, we will be developing our website even more. Our aim is for it to be a central hub for Drama Matter initiatives and a melting pot of ideas for the Drama teacher community.

PERFORMING ARTS FESTIVAL

Everything you need to know

REFLECTING

When you organise a National Drama Competition and the finalists' pieces span a range of topics - from politics to the power of the arts, the safety of the arts, to the stages of life and our reflections upon death - you can't help but be deeply moved. You find yourself pondering whether we truly acknowledge our achievements when they happen or truly appreciate our blessings. Witnessing the depth and insight of these young people, you are brought to tears with the realisation that our world has some incredible young individuals who are capable of rectifying the current state of disarray.

With 85 entrants nationally and 5 internationally, it was an amazing experience and something I have wanted to put together for a long time. I have learnt along the way and therefore it is going to be held at a different point in the year. We are going to have international judges that look after the international side. We hope it will get bigger and stronger every year. The winners from last year will be invited back to perform their piece again and to be judges. They can also put another piece in the initial entry stages.

I am so proud of all the Drama teachers across the world that enable our young people to speak up, speak out and be heard.

Thank you!

As without you, it would not be possible.



THE RULES

THE PROCESS

- Put up the poster
- Pick one group or hold an in house competition for the best idea/piece
- Facilitate the use of a room for students to rehearse
- Allow students to create the piece in the way they want to and what they want it to be about but based around the 'I matter, We Matter, Drama Matters
- Make sure the students are aware that it can include all disciplines in whatever way THEY want to perform, ie it could include, dance, rap, spoken word, song and of course acting or all of the above
- Give feedback so they can improve
- The piece for the entry process only needs to be a workshop piece NO costumes etc to be used
- Make sure you set a date for them to be recorded, to meet deadline
- At the beginning of recording students are to introduce their name, character and one student should say the synopsis of the piece
- Students should NOT state their school in the intro
- Once submitted you will receive notification as to whether you have made the final at Easter.
- If you are notified that you are in the final then your students will then work on their piece to refine, polish and improve by the July final.

- Free entry
- 3- 10 students and 10 minutes long.
- Year groups 7-13 only
- Brief - I Matter, We Matter, Drama Matters
- The piece must ONLY be facilitated by a teacher and NOT created or directed by same, it is important that the students voice is heard and what matters to them
- No pre-existing work to be used
- If you make the final travel expenses will be down to your school
- International schools will be doing their final pieces on video
- Your entry piece is to be received by the 23rd December
- Your entry piece should be a workshop performance and NOT include costumes etc it is the performance and narrative that is important
- The video should be uploaded to the drive given along with the Drama Matters Perf Arts Entry details
- Only one entry per school, however you may choose to have an in house competition to find the best piece
- There will be awards for the following; 4 best performers, Best Script, Best Student Voice Theme, Best Ensemble group, Best Overall Production
- There will be a full set of awards for National and International therefore 16 awards in all
- A public platform will be given for all entries
- Permission forms will need to be completed by the school and all

What did people that took part have to say?

"Thanks Tracy! The pupils loved it and really enjoyed rehearsing. Little superstars and making drama matter at our school! Our headteacher is BUZZING!" - Benjamin Thomas Eva

"Well done to all of the organisers and participants!! I'm so glad we can give our young people a voice in this way! It's an excellent initiative." - Clare Bear

DRAMA MATTERS

THE POWER OF DRAMA EDUCATION

**STUDENT
VOICE**
Teacher
facilitated

*I Matter
We Matter
Drama Matters*

**OPEN TO
ALL
SCHOOLS
AND POST
16
COLLEGES**
11-18 only. This time
around anyway 😊

Devising Performing Arts Festival

Deadline for video entry - December 2023

Finalists announced- Easter 2024

Final in person - July 2024

Sign up on Google Form
Free Entry

ENTRY PACK WILL BE SENT OUT
ONCE REGISTERED

NATIONAL
and International!!

REGISTRATION: SIGN UP SEPTEMBER

GOOGLE FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY TEACHER



Talk Theatre Thursdays were introduced during Covid to enable Drama Teachers to come together via Zoom and share best practice. We have had some amazing people that have given their time for free from the Drama Teacher who is a specialist in a particular subject, to the famous such as Scott Graham, Kelly Frampton, Sally Dynevor, Matthew Warchus, Evan Placey, Emma Rice, Burts Drama, Katie Mitchell, Paperbirds, Michale Balogun and Emma Tomkins.

We had Designer Elena Kotsi and Action Hero Teach's Karl Pupe as well as theatre powerhouses such as Dominic Cooke, Mark Wheeler, Jackie Clunes, Dan Rebellato, Sinead from Les Enfants Terribles and Ricky Dukes, the Creative Director of Lazarus Theatre Company. Fourth Monkey, Roy Williams, Disney, Simon Stephens, Daniel Shindler, Anna Niland and Buffy and Richard from the Archers also joined us.

We also had a variety best practice #TTT on issues such as Devising, Mental Health and Wellbeing, LGBTQIA+, Exam prep, Behaviour, Curriculum and Best Schemes of Work. Anything you needed, we created even with just a place to voice. Our TTTs are free and we are extremely lucky that so many give their time for free.

With permission, we are able to give the transcript of some of our TTTs. This is rare as the idea really is that you need to be on the Zoom call to engage and be part of it. We see it like a piece of theatre in its own right. We will be putting out the TTT schedule for the next academic year towards the end of September so check out our social media accounts and website. As we have done previously, we will be putting out a Google Form to find out what and who you would like to hear from, this can range from special guests to sharing of best practice by our Drama teachers on Drama Matters. It is a place where you can reflect, ask and feel safe in the knowledge that you will be supported. It's the ethos of the Drama Matters Networking Weekend but on Zoom.

You can follow the Drama Matters Eventbrite page here:
<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/drama-matters-30343941070>

This is where all #TT (Talk Theatre) tickets are put up for free. There is always a limit of 100 people and we ask that if you have booked a ticket and then can't attend you release your ticket so someone else can take your place, as they are often sold out.

Over the next few pages, you will see the Transcript for a #TTT* with Scott Graham, the co-founder and Artistic Director of Frantic Assembly. His insights touch on the importance of open dialogue, the power of music, knowledge sharing, the focus on process, the role of physicality in storytelling, creative freedom and an inclusive approach to teaching drama. We hope these insights serve as powerful tools for Drama teachers to inspire and engage their students in the world of creating theatre.

*Conducted in February 2023

Scott Graham



Here you will see the Transcript for a #TTT with Scott Graham, he has now done 4 TTT's and he never fails to inspire, motivate and make us feel seen (and that we have the best job in the world of course).

Tracy - Welcome to Drama Matters and our Talk Theatre Thursday with Scott Graham, the wonderful Scott Graham, for anyone that has been on a talk of his before where he allows us into his Artistic mind you will know how you go away feeling either completely in awe or completely buzzed about the subject or indeed both of the above, but certainly with extra vigour to attack your Friday tomorrow morning. It would be amiss of me to not mention what has gone on in the world today, and therefore I would like to send Drama Matters love and positive vibes to all in the world that need it but particularly for those in Ukraine, I know from my own students they are very very worried about what is happening in our world. It's not just adults that worry about what is going on in the world, it's our students as well, and that brings us very nicely on to our wonderful subject, because if there is one thing we know about our subject it is the fact that it challenges everything that is happening out in the world, which lets face it is why so many governments try and crush it because it's much easier to control what people are thinking instead of giving them the ability to be imaginative and challenge.

So those that haven't been with us before the way it works is as follows, I will not be talking the whole evening as you have not come to listen to me, I will host and ask questions based off the back of what Scott says, but equally if you have any questions you get to ask your question directly. The only thing I ask is that you put your name in the chat as I will then come to you in order and you only turn your microphone on when prompted to do so. Welcome to you all from across the world particular mention to those that have joined us from Adelaide, Australia. This I believe is the furthest that have joined us. I will now hand over to Mr Graham - over to you.

Scott - Hello and thank you. These sessions in the past they pretty much have been just a conversation, I haven't prepared anything, I'm not selling anything, it's just a conversation and I think that's really important, as what I've found myself saying more than once actually, and this comes in Q&As a lot, is that there can be a presumption especially on the part of students, that when they ask me a question about something they presume I will know the answer, and it was always sitting there and I have to explain to them that I might not have known that answer. It was the provocation that inspired me to think about it and then I found the answer. So, that's why dialogue is incredibly important, and I also think that there is an important lesson to learn there that we don't look to people and think that they have the answer all the time. Your students, you can help them find the answer and articulate what is going on behind the work and behind the process. So I think in that spirit I'd really like this to be a conversation. I'm not going to talk for ages, I would much rather that someone started with a question and we just let it roll from there. I hope this isn't the moment that we all look at each other in silence for the next 90 minutes.

Tracy - So on that basis who would like to ask a question first?

Scott - I do realise that I've done something quite arrogant and presumptuous there, because it was the third time I've done this, I've presumed you knew who the hell I was, or what Frantic Assembly is so I'd be very happy to talk about that if that would be helpful?

Tracy - You can indeed as there are lots of new people on tonight, Scott, so if you could that would be grand, but we do then have a question for you from a member. So, if you can talk about Frantic and particularly, I know there is some new work that you have just brought forward that you are doing with schools. So, if you would like to talk about all of that and then we can roll forward from there.

Scott - Yeah, so apologies about that. I'm Scott Graham, Artistic Director and co-founder of Frantic Assembly. Frantic Assembly was formed in 1994 and we were three friends who met at University, met through a Drama society at University, two of us studying English one studying Geography and it was having our world turned upside down by seeing the work of another company and that company seeing something in us and inviting us into that world that made us think that maybe theatre could be for us but it was certainly a moment where I recognised theatre was something that I didn't think it was, it was capable of so much more and I got really excited about just learning more about that.

So, as I said it was a hobby but the three of us became obsessed about it and took a show to Edinburgh and bluffed our way around Edinburgh convinced a few people that we were a proper theatre company. I don't think we convinced that many but that's how we set out. We set out with the name Frantic Theatre Company and then built up a bit of confidence. And all it took was a few people saying to us 'yeah, we think you should do this'. And we set up a small company through a thing called enterprise allowance, which isn't around anymore, but I'm sure some of you might remember it's basically about starting new businesses from being on the dole. So, we finished university, we're all on the dole, out of work, looking for work and in the background setting up a company. And to do that you have to take a pay cut from the dole. You have to be committed to be living off 30 pound a week. And we were. We were lucky that we were good friends and all utterly committed to it. Frantic Assembly started from a point of absolute naivety but with so much energy and, as I said, so much commitment...



(Scott Cont.) And the cleverest thing we did was to recognise that we didn't have all the answers, that we didn't know anything, and we'd be happy to ask people. That openness served us well. It also meant as soon as we learnt something, we would try and find ways of teaching it. And sharing it. And by learning something, I mean just any kind of creative process, any little discovery we would turn into a workshop and try and take it to schools. And that meant we built an audience in schools almost before we'd created the shows and that relationship has remained. In that so many people who experience Frantic Assembly through workshops first and then see our show. Whereas most of the theatre world their outreach is often after the show, and it's an exploration of the themes that you have watched in the show. We were always about sharing the process because we felt that's empowerment. That's how you invite people into this world in the way that we were. And that's how you encourage people. You show them that they can make work and you share that around, so that ethos was absolutely central to the company and still is to this day. The work that we were inspired to make was very physical, it was a mixture of, anything really.

We are unashamed magpies really in if we like something, we learn from it, we'll take it and process it. We never developed a house style. That may seem strange for a company that's been going for 27 years, 28 years and you might say you no you do over house style, and I know what it is but initially because we weren't trained in any way, we didn't know what was right or wrong. And that gave us a wonderful freedom to do whatever we wanted. I remember some companies who started at the same time as us. Who would? Who would define who they were with, really? Straight, hard faces. We are Brechtian. We are this and we are that and you could see it they were being trapped within that. I'm not saying that's always a negative and just saying that I could see it being a negative for them and we were afforded a slightly different type of freedom. I think that lack of training as well meant that we would attack the work in a certain way, we would always try and find a base level, something we could under all understand and to simplify the process as much as possible.

So now. You know, it's become much more well known than our concepts of building blocks and the reason why that is so successful I think is because it puts the experienced dancer and the in experienced actor and vice versa on the same footing to start with. As well as the student, as well as the expert - it pushes them all further than they thought they might go. But it comes from that beginning of us knowing nothing and having to really take little steps. What else can I say about the work we have developed into a what they call a 'Mid-Scale Touring Company' and that has its joys, and it has its problems as well. I think over time we probably worked more now with actors than with dancers. But I took a particular joy in finding that physical performance from actors who might not have done it before. who find that it's not about fixed choreography doing what it does. It's about how physicality can tell stories and how movement can be read by an audience. And just how nuanced and complex and beautiful that can be, and how powerful it is for an actor to consider movements as an integral part of their performance.

More than that, I've got a little bit conceptual now. Movement isn't movement, movement is the potential for movement. That's how you engage your audience. That's how you create tension. The moment the gun goes off. The moment begins to dissipate. It's the moment before the gun goes off that's most exciting. And it's the same with movement onstage and that's why I think the Frantic Assembly approach resonates so well within theatre, because it's about the potential of the moment rather than the spectacle of the movement.

I consider movement to be stillness. I consider everything you see in light to be crafted by the darkness around it. So, that approach has engaged actors in a kind of total theatre thinking and a total body thinking. So, over the years, sometimes that work has not seemed so physical. To the outside eye, but actually on the inside, it's incredibly physical because it's become more and more precise. And because I run my own company. It gives me the massive privilege to make a choice once I've made a show, which is incredibly fragile or incredibly still, I am itching to make that big physical show and I have the freedom to do that. I guess that again, that comes from the freedom we were afforded early on, the lack of what I would call a house style, or rather those rigid parameters that we say we're going to work within. I can jabber on for a long time.

Tracy - We don't see it as jabbering, Scott, so don't worry. In relation to a couple of things that you said, would you say early style Frantic worked more with dancers rather than actors and do you see that as a shift? Or what would you say because obviously if you go back to the very beginning, it is very much choreographed style, it still is but would you say dancers you were working with more than? That that was their discipline rather than the actual actor aspect.

Scott - I think going back to the beginning, we weren't necessarily known by actors. We might have been scared of actors as well, but I wouldn't really have known how to direct them or work with them. But I think dancers weren't scared of what we were offering. They were interested in it. I think actors were scared of it. But I think that the landscape at the time created a larger difference between what an actor does on stage and what a dancer does on stage. That gap was much greater back then and I think now. Actors are more well versed in what their body can do. They're much more well versed in the value of movement onstage to tell a story as well. And maybe audiences are better too, but I've always felt audiences have helped the potential to read and understand physicality, because it's what we do innately. We understand body language when we enter a room. We understand the tension that's existing around that room. Text. So little about communication comes through text in real life. But for some reason Theatre thinks it was 99% and I don't think that's quite right. So maybe we are just shifting to a more natural balance here and audiences are just naturally susceptible, or naturally more intelligent.

'I consider movement to be stillness. I consider everything you see in light to be crafted by the darkness around it'

Tracy - Thank you! And in relation to when you were talking about setting up the company to begin with. You were on the dole etc, etc. What prompted you? Because often people talk about there was one person that made them go, yeah, that's what I wanted to do. Or this is something I want to explore. And you spoke about that at the beginning. Giving people the space to be able to create. Instead of tightly directing them and telling them what they need to create. Let's see what they can produce. So, what was it that actually prompted you to actually want to go on that journey and kind of start those steps really?

Scott - Yeah, so. I wasn't interested in theatre at school. Then a teacher put my name down for a play when I was in 11 and the most interesting thing was I didn't say no. I just went in and did it. He just said you need to do it. So, he saw something in me that I didn't see, and I didn't know was there, but when I did it, I absolutely loved it. I loved the hard work. I loved what it did to the group of people working together. I love the result. I did some more in 6th form but when I went to university I was too scared to join the Drama Society straight away. And actually, I was a footballer. That was my main thing, and those two worlds didn't particularly mix. So, I was playing football for the university and I just couldn't pluck up the courage to actually join the Drama Society. In fact, I went to the end of my second year. I went for an audition and I knocked on the door. I turned up a little bit late I think, no, I don't think I knocked on the door, I think I just opened the door and looked through and as I was looking through the door they were doing a warm up and it looked like they were all stretching to be trees or something and the director saw me and pointed at the door and said 'are you here for the audition?' I went 'no' and closed the door. And that was it.

It took me another year to go back. Which seems ridiculous. But it stayed with me. Just how scary it can seem from the outside, we know from the inside, just how welcoming it is. We know what's to be won. It can offer so much, but I know. You know just how terrifying it can be from the outside and also all of those crossover skills that we might not be bringing into our world because of that fear. But anyway, I was at university. I plucked up the courage to join the Drama Society and through the drama society, I saw a show that my friend was in. It was Volcano Theatre Company directing the students, directing the Drama Society. And it was just the most extraordinary thing, as it was their adaptation of *Savages* by Christopher Hampton. It wasn't the theatre that I thought I knew. I wasn't watching something. I was in it. It was around me. I could smell it. It was existing in all dimensions. And I just found it totally exhilarating. And my friend who was in it was actually Steven Hoggett, who I formed the company with he had the same experience, but from the other side.

To say this was incredible, absolutely incredible to see what it was doing to the audience. I could see what it was doing to the performers and it was more than I thought theatre could do. So, when this came along, it totally blew my mind. And so Steve and I started to just devour this world, well, first of all, what is it? It was considered physical theatre. We got to know the company very well. They liked us. They encouraged us and they actually gave us a couple of videos of David Hinton's films of DV8 Productions. So, *Dead Dreams of Monochrome Men*, *A Strange Fish*. I think that was it at the time. And that just totally turned my world upside down as well. So, I think that was enough for Steven and I to say we wanted to be part of it.

But what made it happen was probably Volcano opening the door and saying 'yeah, you can be part of this. Come in. Is this workshop happening over here? You should be over there or we're running this workshop, you two can have free places on it. Just come in and learn' which I thought was incredibly generous. And as I said, has stayed very much part of the ethos of the company as well, because it is that important. So yeah, that was it. But I would say Steven and I probably were Volcano Theatre wannabes for a while.

We probably were trying to replicate their work. It took us a while to find our own work. Well, I say it took us a while, but I think our first or second production found our style. But I would say it was a really important moment in my development. When I could go to a production of my idols and look at the show and go, I don't like that show and that's not the type of theatre I want to make. I didn't know what I wanted to make until I saw that. And it's a little bit like how I started this conversation here. People don't always know what they like, sometimes they have to bump into what they don't like to go to define what they do like. It gave Steven and I, new vigour, it reframed our conversations. We could talk about ourselves and what we wanted to do in separation from Volcano. To talk about what we didn't like, what didn't work. It was a huge moment of growth to be honest with you, to recognise that.

Tracy - Brilliant. Thank you. Pippa's question, as her mic isn't working, she wants to ask 'How do we encourage students to keep Frantic Style but to still be innovative?'

Scott - Yeah. That's that is a really, really good question and that's something that does keep me up at night. Because it's very, very important. To show people that the Frantic work, the Frantic Method is a process, and by you applying that process could, and should, mean that your work looks very different from my work. Otherwise, you are just retreading someone else's steps. And the long-term effect of that is it kills the work for both of us. It makes it, well it's like seeing chair duets in the middle of a devised piece, you know you have got to ask yourself, Why? Why are you doing that? And, I think people need to dig a little bit deeper into the process. Keep asking. I'm going to come back to this question, kind of come back to this word actually a little bit later on, I think, because I've been writing it quite a bit today, and the question is why? I think you have to always ask people why they're doing something. And make sure that the process, that they're using the process to explore rather than to replicate. Because they'll only make something that's slightly dead. Sorry does that answer your question, as I said I do ramble, I forget the question.

'People don't always know what they like, sometimes they have to bump into what they don't like to go to define what they do like. It gave Steven and I, new vigour, it reframed our conversations'.

Tracy - So the question was, sorry, her mic's not working so she can't come on and respond to you. I think she may have done on text, so I'll have a look in a moment. The question was how do we encourage students to keep Frantic style but still be innovative? So yeah, I think it does 'cause you're saying that if you just replicate (oh, yes, she said. Yes, thank you so much. So yes, it obviously does.)

Scott - Well, I think you need to consider what is it you're trying to achieve if you're just trying to achieve the Frantic style. The Frantic style from which moments? From the stillness of Things I Know To Be True, or the violence of Hymns or the Unreturning. You know what is it you want to replicate there? Or are you really trying to engage with processes to make your own work? Again, 'why' is really important.

Tracy - Fantastic. Thank you. Ali, you get to ask your question.

Ali - Hi, Thanks very much. The answer I'm looking for is for Level 3 Performing Arts and the first question in the controlled assignment there is. There are several contextual factors that the students may be asked and one of them is they have to respond to your work in a political way. So, I just wondered if there are any sort of, are you inspired by politics? I'm sure you are. Are there any pointers that I have missed that you can give me any sort of signposts to that I can feed that back to my students? It just seems to be the one conceptual factor that I'm kind of struggling to piece together a little bit.

Scott - Yeah, I do think it's all there, but you have to dig deep. Because if you think of how the company was formed. Coming through Enterprise Allowance, coming through untrained and making work with writers, but not pulling from the literary tradition. Not taking plays from the canon and acting them out but making new work with people from working class backgrounds who hadn't gone through that formal training. I think that's political because that's finding your own voice within theatre and encouraging others. I think the education work is the same. Because of where we, first of all where we tour to, is often targeted. And where we often do workshops as well. It is targeted and the style of the workshops. As I said at the beginning, it's not themes, it's about empowerment. So it's about encouraging people to make work and encouraging people to find their voice. By their voice, I could mean their body, their movement, their engagement.

It's about making sure that every aspect of the company presents an opening door or open door to people. I find myself talking about doors all the time, a really tiresome metaphor, but I keep using it. I think the door looks locked from one side; it doesn't look like it's going to open. It can look like a wall unless somebody opens it. And we talk about this within the company in the language that we use and how we respond to people. How we try to encourage and empower, and I think that is political. I think having made shows about young men and mental health and suicides. It is obviously political, it's always with a small P, I think. We also made a show called Fatherland. It started off as shows about the stories that we have about our dads or uncles and grandfathers. Trying to create a picture of who these people are around the country and our relationships with them. And we went out around the country talking to people and that process.

Through that process, the show became much more political. Because what people were trying to tell us was that we're not listened to. Around here, no, nobody comes. Here comes the microphone underneath her mouth and asked us what we think. And this was just before Brexit. Before the vote. So, we came out of that process knowing something was going to happen. A real big shift because this was an opportunity for people to stamp their feet and strike out. Other stuff I would say is we always make work. We make work within a political context, of course, and a response to the political environment. But I'm at pains to make sure the work is never didactic because I get bored with that. I don't want to want people to shout what I'm already thinking.

Or necessarily the opposite 'cause it's what they believe, but I love the complexities of human relationships. So that's where I start. But the work is always within our political context because of where we come from, and where we are. It becomes more and more pertinent because there's more pressure than ever on working class people having a career within the arts. So things like Ignition. Our Ignition project goes around the country finding people in the places that people aren't looking and approaching people who haven't thought about theatre. Because I know somebody did that to me and because my crossover skills were applied within the theatre, I know the value of that. When we find these people, we train them up as practitioners often. Which brings them into the workforce and they become the teachers. They teach Frantic's method around the world. And then you might end up making shows with us or performing in shows and they never would have if they hadn't opened that door, if we hadn't invited people in. We need open doors. So that's where I think the political context lies. We respond to the political environment, but I think if we were to wave it on a big flag it loses its power. I think it's just words. It's more deeds that we are interested in.

Tracy - Does that answer your question, Ali?

Ali - Absolutely - That's wonderful. Thank you very much. Thank you. We then have a question of how will the Frantic Studio new initiative work?



FRANTIC ASSEMBLY'S IGNITION PROGRAMME

Scott - So I'll just talk a little bit about the Studio and how that came about. This was something we were thinking about for a while, but there was no urgency behind it. And then, of course, the pandemic comes along. Right at the beginning of the pandemic, I can sense a panic among teachers, and we had a panic as well. My initial thought was I want to reach out to teachers and for them to tell me 'how we can help'? What they want from us, how best to tailor our work in schools for them. After my initial conversations it was quite clear that a lot of teachers didn't know, and they were just as happy to ask me 'what the hell are we all going to do?' So, it became the beginning of a conversation and something we expanded.

We used what we call the Teachers Forum, which is a group of teachers across the country that we meet with and talk with regularly, just to get their thoughts on the potential of Frantic Studio. One of the other things that inspired Frantic Studio was with me going to, I think it might be an open night, at my daughters' school. And we see all the subjects and then eventually went into the Drama Studio and I saw on the wall an info sheet about Frantic Assembly. It was really weird looking at it like that. And I read it and I didn't recognise Frantic Assembly. To be honest, it was nonsense. And I realised there was a real risk of Frantic Assembly coming third at a Frantic Assembly lookalike competition. You know what I mean, because the narrative has moved on and we're not in control of that narrative.

We're being defined by people that haven't quite got the full picture and that's teaching our students that Frantic Assembly is this, which is making us really niche and pushing us, you know, into somewhere on a shelf. That's dangerous because our relationship with education is massive, massively important. So I wanted to readdress that and take control of the narrative and make sure that there was a way of getting a better understanding of the potential of Frantic Assembly within the classroom. And this to me presented the reality that there was a gap, there was a gap between what was happening in my rehearsal studio certainly and how that was being understood within school Drama Studios. And I thought, well, what the Frantic Assembly Studio must do is bridge that gap. So that was the starting point, how are we going to bridge the gap between those two worlds? Because we do rely on each other. And we need to inspire each other. And we do, mostly, I think. But I thought that gap could be very, very detrimental, especially at a time when The Arts are under so much pressure, and we're being actively devalued. You know, I think this is the time for us to reclaim the narrative in all aspects.

So initial conversation and initial thoughts and ideas were put together, the initial conversation was to create a subscription platform that would offer insights into all aspects of, not just Frantic Assembly method, predominately Frantic Assembly method but this is where it's really important, what I wanted to do and what I am doing is presenting an insight or window on contemporary collaborative theatre making. Because the other thing about looking at the walls of these schools is most of them up there are dead! And there are some very clever people who are still making work and can talk about it from all kinds of perspectives and experiences and all different ways of collaborating that I think could be incredibly inspiring to young people to hear how real work is made in the real world.

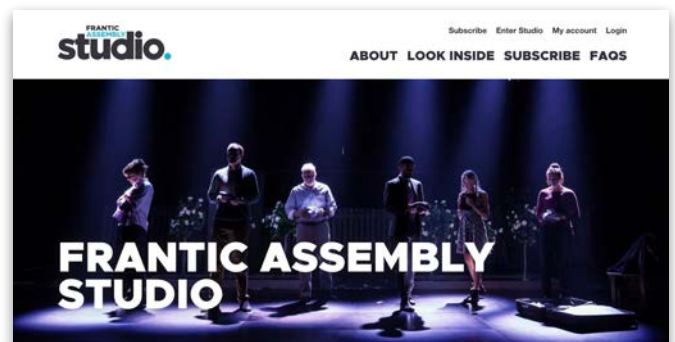
Again, it was a fear of gaps. You know, if you are told 'a lighting designer does this at a particular point', that's it then, you haven't spoken to the type of lighting designers I've been working with. And you haven't heard how exhilarating it is, to have them in the room either 'cause you've only been told they

throw light at a set rather than talk about darkness. Talk about movement. Talk about music. Stillness. Silence. That's the collaborative process. So, it is a subscription platform. Subscribe for a year. It's broken down into various sections. 6 sections. I can talk about this now or come back to it, how would you like me to do it.

Tracy - Entirely up to you. Let me just have a look at what the other questions are. Ah. I think based on the other questions; I think maybe we come back to this because it might actually help with what questions you're going to answer as well. So, if you are the other questions and then it will copy thread into the Frantic Studio. In all fairness as it's probably going to help support your answers.

Gavin - Hello. I work in Essex and we have been introducing our Year 8 cohort to Frantic Assembly and through Curious Incident and they have been totally engaged and absolutely loved it, and this week actually I have delivered some of the best lessons I've ever had, through Curious work and looking at lifts. What my question really relates to is how to open up some of the students fears of being touched because recently they have started to have this fear that they don't want to be touched and don't want people to come too close to them. I don't know if anyone else is having that in their school as well, I just wondered how you approach that and how you can overcome that to help them

Scott - Yeah, I think it is an issue. I think it's getting worse, something our practitioners have found. I think how you approach it is obviously really important. Because often approaching it head on and going 'I'm just going to touch you now', you know it can have the opposite intention. Think of the man on the bus that's tapping the seat, encourages you to sit next to him. You're not going to sit there? You know. Whereas the people who might not want to be touched in the Theatre Studio might well be happy to bump into their friends in the corridor. They might well be happy to play a game outside. That involves them jumping all over each other. So, it's about trying to think about bringing some of that into the room. I think so that it almost happens by accident. That's what I've tried to do anyway, certainly in terms of warm up and games. It's only certainly about being respectful of people's own parameters, but often if their experience, if they are acting differently elsewhere, you need to harness a little bit of that magic and bring it in.



THE STUDIO HOMEPAGE

Gavin - Thank you, Scott, I totally agree with you. I understand that the accidental part of it. I think that the thing that floored me this week was it's actually the people that are normally engaged all of a sudden actually retreated and didn't want to be involved in anything that had touch whereas actually it worked the opposite with some of the lads, the football lads, who hadn't been engaged as the others and they have actually turned it around they are loving the lifts whereas the other people retreated.

Scott - Well I think lifting is quite complex. This is another thing to look out for, being lifted. You know, I'll tell you a little story first of all. This is where I found it, this is where I discovered it was so, so important. I was casting for Curious Incident in New York, so I had a group of men in their 50s who all come from the same part, and I had already realised then that was really important, to make sure everybody has a go at lifting and everybody has a go of being lifted and in an audition situation, everybody is up for it, because everybody wants the job, you know it's those barriers drop, and they tend not to be there with actors anyway. But there was one guy, a huge guy who was lifted, by everybody, just like Christopher does. You know, he was up there. And then when he came down, he said 'thank you, thank you'. And then he just burst into tears.

This massive guy, 50s and everyone was very careful around him, I came towards him and said 'is everything OK' and he just said 'I haven't been picked up since I was seven'. There's something really beautiful about being afforded that opportunity, but that's a little bit simplistic. The reality is it means he hasn't seen the world from that perspective since he was seven, which means he's also being defined as the heavy one. Or the base. Or can only illustrate his strength through being the base, rather necessarily his emotional strength. Or just the strength it takes to be lifted 'cause it's a very active thing. So, I would say, look at your group and think about what is it that's holding the back. It could just be the focus. It's not necessary the touch. I just don't like being the centre of that focus, or I don't want boys hands all over me or girls hands up all over me. We just have to be careful about how lifting can reinforce the dynamic of the room. You know, sometimes, somebody that needs to be lifted and after kind of control somebody else to experience it, to liberate them.' Cause otherwise, they come out of it with their own. I guess perceived limitations reinforced.

Gavin - That's brilliant! Thank you so much, Scott.

Tracy - I think you've answered this anyway with what you were talking about earlier. It says what company inspired you? You've spoken about that? Is the Frantic style similar to what you began creating or has it evolved massively? And I think you kind of talked to us about that journey as well. So next question Claire over to you.

Claire - Hello, sorry. I do hope you can hear me, I mean I guess that I'm in a solo department where there are no boys taking Drama in KS4 and 5 and I guess it's a bit of a big ask really but I wondered if you have any suggestions on how we can? They are all choosing options at the moment and it's a great

time for me to think about how I can engage more boys in Drama.

Scott - I don't have the answer to that, not an immediate fix anyway, but it's something I was talking about with somebody else today. It's a big thing. It's not just a gender thing. We have focused our work on Year 10 and up historically and that's because we felt that those ages can probably handle the physical demands, and maybe the emotional demands of engaging with this work. But we won't have those people to work with if we don't do something about key stage 3 and younger, so we need to find the answer to that. Often teachers come back to us and say 'I use your processes with Year 7, it's great'. 'I use it with Year 8 and it works'. We maybe need to learn a little bit from you guys there about how we can take this on and expand it.

But the ambition from us is to focus on that and to expand into that because it's not about us just getting a few more workshops, it's about combating the erosion of the value of Drama and the Arts, 'cause we see it happen from the top down, and it's insidious. So yeah, it needs combating. But I think the physicality and the action of physical theatre does lend itself to the boys who might be scared of, exposing different sides of, or been exposed to things that make me feel uncomfortable within a Drama Studio, you know, I said I certainly was. I think it was probably no accident that I was attracted to physical theatre. It validated it 'cause it was so physical. It helped bring my two worlds together. And I love telling everybody that we were a physical theatre company. I was doing physical theatre till the point it became an albatross around companies' neck. And then you think, why am I saying this? I don't need to be saying this, but it worked for me. Pitching the world in that particular certainly drew me in. And I think that what we need to do is work that one out. But work out with you probably.

Tracy - Does that help?

Claire - Yeah, absolutely. Thank you. Thank you.

'look at your group and think about what is it that's holding the back. It could just be the focus. It's not necessary the touch'

Tracy - Nathan.

Nathan - Hi. I just wondered if you could help in terms of when you get to that point where you feel like you're going round in circles and how do you generate new material or perhaps finding that passion again for obviously the project that you started on?

Scott - When you say 'go round in circles' do you mean you 'feel like you're getting anywhere with an idea'?

Nathan - Yes, yes. Kind of come to a dead end and obviously with students there not really making progress or you kind of don't think that they're making progress. I think things are starting to become a bit stale and they don't really know how to move forward 'cause obviously I'm aware that you can only influence so much. With them actually having to do it themselves.

Scott - Yeah. What I do, (and this is something that I love, developed to help me not get into that situation) I always remind myself of any presumption that I've made about any moments or any scenes. To the point where the presumption has become a central tenet of the Frantic Method and by that, I mean the application of that if you were dealing with a particular moment, ask yourself does it have to be like this? And ask yourself big questions. What if it was upside down, or if we run this backwards? Or if this wasn't a piece of theatre? What if it was filmed? What if we did this in silence? What if we did it in film? And actually, he presents a whole new frame, and I'm actually looking at the work in a different way. Oh my God, this is where the exciting bit is. I was looking in the wrong place in theatre. Why don't we get everybody to just point to the exciting bit of this scene and we will only work on that? It might just be where somebody's hand reaches out to somebody else. So rather than the whole physical scene, the whole verbal scene, it might just be somebody's pen scraping along the table that creates a bit of tension, which gives away the tension within that person, which might make it the most aggressive act in the room. So, I mean, I'm talking, I'm just going on and on here, but that's what happens once you start applying the presumptions. What have I done? What have I have missed here? Do you know what I mean there?

Nathan - Yeah. That's great. Thank you. That's great, I've literally like wrote so much down, that's great. Thank you.

Tracy - Thank you, Nathan. OK, Kelly Russell.

Kelly - Hi ya. I just wanted first of all, without fangirling too much, to say thank you so much! I'm very passionate about physical theatre and your company's work. I find it kind of fuels my passion when teaching and using your methods and I work in an all-boys school. I find the skills and the techniques are really transferable and accessible for them, and they get really excited by it. I love what you're saying about the 'why', because it kind of reinforces that I'm doing something right. That's why I am always shouting at them 'But why? But why? What do you mean? Why are you doing that?' And it allows me to do that and inspires me and helps me push them in that way. So thank you. I just wanted to know if there's anything that you've got as a kind of like 'go to' or starting point or a warmup with a group with little to no experience and low confidence and things like that when you're working with different groups and your kind of going in cold as we often are as teachers with new groups of

students. Or as we were talking about post pandemic and things like that, where their confidence is taking an all-time low and you're trying to kind of garner that really positive atmosphere and let them get in and let them feel like they can succeed at something first. To take them on a bit of a journey. Is there a kind of 'go to' that you've got?

Scott - Not so much a 'go to' but I think everything you've said, the approach I would take is 'identifying'. They do need something to build on and we do need to build on success. And exhilaration. I think often people's fears are unfounded. People's fears of the rehearsal space are unfounded and so they are based on something, that's based on again, presumptions. I've always tried to make that room initially feel like something they didn't think it would be. So, the first thing I would do would be nothing to do with the play, nothing to do with the rehearsal, nothing to do with what they think it's going to be, whether that's just playing a piece of music incredibly loudly or just to get people's bodies moving or whether that's about playing. I was playing relay games. That brings a kind of competitive edge in, brings a fun edge in. That to me is invaluable. But if you can start the room like that. The what they're building on isn't necessarily a breakthrough in finding a character. They might be building on the fact that just one three relays as a team. But it's still the same thing. It's still the same endorphins. And it might just open them up to engaging. Yeah. So, I don't, I don't necessarily have a 'go to'. But it's about distracting, I think, and combating the presumptions about the room.

Kelly - Yep. Great. Thank you.

Tracy - Thank you, Kelly. Laura.

Laura - Hello! OK, so my question sort of follows on from the previous one and I've noticed there's a lack of movement with my students, especially with new groups and one of the things we explore is narration, as part of a scheme of work. And I'm kind of bored of seeing the same thing happen all the time with students when they narrate. I want them to be more fluid, I want more movement, but they seem restricted, limited. I think the social distancing and all that and they look scared and the fear of touching as well plays into this, but have you got any tips or anything that could actually encourage more movement, especially when pupils are using narration.

Scott - I'm going to say the same word again. Might be about looking at the presumption you've made. Is the narrator on the outside to start with?

Laura - Yeah well, I'm exploring both options really. Narrator on the outside looking in and narration from within. I'm just after tips. It's just I want to move away from them. Just, just, you know, telling the story, move with the story. Does that make sense?

Scott - Yeah, absolutely. But again. Let's challenge the primary presumption about the narrator. Will the narrator tell you what's happening here through words? Is there another way of them illustrating? What's happening? Are they actually just talking to the audience, like it's like their frozen and it's a moment and just dragging audience through that moment? Is it always presented that way? What if the whole stage can actually turn, and I'm not talking about working on a revolve, I'm not talking about that kind of money. I'm just talking about that ambition, but to take an audience on the journey. That's what the narrator does I suppose. Is there another way of them doing it? Can they stop time? Can they change time? Can we experience matrix time, you know? And I'm not saying that's a presentational thing. You don't have to put that in the show.

(Scott Cont.) That's the freedom we should afford ourselves as well, because you could explore all of that and go 'you know that was fun, we learnt a lot from that, but there's no way that's going in the show. What did we learn from that? OK, now use that. Let's never talk about it again'. The reason why that is so fundamentally important is because if everything is just leading up to the performance it means every second that goes by is a second less of rehearsal and it means that the pressure is increasing all of the time, which means a second less of a person. And it means that the pressure is increasing all the time. Which means our opportunities for getting it right are diminishing. That's terrifying. Absolute terrifying. So I think if we can find a way of taking the pressure off our performers and our students when they're working in this way and they can explore freely then maybe we can learn something and then they can come back to something with the vigour and enthusiasm and apply it. That might be wishful thinking but that would be my approach in that I'm trying. Break up this linear journey towards what we might think might be a whole evening of embarrassment. If it goes wrong, you know. How can we take that pressure off and find ourselves learning something new?

Laura - Yeah, I really, really like that. I really like the idea of turning the whole thing around as well. I think that's, you know, that aspect for the audience. I'd like to explore that further so much.

Tracy - Thank you, Laura. Naomi.

Naomi - Our students have chosen to look at Frantic to apply to their scripted extracts and I appreciate that's a little bit back to front in terms of the usual way of working on a completely original piece. So I'm just wondering if you would have any advice for reverse engineering. I know it sort of goes against the usual process, but where would their best place be to start if they're using a script first.

Scott - Do you mean this is an existing script.

Naomi - Yeah.

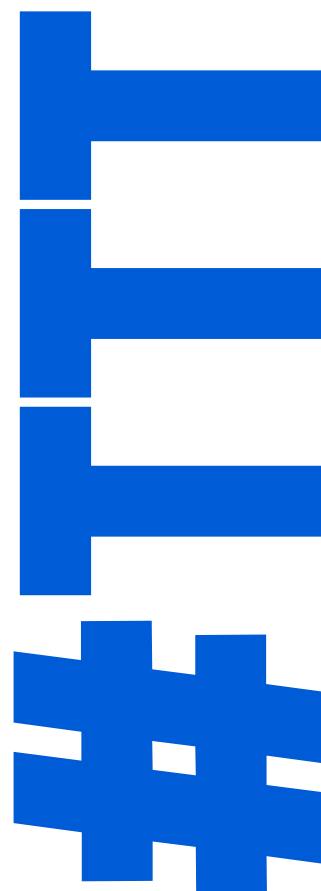
Scott - It's not necessarily reverse engineering. I have to apply the processes to existing script all the time. I guess it's where you start, and how you look at that script. As I said earlier on, I think text is a very small part of our understanding of our environment. So, I would always be looking at text trying to work out where the space is. I don't just mean pauses. I mean you know what? What are the thoughts that are surrounding, where are the aches. Somebody might be saying something, but remember, we say stuff to keep people away, not necessarily to bring people closer to us. So where are the lies?

That manifest itself physically. I think you can look at context and subtext as well. And often subtext becomes quite ripe to explore physically as often the text might appear to only present the context. I do sometimes do this, I do sometimes just make physical strings at work and then just throw them at the text just to see what that will do. But what that can do is unearth an anxiety within the text. It can unearth a tension between the characters. Because suddenly the words sound like their lies, or they sound like they've got something to hide. Or there's just more to the situation that they're letting on? That's probably useful to let your students know that there's always more going on in a situation. That physicality can sometimes bring that out of the context and subtext.

Can I also say when I do throw that choreography at the text, it's an exploratory process. I don't necessarily keep that movement with the text. The other thing I do is I run an exercise often with them actors called the Assault Course and I just set the room up with some tables and chairs, whatever I've got. They might have to walk over the table or just lift the chairs and they might have to lift those chairs up and move on and they might have to step over some rope that might be a river, you know. So they have a journey to go on and they go on it, but they don't speak. This might be a mother and father, mother and son you know, who are setting off on this journey. Whoever takes the first step on that journey will tell you something about that relationship. If someone needs help getting up the chair, getting up on the table, that will tell you something about the relationship.

Do they offer the handout to help the other person up, or do they wait that split second long, too long to let the other person know that they're needy? Doing this all kinds of complexity that can sit alongside our textual understanding. These are characters from plays written plays I sent down the assault course. And it opens up worlds of possibilities and tension between those people. So that's a physical approach towards text and it opens up textual understanding. It's not necessarily about throwing choreography at the text that will then sit with that text.

Naomi - Thank you, amazing.



Tracy - OK, Sophie.

Sophie - Hello. How did you get the opportunity to collaborate and work on *Curious Incident*? I took my Mum to see it a few years ago, bearing in mind she knew nothing about physical theatre and knew nothing about the story and I wanted to see what she thought of it and she was absolutely blown away that something as simple as putting Chris in the air could mean so much, with his autistic background and I just wanted to ask how you got the ability to do that really.

Scott - Yeah, it goes back to a meeting between me, Stephen, who was co-director at the time and Simon Stevens, which was brokered by another director called Sean Holmes. He just thought, you guys need to work together and I think Sean had given and directed Simon to all kinds of footage of the company. I'd read or seen a little bit of Simon's work but nothing massive and we had a really nice conversation. But that's as far as it went. And then suddenly we had a call because Simon was developing *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. He was desperate to convince Marianne Elliott to do it and at that point, everybody was telling him that it was impossible, it wouldn't work. It couldn't work. But Simon thought it could work if he was to bring us in. That's not, sorry, that sounds like I'm bigging us up massively, what I mean is it involved particular perspective to be able to help solve some of the creative problems, the creative problems that he was wilfully creating in his text, which I think is really important to do that, it's really important as well. I think it's really important for writers to do that.

Create problems in the text because brilliant people can offer brilliant solutions, and I think that applies throughout all of collaboration. Don't be afraid of creating problems 'cause it helps people to step forward and solve them. We were invited to come in on the initial development for *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* and it was a brilliant couple of weeks of just trying stuff out. The wonderful atmosphere that was created by Marianne Elliott and the other creatives was that we could try anything. I think some of the stuff that we created that week was probably an abomination, but it felt free. It felt like it was something that, you know, we won't be judged on and that just felt that just made everyone feel a little more comfortable.

So once it came to rehearsals and at that stage we had to convince the National that it was a project that they should take on, and thankfully they did. But once it came to the rehearsals, I think incredibly importantly, Marianne kept that ethos and she did so by turning round to her collaborators and often saying 'I don't know'. I don't know how to solve this. This is something that we often don't afford our students. And they don't afford for themselves as they see it as a weakness and vulnerability but it's not by saying I don't know how to solve this is actually an invitation.

For the people around you to step in because unless you say that people around you don't think they're being invited in. So, it was incredibly fruitful, incredibly exciting, joyous rehearsal room, but it was never one built on the conviction that we were making something brilliant. It was mostly built on the idea that we don't know what this is, we hope to God it works. And just reminded ourselves to be brave.

Sophie - I use examples of the videos all the time in my lesson.

Scott - Be careful. Recognise the danger of showing people videos of actors running along walls, walking along the wall, because people might look at that go well, I can't do that. And often, theatre will just show you those bits, but it's the ambition of the Frantic Studio that I mentioned earlier. You need to see the bits where we fall down. You need to see the bits where it collapses. Because nobody who entered that rehearsal could do what they did when they left. You know, they need to know that there were some dark days and a hell of a lot of doubts along the way as well.

Sophie - Thank you so much.

Tracy - Laura has a question for you.

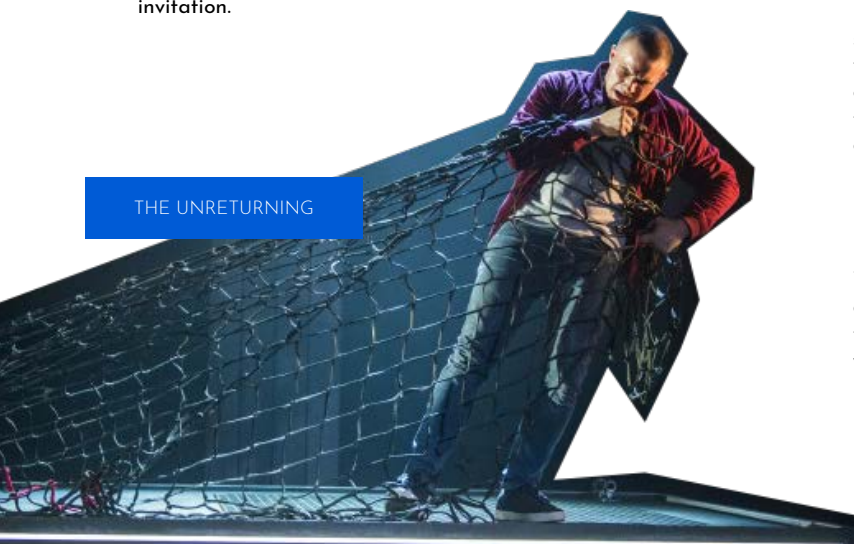
Laura - Hello, hope you can hear me. I've currently got the whole of Year 8s doing a physical theatre version of *Romeo and Juliet* and we're performing it in the competition in two weeks. I just wondered if you got any top tips for quickly getting a whole bunch of kids through rehearsals super quick. They are very enthusiastic, by the way. They are loving what we're doing so far, but not a lot of time.

Scott - Yeah. The quick answer to that is 'no', I don't think I could necessarily say something that helps you with that, but I think what engages is the story. *Romeo and Juliet* story does engage with young people and there are brilliant versions of it. Examples like Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* was a game changer, I think when that came along because I think everyone watched *Romeo and Juliet* without realising they were listening to *Romeo and Juliet*. It's still the text. And that clarity and dynamism within the physical performance and the visual presentation I think is key to an audience understanding. And for that, you need to be confident in what you're saying and putting that story across, so I think every moment, every scene, just everybody being sure of what's the story here, what are we putting across?

The best moment to me when I was developing *Othello* years ago, was working with six, five actors and one dancer. And the five actors picked up their scripts and just spouted this full Shakespearean nonsense. They didn't understand. They just thought that's what they should sound like and then the dancer looked at his script. I don't understand this. And it was that startling moment of honesty that changed everything. I couldn't let the actors get away with that nonsense. Because someone had called it. So, I think always coming back down to the intention of the scene. Always coming back down to the story. How dynamic can it be? How can an audience understand what's going on here? Don't hide behind the language. Own the language.

Laura - That's very reassuring 'cause we have rewritten a lot of it. Well. Right down, yeah. 10 minutes to show our version of *Romeo and Juliet*. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, that's why I was like physical theatre you don't have to have the text. Yeah, it's reassuring what you just said. Thank you.

THE UNRETURNING



Tracy - Thank you. Thank you, Laura. We have Charlie Thompson.

Charlie - Hi everyone, welcome from Adelaide. I'm just about to jump in my car and go to work in a moment and teach a group of Year 11s, so thank you for having us from the other side of the world today. Kristen Doherty is also on from Adelaide, so we're huge fans, we work with your techniques a lot in drama, and we also study Some Things I know to be True, which I know you had a lot of involvement with, and I've also had the privilege of seeing in New York. Curious Incident, which did inspire me and blew me away to start to work with your techniques and I'm currently at the moment and it's probably something that I've picked up today on your essence and how you are working.

It's obviously very much about being in that moment, being created. How do you really work with music? That is my question, 'cause I'm hugely inspired by music, sometimes I'll just listen to a track and take that into the drama room today or see where we can go with it. And you know, work on the idea with what we show physically and how can we convey emotion with less words. So, I'm currently writing a show and I haven't told year 12 (which is 6th form). It's very different, obviously, here in Australia about what that is yet, but when I do get into the room and I've given the bones and the fragments of the text to them to work with, I want to then work with music and physicality to build that story more authentically. So, I just kind of, in a way wondered, do you find music first or do you, you know, work for things and then find different tracks? How does music inspire you?

Scott - Music is a huge inspiration. Sometimes it can be right there at the beginning, sometimes it takes a little bit longer to come to the party. I think this goes back to well before I started the company. I was a teacher for a year and I would teach English in a secondary school, but also taught a little bit of Drama and every lesson before they came in, I would set the lights up in a certain way, but I would also play a piece of music. And sometimes I was subliminal, sometimes it was in their face. But I would ask them how they felt, asked them how they were affected, sometimes not referencing the music. And then we would then we talk about it. So, we develop a greater understanding of the effect, subliminal effect that music often has, certainly the visceral effect. Both Steven and I were huge music fans with eclectic music taste, so that helped. But we would often find ourselves responding to existing music and using that because it was cheaper, to be honest, than a composer. To work with composer, I can't always afford it. I think thought it's worth looking at a lot of films, see how film uses it because music can be a comfort blanket, an indulgence. A very, really brilliant composer (the composer of Curious Incident, actually) talks of it being Mickey Mouse. Because the music that accompanies Mickey Mouse says the same thing as Mickey Mouse might be saying, what his physicality might say if he's sad. The music will go I am sad. And generally, music within theatre should avoid Mickey Mousing.

So, within any scene, you got to ask yourself again 'why'? Why is the music here? Is it to take the audience on a slightly different journey so they learn something about the character? Does the character know what the audience knows about them? Or is the music betraying them? Or is the music giving us the sense that something's about to happen? They are still processing all of this complexity. You have got to be careful that it's not just supporting the scene and helping the audience towards a predetermined emotion as then it kind of gets layered on. The other thing that film does very well is take music away. So, stillness is movement. Silence is sound, you know. Light is darkness. Firstly, they don't exist without each

other, and they need each other to craft each other. So yeah, that's the general things. The other thing I think is just get yourself immersed in playlists.

Charlie - My husband is musician and also a DJ and sometimes if I'm listening to a track, I'll say, can you find me the most stripped back version of this track? So, it doesn't overpower what's happening on stage and it allows it to come through. So, I'm very aware of that as well. And I kind of feel that I do feel the same way as you when I'm working with the track because you don't want it to overpower what's happening.

Scott - Yeah, yeah, exactly. I would recommend Erased Tapes. They are a record label website that do neo-classical music and a lot of digital work, but quite minimalist as well, which is often useful within theatre, so Erased Tapes.

Charlie - Thank you so much for that - I really appreciate it and I'm so sorry. I may have to leave now otherwise I'll be late for work.

Tracy - Charlie, welcome and thank you for joining us. I'm so jealous of the weather I can see in the background.

Charlie - Windy today, but it's been about 32 degrees.

Tracy - It's OK you can go now. Lol.

Scott - Charlie - What school?

Charlie - I'm in the centre of Adelaide and so yeah, we do a lot of work with, you know, like, State Theatre and things that I probably know you would have been engaged with. But yeah, we we've got a really amazing performing arts team and probably just one thing I will say, as I was listening, I'm very homesick because I was born in Australia, raised in England, but came back to Australia for the last 20 years. I feel like this very two different directions where the arts are heading at the moment and listening to what many of you have said about curriculum, I feel very privileged we've changed a lot of things in Australia recently with curriculum and it's become so much more what you said at the beginning, about allowing the students to see purpose and creativity and making them think of themselves as artists, not just responding to this kind of analytical approach to what's been, but what can they create for themselves. I'm so much more inspired as a teacher now that I can be in that space and it really invigorates me to want to go and do more, so I'm really happy we made these changes in Australia in that space. I feel like we really getting somewhere here.

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Scott - That's exciting to hear.

Charlie - We have fought for it for a long time, and I feel that I can actually create work now, do new things. We've got more freedoms, which is a lot of work but very exciting at the same time for a new generation coming forward. I've got to go now, thank you, bye.

Tracy - Thank you. Bye, Charlie. Shannon

Shannon - Hello. Hi, yeah. Can you hear me? I've just got a question specifically regarding Things I Know to be True. My students study Things I Know to be True for their theatrical reviews. Fantastic show. Absolutely love it. There's so much to talk about with it. So, my question to you is what was your aim when creating that show? Like, what were you wanting the audience to kind of take from that? What do you want the actors to basically communicate?

Scott - I think that's a tricky one. Because I'm not sure I think of it in that way. I go back to when I was talking about not wanting to make didactic work. And so, if I was to say, I want my audience to think this way I don't know when that emerges. I think maybe towards the end I might be looking for a reaction from my audience or get thrilled from a particular reaction from my audience and I think the greatest thrill of Things I Know to be True with the amount of people who would stay behind in the audience afterwards and talk about having to phone their Mum or their parents. I wouldn't say we have a set out making that show, thinking about, you know, thinking that this is a show to help people phone their Mums, because then you would just shout 'phone your mum, phone your mum!' for an hour and a half. Whereas actually it is much more complex than that. I think the play itself, I think, I don't think this is a lesson that we should all learn. I think it's just it's about the lessons the characters learn and often we learn it too late.

Rosie had a list of things at the beginning, some things she knew to be true. And that's great, she knows them to be true but the biggest one of all is the fact that life will never change back home, because she is the only one that is out exploring the world. There's a solidity to her Mum and Dad that will always be there, and she can always orbit this rock. You know? And, what happens is that in Things I Know to be True, it shows that life is incredibly fragile. And the person we don't think that has something very, very, bad happen to them. And nobody sees it coming. That can seem like a manipulative trick of a writer just to create an emotional impact, but I think it wasn't about that. I think it's about family and the things we take for granted. And the people we take for granted.

And the idea of knowing. Having a huge list that we know is true. It's really difficult. Because life will come along and turn upside down. And you'll end up with a very different list and I think. Rosie's wisdom was to make that list very short. At the end. And maybe what she says at the end is something worth holding onto, 'cause it basically is life is short. But I would say these are things that we discovered through making the show and there probably understanding that could be taken from the show, but we never set out to say this is what we must communicate if that makes sense 'cause I think the story does that anyway. You have to engage hearts and minds in the experience of watching the show. Then they will take a message if there is any message within it. But I don't think we ever mentioned that notion of a message ever in rehearsals.

Shannon - No, thank you. That's brilliant.

Tracy - Thank you, Shannon.

THEATRE TALK

FROM DRAMA MATTERS

COMING SOON

Check the Drama Matters social media pages and website for announcements for the 2023/24 academic Theatre Talk sessions.

#TT #DramaMatters

Tracy - What did you want to tell us about Frantic Assembly Studio?

Scott - I'll briefly tell you how it's set out. It is set out into six sections and those six sections are Making Work and that's broken down into warmups, games, exploring mechanics, the mechanics of physical work. Creating Choreography, there is a section on Devising, where our practitioners are given a stimulus that they've never seen before, and they have to devise a piece of work in two days. That's particularly useful, I think, for people to see. Because they panic and they make mistakes, and they are all over the place and then they create something really lovely. But that journey is articulated and there's also work on text and movement. So that's the first section Making Work. Second section is Productions and that's where we look at the productions from a particular point, so we will pick out a couple of themes from that production. It might be about how it was devised, or it might be about something I learned from the process. I'll also look at three scenes and do three scene and also interviewed members of cast or creative team on their experience and their perspective on that show. The big news in productions is that I've made a film.

Just between lockdowns, where I devised a show myself, I made it for the camera and it's an exclusive Frantic Assembly production exclusive for the platform. But I made it as a piece of devised theatre, no script. Just six actors and some props. I went into the store and just picked out some props. I pulled out a ladder, a mirror and some cloth and some other things. And then I said OK, each one of these props is going to be the basis for a scene and made a piece of work on then. And the platform is going to see that film first and again that we've broken down. Looking at how it was made, why was it made and mistakes made along the way, Moments of doubt, different perspectives. So that's the productions, and we'll look at at least four productions within there. The method uncovered which is more. Exploring that, the central tenets of the work, as I said, what are the presumptions? How might you apply the presumption? What are the three universes? What I mean by that? How can that open up your work? What is workshoping? How can that change?

My perspective on the work that type of thing. And then there is another section called Ideas, that's going to be a curated environment. Little bits of art, little bits of inspiration for teachers and students to look at and take away. So, it could be 30 seconds of a TikTok or it could be a piece of work that's commissioned or just somewhere you should look.

To go back to what I was saying earlier when Volcano said you need to see this. It's just a little bit like that. And then the last room that is quite interesting. Students won't be able to see that last room 'cause that's the Staff Room. Think of it as a quiz book. This is where the answers are. And those answers aren't necessarily, or basically an area to support.

There's an area where we made films that refer back to the earlier part and point out things that can go wrong and how you might want to think about stuff where you might get stuck. The whole tone of the of the subscription platform, the Frantic Assembly Studio, is something that you would share with your students. You would watch it together and you would interact with it. But this section is just for teachers, and it also contains a film, the introduction, which is called 'No Such Thing as a Silly Question'.

I haven't made that film yet, but I think it's really important to welcome you into the staff room with that film. 'Cause I think that's where we're going to learn about how we apply this, and I think accepting there's no such thing as a silly question is really important for us all.

Tracy - As you already know we always ask at the end of our #TTTs, 'Drama Matters' because?

Scott -

I will go back to that word I have been saying quite a lot. It matters because... 'Why?'. I think so much of what we do does delve into the human spirit. It does ask 'why did we say that?', 'why did we do that?', 'why is the world like this?'.
You prefaced this evening perfectly, Tracy, the situation we are currently in has come about because of indoctrination and the lack of ability to say 'Stop!' and say 'why?'. I think it's really important that we are encouraging young people to ask that question, but to really dig in and explore the answer as well. That's why it matters. It encourages analytical thought.

We learn from the past. It makes us think about the future. It's alive. And it's fundamental.

Tracy - I left pause there purposely because I think it deserved one. Thank you, Scott, as ever you answered the questions beautifully.

Final thoughts (...until next time)

To my friends,

I have always delivered Drama and been involved in Drama since I can remember (like literally since I can remember). I used to work in the city at an Insolvency firm running a multimillion-pound Law of Property Act Portfolio, it basically means glorified debt collector. I had worked there for 15 years after being 'asked politely' to leave the 6th form of the school I was in. The school had promised me a YTS at a Theatre (yes I'm that old, an apprenticeship for any youngsters out there) of course it never happened. I dreamt of being on the West End Stage. I could dance, sing and act, the dream was Drama School and my A Levels were my path to that. However, there was this one teacher, Mr Davis (English Teacher) who hated me, I sneezed too loud in the Summer months, or I didn't work hard enough, or I spoke too much. He made my GCSEs a misery!

I was delighted when I was allowed to do A Level Drama even without studying it at GCSE. I had however been involved in every aspect of the subject possible as extracurricular. One day, while sitting in private study, diligently working on my Stanislavsky essay and listening to my Walkman, I was summoned to the front by Mr Davis, who was supervising. He asked me why I wasn't working. I referred to the essay I was writing and defiantly told him I was. This was all he needed to be able to have a go, to which I thought you are not my teacher any more so I had a go back. This culminated in a shouting match and me promptly walking out, just after telling him to go forth and multiply.

Understanding that the school had to take action, my Dad very kindly offered me a job. I loved my job and at the same time was able to follow my dream by auditioning and performing in London at some of the West End stages. I then decided to set up my own youth theatre (I was 18 years old but thought and felt I could do anything, so I did). My youth theatre was called 'AIM Productions' (Art In Motion Productions) and the first show I directed was Bugsy Malone. There were forty young people aged 4 - 18 raising money for charity. I ran it voluntarily and didn't earn any money from it but boy did I get so much from it. I was also allowed to take posters in and put them up in my old school. It was with great delight smothering Mr Davis's room in them. I even left a program on his desk with my name highlighted. I would stick it to him silently as after all he did tell me I 'wouldn't become anything'.

The youth theatres continued and over time they changed guise to fit with different aspects of my life. They were still voluntary, I charged a £1 a week to cover the hall charge and to be able to buy some material to make the costumes and to put on two shows a year. Upon becoming a mother, I established the Sandye Independent Youth Theatre (SIYT). As my children grew, I then set up the Little Peoples Theatre Company specifically for younger children, which allowed my sons to participate. As they matured, the Young Peoples Theatre Company (YPTC) was formed to suit their age group. The power of drama, you see, lies in its ability to instil a sense of worth in young people. They were empowered to choose the charities we supported, and they had the chance to perform, becoming part of a community that uplifted one another.

It was never about polish and the star diva, it was about self-esteem, confidence building, collaboration and stepping stones on their journey. It was there that I was told by KJ (a member) 'Tracy you should be a teacher'. I laughed. I didn't even have a pass at Maths and English, but I would be able to do what I love and be paid for it! Result. I applied, I was accepted on to a course to get a degree in Performing Arts with Theatre at a local college.

Oh, I should mention - at this point, I had also left my marriage, moved into a house with my two boys (who were 2 and 6 at the time), was juggling three jobs and had embarked on my degree. My ex-partner told me I would never complete it, that I never finished or succeeded at anything. He even claimed my boys didn't stand a chance with me raising them alone.

As much as I could bore you with the rest of the story and the trials and tribulations that happened over the next 20 years, I won't. Maybe that's an article for another time, but what I can tell you is teaching matters, because YOU are that teacher and you have an impact like you wouldn't believe. You influence the path a young person takes and their ability to believe in themselves. Before they entered your class, they may have been in an environment where they were told they couldn't achieve, or perhaps their home life was such that they were constantly told they couldn't. They may even have responsibilities so burdensome that they rarely get the chance to be seen.

You see them. Drama saw me, gave me a worth. It was the one space I knew I could be me and I was bloody good at it. It didn't matter those two negatives that told me I couldn't as I would in spite of them and that is so important after all Drama Matters because it is powerful.

It doesn't just plant seeds, grow and save minds! It has an innate power to bring about change. You also need to see you and that's what this magazine is all about. Yes, it has educational content, but it also focuses on wellbeing, on the fact that 'YOU' matter, on the fun aspects of life and on the reality that we see YOU too.

I also know you all have stories to tell. I have spoken to so many that have a similar story to mine and if you ever want to be part of what we are doing with the magazine, please do get in touch as we would love to hear your story, lift you up in your downs and celebrate you in your highs.

While this is the last page of this issue, I know that many more are to come. This really is just the beginning.

With so much love, peace and understanding.

Tracy



AN INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE DRAMA SCHOOL FOR A DAY

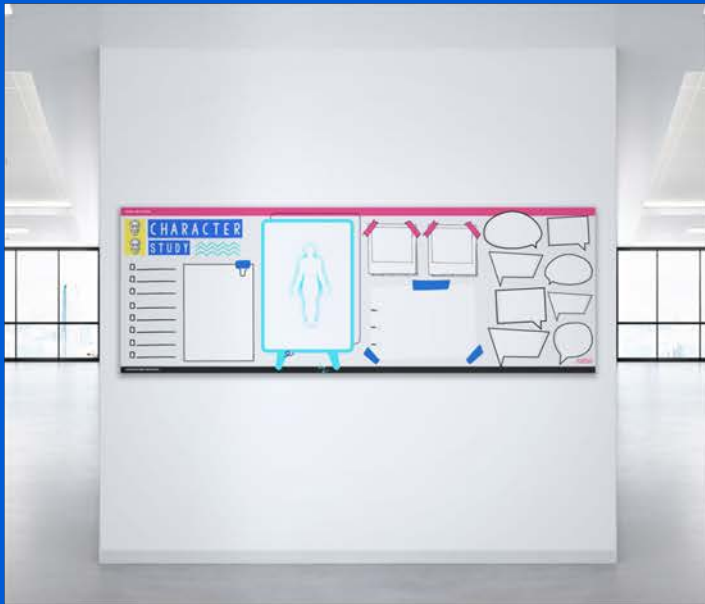
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