



## THE FUTURE OF WORKING IN SCHOOLS

**Friday 31 July 2020**  
**hosted by Action for Children's Arts**

[www.childrensarts.org.uk](http://www.childrensarts.org.uk)

### PRESENTERS

**Vicky Ireland MBE** – Chair of Action for Children's Arts. Freelance director, writer, actress, presenter, Co-Artistic Director of A Thousand Cranes Theatre. Former Artistic Director of Polka Theatre Wimbledon.

**Chris Jarvis** – Trustee of Action for Children's Arts. Presenter on BBC Children's Television.

### SPEAKERS

**Holly Barradell** – Head of Faculty for Expressive Arts at Skinners' Kent Academy and Founder of Open Drama UK.

**Timm Dadds** – Deputy Head at Cwmrhydyceirw Primary School, Swansea.

**Elaine Grant** – Head of Access Programmes at Mousetrap Theatre Projects.

### ATTENDEES

Chris Abbott – Emeritus Reader in Assistive Technologies, Kings College London; ACA Critical Friend.

Sarah Argent – Artistic Associate of Theatr Iolo.

Emily Bairstow – Director, Wild Geese Theatre Company.

Debbie Bandara – Artistic Director, Forest Tribe Theatre.

Mimi Doulton – Development Officer, Action for Children's Arts.

Alison Garratt – Touring Producer, Oily Cart Theatre.

Samantha Giblin – Artistic Producer, Little Actors' Theatre.

Jennie Hardie – ACA Honorary Member.

Penny Hay FRSA FHEA – Director of Research, House of Imagination; Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural and Creative Industries; Reader in Creative Teaching and Learning, Bath Spa University.

Kevin Lewis – performer, writer, director of theatre for children and young people.

Lisa Prime – Programme Manager for Children and Young People, BAFTA.

Dr Geoffrey Readman – Consultant in Theatre and Drama Education.

Matthew Sanders – director of Magic Lantern.

Phil Sherman – Artistic Director of Booster Cushion.

Adam Stafford – Freelance Theatre Director.

Vince Virr – Associate Artist with Barrowland Ballet; One Dance UK Mentee.

Ruth Weyman – Executive Producer, Theatre Alibi.

Kate Williams – General Manager, Theatr na nÓg.

David Wood – actor, author, composer, magician, stage producer and director; President of ACA.

## PROVOCATIONS

*Holly Barradell*

I have oversight over both primary and secondary education in my current role. From September I will also be overseeing early career teaching. I'm here to talk about how we can work with visiting artists, school trips, and the curriculum from September.

Visitors: should be encouraged to come on-site as much as possible. One way to work with the guidance is by offering peripatetic teaching after hours. A record needs to be kept of visitors as normal, with extra details because of Test and Trace. As a caveat, peripatetic teachers do increase risk as they move around schools – if one of them gets ill, all schools they work at may be forced to shut.

Curriculum: my school is making use of outside space until the October half-term so that students continue to access drama teaching. We are looking at using local parks and other outside spaces around the site to support the curriculum. This has required extensive risk assessments.

Government guidance for England: **From KS1 to KS3 the curriculum should remain broad so that the majority of pupils are taught a full range of activities.** The government has suggested schools follow the Oak National Academy curriculum. The issue with this is that there is no drama coverage, however there is useful specialist content for SEND and some performing arts subjects such as music. Music has subject specific guidance from the government: no sharing of instruments. Lessons have had to be shortened to allow time for cleaning. No large group choirs or ensembles, consequently the school choir is continuing with online singing.

Bubbles are making it challenging to work across year groups. This has had implications on staffing as there has to be a drama, art club etc for each year group.

School trips: are allowed to happen, but not overnight or overseas

*Timm Dadds*

The new Welsh curriculum includes expressive arts as a distinct area of the curriculum. It is a right for all children aged 3-16.

Covid-19 impact: all artist visitors were cancelled, venues we would normally visit were closed, trips requiring transport became too expensive as only eight children were allowed on a 60-seat bus. We have found creative solutions to these problems, for example virtual venue tours with live Q&As, artist demonstrations on Microsoft Teams, feedback for children and carers via Flipgrid. Students have been taught how to make their own films, enabling them to create more content on which we can offer feedback. The school has embraced online celebrations, and is currently planning an online Christmas concert. Teaching online reduces stress for children at a time when we must prioritise their mental health – releasing the content they create online reaches a wider audience

This curriculum offers amazing opportunities for children – let's stop expressive arts being the Cinderella subject

*Elaine Grant*

I have been running a schools project at Mousetrap for 13 years. We organise theatre visits for secondary schools across London as part of the Theatre Openers programme, offering them tickets to West End

shows for £8/head. It is one of our largest programmes, and the hardest to fund, but has run successfully for 24 years.

Covid-19 impact: we are now faced with the dilemma of whether teachers will be willing to resume school visits; will theatres reopen to capacity; will we still be able to offer subsidised tickets? Every programme we run involves a theatre visit – if theatres remain closed until next year, what provision can we offer? Personally, my job is in the hands of the government and their social distancing restrictions. But, I am certain that school visits should not be a thing of the past – nothing can replace live performance or live experience of being part of an audience. I have witnessed incredible responses to numerous productions from a diverse range of students.

Furthermore, theatres and arts venues need school groups – this is a huge part of their audience. We need to make school visits an entitlement for learning, culture and fun – I'm ready to fight for its survival – are you?

## **BREAKOUT ROOMS**

### *Group 1*

- School visits account for a huge amount of theatre-going (for example, in one attendee's local theatre – over 30% of the audience is from schools).
- One attendee has been working outside with students in bubbles – there are challenges working with children who are so spaced out; another is embracing virtual story-telling.

### *Group 2*

- Disappointment that [Bradford] schools aren't valuing the arts or seeing its benefit, some schools are going backwards.
- Challenges: different rules in different counties/countries; persuading older children to adhere to social distancing; variation in resources between schools.
- Opportunities: creating radio plays, working outdoors in public spaces.

### *Group 3*

- Practical and safeguarding challenges of teaching through Zoom – shared resources.
- Digital poverty: one in three children in Bristol have digital poverty – a combination of analogue and digital teaching is very important
- People have been rising to the challenge and embracing CPD online. Do we feel that teachers will be able to embrace all this new technology?
- Concern about whether outreach programmes will have the same impact if delivered online, rather than in person.

### *Group 4*

- Everybody is rising to the challenge in their own way, setting off into the unknown.
- One attendee is doing a one-person show in Devon, another running workshops for disadvantaged children, a third considering creating work for babies and early-years on picnic blankets in the park.

- A teacher commented on their desire to have artists in, but the concern that parents would be threatened by this. How do we prepare parents for school visits?
- People who work in arts for children are good at being imaginative and celebrating our own skills. We have great skills, are light on our feet and inventive. Positive thinking.

## QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Q. I spend a lot of time working with children's mental health charity Place2Be. Creativity seems core to mental well-being and health. Do you feel this acknowledgement is there in schools?

A. *Timm* – we are looking to use Expressive Arts to draw out the pupil's feelings. Digital is a stop-gap until we can return to face-to-face work. *Holly* – the school I work at has a focus on student well-being as well as staff; we will have no formal assessments in the first half term in the autumn – let students get used to formality of school again.

Q. Does anyone have experience in SEND schools that they can report back on?

A. They have bubbles within each school and also are supporting families one to one, it's been complicated.

## APPENDIX

### *Apologies and Message from Tina Williams, Artistic Director Pied Piper Theatre*

We're all ready to go as soon as the government allows assemblies and visitors in schools. Our cast and creative team are all prepared to start at any date, so if we can't tour in November, we will move forwards to December, then January, then February. Schools and theatres have a second contingency date. They may have to have a third.

We're all going to isolate for seven days before rehearsals start and then form a bubble. Masks and gloves will be worn except for performances. Our cast and team have monthly Zoom meetings for updates.

One touring company's way of coping with the current situation and trying to remain positive!

### *Message from Phil Sherman, Booster Cushion*

I have been talking to other performers and there has been a huge move to putting things online but without any consideration to the costs. As such, people are not paying a fee to watch. This has been most acutely felt by unfunded groups. The expectation is that online content should be free and this is becoming the norm.

Also, the different approaches around the UK are making it hard to find out who is doing what and how. We here at Booster Cushion Theatre have found so many colleagues on furlough that we cannot plan or organise virtually any performances at all.

However, we are presenting 3 outdoor productions during August and each authority is having to jump through bizarre hoops just to get spaces identified and then engage in even more intensive tasks of making it safe.