



## DRAMA AND ME

Patrice Baldwin

### What is your occupation?

I used to be a headteacher but am currently a local authority adviser for arts development and improvement in Norfolk. I also work partly as a school improvement partner; I know that good drama can be a powerful way of improving schools. I am the chair of National Drama (the leading UK association for drama and theatre educators) and I am an educational author. For many years I was a BBC Education scriptwriter.

### Where did you train?

I studied English and drama at Dartford College, so of course I consider them to be separate subjects and don't think drama should be placed within English. I started out teaching in the ILEA (Inner London Education Authority), where there were plenty of drama courses, and I completed an ADBED course and later (in Norfolk) the RSA drama in education course. But it was being a member of Gloucestershire Youth Theatre that hooked me into drama. Now I keep attending National Drama's conferences to keep my own practice moving forward.

### What drama education projects have you been involved in?

I set up D4LC (Drama for Learning and Creativity) in 2005. It started out as a project between National Drama and Norfolk County Council to improve learning and teaching in and through drama in primary and secondary schools (and later museums), and became a nationally recognised school improvement initiative that is still spreading in the UK and internationally.

I was also involved in planning and organising a very exciting European project that took place last year (led by ANRAT, France) involving young people from many countries, working together on the theme of migration. Half had been born in the country they live in and half were migrants, so they explored what they had in common as young people and expressed it through devised performance. They worked with theatre directors from five countries, making some excellent drama and many strong international friendships that I am sure will last.

### What is the proudest moment of your career so far?

I was very pleased to be invited by Sir Jim Rose to be the drama member of his expert editorial group that drafted the



proposed new primary curriculum. It was an incredibly challenging and satisfying task and I learned a lot through doing it. It is just a shame it all went by the wayside just prior to the election.

### What do you think of the drama lessons you received at school?

At primary school we had radio drama lessons (although they were mainly movement); little did I realise that I would one day end up writing some of them. I did not receive drama lessons at the traditional Grammar school I went to; the only 'drama' was reading Shakespeare and the annual school plays.

O level drama was introduced the year after I left the school and I remember feeling sad it had not been available to me. It was youth theatre that got me passionately involved in drama, not school. I could have gone through all my school years and never experienced drama teaching at all if I had not decided to join a youth theatre. I think this is sadly still the case now sometimes.

### What do you think about the state of drama education today?

I am very concerned about it. Drama is undervalued and underdeveloped in many schools and this deprives children and young people. I think regular, high-quality drama in school hours, taught by well-trained drama teachers should be a statutory entitlement for all children at KS1, 2 and 3, but in practice it is simply not happening.

Drama (and dance) still does not have equal status with art and music. The new secondary curriculum ignores drama and the newly-proposed primary curriculum (which placed drama as a subject within

the arts instead of just part of speaking and listening) seems to have been lost. I am concerned that the cultural entitlement agenda could mean that drama teachers become a dying breed and drama education will become the domain of theatre educators (often out of school hours). Drama teachers and theatre educators provide different experiences and children need access to both.

### What was the last production you saw?

My daughter took me to *Hair* recently. It made me feel rather like a piece of 'living history' but it was enjoyable. I remember the original in the 1960s in Bristol and seeing it again 40

years later, but with my daughter, seemed a little odd!

### What's next for you?

I am currently doing quite a lot more international drama workshops and keynotes (mainly in Europe) and would like to continue to develop my international drama work in and beyond Europe. I also intend to become more active on behalf of IDEA (International Drama, Theatre and Education Association).

I am fascinated by working with drama in different cultural and educational settings. I also want to revisit and make further links between drama, learning and neuroscience, which I started to explore in my book, *With Drama in Mind*. I don't want to write another drama book for quite a while (if ever) but I might write a children's novel and more children's poetry. And I will keep on battling alongside National Drama for drama to be part of the school curriculum of the future for every child.

### If you could give just one piece of advice to fellow drama teachers, what would it be?

Make good and frequent use of teacher in role. It is arguably the most powerful teaching tool there is and shifts your relationship with the class. It is challenging, enjoyable and totally flexible and will keep you on your professional toes!

*Teachers who want to know more about D4LC can go to [www.d4lc.org](http://www.d4lc.org), join the open D4LC Facebook group or go to Patrice's own website: [www.patricebaldwin.com](http://www.patricebaldwin.com).*