

SPRING SCHOOLS PROGRAMME AT UNICORN THEATRE

The Unicorn Theatre has announced details of its forthcoming events for Interact: the theatre's school programme. Interact provides resources for schools, including in-school workshops, based on the theatre's productions, CPD for teachers and online education packs, with ideas for classroom teaching.

The new year will see Interact offer workshops and resources alongside three of the Unicorn's productions:

1001 Nights, a modern retelling of *Arabian Nights* is suitable for primary Years 2–4; *A Thousand Slimy Things*, based on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is applicable for early year secondary school students and *Liar, Liar*, written by EV Crowe is most suitable for KS3–4 secondary students.

For more information visit <http://unicorntheatre.com/schools/interact> or contact Unicorn's schools relationship manager: ella.macfadyen@unicorntheatre.com; 020 7645 0544.



New workshops for Unicorn school's programme

HAMMERSMITH LYRIC BEGINS WORK ON TRAINING FACILITIES

The Lyric Hammersmith is undergoing a £16.5million redevelopment after six years of raising funds for the project. The renovations will turn the West London venue into the country's first teaching theatre by 2014.

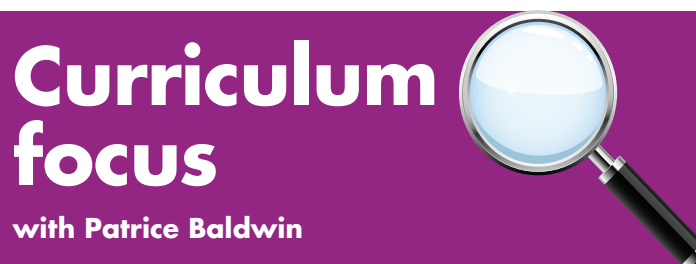
A two-storey extension to the existing venue will provide extra rooms to offer educational sessions for students from actors and directors. In addition, there will also be facilities for dance, drama, wardrobe and prop departments and a TV and film studio.

The Lyric's executive director Jessica Hepburn said: 'This is a unique project and the largest cultural development of its kind to take place in West London for decades. We're extremely grateful to everyone who has contributed their vision and support to the project and we're delighted to be putting culture and young people at the heart of the regeneration of Hammersmith and Fulham.'

Hammersmith & Fulham Council has donated £3million towards the Lyric's redevelopment project. Council leader Nicholas Botterill said: 'The Lyric is already far more than a theatre and this major regeneration project will not only help to inspire generations of young people, but also secure this wonderful institution's place at the heart of the borough's cultural community for years to come.'

The Lyric's website has a donation page, where visitors can provide the redeveloped building with much-needed furnishings – everything from a digital camera to a kettle is available to purchase for the theatre's new facilities.

For more information about donating to The Lyric, visit www.lyric.co.uk/changing-landscapes-changing-lives/donate.



Invisible drama and other monkey business

When I was a child, I told other children in my neighbourhood that I had pet monkeys swinging from the trees in my garden. I started charging them each a penny to come and see them. Amazingly, children handed over their money and then stood together in my garden and agreed that they could see monkeys. I still wonder if they actually believed they saw them. It went wrong when a doubting child threatened to ask my mother if I really had any monkeys. I went indoors and asked my mother to lie for me, but she made me tell them the truth and refund their pennies.

Children and drama teachers are good at bringing to life what can only be imagined. This will soon be necessary, as we are already being asked to imagine that drama is in the next curriculum – when it clearly isn't. The Department for Education (DfE) is now leading the way with this 'pretend', recently claiming that drama is threaded through the draft-primary English curriculum. I can only assume they are referring to an updated version of the draft-primary curriculum, one that I have not seen, or they are using the same imaginary thread that was used to make *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Drama is now invisible in the curriculum, so let's not pretend it is there. Maybe, like the children in my garden, some will claim to see the drama in Mr Gove's political undergrowth. I prefer not to beat about the bush. I will call out loudly: 'The king has got no clothes on!' and 'Mr Gove has cut drama from the primary curriculum and the EBacc.'

Mr Gove claims that primary and secondary schools are free to offer drama. It is apparently their 'choice'. He has a great imagination! There is no curriculum-drama guidance in sight, no drama programme of study under construction, fewer drama teachers in training and less-curriculum time for drama. Secondary schools have realigned their curriculum and staffing in anticipation of the EBacc. Is drama a real or imaginary choice when assessment rules and schools will be judged mainly on their EBacc results?

Recent research for the DfE, conducted by Ipsos MORI, revealed that among the schools surveyed 23% of them have cut drama and the performing arts as a subject since the EBacc announcements. Drama is the most frequently cut subject. Many drama teachers are either losing their jobs or being redeployed to teach other subjects (usually English). How can drama honestly be a real choice for all children, in all schools, when not all schools have drama or drama teachers? For many children, drama will not be available as a choice.

If my mum were alive today, she would tell Mr Gove to stop pretending. She would tell him to be honest and speak the truth. Drama is not there. Not all children will have access to drama. Stop pretending!



Patrice Baldwin is chair of National Drama, president of the International Drama Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) and a member of the presidential council for the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE). She works freelance as an international drama CPD consultant, workshop leader and conference speaker. Patrice is also an educational author, her forthcoming book *Inspiring Writing Through Drama* is co-written with Rob John.