

## DOT WOOD STEPS DOWN FROM M6

Artistic producer of M6 Theatre, Dot Wood, has announced that she is to step down from what she describes as, 'the most amazing job in the world' after 30 years service.

M6 Theatre was founded in 1977. The company, based in Rochdale, specialises in producing theatre work with and for young people. Wood first started at M6 in 1982 as education officer, having previously worked in the multicultural primary schools of Manchester. Wood was awarded an MBE in 2006 for services to drama in the North West.

Chair of trustees Katharine Rhodes said: 'Dot has been at the heart of M6 Theatre over many years as our creative force and guiding light. Her talent, vision and unswerving commitment to theatre for children and young people is well recognised – not only by those of us who have had the pleasure of working with her, but by the whole community of young people's theatre.'

'We at M6 are immensely sad at her leaving. However, a true testament to Dot's extraordinary achievements is that she leaves a great team of people and a strong, resilient, forward-looking theatre company, with quality and integrity at its very roots.'

The search for a new artistic producer is underway for when Wood leaves in July. She said of her departure: 'M6 has been a huge part of my life over the past 30 years. It's been a wonderful journey and I'm extremely proud of what we've achieved over those three decades.'

'There have been some tough mountains to climb at times, but the rewards have been a thousand-fold! Working with inspirational artists to create theatre which brings wonder, imagination and connections into young people's lives, and being able to witness that impact, has always felt like the most amazing job in the world.'

[www.m6theatre.co.uk](http://www.m6theatre.co.uk)

## THEATRE AUDIENCES NOT PUT OFF BY THE OLYMPICS

A poll by [Whatsonstage.com](http://Whatsonstage.com) has suggested that, despite fears of low attendance numbers, theatre audiences will not be put off by this summer's Olympic Games.

Of the 32,000 people polled, 66% believed that the Olympics Games would have a positive impact on numbers attending the theatre. 58% also said that they would attend the theatre during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and a further 11% said the Olympics would encourage them to attend more than they usually do.

Many theatre organisations are still concerned about the impact this summer will have on visitor numbers. The Society of London Theatre (SOLT) is set to offer £10 tickets to performances of *Mamma Mia* and *Phantom of the Opera* as an incentive to keep commuters facing longer journeys happy during the Olympic Games busy period.

Ben Plowden from TfL said: 'We know that public transport will be much busier than usual. That's why we are teaming up with a range of London's top attractions to ensure that people, on the busiest days, are spoilt for choice when deciding how to spend their evening.'

The offer will bode well with those polled by [Whatsonstage.com](http://Whatsonstage.com), as 65% of those who said they would not be attending the theatre said cheap tickets may persuade them to attend.

[www.whatsonstage.com](http://www.whatsonstage.com); [www.solt.co.uk](http://www.solt.co.uk)



Lewis Wileman

## Curriculum focus

with Patrice Baldwin



### A fairy tale come true?

I am sitting at the Royal Opera House waiting for a performance to start. Opera? Ballet? No, Darren Henley launching (and Michael Gove responding to) the overdue report on cultural education. There was not much song and dance from the invited audience.

Henley has proposed a national plan for cultural education that will operate through cultural hubs (rather like the new music hubs). The new ACE regional bridging organisations are poised to act as the future funding channels and as cultural brokers between schools and cultural organisations, creative industries and artists. Arts Council England insists that drama is one of the four main art forms. So maybe ACE has added its weight to the case for the equal status of music, art and design, dance and drama in education. The hefty influence of ACE shines through the cultural education report with Artsmark and Arts Awards being woven neatly into the plan.

Henley states that cultural subjects (such as drama) should be included in the National Curriculum and the English baccalaureate. He reports that, 'schools remain the single most important place where children learn about cultural education [both] in and out of school hours.' Henley recognises the importance of arts teachers to cultural education and points out that drama (and dance) are still 'Cinderella subjects'. He suggests they should become 'stand-alone' subjects, with drama as more than just 'a subsidiary of English'. Hoorah!

If drama is a Cinderella subject then maybe Henley is our new fairy godfather, and the magic wand is this report – as long as wicked step sisters are banished from the land and drama in schools is not stolen away and locked up inside theatre towers for 100 years or more.

I asked Mr Gove about the future role of arts teachers in relation to the cultural education plan. His response to me focused on how schools could link up talented students to cultural organisations and how important arts appreciation was. Gove's response resonated with one I received from a director of a theatre for young people about a year ago, who told me that drama teachers were important because they, 'let theatre into schools'. This left me speechless for a whole second!

Gove wants to ensure that children from poorer backgrounds with artistic talent are supported towards excellence in their field. Surely the key starting point should be a good arts curriculum in all schools for all children taught by well-trained, arts specialist teachers. We can all appreciate that!

The choice of which recommendations to act upon is up to Gove. He has agreed to the first national youth dance company, an academy for young film-makers and a national network of art and design Saturday clubs. Music had its own review and will soon have its own hubs. There seems to be nothing specific in his action list for drama. When asked about drama as a separate subject in schools he said, 'You can't have all your Christmas presents at once.' Hum! 'Dear Santa ...'.



Patrice Baldwin is Chair of National Drama, President of the International Drama Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) and a member of the executive council for the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE).

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