

### The Opening Ceremonies

The Opening Ceremonies of the Olympic and Paralympic Games are both dramatic and spectacular, involving many professional artists. The opening performances (which can last several hours) combine a range of dramatic techniques and art forms, including dance, movement, music, theatre, pyrotechnics, lights, sound, singing, special effects and costumes.

Early Ancient Greek Theatre was mainly singing, dancing, chorus and masks. It was linked to religious festivals and drew a very large audience to an amphitheatre, which has some similarities to an Olympic stadium. If you read through the information below about Ancient Greek Theatre, it is easy to draw comparisons with the Opening Ceremonies of our modern day Olympic and Paralympic Games.

### Ancient Greek Theatre

- ▶ Theatre was invented by Ancient Greeks.
- ▶ The first plays were song and dance shows performed by an all male Chorus.
- ▶ The first plays honoured the god Dionysos (the god of wine) and attending was considered to be a type of worship.
- ▶ Plays lasted a long time and people brought food and drink to the performance.
- ▶ The audience cheered or jeered the performances and sometimes threw stones or bits of food at poor performances.
- ▶ Stewards with sticks would beat the audience if their behaviour was getting out of hand.
- ▶ Ancient Greek Theatre buildings (*Theatrons or amphitheatres*) were semi-circular, built on hillsides and were open air, seating an audience of up to 18,000 on tiered, stone benches.
- ▶ The actors changed in the skene (a building at the back of the circular stage that usually had scenery painted on it).
- ▶ Actors wore exaggerated masks that portrayed the emotions and type of character. One actor might change masks a few times, to play several characters.



Opening Ceremony of 2008 Games in Beijing (Heinz Klutmeier/Sports Illustrated/Getty Images)



The Stadium In Epidaurus, Greece (Manuel Cohen/Getty Images)



### How drama links with and supports the Olympic and Paralympic Values

- ▶ **Friendship** – drama involves working together collaboratively and trusting the people you are working with. Through drama we work together towards the same goal and this can support new friendships.
- ▶ **Equality** – in whole class drama children and teachers in role work as co-participants. There is equal opportunity for all to contribute and there is opportunity to raise the role status of selected children within a drama.
- ▶ **Respect** – drama relies on the mutual respect of participants in order for it to work. In drama we respectfully watch and listen to each other and feedback on each other's work, both as co-participants and as audience.
- ▶ **Courage** – if children feel insecure about working in role with others or about performing their work in front of an audience then individual and collective courage is required to participate and present.
- ▶ **Determination** – successful drama demands on sustained determination and hard work. It requires focus, concentration and co-operation and the ability to keep working together towards a negotiated and shared outcome.
- ▶ **Excellence** – in terms of performance, participants in drama strive for excellence. They often spend much time rehearsing, practising, evaluating and re-evaluating the drama and/or performance.
- ▶ **Inspiration** – drama arises from individual and collective inspiration and can also inspire those who experience it, either as audience or as participants.

# Going for Gold – a modern day fairytale for Key Stage 1 by Patrice Baldwin



(The drama strategies and conventions used are in italics.)

**Teacher-in-role:** Princess Willdoo says she is upset because her gold crown went missing last night. Spies told her that a dragon took it. She asks the children if they saw or heard anything, and listens attentively to the children and asks questions. She invites them to come on a journey to get her crown back.

**Improvisation and mime:** The children pack imaginary items for the journey and gather and tell each other what they have packed.

They now can ask the wise old woman questions. She explains that when she wears a shawl she will become the wise old woman and answer questions.

**Teacher-in-role:** The wise old woman says 'I need strong minds and bodies to go on the journey. You must be determined and show courage, be fast runners, be able to jump high and far and to throw objects great distances.'

The children could demonstrate these skills (possibly through slow motion mime but if space permits they can really run, jump and throw).

The teacher asks the children to wonder aloud why they might need to run, jump and throw on this journey. The children's suggestions can then be woven into the journey, for example, jumping over tree trunks and across mountain tops, throwing ropes over branches to swing across rivers or running away from the dragon. (They could make a long pictorial map of the route).

**Follow my leader:** The teacher leads the way on the first part of the journey (which could happen outdoors) moving in appropriate ways, for example, jumping over branches in the forest. As they travel they look for and report signs of the dragon such as scorched or crushed grass or footprints. Some children might be invited to lead parts of the journey.

**Physical theatre:** They reach the tunnel entrance of the dragon's cave. They become the tunnel (by making two lines facing each other). The teacher as Princess Willdoo (*Teacher-in-role*) will walk through it. Each child has opportunity, as she passes, to say aloud what the princess is thinking (thought-tracking) as she enters the dragon's cave. She says she will talk to the dragon alone and report back to them (Value – courage).

**Teacher-in-role** returns disappointed, holding imaginary (or 'real') gold discs. She explains that the dragon says he accidentally melted her crown with fiery

breath, when carrying it in his mouth. It has melted and hardened into gold drops and she decides to present each child with a gold medal to reward them for helping (Values – respect, equality).

**Teacher as narrator/storyteller (whilst enacting the giving of gold medals):**

The children line up and receive a gold medal each. As they are awarded the *teacher-in-role* says something such as

'You are a wonderful team. You have all been very brave and determined. You are very fast runners, great throwers and wonderful jumpers. I am going to give you all a piece of my gold crown.'

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# The Opening Ceremony – a drama for Key Stage 2

## by Pamela Bowell

### 27th July 2012 – Opening Night!

Through imagining being a performing arts company, the children explore the connection between drama and the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Games using the Olympic and Paralympic Values (friendship, courage, determination, excellence, equality, respect and inspiration) as a focus.

### At the beginning

Children imagine they are a performing arts company. They examine pictures and/or footage of previous Opening Ceremonies and identify types of performance they see and the types of symbols, costumes and props used. They find out what the Olympic and Paralympic Values are.

### The Drama

The performing arts company is bidding for the contract to create and perform the Opening Ceremony. (A parallel class might create the Paralympic Games Opening Ceremony.) Their reputation is at stake. Will they succeed? How will they create the ceremony? What form will it take?

### Establishing the dramatic context, developing roles, building belief in the story

In role as performers, the children complete profiles (using a form created by the teacher) detailing their skills and previous experience, and introduce themselves to each other. They individually create a still image of a key moment in their performance careers. The Company Administrator (*teacher-in-role*) takes digital photographs to add to the profiles.



### Writing the bid

After in-role discussion, each performer in turn explains:

*'We should create the Ceremony because...'*

The Administrator sends the bid and profiles to the London 2012 Games Organising Committee.

### Moving the drama forward

A letter (created by the teacher) arrives, awarding the contract to them. It reminds them that the Ceremony should focus on the Olympic and Paralympic Values and that the Committee will need an initial outline, promptly.

A company meeting is held to discuss what to do. What are the Values? How quickly can they devise a plan? How can they work efficiently? Dividing into teams, each works on a Value and then the company reassembles to share what they have discovered. Each team creates a group still image that represents one of the Values. Now they must develop a plan for the Opening Ceremony based on them.

### Tension

The Administrator receives a text from the Organising Committee. They need the initial plan in one week. The pressure is on!

### If the venue could speak...

In an oval, the children become the collective spirit of Stadiums Past and describe aspects of the best Ceremonies – excitement, sound, colour, passion, imagination?



### Capturing the mood of the moment

That night the performers write in their diaries...

### Subsequently they:

- ▶ devise the plan, present it to the Organising Committee (*teacher-in-role*), get feedback and revise
- ▶ rehearse the Ceremony and document progress
- ▶ create the costumes and props
- ▶ compose or select music to use
- ▶ hold a press conference (half as performers, half as reporters) to give a progress report
- ▶ produce publicity and programme
- ▶ create dreams and nightmares about the Ceremony.



### Opening night

The company performs the Opening Ceremony – the rest of the school might be the audience.

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## Resources

### Get Set

[www.london2012.com/getset](http://www.london2012.com/getset)

To find out more about the Olympic and Paralympic Values take a look at the Discover section of the Get Set website. Here you will discover how to win reward and recognition for activities such as those outlined in this leaflet by joining the Get Set network.

### Drama Online CPD

– coming soon to a computer near you!

- ▶ Would you like to know more about *Teacher in Role*?
- ▶ Do you need some guidance in creating a drama policy?
- ▶ Would you like support in critically reflecting on your drama practice?

National Drama's online CPD initiative will be able to help you.

The National Drama CPD website is well underway. The design is in development and study units are already being created. The site will provide drama-specific CPD, relevant to primary and secondary teachers who teach about and through drama, whether they are experienced or coming to grips with drama for the first time.

The units are grouped in four categories (identified by National Drama's scoping exercise and national survey):

- ▶ Subject Knowledge and Key Skills
- ▶ Ways of Teaching About and Through Drama
- ▶ Pedagogical Resources
- ▶ Subject Leadership.

Skilled practitioners who have a real understanding of drama within each Key Stage and the challenges and opportunities of drama leadership in different settings



are developing the units and National Drama is ensuring that, no matter what level of experience they have, teachers will find units in each category offering different levels of challenge.

**Going live June 2009 –**  
[www.nationaldrama.org.uk](http://www.nationaldrama.org.uk)

### Drama Research

– National Drama's new online international journal of drama in education

National Drama's journal, *Drama*, has an established reputation as a publication of quality and relevance for primary and secondary teachers everywhere.

Joining it later this year is the new online research journal, *Drama Research*. This international, peer-reviewed publication will contain articles from practitioners and researchers across the spectrum of drama in educational settings. The first issue includes items of interest to primary teachers.

Why not consider subscribing to *Drama Research* or perhaps submitting an article for it or for National Drama's more general journal, *Drama*?

**Launching November 2009 –**  
go to [www.nationaldrama.co.uk](http://www.nationaldrama.co.uk) and follow the links.



## National Curriculum news

Sir Jim Rose's report is good news for drama. Its importance as a context for teaching modern languages and its effectiveness with regard to developing speaking and listening are recognised. Of course drama can contribute to any curriculum area and has much to contribute to children's personal development as well as being a powerful way of making curriculum links across the new areas of learning. ND has been involved in various ways throughout.

### STOP PRESS

National Drama is planning a major national conference focussing on the new primary curriculum. Watch the ND website for details.

## National Drama

National Drama is the leading association of UK drama and theatre educators. Join online via the website.



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