

All in all, it's up to us to take the bricks from the wall



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November 1989 was a memorable, hopeful and exciting month. On 9 November 1989, the Berlin wall was momentarily breached and on 11th November 1989 National Drama was formally launched. The incidents may not be connected but they both led to unity, great hope for the future, exhilaration and joy. As the Berlin wall was being symbolically and physically dismantled, the building blocks of ND were being put into place. This November, ND will be 25 years old and has grown into the leading professional association for UK drama and theatre educators. We will celebrate this with our members later this year, so watch this space!

I have recently been reading reflective, eye witness accounts about the breaching of the wall. One witness said that, ironically, the 'wall in the head' remains for many people, even though the actual wall has gone. Relatives living in the east or west probably visit each other less. He says this may be as there is less struggle and so a diminished sense of 'solidarity'.

It is 25 years on and ND is experiencing plenty of 'struggle' and some solidarity. We are struggling to ensure the future of Drama in schools, even if we feel that we are banging our heads against a Government brick wall. We will not give up the struggle and we urge unity and solidarity amongst drama teachers and theatre educators. We must not accept a situation of 'divide and rule' to take a grip amongst the drama community. ND was constituted for both drama teachers and theatre educators and we must act as one

community, even when there are those who seek to divide us.

If Berliners had just accepted divisions and the imposed oppression of the wall, then it might still be standing. If drama teachers accept the diminished place of drama in the curriculum and its sidelining into just after school slots, then this could become a new wall for us. All children should have the democratic right to be taught drama in schools, by specialist drama teachers, during school time and also have access to high quality theatre experiences and theatre education practitioners. ND drama members must work determinedly together as a vocal, viral and media savvy community. For children in schools, we must take every brick from the wall (with apologies to Pink Floyd).

So, during the past 25 years what has ND been up to? Representatives have relentlessly attended hundreds of meetings with various government representatives and key agencies, (e.g. QCA, QCDA, DfES, DCSF, DfE, DCMS, ACE). Nowadays, this often seems like 'one step forward and two back' but we must keep going!

ND is a founder member of the Council for Subject Associations, thus ensuring that drama as a subject is continuously represented in this forum. We also represent drama teachers in schools, at meetings of the Cultural Learning Alliance.

National Drama organises biennial (or triennial) international conferences, the most recent being the deeply

moving and monumental *Heathcote Reconsidered* Conference in Greenwich last July. National Drama is internationally active and was instrumental in setting up the International Drama Theatre and Education Association in 1992. I was honoured to be elected as IDEA's President from 2010 – 2013.

From 2005 to 2010, ND was the key partner of Norfolk County Council, in the development of *Drama for Learning and Creativity* (D4LC). This highly successful, national initiative was mainly funded through the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). More than 300 schools engaged with it over 5 years, including schools in Iceland, evaluating the significant impact of drama on both children's learning and creativity.

ND's high quality publications include its magazine, *Drama*, and its online research journal, *Drama Research*, available at www.dramaresearch.co.uk. These publications are a valued source of shared practice, theory and expertise and have enabled established and new writers and researchers to publish for the drama community.

National Drama officers are all unpaid volunteers. Without many hours of voluntary help, ND would not exist. We seek new, dedicated, active ND members, willing to join the executive or working groups and help move ND forward into the next quarter century.

Change is inevitable. Governments, Ministers of Education, schools as institutions, education policy: these will all change in the coming years; but what must not change is the determination of National Drama to keep drama strong.

Patrice Baldwin
Chair of National Drama