

## ESSENTIALLY YOUTH THEATRE

*The following is the keynote address was delivered by Jonothan Neelands at the NAYD Starting The Debate Seminar, May 10<sup>th</sup> 2008.*

Youth theatre is now an established tradition. It is time to stop and try to make some sense of that: to understand what those values are that have grown and developed over the years, that have been passed so successfully from one generation of youth theatre [practitioners] to another.

In looking at what's essential about youth theatres, there is tension, of course. One of the things that I really love about the youth theatre movement is its independence, its fierce independence: there is no model of a youth theatre, they're all different, they all do different things, they stand for different things, they protect their identities - this is something that is very strong and needs to be kept. However, it's time for us to come together and to have some debates about what the commonalities are: we all work differently but what is at the core that is the same for all of us?

I'll begin with reflecting on a show from The National Theatre of Scotland, *Black Watch*. Although this is a huge professional show which has been all over the world, for me it had many of the qualities of good youth theatre. Firstly, it's an ensemble piece - it's not about stars, it's about a company of actors working really hard together; the strength of the piece is in the ensemble playing - it's in the collective, it's not in individual performances. And **if anything is an essential characteristic of youth theatre, it's that commitment to a collective approach to theatre making.**

The piece also has a very strong **local context**: the play is performed by actors who come from Fife; the Black Watch regiment is based in Fife; it's about the experiences of young soldiers in Iraq, a young Fife writer and director collecting those experiences and working with a group of young actors in order to bring that alive for an audience. That mirrors some of the essential characteristics of youth theatre: it takes seriously its sense of place, its sense of community, the desire to speak of itself as a community, but also to speak to communities.

Also its **relevance**: you can't - as one of the nations that is at war in Iraq - not find a show like this inescapably relevant, and reflect on that from the perspective of those young men to whom we have given the responsibility of going to Iraq on behalf of the United Kingdom. That is also a hallmark of good youth theatre: that the work it produces is relevant to the lives of the young people who make it.

Young people making a statement that is relevant to other generations, other members of the community, and young voices explaining the world from their own perspective - this is another hallmark [of youth theatre].

[*Black Watch*] was also a very **innovative and experimental** piece in its form: in its use of multi-media, and also a very exciting use of dance as a way of softening the presentation of death on stage. This reflects the very best youth theatre work: it's sensitive, it's careful, it plays with how we make theatre so that we make the most out of young people's energies. Also, increasingly, some

reference to new media (if not the actual use of new media) so that young people can bring their own forms of representation into the theatre-making process. Another hallmark was that this piece was extraordinarily **committed**. What has made it a global triumph is the audience's respect for the absolute commitment of the young men in this piece to the material. This is not just another acting job, this is something that the actors care about passionately. And of all the things that we might say about youth theatre, that for me is the overriding joy of it: you see a piece by young people and only young people could have done it, only young people could have found that urgency in their voice and in their performances, that real desire to communicate *this* piece. [*Black Watch*] had all of that, and all of that reflects youth theatre.

All of these young men began in youth theatre in Fife, an area of Scotland which has a very long tradition of extraordinarily high support for drama in schools and youth theatre. Michael Nardone plays the regimental sergeant major in the piece:

*"I got away through drama club, youth theatre. Suddenly I could express myself through someone else's voice, in a way you were not permitted to do here, in Fife, in real life. And then to get to do this, something like this....aye its something none of us will ever forget"*

Michael Nardone (RSM and the Writer, *Black Watch* NTS)

This is a powerful testament to what youth theatre has done for thousands of young people over the years. That escape through youth drama, being with others who have that same kind of restlessness, wanting something more - and through youth drama being offered the chance to build a voice and a sense of belonging. For those young people it's not necessarily about stardom; they're looking for something which is shared, something which gives them some hope, something which gives them some aspiration, something which will transform their lives.

This is a powerful witness, the interviews with the young actors where all of them say: "we could have been in *Black Watch*, not been on the stage in *Black Watch*; we could have been in the pits, we could have been in the army but we went to youth theatre and it showed us that there's more to the world". It's different to the appeal of soccer or sports or games; it's a chance to work together on something really relevant, looking at how the world is and more importantly, how it might be different, and being given a voice.

Some young people will find their voice through expressing themselves in the voice of another. Through building character, building stories, their own voice develops. This is one of the great qualities of good youth theatre. Also being given permission to be different from other people: being given permission to dream by the people with whom you share your community, and having something bigger to work towards.

I've deliberately referenced that professional show as a way of beginning

to talk about youth theatre because it also represents a certain democratising of culture, democratising of the arts. Real questions to be asked: who owns the theatre? who does it belong to? whose voices are heard? whose faces are seen? whose stories are told?

## Reimagining Excellence

*“The time has come to reclaim the word ‘excellence’ from its historic, elitist undertones and to recognise that the very best art and culture is for everyone; that it has the power to change people’s lives, regardless of class, education or ethnicity.”*

James Purnell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

There is a notion, even from politicians now, that good art has the power to change people’s lives regardless of class, education or ethnicity. That is what we’re trying to understand and articulate: our desire is to change people’s lives. Our desire is that through the transformations of the stage we can also have an effect on the people who make theatre, and also on the audiences that come to it. We have something very powerful that we offer young people, and [try to] make sense of how best to use that in the interest of the young people, how best we make that effective, how best we make sure that the dreams that we offer them are real, achievable dreams - not some fake dream of stardom, but the dream that you might take better control of your life and the direction that your life takes. That sense of transformation is very important to us as well.

Then, role-models become a problem: it’s alright to talk about opening up paths to excellence to everybody, but if you’re a young black dancer, you have no role-models at all. There is one black dancer employed in the six big national ballet companies in England, so if I’m a young black dancer, what are the chances for me? The difficulty is - the reason why there is only one black dancer in English National ballet companies - is to do with excellence. And **part of our difficulty in talking about excellence is that excellence, as it stands, is something which is by definition exclusive because *this* is excellent, *this* is not, so there’s a distinction made.** And when you have artistic judgements, in ballet for instance - where you can’t be excellent at ballet unless your body conforms, not just to a particular size and shape, but a particular ethnicity - then we know that there’s something wrong with how excellence is defined. **We know that part of our struggle, not just in youth theatre and youth drama, but right across young people’s arts is that we have to challenge the notions of excellence that are around because we can’t widen access to youth theatre for everybody without changing the criteria of excellence that are used to exclude quality work that doesn’t match convention and traditional tastes and preferences.**

Youth theatre and youth drama should offer the full range of theatrical experiences for young people. In talking about the role that theatre and drama might play in young people's lives, I'm often drawn back to Richard Schechner's classical distinction, "Domains of Performance", where he suggests that in every culture, performance tends to operate in these four domains: as education, as healing, as ritual and as entertainment. And of course the very best youth theatre will tend to mix those domains together.

### **The Domains of Performance (after Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, Routledge, 1995)**

**As education** – where theatre is used to inform, explain, agitate, provoke, pose problems for communal discussion, change attitudes, and propose new ways of seeing and living.

**As healing** – where theatre is used as a medicine, for therapy, for rehabilitation, as living social remembrance of the dead and the living whose lives have been, or are, full of suffering and injustice. The laying of ghosts, the laying of disease and dis-ease.

**As ritual** – where theatre is used to celebrate the shared beliefs, values, dreams, demons and aspirations of a community, where the making of theatre is also the making of community.

**As entertainment** – as fooling around, as pure aesthetic pleasure, as an escape from the ordinary, as a way of dreaming.

Let's go back to the professional show, *Black Watch*, to see how those domains are intermingled, even within that one show. It is **educational**, I learned from it, it informed, it explained, it helped me understand; it is **healing** for the young soldiers who gave their testimonies and witnesses and who are broken by war, it is also healing, perhaps, for the communities of Glenrothes and Fife to see this show, bringing back honour, homage to those young soldiers and their lives; and drama and theatre as **ritual** whenever it reminds us of our sense of community, our sense of belonging, our sense of being.

Often in youth theatre, the first struggle is to use drama and theatre *ritually* to help the group see themselves as community; understand how they might bond, explore the values that they have, reshape those values to get a sense of belonging, a sense of community - and out of that sense of community comes a sense of power. We know that about young people: that's the attraction of gangs, that's the attraction of hanging out with tough other people - it makes you feel powerful. Part of what we're offering in youth theatre is an opportunity to feel that power in a very different way, as a positive force, as a power to change, as a power to communicate. There's a power of belonging together and supporting each other.

**Entertainment:** it's taken me a lifetime to understand that we need to amuse each other, that sometimes we just need to do things which are purely about fooling around, having some fun. Something which should distinguish youth drama from some other provision for theatre for young people is this commitment to the full range: we're not just doing musical theatre, we're not just doing tragedy, we're not just doing text, we're not just working with you as if you don't come from anywhere, we're not just working with you regardless of your self. Maintaining that commitment to the full range of human needs for theatre is very important.

\*

I've recently been involved in research for the National Association of Youth Theatre (England) which builds on a research project, 'Playing the Part', carried out by Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson at Manchester University, that looked at youth theatre as a threshold experience for young people: how does youth theatre help young people move into adulthood? how does that happen? In their research, they suggest that youth theatres, more or less, fit into these four different models:

- i. Theatre-arts** -to provide access to professional quality drama and theatre processes. Personal and social development outcomes may be a by-product of this work but the driving force is to create theatre and performance.
- ii. Community** - to reflect and represent concerns of specific communities and promote community development through theatre.
- iii. Youth arts** - to support the personal, social and political development of young people through theatre and drama activity.
- iv. Applied theatre** -to address specific issues and deliver non-arts related outcomes using theatre as a tool.

(From 'Playing a Part', NAYT research)

There are youth theatres where **theatre arts** - learning to become an actor, learning to become a performer - that's what's really important and that's what young people are asking of that youth theatre, that it should give them that kind of backing.

There are youth theatres which are very rooted in their **community**, where the work makes best sense within that community, where the community finds new respect for young people through the work that they do.

There are **youth arts** groups which are more issue-based, looking at the world which they [young people are] growing into and will inherit, and wanting to talk about that; that is political in the best sense, using theatre as an alternative space for dialogue, a kind of debate between themselves and between the piece

and the audience.

And [there is] **applied theatre** where young people are perhaps using theatre for a specific purpose: they might be going to work with the old, they might be going to work with people who are less fortunate than themselves in some way, where they want to use it as a gift, give it back to people who might benefit from it, might find some solace in the theatre work.

These are the kind of models that the research came up with. There is also a summary of the generic qualities of the youth theatres:

### **Playing a Part (generic qualities):**

Effective youth theatres:

- include all young people, regardless of ability or background;
- occur in informal settings outside of school and home;
- are characterized by an informal, yet disciplined process that involves high expectations of young people;
- provide opportunities for young people to take risks in safe contexts;
- provide opportunities for young people to take part in performance;
- provide opportunities for young people to take responsibilities necessary to maintain the organization;
- involve a sense of urgency, commitment to work hard and work to real deadlines.

**= ensemble based theatre making in community contexts**

(From 'Playing a Part', NAYT research)

What is at the heart of youth theatre is **ensemble-based theatre** - so it's interesting to reflect on professionals and how they're trying to do that. Over the last five years, the RSC have become an ensemble-based company, in the sense that it now employs actors on two to three year contracts to work together as an ensemble, and the RSC has begun to define itself in that way. The following works for most youth theatre groups as well.

### **Defining the Ensemble (RSC example)**

The term ensemble can describe any company of actors, whether they are brought together for a repertoire or a single show, as long as they share the same values: trusting each other and embracing a duty to experiment.

The values that define the RSC's approach to ensemble are:

- A commitment to the unexpected, borne out of trust and the time the company spends together;
- A belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts;
- A rigorous approach to training;
- A duty to experiment; A celebration and nurturing of the skills of emerging artists;
- Creative communication across theatre disciplines;
- Curiosity for and engagement with best practices from other cultures and disciplines.

'Curiosity for and engagement with best practices' is such a nice way of putting that because, let's be honest, whenever anybody talks about excellence or standards, we all get a little scared. We feel that we might get judged and that we might get judged as lacking. So how do you assess it? how do you establish whether what you're doing is good or not? how do you find out about what other people are doing? Instead of that being a fearful thing, start to turn that into curiosity: what are people doing? what could we learn about? how do we engage with what's going on in Ireland, from across the water? how do we find out what's going on in best practice in youth theatres who represent other cultures? How do we do that as something that's exciting, rather than something that's fearful?

Something that would be contentious for [youth theatre] is the 'rigorous approach to training'. Training is a kind of fault line: what is our responsibility? is it our responsibility to train them to be actors? is that what we do? and if we're not committed to training, what's the alternative?

Sometimes when I go to see work, people say to me, "Oh, it's all the kids' work. I didn't do anything, it's all theirs, they designed it, they wrote it, they..." Well, why are they paying you? You know, if the kids can just get up and do it all by themselves, then we could save a salary here! We could just leave the door open on a Friday night and let them come in and do it themselves. So the training we offer - how we deploy our experience, our knowledge - is very important; that is something we need to discuss.

As part of the research that we've been doing for NAYT, we've been running workshops as a way of opening up discussion within the youth theatre, helping them decide who they are and who they want to be. We do some exercises about expression of difference, putting words at either end of the hall and then asking them to stand in relation to that. The first one is between *vocational* and *recreational*. The reason for asking their opinion is they need to understand that **if it is their desire to be at the *vocational* end - if they're talented young performers and they want to take that somewhere - then youth theatre may not be the best place for them to get that kind of training**, not unless it's a very specialist youth theatre, which is feeding the needs of young performers and providing them with that kind of training. Not every youth theatre will do that. On the other hand, if you've come for the recreation and what you're getting is a lot

of voice work and movement work, then that might become frustrating for you. So it's partly about getting young people to be clear about their aspirations and whether or not their youth theatre can meet those aspirations, or whether they need to look beyond that.

In getting a sense of the aspirations of the young people, the other contingent that we lay out is: "Are you mostly interested in working within your own community, performing for your own kind, people who know you? Or is it your aspiration to perform regionally, nationally, beyond your community?" And most young people push towards [the latter], going to big youth theatre festivals, putting themselves out there, seeing what other young people are doing.

However, what many young people don't understand is that there's a big difference between the way that your work is judged by those who know you and the way that your work is judged by those who do not know you. And that can sometimes be very damaging for young people. They can have done something in their own community that was absolutely on fire because part of the joy is seeing people you know, seeing how they transform, seeing the strength of what they have to say on the stage. Then you take that to some other place where we don't know you at all, I'm only seeing you as a performer, I'm only judging you as a performer, and suddenly the confidence goes because a whole new set of criteria for judging that work come into play. We want to help people become aware that, whatever your own internal ways of deciding what's quality and what's excellence, **when you step into the world - which you should do - there will be other sets of criteria for judging you** that you need to be aware of and you need to aspire to as well. It's not just about, "I would like to perform on a national stage", it's "I would like to raise the game of my work, so that it stands proudly on a national stage" and that creates a new kind of challenge for those people who are leading [the youth theatre].

### **Defining the RSC Ensemble (ii)**

Our ever growing trust enables us to experiment, improvise and rework on the floor with an astonishing freedom and confidence. **This ensemble is a secure environment without ever being a comfort zone.** All of us are continually challenging ourselves and being inspired by those around us to reach new levels in all aspects of our work. ([Geoffrey Streatfeild; actor Histories Company RSC 2006-2008](#))

That encapsulates a lot of the qualities of the best youth theatre work: the support, which is not just a kind of passive 'no expectations' support, and the complexity of that equation. "This ensemble is a secure environment without ever being a comfort zone" - if you could bottle that we could easily answer questions about what counts as quality in youth theatre. The skills of leading in such a way that we feel safe enough to take risks, to make mistakes: that seems to me to be right at the heart of it.

## Ensemble Sensitive

In all my drama and theatre work, I use these two French words together: “ensemble” meaning together and “sensitive” meaning sensitive. That idea of the sensitive ensemble - that we are a collective of artists, a collective of young artists, working together who are sensitive to ourselves, sensitive to each other and sensitive to the world that we are inheriting - is right at the heart of all the work that we do. At the heart of the idea of the ensemble is the idea of the actor and what distinguishes youth theatre is this idea that by working on becoming artistic actors, what we’re actually doing is working on becoming better social actors. By encouraging young people to find the confidence to take part in drama, we are encouraging young people in the confidence to take part in the world. We understand that in this youth theatre, nothing happens unless we do something - and in the world outside this youth theatre, nothing happens unless we do something. Often what stops young people from being actors in the artistic sense is the same as what stops them in the social sense: “my body’s not right, people will laugh at me, I’ve got nothing to say, who’s interested in me, my friends will tease me.” A youth theatre director/leader will get you over that, get you to set up a distance, get you to lose some of that self-consciousness, protect you so that you know that when you get up, nobody will pay attention to how you look or where you’re from, they will only listen to what you have to say to them as a performer.

In the same way, if something happens in the community, often young people say, “It’s not my job, who’s going to listen to me, people will tease me, people will say that I’m nosey if I stick my hand up and say something needs to be done.” In my work, I hope that as I give you confidence as an artistic actor, you will have more confidence to be a social actor in the world and that comes out of the ensemble - not just the performance, but all the negotiations, all the talk, all the discussion, all the coming into the group, all the planning, who’s going to take responsibility for, that’s all about modelling for young people a way of behaving and working together in the world.

Can an ensemble company act in some sense as a .....better version of the real world on an achievable scale which celebrates the virtues of collaboration?

(Michael Boyd; artistic director RSC)

The notion of theatre as a way of understanding, exploring, representing, responding to, sharing questioning, re-imagining, debating the world as it is and as it might be is a theatrical / artistic process and is also a democratic process. The reason why I’m excited to be re-engaging with youth theatre is because I believe that there is a real urgency in this world. It seems to me that initiatives like youth theatre that are taking young people now and giving them the strength,

the collective energy, the voice, the shared wisdom, the confidence are essential. The choices that young people now make, the directions they now take, will determine whether they will have a world to pass on to their children or not. Youth theatre can be a site for young people to discover what they are part of and what part they can play in securing a future for the world.

In looking at what counts as quality, I've also been interested in how theatre teaches. John McGrath, the late Scottish theatre director, wrote a very moving piece called "Theatre of Democracy" that explored these links. He suggested that theatre teaches through its **accuracy**, its **relevance**, and through its **accessibility**. About accuracy, he said: "The audience must recognise and accept the emotional and social truth of what is happening on stage, must identify with the core situation whatever style may be used to present it." Again, youth theatre wins hands down because if you get truth in a youth theatre piece it's genuinely humbling: "This is the truth for us" makes such a powerful statement: "this is my truth, and I've worked to shape it artistically."

On relevance: "the core situation must affect the central, most profound realities of its time, must speak to its audiences about the truth that matters in their lives whether social, moral, political, emotional or individual." That notion of pursuing with young people what is vital to it. And how do we do that truthfully? And how do you communicate that in a way that makes it relevant to other people, not just to us? How do we share our urgency with audiences that come? How do we share our urgency with other young people that we want to invite into the youth theatre, so that we're including more of us in what we do?

And then his final point about accessibility: "Needless to say, the theatre must use all possible means to reach every citizen in the demos (in the community) and not act itself as an excluding agency, whether by the price of its ticket, the manner of its box office staff, its location or its impenetrability." It's such a sharp insight. One reason why young people don't go to the theatre is they're not really sure what happens when they open the door and if what you get is, "What do you want?" or, "Are you lost?" or, "Are you looking for a toilet?" it's not going to make you feel good about it.

### **Essentials of Youth Theatre**

- Agency-centred (doing things to make things happen on and off stage)
- Provides for individual growth and voices within an ensemble environment
- High artistic standards and production values
- Power-sharing (uncrowning of adult powers and self-management)
- Representative in its representations; engaging in its engagement (artistically, socially, politically)
- Uniquely youth-full

- Apprenticeship models
- Socially and artistically progressive (inclusion, innovation and transformation)
- Hope for a better world

### **Agency-centred (doing things to make things happen on and off stage)**

Youth theatre ought to be action centred: a youth theatre ought to be about *doing* things, on and off stage. It ought to be about what needs doing, not let's sit down for three hours and talk about it, or we've got a six week rehearsal period and we'll spend five weeks sat on our chairs thinking about it. And not just in terms of the artistry but how do we run this place better? How do we decorate it? How do we get money? Who's going to look after the coffee? It's about agency. It's about taking action. It's about not being vapid.

### **Provides for individual growth and voices within an ensemble environment**

We've talked a lot about ensemble but of course, youth theatre also provides for individual growth and voices. Again that's part of the artistry of good youth theatre leadership: how you grow individual voices, how you leave room for them, how you demand the group leaves space for a voice that's different, for a voice that is counter to what's going on, but at the same time, to insist that people work with a sense of the ensemble, sense of commitment, a sense of responsibility to the group as a whole.

### **High artistic standards and production values**

There should be the very highest artistic and production values in the work that's done. Young people do the best work that they can do, but we can bring in adults to do a lot more. What really angers me is when you get young people who've got a real commitment and it's just shabby, and that usually comes from the, "I leave it all up to the kids and let them do it" - you end up with bare feet, you end up with random lighting, you end up with mumbling, you end up with crisp packets of the floor, that kind of thing. The youth theatre commitment ought to be that whoever you are, you are entitled to the very highest, very best artistic production values. Because that's the only way you'll get respect for the work, because modelling the highest standards of artistic and social values moves young people on and encourages their aspirations.

### **Power-sharing (uncrowning of adult powers and self-management)**

Ultimately, the purpose of a youth theatre ought to be for it to become self-managing, self-governing, self-leading, self-regulating - not individual self, the self of the collective, because that's a societal issue as well. Don't wait for authority to come and tell you what to do. Don't wait for power to intervene. Take responsibility for your lives, take responsibility for what you do, carry other people with you through the power of debate, through the power of persuasion and

through the power of what you actually do.

### **Representative in its representations; engaging in its engagement (artistically, socially, politically)**

Who gets mentioned in the programme? Where are the young people? How responsible have they been, not just for the acting but for the design, for the use of new media, for the programmes, for the front of house, for every aspect of it? Are young people represented in what they represent? And is the engagement engaging? Youth theatre ought not to be something that pushes people away - that's the other danger of becoming a very strong collective, that nobody can get in any more.

When you ask young people to make pictures of an ideal youth theatre, often it's a closed circle, which is great - that sense of unity - but they're all looking in at each other. So the challenge is that youth theatre has got to get young people to turn that circle outwards so that the energy is going out, the energy is communicating the power of what they've got *outside*, so we're not just talking to ourselves. I have seen some devised youth theatre shows, which might have made a lot of sense to the people inside them, but I have no idea at all what's going on - because no one ever brought an outsider in to say, "Can you make sense of what we're doing?" And they're all really enjoying it!

### **Uniquely youth-full**

It seems to me that professional theatre cannot compete with the very best of youth theatre because young people bring something which is absolutely unique. Most actors will spend their lives trying to recapture what was instinctive, natural and raw in them when they were young and first started performing: the heart, the commitment that goes into it is uniquely youthful.

### **Apprenticeship models**

It ought to be based on an apprenticeship model; that if I come to you at nine or ten, I have a sense of where I might go; you're offering me training, you're offering me new positions; I can work with somebody who's directing and I can become a director; I can work alongside a leader and I can become a leader; I can take advantage of whatever arts training is available or get government funding for it.

### **Socially and artistically progressive (inclusion, innovation and transformation)**

There should be a sense of progression, so I'm not just stuck here, coming out at 16 without having grown, without having got somewhere, without having something to show for what I have done. Youth theatre should be socially and artistically progressive: it should be experimental and innovative in terms of performance but also in terms of how and by whom it is managed, what kind of people are brought into it, how it regulates itself, how decisions are made - it

should be socially progressive, in the sense of looking at new democratic models that young people can use in the youth theatre and beyond in their public worlds.

### **Hope for a better world**

Most important of all, there should be hope for a better world. That's got to be the belief that brings you out on a Saturday [to the NAYD AGM and keynote address], that somewhere within you, you hope for a better world and you hope that your contribution to a better world comes through the work that you do with young people.

From the outset I have stressed that what is distinctive, the heart, the essential characteristic, essential quality of youth theatre is the commitment to ensemble based theatre and living. It's not about nurturing show ponies, fostering unreal expectations of talent, star systems, or flattering adult egos, it's about something much bigger.

*Professor Jonothan Neelands is an author, renowned drama practitioner and a National Teaching Fellow and Chair of Drama and Theatre Education at the University Of Warwick where he teaches graduate and research students. He is an associate of the CAPITAL Centre for Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning, which is a joint initiative between the University of Warwick where he teaches graduate and research students.*

*Jonothan is the author of several texts for teachers and students, which have influenced the development of drama in recent years. His latest publication is **Improving Your Primary School Through Drama** (David Fulton, 2006)*

***No part of this article may be reproduced in any form whatsoever without prior permission from the writer or from the National Association For Youth Drama.***