



Seizing the Day!

Sam O'Reilly

Here at Coombe Boys' School we've always prided ourselves on having a reputation for creating high quality performance work whilst generating an ethos of inclusion and an environment in which anything is possible! Although we are a small team we are passionate about providing an exceptional Drama provision for our boys. In fact we were thrilled to receive the Music & Drama Education Awards first ever 'Outstanding School Drama Department' award in 2020. We collected our award at a very lavish ceremony in March 2020 just a few days before the world changed and we were sent into the first National lockdown.

identifying the significant impact the pandemic has had on Drama education for our boys and the wider enrichment and cultural opportunities they have missed out on.

When National Drama reached out in January to ask if we would be interested in partnering with Frantic Assembly to help mark 'World Theatre Day for Children and Young People' and join the National Campaign #NDSeizeTheDay we of course said YES! What better way to build back a little of what was lost and raise awareness about the value of Drama and Theatre Education in young people's lives.

The planning for the day began with a meeting with the wonderful Marilyn Rice, Frantic's Head of Learning & Participation. Marilyn is passionate about collaborating with young people and bringing Frantic Assembly's distinct creative approach to life for them, something which was very clear from our first meeting. It is also clear how excited we both were to get the message about the value of Drama and Theatre Education with children and young people across to the wider world, something Artistic Director, Scott Graham was also fully behind. The plans were made and the date set. We would host the project on the 18th March, the National Campaign Day.



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ith no time to reflect or celebrate our win we, like all Drama teachers, spent the next two years grappling with the huge challenges delivering our subject during a world pandemic has presented us with. Our successes with pupils in the Drama Department have been embedded around inclusion which is at the heart of the team's ethos. Drama lessons and extra-curricular involvement are often one of the most motivating factors for attending school for pupils and something the pandemic literally took away from all young people. The past six months of this academic year we have been (to coin a phrase) 'building back'. The National Drama Covid impact study found that 84% of respondents felt that the pandemic has had a 'significant impact' on Drama education overall. We, too, were



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The afternoon session was all about creating a resource which all schools could use in the future. Marilyn invited the boys to interview the Frantic team and ask any questions about their careers, the work they do and why they do it and our boys didn't hold back! After a planning session the tough questioning got underway. We are thrilled to be able to share those videos with you all. They can be accessed at the Frantic Assembly or National Drama websites. Follow the links to find out what Scott Graham – Artistic Director & Co-Founder; Sophie Shaw – Associate Director and Marc Benga – actor and Frantic Assembly Practitioner, had to say.

<https://www.franticassembly.co.uk/frantic-digital/world-theatre-day>
<https://www.nationaldrama.org.uk/frantic-assembly-nd-visit-to-coombe-boys-school/>

We ensured our full day was shared across social media alongside many #NDFriends who also took to social media on Friday 18th March to shout about the value of Drama in schools for Children and Young People. It was a great start to what National Drama hopes will become an annual campaign day. The reach of this campaign was impressive to see, with close to 15,000 people engaging with just one of National Drama's tweets on the day. We look forward to seeing what next year brings! ■

#SeizeTheDay

The day began with the arrival of the Frantic Team: Artistic Director, Scott Graham, Movement Director, Sophie Shaw, Frantic Actor, Marc Benga and Marilyn meeting our boys and putting them through their paces with a two hour introductory workshop exploring the Frantic Method. For anyone who has had the pleasure of watching or participating in Frantic training/masterclasses before you will know just how quickly the Frantic team can draw out the best from students. The workshop was challenging but engaging at all times and the quality of work produced over such a short period of time was a credit to both Marc & Sophie's skills, helped occasionally by insightful words from Scott.

The workshop included:

- A thorough warm up, preparing students mentally and physically.
- Tasks based on team building and spatial awareness.
- Development of physical skills including contact work.
- A basic introduction to devising and sequencing movement.

Samantha O'Reilly

Assistant Headteacher responsible for the Performing Arts at Coombe Boys' School in Kingston Upon Thames. Taught Drama for twenty years, a Lead Practitioner and an AST for Drama. Supporting the Marketing Team for National Drama. We were thrilled to be awarded the 2020 (and first ever) Outstanding School Drama Department Award at the MDEA's.

