

APP FOR THEATRE PERFORMANCES CREATED BY DIGITAL THEATRE AND SAMSUNG

Digital Theatre has launched an app with Samsung which allows users to view theatre recordings via their smart televisions.

The Digital Theatre App, free to download, enables productions bought from Digital Theatre's website to be accessible through Samsung televisions.

Available online are Frantic Assembly's *Lovesong*, *Much Ado About Nothing* starring Catherine Tate and David Tennant, Mark Ravenhill's *Over There* and a selection of others.

Users can rent productions for 48-hours online viewing for £6.99 – however, rented performances are not compatible with the Samsung app, meaning users can only view these with computers. But downloaded performances for a cost of £8.99 and high-definition downloads, available to buy for £10.99, work with Samsung smart televisions.

Robert Delamere, former theatre director and co-founder of Digital Theatre said of the new venture: 'Viewing performances online using a laptop is a singular experience. There's something about viewing it on a larger TV screen that enables more of a community experience. Being a director that is very important for me.'

To find out more visit www.digitaltheatre.com/smart-tv



Curriculum focus

with Patrice Baldwin



Is this 'death by a thousand cuts'?

We may be witnessing curriculum drama and drama teachers being killed slowly by a series of sly cuts. It is professionally painful and disturbing to witness what could become a death knell for drama in schools as we know it.

Drama should be taught by trained drama teachers and be available to all children, in all schools, during school time. This ideal has never really been achieved across the whole UK, but it is becoming unlikely that it will ever be achieved due to many recent changes that together are more damaging than the sum of their parts.

The sudden prominence of the EBacc, cuts in drama teacher training places and the removal of drama from the draft primary curriculum have all had their impact. The latest deep cut to drama teachers may have slipped by unnoticed during the summer holidays (traditionally a good time to hide contentious education news). A few hours before the Olympic opening ceremony, it was revealed that academies can now employ teachers without QTS for specialist subject areas such as music. We can see where this could soon lead for drama teaching.

Following the Music and Cultural Education Reports by Darren Henley, music hubs are now being established and soon we can expect 'cultural hubs'. These are under the auspices of Arts Council England, operating through their regional 'bridging' organisations. These can link schools with cultural organisations and a local arts workforce. If QTS drama teachers exist to use this resource it will be very valuable to them, but if drama teachers disappear then these hubs could soon become the main source of cheaper, non-QTS arts teachers.

I went to a party recently. An attractive and confident young woman in her late twenties came up to me and unexpectedly hugged me. I had taught her when I was a primary school teacher and had not seen her since. 'I want to say thank you,' she said. 'When I came into your class I was really nervous and shy, but when I started doing drama in your class, it made me confident. Before I did drama I was useless at everything at school, but it gave me the confidence to try other things, like maths, and then I found I could do everything else.'

I was deeply moved by what she said, and responded, 'I wish the education minister had heard you say that.' She went on to tell me I had once wrapped her in a butcher's muslin and told her to emerge as a butterfly and dance! I could not recall this symbolic, life-changing experience that she had enacted, but on reflection, I decided that this is what drama had done for her. She had metamorphosed into a warm, confident and capable young woman. 'Thanks again', she said, as she flew off into the distance ...



Patrice Baldwin is chair of National Drama, president of the International Drama Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) and a member of the presidential council for the World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE). She works freelance as an international Drama for Learning and Creativity consultant, workshop leader and keynote speaker. Patrice is also an educational author, her forthcoming book *Inspiring Writing Through Drama* is co-written with Rob John.

HIGGINS' PLANS FOR FREE LONDON DRAMA SCHOOL

Olivier award-winning actress Clare Higgins is developing plans for a free drama school. Higgins and what she describes as 'a few very concerned' actors want to create better access for students from working-class roots.

Initial plans are that the free drama school would be based in London for students, aged 18 and over, who can show they would be unable to support themselves while training.

Higgins has undertaken the project having been concerned that drama schools are fast becoming an opportunity for the elite and excluding those from lower-income backgrounds as tuition fees rise to £9,000 per year.

A graduate of LAMDA, Higgins was born into a working-class family in Bradford. She told *The Stage* 'We can't go on with this any longer, where only rich people can afford to train in the arts, so we have to get out there and make it change now. I am not going to get political about it, but all I am going to say is that there is a dearth of training for people who don't have independent wealth or rich parents. We are aiming to stop that in its tracks.'

Higgins' criticism comes after BAFTA-winning actress Julie Walters voiced her own concerns about the lack of working-class acting talent coming through. Walters told *The Sunday Times Magazine*: 'Back then, it was still possible for a working-class kid like me to study drama because I got a grant, but the way things are now, there aren't going to be any working class actors.'

'I look at almost all the up-and-coming names and they're from the posh schools. Don't get me wrong ... they're wonderful. It's just a shame those working-class kids aren't coming through. When I started, 30 years ago, it was the complete opposite.'