

NICHOLAS HYTNER TO LEAVE NATIONAL THEATRE IN 2015

Sir Nicholas Hytner is to step down as artistic director at the National Theatre after more than a decade at the helm. Announcing his departure, Hytner said: 'It's been a joy and a privilege to lead the National Theatre for ten years and I'm looking forward to the next two.

'I have the most exciting and most fulfilling job in the English-speaking theatre; and after 12 years it will be time to give someone else a turn to enjoy the company of my stupendous colleagues, who together make the National what it is.'

Hytner came to the National Theatre as the successor of Sir Trevor Nunn in 2003. He has since headed up some of the National's most commercially successful work to date, including *The History Boys*, *One Man, Two Guvnors* and *War Horse*. Hytner also worked to bring Traveler on board as a sponsor to launch the National's discount ticket scheme. He is currently overseeing the £70m redevelopment of the National's smaller stage space, the Cottesloe theatre.

It was also announced that executive director Nick Starr will also depart from the National Theatre in 2014. Starr, former Warwick Arts Centre director and Almeida Theatre executive, has been working with the National since 2002.

Starr said of his own departure: 'There's a genius to this place and it will be a wrench to leave it. But I want to make room for the next generation, and it's time for me to plough new furrows.'

Chairman of the National Theatre John Makinson spoke highly of the outgoing men: 'Nick Hytner and Nick Starr have led the National Theatre to undreamt levels of creative and commercial success over the past decade. Today's announcement will not come as a surprise, as we have known for some time that they planned to initiate a phased succession process in the course of 2013. It is a sad moment for the National Theatre nonetheless.'

Speculation has begun over Hytner's successor, with figures such as Michael Grandage, Dominic Cooke and Marianne Elliot already having refused to be taking up the role.

Hytner is expected to continue as artistic director until spring 2015, with a replacement being appointed in 2014.



Hytner will continue in his role until spring 2015

Curriculum focus

with Patrice Baldwin



Education at 'the races'

At the education race course, tension is mounting. The subject horses that have been allowed to compete will all be running very soon. Some have the usual head start, some are kept lame and may not be allowed to enter the main race at all. What happens behind the scenes in various stables is already determining the subject and GCSE winners, and the odds are low on drama being allowed to compete fairly in the race.

Drama continues to be held back. Michael Gove is apparently avoiding having to get an act of parliament passed, which is needed were he to change the basic structure of the current national curriculum and add new subjects. It seems that he wants a fast race with loaded odds and irrevocable change before the next election. The subject race is fixed.

Drama from KS1 to 3 is not a national curriculum subject and will still try to fit in somewhere to survive. This new 'slimmer' national curriculum is only statutory in maintained schools and schools can still offer drama if they wish. The draft national curriculum is being consulted on. Drama is slightly more evident than in an earlier version and has small hooks in English, such as reading plays and using drama 'techniques' to help with writing. Spoken language has no programme of study; drama used to squat in speaking and listening.

Keep your eyes on an outsider gaining ground in the qualifications reform at the KS4 race. The usual exam boards are jockeying for position to create a more 'rigorous' and reformed GCSE for drama. In the Arts Council England stable, research has just been commissioned into what new GCSEs in the arts could look like, and ACE is apparently drafting a core curriculum for art and design, dance, drama and music.

One hopes ACE will talk with expert trainers, i.e. drama teachers and not mainly the cultural sector and creative industries. I'm taking bets that ACE is the way Gove can sideline and parcel off arts education. The arts are not served well by 'paper and pencil' examinations, but drama now needs, more than ever, examinations that cannot be seen as 'also-rans' in comparison with core subject qualifications. Quite a challenge.

The odds are stacked high against universities running drama specialist teacher courses. We know that Gove recently referred to university academics as Marxists and 'blobs' (as they don't agree with him). University education departments are being overtaken fast in the ITT (Initial Teacher Training) race, as teaching schools are increasingly taking over drama teacher training.

I'll finish here with words written to Gove recently by the well-respected Professor John O'Toole from the University of Melbourne: 'I am writing to express my concern that a nation to whom educators have often in the past looked for inspiration and enlightenment seems perversely determined to turn its next generation of citizens into a drama-free zone and cultural backwater.'



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