

## Year 7

A definition of Art is 'the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form'. Drama fits into this definition. At the center of all Drama is communication. Like all the arts, Drama allows students to communicate with and understand others in new ways. At Blatch we focus on teaching the skills that allow that communication to happen in the most interesting and creative of ways.

We start the year by teaching students the basic techniques they will need to create their work in the subject. All students arrive full of ideas and stories and it is our job to give them the tools to communicate those ideas and stories to others. This is at the heart of what Drama is - communication. It is important that students **learn the basics of physicality and control** at the very beginning so that they can bring structure and shape to their ideas and so that they can develop an ordered way of working to achieve creativity.

Students will learn all the basic skills and conventions of drama through a variety of topics and resources. In the Autumn Term work will centre around **movement, mime and physicality** In the first half term students will learn how to create a **strong freeze frame** and how to use them in the telling of a story. Within this they will learn about the importance of physical accuracy in their work and the idea of character motivation through the use of **Samuel Beckett's stage directions for 'Come and Go'**. We chose Beckett because he was just as concerned about the movement and positioning of characters in the play as he was about what they said and at this stage, Beckett's renown for explicit precision in stage direction allows to teach the students the importance of physicality as equal to dialogue. They will also learn how to action a scene in the style of Bertolt Brecht, one of Theatre's most influential practitioners. Much of the work we do with students is improvised and devised and Brecht provides specific structures that give shape to the work. Much of students' work will conform to **Brecht's idea of Epic Theatre** and this is a format that we use throughout their experience of Drama at the school. This introduction prepares students for being able to create performance work in a theatrical style, providing them with the structural tools to approach the subject in a creative way.

In the second unit of work students will work on a scheme entitled '**Darkwood Manor**'. The story involves an abandoned house that terrifies local villagers and encourages students to use drama skills they understood from the previous term and strategies to develop storytelling. They will be taught how to organise plays and create character whilst all the while we will be looking to build their **confidence in performing** by ensuring that everyone is focused and attentive both as an actor and a member of the audience. Embedding these principles allows all other work to develop. Students work both independently and as part of a group. Students will be using the physical skills taught in the first half-term to bring the house to life. They will be encouraged to be creative and imaginative in their use of these skills to create atmosphere and their work will again have echoes of Epic Theatre. Students will also be introduced to improvisation which is at the core of devised drama and through which they will start to create character.

Following on from this, in their third unit of Yr 7 students will work on a unit of work entitled '**Lottery Loser**' which tells the real life story of a woman becoming addicted to gambling - she missed out when her office Lottery Syndicate won £20 million and became obsessed with winning an equivalent amount. This introduces students to social issues and we look at how they can be discussed and explored through Drama. Again this will involve students developing **storytelling** skills as the students reflect on the woman's plight and take us on her descent into crime and then redemption. This is linked to Medieval Morality Plays, the earliest form of theatre in this country. Building on the theatrical skills learnt in the first term students will now also be introduced to the use of **split stage** which will start to add **structure to improvised scenes** and they will revisit the important work done on the use of **freeze frames**. The story of 'Lottery Loser' is dramatic and compelling and lends itself to students creating work that is inventive and imaginative.

After the improvised work of Lottery Loser we want students to look at **text** and how the demands of it differ so much to **improvised work**. For this, students study the play 'Ernie's Incredible

'Illucinations' by Alan Ayckbourn. The plot is very simple and concerns Ernie being taken to see a doctor by his parents. They are concerned about Ernie's 'illucinations', of course the sceptical doctor and family find themselves astonished when the illucinations turn out to be real.

Ayckbourn says of the play *"I tried to write a play which a large class of children could perform - a play that everyone could take part in. I also wanted to write something that would draw on the imagination of children and cause them possibly to explore other 'Ernie' situations of their own."*

This is at the core of why we chose this text. It encourages students to see the play as something that can be explored on stage and something that will **ignite their imaginations and encourage their use of the physical skills that they have learnt**. In doing this in Year 7 we are looking to make students understand that scripted work should be just as alive to them, and they should be just as creative with it, as they are with any improvised work that they have made up themselves. We want our students to see that a script is not a constraint on their ideas and can be imagined in many ways. During this scheme of work there will also be more emphasis on the **spoken word and the accuracy of it** as for the first time students will have to learn a short piece of **dialogue**. This is an introduction to a fundamental element of Drama - **line learning**. This is an important discipline to introduce and we do it at this stage as students are now acquainted with the physical demands of the subject and are ready for this more formal requisite of the subject. **Characterisation skills and performance confidence** will be developed through exploration of this Ayckbourn text and students will be encouraged to link the physical theatricality of earlier units with the creation of character and the delivery of specific lines. This script based scheme of work will then run into the students creating a devised piece of work in groups. Students will be given a stimulus and they will have four 50 minute lessons in which to create a final piece of work that will reflect all of the different skills and techniques they have been introduced to this year.