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Royal Opera House brings anti-bullying play to Thurrock schools

Royal Opera House Thurrock has commissioned **Box Clever Theatre Company** to work on a powerful anti-bully programme as part of the **Thurrock Trailblazer** project in Thurrock schools. The Company has been touring seven schools with a play called *Mark and the Marked* and running workshops to look at the issues raised in the show.

Mark and the Marked is a vibrant, physical and visual show that helps raise awareness of the negative effects of bullying amongst children. It looks at positive aspects of diversity and the importance of difference for both the school and wider community.

Box Clever performed the show to Year 5 pupils at **Stifford Clays Primary School** on Tuesday 24 March. 90 pupils saw the show and then a smaller group of 30 children took part in workshops with the cast. **Teacher Laura Costen** said: “The performance was very emotive and gave the children opportunities throughout to think and reflect. Each child was put in a position where they had to make a choice and you could see their reactions changing as the play evolved. The cast was very professional and extremely talented.”

The performance also toured to **Purfleet Primary, Aveley Primary, Kenningtons Primary, Lansdowne Primary, Deneholm Primary** and **Giffards Primary**. On Friday 27 March, children from four of the schools gathered at the Thameside Theatre in Grays for a joint workshop to explore the issues raised further.

Michael Wicherek, Box Clever’s Artistic Director who also wrote *Mark and the Marked*, said: “This is a vital project that focuses as much on the value of friendship and community as it does on bullying: vital for the happiness of the individual child and for the cohesion of the wider community.”

Thurrock Trailblazer

Thurrock Borough Council is transforming education in Thurrock and Royal Opera House Thurrock is delighted to be delivering the Cultural Entitlement Pathfinder Initiative, **Thurrock Trailblazer**. The programme uses involvement in the arts to inspire and engage young people, raise aspiration and improve educational attainment.

The Learning and Participation Team is building on its strong partnerships across Thurrock and the wider cultural sector locally, regionally and nationally creating an exciting programme of activities for pupils and teachers in the 21 Trailblazer Schools across Thurrock. It has developed targeted offers for schools to take part in activities in Covent Garden and Thurrock and form new relationships between schools and other cultural providers.

For more information about **Thurrock Trailblazer**, please go to www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/thurrock-trailblazer

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CONTACTS

Jules Easlea

Julie.easlea@roh.org.uk

Tel: 07941 502577

Notes for Editors

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation in Thurrock

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation in Thurrock has been offering innovative and creative projects and programmes in schools, colleges and across

communities in the Thames Gateway for the past six years. In 2010, more than 1000 people from Thurrock, young and old, took part in creating and performing the spectacular Purfleet Opera: *Ludd and Isis*, the third large scale ROH performance created with communities in Thurrock. As a result of this work a Thurrock Community Chorus has been created with over 140 members of all ages. For further information, please go to: www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/community-chorus. RM19, a new Youth Chorus for 11-25 year olds was started in 2012: www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/rm19-youth-singing-group.

Public and educational tours of the state-of-the-art Bob and Tamar Manoukian Production Workshop where the sets and scenery for the Royal Opera House stage in Covent Garden are built are now available. Please go to www.roh.org.uk/visit/tours/thurrock-tours for further details.

The High House Production Park is supported by a unique partnership including Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills, the Royal Opera House and Thurrock Council: www.highhouseproductionpark.co.uk