



ROYAL
OPERA
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PRESS RELEASE

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Royal Opera House welcomes Arts Organisations to Thurrock

**Thurrock Trailblazer Cultural Providers come to High House
Production Park**

Royal Opera House welcomed representatives from over 20 arts organisations on Tuesday 17 May when it hosted a training day in advance of them starting work on the **Thurrock Trailblazer** programme in schools across the borough from September.

Local, regional and national organisations came together at the High House Production Park in Purfleet to discover how the Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer programme is helping to raise attainment in schools in Thurrock and how organisations will be able to enrich the programme and bring more creativity to schools and young people. Thurrock Trailblazer is a partnership with Thurrock Council.

Jo Frater runs **Confidance** and is a dance specialist who has already worked at Beacon Hill Academy on Thurrock Trailblazer. She said: 'I've loved working in Thurrock. This truly collaborative approach enabled me to create a project which felt really valuable to both students and staff and I left the school knowing that dance would continue to grow and flourish. It is exciting to be part of a project which supports the development Arts and Culture in schools.'

The aim of the Thurrock Trailblazer programme is to offer access to high quality arts and culture activities that can support and develop the curriculum within school. In its first pilot year it worked with 22 schools and now in its second year, 28 Thurrock schools are engaged in the programme. **Chatham Historic Dockyard** is one of the regional organisations taking part and offering Thurrock young people an opportunity to explore a maritime history.

Chris Chedzy, Life Long Learning manager at the Dockyard is enthusiastic about their involvement: 'My role as Learning Manager at the Historic Dockyard Chatham is to encourage young people from both banks of the Thames and beyond to engage with their maritime heritage, to be inspired by the achievements of the past and have greater expectations for the future. This partnership between schools and cultural providers from all disciplines to support the curriculum should be the pattern throughout the UK and it is great to see Thurrock leading the way.'

Attendees included learning and participation managers from organisations such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Theatre, the Tate Gallery, the Mercury Theatre in Colchester, and Theatre Royal Stratford East. **Jan Sharkey-Dodds**, from **the Theatre Royal** spoke at the event. She said 'Trailblazer speaks to Theatre Royal Stratford East in its vision; that culture is an entitlement and of huge value in developing independent and creative learners. At a time when creative learning experiences is having to be squeezed out of the curriculum, this initiative is even more important. We are proud to be a partner.'

Sarah Campbell, Head of Learning Programmes at the V&A said: "We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work with Thurrock teachers, pupils and students as part of Thurrock Trailblazer. We know that having access to high-quality arts experiences in authentic contexts has an incredibly positive and powerful impact on young people's confidence and levels of attainment and we are keen to reach out to schools who may not have thought to engage with us in the past. We look forward to developing a strong partnership over the coming year and beyond, as we look ahead to the opening of V&A East, a new civic space and cultural destination at Stratford Waterfront as part of the Olympic legacy."

Martin Russell, the Mercury Theatre's Head of Learning and Participation said: "The Mercury is really pleased to be a delivery partner for Thurrock

Trailblazer. It allows us to be part of a really exciting initiative and model of best practice for working with schools. There is so much creative potential with the young people in Thurrock and this is an innovative approach to partnership working with schools that we can all really learn from.”

Gabrielle Forster-Still, Deputy Head of Learning and Participation for Royal Opera House in Thurrock said: "The Royal Opera House is delighted that so many highly respected organisations are joining us to offer Thurrock schools such a wide range of exciting opportunities with which to engage.

The activities on offer enable young people to experience great art and culture at first hand in their schools and on their doorstep and to learn more about our cultural heritage. Thurrock Trailblazer aims to develop both young people's understanding and appreciation of the arts, the world around them and also develop their broader personal skills. The offer includes some of our own flagship programmes such as tours of the Royal Opera House Production Workshop and Costume Centre to special days visiting places such as the Historic Royal Palaces or the Barbican.’

Royal Opera House is currently recruiting for the Thurrock Trailblazer programme for the academic year 16/17. All Thurrock primary, secondary and SEN schools are invited to join the programme. To find out more about how to apply or to discover what has already taken place on the programme, please go to www.roh.org.uk/trailblazer.

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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 since 2006.

Since then, more than 60,000 people have participated in activities ranging from schools projects to teacher training, from work-based learning to fully-staged community operas. People in Thurrock have both been able to watch special performances at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden and gain a very special insight into the behind-the-scenes process.

The Learning and Participation team runs the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus which currently has over 140 members of all ages and regularly performs across Thurrock and at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. For further information, please go to: www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/community-chorus. Details of future performances and taster session for the Community Chorus can be obtained by emailing getinvolved@roh.org.uk or calling 01708 891200.

Regular public 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, and the Bob and Tamar Manoukian Costume Centre which opened in October 2015, are now available. Please go to www.roh.org.uk/visit/tours/thurrock-tours for further details. Inspiration Days offer a more in-depth look at the work of the Production Workshop. More information can be found at www.roh.org.uk/inspiration

In April 2012, the Royal Opera House agreed to become a [Bridge](#) organisation, working to connect children and young people to great art and culture across Essex, North Kent, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

The Learning and Participation team is based at the High House Production Park in Purfleet which is supported by a unique partnership including Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills, the Royal Opera House and Thurrock Council: www.hhpp.org.uk

