



PRESS RELEASE

7 NOVEMBER 2016

Thurrock Trailblazer Leadership Conference

The Royal Opera House welcomed local education professionals to High House Production Park recently to attend a Leadership Conference. Head Teachers, Senior Leadership staff, school governors and Royal Opera House cultural partners came together for the conference entitled: **Creativity and the Arts – supporting your school’s journey to outstanding.**

Conference attendees explored the benefits of an arts embedded curriculum, with a keynote speech from **Professor Mick Waters**, inspiring Thurrock Trailblazer case studies and an introduction to the new **National College for the Creative and Cultural Industries** by principal **Jane Button**.

Professor Waters, from the University of Wolverhampton’s Centre for Developmental and Applied Research in Education and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Teachers, challenged delegates to think differently about the essentials of education. He urged educators and artists to encourage learners to go beyond their own scope and to ensure that school contributes to a joyous childhood for all young people whilst emphasizing the role that culture can play in supporting these ideas.

He said *‘It was professionally heartening to be part of the Thurrock leadership Conference. The workshops led by schools and cultural partners showed just what can be achieved through the Trailblazer model. It was good to see school leaders recognising the value of the resource on their doorstep and accepting the invitation to cross the threshold to the benefit of pupils in their schools.’*

Teachers and artists working in four Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer schools presented case studies offering insights into different approaches to engaging young people in cultural learning, and showing how to involve a whole school in creativity.

Jillian Barker, Director of Learning and Participation at the Royal Opera House said *'Thurrock Trailblazer is an exciting and unique programme and it was wonderful to see a room full of headteachers, senior leader, governors and arts professionals coming together to enjoy such a thoughtful and inspiring morning. Mick Waters' provocative presentation reminded us all of the importance of arts and culture in children's lives, while the examples presented by Thurrock schools demonstrated the breadth and depth of programmes delivered by schools in Thurrock.'*

Roger Edwardson, Head of School Improvement for Thurrock Council said: *'It was an excellent conference and I particularly enjoyed the key note speech from Professor Mick Waters who I have known for many years. It was good to see so many of our Thurrock headteachers and their cultural champions attending. This is a unique relationship with the Royal Opera House and is highly valued by the council and our schools''*

Jane Button, Principal of the new National College for Creative and Cultural Industries spoke about the launch of the National College and the opportunities that it will provide for local students to gain expert, industry-relevant training. An open evening for the National College takes place on Thursday 1 December at Backstage Centre on High House Production Park.

To find out more about the Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer 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