



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

PRESS RELEASE

2 MAY 2017

Thurrock Schools get the Chance to Dance

William Edwards Students work with Royal Opera House artists

Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer school William Edwards in Stifford Clays is beginning to make its mark as a dance hub for the area with students studying Resident Choreographer of The Royal Ballet, Wayne McGregor's, work for GCSE and taking part in the Royal Opera House's Chance to Dance programme.

Thurrock schools working on the **Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer** programme are the first in the country to take part in workshops with the Royal Opera House as part of their studies of **Royal Ballet Resident Choreographer Wayne McGregor's** one-act ballet *Infra*. The ballet has been added to AQA's Dance GCSE syllabus. Three Thurrock schools are studying *Infra*: **William Edwards School, Gateway Academy, and Grays Convent High School.**

William Edwards hosted a Royal Opera House dance facilitator on Tuesday 25 April for the first of their *Infra* workshops. Inspired by the Latin 'vide infra' meaning 'see below', *Infra* presents a portrait of life beneath the surface of the city of London. *Infra* workshops provide students with a deepened understanding of the possibilities of choreography and dance.

'It was lovely to see the students manipulating and using their bodies in a way that was so different. They enjoyed the creative process and learning the repertoire from *Infra*. The students were able to both choreograph interesting signature solos and perform original choreography by the end of the workshop. The workshop was dynamic, fast paced and thorough throughout the day, which engaged the students from start to finish. They all left feeling inspired with an insight into McGregor's choreographic processes,' said **Nina Standen, Head of Dance at William Edwards**.

The students were equally enthused by the workshops: 'I liked that we got to change traditional Ballet moves to make them abstract. The energy throughout the day was amazing,' said **Poppy Blackledge**. Fellow student **Anne-Marie Cairns** gained a lot from the session: 'At the beginning of the day I was nervous to take on the choreography from *Infra* but I was performing with confidence at the end of the day and even creating my own signature solo.'

The *Infra* and Chance to Dance workshops are led by **Hayley Ryan**, a dance facilitator who also works for the Royal Opera House as a Trailblazer Learning and Participation Officer at the High House Production Park. Hayley is originally from Aveley and trained at local stage school, Poulton Lee Theatre School, before going on to achieve a Masters in Dance and a career as a freelance dancer. She said 'I am thrilled to be working for the Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer programme and am really inspired by the work I see in Thurrock schools across many different art forms.'

Chance to Dance, the Royal Opera House's long-running creative introduction to ballet for 7 year olds, holds its regular classes at William Edwards School. Year 3 children throughout Thurrock are offered a mix of Royal Ballet demonstrations and practical workshops to identify those with enthusiasm and aptitude for dance who are then invited to join the Chance to Dance Company for up to four years, going to weekly classes locally, attending family days at the Royal Opera House and working towards an annual performance alongside dancers from the Royal Ballet.

To find out more about **Infra** or Chance To Dance, please go to www.roh.org.uk or email getinvolved@roh.org.uk

END

Press Office contact:

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 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.

Since April 2012, the Royal Opera House has worked as a Bridge organisation, working to connect children and young people to great art and culture across Essex, North Kent, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. ROH Bridge is working with similar clusters of Artsmark schools across this region.

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