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PRESS RELEASE

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Barbican visit for Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer schools Gateway Academy and William Edwards

Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer schools, Gateway Academy and William Edwards visited the Barbican recently to work with artists on the Barbican Box performance and dance project.

22 Year 7 and 8 William Edwards and 30 Gateway Academy students attended the Barbican Box event as part of their ROH Thurrock Trailblazer programme. The Barbican Box is a portable box filled with the ingredients for student to create original theatre, visual art or music inspired by the Barbican's world class arts programme. Leading UK Theatre Company Tamasha have curated this year's Box and the students learnt from the company's investigative approach to theatre-making.

Now in its sixth year, Barbican Box works with schools over a six month period beginning with teacher training, after which the Box is sent into schools. As part of the programme, students visit the Barbican to see a production, musical performance or exhibition and the project culminates with students returning to the Barbican to showcase their own original work. Gateway Academy and William Edwards performed their pieces of dance and drama to other participating schools from across London.

A student at Gateway Academy said: *"Barbican Box was one of the most exciting things I have ever done and I wish more students could experience this to give them more*

confidence on the stage.” “I enjoyed the fact that we were able to choreograph our own dance, based on the mysteries within the Barbican Box. I learnt how to control my spatial awareness and how to work co-operatively with other students as we listened to everyone’s ideas throughout the project.” Another student commented “as a performance I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I was so nervous and excited all at once but it was well worth all the hard work in the end.”

George Keeping from William Edwards School said: *“Barbican Box was a most rewarding experience.”* His fellow student Lily Edmeades added: *“I enjoyed creating and developing the performance.”*

Becky Mead, Dance Teacher, Gateway Academy said: *“The Barbican Box project has allowed pupils to explore new and exciting ways of choreographing movement material by stimulating their intellectual curiosity. It has opened their eyes to new ways of tackling the creative process. Allowing pupils the freedom to choreograph and create movement as well as piece together an entire performance has proved both challenging and rewarding. The excitement surrounding this project enabled pupils to show their commitment and dedication to the creative and rehearsal process, which was evident in their final performance. It was fantastic to be able to give our pupils the opportunity to perform in London alongside other schools, where their professionalism and performance was outstanding.”*

William Edwards teacher Polly McCarthy agreed that it had been *“an amazing opportunity for the pupils to perform in London and to create a piece based on a range of stimuli.”*

The Royal Opera House Thurrock Trailblazer programme provides pupils with access to high quality arts and culture activities provided by the Royal Opera House and other cultural organizations. Working with the ROH Learning and Participation team each school creates a yearlong calendar of cross-curricular creative activities that is tailored to their school’s needs. The programme can include any art form such as: creative writing, visual arts and design, drama, dance, music, singing, film and photography.

To ensure schools develop the very best programme for their pupils, Thurrock Trailblazer also gives teachers access to expertise, training and resources from a wide range of great cultural providers such as theatres, museums, galleries, orchestras, professional artists, writers and choreographers. **Recruitment for the academic year 2018/19 begins on 16th April. To find out more email thurrock.trailblazer@roh.org.uk or 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.

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