

# SHARING LAB

THURSDAY 5 MARCH

**Through the Mask:  
Empowering children with  
SEND in the Drama  
Classroom**

*Cheryl Stapleton*



**music&drama  
education expo**

# Cheryl Stapleton

Artistic Director  
Learning Through Theatre

[www.learningthroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.learningthroughtheatre.co.uk)

[cheryl@learningthroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:cheryl@learningthroughtheatre.co.uk)



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# Drama: 'The Inclusion Subject'

Drama can overcome and sometimes remove many of the basic barriers to learning that children with SEND face:

- Enables children with SEND to actively integrate with and be included by their peers
- Enables social interaction with most activities involving core social skills: collaboration, communication and negotiation
- Provides an ideal environment for students to develop trust and friendships
- Enables all students to be expressive, teaching communication modes that can be used alongside, beyond and in place of words



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What are the pros and cons of drama being seen as an inclusion subject?

PROS	CONS
Children with SEND are enabled to achieve within the mainstream curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A devaluation of the contribution of theatre to academic work</li> </ul>
Drama is valued within the curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A devaluation of the achievements of all drama students</li> </ul>
Diversity becomes the norm in the drama classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The perception of drama as being easy or not requiring basic skills – becomes a ‘dumping ground’</li> </ul>
Drama skills are perceived as valuable to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reduced perception of a subject at which some children with SEND can excel</li> </ul>
The development of communication, collaboration and social skills are perceived as valuable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The alienation of children with SEND who do not find drama lessons automatically accessible</li> </ul>
Through mixed ability collaboration all children can learn to appreciate the different challenges that children with SEND may face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The mis-teaching of drama as always accessible</li> </ul>
Opportunity exists for all children to learn how to perceive each other as equals, no matter what their ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The removal of learning support in drama classes</li> </ul>
The strengths of difference can be explored in a positive environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pressure this places on drama teachers to be inclusive and sometimes lead on inclusion</li> </ul>



What are three biggest challenges you face within your 'inclusive' classroom?

- Controlling the space and behaviour within it
- Differentiating all activities to enable all to learn
- Coming up with inclusive activities
- Group and pair work
- Physical work – touch, body contact
- Improvisation and activities involving imagination
- Script work, dialogues, eye contact
- Changing environments – moving from classroom to stage space, theatre trips, site specific work
- How to ensure middle achievers are learning when focus is on those with SEND, those who are high achieving and those who are low achieving



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# Unmasking Autism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baDTd8E5xk0>



Parasuram Ramamoorthi

He is very happy for anyone to contact him:

<https://dramautism.org>

[parasuram.ramamoorthi@gmail.com](mailto:parasuram.ramamoorthi@gmail.com)



# Commedia dell'Arte masks



<https://strangefacemasks.com>

# Trestle Basic Masks



<https://www.trestle.org.uk>

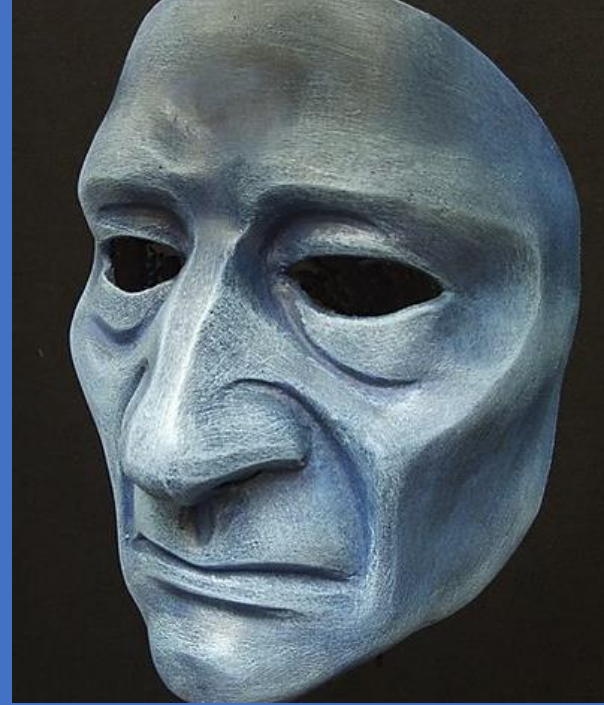
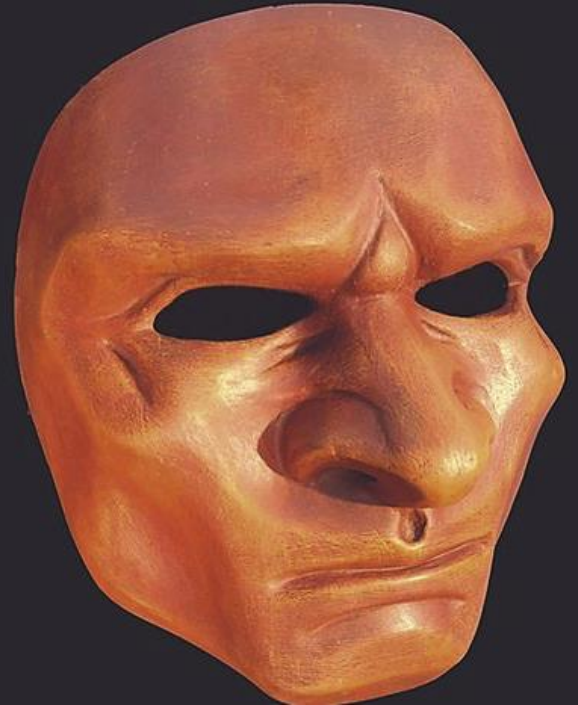
# Laval Masks



# Neutral Masks

<https://strangefacemasks.com>

# The Four Temperaments



Phlegmatic

Choleric

Sanguine

Melancholic

<https://www.mikechasemasks.com/the-four-temperament-masks>

# Le Bouffon

## The costume mask





What drama strategies have worked for you?

What strategies have been *unsuccessful* and why?

# A few ideas:

- Groups – use random numbering games to get into groups; allocate roles and allow observers, note takers, narrators, journalists; empower more able by giving them the role of peer model;
- Mark out working spaces with tape on the floor; give each child a clear position in the space – maybe a start and end space;
- Actively incorporate different languages – enable children to share/use their language: native tongue (for EAL), Makaton, BSL, switches, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), eye contact, singing, drawing;
- Do model what you want, copying is the first step; draw it, image boards, make your room visual



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- Reading cushions
  - start with one line of dialogue using repetition and gesture;
  - read two lines together before breaking into groups;
  - do an improvisation based on the text before reading it.
- Create sensory spaces so children experience it through sight, sound, smell, touch, taste (using feathers, bubbles, pipe cleaners, pillows, fabrics, sponges, torches, lavender bags) e.g. *Midsummer Night's Dream*: a big picture of a forest projected on the wall of the classroom, crunchy leaves/branches under foot, pine air freshener, fairy lights.



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# Travelling Light Theatre Company (Bristol)

<http://www.travellinglighttheatre.org.uk>

Creative Learning Officer – Lizzy Cummins:

[lizzy@travellinglighttheatre.org.uk](mailto:lizzy@travellinglighttheatre.org.uk) or 0117 3773163

Committed to providing opportunities to create and imagine for all children and young people, especially those who are the least able to seek them. School based projects, Youth group, CPD workshops, Arts Award.



# Ramps on the Moon

<https://www.rampsonthemoon.co.uk>

A critical movement in the UK theatre sector, striving for a step change in the inclusion and integration of Deaf and disabled individuals. Led by New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

With:

Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Theatre Royal Stratford East

Nottingham Playhouse

Leeds Playhouse

Sheffield Theatres

Graeae Theatre



# Chicken Shed Theatre (North London)

<https://www.chickenshed.org.uk>

A pioneering and inclusive company that makes beautiful and inspirational theatre. Bringing together people of all ages and from all backgrounds to produce outstanding theatre that entertains, inspires, challenges and informs both audiences and participants alike.

‘Sheds’ in Islington, Hackney, Tottenham, Harrow, Bushey, Brighton, Maidstone, Reigate, Chesham, Blackpool, Rossendale, Northfleet.

**CHICKENSHED**

THEATRE CHANGING LIVES

Graeae (London)

<https://graeae.org>

Graeae is a force for change in world-class theatre: breaking down barriers, challenging preconceptions and boldly placing Deaf and disabled artists centre stage.

The logo for Graeae, featuring the word "GRAEae" in a dark red, serif font. The letters "GRAE" are in all caps, while "ae" is in a lowercase, cursive script. The logo is set against a white rectangular background.

**“the national theatre of disability”**

**- Jack Thorne**

Watch trailer: <https://vimeo.com/374648992>

# Disability Arts Online

<https://disabilityarts.online>

Set up and led by disabled people, they give disabled artists a platform to blog and share thoughts and images describing artistic practice, projects and just the daily stuff of finding inspiration to be creative. Primarily, they publish editorial, blogs and showcases of art, providing a place where opinion pieces, reviews and interviews can be shared and commented on.





Thank you

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