

## Summer School History page – 2012



The DAW 2012 Theatre Summer School took place between 12 & 18 August. Following the week-long residential course we invite a couple of the attendees to give us an account of their week. This year we asked, Dave Perkins and Jane Jones. Both newcomers to the course, we were interested in finding out what their expectations of the summer school were, whether their expectations were met and whether the experience, as a whole, worked for them.

Jane attended a course entitled Approaching Shakespeare with the RSC in which three RSC practitioners (Victoria Williams – voice, Anna Morrissey – movement and Helen Leblique – directing) explored different elements of performance with the group. Meanwhile, Dave had booked on to Theatre Mezze in which professional director, actor and GoDA adjudicator Ben Humprey led attendees through a variety of theatre and performance skills and techniques throughout the week.

“Summer 2012 was my first ever Drama Association of Wales Summer School but I hope it will be the first of many.

I was very attracted by the prospect of being taught by practitioners from the Royal Shakespeare Company since I want to direct Shakespeare but, despite my longstanding personal love and understanding of his plays, I lacked confidence in attempting to realise this ambition with my amateur group. This was a wonderful and unusual opportunity for me to get insights and ideas from experts.

I was very impressed by the organisation of the event and by the value for money. The accommodation was convenient and comfortable, and the meals hearty. I also found the group very welcoming and enthusiastic.

Previous courses I have been on have been mainly with keen young things looking to become professionals. It made a really nice change to be with a more experienced group of people dedicated to amateur theatre, and the mix from countries and walks of life was very stimulating. The programme of social events in the evenings allowed us to get to know each other outside the workshops and across the two courses that were running.

I can't praise the tutors that we had highly enough. They were all very different and each brought something special to the school. I learned so much each day and was always scribbling frantically in the breaks to capture all the nuggets being shared with us.

I must admit that by the end of the week I was pretty tired but it was the kind of satisfying tired that comes from both mind and body being active; a lovely change from my usual desk bound job. I was sorry to say goodbye to everyone and would have liked it to go on for longer (a sure sign of a good experience) but for just a week's course I got so very much of value.

Best of all I now feel much more confident about leading my group into Bard territory. Just got to crack the committee now!” **Jane Jones, Harrow**

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“I approached the Caerleon campus of the University of Wales for the DAW annual summer school with more than a little nervous anticipation. I hoped for a week developing acting skills: a passion I discovered only a couple of years ago and something I wanted to develop. I also hoped for the chance to share experiences with fellow actors. The course did not disappoint.

I felt instantly welcomed by course regulars, tutors and organisers alike. The week was packed with activity, fun and hints and tips that I can take back to my group. I also felt privileged to be asked by Derek Williams to perform a rehearsed reading of one of his short plays.

Our tutor, Ben, made sure that the learning environment was one where it was OK to make mistakes and I certainly benefited from this! I appreciated more than ever before how drama is a shared experience requiring mutual trust and co-operation of the highest order; the activities all reinforced this. Using the Roman amphitheatre for our physical and vocal warm-up was inspired: exploring the acoustic properties of the space and doubtless entertaining local dog walkers and early rising tourists!

As for hard results, they include:

- A battery of physical and vocal warm up skills to energise body, voice and mind before rehearsal and performance
- Techniques of “devising” and intention to ensure that our drama has life and purpose not a flat, lifeless regurgitation of the text
- Using physical theatre to “put on” our character from head to toe
- Mask work to ensure that every part of us should reflect our role
- Building faith and trust in our own and each other’s abilities
- A kitbag of madcap games to help us work together including the notorious “bing – bong” reducing everyone in the group to helpless laughter

I left hoping that there will be another course next year despite threats to funding. The summer school is a key tool in the Association raising the standard of amateur drama in the province and further a field.”

**Dave Perkins, Chester**

