

A CELEBRATION

OF THEATRE ARTS, EDUCATION & DEAF STUDIES AND THE THEATRE OF THE DEAF

1986–2018



INTRODUCTION

A CELEBRATION OF THEATRE ARTS, EDUCATION & DEAF STUDIES AND THE THEATRE OF THE DEAF

After a 32-year illustrious career the Theatre Arts, Education & Deaf Studies (TAEDS) programme (originally the Theatre of the Deaf course) at the University of Reading is bowing out. All things have their time – are born, flourish and then transform. Following the decision to close the programme in October 2015, the remaining staff and students made an immediate decision to stage a celebration of its life. We felt it was important to mark this moment with a tribute to 32 years of innovation and excellence rather than to mourn its passing.

This commemorative programme both accompanies the celebratory event and exists as a memory of a truly unique course. You may be reading this from a variety of distinct perspectives: as an alumnus of TAEDS or of the quite different Theatre of the Deaf; as a tutor or professional who has contributed to the delivery of the course; perhaps as a support professional; or even as someone who has heard of the programme without knowing too much about it.

You may be reading this programme on the day of the event – 23 June 2018 – or some years later as a memory of having been there, studied on the course or have simply known about it.

With this in mind, we present here a brief history of the programme and some memories from some significant professionals who have contributed to it over the years. For later TAEDS alumni, it is important to know where you come from and the history recorded here also suggests where the work is going in the future!

Any event such as this celebration requires input from a vast range of different people and there is a substantial list of thanks and acknowledgements also included. I would like here, however, to thank the contributions of Peter Muschamp, Jenny Sealey, Stephen Lacey and Paula Garfield to the programme – all have a significant link to TAEDS/TOD.

Regretfully, records of the Theatre of the Deaf years were not well kept before the digital era and have therefore not been retained. This makes the contributions on the formation of the course even more significant.

You will also read a selection of alumni reflections on the impact of TAEDS on their lives and careers. These make for powerful and emotional reading and provide a snapshot of a much larger experience. With a healthy TAEDS alumni Facebook community growing year by year, the huge number of stories and successes within the TAEDS' community will continue to be celebrated.

It has been a personal privilege to witness the successful blossoming of students and to observe the flourishing of these lives and careers beyond the programme. These hundreds of deaf and hearing individuals are the true legacy of this unique programme.

Cheers to all of you!



Simon Floodgate
May 2018

S. Floodgate

PROGRAMME

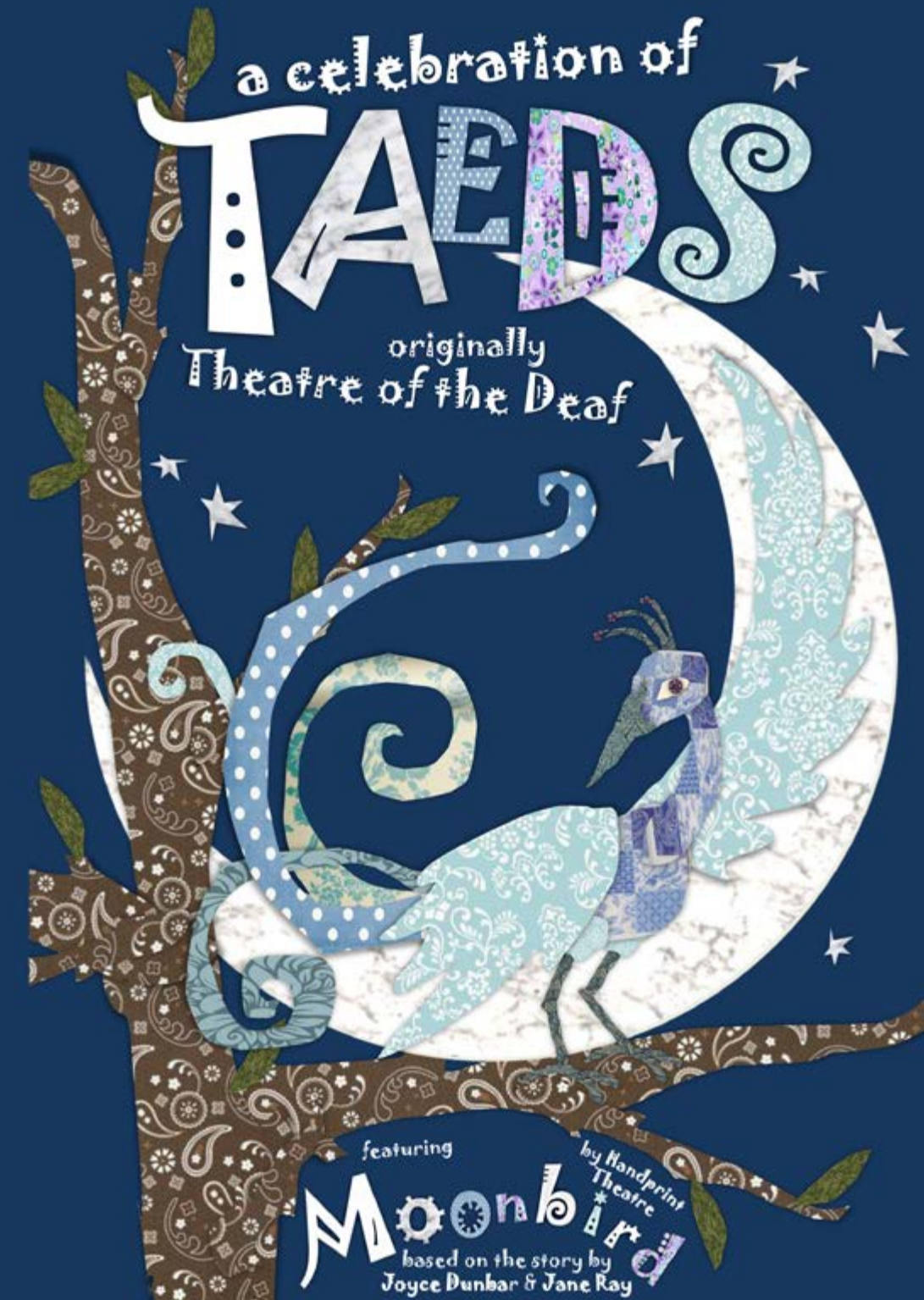
Moonbird by Joyce Dunbar

A tale of a family who just don't know how to communicate with each other. Can the Moonbird teach them that listening is not always about hearing?

Through puppetry, British Sign Language and physical storytelling a tale of family, acceptance and identity.

Accessible theatre for all the family.

12.30	Arrive at Minghella Studios, Whiteknights Campus
13.00	Performance of Moonbird by Handprint Theatre
14.00-15.00	Refreshments
15.00-15.40	Speeches
	Sir David Bell, KCB, Vice Chancellor
	Professor Lib Taylor
	Steve R Vevers-Webb, 1996-99
	Stephanie Back, 2013-16
	Simon Floodgate
	A Toast to TAEDS/ TOD
16.00	Close



A HISTORY

THE THEATRE ARTS, EDUCATION & DEAF STUDIES PROGRAMME

The Theatre Arts, Education & Deaf Studies programme has always been unique in combining an education in Theatre Arts and Drama leadership with the special skills and opportunities offered by the language and culture of deaf people.

Its origins can be traced back to a small part-time course organised in the early 1980s by **Pat Keysell** (founder of the British Theatre of the Deaf) and validated by the Royal Society of Arts, whose aim was to train deaf as well as hearing people in drama leadership with an emphasis on working with deaf people in clubs and drama societies.

This course was based in Reading at **Bulmershe College of Higher Education**. Two members of tutorial staff at the **Department of Film and Drama** had a particular interest in working with deaf students of drama and they became involved in teaching on the part-time RSA leadership course.

“*TAEDS has shaped me into the adult I am today. We are definitely a secret society who are dispersed everywhere. I have used most of the skills I've learnt from TAEDS leading drama workshops, teaching BSL at after school clubs and translating songs into sign theatre as part of performances.*”

Ruth Hands, 2007–2010

The course started as an adjunct to students' other careers. Its great value was in encouraging an interest in creative drama among the deaf adult community, and of raising standards of drama leadership in deaf clubs. It had the secondary effect of opening the eyes of tutorial staff to the creative talent that existed among deaf people, whose particular visual perception offered a whole new way of looking at drama and theatre. At that time, it was extremely difficult for a deaf person who wished to make a career in the Performing Arts to be accepted for full-time training in any of the established courses. Having been funded by the **Carnegie UK Trust** until 1984, the course found its next home within the Department of Film and Drama at Bulmershe College, with a view to setting up a special full-time course under the auspices of that department with the needs of deaf students specifically in mind.

The first full-time course, then entitled ‘**Theatre of the Deaf**’, ran from **1986 to 1990**, seeing 34 students successfully passing, 23 of them deaf. Some of those have since become professional performers, and have appeared regularly in theatres, films, and on TV. Others joined children's theatre companies, or became

workshop leaders. A few went on to further, more specialised training: one (deaf) student went on to qualify as a drama therapist; another made a successful career in Arts administration.

In **1989**, Bulmershe merged with the **University of Reading**, and the newly formed Department of Arts and Humanities in Education extended the course to two years, with its qualification upgraded to a **Higher Education Diploma (HED)**. This gave more time for deeper analysis and exploration of alternative theatre forms and methods, and students benefited considerably. Finally, in **1994** the programme was accepted by the University as leading to a **Diploma in Higher Education (DipHE)**. In **1996**, the programme became a three-year full-time course leading to a **BA degree**, entitled **Theatre Arts, Education & Deaf Studies (TAEDS)**.

It had always been assumed that this course was too specialised to appeal to a wide market and would never be able to recruit students more than once every three years. When, in 1997, the programme appeared for the first time in the UCAS prospectus, the department was overwhelmed with applications – and the pressure was on to admit students on an annual basis, which began in 1999.

“*TAEDS people turn up everywhere and it is always a delight to meet them and know that you have that shared experience despite maybe having graduated years apart. It is a truly unique course. I am very honoured to call myself a TAEDS graduate.*”

Ana Becker, 2005–2008



UNDER MILK WOOD | 2001



THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE | 1995



UNDER MILK WOOD | 2001



THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE | 1995



SCARS UPON MY HEART | 2014



LA BARRACA PRESENTS | 2010



TRANSLATIONS | 1997



7 DEADLY SINS | 2009



A STITCH IN TIME | 2013

Eventually, Film, Theatre & Television moved to Whiteknights whilst the Institute of Education re-located to London Road, with TAEDS soon following. Students continued to create innovative sign theatre and work effectively with deaf and hearing children in a range of formal education settings. The programme continued to spawn deaf actors for the professional theatre world as well as generate a raft of qualified sign language interpreters, teachers and specialised SEN support staff, speech therapists and more.

The key thing about TAEDS is the legacy that it leaves behind. The impact of TOD/ TAEDS on the professional theatre world is unquestionable and it is to be remembered that the programme led to the birth of **Co-Sign Theatre, Deafinitely Theatre, Handprint Theatre** and **D-Roots**. Deaf and hearing alumni have also performed or been centrally involved with **Graeae Theatre, Sign Dance Collective, The Fingersmiths**, and **The Deaf-Hearing Ensemble** as well as the hugely significant **Ramps to the Moon** project currently in the third of its six-year tenure. In addition, deaf actors, graduating from the programme, have

“ The variety of topics studied and the skills I learnt I use everyday as a special needs teacher. I love that TAEDS is a community and we can be found in such a wide variety places! ”

Emily Stark, 2013–2016

been seen in the film **Four Weddings and a Funeral**, the world premiere of Nina Raine's play **Tribes** at the Royal Court Theatre in London and touring with **Take Flight** theatre company.

It is very difficult to navigate around the deaf professional theatre world without witnessing the influence of the programme and it is with huge delight that, as TAEDS withdraws from the stage, the baton of training and preparing deaf actors for the profession passes to the BA Performance in British Sign Language and English at the Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow. The model of support, training and preparation currently being pursued there is both exciting in its performance innovation and student support, and also an honour to witness in its development on the years of practice undertaken on TAEDS. The theatrical spirit of the British Theatre of the Deaf is alive and kicking – and further changing the norms of mainstream theatre practice!

As we celebrate the 32 years of Theatre Arts, Education and Deaf Studies and the Theatre of the Deaf, it is also hugely significant that the majority of alumni are working within education or as sign language interpreters. The programme's central aim was always concerned with the use of theatre to support and develop young deaf people as well as to promote actor training. This tradition has never waned and, in spite, of the closure of the vast majority of dedicated specialist deaf schools, the programme alumni continue to educate and support deaf people of all ages throughout the UK and beyond.

The alumni of the Theatre of the Deaf and the Theatre Arts, Education and Deaf Studies courses are the true legacy of this remarkable programme. It has steered at times an awkward and difficult course through the choppy seas of higher education and yet there have been so many moments of sheer joy and magic along the way.

It has always offered an alternative perspective in its study of the Theatre Arts - a deaf perspective - and one that continued to be taught by deaf tutors, or by tutors with wide experience of working with deaf people. In this respect it has been quite unique internationally and is a programme of which the University of Reading can forever be extremely proud.

Simon Floodgate

With thanks to Daphne Payne for the early history.

“ Now I am a professional actor, drama workshop leader/tutor and director! Kicking ass and loving life! ”

Charlotte Arrowsmith, 2001–2004



IN REHEARSAL | 2007



LES FUNAMBULES | 2002



4:48 PSYCHOSIS | 2012



THE PASTOR'S SPEECH | 2016

Theatre Arts, Education & Deaf Studies/Theatre of the Deaf Programme Directors:

1986–2006: Daphne Payne
2006–2012: Simon Floodgate
2012–2015: Dr Cathy Wardale
2015–2018 : Simon Floodgate



SCARS UPON MY HEART | 2014

RECOLLECTIONS



I loved my time as a guest director along with Steven Webb (ex TAEDS who founded Deafinitely Theatre with Paula Garfield) and Daryl Jackson. We three would plan our workshop approach, each playing to our strengths and then faced with the students, plans would go out the window as they took us on new creative paths with their hunger to try new things and break rules.

TAEDS has laid foundations for so many students to spring from and something else in time will take its place. Thank you Daphne Payne for having the wisdom to start it all and to Simon Floodgate for your tenacity to keep it running as long as it did. And thank you all those past students who are continuing to fly the flag for communication, inclusive practice and equality.

Jenny Sealey

CEO/ Artistic Director, Graeae Theatre



Growing up, I struggled through school where communication was oral and we were punished for using sign language. Communication was a big barrier in the work place and the isolation left me feeling depressed.

When I heard of this groundbreaking course, a one year pilot; something never before taught in the UK, I jumped at the chance and got a place. It sent me on a brand new path.

I remember my tutors Daphne Payne and Judith Jackson, telling me that contrary to what I believed - BSL is a REAL language, and absolutely can be used in theatre. This was a revelation to me, after so long of sign language being banned in my childhood, I was able to bring the beauty of it in to an artistic space, and see it flourish. I truly believe that theatre saved my life. The opportunities that this course gave me changed my world around and brought light, creativity, and motivation to my life.

Since I left in 1989, I've been an actor for 12 years, and Artistic Director of Deafinitely Theatre for 16 years. I am a proud member of the Deaf community and I know that being in this course helped me to understand and find my Deaf Identity.

I hope all those that have been involved in the TOD/TAEDS course feel pride in all that they have achieved and the fantastic work that has grown from the seeds that this course has sewn. I know I will always treasure the memories of being a part of it at its very beginnings.

Paula Garfield

Artistic Director, Deafinitely Theatre

“I recall a motorway trip with Dr Julia Boorman and a 6” cardboard Roman soldier, I also recall, courtesy of the unique and brilliant physical theatre lecturer Shane Irwin, ‘The floor is your friend!’”

Jane Boyd, 1999–2002



Stirred initially in 1975 by the BBC2 film, introduced by Melvyn Bragg, about the British Theatre of the Deaf (BTD), it was to be a phone call a year or two later from the indefatigable Stella Miles, to ask if I'd like to teach on a part-time drama course for deaf and hearing students at Bulmershe, that got me really interested in this multi-lingual form of theatre.

I'd never worked with deaf people before and was apprehensive, my signing capability restricted to slow – very slow – BSL fingerspelling. But with the support and forbearance of some very able students, including Daphne Payne, who was to be a pivotal figure in the development of later provision, this small part-time course became something of a trail blazer.

Perhaps the most inspiring individual was Pat Keysell, the founder of BTD, an outstanding teacher and performer, and someone I was fortunate to work with

on one of Terry Ruane's popular Interim Theatre summer schools in Liverpool. Pat had been motivated to create BTD by a study visit to the USA to work with the (American) National Theatre of the Deaf, started by another visionary, David Hays, in 1967. Paradoxically, perhaps, it was in the area of musical theatre where I and others saw the most exciting and innovative practice. This simultaneous, mutually illuminating use of gestural and spoken modes of communication connected well with other Film and Drama work. Now, thirty-two years on, I'm sure this bold and unique higher education initiative will be long-remembered and valued, not just by former students but, also, those who were privileged to teach them.

Peter Muschamp

Lecturer, Film & Drama 1973-85



Had it not been for the enthusiasm and dogged commitment of a small group of individuals, Theatre of the Deaf at Reading would not have happened at all. Peter Muschamp should take the credit for creating the conditions for the first manifestation of the course, but it would not have taken off without the support of Harold Silver, the Principal of Bulmershe College of Higher Education, as it then was, and – even more importantly – his successor, Brian Palmer, who was unwavering in his support for the course.

It is important to remember just how unique the first year of the Certificate was – not only in its subject matter but also in the way it was funded, which was by a variety of bodies that had never been co-partners in Higher Education before, notably the National Deaf Children's Society and the European Economic Community (EEC), as the EU was known at the time. The other key ingredient, of course, was Daphne Payne, who threw in her permanent job to develop the Certificate and bring it into being. Daphne's energy and single-minded focus were vital, as was her willingness to take risks even when we were none of us sure what would happen next. The

Certificate had two immediate challenges: to find students and develop a distinctive artistic practice. It succeeded in both. It brought people into HE who would not have considered it under any other circumstances, especially members of the deaf community. And it had a profound impact on the existing student population at Bulmershe, especially drama students, many of whom formed close ties with the course and its students and were directly influenced by Theatre of the Deaf approaches to theatre.

I came back to Theatre of the Deaf twenty years later, in 2006, as an external examiner for TAEDS. Now a three-year degree, TAEDS was clearly very different to the Certificate yet there were clear lines of connection between the two.

It is impossible to overstate just how significant the Theatre of the Deaf courses, in all their manifestations, have been, not only for the deaf community but also for contemporary theatre practice itself.

Stephen Lacey

Emeritus Professor of Drama, Film and Television, University of South Wales

“I loved TAEDS and the varied programme... I learnt my craft from Simon Floodgate who was possibly the most patient lecturer ever. Julia was a beautiful soul who helped me shape an exciting dissertation. However the best thing was definitely the group - my best friends in the world came from this course.”

Naomi Wilson, 2001–2004



BIOGRAPHIES

'He doesn't listen for his name'
said a father (who happened to be a King).
Moonbird by Joyce Dunbar

FOR 'MOONBIRD'

HANDPRINT THEATRE

Handprint Theatre creates theatre for and with young people. Using storytelling, physical theatre, British Sign Language and a combination of anything they can get their hands on, the company strives to empower young audiences and celebrate Deaf accessible theatre.

Founded in 2009 by Laura Goulden, Marian Hoddy and Jacob Casselden (Deaf and hearing BA graduates from Theatre Arts, Education & Deaf Studies, University of Reading), Handprint have since toured across the UK and Channel Islands inspiring accessible arts practice. They received British Council funding to visit Los Angeles, for a cultural exchange with Deaf West Theatre, and led a youth participation project collaborating with local Deaf schools. Notably our work has included working with The Battersea Arts Centre, artsdepot, Liberty Festival at The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Discover Story Centre, Mousetrap Projects in the West End and with thousands of young people across the world.

JOYCE DUNBAR

Author of the text

Joyce Dunbar has written over 80 books for children, mostly picture books, including *Tell Me Something Happy Before I Go To Sleep* (Random House Children's Books), *Oddly* (Walker Books) and *I Want a Mini Tiger* (Macmillan). Her picture book *Shoe Baby* (illustrated by Polly Dunbar) has been adapted into a stage play by Longnosepuppets.com and *Moonbird*, illustrated by Jane Ray, has been performed as a play in five countries overseas as well as the UK. Joyce has two titles being published this year: *Grumpy Duck* illustrated by Petr Horacek (Walker Books) in September and *It's Really Nearly Christmas* illustrated by Victoria Turnbull in October 2018.

JANE RAY

Illustrator of the text

Jane Ray is an illustrator and author who has worked with a variety of publishers, but is best known for her distinctive children's book illustrations. As well as writing and illustrating her own stories, she has worked with authors including Michael Rosen, Vikram Seth, Carol Ann Duffy and Jeanette Winterson. Her most recent publications are *The Elephant's Garden* (written by Jane for Boxer Books) in January 2017 and *The Glassmaker's Daughter* (written by Dianne Hofmeyr for Frances Lincoln) in October 2017. She was the IBBY UK Illustrator Nominee for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 2018.

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INFO@THEAGENCY.CO.UK

SOPHIE AND TOM | 2014

FOR 'A CELEBRATION OF TAEDS'

PLANNING GROUP:

Simon Floodgate
Ilan Dwek
Lucy O'Keeffe, 2007-10
Nadia Bernardes, 2014-17
Lucy Brown, 2015-18
Alexander Scott, 2015-18
Ben Watts, 2015-18
Becca Ivens, 2015-18
Eloise Roseby, 2015-18
Tom Mepham, 2015-18
Emily Stark, 2013-16
Ebonny Lay, 2009-14

USHERS ON THE DAY

Anna Bolton, 2014-17
Emily Stark
Nadia Bernardes
Lucy Brown
Alexander Scott
Ben Watts
Becca Ivens
Eloise Roseby
Tom Mepham

SPEAKERS

Sir David Bell, KCB Vice Chancellor
Professor Lib Taylor
Steve R Vevers Webb, 1996-99
Stephanie Back, 2013-16
Simon Floodgate

SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Sam Dean, 2007-10
Fliss Becker, 2005-08
Ana Becker, 2005-08
Caroline Richardson, 2007-10
Tony Oliver

FOR HANDPRINT THEATRE

Laura Goulden, 2006-09
Marian Hoddy, 2006-09
Charlotte Arrowsmith, 2001-04
Nadeem Islam

Stage Manager: Francesca Osimani

FOR FILM, THEATRE AND TELEVISION

Set design: Lisa Clark

Costume design: Pam Wiggin

Set build: Ross Peters,
Tamara Osborn, Emily Moulton

Technical Support: Chris O'Shea,
George Ormisher

Venue liaison: Lucy Tyler

PROGRAMME

Ken Carter & Decibels

MOONBIRD IMAGE DESIGN

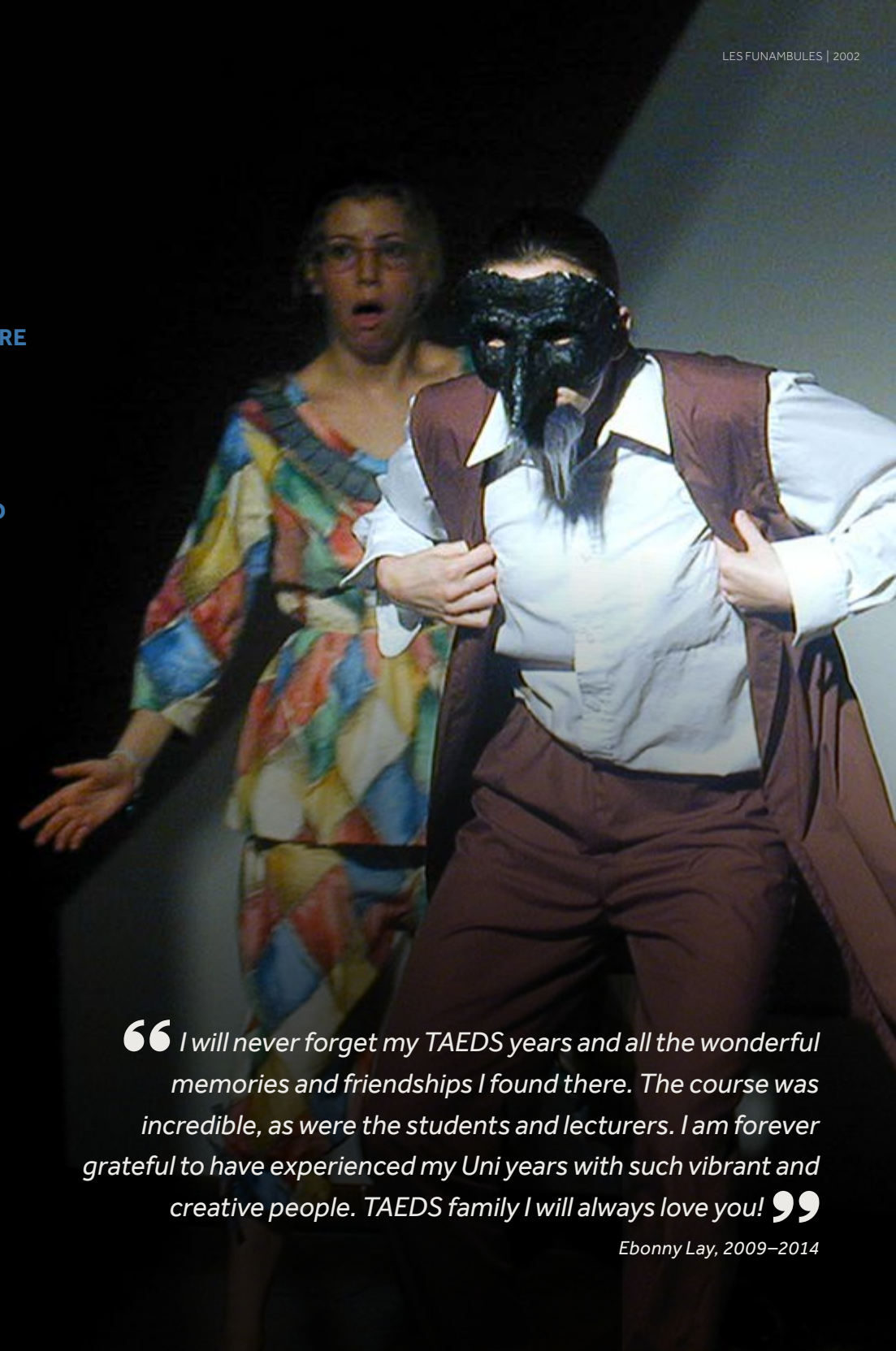
Matthew Friett, 2007-10

TICKETING: ALUMNI OFFICE

Lauren Gordon
Carole Loftus

REFRESHMENTS

Venue@Reading



“ I will never forget my TAEDS years and all the wonderful memories and friendships I found there. The course was incredible, as were the students and lecturers. I am forever grateful to have experienced my Uni years with such vibrant and creative people. TAEDS family I will always love you! ”

Ebonny Lay, 2009-2014

**CELEBRATORY ALUMNA EVENT PROGRAMME
SPONSORED BY DECIBELS**



Decibels is very pleased to be sponsoring the production of this TAEDS (Theatre Arts Education and Deaf Studies) Celebratory Alumni Event Programme.

Decibels, founded in 2005, has established an Inclusive Learning Unit on the London Road Campus of the Institute of Education, University of Reading for the development and use of Sound, Music, the Arts, Drama, Film through ICT (Information & Communications Technology).

Decibels believes in a world where all people including people with deafness and other disabilities have opportunities to develop their creativity and discover their talents. We know how important the BA (Hons) TAEDS course has been to so many students from its early beginning as a Theatre of the Deaf Enterprise some 30 years ago.

For more information about Decibels, please do go to our website www.decibels.org.uk or contact Debbie Flory d.flory@decibels.org.uk Ken Carter ken.carter@decibels.org.uk

**A CELEBRATION OF TAEDS (TOD)
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Institute of Education



For more information contact Simon Floodgate
s.floodgate@reading.ac.uk

blogs.reading.ac.uk/ioe-news-and-events