

NATD

The National Association
For The Teaching Of Drama

Chair's Report 2012 – 2013

This report is on behalf of the NEC and we see it as not just a report from the outgoing to the incoming NEC but also as a suggested blueprint for the year ahead. In this report I will try to recognise and map out the crossroads at which NATD, in our opinion, stands.

This has been another incredibly busy year for the outgoing National Executive Committee. As the government has effected a number of consultations and changes we have furthered the strength of NATD's voice by contributing to a series of meetings and consultations with groups like the Cultural Learning Alliance and CASE.

Last year's Conference was a huge success and it was a pleasure for the NEC to hear the positive evaluation and analysis made by the membership. The comments we received were full of hope for the future and trust in our capabilities.

We arranged for the conference to be filmed which meant those who couldn't attend could watch edited versions of the keynotes on our website, which is a first. We also had a short promo film made, to use as a marketing tool, which we felt really captured the essence of the weekend and NATD.

This positivity geared us up to have this year's event organised, including all contributors booked and marketing material produced, in record time.

Our phenomenal Journal Committee has worked even harder this year, which didn't seem possible after last year. We asked for a T.I.E. Special to reflect that important history of our members and the crucial work that some of them are still undertaking and I am sure you will agree that it surpassed expectation. This was on top of the two full issues. Again, I would like to formally thank this hardworking group, as they not only give the Association its internationally respected voice but they are also a huge support to the NEC and always generously give up their time to advise us and we consider them very much part of our team.

The NATD now has a Journal Archive on the website as part of our members' benefits. This is another first in our history and reflects all the work undertaken by members and celebrates the achievements of NATD over the years. Excitingly, it even includes the rediscovered, first ever issue of 'Broadsheet', which we were unaware existed. As you will have seen from the motions, we are hoping to charge institutions to access this wealth of dramatic theory, as another source of income.

Our President, Luke Abbott, has also been busy on our behalf. Owing to the fact that three of our NEC members are students of the Central School of Speech and Drama, they initiated a meeting with Luke to run some Mantle of the Expert training, under

the banner of NATD. We are now hopeful that this relationship will continue and flourish to possibly create some specific qualifications or credits. In May, Luke then led a two day course in Leeds; one of NATD's first regional events for a few years.

Another way we have considered raising the profile and attracting new members is by inviting high profile people to become patrons. The first person we approached was Edward Bond. After much deliberation, Edward sadly felt he didn't have the time to do justice to the role. This was definitely a hard decision for him, as he is such a stalwart supporter and believer in our cause.

We have continued to approach others with regard to patronage and would welcome input from membership on this matter.

We have also forged relationships with other like-minded groups. We attended the CASE conference in November and the subsequent launch of their alternative education at Westminster.

As you may have read in my previous report, Liam Harris and Gemma Grubb also attended a meeting with the Cultural Learning Alliance, to give our input, alongside other subject specific associations, to reshape the National Curriculum 2014. As well as this, we have been invited to sit on the OCR panel and have established initial relations with the Student Drama Festival. Both of which should grow next year.

One of the bodies represented at the CLA was National Drama, with whom we have tried to build bridges and with whom we all feel we need to forge a new relationship in order to create larger opposition to Government reform in the future. What form this takes is not yet known as we know some of their educational views are very different from ours. We would also like to form alliances with others, like NATE and the Historical Association, who we know are more sympathetic to our pedagogy.

As you know, last year, we also invited four members to be our Trustees. Luke Abbott, Iona Towler-Evans, Mike Davies and Matthew Milburn have supported us all year and offered us much valued advice. We would like to formally thank them for their patience and guidance. We hope to vote in our Trustee document at this AGM to help the Trustees understand what we expect from them and to give them some security in their critical role.

Thus there have been many advances this year.

However, there were some unforeseen obstacles on our path:

- There were conference costs from which we lost money. These have had a knock-on effect on our finances all year. (See Treasurer's report.)
- Some of this was down to historical issues with the accounts.
- And some were lessons we had to learn from in order to budget this year. (Again see Treasurer's report.)
- In the past the annual conference had run at a surplus thus enabling NATD to manage itself for the following year. However this hasn't happened in the recent past – largely due to the decreasing budgetary power of drama in schools. Which brings me on to other obstacles.

These other obstacles, were more predictable, but have, nevertheless, proved a huge challenge. As you are more than aware, drama is not at the top of many

schools' budgets, and schools' INSET budgets have been significantly cut as schools try to grapple with increasingly difficult budgetary challenges. Thus this year delegate numbers dramatically dropped. We even considered cancelling this conference, but in the event we decided that there were enough bookings to break even and that it would not damage the Association by going ahead.

Nevertheless, we know that we need to look elsewhere for much needed funding.

The Blueprint

1. We have made some applications for funding to utilise our charitable status but so far this has borne no fruit. This is a time-consuming task but we see it as a priority for the new Committee. Membership could support this by giving up some time to help and suggesting more ideas for funding bodies.
2. The organisation needs greater clarity on what the role of the NEC is. Where should the priorities of the NEC lie? As administrators? Representatives? Leaders? What kind of leaders should they be? Can the members galvanise and become more active in the promotion and growth of the Association? We know that you are all busy promoting drama in your own contexts and nationally but our strength must lie in unity of purpose and action.
3. The NEC needs to adapt and update the membership processes and procedures as the administration role is changing.
4. Guy Williams has provided members with some interesting reading about the website visits which have increased this year. Guy has worked tirelessly to keep the website current and we had record amounts of hits during the responses to the draft curriculum. I would like to formally thank Guy for his marvellous efforts on everyone's behalf: we know that people are looking at the website and it creates interest in membership and Conference. The new NEC also needs to analyse this data and try to address why some people aren't coming back though after an initial visit, as we are clearly reaching new people. We also know that our Facebook page and Twitter account have attracted first time delegates to Conference. These now need to run alongside the website to create further Internet traffic.
5. I maintain that we need to become paperless in order to save hundreds of pounds annually and this is something to pursue further.
6. We believe that smaller regional or subject specific events are the future answer for the NATD and we have been looking for joint ventures with other educational establishments and academic partners. This could boost the advantages of membership, as there would be discounted rates for members of NATD.

To ensure the existence of NATD, the NEC has not claimed any expenses since September, so has actually been paying for the Association to run all year. As some of us are students or work part-time and travel extensive distances from different

parts of the country, we cannot afford to do this again this year. And I know you wouldn't expect us to.

I would like to say a huge thank you to the outgoing NEC. They have gone above and beyond the remit with their generosity of money, time and energy to ensure the running of NATD and to make this year's Conference another success and place for us to garner strength from each other for the year ahead.

Ruth Saxton (Chair of NATD) and the National Executive Committee