



## Performing Arts & Drama



Varndean College has a strong reputation for drama. It arises from the work of a committed department who believe that students achieve highly when they both enjoy and are challenged by the task in hand. For theatre and drama students, this is achieved through a process that combines intellect with action and theory with practice. We believe that the key that unlocks student potential lies in learning to perform without fear of destructive criticism. Theatre Studies and Foundation Diplomas are popular and important subjects, quite different from most other courses. Many of our students go on to study drama related courses in universities and colleges of higher education.

You can follow two different types of courses – **A Level in Drama and Theatre Studies** and **BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Acting (Performing Arts Practice)** [equivalent to 1.5 A levels]. All have performance at their heart and it is important that you are able to meet the requirements below, as well as the specific entry criteria:

- Be prepared to perform in front of others
- Take risks in practical workshops
- Accept constructive criticism and act on it
- Work as part of a team
- Enjoy and be prepared to go to the theatre
- Enjoy reading plays and books about theatre and performance
- Engage positively with written tasks and other assignments
- Be interested in the role of drama



## Teaching Style

Because of our backgrounds in the industry, we are able to deliver an experience that closely matches the format, style and approach of a Drama School: We teach actively and practically through actor and director workshops, improvisation, voice and movement exercises, discussions, student-led seminars, performance and design projects. We also emphasise the importance of developing written and analytical skills.

## Extension Studies

- Drama Society: Open Enrichment club; join in weekly drama games and techniques, developing skills as an actor and perform in a play for the Creative arts showcase in Summer.
- Production Skills: Developing skills in design, stage management and front of house with practical experience on a production.
- Audition Skills: For students applying for drama training or drama degree, a practical support course in how to apply, with advice for monologues and auditions.

## Teaching Staff

All staff on drama courses are specialist tutors with their own links to the industry. The area is supported by a technician/teacher with a specialism in design. Professional directors are also employed to work on particular productions. The permanent team are Steve Bates (Assistant Head of School, Creative Arts and Programme Leader For Performing Arts), Nicky Jones and Sian Hutchinson (Programme Leaders for Drama & Theatre Studies). We all have a professional interest which we bring to our teaching. Steve worked as a Senior Technician for Glyndebourne Opera and DV8 Physical Theatre Company, Nicky was Artistic Director of Otherplace Productions and Sian is a comedy writer and performer.

## Productions

Productions are integrated into the courses as public performance and exam. Each year there is an extra-curricular play open to all students in the College. We are also part of the National Theatre Connections project, with learners performing at a professional partner venue.

## Performing Arts

Students interested in a broader performing arts course can combine a theatre course with Music Technology, and/or a BTEC in Dance.

## Other Subject Combinations

Any really: students often combine courses in Art, Design, Dance, English, Film Studies, History, Media, Sport, Philosophy, Photography, Politics, Psychology and Sociology. We also have a number of creative and enterprising scientists on courses.

## Drama & Theatre : A Level (eduqas)

Entry requirement for Drama and Theatre Studies A Level: 6 GCSE's at Grade 4 or above including English and with a 5 in GCSE Drama (if taken). This course combines creative practical exploration of drama and theatre with the ideas and theories of practitioners and directors. You will be examined through performance projects in scripted and devised work. There is one written exam. Students should expect to spend around £50 a term on theatre visits.

High percentage of practical assessment in non-exam units. Theatre visits are an important part of the course. One written exam at the end of the course, and supporting coursework for practical projects, so developing written skills is important. Most students choose acting as their main pathway, but you can also specialise in design.

### Units studied:

#### Theatre Workshop (20%) internally assessed

Create, develop and perform of a piece of theatre based on a reinterpretation of an extract of text and produce a creative log.

#### Text in Action (40%) Externally examined

Create develop and perform two pieces of theatre one devised, the other a text extract. Complete a process and evaluation report.

#### Text in Performance (40%) written exam 2 hours thirty mins

Answer questions on three different set texts.

<b>Year 1 Autumn</b>	Practical workshops on performance styles, staging and a technical vocabulary. Practitioner workshops leading to: Set text 1 Theatre visits and analysis – ongoing
<b>Spring</b>	Theatre Workshop assessment Set text 1 continues Theatre visits and analysis Set text 2
<b>Summer</b>	Set text performance of extracts Set text 2 continues Theatre visits
<b>Year 2 Autumn</b>	Create develop and perform two pieces of theatre one devised, the other a text extract Set text 3
<b>Spring</b>	Text in action exam Set text 3 continues
<b>Summer</b>	Exam revision and written exam



## BTEC Acting (L3 Diploma)

A two-year vocational course equivalent to one-and a half A Levels (Edexcel). All four units are 100% coursework, internally assessed. Every practical unit is supported by reflective written work, developing skills in research, analysis and evaluation.

The Foundation Diploma in Performing Arts Practice is an exciting vocational course for students who want to focus on the development of acting skills with a view to progressing to a career or further study in Performing Arts. It is designed to be taken as part of a programme of study that includes other appropriate BTEC Nationals or A Levels.

### Entry Requirements:

5 GCSEs at Grade 4 or above and, preferably, a GCSE Grade 5 or BTEC Merit Level 2 in Drama/Performing Arts (if taken) or some drama experience.

### Course Units:

- B4. Exploring Performance Styles
- B5. Creating Performance Material
- B6. Performing as an Actor for an Audience
- F16. Planning a Career in the Industry

<b>Year 1</b> Autumn Term	<b>Exploring Performance Styles:</b> Two practical projects exploring related styles of performance. The first is explored through workshops and an informal solo performance with your group. The second project explores different styles of Theatre Through The Ages with a group performance.
Spring Term	<b>Creating Performance Material:</b> Explore a range of performance styles and storytelling techniques to create new material. Then working in a group to devise an original piece of theatre to an invited audience.
Summer Term	<b>Planning a Career in the Industry:</b> Learners will develop their knowledge and understanding of the performing arts industry, including roles, organisations, future developments and capitalising on job opportunities. Workshops and working on short monologue/duologue scenes for performance.
<b>Year 2</b> Autumn Term	<b>Exploring Performance Styles:</b> Practical exploration of new practitioner and style to help you to prepare, rehearse and perform a modern piece of theatre for a live audience.
Spring Term	<b>Creating Performance Material:</b> Develop skills and techniques to devise group performance work in response to a theme or stimulus.
Summer Term	<b>Performing as an Actor for an Audience:</b> Final acting showcase in a venue in Brighton.



## Performance Date Schedule (example)

We pride ourselves on the diverse range of theatre trips and chosen plays studied. Here is the schedule for 2023-2024 to give you an indication of the enriching events our students get to experience within our drama department.

GROUP	Production / Trip	Date
Drama A level	<i>As You Like it</i> - Globe Theatre London	Sept
Drama A level Yr 2 and BTEC Acting Yr 2	<i>Dr Semmelwiess</i> , Harold Pinter Theatre, London	Sept
All Performing Arts / Drama Students	Frantic Assembly's <i>Metamorphosis</i> Worthing	October
Drama A level Yr 2 and BTEC Performing Arts Yr 2	Frantic Assembly Devising Workshop	October
BTEC Acting Yr 2	<i>Going Back</i> Devised Performance	October
BTEC Performing Arts Yr 2	<i>The Witches</i> - The National Theatre, London	November
BTEC Acting Yr 1	Naturalism Scene Study (The Cherry Orchard)	December
Drama A level Yr 1	<i>As you Like It</i> Scene Study	December
BTEC Performing Arts Yr 2	<i>EAST</i> Performance	December
BTEC Acting Yr 1 and Yr 2	Gecko Theatre's <i>Kin</i> - The National Theatre, London	January
BTEC Acting Yr 2	<i>Memories</i> - Mask Theatre Performance	January
Drama A Level Yr 2	Text In Action Performance Exam	March
Drama A Level Yr 1	<i>Antigone</i> Devising Performances	March
BTEC Acting Yr 1	<i>The Periodicals</i> (NT Connections) Performance at Varndean	March
BTEC L2 Performance	<i>Boys</i> Performance	March
BTEC Acting Yr 1	<i>The Periodicals</i> (NT Connections) Performance at Trinity Theatre in Tunbridge Wells	April
BTEC Acting Yr 2	<i>Earthquakes in London</i> Performance	April
Creative Arts School	Creative Arts ShowCase	June
Drama Society Enrichment	<i>Bucket List</i> (Inspired by Buckets) Performance	June

## Teaching, workshop and performance space: facilities

*"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all it takes for an act of theatre to be engaged."* **Peter Brook *The Empty Space***

At Varndean we have more than 'an empty' space: most lessons happen in our well equipped, black box drama studio which has wrap around curtains, computerised lighting rig and sound system and av facilities. The prop and costume store is in the adjoining workshop which is well equipped with tools to support design and technical theatre students. There is another smaller studio close by for intimate performances and rehearsal work. In-house productions are staged in the studio. Students also perform in a range of different venues to enhance vocational expertise and respond to contemporary theatre practice.

## Theatre Visits and Workshops

An essential part of learning about performance is seeing it. There are organised theatre visits each year, and students are encouraged to see plays with family and friends. We also invite practitioners to the College to offer workshops or discussions as well as attending after show talks and workshops in other theatre venues. We also go to London theatres including The Globe, The National Theatre and The Bridge. In Sussex we regularly visit Chichester, Glyndebourne and other more local venues. We have a bi-annual backstage tour at the National Theatre and have set up visits to the Theatre Archive on London's South Bank. We also arrange gallery and other visits to inspire and support students in their work.

## Progression

Drama courses prepare students for employment and higher education through emphasis on task related team work, research, written tasks; and practical performance. Students gain self-confidence and self-awareness alongside the skills, knowledge and understanding associated with drama and performance. These are recognised as the skills of industry in general as well as drama in particular.

All our courses require our students to write about theatre and their own skill development. We support students with written and practical work through tracking progress, setting targets and discussion. There is specific support for students who need help organising their time and producing written assignments. One of our strengths is the high percentage of students who go on to study theatre at drama school and university or who gain work in the industry. Other students go onto degrees in a variety of subjects including, law, film, politics, psychology and marine biology. We have had students at Cambridge University, Central School of Speech and Drama, RADA, Guildford School of Acting, Bristol Old Vic, Goldsmith's College University of London, Warwick University, Rose Bruford, East 15, Royal Holloway and Chichester University amongst others.