



Images courtesy of Alpha Shows

# Exploring the benefits of live performances

By Gemma Easton, Editor

**Theatre, including school productions and theatre incursions, is a valuable educational tool. Helping students to develop new skills, and explore aspects of the curriculum in different ways, the advantage of theatre are wide ranging.**

Perhaps the most obvious benefit of staging a school theatre production is the extension of students in the performing arts, allowing them to share their talents in drama, music, dance and voice. Performing helps students to build confidence in these areas, which will in turn build their confidence more broadly.

Students who are not involved in the performing arts through their classroom subjects may be encouraged to try something new, and step outside their



comfort zone to appear on stage in a production. This can help students discover new interests, and explore hobbies and pastimes beyond their usual activities.

Of course, a school production, goes beyond the people on stage. Students who are not performers can be involved in different aspects of the

production, including set and costume design, sound and lighting, and promotion of the production. There is also the opportunity for students to sell tickets, or assist on the night with ushering. Opportunities, then, are available for all students to become involved.

This large-scale involvement in a shared project can help students

build a sense of pride in their school, helping them to feel more connected to their school, their teachers, and their classmates. This will in turn help students to feel happier at school, positively impacting all areas of their learning, as well as their social and emotional development. This sense of connection can extend to the wider community, as parents and families help out with the production, or come and watch a performance.

A musical brings together the discrete learning areas within the creative and performing arts, blending elements from each discipline. This can allow for teacher collaboration and co-teaching across subject areas. From collaboration, teachers may learn new ideas or consider different ways of approaching a subject. Co-teaching can help lighten the load for individual teachers, as the responsibility of preparing and delivering a lesson can be shared. ►

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◀ The educational benefits of theatre productions extend beyond honing a student's performance skills. The performing arts can help develop a range of skills which will benefit multiple subject areas, including improved communication skills, giving and receiving feedback, working in a team and collaborating, and effective time management. The unpredictable nature of live performance helps students develop the ability to think quickly and improvise when things do not go to plan, and to stay calm in difficult situations.

Through theatre productions, students may be exposed to different cultures or philosophies, challenging them to consider things from a different point of view. This

helps build their capacity to approach tasks with an open mind, considering the impacts of their actions on a global, rather than individual level.

Engaging an external company to present a theatre production to students is another way to incorporate theatre in learning. Productions can complement history or social science studies, bringing subject matter to life in different and interesting ways. Students may better connect with content when presented in this way, leading to improved learning outcomes.

Whether you are staging a school production or hosting a guest performance, there are important things to consider. Firstly, the intended audience will impact the choice of performance.

All productions should be age appropriate and engaging for students, and the links to curriculum clearly established. For in-house productions, schools must ensure they have obtained the necessary licenses and permissions to stage the performance.

The size of the space to perform, as well as the capacity to hold an audience should also be considered. If audiences are to be seated for a long time, ensure seating is comfortable, and the space is adequately cooled or heated.

Access to technology, including sound, lighting and special effects can impact your choice of performance. Some schools choose to install professional sound and lighting boards,

allowing students to learn how to operate these. If performances are to be held at night, ensure there is adequate lighting of the performance area, and for audience members to take their seats.

Ensure external companies provide a clear brief, outlining their requirements and expectations before they arrive to perform. In some instances, a site visit ahead of the performance may be useful to ensure the space is appropriate.

With so much to consider when planning a theatre incursion or school production, *School News* asked some industry experts for their advice.

Ben Jackson from Alpha Shows said there are several benefits to inviting an external provider to host a musical incursion in your school.

"A musical incursion gives students the opportunity to experience a professional-quality production and to see how musical theatre is performed at a high level. They can then take what they have learned and apply this in their own production. The skills and social and emotional learning experienced through theatre goes beyond just the arts, and has positive impacts for all learning areas.

"Participating in a musical incursion can help students develop their own theatre skills, such as singing, dancing, and acting. They may also learn about stagecraft, lighting, and sound design."

Mr Jackson said theatre is a safe space for students. "You can either bring in performing arts and have theatre presentations that allow a safe space to process grief, fear and anger, or let it happen uncontrollably out in the playground, classroom or world! Emotions need to be fully felt and expressed, but our culture and society often has limits to how much children (and adults!) are 'permitted' to do this important psychological work. By taking these types of archetypes to the extreme in theatre, children can more easily be triggered to express their emotions in a safe place, thus negating the need to express that outside in an uncontrolled and perhaps unhealthy or destructive way. ▶



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◀ “Musical incursions can be tied to other subjects, such as history, literature, and music, providing a unique and engaging way to learn about these subjects. Even when the subjects or curriculum content isn’t addressed directly, those curriculum areas can still see benefit as a student grows in their emotional resilience and confidence.”

When staging your own production, Licensing Manager at Origin Theatrical Nick Young said you must first apply for rights. “The authors or creators of that musical and/or those who own the rights, must give you permission to perform their creative work. You will need to pay a small fee (a royalty) which is passed on to the rights owner, author or creator. This is how the creators of the show make a living.

“To apply for rights, first you need to find out who owns the rights and provides the licence and materials you will need to perform the musical. Once your application has been submitted, you need to wait for approval. This can take anywhere from 24 hours to a



Image courtesy of Jands

few days and depending on who needs to give permission, all the way to six weeks.

“Sometimes the rights are restricted or not available for the musical which you might want to perform. This can happen if it is a brand-new musical and rights for schools to perform have not yet been released or if there is a professional production running currently or coming soon.”

Mr Young warns that staging a performance without an approved licence is breaking copyright law

and you could be fined.

“As a rule, you cannot make any changes to the show or script without having written approval from the owners of the show. On occasion permission might be granted to localise place names or change non-lead character names.

“You can create your own show, but only if you are going to use a script that is 100 per cent your idea and any songs and music are your own creation as well. You are not able to mix different songs from different

musicals to come up with a new show or compilation show.”

Transtage said there has been a trend towards portable staging in recent years, providing schools a cost-effective way to customise their staging solutions. Company representative Kevin explains, “Most schools have a permanent stage in their school hall. However, portable staging has become more and more popular in the past decade, as they are a great addition to the permanent stage.”

Using portable staging gives schools flexibility. “Portable stage can be easily added on to an existing stage as an extension, to enlarge the size of the stage for bigger events. Portable stage can also be taken outdoors when a school wants to host an outdoor event.

“Most portable stages are modular design, which means the school can change the size of the stage easily. A small stage can be set up for a small event, and a bigger stage for larger gatherings. Portable, modular staging can be tailored to suit the schools needs and types of events it will host.”

Joe Hopkins from Jands said choosing the right equipment will enhance your school production. “Proper microphone selection and placement in theatre applications can dramatically improve and reinforce the impact of the action and emotion on the stage. From large Broadway shows to small community stages, any theatre experience relies heavily on having good sound to emotionally connect with the audience.



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"Loudspeakers are available for a variety of applications, including schools and theatres. There are several options to choose from, including portable and compact models. Make sure you choose the model most suitable for the space where it will be most used. Some models are better suited to large spaces like auditoriums and gymnasiums, while more compact models may be sufficient in a smaller venue, like a classroom.

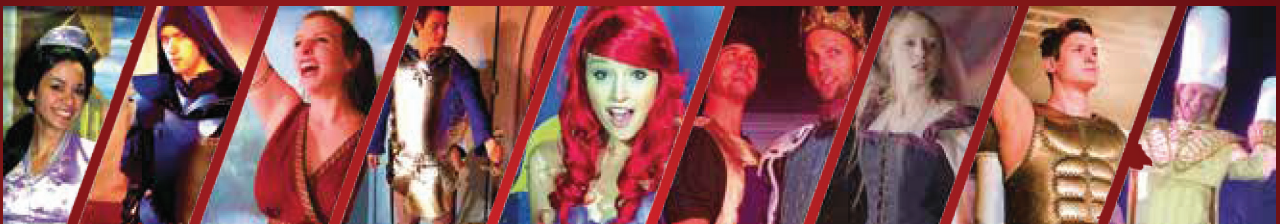
"Hiring or purchasing truss is

a good option for schools. It is a versatile resource, and can be used for hanging lighting, curtains or speakers for any temporary installations. For lighting, there are a range of options which meet or exceed theatrical and performance lighting demands and specifications. Lighting consoles, dimming systems, networked lighting controls, and software for lighting design and visualisation are also available. All of these tools will help make your school production more professional." ■

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