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A Revamped Drama Centre Prepares for Action

The Drama Centre has been offering a series of intensive workshops over the past weeks for students and outsiders alike. Theatre animators like Irene Christ, Ruben Zahra, Albert Marshall, Stephen Florian and Mario Azzopardi have been conducting Sunday sessions on the work of Brecht, Stanislavski, Grotowski, Barba, Boal and other 20th century pedagogues.

All courses have been heavily subscribed. The workshop in Vocal Action conducted by Ruben Zahra has been offered twice this summer, back to back due to the overwhelming response. The success of short-term intensive workshops is however the prelude to an even larger initiative. The Drama Centre has put together an exciting package of courses to launch the 2004-2005 academic year.

Piloted by theatre animator and director Mario Azzopardi, who took charge of the Drama Centre on March 1 of this year, a new team of tutors, including directors with international experience has been engaged to work within specialised theatrical areas and a new range of courses is being offered. Body Coordination and Theatre and Creative Dance will be animated by Svetlana Silina who graduated from the Academy of Dance in Moscow while Vocal Action, an intensive rush of voice work rooted in physical theatre will run again under Ruben Zahra. Costume Design and Manufacture for the Stage will be devised by John Williams, a designer with plenty of West End experience who will be taking up residence in Malta.

On the other hand, Erika Ferrito has been engaged to run new dance classes for juniors opting to sit for RAD certification while leading actress Rachel Portelli is being entrusted with innovative workshops for the junior sector. The intermediate group at the Centre will be involved in singing and voice and devised theatre workshops by Norma Camilleri and John Attard respectively, while seniors will be working on character interpretation from the classical, contemporary and experimental repertory, guided by Albert Marshall, Lino Farrugia, Anthony Ellul and C.S. Aquilina. Senior students will also be presenting an original collage in Maltese, based on Anton Chekhov's humorous inclinations. The project is being offered in association with the Russian Centre for Culture and Science to mark the first centenary from Chekhov's death.

The Drama Centre has also secured the services of leading playwright Oreste Calleja to coordinate the scriptwriting course. As from this year, the course will include exercises extended towards communal, outreach commitment.

Another brand new course, Community Theatre, with Sarah Spiteri, [Charlo Seychell](#) and Mario Azzopardi as instructors has proved to be a magnet for some twenty leaders from the social action field while there was also heavy subscription for another introductory course dealing with drama for personality development. Special Sunday workshops will continue, with Irene Christ offering insight into Realist Drama from Scandinavia and Frank Horner offering sessions in dramatic interpretation for prospective directors.

Tutors will work intensively with the students to give them the necessary technical skills and artistic experience throughout their years of formation at the Drama Centre.

As from this year, the Drama Centre is offering to students for the

Trinity College London graded and diploma examinations in Drama & Speech, Musical Theatre, Theatre Arts and Communication Skills. These certificates in the performing arts are designed to equip students with the necessary skills to work in a wide range of professional situations. The diplomas will suite those wishing to work in education, entertainment or in any situation where imagination, presentation and discipline are important features. Trinity's syllabus contains the widest variety of diplomas in this field, offering qualifications to suite all vocational and leisure needs.

The Centre will be offering "optional courses" for outsiders who find it difficult to meet the commitment of three years of training. Such courses are being offered in Theatre for Personality Development, Drama for Social Communication Skills, Character Dance, Body Coordination and Costume Design. For more information regarding these courses and subscription interested persons should contact the Drama Centre on 21220665 (attn. Joseph Saliba) or by email: malta.drama.centre@gov.mt

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