

THE STAGE:

Physical theatre and front of house skills

By Susan Elkin on November 14, 2011 10:25 AM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

There are two things I want to tell you about today. And since there is no connection whatever between them I shan't even attempt one of those spurious and creaky journalistic links.

First, I went last Thursday to [Chelmsford High School for Girls](#) to see - at last - [Scene Productions's theatrically riveting version of Kafka's Metamorphosis](#). My review should be on *The Stage* website today.

Although Scene Productions creates work which is theatre-friendly and the company is beginning to get bookings in venues patronised by the general public, its core business is theatre in education. Katharine Hurst, who runs the company (with Kelly Taylor-Smith - currently on maternity leave) David Sayers and Stuart Walker had run a two-hour workshop with 17 sixth formers before my arrival. The performance that I saw was, therefore, graced with a very informed and engaged audience.

Those 17 girls are studying for AS level Theatre Studies under the guidance of Sally Foley, Chelmsford High School's Head of Drama and her colleagues. "They will use what they have learned here today in their practical piece, which will be assessed as part of the AS course," she said. And what they learned on Thursday was how the techniques of Brecht, Artaud and Berkoff can be used to create dynamic physical theatre using grotesque masks, bold accurate gestures, screens, minimal 'representative' scenery or realism and much more.

After the performance, the three actors ran a short question and answer session to consolidate the learning still further before dashing off to Chigwell School to lead another two-hour after-school workshop followed by an evening performance.

It's high quality work which is making a difference to large numbers of young people studying drama and, best of all, it's a very intelligent, uncompromising, challenging approach in which nothing is in the slightest bit dumbed down. If you are working with this age group then I warmly recommend the work of Scene Productions.