

A Picture of Health by Sudha Bhuchar



Dear Colleague,

Announcing a new Theatre of Debate[®] programme for Autumn 2024

"How do you make exciting drama that is enthralling to watch? How do you explain the ethical dilemmas that affect our daily lives? How do you do all this without boring people to death? The answer is - uniquely - Theatre of Debate" (Baroness Joan Bakewell, Journalist, Author, Playwright and President, Birkbeck University).

We are very excited to announce that Theatre of Debate[®] (ToD) will be touring an entirely new programme this autumn, the first since the Covid 19 pandemic. Post-production impact evaluations from one of our previous productions tell us that you felt our work helped to support the Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) delivery in schools and we think that our new production, 'A Picture of Health' will do the same.

No charge to participating schools - the tour is fully financially supported

We are even more excited to tell you that due to a generous private donation we can offer this programme to your school at no charge to you.

'A Picture of Health' - What's the story?

Set in Mysore, Southern India, in 1805 the story begins when princess Devajammani arrives at the royal court of Mysore to marry Krishnaraja Wadiyar III. They were both 12 years old and he was the newly anointed ruler of the Southern Indian kingdom.

But Devajammani soon found herself recruited for a more momentous cause - to publicise and promote the smallpox vaccine. And her unwitting role was captured in a painting commissioned by the East India Company to "encourage participation in the vaccination programme", according to Dr Nigel Chancellor, a historian at Cambridge University.

What followed was a concerted mix of politics, power, and persuasion by the East India Company to introduce the world's first ever vaccine to India, their biggest colonial enterprise. It involved British surgeons, Indian vaccinators, scheming company bosses and friendly royals - none more so than the Wadiyars, indebted to the British who had restored them to the throne after more than 30 years of exile. This new play has been written by award-winning playwright Sudha Bhuchar and was inspired by Irish painter Thomas Hickey's portrait 'The Three Queens of Mysore', which itself has been called "one of the most important scientific paintings in the history of medicine in India."

'A Picture of Health' - Who is it for?

This Theatre of Debate[®] programme is designed for a year group audience of 75-150 students. A stimulating performance with drama and humour is followed by a thought-provoking post-show facilitated conversation in which the actors return in character and answer questions from the audience. After the company leaves your school, online resources will be made available for students and teachers to deepen their knowledge and learning, enabling the continuation of conversations around the subject.

'A Picture of Health' will be suitable for pupils aged in KS 4/5 and engages its audience in an informed conversation around vaccination, variolation, colonisation, decolonisation, vaccine hesitancy and the role of women in Southern India. The programme addresses key curriculum objectives across KS 4/5 in PSHE, English, Drama, Art, Media, History, Science, Biology and Philosophy.

The Theatre of Debate® development process

'A Picture of Health' has been developed in close collaboration with:

Professor Michael Reiss - an Anglican Priest and a Professor of science education at the Institute of Education, University College London, where he is assistant director, research and development.

Prof Sue Pavitt Professor (Translational and Applied Health Research) the school of dentistry, University of Leeds.

Dr Apurba Chatterjee - Department of History, Reading University. Dr Chatterjee is a Wellcome Trust Research Fellow in humanities and social science. Particular areas of interest include the British Empire, India, Histories of Medicine and Science, Visual Culture, Postcolonialism and new Imperial History

Dr Maheshi Ramasamy - Associate Professor, Senior Clinical Researcher, Principal Investigator Oxford Vaccine group.

His Highness Yaduveer Wadiyar Maharaja of Mysore - Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar, is the 27th and present titular Maharaja of Mysore, and the head of the former ruling Wodeyar dynasty.

Writer **Sudha Bhuchar** and emerging playwright **Claudia Fielding** workshopped ideas for plays with students from Batley Girls school and ToD produced a rehearsed reading, an essential part of our development process, of 'A Picture of Health' at the Soho Theatre for an invited, largely South Asian, audience. Our collaborators have read and fed back their views on the scripts at every stage of development and have participated in the workshops.

How to book 'A Picture of Health' – follow the link to reserve your preferred date and time. There is no charge to you

Thanks to a generous bequest from the estate of actor Peter Stenson, we can tour this production and support it FREE of cost to participating schools. We expect demand to be strong. All you need to do is follow this link debra@theatreofdebate.co.uk to register your interest and we'll do the rest.

Autumn 2024 dates:

London: Monday 30th September - Friday 4th October

West Yorkshire: Monday 7th October - Friday 11th October

Greater Manchester: Monday 14th October - Friday 18th October

We are able to provide two performances a day per school for a minimum of 75 and a maximum of 150 students per performance. To optimise reach, we give priority to schools where we can reach the most pupils.

We look forward to working with you.

With best wishes,

C N Townsend

Nigel Townsend
Founder and Creative Director
Theatre of Debate®



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