

Ovingdean Hall News

Winter 2025



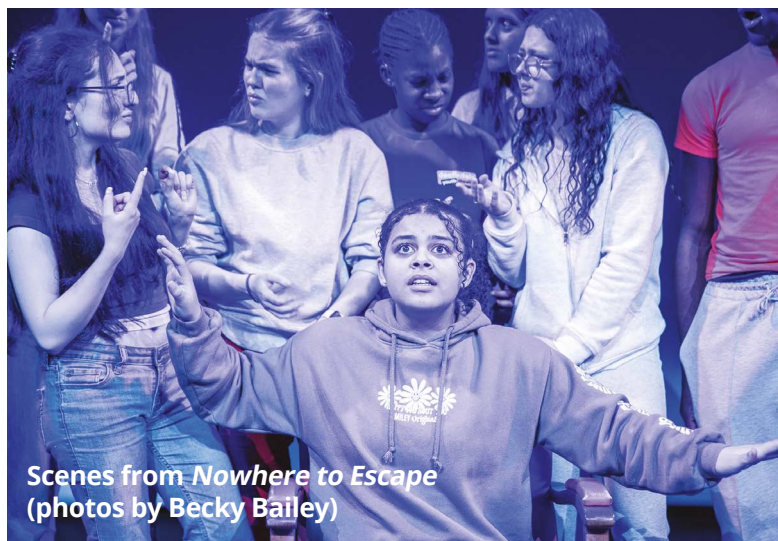
Ovingdean Hall
Foundation

Stage fright

deafinitely
ttttheatre

Members of Deafinitely's OHF-supported Youth Theatre chilled the audience at London's John Lyons Theatre this year with their performance of a supernatural thriller exploring prejudice, oppression and the healing power of friendship.

The play *Nowhere to Escape*, which was developed by Youth Theatre members in collaboration with theatre professionals, followed the story of a group of friends who break into an abandoned psychiatric hospital overnight. It explored the real-life experiences of a deaf woman who had been a mental health patient in the 1960s.



Scenes from *Nowhere to Escape*
(photos by Becky Bailey)



'It has been truly inspiring to watch the talented young people of Deafinitely Youth Theatre take ownership of this production, bringing their creativity, energy, and unique perspectives to every moment,' said co-directors Cherie Gordon and Lisa Kelly. 'From developing the story to shaping their characters, they have crafted something special from scratch. Watching the play evolve has been a beautiful experience, and we are incredibly proud of what they have achieved.'

Deafinitely's Youth Theatre is the only specialist, free of charge, deaf-led arts provision available to young people aged 14-21 in London and nationally. The Young Theatre runs from October to February each year, with members attending workshops twice a month.

The charity also delivered a four-night residential summer school, their first since the pandemic. *'This was a free opportunity for deaf young people to meet each other, develop their performance skills but also have access to fun social activities like swimming, archery, film nights and campfire experiences,'* said Deafinitely's General Manager, Sophie Flack. *'Residentials like this are vital because they help reduce isolation, build confidence and create lasting friendships within the deaf community.'*

During 2024-2025, 230 deaf children and young people took part in the Youth Theatre programme.

Supporting deaf children and young people in Birmingham...

Over the last two years, we have contributed towards Birmingham Institute for the Deaf (BID) Services' youth provision.

Their weekly club offers 40 deaf children and young people activities such as arts and crafts, drama and story time. BID has a holiday scheme, including science and sports events. They have also invited deaf presenters to the group to promote positive role models.

BID provides its members, aged 15-18 years, with the opportunity to take part in their Youth Leaders programme. Once trained, the Youth Leaders go on to support the club's activities, while also developing their own skills and confidence.



BID SERVICES

'Our aim is to support children and young people's development, increase their aspirations and access to social and leisure activities, enabling them to have the same level of social life more readily available to their hearing peers,' said their Youth Officer, Richard Clatworthy.

In York...

We have recently supported Lollipop's *Raising Aspirations* project, helping the charity to deliver a monthly term-time youth club for 66 deaf children and young people based in and around York.

Activities have included bushcraft and archery, a family Christmas party, pizza making, trampolining and visits to an escape room, a chocolate factory and a performance of *Jack and The Beanstalk*.

They also took part in samba drumming workshops organised by another OHF-supported project I Can Play! (National Centre for Early Music). *'These activities have provided social opportunities to reduce isolation and help develop positive self-identity,'* said Lollipop's Service Manager, Deb Walker.

And London...



We have continued our partnership with Deaf-SELF, supporting their school holiday play scheme in south London.

The play scheme provides a range of activities including trampolining, go-karting, football, paddle-boarding and self-defence.



'It has been an adventure-filled and eventful year with children and youth embracing the opportunity to socialise in British Sign Language, discover new things, and learn skills from incredible Deaf role models,' said Steven Wynne, Head of Community at Deaf-SELF.

A HUGE thank you to all of our friends for funding these important projects for deaf children and young people.

If you would like to help our work, please can you donate online at www.ovingdeanhall.org.uk/support-us or please send your cheque or CAF voucher (payable to Ovingdean Hall Foundation) to the address below.

Thank you very much!

Ovingdean Hall Foundation
15 Great College Street
London
SW1P 3RX

Tel: 01273 301929
Tel / Text: 07778 599939
Email: info@ovingdeanhall.org.uk
Web: www.ovingdeanhall.org.uk
Registered charity number: 1052478


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