

Drama and Media: *Workshops*

**How do you improve the achievement of GCSE Drama students?
First of all, you cover up their faces...**

This May, our Year 10 and Year 11 candidates for GCSE Drama will be expected to produce an examination performance that is particularly interesting and demanding – a public show attended by important international guests who do not necessarily speak English.

After some excellent experimentation with slapstick comedy in class, bowing to the comedy gods of Harold Lloyd, Buster Keaton, Morecambe and Wise and Lee Evans students, we were ready to move on to a new challenge to aim for those highest grades; namely performance in masks.





Visiting professional actor **Paul Dix** of **Pivotal Education** was brought in on March 2nd and March 6th for lengthy and highly stimulating mask workshops. The exercises were inspired by the work of highly influential French theatre maker **Jacques Lecoq**, most famous for his methods on [physical theatre](#), movement and mime taught at [l'École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq](#) from 1956 until his death in 1999.

Lecoq's acting style was aimed at a closer interaction with the audience and a focus on the physical rather than the emotional side of the character to impact on the audience by way of social or political comment.

Bournville students worked with Paul's prized collection of **Larval Masks** - a simply sketched style of mask with a soft animal quality, almost like a cocoon, that suggests characters instead of dictating them, therefore freeing up the imagination of both the actor and the audience. Students responded well to the masks' immediacy and spontaneity and really exploited their potential in creating powerful images of vulnerability.

The bonus came from Paul Dix having worked as a Drama teacher and as a Faculty Head for Creative and Expressive Arts – only asked on the day, he agreed to mark each of the students according to the examination criteria and give quality verbal feedback to help focus their rehearsal and so improve their grades in May. The positive feedback and the targets are now formally recorded and action being taken – and since Paul's resounding comment to the group on a Friday afternoon was *there is a lot of skill in this room* we can really hope for some high achievement!





Student, who demonstrated exceptional focus throughout the workshop



Two students spot the bomb in the room...





Both students experience an epiphany



Paul Dix working in role with Bournville students.

These larval mask characters are low in status, therefore Paul as the human adopts the high status – commanding and bullying the characters.

