
**PRESS RELEASE**

**Pioneering Theatre founder to receive honorary doctorate from Leicester’s De Montfort University

Christopher Davies, a leading figure in children’s education and theatre for children with special educational needs, is awarded a Doctor of Arts.**

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For over half a century, Christopher Davies has been a leading figure in children’s education in Leicester, and helped to make it a centre of excellence for creative arts, and particularly a beacon of theatre for learning disabled and autistic children and young people, (having co-founded Bamboozle Theatre with Sue Pyecroft in 1994.)

Bamboozle exists to create spaces where young people can express themselves and are heard. Bamboozle does this by working in local communities with families, touring immersive theatre and providing creative projects in schools. They offer a range of artistic opportunities for young people with complex needs to thrive and find joy in their own unique ways both individually or with their peers and families.

Through a proven track record of engagement, Bamboozle connect those in society who can feel trapped, isolated and judged, by offering safe and welcoming spaces that are dynamic, challenging and rooted in creativity.

Since its beginnings, Bamboozle has reached over 40,000 children and young people across the city, UK and globally. The company’s principles, which strongly resonate with De Montfort University’s commitment to Empowering People and Equality for All, are founded on the belief that all children and young people should have the right to access high quality educational and creative experiences.

Hayley Smith, the mother of Lily Smith, who has regularly experienced Bamboozle’s work, said: “*Christopher recognised the poverty of experience that profound and multiple learning disabilities children experience and believed that disabled children and young adults’ have value. Instead of shrugging and thinking, ‘not my problem’, he focused his creative, emotional, energy and skill set to work in order to address the deficit. He did this without having the motivation of having a disabled child himself, he was simply moved to act. His work has built connections reducing isolation for otherwise deeply marginalised families. He makes “normal’ a world which in every other way says we are not.”*

 

 Photography credit Redpix Photography credit William Northam

 

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For thirty years, Christopher has used his insight and experiences to run courses for many national and international organisations, including; The National Theatre, Shakespeare’s Globe, Royal Shakespeare Company, De Montfort University and Leicester University, Shanghai Children’s Art Theatre, New York University, Singapore Arts Council, Melbourne Arts Centre and Sydney Opera House, as well as hundreds of special school staff in the UK and further afield.

Dr Mark Crossley, Asscociate Professor, De Montfort University, said: “*Christopher Davies has been a major figure in the city’s cultural and educational landscape for over half a century and is now a significant voice within the national and global field of theatre for special educational needs. His practice and publications reflect an outstanding contribution to that field, and one that is readily comparable to an original contribution to knowledge at doctoral level.”*

Upon receiving his Doctorate, Christopher Davies said: “*It is very gratifying for me and for Bamboozle to receive this honorary doctorate from De Montfort University. We have worked with DMU for a number of years and it is clear that the ethos of the university chimes with that of Bamboozle. This award will cement our relationship and I look forward to working closely with DMU and the Arts Faculty in the future.”*

Sandra Pollock, OBE, MA and Trustee of Bamboozle, said: “*Every member of the Bamboozle Theatre Company, its Board, Staff Team, and Artists are immensely proud of the work, commitment, and generosity of heart that we have seen Christopher Davies demonstrate over the many years.*

*Christopher is a role model in creating diversity and equity for disabled children and young people.  Creating a pedagogy and methodology to meet the specific needs of these young people, then working tirelessly for over 50 years, locally, nationally, and internationally sharing these skills to impact so many young people and their families is equity at its best.*

*We are delighted that Christopher and his work have been recognised in this way.  It is a further tribute that this recognition is being given by a University in his hometown.”*

**-ENDS-**

**Press Contact**

For interviews and high res images
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Image captions-
1) Christopher Davies
2) Christopher Davies with with Professor Katie Normington (Vice Chancellor, De Montfort University) and District Judge Jamal Jeffers (Pro Chancellor at De Montfort University & District Judge)
3) Christopher Davies with Dr Mark Crossley (Associate Professor, Research / Reader Performing Arts).

**Notes to Editor**Bamboozle Theatre was set up in 1994 and has spent the last 30 years working in local communities and touring work nationally and internationally. It is a leading arts organisation and charity, championing the need to provide creative opportunities for disabled young people and their families. Through a range of theatre, immersive performance, education and training, Bamboozle engages disabled young people and their families through
non-judgemental and welcoming artistic provision.