

chichester festival theatre

15 June 2024

Dale Rooks, Director of Learning, Education and Participation at Chichester Festival Theatre, awarded MBE in The King's Birthday Honours list

Dale Rooks, Director of Learning, Education and Participation (LEAP) at Chichester Festival Theatre, has been awarded an MBE in The King's Birthday Honours list 2024 for services to theatre and young people.

Justin Audibert, Artistic Director and **Kathy Bourne, Executive Director** of Chichester Festival Theatre, said: 'We could not be more thrilled that our brilliant and inspirational colleague Dale Rooks has been recognised in the Honours list. In her role as Director of Learning, Education and Participation, she has built our industry-leading youth theatre and a large-scale programme of work to support young people and the community.

'She is beloved and revered by the thousands of Youth Theatre members who have experienced the life-enhancing – and in many cases, life-changing – work she has led; by the vast audiences who have cherished her wonderful theatre productions; and by the countless individuals of all ages, from young carers and refugees to isolated older people, whose lives have been enriched by the projects she has established and championed. We know that they will all be as happy and proud as we are to celebrate this wonderful honour with her.'

Mark Foster, Chair of Trustees, said: 'Dale Rooks is widely recognised in our city, county and increasingly nationally for her exceptional work with and contribution to young people and the community. In addition to her work at CFT, Dale also volunteers to support young people as a governor of Bishop Luffa school, a trustee of Creative County West Sussex and a trustee at the West Sussex Music Hub, alongside many other projects. All of us at Chichester Festival Theatre are absolutely delighted that her service, contribution and impact has been recognised, and we warmly congratulate her on this honour.'

Dale Rooks biography

Dale is Director of Learning, Education and Participation (LEAP) at Chichester Festival Theatre and works extensively with children and young people. She first joined CFT in 2002, though her connection to Chichester Festival Youth Theatre goes back to the mid 1990s; she directed her first Youth Theatre show in 1999.

Dale has significantly developed the breadth of learning and community work delivered by CFT, including extending the Youth Theatre via six satellite hubs across West Sussex, with weekly workshops are attended by almost 1,000 young people. The LEAP programme provides over 80,000 opportunities annually for people of all backgrounds, abilities and ages, to get creative and feel inspired by the arts.

As a director, her 2015 promenade production of Michael Morpurgo's *Running Wild* won the UK Theatre Award for Best Show for Children and Young People; the production was later restaged at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre and on a UK tour. She directed the world premiere productions of *The Midnight Gang* based on David Walliams's novel and Michael

Morpurgo's *The Butterfly Lion*. This December, she will direct the premiere of *Hey! Christmas Tree*, written by Vicki Berwick from an original idea by Michael Morpurgo.

Her many Chichester Festival Youth Theatre productions, for casts of up to 80 children, include *The Wind in the Willows*, *Pinocchio*, *The Hundred and One Dalmatians* and *Peter Pan*.

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For further information, please contact Lucinda Morrison, Head of Press on 01243 812917 or lucinda.morrison@cft.org.uk