STC’s School Drama Book launched in New York

Following its successful release in Australia last year, The School Drama Book: Drama, Literature and Literacy in the Creative Classroom by Robyn Ewing and John Nicholas Saunders, is launched this weekend in New York. The event is part of the New York University Forum on Ethnodrama: The Aesthetics of Research and Playmaking, hosted by the Program in Educational Theatre at New York University’s Steinhardt School.

The School Drama Book, published by Currency Press, introduces STC’s popular School Drama program to a wider audience. As well as discussing relevant Australian and international research about using drama to enhance literacy and English, the book explores the drama based conventions which are employed in the STC’s program and includes a comprehensive selection of units of work.

STC developed its in-school teacher professional learning program, School Drama, in 2009 in partnership with the University of Sydney. Specially trained Teaching Artists work alongside teachers throughout each term to pass on the use of drama strategies in cross-curriculum learning with a focus on literacy. The STC Teaching Artist team teaches the program with the teacher in their classroom, modelling the drama strategies and empowering the teacher to confidently integrate these ideas and strategies into their regular teaching practice.

Explaining the genesis of the book co-author and Manager of Education at STC John Nicholas Saunders said: “Teachers kept asking Robyn Ewing and I if there was one comprehensive resource that encapsulated all of the work we do in STC’s School Drama program. We decided to bring together our practice, research and lesson plans developed through School Drama, into one accessible, practical textbook.

“Feedback from teachers using the book has been overwhelmingly positive”, he said. “We are thrilled to now share our findings with international colleagues in New York.”

In 2016 alone, STC’s School Drama program reached 3325 students and 133 teachers in 47 schools in New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory (with additional pre and in-service support for 1236 teachers). Thanks to philanthropic support the program has extended beyond Sydney and provides further subsidies to low socio-economic status schools. A new partnership in the Albury Wodonga areas with Murray Arts and HotHouse Theatre was initiated in
2014, with learnings from STC programs in Broken Hill and building on the success of School Drama in the Blue Mountains. The program also went into its fourth year of delivery in Adelaide in 2015, courtesy of a partnership with State Theatre Company of South Australia and Flinders University and STC has just completed a pilot year of the program in Darwin.

STC’s School Drama came about after former Co-Artistic Director Cate Blanchett met Professor Ewing in 2008 while chairing the Creative Australia working group of the 2020 Summit. Born from a discussion of the role of artists in education, the concept of STC’s School Drama was floated, grounded in Professor Ewing’s 30 years of research and practice.

For more information and to purchase the book please visit: www.sydneytheatre.com.au/theschooldramabook

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:
Dr Robyn Ewing is Professor of Teacher Education and the Arts, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney. A former primary teacher, Robyn lectures in Curriculum, English and Drama across pre-service and postgraduate teacher education programs.

John Nicholas Saunders is the Manager of Education at the Sydney Theatre Company. Previously John worked as a secondary drama teacher and Head of Department for the Arts. He wrote the Senior Drama Syllabus with the Queensland Studies Authority and is the President of Drama Australia.

For further information: Katherine Stevenson (02 9250 1705 kstevenson@sydneytheatre.com.au) or Tim McKeough (02 9250 1703 or tmckeough@sydneytheatre.com)