

IDTA

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Kings Honours

Three hearty cheers for the IDTA members recently honoured in the Kings Honours List.

Alison Fordy MBE



Who has been a member of the IDTA and NCDTA since the age of 17. She has been teaching in the Redcar and Marske area in Teesside for the last 53 years during which time she had the privilege of working with thousands of children and their families, some of whom are now coming up to the third generation!



Alison tells Dance International “I have always been very inclusive in all aspects and I am so proud to have seen so many youngsters arrive at the age of 3 and 4 years of age following their lives and seeing them go off into the world as wonderful, well-adjusted

young people, who have formed strong friendships along the way. I am very proud and humbled that so many of these people have taken the time to send in letters, in support of their appreciation, to which end I have been given this amazing Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) Award”.

Norah Button BEM



Liverpool Theatre School’s Norah Button is enjoying a double celebration after being awarded a British Empire Medal (BEM) in the King’s New Year Honours List, just days away from her 85th birthday. ‘Miss Norah’, as she is affectionately known at Liverpool Theatre School, was recognised for her lifetime contribution to dance as well as her commitment to improving opportunities for young people in the city. ‘Miss Norah’ has dedicated her life to turning talented young performers into stars through her beloved Liverpool Theatre School, which was started by her grandmother in 1939, the same year Norah was born. The centre of excellence has turned out generations of professional performers with graduates starring in smash-hit shows including SIX, Blood Brothers and Les Misérables to Wicked, The Book of Mormon and the West End adaptation of Frozen.

A talented performer in her own right, Norah spent over five decades as Principal of Liverpool Theatre School after taking the helm when her grandmother became ill. In the early 1990s, she was joined by former student, Maxine Ellis, who co-ran the performing arts school with Norah before becoming

sole Principal in 2011. Despite her tender years, Norah continues to teach and inspire students, with no plans to slow down any time soon. Norah, who lives in Aigburth with her husband Jim, said: "It was such a lovely surprise to find out I was being awarded the BEM. Nurturing young talent is my passion and it's very nice to be recognised for doing one of the things I love most. I'm just about to turn 85 so it's almost like an early birthday present, we'll definitely be having a double celebration. "I'll never tire of watching Liverpool Theatre School students and graduates performing, seeing them light up the stage fills me with so much pride. Theatre is my life and I feel very lucky to have been part of this wonderful industry for so long, both as a teacher and a performer. My family always ask when I plan to retire but I'll never give up teaching, it's what keeps me young."

Proving that learning is a lifelong journey, Norah recently became one of the oldest students in Britain to receive a Masters Degree in Musical Theatre and Drama after graduating from Liverpool John Moores University at the age of 83. The unstoppable octogenarian managed to complete her final dissertation whilst recovering from a quadruple heart by-pass. She even kept the other patients entertained by performing a ballet on the ward before surgery.

The former beauty queen, who won 19 pageants in the 1960s, is also credited with choreographing Sir



Ken Dodd's Diddymen at all of his shows. She was awarded Freedom of the City of Liverpool in 2013 for her contribution to dance, singing and drama through Liverpool Theatre School.

Maxine Ellis, Principal at Liverpool Theatre School, said: "It's fantastic to see Miss Norah recognised in the King's New Year Honours. She's dedicated a lifetime to teaching young people at Liverpool Theatre School and we're all incredibly proud to see her receive such a special award." Throughout her career, Norah has been committed to making professional training more accessible to all talented young performers, particularly those from working class backgrounds.

Bringing the government funded Dance and Drama Awards (DaDA) to Liverpool Theatre School is one of her key achievements. The centre of excellence is one of just 15 stage schools in the country, and the only one in Merseyside, to offer DaDA funding, which is designed to support talented students who may otherwise struggle to afford the cost of professional training.

Liverpool Theatre School also became the first stage school in the country to scrap audition fees in 2018, which led to many more following suit. The Ofsted 'outstanding' school offers a number of fully-funded places and bursaries every year for elite Trinity and BTEC training programmes in dance, musical theatre and performing arts.

Gavin Roebuck

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