

DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

**FIND
SHANNON
REWARD £50,000**

Shannon Matthews went missing on Tuesday 18th February in Dewsbury, West Yorks. Nine year old Shannon is around 4ft 1in and slim, with shoulder-length, medium-brown hair. She has blue eyes and freckles.

She was wearing a school uniform, a black coat with fur round the hood and pink and grey "Bratz" furry boots.

A small portrait photograph of a young girl with shoulder-length, medium-brown hair and bangs. She has blue eyes and freckles. She is wearing a dark jacket with a fur-lined hood and a pink flower in her hair.

Anyone with information contact West Yorkshire Police on **01274 373737**, text **07786 200806**, or contact **Crimestoppers** anonymously on **0800 555 111**.

See offer subject to terms and conditions and Editor's discretion - see www.co.uk reward

NAME:

FORM:

DRAMA DAY:

Fact File



Name:
Age:
Description :



Name:
Age:
Description:



Name:
Age:
Description:

Relationship to Shannon:



Name:
Age:
Description:

Other key characters

Use the space below to make notes on people involved in the story.

Details of the case

Where did this incident take place?

How long did the search for Shannon last?

How much did the police investigation cost?

How were the community involved?

Press coverage

How much did the Sun newspaper initial offer as a reward for the safe return of her and how much was this later increased to?

Karen's Behaviour

How did Karen Matthews come across to the public when she made her first interview? How did her behavior change behind closed doors?

In conclusion

Where was Shannon found?

What charges were those involved in the kidnap charged with?

What punishment did they receive?

HOMEWORK 1

Find out what happened to the people involved in the story after we leave it – this will be useful to inform your future devising.

DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

Documentary Theatre is a style of theatre where documentary material such as interviews, reports, media material and transcripts are used as the primary source for the script.

The purpose of Documentary Theatre is usually to inspire the audience to question

Events that have happened and to provoke social change outside of the walls of the theatre – it is a very active form of theatre and so needs to create an active audience.

Verbatim Theatre is a branch of Documentary Theatre developed from the transcripts and recordings of people interviewed. It often involves a writer, researcher and/or actors and directors interviewing a person or people about an event, experience or topic and using parts of the transcripts of those interviews to construct a performed piece.

Documentary and Verbatim Theatre can be seen as a theatre primarily of social and political change since they often seek to present both an entire picture and individual perspective on issues while trying also to give emotional insights into a theme or issue.

In Documentary Theatre, real documents and even the words of those involved in a situation or event are used to construct a script or a performance piece. Often Documentary Theatre focuses on events and experiences that have a political or topical focus and seeks to inform the audience as well as entertaining them.

We can trace Documentary Theatre right back to the Ancient Greek playwright Phrynicus and his play about the Persian War '*The Capture of Miletus*'. Certainly Medieval Drama and Elizabethan Drama contain aspects of real events and testimonies.

However, probably the first pieces of modern theatre which consciously and openly used Documentary Theatre and Verbatim Theatre techniques were the Living Newspaper theatre experiments of Erwin Piscator in the 1920's in Germany where he tried to raise awareness of the rise in power of the Nazi Party.

David Hare and Caryl Churchill can be seen as one of the key players of the Verbatim form of Documentary Theatre with many of his plays being performed at the National Theatre.

THE TRUE STORY OF SHANNON MATTHEWS'S DISAPPEARANCE

A missing nine year old. A devastated family. A £3.2 million police hunt. A miraculous discovery of the girl. Then a twist - her mother is arrested for kidnapping.

Shannon Matthews' kidnapping gripped the nation - it lasted 24 days and brought together hundreds in Dewsbury as they hunted for her. The happy ending, as she was found safe took on another dimension as it was discovered that her mother Karen Matthews had known where she was all along. In 2009, she was jailed for eight years for Shannon's kidnapping.

19 February 2008

Shannon Matthews was reported missing after failing to return home from a school swimming trip. She was last seen, on CCTV footage, leaving a leisure centre in Dewsbury. Her mother, Karen, 32, said she believed someone had taken Shannon.

1 March 2008

The Sun offers a £20,000 reward for the return of Shannon, which is increased to £50,000. **Watch** | Social

3 March 2008

Matthews made an emotional plea for her daughter's return. She said her daughter's disappearance had broken her family apart. "The family don't feel safe anymore - it has broken the family apart," she said, fighting back tears. "It makes me think I can't trust the people who are really close to me anymore."

14 March 2008

24 days after she was reported missing, Shannon was found alive, hidden in the base of a bed at a house nearby, belonging to Michael Donovan, the uncle of Matthews's partner Craig Meehan. Donovan was arrested at the scene – he was hiding in the bed with Shannon.

March 2008

Three weeks after Shannon was discovered, Matthews is claimed to have sobbed: "People will hate me for what I've done. I've disgraced the kids." She was in a car with Dc Christine Freeman, the family liaison officer, and her friends Natalie Brown and Julie Bushby.

17 March 2008

Donovan was charged with kidnap and false imprisonment, while Matthews was charged with child neglect and perverting the course of justice. She was later also charged with kidnapping and false imprisonment. In court, it was later claimed Donovan's own two daughters had been taken into care after allegations of neglect, he had later abducted them before being caught.

16 September 2008

Craig Meehan, Matthew's partner, was convicted of possessing indecent images of children. He was sentenced to 20 weeks in jail.

4 December 2009

At the end of a trial, Karen and Donovan were convicted of kidnap, false imprisonment and perverting the course of justice. Donovan suffered physical and mental problems. In the trial he said he didn't like Karen, but was scared of her and she threatened him into taking part in the kidnap plan at a meeting where she handed him an A4 piece of paper containing instructions. Karen maintained she had nothing to do with the kidnapping, but repeatedly changed her story.

23 January 2009

Matthews and Donovan were both sentenced to eight years in jail.

5 April 2012

Karen Matthews was released from jail after serving half her sentence. She left jail with a new haircut, but was discovered by the media whilst in the probation house. She has now changed her identity to avoid media attention.

HOMEWORK 2

- 1) Describe the scene that you created to give the audience an overview of the Shannon Matthews story. What was the plot and style of the performance?
- 3) What role/s did you play in the scene and how did you communicate this role to the audience using your voice and physicality?

HOMEWORK 3 – MASH UP!

- 1) Describe the process that we undertook to create your second scene and say if you found it easy or difficult with reasons to back up what you say.
- 2) How effective was the exercise of spontaneously improvising the scene? Did it throw up interesting ideas? Did it allow people to shine who don't usually put forward ideas? Was it confusing?
- 3) What feedback did you get about your first performance and how did you then change the scene to make it better? Give at least 3 improvements.

HOMEWORK 4 - ADVERT

- 1) Describe the 'advert' scene that you created.
- 2) Explain your role in the creation of this scene and say what your contribution was in preparation.
- 3) What feedback did you get about your first performance and how did you then change the scene?
- 4) Give 3 ways that your performance was better the second time that you performed it – what was the impact on the audience of these improvements?
- 5) What made your scene funny and why do you think it may be effective to have light and shade in a full performance?

HOMEWORK 5 - OPINIONS

- 1) Describe the character that you created in the caricature scene – how did you exaggerate your performance to communicate your role to the audience?
- 2) What do you think that the impact was of playing these characters in unison and chorally?
- 3) What feedback did you get about your first performance and how did you then change the scene?
- 4) How was the scene better as a result of the changes that you made?

HOMEWORK 6

- 1) Explain the style that Frantic Assembly work in and give your opinion on the effectiveness of it.
- 2) Describe the process that we undertook to create our Frantic inspired scene.
- 3) Evaluate the scene that you created – why would it be effective for your audience in the piece?

HOMEWORK 7

- 1) What do you think have been your 3 greatest strengths whilst working on the Shannon Matthews story? These could be in preparation or performance.
- 2) What role do you normally play when you are creating a piece of drama and what skills do you demonstrate when you are being successful in this role?
- 3) Which was your most successful scene in the performance? Why was this scene so good at engaging the audience?
- 4) Which role did you play most successfully during a particular scene? How did you demonstrate this character clearly to the audience using your voice and physicality?
- 5) Which performance (from another group) have you particularly enjoyed during this scheme and what did they do that made it so effective for an audience?
- 6) What have you learned about devising drama from working in these different styles?
- 7) What do you think you will need to improve for your next piece of devised work?