Midland Actors Theatre and University of Worcester present

DOROTHY HEATHCOTE NOW

INTERNATIONAL DRAMA CONFERENCE 2026

5-8 NOVEMBER at St John's Campus, University of Worcester WR2 6AJ

Welcome to the sixth year of *Dorothy Heathcote Now* – "the greatest drama in education conference in the world." This year marks 100 years since Dorothy's birth. We are delighted to be holding the conference in the beautiful and historic town of Worcester. Presenters will include: Cecily O'Neill, Brian Edmiston, Tim Taylor, Stig A. Eriksson, Theo Bryer, Bob Selderslaghs, Iona Towler Evans, David Allen, Maggie Hulson, Sorrel Oates, Lisa Hinton, Richard Kieran, Vaishali Chakhravarty, Vishakha Chakhravarty, Flávia Janiaski Vale, Paul Sutton, Roberta Luchini, Alison Reeves, and more.

HOW IT WILL WORK

THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER: ONLINE DAY (10am–5pm)

On 5 November, there will be an online day, with an international line-up of presenters.

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER: CREATIVE PRACTICES DAY (9am–4.15pm)

Delegates will work for a day with leading practitioners, and also observe or participate in a drama session in a local school. You will be able to choose between a primary school, and a secondary school. This year, the schools will be Woodrow First School, Redditch and Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester. This is a great opportunity to see drama work in practice.

CONFERENCE WEEKEND: 7-8 NOVEMBER

There will be a two-day conference weekend, with practical drama workshops and panel discussions, and an international line-up of presenters.

7 November: 9am – 7.30pm / 8 November: 9.30am – 3.30pm

For a detailed schedule, see below

HOW TO BOOK

There are several booking options. You can book for all four days; or you can book separately for the online day, the 'Creative Practices' day, or the Conference Weekend.

For more details, go to: https://heathcotenow2026.eventbrite.co.uk

CONFERENCE THEME: DRAMA AND THE WORLD

One of the ideas behind the Dorothy Heathcote Now conferences, is that we come together to engage in active research – and so each year, there is a topic or theme at the centre of the event. This year, we have chosen: Drama and the World.

Dorothy stated: "I have a dream that has not yet been realized … I want students to be citizens of the world." Her dream was never just about young people learning facts about the world. It was about helping them live in it — responsibly, imaginatively, and with an eye for other people's lives. To be a "citizen of the world" isn't just about knowledge. It's about understanding other perspectives, working together across differences, and thinking ethically about your place in the world.

Her work has travelled far and wide — through her own teaching in Canada, America, New Zealand, Australia, Norway, Türkiye, Ireland and South Africa, and through the teachers and facilitators who studied with her and took her ideas to new contexts. Today, her influence is growing in countries such as India, China and Belgium.

This isn't just the spread of a method; it's an international movement, constantly growing and adapting. When Dorothy's ideas are applied in different countries and schools, they meet new challenges and possibilities. How do the core ideas travel across cultures? What changes, and what stays essential?

A key idea for Dorothy was what she called "the substance of we-feeling," a phrase from Doris Lessing. It's what happens "when human beings get together and collaborate in bridging the spaces between." It's not about being the same or agreeing all the time. It's about working across difference, listening, observing, and making something together.

This year, as the world feels increasingly divided, that kind of collaboration feels more important than ever. Drama gives young people the space to practise this: to pay attention

to others, to hold different perspectives, to face uncertainty, and to act together responsibly. It helps them not just understand the world, but engage with it meaningfully.

The conference will explore these ideas through three strands:

How is Dorothy's work being used in different contexts?
What happens when Mantle of the Expert and other approaches are used in different schools and cultures? What stays central, and what adapts?

What are the possibilities for international collaboration?
How can we work across borders — through shared projects, discussions, and connections — to extend opportunities for young people to learn and create together?

How can we work with material from other cultures, or deal with encounters with difference?
How do we do this respectfully and thoughtfully, and help young people engage with people, stories, and experiences that are new to them?

"Drama and the World" is about exploring the link between classroom practice and global citizenship. If, as Dorothy believed, education is about awakening reflective, attentive people, then drama offers the space to practise the habits needed for living in a shared world. We look forward to coming together — from near and far — to explore what happens when we collaborate, bridge gaps, and build understanding across the spaces between us. Join us, as we explore these questions through practical workshops, talks, performances, demonstration classes, online panels, and more!

SCHEDULE

Prepared 10.3.26. Programme may be subject to change. All times are UK times

THURSDAY 5 NOVEMBER: ONLINE DAY (10am – 5.00pm)

Details tbc.

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER: CREATIVE PRACTICES DAY (9am – 4.15pm)

This is a great opportunity to learn about teaching through drama methods such as Mantle of the Expert, and see them used in practice in schools. Delegates will work for a day with leading practitioners, and also observe or take part in drama sessions in a local school. There are two options:

OPTION 1. KS1 and KS2: MANTLE OF THE EXPERT
Venue: Woodrow First School, Redditch
Trainers: Richard Kieran, Lisa Hinton and staff
Woodrow First School is a Mantle of the Expert Training School. The school teaches a lot of its curriculum through Mantle.

OPTION 2. KEY STAGE 3: DRAMA ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
Venue: Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester
The day will be led by David Allen & Roberta Luchini, from the Mantle Network. The curriculum focus is Anglo-Saxon Britain. The session in Tudor Grange Academy will focus on strategies such as teacher-in-role, and the use of drama conventions.

If you are attending the Creative Practices Day, you will be sent a form to choose the option you would like to attend. Please go straight to the venue at the start of the day, for the option you have chosen: Woodrow First School, Redditch, for Option 1, or Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester for Option 2.

CREATIVE PRACTICES DAY: SCHEDULE

This is an outline of the schedule in schools.

8.30am – 9.00am	Registration
9am – 12 noon	**WORKSHOP GROUPS** *(Delegates choose ONE workshop group for the whole day.)* **GROUP A (KS1 & 2): MANTLE OF THE EXPERT**. VENUE: Woodrow First School, Redditch **GROUP B (KS3): DRAMA ACROSS THE CURRICULUM** with David Allen & Roberta Luchini VENUE: Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester
12 noon – 1pm	Lunch
1pm – 3.00pm	**WORKSHOP GROUPS CONTINUED**
3.00pm – 3.15	Break
3.15 – 4.15pm	**REVIEW OF TEACHING SESSIONS**

CONFERENCE WEEKEND: 7-8 NOVEMBER

There will be a two-day conference weekend, with practical drama workshops and panel discussions. Here is an outline of the programme. More details to follow shortly.

DAY ONE: SATURDAY 7TH NOVEMBER

8.30am – 9.00am	**REGISTRATION** VENUE: DRAMA DEPARTMENT, ST. JOHN'S CAMPUS
9am – 10am	**KEYNOTE: THE FOUR MODELS OF DRAMA WORK - BRIAN EDMISTON**
10.15am – 12.15pm	**EXPLORATORY WORKING GROUPS: SESSION ONE** *There will be three Working Groups. Delegates choose ONE Working Group for the whole weekend. The group meets for one session today, and then for another session tomorrow. You will be sent an Options form to select the Working Group you would like to attend.* **A:** MAGGIE HULSON & SORREL OATES **B.** TIM TAYLOR & RICHARD KIERAN **C.** IONA TOWLER EVANS & LISA HINTON
12.15 – 1.15pm	**LUNCH**

1.15pm – 2.15pm	**PRESENTATIONS** *There is a choice in this session of four presentations. You will be sent an Options form to choose which presentation you would like to attend.* **A:** BOB SELDERSLAGHS **B:** THEO BRYER AND REBECCA WILSON **C:** FLÁVIA JANIASKI VALE D: WOODROW FIRST SCHOOL GOVERNORS
2.30pm – 4.30pm	**PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS** *There is a choice in this session of three practical workshops. These workshops are designed to be self-contained, one-off sessions. You will be sent an Options form to choose which session you would like to attend.* A: CECILY O'NEILL B: PAUL SUTTON C: ALISON REEVES
4.30pm - 5.30pm	**KEYNOTE: DISTANCING IN DRAMA - STIG A. ERIKSSON**
5.30pm – 7.30pm	**RECEPTION**

DAY TWO: SUNDAY 8TH NOVEMBER

9.00am – 9.30am	**COFFEE**
9.30 – 11.30am	**EXPLORATORY WORKING GROUPS: SESSION TWO** Groups as for Day One **A:** MAGGIE HULSON & SORREL OATES **B.** TIM TAYLOR & RICHARD KIERAN **C.** IONA TOWLER EVANS & LISA HINTON
11.30am – 12.30pm	**PRESENTATIONS** *There is a choice in this session of three presentations. You will be sent an Options form to choose which presentation you would like to attend.* A: DAVID ALLEN & ROBERTA LUCHINI B: SUKHESH ARORA C: VAISHALI CHAKHRAVARTY & VISHAKHA CHAKHRAVARTY
12.30pm – 1.30pm	**LUNCH**
1.30pm – 3.30pm	**PRACTICAL WORKSHOPS** *There is a choice in this session of three practical workshops. These workshops are designed to be self-contained, one-off sessions. You will be sent an Options form to choose which session you would like to attend.* **A:** CECILY O'NEILL **B:** STIG A. ERIKSSON **C:** FLÁVIA JANIASKI VALE
3.30pm – 4.00pm	**PLENARY & GOODBYES**

ABOUT THE VENUE

St John's Campus, University of Worcester, Henwick Grove, Worcester WR2 6AJ

BY TRAIN
There are two train stations in Worcester: Worcester Foregate Street and Worcester Shrub Hill. There is also another station, Worcestershire Parkway, a short taxi ride away. Trains run from Birmingham and from London to Worcester Foregate Street; there is a taxi rank outside the station. Approximate travel times:

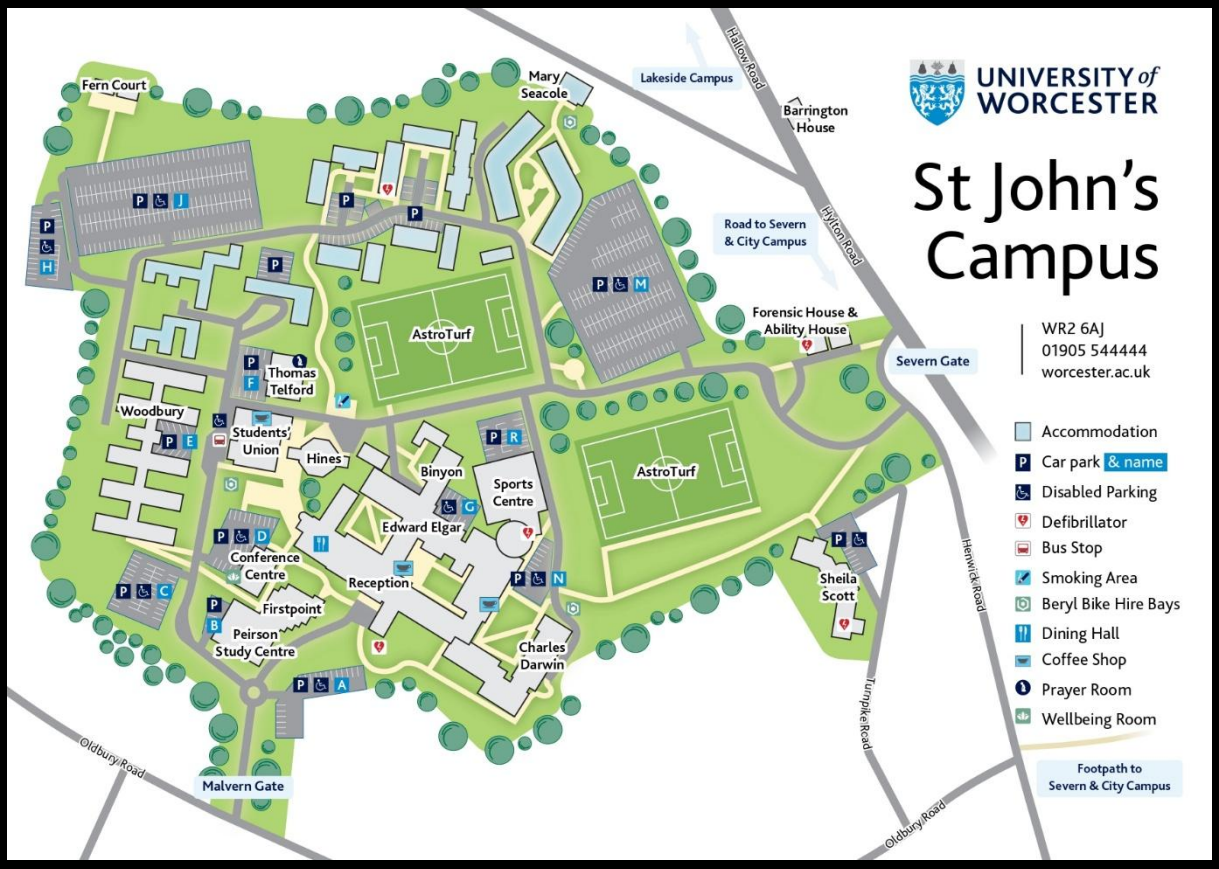
- Birmingham New Street - 50 minutes
- Bristol Temple Meads - 1 hour 20 minutes
- Cardiff Central - 1 hour 50 minutes
- London Paddington - 2 hours 20 minutes
- Manchester Piccadilly - 2 hours 30 minutes

BY CAR
Worcester is served by the M5 motorway and is accessible from Junctions 6 and 7. Under normal traffic conditions all university campuses can be reached in 15-20 minutes from Junction 7.

BY BUS
First Bus services 31, 31A, and U1 connect the St John's Campus to the City Centre Bus Station.

CAR PARKING
There is a visitors' car park (Car Park B) on St John's Campus, with Pay and Display machines to purchase parking tickets.

ACCESS
For information about access, go to: https://www.accessable.co.uk/university-of-worcester/st-john-s-campus



ACCOMMODATION

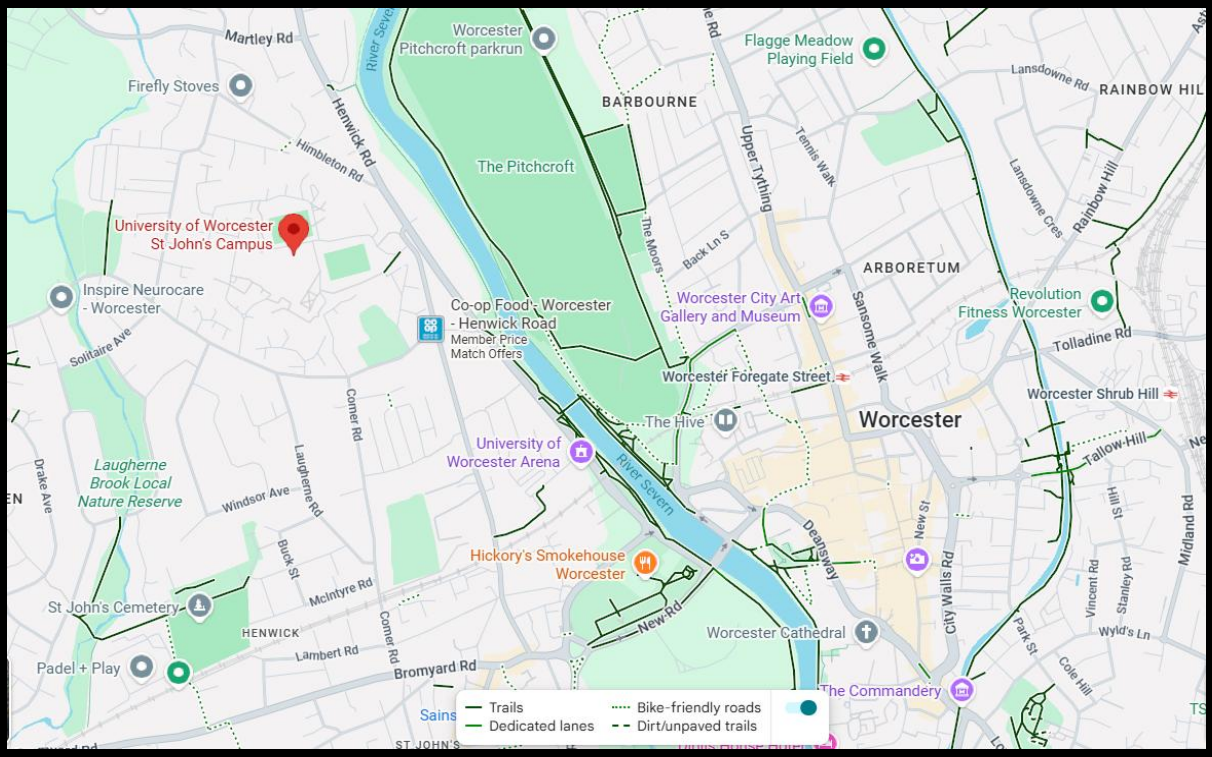
Hotels in Worcester (£70-£120 per room per night) include

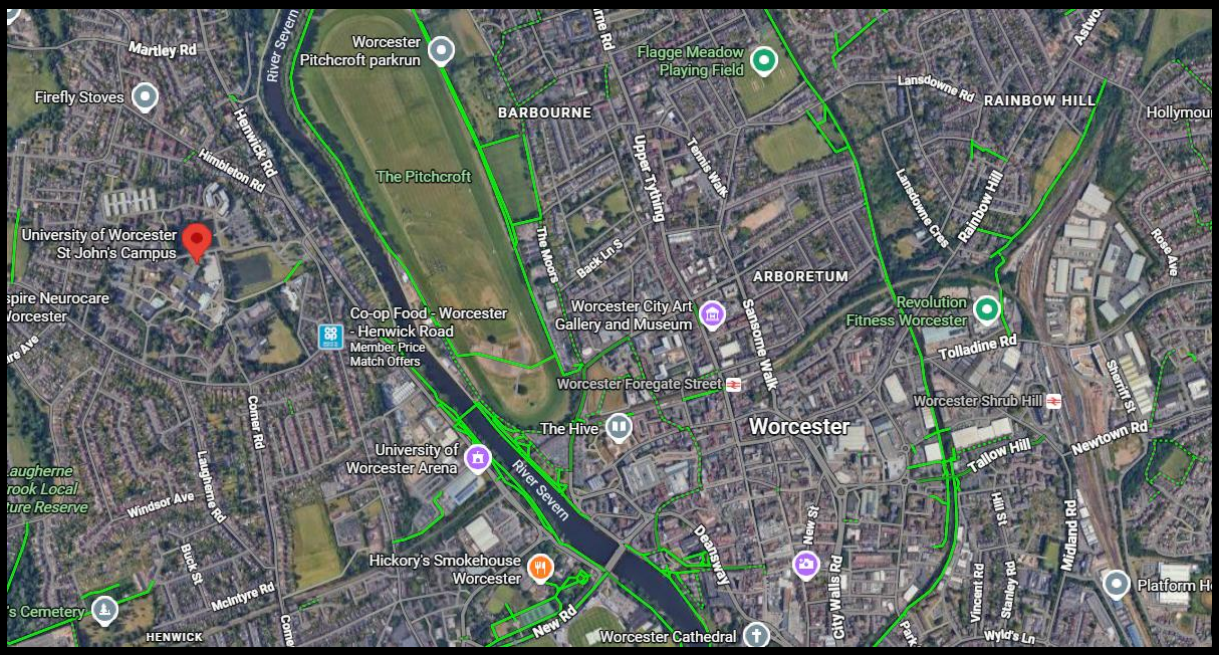
- PREMIER INN County Ground, New Road, Worcester WR2 4RL
- WORCESTER WHITEHOUSE HOTEL Foregate St, Worcester WR1 1EA
- TRAVELODGE WORCESTER Cathedral Plaza, 3 High St, Worcester WR1 2QS

CREATIVE PRACTICES DAY, 6 November

If you are going to the Creative Practices Day for KS1/2 at **Woodrow First School** on 6th November, you might decide to stay in the Premier Inn or the Holiday Inn in Redditch for one night, as these hotels are nearer the school:

- PREMIER INN Bordesley Lane, Alvechurch Highway, Redditch B97 6AQ
- HOLIDAY INN 2 Hewell Road, Redditch B97 6AE





MIDLAND ACTORS THEATRE & MANTLE NETWORK
25 Merrishaw Road, Birmingham B31 3SL
Tel.: + 44 7946 006511 david@mantlenetwork.com
www.mantlenetwork.com www.livingmuseums.co.uk www.midlandactorstheatre.com