

## The Mary Simpson Fund

For nearly 20 years, members of NATD who require financial assistance to attend our events have been supported by the Mary Simpson Fund. Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton were close friends of Mary. Gavin outlines the history of the woman in whose name so many teachers have been able to attend our Conferences and Regional events.

*Mary Simpson nee Robson 1907-92*

*Having begun her career as a Primary school teacher in 1924 Mary Robson was appointed to the newly set up Emergency Training College in 1946, (becoming a two-year training establishment after three years and then, in 1961 amalgamating with Neville's Cross College, Durham) under the auspices of the University of Durham. It was based at Wynyard Hall, property of Lord Londonderry whose estate is on the edge of Teesside. From the start a feature of the college was the insistence by the Principal that it should revive the pre-war tradition of the Londonderry family of promoting the Arts by arranging concerts and play performances for the local community. This is how Mary, an artist, actress, theatre director and much loved trainer of teachers established her reputation in the North-East. Her early productions included 'Tobias and the Angel' and 'Peer Gynt'. One of her students at that time recalls that 'She nurtured everyone and brought out the best in them. She was kind, gentle and unassuming with a twinkle in her eye and a wonderful sense of humour.'*

*Such was her reputation that Professor Brian Stanley, Director of Durham University Institute of Education, in 1950 offered her the post of working with experienced Drama teachers (there was no other such post in the UK) but she turned this down because she wanted to continue to work in Art as well as Drama. Her non-acceptance of such an invitation is not without its significance in the history of UK Drama Education, for Dorothy Heathcote would not have been appointed and her whole career and influence on the world's drama teaching would have been much less influential had she accepted it. And my career too would have been seriously affected, for it was Mary Robson who introduced Dorothy and me to each other when I was appointed Durham Drama Adviser in 1961. She invited us both to tea (a popular way of entertaining guests all those many years ago!) and because I replaced Dorothy at Durham University two years later when she moved on to Newcastle we were able to share our work for the next 30 years!*

*In 1969 Mary retired and in 1978 she married her cousin, John Alfred Simpson (popularly known as Alf Simpson), also an artist. She died in 1992.*

Mary bequeathed a sum of money to continue the nurturing of students and young Drama teachers. In 1992, Dorothy Heathcote and Tony Grady recommended to the NATD committee of that year that using this money a fund be set up to enable all members to attend Conference. That fund still exists in Mary's name and continues to ensure that all who wish to can attend our events. We are always looking for ways to top up the fund and at each conference there will be an event or activity that encourages you to contribute. Please give generously. In addition, you may like to consider paying your membership fees by standing order and adding a small monthly amount that will go directly into the fund. Please contact the Treasurer for further details and a standing order form.

If you would like to receive support from the Mary Simpson Fund, please write to the Chair of the Association indicating your reasons for needing support and the proportion of the Conference fee that you would like to receive.

### **The Tony Grady International Fund**

Tony Grady was twice chair of the national executive of NATD. He was an outstanding leader, always careful to develop the theory and practice of drama and theatre in education, always with the needs of the young firmly at the heart of all endeavour. Tony was also on the editorial committee of The Journal of NATD for seven years, again providing a focus and leadership that was second to none. Underpinning all of Tony's work was a great humanity born of which was his leadership of 'NATD to think and work as internationalists'<sup>1</sup>. He was a founder of the International Association for Drama and Theatre and Education, and led developmental work in Bosnia, Serbia and Kosova, always working to bring international delegates to NATD conferences.

In 2003 Tony died, much mourned and missed, not only for his insight and guidance, but also because he was a good mate to so many of us. When the arrangements for his funeral were being discussed his partner, Angela, asked that, instead of flowers, money should be donated to NATD to create a fund for bringing international delegates to NATD conferences. In this way, through the Tony Grady fund, NATD seeks to continue, both in conviction and in action, an internationalist practice.

We are always looking for ways to top up the fund and at each conference there will be an event or activity that encourages you to contribute. Please give generously. In addition, you may like to consider paying your membership fees by standing order and adding a small monthly amount that will go directly into the fund. Please contact the Treasurer for further details and a standing order form.

If you are a practitioner from outside the UK and would like to receive support from the Tony Grady Fund or you know of someone who would benefit from it, please write to the Chair of the Association indicating your reasons for needing support and the proportion of the Conference fee that you would like to receive.

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Higgins 18<sup>th</sup> December 2003 – letter to NATD