

Arts in Ministry

Service to Christian Fellowships, Churches and Organisations

Jesus was an Artist because he was the Son of the **Creator of the universe**! Jesus himself said that he only did what he saw his father doing (Jn 5:19). Craftsman by trade, Jesus was, more importantly the consummate **story-teller** which he may well have acted out together with his disciples. In Mark's gospel it says *"He did not say anything to them without using a parable."* (Mk 4:34).

We set up this charity **Phoenix Performing Arts Trust** in 1989 with a view to seeing the **restoration of God's plan** and impactful use of creativity and the dramatic arts to start in, and come out from His Church for the benefit of reaching out into the world! We have spent over 35 years in as many countries and in nearly every denomination of churches exploring why the dramatic arts and creativity are so important to God and **so intrinsic** to the bible!

World vs Kingdom

When we talk about 'drama' (or 'performing arts') to people - regardless of their faith stance, most will immediately think about entertainment, performance, ego, fame and fortune but **this is not God's purpose and heart!**

God's Creativity

God created human beings as sensory beings and each individual was 'embroidered' beautifully in their mother's womb (Ps 139:13). We were created with all the senses; taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing, sensing (intuition) and with imagination. **Imagination is not a luxury – it's a necessity.** Imagination is at the root of all innovation, artistic creativity and even faith! (Heb 11)

The Dramatic Arts as Incarnation

The arts are not just an expression or reflection of God's creativity in beauty and worship – the dramatic arts are designed for **incarnation of human story**. "The word became flesh....". The baptism of Jesus was an **act of drama** (he didn't need forgiveness of sins – rather, he demonstrated in physical, dramatic form who he was and why he was here (John 1:29-31)

Gods' Purpose for the Dramatic Arts

The Dramatic Arts should be having a Cathartic impact: *Catharsis is something having a heart impact - resulting in change (challenge, repentance):*

- When Ezekiel was told by God (Ezekiel 4 & 5) to create a model and do some quite extreme physical actions to prophetically speak to the people he was not doing a 'performance' – he was *acting out God's word in a dramatic format*
- When Nathan was told by God to tell a story to David (2Sa 12) he was not 'performing' a monologue but *telling a story!*
- When the prophet in 1Ki 20 went to King Ahab to bring God's judgement, dressed up as a wounded man and told him a story, he was not there as entertainment!
- When Jesus broke bread and gave it to his disciples – he was doing a *symbolic, dramatic act*, to signify his sacrifice and death, as well as his life ('Bread of life').

The purpose for these and many, many other examples in the Bible was to *convict, challenge, call to repentance* ("whether they listen or fail to listen."), demonstrate God's glory and lordship and truth with a view to enabling heart and life change in individuals and society.

The Arts in History and Current Impact

- The **Church** was the **original place** that gave birth to the dramatic arts in this country. But, believing that the arts was materialistic and idolatrous, the puritans “threw the baby out with the bath water”, and in conjunction with the Renaissance, this enabled the arts to be fairly and squarely handed over to the ‘world’ system. Not surprisingly, Christians fear and avoid the hedonistic and ungodly practices associated with the arts and some aspects of media.
- The arts and media **influence** the young generations more than any education will do! Children and youth are spending an **average of 6.3 hours** of their day watching a screen¹ which is streaming out drama, film, games, ‘reality’ shows, memes, cartoons all subconsciously influencing their thoughts, beliefs, imaginations, view of self and the world, as well as imbibing them in ‘truths’ that are not based on the Bible.

Our observations since the mid 80s have been:

- The quality of Christian dramatic arts has been low (comparative to the world) and has shown a very limited understanding of the biblical role and effect of drama in society. As a result, the world has not taken it seriously. Out of lack of understanding, Christian leaders have not challenged the producers of these works as they might those in other sectors (e.g. business, industry, evangelism).
- Actors and dancers who have become professionals in their ‘craft’ have frequently had major mental health and spiritual problems to deal with, but had little support with real-world understanding from their brethren around them; some lost their faith, others left the industry.
- There is virtually no teaching or equipping in UK theological or biblical training for what it means to be called as an artist, what is the true God-given nature of the Christian artist, and how he/she can not only thrive in their calling but make a strong impact and bring change to culture and society.
- Many Christians who in their childhood/youth who had a passion and ability in the arts were let down by an education system that approaches it through academic methods but overlooks the practical, incarnational expression of the dramatic arts, and a Christian church that has misinterpreted their passion as simply ‘attention seeking’ at best and ‘ungodly’ at worst. Children were told things such as ‘dance is sinful because it idolizes the body’ and ‘acting is lying’. These people have grown up at worst throwing away their passion and ability or at best minimizing it and seeking other more ‘acceptable’ avenues of calling.

Phoenix’ purpose is God’s purpose for Redemptive work

Our pieces are always redemptive – in other words; however ‘dark’ the subject (working with topics such as homelessness, trafficking, the Holocaust, depression/grief, etc.) there is **always** a glimmer of the light of Christ, because that reflects how our world is and introduces the Good News to audiences’ mindsets. As a result – audiences feel understood and empathised with in their darkness, as well as perceive hope.

Mental, spiritual and physical health

We train our students and work with our casts holistically: body, soul, spirit and artistically to see their craft as a *life-changing prophetic and cathartic one*. The by-product of this alignment with God’s purposes is health in mind and body – even those who have no faith stance feel this and some have come to faith.

Hopeful signs

We have been grafting since 1989: praying, observing, teaching, educating, producing drama and film, lecturing, coaching, nurturing young and potential artists, restoring lost vision. However, the impact has been hard to quantify and it has been a very slow process.

¹ Research by SpecSavers 2021

There are a small number of Christian artists in this country who have not given up hope and have doggedly stuck to producing quality, impactful works of dramatic arts. Film makers and drama producers are emerging in this current generation, albeit slowly and quietly. The **“Chosen”** has set a new benchmark for biblical, deeply understanding, cathartic drama – with quality of acting, production, direction and tech that gives us hope and something to aspire to!

Arts in Ministry service to Churches and Organisations

Our mandate is: ***“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.”*** (Is 58)

Now Phoenix have appointed Mary Scott² to set up a team to establish a dedicated ministry (‘chaplaincy’) into Churches and Christian organisations in our locality (and in future, further afield) in order to serve you in **restoring creativity back into their congregations**; equipping your artists and leaders, for the purpose of reaching out into the world whether through development of quality dramatic arts, or through equipping those going into the community or challenging world of the secular professional performing arts.

Working in Partnership with you

As congregations, fellowships and organisations differ so greatly, this can only be a bespoke arrangement. We hope this to be predominantly free of charge, as we will be raising funding for this, but some services may require donations according to the level of service given – and this can happily be negotiated.

Our first step will be organising a **Coventry Artists hub and prayer meetings** for existing and new Christian artists in the West Midlands (Coventry) to meet and support one another.

We will be contacting you to discuss your needs, but they may include the following:

1. **Coming alongside Church leaders** - enabling and assisting you in drawing out potential and empowering your artists; encouraging, commissioning and supporting them.
2. **Enabling vision and understanding through seminars and workshops on subjects such as:**
 - The extent and purpose of the arts in the bible (predominantly the dramatic arts and story-telling)
 - Story within evangelism, outreach and ministry: why and how does God use story as a ministry?
 - What does it mean to be “called” into the performing arts sector?
 - How can you be equipped for this calling? (professional training, developing a biblical insight and deeper understanding of the impact of the arts, etc.)
 - What is a “professional”? Excellence in skill, character and spiritual maturity.
 - ‘Performance mentality’ – what is it and how to avoid it! (the Dynamic Cycle of Grace)
3. **We can offer training days or courses** (led by professionals associated with Phoenix’s Charity):
 - Workshops in dramatic arts: acting, production, acting for film, directing, voice, mime/physical theatre, story-telling, poetry, dance theatre (any age over 11)³ which can lead to a small-scale performance.
 - “Word Aloud” reading the bible in public – *how to bring the bible alive!*
 - How to write, direct and produce a new piece of drama (over 16- no upper limit) which could include bringing a team in to help you stage a production in your own organisation
4. **Making opportunities available for professional training, Internships and apprenticeships**
 - Jesus’ method of training was the ‘apprenticeship’ (discipleship) method (only a couple of his followers were ‘educated’) - this Apprenticeship approach is also our method. [CORE theatre arts training](#) trains students (17- no upper age limit) gaining experience with Phoenix’ companies [TouchPoint Productions](#) and [PointZero Physical theatre](#)

² See biographies at the end of this document

³ If there is a significant age diversity – these workshops could be split accordingly.

5. Empowering, mentoring and ministering to professional Christian performing artists

- Being a professional performing artist in the secular arts world is an extremely spiritually isolated, and challenging space. We are experienced in mentoring and coaching through our individual programmes and can enable support and fellowship with others of a similar experience.

6. Performances by Phoenix's Performing Companies

- We have a repertoire of collaborative performance pieces and are creating new pieces as needed – we would endeavour to involve your members within these.

This is a sample of ideas and we are happy to listen to you about anything you feel you need for your members/congregation.

About Danny and Mary Scott

(Directors and Co-Founders of Phoenix Performing Arts Trust)

Danny and Mary have over 35 years' experience as professional artists and performers in both secular and Christian contexts. They have lived in 3 different countries and worked in over 35 countries. In the 90s they were leaders in YWAM Canada (performing arts academy) for 4 years and since then have set up a number of initiatives and programmes for artists and young people as well as working in the education system and corporate consultancy. They set up CORE theatre arts training in 2019. Danny and Mary are both DBS checked and have training in Safeguarding and extensive experience of working with all age groups including under 18s.

Danny Scott

Despite leaving school at 16 with no qualifications, Danny was accepted for a double scholarship at the London Mime Centre and has been professionally performing all over the world since 1984. He gained his Masters in 2007. Danny has given workshops and masterclasses in R.A.D.A, the Academy Drama School, Mountview Theatre School, amongst many others. He has worked alongside and collaborated with musicians and artists including bands such as Adrian Snell, Iona and Martyn Joseph and many artists in Europe and has produced two albums of his own poetry and songs. Danny's debut performance in the West End was with his Solo Show ('China Dolls') in 1990. He has been a director, trainer, lecturer and working in corporate consultancy since the 1990s with companies such as Siemens, Hyatt and Hilton Hotels and Boston Consulting Group. He founded two performing companies: Diakonos Physical theatre 1993-2000, [PointZero Physical Theatre](#) in 2009 and he is currently setting up 'Threshold Ensemble' - a bespoke ministry into secular and Christian corporate situations developing leadership and potential through highly original and creative methods. Danny has been consistently awarded Grade One excellence in Ofsted teaching awards and has won a number of other awards for performance and production.

Mary Scott

Mary had a background in semi-professional dance (ballet, jazz and modern) and classical voice before training in Acting and Theatre as a mature student at the Academy of Performing Arts, Ontario, in 1992, followed by a year's apprenticeship with a professional company. Since then she has been acting professionally and teaching acting and drama skills mainly in youth and student theatre contexts: Stagecoach, The XL Project, The Pauline Quirk Academy and Oxford Royale Academy and many others, including coaching for LAMDA and Trinity exams. Since 2007, Mary has been writing, producing and directing her own plays in professional and community contexts with her company [TouchPoint Productions](#). Mary side-stepped into film in 2017, making an award-winning short film "Seeing Grace". She is awarded Grade One excellence for teaching skills, is DBS checked, is since 2005 a qualified [Careers and Vocational Coach](#) and experienced personal development and progress coach.