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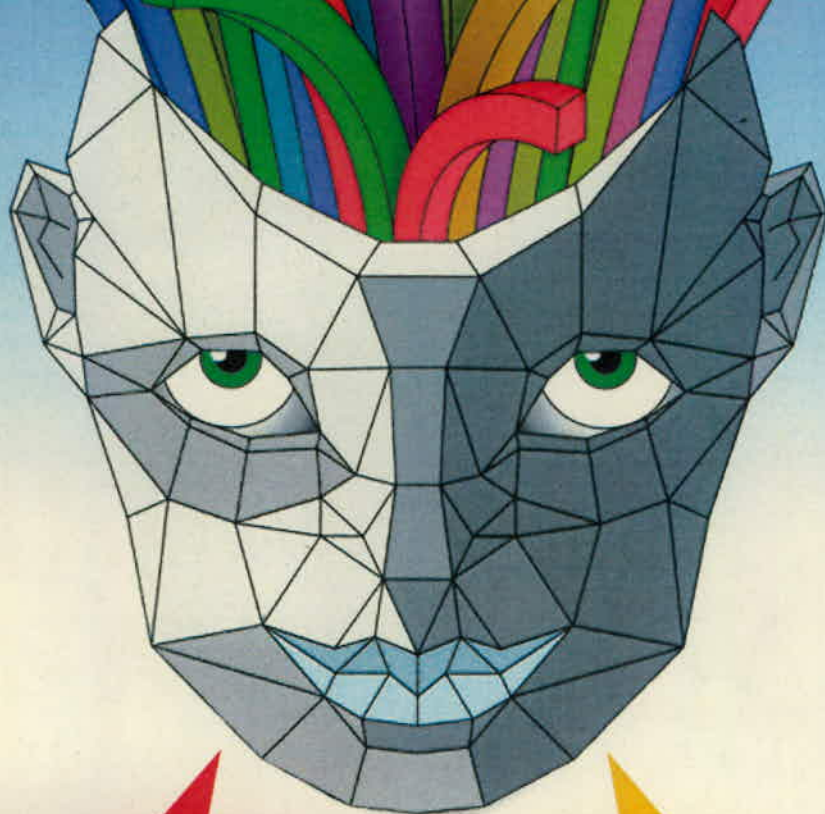


Dyslexia  
Scotland

# Dyslexia Voice

[www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk](http://www.dyslexiascotland.org.uk)

Teaching  
and learning



Dyslexia  
and  
Maths

Inclusive  
practice in Home  
Economics

Holly  
Brough –  
Dyslexia Eye

Bronte  
Marwick –  
Skills for Work

# Anna Devin – interviewed by Ross Duncan

It being difficult to inspire a child with dyslexia – it can be harder still if their sibling or a parent also happen to be avid readers. For Anna Devin, growing up in Ireland this is what she first experienced, but later she found fame and success as an international opera singer and British Dyslexia Association (BDA) Ambassador.

There were expectations on Anna to be just as good as her mother and sister, but her mother was quick to spot her struggling at reading. At the age of six she was tested for dyslexia. However, attending a Convent school in Ireland they didn't take her test results seriously. According to Anna the traditional form of teaching didn't help. This resulted in her getting private lessons outside of school to teach her how to cope and learn methods about how to help in class. If she had an opportunity to go back to school she would reduce the amount of text-based learning she undertook as it took her 20 times as long to learn from a book. Anna hopes that things have changed with multimedia these days and that multi-sensory learning is more the norm. Despite her difficulties at school, Anna considers herself to be highly academic because she is a visual thinker - she learns things faster in a number of specific subjects like maths and biology, but English takes a bit longer as she has to find ways to make the text come alive.

A quote from W B Yeates (who was said to have been dyslexic), "Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire". For Anna, music was not only her first love, it was her inspiration. By luck, at an early age, she found her own motivational spark from singing and playing the piano. Now she takes great joy and pleasure sharing her musical talents with other people around the world – being able to interact with the audience enjoying her performance is something she still finds very rewarding.

In finding her own success in music she no longer sees being dyslexic as a disadvantage. With the help of a physiologist that introduced her to Neuro Linguistic Programming, Anna has opened her eyes to appreciate that we all have different ways of learning. Every dyslexic can find this once they know how. Being an opera singer has been an education in itself that has made her think outside the box. Being able to adapt to different situations that can happen during a live performance, not to mention now being able to sing in 7 different languages, she no longer feels inhibited.

As an Ambassador for the BDA she wants to help inspire people particularly in the theatre and music industry.

# Ross Duncan interviews Zenna Atkins

Education forms such an important part of your life that sometimes we easily forget how important it is to get it right the first time. Therefore the role of OFSTED, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills for England and Wales, is a very important one. It is the regulatory body which inspects schools to ensure that individual schools maintain a high level of educational standard for all pupils at all levels.

Back in 2006, OFSTED appointed Dr Zenna Atkins as their new head who had no formal qualification but also had dyslexia. According to her dyslexia does not stop anyone from achieving as demonstrated by the many brilliantly successful people in all walks of life. She firmly believes in her own in-built ability, in that having dyslexia can be frustrating but also given her a number of strengths, something she has developed in order to compensate for not being able to learn in the traditional way. Being dyslexic is, for her, neither an advantage nor a disadvantage. This can be best summed up in her previous responsibilities in being chairs/directors and founder of a number of charities and organisations.

The responsibility of OFSTED cannot be underestimated. Although they may not be there specifically to inspect for dyslexia provision, they do however put great emphasis on examining that the needs of all are fully met. According to Dr Atkins, a good standard of education provision recognises that people learn differently and further recognises that skills other than passing exams are the key to improving the employment prospects of people with dyslexia.

Post mainstream education can be a particularly daunting time chiefly when having to cope and to readjust to a new way of life. This can be put down to predominately feeling labelled or unusual in an unknown environment. But according to Dr Atkins the very skills you develop in how to survive with dyslexia through school, may not be those that are easily recognisable to some. However, they are in fact very useful, particularly in the workplace - such as creativity, imagination, group brainstorming, good sense of humour and emotional resilience.