

- [Exeter Live \(/exeter-live.html\)](#)

TEDxExeter speaker Jenny Sealey challenges perceptions of disability

By GRichardson (<http://www.exeterexpressandecho.co.uk/people/GRichardson/profile.html>) | Posted: April 23, 2015



Jenny Sealey, artistic director of the Graeae Theatre Company and co-director of the London 2012 Paralympics opening ceremony, is one of the speakers at the 2015 TEDxExeter conference



- [Previous](#)
- [Next](#)

- [Previous](#)
- [Next](#)

Comments (0)

Society may have come a long way but much more still needs to be done to enable people with disabilities to realise their potential.

That was the message from TEDxExeter speaker Jenny Sealey, artistic director of the Graeae Theatre Company and co-director of the London 2012 Paralympics opening ceremony.

She was speaking at a dinner at Pynes House, near Exeter, hosted by law firm Stephens Scown, one of the sponsors of Friday's sold-out conference at the Northcott Theatre.

Jenny told of her own experience of becoming deaf after a childhood accident and the barriers she has faced in pursuing a career in the arts.

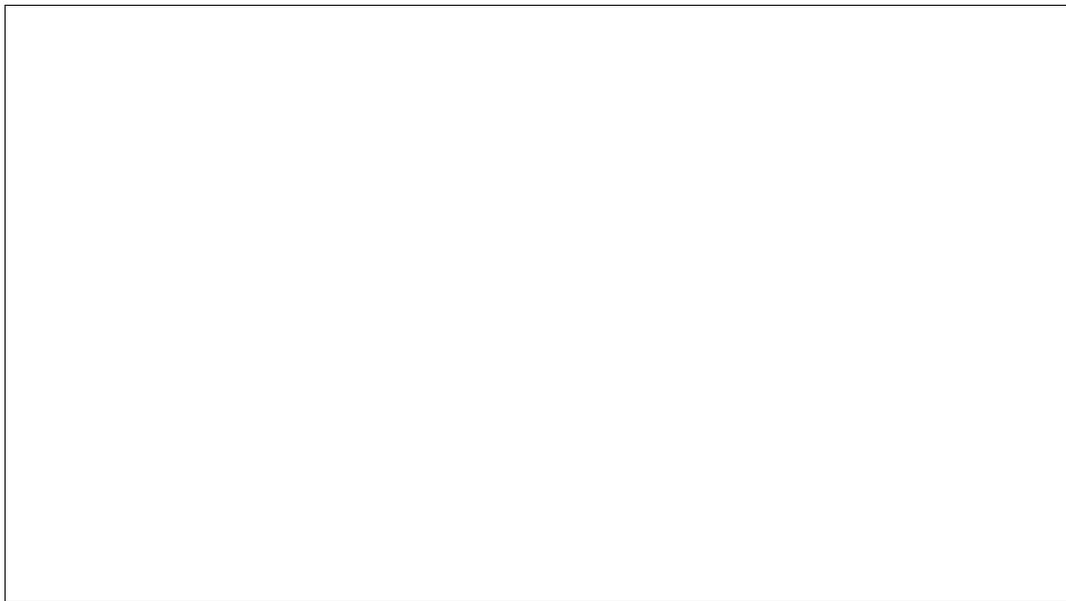
Related content

- Sold out TEDxExeter to stream live ([/Sold-TEDxExeter-stream-live/story-26353046-detail/story.html](#))
- Beth to give her all at TEDxExeter talk ([/Beth-TEDxExeter-talk/story-26295123-detail/story.html](#))
- TEDxExeter to examine why 500,000 children go to school too hungry to learn ([/TEDxExeter-examine-500-000-children-school-hungry/story-26277241-detail/story.html](#))
- TEDxExeter 2015 conference launched at Southernhay House ([/TEDxExeter-2015-conference-launched-Southernhay/story-25966610-detail/story.html](#))
- Exeter Deaf Academy sensory pod boosted by Santander Foundation ([/Exeter-Deaf-Academy-sensory-pod-boosted-Santander/story-23442394-detail/story.html](#))
- Exeter Deaf Academy students and staff praised in Ofsted reports ([/Exeter-Deaf-Academy-students-staff-praised-Ofsted/story-21343343-detail/story.html](#))
- Exeter Deaf academy relocation plan approved ([/Exeter-Deaf-academy-relocation-plan-approved/story-18728187-detail/story.html](#))
- Woman falls down eight foot hole that appeared on the pavement ([/Woman-falls-foot-hole-appeared-pavement/story-26379857-detail/story.html](#))
- Michael Caines, MBE, launches exciting new partnership in Exeter! ([/Michael-Caines-MBE-launches-exciting-new/story-26380535-detail/story.html](#))
- Gallery: TEDxExeter conference inspires people around the world ([/Gallery-TEDxExeter-conference-inspires-people/story-26391785-detail/story.html](#))

"My careers officer told me I should be a librarian," she said. "I never thought in a million years that I would be the artistic director of the most fantastic theatre company in the world.

"When I became deaf, there was no expectation about what I would do, as long as I was happy. But I had expectations.

"Deaf and disabled people have to contribute to society. We need to be noticed and we have so much to give."



Graeae was founded in 1980 with the aim of dispelling images of defencelessness, together with prejudices and popular myths around disabled people through theatre, workshops and training. The company has gained an international reputation for pioneering accessibility in world-class theatre.

“Our passion is that we fundamentally believe deaf and disabled people have a right to be on stage,” said Jenny. “We share what we have got rather than what we haven’t got.”

She added: “I’m so glad I became deaf because it made me who I am. I can’t imagine not being deaf. I had to go right inside me to find out who I am, and so many people don’t have that opportunity.”

The theme of the evening was Enlightenment – Transforming Perceptions of What’s Possible.

Jonathan Farnhill, chief executive of the Exeter Royal Academy for Deaf Education, told the gathering of city business people about the school’s plans to relocate to a new state-of-the-art building.

“Jenny shows what deaf people can achieve,” he said. “The Deaf Academy exists because sadly for many deaf children they don’t get to achieve the potential they have.

“Deaf children achieve half the grades that hearing children get. How can we live in a society where we allow that to be?

“Deaf children need support and opportunities to fulfil the potential they have. Sadly our experience is that many children who come to the academy have been repeatedly failed elsewhere, so they come with little or no self confidence.”



He added: “For too many deaf children, life is what happens to other children. So the Deaf Academy is

about enabling them to discover the talent and abilities they have got.

“Our new building has been designed by deaf children for deaf children. We hope it will be a place where people and their potential are transformed.”

Robert Camp, managing partner at Stephens Scown, said: “TEDxExeter is one of the most important events to take place in Exeter during the year. And the Deaf Academy’s new building is another cutting edge, exciting thing for Exeter.

“I always tell people in London that Exeter punches well above its weight and you should come here and see what’s happening in this great city.”

Jenny’s talk at Friday’s TEDxExeter conference – and those of all the other speakers – will be available to watch online at tedxexeter.com.

-
- [Report this article](#)

&taboola_utm_source=northcliffe-exeterexpressandecho&taboola_utm_medium=bytaboola&taboola_utm_content=grid-4x2:grid-4x2:)

:taboola_utm_source=northcliffe-exeterexpressandecho&taboola_utm_medium=bytaboola&taboola_utm_content=grid-4x2:grid-4x2:)

From the Web



(http://www.hl.co.uk/news/articles/five-traps-hidden-in-new-pension-rules?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=content:dist)



(<http://www.babbel.com/magazine/language-chameleon-one?slc=engmag-a2-vid-but-actylatid>)



(http://www.maxworkouts.com/lp/3-worst-exercises-that-cause-aging-1/rd?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=content:dist)



(<http://www.moneynews.com/MKTNewsIntl/stock-market-crash-warren-buffett-indicator/2014/10/02/1500104>)



(http://www.ancestry.co.uk/s62657/t31435/rd.ashx?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=referral)



(http://www.motoring.co.uk/car-quiz/top-15-cars-under-10-000_405?utm_source=taboola&utm_medium=content:dist)

taboola_utm_content=organic-text-links-b:Below Article Text Links:) MORE NEWS

- **Do you recognise these men? Police appeal after assault outside Lidl on Burnthouse ...**
(<http://www.exeterexpressandecho.co.uk/recognise-men-Police-appeal-assault-outside-Lidl/story-26361039-detail/story.html>)
- **Abandoned car creates legal nightmare for Kenton near Exeter**
(<http://www.exeterexpressandecho.co.uk>)