

Principal's Blog – March 2015

With Easter and the promise of spring almost upon us, I cannot believe how quickly this term has flown! However, when I think back to all of the things we've done over the past few months, it's no wonder that the days and weeks slip by so quickly. Since my last blog, we have presented two shows at The Old Rep, five at our own BOA theatre, organised two school trips abroad and experienced a wealth of professional industry partnerships.

The Acting pathway has just presented four radical interpretations of classic texts, each directed by BOA staff and performed by Year 12 students. *Bedlam* was performed at The Old Rep from 4th – 6th March. The tragedy of *Oedipus* was created with an astonishing chorus relating in unison the terrible facts of Oedipus' life and the reasons for a city-destroying plague. *Macbeth* was presented by the inmates of a secure unit who came to realise that the play with its 'scorpions of the mind' was a reflection of their own physical confinement and the prelude to a sentient revolution. *Coriolanus* showed the effects of war on a mind conditioned to violence, as a dream overtook a general and revealed the truth about life on the frontal lobes and the front line. Finally, *King Lear* proved that love is an unruly madness, as a ruler lost everything to turn from love towards a preference for power.

Also, as part of the Rep Student Drama Festival, Year 13 Actors presented a comic and touching new play by our Director of Acting, *Lord Of The Files*. This took William Golding's classic tale of isolation and community and crossed it with *The Breakfast Club*, as a group of students were trapped overnight in a school stationary cupboard where truths were revealed and personalities challenged.

Responding to the fact that his peers were studying Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* in English, a Year 12 director, Oakley Flanagan, assembled a cast of Acting pathway students and rehearsed and produced a full and free production of the play. The effort and commitment, not to mention talent, that this took was phenomenal. Congratulations to all concerned and for the excellent turn out.

We've really had a fantastic few months in Acting with, as always, much more to come in *Nicholas Nickleby*, the Year 13's epic final performance.

The Dance Pathway have also had a very busy and highly successful term thus far. Performance wise, we were treated to the Year 11 dance show *Attitude* in January, and also to the Speak Dance Project, a performance with our Danish exchange students, in March – both at the BOA theatre.

We have also been busy forming national and even international dance partnerships. In January, we visit Balletskolen in Denmark with a selected group of Year 10 Dancers. The students participated in dance workshops and classes, began creating a group piece of choreography, went to their Danish buddies' school lessons, and developed an understanding of Danish culture during visits to several museums and Copenhagen.

In March, Balletskolen visited us at BOA to complete this exchange project. We had a welcome greeting evening with parents/carers, our students and the visiting school. We hosted dance lessons, and the Danish students shadowed their British partners throughout the school day. As a whole group, we visited Dudley Castle & Zoo, and The Black Country Museum. The project culminated in a show at the BOA theatre with all of the Year 10 cohort and Danish students.

We also had a visit from RAD, who talked to Year 12 about Higher Education opportunities, and Claire Richards from Motionhouse also visited the Year 12s to discuss the dance industry.

We have just finished a 5 week project with Matthew Bourne in collaboration with Elmhurst Dance School, Stratford College, and Walsall College. Students from KS5 completed 5 Saturday rehearsals and a Friday rehearsal for a curtain-raiser show at Birmingham Hippodrome of *Edward Scissorhands*. 5 BOA students choreographed the entire production with Clair from Rubix and Paul Smethwick from Matthew Bourne's New Adventures. We had a further 6 students performing as dancers in the piece.

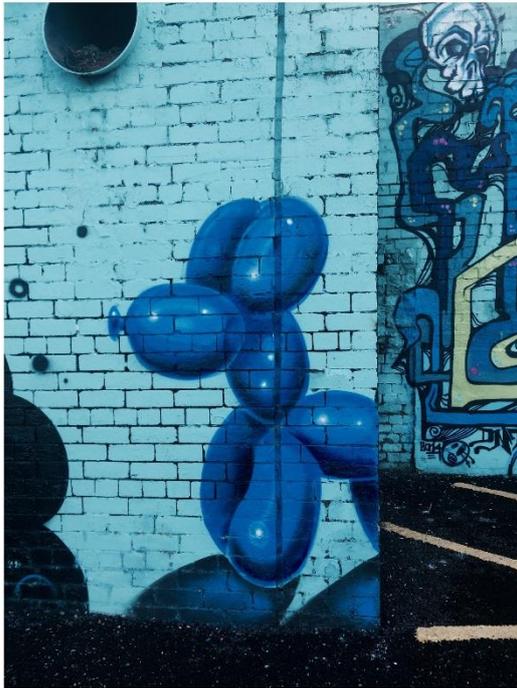
Since my last blog, the Musical Theatre Pathway have performed in *Peter Pan The Musical* at The Old Rep from 4th – 7th February. The students playing Peter, Wendy, John and Michael even took the skies, as they learnt how to fly on stage. This production was met with tremendous success and packed out audiences.

The Musical Theatre Pathway also exhibited at Move It & Perform 2015 from 13th – 15th February. This was a performing arts exhibition at the Olympia, London, which offered our students the opportunity to talk directly to industry professions and explore range of career paths in the performing arts.

This week, the Year 13 Musical Theatre students are preparing to perform *Betty Blue Eyes* at The Old Rep from 19th – 21st March. We have been given an exclusive license from Cameron Mackintosh to present this show, so we are the first ever amateur company to perform it.

Over the past few months, Year 13 Pathway VAD students have been developing a new project which reflects on themes associated with the city of Birmingham. This mixed media exhibition comprised of Illustration, Painting, Fashion Textiles, Photography and Video Installations. The exhibition took place in the BOA Theatre for all to see on 20th and 21st January, with some excellent

work feature. Here are two fantastic examples of work produced by Erin Healey for the exhibition.



Recently, some of our most academically able students were entered in the UK's biggest national maths competition, the UK Mathematics Trust's "Maths Challenge". Last year over 600,000 of the country's brightest students from 4,000 schools took part in the different challenges. At BOA we entered the top 10 pupils studying A-Level mathematics from Years 12 and 13 to the Senior Challenge in November and every pupil in the top band of Year 10 and Year 11 to the Intermediate Challenge in February.

In the Senior Challenge, three Year 13s achieved results in the top 60% of scores nationally and received a Bronze award: Catriona Carswell, James Johnston and Jay Albray (best in year). Three Year 12s also achieved an award, with Tom Jones and Victoria McCormack achieving Bronze awards and Maisie Truman achieved a Silver award, for being in the top 30%.

In the Intermediate Challenge, ten Year 11 and five Year 10 pupils achieved a Bronze award, making them in the top 40% of the country. These were: Jessica Walton, Olivia Jones, Ryan Suzuki, Josie Crane, Martha Graham, Kane Blundell, Nina-Simone Brown, Frankie Smith, Alice Townsend, Sukhvir Chugh, and Natalie Evans, Lucy Foley, Toni Earle-Randell, Charlotte Travis, and Nicholas Cheneler, respectively. We also had two Year 11 pupils and one Year 10 achieve a Silver award, making them in the top 20% of the entrants in the country. These were Jacob Chance and Isha Bahia, and Lucy Alder, who was the top scorer in the school.

The results were extremely successful and show that in addition to being talented in a variety of different specialisms, we have some formidable mathematicians on roll.