

Happy New Year! How did we arrive at February so quickly? This half term has flown by and as ever the academy has been busy.

We started the New Year with the final performances of Treasure Island. After over 70 performances we said “Tally Ho” and packed up our cutlasses. A massive thank you to all of our students involved and I hope they find the experience beneficial for their future careers or upcoming auditions.

Both The Old Rep and Treasure Island have been nominated in the What’s On Reader’s Awards, as Best Small Regional Theatre and Best Home-Produced Show in the Midlands respectively. We have reached the short-listing stage, where each category has been narrowed down to just five finalists. You can vote for us online until the voting closes on Thursday 10 March, here: <http://whatsonlive.co.uk/whats-on-readers-awards>. This is a wonderful achievement after just one year of operating The Old Rep and producing our first professional show, so please as many people as possible vote for both the venue and the show.

We are currently discussing what our Christmas show will be for 2016/2017. Hopefully I will be able to announce this in early March!

We are delighted that The Old Rep has been chosen to host the launch of Birmingham’s Year of Arts and Young People (YAY16) on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February. I would encourage our students to attend the launch event to take advantage the free workshops, open discussions and even chances to perform in open mic sessions. For further information, call The Old Rep on 0121 359 9444.

Early January saw three music performances from Year 11 and Year 13. These superb events were supported and facilitated by our excellent music tech and technical theatre production students. The musicianship and performances were excellent. Our technical students ran the events with outstanding professionalism and managed the pressure of the performances with the calmness and skills required in the industry. Well done!

Following closely on the heels of the music performances was the art exhibition for Years 10 & 12. The event showcased the amazing talent of our visual art and design students. Thanks to the musicians who provided live music and the technical students who again facilitated the show.

The Year 11 dance showcase was a highly commendable and thoroughly enjoyable experience. We enjoyed a fusion of different dance styles from ballet to jazz, urban to contemporary, all based around the theme of Alice in Wonderland. Well done to all of the students and staff involved.

Our dance company Industria were involved with Zooresidence, a project in which a hip hop artist worked with the group to create a performance shown at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on 27th January. Zonation, the UK’s biggest hip hop theatre company judged the show to select students to take part in a Curtain Raiser on 25th and 27th February for their ‘Into the Hoods: Remixed’ UK tour. BOA have had 4 students selected, one of the largest selections; Phoebe Le Blond (Year 12), Dru Bennett (Year 12), Renee Ramsay (Year 11) and Amira Walters-Bryne (Year 11) were chosen to

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perform in the Curtain Raiser performance.

Just after half term, on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> March, students from Balletskolen Denmark will arrive to take part in an exchange project with Year 10 Dance students. We hope to arrange a return visit to Denmark later this year.

Year 11 Musical Theatre students have worked incredibly hard since September on their Final Major Project 'Seussical.' Following an incredibly strong round of auditions, students have worked with great passion and focus to bring this incredibly touching and quite wacky musical to life. This ensemble show has been extremely well received by families and students, many of whom have commented on how the students' performances far exceed their years. The cast gave a special matinee performance to open their run of shows to St Brigid's Primary School and we have received excellent feedback. Students have also completed their Performing Arts Enterprise Unit alongside the show and produced a full range of branded merchandise which was most popular. The success of the performance was entirely down to the hard work and fantastic efforts of Year 12 and 13 Technical Theatre Arts students who produced phenomenal props, costume, set and make up designs. A big well done to all.

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January, BOA students provided entertainment and coverage for the Dialysis Ball at Edgbaston Cricket Ground, celebrating 50 years of dialysis at Heartlands Hospital. Year 12 broadcast students provided coverage of performances from music, dance and musical theatre students. It was long evening, but very successful and all for a worthy cause.

Broadcast students recently enjoyed a workshop delivered by RED. They are one of the most popular manufacturers in the industry and their cameras are utilised on high-end film and television productions such as The Hobbit trilogy, Transformers, The Great Gatsby, Pirates of the Caribbean, all recent Netflix productions and more. Students got hands-on time with the equipment and were able to practice the camera's slow-motion capabilities. The workshop had never been delivered to students as young as ours and RED were impressed by how knowledgeable they were in comparison to graduate and post-graduate students that they usually connect with.

Students from across Games, Design and New Media have started work on a commercial game project as a game development extracurricular activity. The as yet untitled game is being developed by learners working together as a small business and will launch at the end of term 5.

In the Animation club this term, learners have been producing a short animation depicting a character completing an assault course using frame by frame animation techniques. This incorporates actions such as running, jumping, climbing and pushing heavy weights in one complete sequence. Once this has been completed, the learners will be exploring the planning and executing of their own short animations from initial concept through to completion using the animation technique of their choice.

Over half term, 64 students and staff will be going on our annual trip to New York, where they will be watching the musicals The Colour Purple and The School of Rock. The students will also take part in workshops with the cast of The Colour Purple, enjoy tours of the Steps On Broadway Dance Studios, the Lincoln Centre and Radio City Music Hall, and visit the classic tourist sights of the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty and Central Park.

In other news, BOA switched to Bio Mass Renewable heating early in January, which uses wood-chip to heat the academy instead of gas. As an academy we now qualify for RHI Allowance Funding and a significantly reduced carbon footprint. Combined with the recycling programme we already have in place, this new initiative means that BOA is a very environmentally aware organisation.

The Voice of BOA have created a new website for all students to share and be kept updated on current BOA news. One feature is a forum where students can post suggestions for improvement, which the Voice of BOA students will read and discuss. The Voice of BOA have also introduced a one-way stairwell system, which was suggested by students in order to reduce congestion at peak times of the day. This is a work in progress and will be reviewed by students and tutor reps.

Congratulations to Aliasha Lobuczek, who recently appeared on ITV's The Voice and was chosen to progress to the next round. We wish her luck for the rest of the competition.

The week after half term holiday is our aptitude week. Year 12 and 13 have an extended half term but with lots work to do at home! Year 10s are on work experience and Year 11s have Core Week just for Maths, English and Science. This will culminate in their final mock exams before the May GCSEs. School will resume as normal on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> February.

Have a lovely half term break.