

It has been a busy half term since we returned from our Easter break. As always there has been a number of performances ably facilitated by our 'always willing' Technical Theatre Arts students.

On Saturday 7th May, an ensemble of fourteen BOA Actors performed at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre as part of this year's National Theatre Connections 500 Festival. Directed by their Acting Teacher Sarah Spicer, the company's interpretation of their chosen play 'It Snows' by Bryony Lavery and Frantic Assembly had already received excellent reviews following their home performance in April. A visiting National Theatre Director said: "This is a production that puts the performer at the heart of the play, and empowers the performers to bring their individual skills and gifts – this is a skillful and dedicated company". The company were praised for their focused and committed ethos as well as "physical dynamism, dead pan wit and the ability to embrace and enjoy big, bold characters".

Comprising of a mixture of students in Years 10, 12 and 13 who all study Acting at BOA, the company has grown as an ensemble, uniting their love of physical theatre whilst experimenting with motifs and developing clever visual imagery against a backdrop of emotion in such a unique scripted piece. The performance at the Birmingham REP was a culmination of the students' hard work, providing them with the opportunity to showcase their ambitious creativity and work with a professional technical and stage management team as well as perform to a public audience in a well-respected Birmingham venue. Being part of the NT Connections 500 festival has given the students a valuable and rewarding experience that will benefit them both personally and theatrically.

Year 13 Acting Pathway students presented a stunning and harrowing season of Holocaust plays at The Old Rep in April. There were three plays in the season and each contained a deeply felt response to the human tragedy of the subject matter. In 'Ghetto', the ensemble were outstanding in showing us the wider impact of the plays story. The second night saw directors Chris Watson and James Lees take a frantic assembly physical theatre approach to Peter Weiss' verbatim text, 'The Investigation'. The ensemble here created moments of beauty and suffering that will live long in the memory.

The third play saw the company create a new play as a Jewish theatre company, performing Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice'. The dress rehearsal achieved a truth and raw emotional response that no one had experienced before.

Music has had a very busy term with six showcase performances. Right at the beginning of term we had performances in the BOA Theatre. Tuesday 12th April was the final Year 11 show of the year, with the whole of year 13 Music and Year 13 Music Tech performing on the 13th and 14th respectively. The student interns from Portugal did a fantastic job in filming these shows, capturing the atmosphere brilliantly. Video clips are available to watch on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QABSEiSLVko> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHoxpXZ4nC8>.

On 9th and 10th May it was the turn of the Year 12 Music and Music Tech cohorts to show their talents, followed on 11th May by the final showcase for the Year 13 Music group. It was an emotional

evening as the students enjoyed their final performances after two or four years. All of the shows were very well supported and demonstrated the wealth of musical talent at BOA.

We've also had the GCSE and A level final shows for submission with some excellent performances from students across all the pathways who have opted for these courses.

We have still got a few opportunities to come after half term with Nathan Lewis running a trip to Derby University on 6th June for Year 12 Music and Music Tech so the students can get an enhanced insight into what it is like to study Music at tertiary level.

On 17th June the Year 12 Choir have been invited to perform at the National Governors' Association 10th Anniversary Dinner at the ICC. The 60-strong choir will be supported by a full band made up of staff and year 13 students.

The Dance department have recently had their Year 12 showcase; 'May Day' that celebrated our Year 12 dance students success in their first year at BOA. There were some fantastic student choreography performances, jazz medley performances and contemporary dances. All choreography was inspired by the theme of the show 'May Day'. Students also took part in a week of intensive workshops with Motionhouse Dance Company, where they created contemporary pieces for their show.

Industria Dance Company were successful in performing as part of International Dance Festival Birmingham on the outside stage of the 'Put your foot down' platform. They performed on 7th May to the community of Birmingham and delivered a high energy and strong urban dance linked to the theme of 'Gods'.

Versus Dance company have been successful this year in getting accepted for both MYDance and U-Dance regional competitions and platforms. They performed at the Crescent Theatre for MYDance on 16th April and have the U-Dance competition in July 2016.

BOA also hosted a Workshop with 'Rebourne' for the Boat Journey project. The project selects dancers to create choreography whilst travelling on a canal boat to then be performed at various destinations in the UK. We have had several students selected to perform as part of this project.

B2 Radio, BOA's student radio station, has just appointed a new management team to take the station forward into the next academic year with lots of exciting plans to grow the station. Year 12 Broadcast students Tom Furzeman, Georgina Twelftree and Alex Murley will be the driving force behind developing the stations output and presence in the next 12 months with a key objective to grow input from across the school. We broadcast live at b2radio.co.uk and via the TuneIn app.

Game Design and New Media and Broadcast students are gearing up for their end of year showcase. This year Digital Arts are taking over The Old Rep to exhibit their work and celebrate their achievements from the year. They will be joined by a panel of industry professionals for a Q&A session and the whole event is open to the public. Work showcased will include moving image and film, radio, games design and interactive media and digital art from across the school.

The recent Year 11 and Year 13 art exhibition was a real success, with a huge collection of artwork from a range of different specialisms from fashion to photography which was presented in a big interactive exhibition for the public. The exhibition was called 'Imagine' and sold over 150 tickets. There is a link here to a sneak preview of the exhibition:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dt5iRCNrdxY&feature=youtu.be>

Saturn House invited Fiona Loud, Policy Director from the British Kidney Patients' Association, in to speak to the students during an assembly to raise awareness about how many young people and

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families are affected by kidney disease. The students were thoughtful, respectful and have pledged to assist this worthy group in raising money during our Summer term.

Also, a big thank you to all those who donated to Mercury's many fundraising events last term. We raised a fantastic amount to support the Midlands Air Ambulance.

Over the Easter holiday, a small group of BOA students stepped away from the creative, digital and performing arts for a moment to pursue another of their passions – in this case, world travel and geography! 30 students from Year 11 and Year 13 took part in a trip to Iceland, where they stayed in Reykjavik whilst visiting a number of attractions, from the infamous Katla and Hekla volcanoes to the Strokkur Geyser and Gullfoss Waterfall. Students also enjoyed the relaxing atmosphere of a Geothermal Spa and a shopping trip in Iceland's capital city. Most importantly, students were rewarded with two incredibly rare sightings - a brief glimpse of the Northern Lights (or the Aurora Borealis, for all you experts) and a pod of humpback whales that dived in front of their whale-watching ship, as well as one of the impressive mammals rolling on the surface of the ocean.

Last Monday we said farewell to our fourth set of Post-16 students. This was particularly poignant as about a quarter of the year group had been our very first Key Stage 4 students therefore the first year group to have spent four years at BOA. We wish them all the very best with their futures and look forward to seeing them on 18th August between 8am and noon if they wish to collect exam certificates. I urge all past students to stay in touch via our Alumni BOA-Alumni@boa-academy.co.uk.

As we are well into the exam season this Friday will be the last day for our current Year 11s before study leave after half term. Please note staff will still be in their classrooms to support any students who wish to still attend lessons or ask advice. Good luck Year 11s! Your results day is Thursday 25th August from 10am.

Next month myself, Mr Dodzo and Mr Penn have been invited to the Grosvenor Hotel, Park Lane, for the TES Awards Ceremony. BOA has been nominated for the International Award. I have no idea if we will win but it is nice to be nominated and recognised for the quality and amount of international work we do with our students.

At the end of this academic year, BOA will have been open for five years. In that short time, BOA has rapidly gained a reputation as a centre of excellence for the arts. It has impressed the creative industries and subsequently has an excellent array of well-known industry partners who support the different pathways.

Our results at Post-16 and Key Stage 4 are also impressive with our Post-16 students gaining the equivalent of AAA for the past two years. At KS4 (2015) our students gained 82% C and above in both Maths and English. We are over subscribed.

In June 2015, BOA was approached by the New Schools Network to open a new school. In August, myself and the two founding partners met with both BIS and the DfE with regards to this. The BOA Board of Directors subsequently voted to open at least one new school. We are now in the process of bidding to open BOA 2 (BOA Digital). The plan is to open a new academy specialising in New Digital Technologies, Mathematics and Coding in either September 2018 or 2019. Exciting times but rest assured we will not take our eye off the ball here at BOA.

Have a great holiday and I hope the sun shines.