

The exam season is nearly over and we have almost said farewell to our current year 13 and year 11 students. I am looking forward to seeing them at their Prom evenings. The first half of this summer half term was packed full of exciting performances and achievements by each and every BOA student, so I would like to wholeheartedly congratulate every subject pathway for their outstanding work. I hope this blog provides you with a glimpse of life at BOA over the past few months, as we have been preparing for the busy exam season and the close of this academic year.

The term started with some outstanding music performances. Our year 10, 11 and 12 students presented 'The Final Countdown' and music from the 50's, 60's and 70's in 'The Jukebox Joy Show', which gave the outside world an opportunity to see what the music pathway at BOA has to offer! 'The Final Countdown' was a showcase with a lot of memories; it was the last time we saw our current Year 11s on the stage. Two hours of pop music along with Year 10 bringing their influences saw an action packed two hours of entertainment in our very own BOA Theatre. 'JukeBox Joy' saw an opportunity for our current year 12 students to broadcast their talents. They performed tracks from the 60s, 70s and 80s offering something different from a normal music showcase. There was even a performance from the extracurricular Ska who took the audience by storm!

We also had a visit to the University of Derby where students in year 12 had the opportunity to explore information regarding their progression. The course offered at the university provides students with a chance to develop their skills as a session musician as well as in the studio, so it was a great opportunity for our students to do some degree level work!

Highlights for the Dance Pathway throughout the last half term included *The West End* Year 13 final major project, which showcased their achievements throughout the course. The show was deservedly a full sell-out each night. The Dance Pathway also completed Urban Dance and Ballet workshops with a selection of guest artists, which were a thoroughly enjoyable experience for both teachers and participants. We also have exciting events to look forward to, as Versus Dance Company has been selected to perform at the U.Dance Finals in Plymouth in July.

Year 13 Acting Pathway presented *Nicholas Nickleby* from 22- 24th April. This epic undertaking was brought to life at The Old Rep with a vast scaffold of set, visionary direction and some of the finest performances achieved by BOA actors that we have ever seen. Birmingham School Of Acting were invited to attend and choose a best male and female lead but were so struck by the performances that they also chose additional performers to mark for commendation. The Assistant Director of BSA presented the awards following the pathway's own BOA Oscars ceremony! The current Year 13s have been a fantastic year group that the Acting staff will really miss. Year 11 Acting pathway are also about to complete their course and we wish them all the luck for the exam period and their future. We look forward to many of them returning for Year 12 and working further with the energy and talent that they bring to the BOA Acting Classroom.



The Musical Theatre Pathway also achieved a lot in the past term. They performed two major musicals at The Old Rep: *Betty Blue Eyes* (with exclusive license from Cameron Mackintosh) and *Little Women*. Both shows were received exceptionally well by critics, and were no doubt some of the best performances to come from the Musical Theatre Pathway. Last week I witnessed the year 10 Musical Theatre performance of 'Stars and Stripes'. What a talented group of young performers!



The Musical Theatre students had the opportunity to work with professional West End directors on both of these shows: Alistair Knights and Stephen Whitson. Students also worked with *The Bodyguard* cast member Jamie-Ray Hawthorne on series of workshops to increase their understanding of auditions. The Year 13 Musical Theatre students have now departed the course, and this year we are very proud to have graduates moving on to the Arts Educational School, Guildford School of Acting, Laine Theatre Arts, Urdang, Bird College, Italia Conti and many others.

The BOA Musical Masterclass has been a big success this term. We held our Easter intensive school, which involved a workshop master class with West End star Anna-Jayne Casey and concluded in a performance at the Old Rep Theatre.

This term has been one of Visual Art and Design's busiest and most successful, with students working extra hard preparing for their final practical exams. The term began with a residential trip to London for Year 11 and 12 students, where they were able to visit a range of galleries including Tate Modern, Tate Britain and The Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as letting their hair down at Planet Hollywood and Ripley's Believe It or Not.

This term has also seen the department's best exhibition to date, with a huge turnout for the Year 11 & 13 end of year exhibition *Change*, which featured a range of fine art and design work.



1 Grosvenor Street, Birmingham, B4 7QD

email: [info@boa-academy.co.uk](mailto:info@boa-academy.co.uk)  
[www.boa-academy.co.uk](http://www.boa-academy.co.uk)

Tel: 0121 359 9300

web: [www.boa-academy.co.uk](http://www.boa-academy.co.uk)

: @ImagineBOA

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The Production Arts staff and students had a busy and productive term, working on shows with Acting, Dance, Music, Musical Theatre and Visual Arts and Design departments. Year 12 students achieved much success undertaking independent roles including Assistant Stage Management, Scenic development, Lighting Design and Lighting Operation on *Bedlam* and *Nicholas Nickleby* with the Acting pathway. They rapidly gained independence in a range of production skills and roles and it has been a pleasure to see them working on shows so confidently and professionally. Year 13 students worked in roles closer to their progression routes, building their specialisms ahead of their next steps outside of BOA. They have undertaken their final production roles in sound, lighting, stage management, costume and make-up through working on *Betty Blue Eyes* and *Little Women* with the Musical Theatre department. These productions saw the students work alongside both BOA staff and our professional colleagues at the Old Rep Theatre to create and produce high quality productions.

We are currently in the process of saying a fond farewell to our Year 13 students who are heading off to continued education and training at various drama schools and universities, with establishments such as RWCMD, Bath Spa University, Arts UCB and both Nottingham and Nottingham Trent set to be receiving our alumni. Some students are going straight into work, and are using the professional network they have built during their time at BOA to secure employment and / or work placements.

We have also enjoyed a wealth of academic achievements to accompany our recent vocational accomplishments. For example, our KS5 Learning Leaders students recently attended the Unite Uprising Youth Debate about the General Election. Also, we organised a highly successful Year 12 Russell Group University Information evening which was very well attended by students and parents alike. The year 12 progress evening was also exceedingly well attended.

The BOA Humanities language students have produced some excellent work for a competition on 'how to improve your lifestyle'. In response to changes in the canteen food and the resulting sudden shortage of chocolate, the Year 10 students of languages created some posters to promote a healthy diet. Here is a little 'taste' of the wonderful posters created by our Year 10 Spanish group.



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Our Year 10 French students produced a fantastic presentation on the topic of health, and we had some excellent role play 'chez le docteur'. Here our talented students practised their best French speaking skills with their acting, dancing and even TV presenting skills, to present their view on how best to have a healthy lifestyle.

At the end of term, a group of Humanities students went on a visit to Normandy. With an exciting programme of visits and busy timetable, the students experienced some real French culture with a certain 'je ne sais quoi'. They tried traditional frog's legs, had a crepe night, and a visit to a goat farm. The group also visited the famous Mont Saint-Michael (a famous UNESCO site), Arromanches, the D Day landing beaches and the Tapestry of Bayeux.

This year we were delighted to be a part of a nationwide initiative provided by the Department of Education and First World War Centenary Battlefield Tours. Two students and one teacher from every school in the country have had the opportunity to visit sites in France and Belgium and reflect on the sacrifices made by troops from all four corners of the world. Two A-Level History students, Caitlin Parker and Lauren Curno, were selected to accompany Mr Eykelestam and representatives from a number of other Ormiston Academies across England on the three day trip. We took part in the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres and visited a number of cemeteries and memorials across the Western Front. This was undoubtedly a moving, humbling and enriching experience for our students. They returned with personal stories to share with their friends, families and fellow students that will keep the flame of the fallen alive one hundred years on.



Our Gaming and New Media students are being seriously challenged and are working full time with guest lecturers from our partner university in Malta.

Broadcast students have also been enjoying a particularly busy and productive term. Year 10 students recently visited BBC Mailbox and worked with Martha Littlehailes, a producer with the BBC Radio Drama Department, where they learnt techniques used in audio editing for radio drama. Also, B2 Radio's Callum Denning visited the Aegon Classic Tennis Tournament in Edgbaston to compile audio and articles for the B2 Radio website and broadcast content. Another Broadcast student, Scott Gibson, has created a corporate piece for an external client, GumSaver, which is now being used within the dental industry to promote their product. We have completed our final Broadcast trip to Malta as part of the MarBOA Mobility Project. Students produced, shot and edited promotional videos for the Maltese Tourist Board. For more information visit: [www.marboaproject.com](http://www.marboaproject.com).



Future projects for Broadcast include our upcoming partnership with Sport Birmingham and the 2015 Sainsbury School Games wherein students will be assisting in the filming, photography and online journalism for the event. To find out more about Broadcast events and projects, we have launched our new department and showcasing website: [www.boa-digital.co.uk](http://www.boa-digital.co.uk). Also, Year 13 TV student Luke Tapley created an online platform for showcasing our student success stories: [www.boabroadcaststories.co.uk](http://www.boabroadcaststories.co.uk).

Current students were given the opportunity to interview for work placements at Live Nation's 'Download Festival,' and several students, from Production Arts to Broadcast, gained placements in lighting, artist liaison, and creative fulfilment. This was great opportunity for them to use the skills they have learnt, develop their independence and begin building a professional network.

Many young people are currently thinking about studying in Europe, rather than the UK, as fees and accommodation are so much cheaper. The Barcelona Institute for the Arts is proving to be a particularly popular destination.

The next time I write to you will be the end of term! Where did the year go?