



AROUND THE PALACE Drama Festival Special Bulletin

In May, Old Palace once again held a week-long Drama Festival. The Old Palace Drama Festival first began in 2017 as an opportunity for students to engage in different activities to widen their understanding of theatre.

Each festival year, the department provides students with enrichment opportunities, such as professional and student workshops, presentations and showcase performances.

This year, students enjoyed a wide-range of activities, including the first-ever Drama Festival theatre trip. This special article outlines the various activities offered during the week.

We hope you enjoy reading about the students' successes and the exciting activities.

Drama Festival 2022



The Lion King
Wednesday, 25th May
Lyceum Theatre

Student Led Workshops

Monday, 23rd May
Advanced Acting
Wednesday, 25th May
Costume Design
'The Lion King'
Discussion

Guest Speakers - Friday, 27th May



Performance
Tuesday, 24th May

Sarah Rutherford
Playwright

Dr Molly Flynn
Academic, Deviser and Performer

Francis O'Connor
Set and Costume Designer



Whole School Assembly: 'What Does Theatre Give You?'

The Drama Festival was launched in a whole school assembly led by Ms Berk, Mrs Hargraves, Madinah M and Emily B (Year 12).

The assembly posed the question – 'What does theatre give you?' The speakers discussed how theatre can be used as a catalyst for social change, highlighting the work of theatre groups like the Cardboard Citizens, who work with the homeless population in London.

The assembly also focused on the academic challenge given to students when studying Drama. Theatre & Performance research is a wide-ranging academic field and invites scholars to make connections between many different subjects, such as history and politics. The assembly also discussed how theatre is a place for conversation, as well as entertainment.

Students left the assembly understanding the vital role theatre plays in societal change and how it can enrich our lives.

Student Led Workshop: Advanced Acting

On Monday, A-Level Drama students Madinah M and Tilly L (Year 12) led a workshop with students in Years 7-9 to introduce them to 'Meisner'. Meisner is an advanced acting technique created by American theatre practitioner Sanford Meisner, which is used to create more naturalistic reactions to other actors on stage.

Madinah and Tilly taught the students basic exercises they then used in script work. Students made excellent progress in the session and by the end, they were reacting to their scene partners more naturalistically and spontaneously.



'Advanced Acting' Workshop – Led by Tilly L and Madinah M (Year 12)

Student Led Workshop: Costume Design

Emily B (Year 12) led a workshop with Years 7-9 on costume design. She introduced students to key costume terminology, expectations of the GCSE course and led them in a costume designing exercise.

Emily has expertise in costume design and fashion, having previously designed costumes for school productions and being an A Level Art and Drama student.

The workshop participants greatly appreciated her professional and knowledgeable lesson.



'Costume' Workshop – Led by Emily B (Year 12)

Drama Festival Performance

Over the course of last term, students in Years 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 worked to prepare material for the evening Drama Festival performance.

On Tuesday, these students spent all day in a dress rehearsal polishing their work and performed in an evening performance on the same day. Students in Year 7 and 8 Drama Clubs showcased a selection of scenes from 'The Wind and the Willows', 'Treasure Island' and 'Swallows and Amazons'. Their performances proved to be whimsical and charming. Well done to Nia L (Year 8), Zadie C, Bella H, Lily T, Arputha R, Zoya R, Sofia S, Summer H, Leiya S, Abena O, Imogen H, Catherine M and Onaisa L (Year 7). The pieces were directed by Mrs French and Miss Kolpaktchi with further direction from students in The Palace Players – the Drama student leadership team. Thank you to Lizzie G and Nissi O (Year 11); Tilly L (Year 12) and Madinah M (Year 12) for your direction and guidance.

Year 10 students, Keno A, Rhian F and Rebecca O performed a riveting and high charged scene from 'As We Forgive Those'. Sumaiya B (Year 10) also performed a creative and engaging interpretation of Marc Antony's famous speech from 'Julius Caesar'.

Madinah M (Year 12) produced a soulful performance of a monologue from 'Appropriate'. Anna G and Kiruthyaa T (Year 12) immersed the audience in their frightening telling of a scene from 'The Woman in Black', underscored by a brilliant sound design created by Ria P (Year 12). But who was the mysterious and frightening spectre who also appeared that evening? Will we ever know? We can only hope we never meet her again.



In rehearsal: Madinah M (Year 12)



In rehearsal: Sumaiya B (Year 10)

These Year 10 and 12 scripted pieces were directed by Ms Berk and Mrs Hargraves.

Finally, the performance was completed by a 30-minute set performed by the Old Palace Improv Troupe. This ensemble, run by Ms Berk, performs 'Comedy Sports' style improvisation and everything seen by the audience on the evening was spontaneously created

without any prior planning. The troupe expertly entertained the audience who were crying with laughter.

A fantastic performance by the team – Imogen H & Onaisa L (Year 7); Tusara K, Prisha P and Harini R (Year 9); Jathusha B, Madinah M, Ria P and Kiruthyaa T (Year 12). Well done to all who performed and directed!



In rehearsal: The Old Palace Improv Troupe (Imogen H & Onaisa L, Year 7; Prisha P, Tusara K and Harini R, Year 9; Kiruthyaa T, Jathusha B, Ria P and Madinah M, Year 12)



Zadie C (Year 7) as Mole from 'The Wind and the Willows', emerging from his burrow at the start of the performance



Onaisa L, Abena O and Catherine M (Year 7) perform an extract from 'Swallows and Amazons' in the dress rehearsal. Mrs Burton proudly watches in the audience.



Nia L (Year 8) and Zadie C (Year 7)



In rehearsal: Anja S & Lily T (Year 7)



In rehearsal: Kiruthyaa T, Anna G and Ria P (Year 12)



In rehearsal: Onaisa L, Catherine M and Imogen H (Year 7)



In rehearsal: Keno A, Rhian F and Rebecca O (Year 10)



In rehearsal: Rhian F and Rebecca O (Year 10)

Theatre Trip: Disney's 'The Lion King'

On Wednesday, 45 students in Years 8-10 went to see Disney's production of 'The Lion King'. Students enjoyed this imaginative and exciting production. For some it was their first visit to the theatre and for many the first since Covid. It proved to be a truly magical experience.

Post-Show Discussion: Disney's 'The Lion King'

The next day, students in Year 8 and 9 who attended the trip engaged in a post-show discussion. Students analysed the design, acting and directing in the production. The conversation was highly insightful, with students recognising that Julie Taymor's direction using puppetry was an imaginative approach to telling this iconic story. Students also showed a maturity in their critique of moments in the production that were less successful, which was very impressive and perceptive.

Professional Panel of Experts Q&A

The festival was completed by a speaker panel of industry experts. The panel included: Sarah Rutherford who is a writer for the stage, film and television; Francis O'Connor who is a set and costume designer and Dr Molly Flynn, an academic and performer who specialises in Russian and Ukrainian political theatre. Students learned a lot about theatre craft as well as the academic rigour needed to be a theatre researcher.

Dr Flynn's contributions were especially poignant due to the current political situation, demonstrating the relevance theatre has and its ability to act as both a mirror and critic in society.

Thank you again to everyone involved. It is always a pleasure running the Drama Festival alongside our other school productions and activities. It is an opportunity to truly celebrate the subject and its importance in the world around us.

We hope to see you at the next festival!

Ms Berk, Mrs Hargraves, Mrs French and Miss Kolpaktchi

