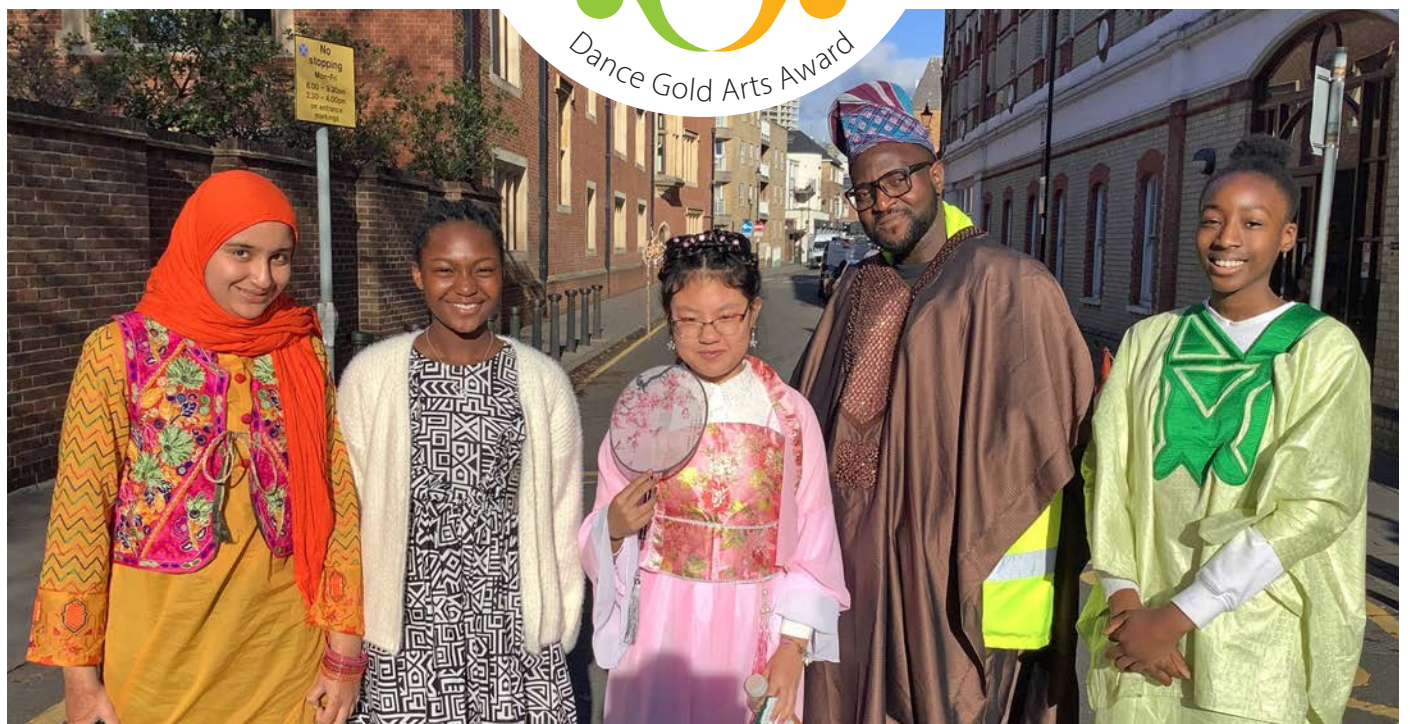




AROUND THE PALACE Cultural Festival Special Bulletin

Cultural Festival Week



Cultural Festival Week

As part of my Year 13 Gold Arts Award course which the Dance Department deliver to Sixth Formers, I organised an arts project to appreciate and celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the Old Palace community.

The first and foremost motivation behind running Cultural Festival Week was to highlight the importance of recognising and owning our own individual cultures. In the Whole School Assembly that I presented on Tuesday 15th November, I posed the question, 'Why is celebrating culture healthy?'. An important question which led to the conclusion that the celebration of our differences and similarities can create a healthier environment which breeds open-mindedness and curiosity. Some of our students, Caitlin (Year 12), Gina (Year 13), Abhirrha (Year 13) and Mya (Year 13) also shared what certain aspects of their culture means to them be it the food, sports or clothing. I also spoke about how culture tells a

story and explained the history behind African hairstyles such as Bantu knots and Fulani Braids. During the slave trade, African women used their hair to map escapes and draw directions, showing that traditions within cultures have a deeper meaning than what is perhaps merely perceived on the surface.

The chosen theme of the week was, 'One heart of Many', because our hearts belong to many different cultures as we all have a multi-dimensional cultural identity - I wanted to steer away from the idea that we can only be affiliated to one culture. Also, by allowing the expression of so many various cultures we are actively exposing ourselves to different ways of life which makes way for learning, self-awareness and self-development.

This week was very enjoyable to organise and it fully embodied the festive atmosphere of sharing and

celebration through the different workshops and events. I also enjoyed running the 'Musical Theatre Workshop' alongside Nissi (Year 12) teaching singing and dancing from the Musical 'Six.' Some of the highlights included the Cultural Festival Performance and the Cultural Catwalk but the whole week showcased the diversity and talent of Old Palace School. As an Arts Award student, I used the arts as a vessel for expression and learnt that the passionate, creative nature of the arts was a successful way to celebrate diversity. Organising Cultural Festival Week 2022 was a great opportunity and experience for me and I hope it was for everyone involved. I wish to give a final and huge thanks to Mrs Barber who through her continuous support and contribution helped make this week as amazing as it was!

Madinah M, Year 13



Cultural Festival Catwalk

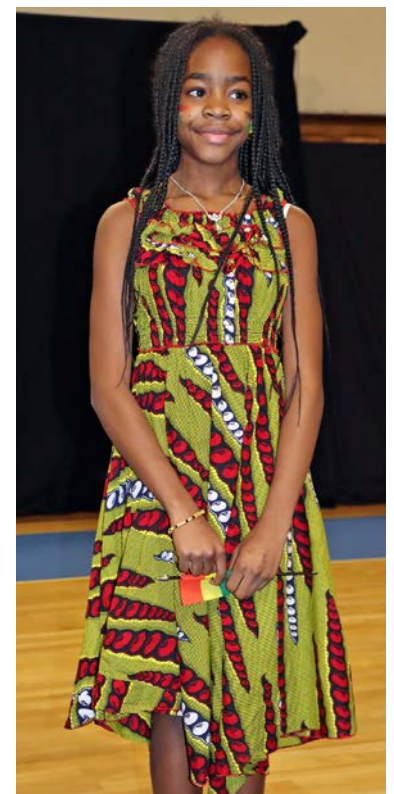
The Culture Day catwalk was amazing! I wanted to attend this and be a part of it because I really wanted to represent my culture. Also, because this was my first experience of a Cultural Day and I really wanted to fully participate in all the activities. The hall was filled with students and teachers. It was great to see all different cultures boldly represented on the catwalk. Everyone had a great time.

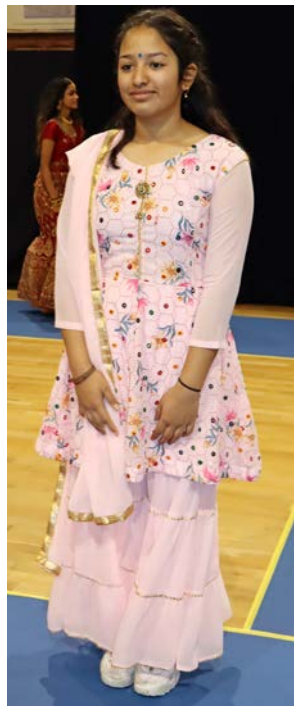
Daniela, Year 8

The catwalk was one of the main highlights of the Cultural Festival. It was an opportunity to see others' cultural clothing. Most importantly, not only did we hear about the clothes but also learnt about the history and meanings of some parts of different cultures and I feel that was one of the biggest things that week. What was so warming was that everyone supported one another during the catwalk and the cheers gave me a bit more confidence walking down the runway.

Overall, it was an amazing experience which helped me build my confidence and now I've realised it helped me work towards the 3Cs and I appreciate how it helped me. Everyone looked stunning in their clothes and to sum it up everyone had a chance to learn something new they never thought they'd learn and got a chance to see others' different clothes with different materials, fabrics, jewellery and most importantly who they are.

Melat, Year 7





African Drumming Workshop



The Power of a Drum

Despite playing instruments for most of my life, I'd never ventured into the world of percussion. So, when Old Palace decided to host an African drumming workshop, I decided to throw caution to the wind and sign up.

When the day came, I arrived to see the Banqueting Hall converted into a drumming room; a semicircle of chairs spread out with a mysterious brown drum in front of each one. Our instructor, Mawulikplimi Dossavi, eagerly explained that these instruments were djembes.

Djembes are skin-covered drums hailing from West Africa. Communities often gather together to play, spontaneously devising rhythms and melodies

But these rhythms aren't written down. Djembe players don't rely on sheet

music – trusting that their memories will keep the music alive. A nightmare for a musician like me who relies on their sheet music.

After the brief history lesson, our workshop began. Mawulikplimi Dossavi first taught us the basic tones that could be produced using a djembe – the bass tone, the open tone and the slap. Armed with these three techniques, us amateur drummers had to put our skills to the test – with a song.

Slowly, our teacher guided us through a song. He had us repeat segments until we'd mastered them, before moving on to the next section. I like to think of the process as a length being broken down into digestible paragraphs.

While we were a tad reserved at the start, Mawulikplimi Dossavi's energy was contagious. Our careful hands began to hit the drums harder: unsure slaps morphing into confident ones. Although each person was concentrating on their own instrument, there was a sense of unity that only grew stronger with every beat of the drum. It was the most fun I think I've had playing ANY instrument.

Later, spurred on by the thrill of playing in our 'orchestra', I googled the djembe, eager to discover more about it. And in the process, I discovered a quote that perfectly encapsulated the feeling of drumming with my fellow students.

(Paraphrased from Wikipedia)
According to the Bambara people in Mali, the name of the djembe comes from the saying "Anke djé, anke bé" which translates to "everyone gather

together in peace".

It'd be an understatement to say we live in a divided world – one where it's easy to feel isolated from others. But let this story be a reminder of the multitude of ways us humans can unite. Sometimes it can be as easy as picking up a drum.

Lila, Year 10

I absolutely LOVED the drumming but my hands were very red at the end! I learnt that there are four different sounds an African drum can make. I also found out that while you play the drum, you sometimes sing to accompany it, which we had a go at. I probably found co-ordination with everyone else the hardest part as everyone was playing so fast! The thing I loved the most about drumming was being able to finally play the music at the end!

Ada, Year 7



Classical Indian Dance Workshop



Bharatanatyam has been a great way for me to express myself in the form of dance. It is a classical dance that

requires a lot of rigorous training as well as good posture, strength, and rhythm. I have trained up to Grade 6

since the age of ten and have performed numerous times on stage, as well as in our school's recent cultural show.

This dance workshop brought back my memories of my dance lessons before the pandemic and has helped me revisit the basic steps. I enjoyed in particular the simple choreography as well as practicing in different speeds.

Overall, the workshop was a great way of experiencing a typical dance lesson once again!

Abhirra, Year 13

Chinese Character Writing Workshop



The Old Palace Cultural Festival was a wonderful experience, where each and every student had the opportunity to celebrate the rich and diverse culture that is distinctive to Old Palace. As part of Cultural Festival Week, my classmates and I who also come from an East Asian background, were given the opportunity to hold a Chinese Character Writing workshop.

It was a delightful chance to share how Chinese Characters were written and how it has evolved. There are approximately 47,035 Chinese characters in the Kangxi dictionary, which was the standard national dictionary that was developed during the 18th and 19th centuries, however, in the 20th century the precise quantity of Chinese characters is still a mystery. For thousands of years, until well into the 20th century, the standard order for Chinese texts was top to

bottom and right to left. The Chinese characters would also often be written with a calligraphy brush (Maobi), where the brush is held perpendicular to the paper. This was recreated during the workshop by using paintbrushes from the art studio and actual Chinese calligraphy paper called Xuan paper, which is commonly made from cherry tree bark, sandalwood or bamboo.

The beautiful characters of Chinese calligraphy were what had first motivated me to start learning Chinese writing however, gradually I began to enjoy it as it was very soothing to write, and it is relatively aesthetic; this was something that I had hope to share with everyone who attended the workshop.

Claire, Workshop Leader, Year 13

On the 16th of November, I took part in the Chinese Calligraphy workshop as part of Cultural Week. This workshop focused on teaching us about the structure of Chinese characters, and we practised writing our Zodiac signs on special calligraphy paper (my zodiac sign is a rooster). At first, it was quite challenging to get used to writing Chinese with a paintbrush, but after some repetition, it became much easier. Towards the end of the session, my confidence grew, and I challenged myself to write the traditional Chinese version of my Zodiac. It was a more difficult character to write due to its more intricate detail, but again after some repetition, it became a bit easier. Being half Chinese, this workshop helped me improve my calligraphy skills and was a great way to meet people from other year groups. I thought the session was rewarding as I could see how much I progressed in only a short period and overall, I very much enjoyed this workshop.

Sarah, Year 12

The Chinese workshop was really fun. I already knew how to write a few characters, but it was nice to be shown the directions and which lines to draw first. I really enjoyed talking to some of the leaders and it felt great to be able to speak Mandarin freely in school with people who could understand. After the workshop was over, I felt a deep sense of pride for going forward and reconnecting with my Chinese roots.

Sophie, Year 8

Musical Theatre Workshop



During the Cultural Festival, I attended a musical theatre workshop with 6th formers Madinah and Nissi. I really liked it, it was one of my favourite things.

I learnt that musical theatre requires you to sing and dance at the same time which is hard work but also really fun. I really liked the choice of music and I enjoyed singing it.

Some of the footwork was hard to do, especially at the same time as singing but by the end of the session, I was ready to be in a girl band and I felt more confident.

Frema, Year 7

Through this workshop I learnt a lot about musical theatre. I really enjoyed it as I found it very interesting and fun to learn the dance and lyrics as well as meet some new people! It was challenging as I was quite nervous to do the workshop at first but Madinah and Nissi were really nice and helped us while making the experience a lot of fun!

Evangeline, Year 8

French and English Literature Workshop

A calligram is a poem where the typeface is arranged to create a visual image, and I focussed my workshop on Guillaume Apollinaire's French calligrams. The poems are visually striking but simple, as I wanted to show how fascinating and accessible foreign literature can be.

I opened with a discussion of everyone's experiences of reading in other languages and the potential challenges. It was incredible to hear about a variety of works, from Punjabi poetry to Heine's German epic, 'Ein Wintermärchen' (A Winter's Tale). We then explored some of Apollinaire's calligrams such as 'Le Paysage' (The Countryside) and 'Le Chat' (The Cat), considering the effects of style and the playful vocabulary. Finally, I shared a more sombre and ambiguous war poem, 'La Grâce Exilée' (Exiled Grace), and enjoyed hearing different perspectives on the symbolism of the rainbow.

Overall, it was amazing to share my research with such an attentive and enthusiastic audience, especially as I have been interested in this topic for a while. Each person had a unique perspective on the poems, leading me to reflect on and re-examine my own interpretations.

Sophia, Workshop Leader, Year 13

The French and English Literature workshop that was led by Sophia in Year 13 was immensely enjoyable as we were taught about French poetry called 'Calligrams' which took the shape of miscellaneous objects and animals, including cats! It was interesting to learn how the presentation of a poem could alter its meaning and give it multiple interpretations.

We had interesting conversations about reading poetry in different languages from Punjabi to German, which led to discussions about the power of translation. For example, I talked about reading the German poem 'Germany. A Winter's Tale' and how I felt reading something in a different language. We finished the workshop learning about all the many French sayings which featured cats to express a variety of things such as

'écrire comme un chat' which means 'to write like a cat' or to write illegibly! Sophia led a very engaging and insightful session about poetry and the significance of reading literature in different languages.

Madinah, Year 13

On Thursday 17th of November, I took part in an English and French Literature Workshop led by Sophia in Year 13. I really enjoyed this session as it was interesting exploring the different interpretations of the poetry, and also learning the meanings of some French idioms. I realised that I hadn't read very much literature in other languages, and I felt inspired to begin doing so after the session. Overall, it was an engaging and insightful workshop. Thank you Sophia!

Chitleen, Year 12



Capoeira Workshop

I was very keen on learning Capoeira as I had watched a tv programme on it when I was younger explaining its history and significance to Brazilian culture. In the workshop we not only learnt Capoeira moves but also how music, dancing and gymnastics all intertwine to make this unique art form. I enjoyed how we slowly built up the simple movements to create fight scenes involving cartwheels to kicks to handstands.

Something I found challenging was the gymnastics element to Capoeira as I haven't practised in years but after a few handstands and using core strength, I soon got the hang of it and had fun incorporating this into the movements. At the end of the session, we had a mini motif combining the techniques we learnt and sang some songs that would have been sung during the fight to keep us in rhythm. Overall, it was extremely interesting to learn about a new cultural art form and I would recommend it to anyone who can try it out.

Rinii, Year 11

Capoeira is a form of martial arts that takes place in Brazil. It was created by the African people who were captured by the Portuguese and brought to Brazil. They created this form of dance to increase their chances of liberty and independence.

During the wonderful opportunity that we had on Thursday I've learnt that capoeira is a martial art that combines dance, music and acrobatics to create a bond between the dancers. In the session I really enjoyed learning the new techniques that the workshop

leader Adriano taught us. Learning about the origin of the traditional capoeira music was truly amazing.

We had the exciting experience to hear and see the berimbau, which is a instrument made from wood and a single metal wire. We even got to sing some traditional songs while he played the berimbau. I am very grateful for this session with Adriano and I hope to learn more about capoeira.

Leela, Year 9



Art Competition Winners

The reason as to why I chose the Ka'aba located in Mecca, Saudi Arabia is that it is a very heartening and uniting place for Muslims all around the world. As a Muslim, this painting hit quite close to home therefore, it displayed meaning and a sense of belonging to return to the home of all Muslims.

Although we may not be together, it's when we meet in Mecca, our eyes are met with the breathtakingly sight of Mecca; we are just people separated from our home after all. This was my inspiration for the painting.

Anita, Year 9



Cultural Festival Performance

When performing in five different dances in the show, I was able to appreciate and represent many cultures within our school community.

Whilst performing, I was able to radiate my energy through dance which I highly enjoyed. The highlight of that night would definitely be when I was able to perform my club piece, as the students within my Kuthu Club were able to connect to our Tamil roots and represent our identity through dance.

Being able to represent our identity through this unique art is important to Old Palace as we were able to widen and appreciate the diversity among us.

Aswini, Year 11

In the Cultural Festival Show, I performed in three different dances, they were, the Indian Dance group, the Kuthu Dance group and finally, my solo. These three dance pieces gave me the chance to express my talents and skills in dance. This also allowed me to improve my confidence in performing in front of a large audience. I felt that these performances gave me the opportunity to come out of my academic studies and enjoy. The highlight of these performances was that I was able to socialise and get to know other students across various year groups.

I found that both group dances were the most enjoyable to perform as there was so much energy coming from each and every person who

participated in the group dances. Being given the opportunity to dance with a group of new peers had allowed me to understand the importance of exploring everyone's individual talent and utilising that in a performance with full efficiency.

This encouraged me to dance with lots of energy and a massive smile on my face! If I was given the opportunity to take part in a show like this again, I will definitely do it again and learn some other cultures as well.

Suruthi, Year 9





Cultural Festival Performance *continued*



