



Welcome to the Autumn Term's Newsletter for Drama!!!

What a busy term it's been - we have once again been wowed by the performances of 2 amazing casts in the Shakespeare Schools Festival, we've seen fantastic work from our exam groups and had some really exciting opportunities out on offer including a recent trip to the theatre for our sixth form students.

In this edition of the newsletter you will find:

- write ups about the Shakespeare Schools Festival from some students who took part, alongside some photos of the incredible performances,
- a review of "Tartuffe" - a performance recently seen at Birmingham's Rep,
- a film review from our resident critic Rutalee in year 13
- some photos showing some incredible design work that some of our year 11 students completed as part of their course.

Enjoy!



The Comedy of Errors - Years 8 and 9 By Tula and Lola, 9W

Last month, thirteen students from year 8 and 9 performed Shakespeare's 'A Comedy Of Errors' at the Old Rep Theatre in Birmingham for Shakespeare's Schools' Festival, along with a Year 12 cast who performed 'Romeo & Juliet'. We were selected from two auditions at the end of last year and have been working hard learning lines and participating in lunchtime rehearsals this term, as well as practising on open evening.

On Wednesday 2nd November, we travelled to the theatre via coach and we were introduced to our mentors from the Shakespeare Schools Company for the day. The Comedy Of Errors cast were shown to our dressing room while the other cast did their technical rehearsal, and then we switched. We had lots of fun practising our lines in the dressing room before the show at 7pm and we were all apprehensive but excited to perform. Both shows went brilliantly and we were all proud of ourselves. The experience has been wonderful and we recommend it to any students who are thinking of trying out next time.



Romeo and Juliet - Year 12 By Palak and Aisha, year 12

It was on a Thursday, just before lunch, that Mrs Morgan-Long handed our year 12 drama class a sheet containing four monologues from Romeo and Juliet to rehearse with, practising when pauses or gestures should be used, which allowed us to better understand the characters. This helped us better understand characters such as the Prince and Juliet as they showed their emotions to the audience through angry or wistful tones. While we were aware that these were the pieces we would audition with, we were shocked to discover that the auditions would be the next day. It was stressful to say the least, luckily, however, we weren't required to memorise whichever monologue we chose to audition with. Eager to demonstrate our dramatic prowess, we spent the rest of the lesson picking our monologue and practising with them. The next day, we performed in front of the rest of the class one by one as Mrs Morgan-Long wrote notes on our auditions and we all appreciated the range of abilities on show within our new cast. The following Monday, Mrs Morgan-Long released the cast list.

When the casting was complete and we had been given our roles, the newly formed cast began rehearsing together. To begin with, the process was somewhat rocky, with many of us stumbling over our lines as we tried to get our mouths around the difficult Shakespearean language, and certain members of the cast struggling to contain their laughter as the more romantic scenes were played out. However, both the cast and our performance grew with each rehearsal and slowly we became confident in our roles and the lines we were learning and reciting, injecting passion and character into our scenes. We were visited by a professional actor who worked closely with us on improving and refining our performances, suggesting additions to the performance which we found valuable and immediately put into practice. Finding out what costumes we would wear was thrilling as the entire cast saw the performance come alive in front of our eyes with the imminent performance finally seeming real to us at last. As the day of the performance loomed ever closer, some stress began to set in, with most of our cast working hard to memorise their lines. Towards the end of our time rehearsing together we managed to get through the performance with minimal laughter and only a few minutes over the half hour slot we had been allotted that evening, leaving us feeling accomplished and finally ready to perform.

Finally, it was the day of the performance. Huddled in the drama workshop, we received the news that the other school, which would have been performing along with us on the 2nd of November, had pulled out the day before, meaning we would be getting home earlier than expected, allowing us a much needed good night's sleep! This also meant that it was a Camp-Hill-only night of Shakespeare, making it feel much more special and significant for everyone involved. After our short coach trip to the Old Rep Theatre in Birmingham (where we were performing), we had a technical rehearsal, full of stops and starts, quickly followed by a dress rehearsal. A technical rehearsal, for those unfamiliar with the term, is a rehearsal for the lighting and sound technicians to perfect their cues, as they had never seen our rendition of Romeo and Juliet before. It allowed them to familiarise themselves with our cues, ensuring mistakes in the performance were kept to a minimum. Some rather amusing mistakes occurred during both performances as Tybalt's bow tie was left on stage after his death and parts of the handles on our (wooden) swords kept flying off mid fight. While the Key Stage 3 cast had their technical rehearsal, we were allowed a break, filled with sweets

(courtesy of the teachers) and relaxation in the dressing rooms. Unless you were Romeo of course and managed to run headfirst into a shelf, causing a bump to form on his forehead, that proved rather distracting for the rest of the cast. Then, the 'Comedy of Errors' cast performed their dress rehearsal for us and, following their performance, we had our dinner. While some of us chose to relax in the dressing rooms again to save our energy for the performance, other, more wild members of our cast filmed TikToks and danced in one of the upstairs studios.

The performance itself was a whirlwind of adrenaline and excitement, with everyone making sure that they were in the right places at the right times and the energy palpably high. We flew through the performance in a haze of exhilaration, and, after we had finished, we were invited back on stage along with the key stage three drama group and were given feedback on our performances.

Participating in the Shakespeare Schools Festival was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, which we would definitely recommend to anyone with the opportunity to participate in the future. The festival allowed us to better connect with each other as a class and for us to form closer bonds, which we found to be an important part of being in a production together. Additionally, being treated like professional actors and receiving glowing reviews was certainly gratifying.

Finally, we, as a cast, would like to say a huge thank you to Mrs Morgan-Long, who worked tirelessly with both us and the Key Stage three performers to create a thrilling night that we won't quickly forget. She spent hours upon hours working with us, thinking through new ideas for scenes, lighting and costumes and it was because of her that the shows ran so smoothly and we were able to create lasting memories with our cast members.





Theatre Review 'Tartuffe' at the Birmingham Rep

On the 3rd November, the Year 12 and 13 A-level Drama class, along with the Year 12 A-level English class saw a RSC/Birmingham Rep production of 'Tartuffe' at the Birmingham Rep, directed by Iqbal Khan. The play was a modern reimagining of the classic by the renowned playwright Molière, which centres on a family who have been infiltrated by a scammer, Tartuffe, under the guise of being a holy man. This production, however, was set in modern day Birmingham in the Pakistani Muslim Pervaiz household, with the dad, Imran (Simon Nagra), being the one conned and the daring cleaner Darina (Olga Fedori) being the one to expose Tartuffe's schemes.



Although we were all very excited to see this show, having never seen the original onstage, I still did go in with feelings of worry about even understanding the play's language and its basic plot. Thankfully, not only had the language been modernised so it was easily understandable, it still kept the same sense of humour with plenty of joke-filled lines. The writers, Anil Gupta and Richard Pinto, also did a great job of making the fairly long running time of 2 hours and 30 minutes not feel repetitive at all. The production was filled with wacky one-liners, rap battles, lip-sync performances (the show opened with an energetic dance



number to a Black Sabbath song!) and plenty of audience participation in 'ooh' and 'oh no!' moments, with the fourth wall being broken all the time. There really was a danger of it feeling almost pantomime-like and childish, but the cast had a perfect understanding of their physicality and were able to act overdramatically without it seeming too over the top (which would've gotten boring quickly...) The set, lighting and costumes were also astounding to see and I feel the

excitement generated in some scenes would not have happened if the actor couldn't interact with such stunning examples. My favourite part of the set was an oversized vase of flowers which were placed backstage right in the living room, that Damee (Imran's son, played by Salman Akhtar) hid in to eavesdrop on a conversation between Amira (Imran's new wife, played by Naomi Campbell) and Tartuffe. Not only was it great to see a fully grown man hide in something like a flower vase, it did also give the audience an insight into Tartuffe's manipulation of the family, by a visual representation of one of the 'worldly possessions' they should seek to leave being overexaggerated to such an extent. Similarly, the family members were all dressed in block colours which seemingly indicated Tartuffe's opinion



of them. Damee was dressed in a green t-shirt and gilet (a colour associated with envy and jealousy, possibly because of Tartuffe being 'the son [Imran] never had'), Amira in a red salwar kameez and later a white salwar with embroidery (indicating towards Tartuffe's feelings of beauty and lust), Darina in a sleeveless top and $\frac{3}{4}$ leggings (as he feels she isn't a 'modest woman') and Mariam (Imran's daughter, played by Anshula Bain) being dressed in a pink tracksuit (showing her femininity and innocence). This was a very thoughtful idea which I didn't even notice until the interval (most of us were too busy laughing!), so the second half was interesting to watch with this knowledge.

What I was surprised about was the amount of poignant moments this production also had. Almost every character had at least one monologue explaining their motives, so even if we knew they were acting awfully, all we could do was feel pity and despair at witnessing these ill-thought actions drive a loving family apart. The production also added realism into this play by discussing problems that would affect a family like this one, with Darina delivering an eye-opening



monologue about the misogynistic need men have to 'defend women's honours' as if they don't do more harm than good and are usually unasked for opinions which end up painting women as powerless objects. Her staying still, alone on centre stage, with lighting focused on her was a very effective staging choice as we could only focus on her as she delivered these words with a barely concealed anger, which many women in the audience could relate to. Amira also had moments in the second half where she finally exploded in anger at how the men in the household had been acting so awfully, which I felt was a realistic reaction and also illustrated the problems South Asian women face and the ingrained sexism in the household.

Overall, I really enjoyed this production. The actors had clearly understood their characters very well and, combined with stellar sound, lighting, costume and set, performed a great balance of comedy and solemnity when needed, taking the audience on a deep dive into a seemingly normal Pakistani family.

Film Review by Rutalee, Year 13



For this edition, I'll be reviewing Wes Anderson's "The Grand Budapest Hotel" (rated 15). The film centres around 'Monsieur Gustave', the hotel concierge, and 'Zero', the lobby boy, and their adventures with false murder accusations, art heists and prison escapes. Anderson's comedic yet aesthetic storytelling style is definitely the highlight of the movie for me - while it isn't necessarily a Christmas watch (although it's got a Bond-inspired ski chase on snowy mountains), it's definitely worth putting on the watch list!

On a base level, I really enjoyed the movie for its plot. It had a lot going on, but I liked that even with a long plot full of small twists, I could stay engaged and interested in the movie. I think this was mainly because of the fast-paced dialogue - most of it was made up of short, snappy exchanges so it didn't get stale at any point. It was a successful blend of the crime, comedy and action genres and was generally a very amusing watch because of the absurdity of many of the scenes. Even parts which would typically be quite stressful to watch, like a gunfight, were made comical through their almost nonsensical nature. Overall, it made the movie light and relaxing, which is perfect for an end of term watch.

Spotting the number of cameos or smaller roles played by very famous names, like Jeff Goldblum, Owen Wilson, Jude Law made the experience even more fun. Even though a lot of these characters were very small (some being just one or two liners), it meant that the level of acting was consistent across the film. The style of acting was largely realistic, but it still had some animated elements to fit with Anderson's non-naturalistic style. I think that all the actors balanced this effectively, and could create realistic characters that were somehow also very obviously fictional. Specifically, Tony Revolori (also in Marvel's 'Spiderman' trilogy) was great in his role as the lobby boy. His character was one of the few that I could empathise with, as he added a level of relatability and likeability to it. This brings me to perhaps the only aspect of the movie that could be seen as a negative: because of the sheer amount of characters, it was difficult to connect with the majority of them, as their roles were small and were there to help move the plot forward. This movie isn't the best if you want to watch something for its characterisation, but I don't think that's really the point of it. Instead, I think the focus of the film is on the storytelling methods - from set, directing and the overall visuals.

Being a Wes Anderson film, the first thing I noticed was how the movie was visibly so aesthetic. The camera framing and movements were the most prominent. Sticking to his notorious directing style, the majority of shots were symmetrical, with the subjects directly in the centre of the frame. The backgrounds of the shots (and large pieces of sets/buildings like

the hotel itself) were created to look 2D. All of this together added to the anti-illusionary aspect of the film. The camera itself had very swift pans, or incredibly still shots, which also made me aware that I was being told a story - this was fitting as the outermost 'layer' of the story is a woman reading the book, "The Grand Budapest Hotel". The colour palette for individual scenes was heightened - the actors' costumes matched the set (like the colour of a building) which then matched the lighting. The meticulous construction of the design elements further removed the sense of 'realism' most movies have. Because of this, I think that the movie is so much more enjoyable if you go into it looking at the stylistic elements and how the 'movie feels like a movie' (if you know, you know), rather than expecting a typical naturalistic film. All in all, I wouldn't give the movie a miss - it definitely deserves the 8.1 it got on imdb! Also, I've linked a couple video essays about Wes Anderson and 'The Grand Budapest Hotel' if you want to get a more detailed commentary on his work.



[▶ Why Do Wes Anderson Movies Look Like That?](#)

[▶ How To Steal Like Wes Anderson - The Grand Budapest Hotel](#)

Have a great holiday!

By Rutalee, 13S

GCSE Drama - Design work

Did you know that in GCSE drama you can choose to be assessed as a designer or technician if you don't want to be a performer? Picking this route demands a lot of creativity, research and independent thinking and work - as well as patience with a sewing machine or paint brush but quite a few of our students have put their minds and hands to this during the Autumn term. Below are some images from just some of the selection of design work that we've seen, including set and costume designs based on Icarus, Alice in Wonderland and the history of the Suffragettes - this is just a small sample of images showing some of the work we've seen from our design candidates and we're sure you'll agree there's a massive range of talent here - we look forward to seeing designs from Camp Hill students on professional stages in the future!





