



DRAMA NEWSLETTER 4

Welcome everyone to the fourth edition of the KECHG Drama Newsletter. Once again we have a packed issue for you and on the next few pages you will find all kinds of interesting articles including:

- A Film Review from our resident reviewer, Rutalee, about the film *Little Miss Sunshine*, (age rating, 15)
- Details about the recent year 12 performance assessments,
- An update on the preparations for the department's Summer event - *An Evening of Shakespeare*,

As ever the Spring term in the Drama department was an exceptionally busy one with the practical examinations and assessment for our Year 11, 12 and 13 students. We have been so incredibly proud of all the work we've seen performed this year and we are really sorry to say goodbye to the Years 11 and 13 drama classes who were all really special - both cohorts have left us with really fond memories, especially from their most recent performances where they've transported us incredibly effectively in to a whole host of different stories including *A Monster Calls*, *Wendy and Peter Pan*, *Girls Like That*, *pool (no water)* and so many more!

Goodbye years 11 and 13 - Break A Leg with those exams of yours!



coming soon..



After having a break from our participation in the Shakespeare Schools Festival for a couple of years the Drama department will once again be participating in this National Festival which celebrates the work of Britain's "playwright for all time" - William Shakespeare!

The Festival gives the school the chance to rehearse a performance of a 30 minute Shakespeare play which is performed in a professional venue on the same evening as other schools. The performance will be in the Autumn Term of 2022-23 and we will shortly be holding auditions for our **current year 7 and 8** students to participate - watch this space!



Film Review - "Little Miss Sunshine" by Rutalee Buch

A mildly dysfunctional family goes on a road-trip to get the young daughter, Olive (played by Abigail Breslin), to a beauty pageant: "Little Miss Sunshine". This edition's film is a slightly absurd but overall wholesome watch, perfect for a Friday night. It is a story that depicts a journey more than anything - the characters are not just driving an almost unusable minivan from New Mexico to California, but are also going on a metaphorical journey to coming to peace with themselves and their troubles. It is available to watch on Amazon Prime (**it is rated a 15, though**), and I would definitely recommend it!

What stood out to me in particular was the role of Dwayne - the older brother - played by Paul Dano. More recently, he has appeared in "The Batman" where he played the "Riddler". In this, he gave an awe-inspiring performance and amplified the unsettling aspect of the movie. In "Little Miss Sunshine", Dano successfully plays a very different character, showcasing his range of talent. Each member of the family has their own backstory and quirks, but I found Dwayne's the most interesting: he has taken a vow of silence that has lasted 9 months so far, and intends to keep it until he becomes a pilot in the Air Force. Apart from it showing determination, this pledge meant that Dano had to build a lovable character without saying a thing. Voice and dialogue is naturally integral to most performances, and so to act in a movie without it (and without being a mime) was something that I thought was very impressive. Not only did the writer, Michael Arndt, added effective subtleties that built Dwayne's character, Dano did a great job of it in terms of showing Dwayne's internal monologue constantly.

Steve Carell's role in the movie is Uncle Frank, who has just been released from hospital after an attempt on his life. He had fallen in love with a student of his, and was consequently fired from his job as a professor. I felt that he played his character very well - his reactions to the absurd events of the story added to the humour of the movie as well as currying sympathy for the character in later scenes. While his role certainly enriched the movie in terms of giving the audience a pair of eyes to view the family through (as Frank is also joining the family almost afresh), I don't personally think he played a large part in the plot of the film. Regardless, I think in this case it wasn't something that was a letdown in any way - even though Carell had a smaller-than-expected role, the balance of characters in the movie was well done.

There were many messages in the movie - the main one being about body image and calling out the absurdity of children's beauty pageants. As I mentioned before, the main segment of the film is the road trip filled with all sorts of obstacles. The destination is the beauty pageant - when it starts, there are multiple scenes showing young girls (around 6-8 years old) dressed in typical pageantry wear and wearing a lot of makeup. This scene in particular was very disconcerting - it was odd seeing kids participating in beauty pageants and acting as if they were adults. This was an effective way in showing how the media and society's beauty standards are affecting people at a younger age than ever. A prominent scene was where the dad told Olive (the daughter) to not eat any ice cream as she had to lose weight. This was effective as it really put across the message about upsetting to see as she had to refrain herself from normal things like dessert in order to fit herself into the ideal body-type. I thought that the film highlighted this issue well, as it didn't feel "preachy" but still subtly showed the effect that irrational expectations can have on children.

Year 12 AS Performances by Nithila Balachander

During the first term of Sixth Form, the Year 12 Drama students were tasked with analysing the works of theatre practitioners Bertolt Brecht and Steven Berkoff. We had then studied the works and adaptations of these practitioners, *The Trial*, and *Metamorphosis*, which were adapted from novels of the same name, originally written by Franz Kafka, as well as the Greek tragedy of Agamemnon. We began by reading all of these scripts and breaking off into smaller groups and deciding on which play we would enjoy performing the most, with two groups choosing to do *The Trial* and one group performing Agamemnon. We had recently performed these plays and handed in our portfolios and research reports surrounding them.

The Trial and Agamemnon were both adapted by Steven Berkoff. Berkoff is a British author, playwright, actor, theatre director, and practitioner. Berkoff was born on the 3rd of August, 1937, in the East End of London. He is most famously known, as an actor, for his portrayal of villainous characters, particularly General Orlov in the James Bond film, *Octopussy*. He is also widely known for coining his own style of theatre, aptly named 'Berkovian theatre' which encompasses techniques from Greek theatre, Japanese Noh and Kabuki, Shakespeare, and East End music hall, as well as drawing inspirations from his own Jewish heritage. He has a very experimental style and uses physical techniques such as mime, improvisation, exaggerated vocal work, minimalism, and exaggerated movement. The main theatrical influences on his style of work included Brecht, Artaud, and Lecoq. In total theatre, every aspect contributing to the play must have a purpose, i.e, the lighting, the sound, the cues of lines, the dialogue, the props chosen, etc. This style of theatre also aims to stimulate an emotional response from the audience, which includes shocking them, scaring them, amazing them, surprising them, or even amusing them.

The Trial is a novel written by Kafka in 1914, published in 1915, which follows the story of the main character, Josef K (known as 'K'), who is put on trial for a crime that is revealed neither to him or the reader/audience. We are also unaware of the authority that is prosecuting K, adding to the complete mystery of K's crime. On his thirtieth birthday, K is unexpectedly arrested by two agents, who, advertently, fail to disclose their identity and the nature of their visit to K, except for the fact that they have come to imprison him for a crime that he has 'committed'. The readers follow K on his journey, and learn about the ins and outs of the judicial system, until, K finally meets his demise as, he quotes, 'Like a dog!'

Metamorphosis is a novella written by Kafka, that was published by him in 1915. It follows the story of Gregor Samsa, a clothes merchant, and his sudden transformation into a beetle. He is the sole breadwinner of the family, so when he does not turn up for work one day, his family checks on him, only to find that he has turned into a giant bug! They are disgusted and they begin to isolate themselves from him. His sister is the only person who caters to his needs now by bringing him food, which she finds out that he only enjoys when rotten. They begin to remove all of the furniture in Gregor's room, to make space for him to crawl around, however, this terrifies Gregor as he is scared that he will no longer remember his past. Due to the circumstances surrounding him, Gregor suffers from injuries for the rest of his life and he also eats a little food. He is slowly neglected by his family, who no longer converse with him and hide him away when three new tenants occupy their spare room. One day, Gregor hears his family talking of the misfortune he has caused them and how getting rid of 'it' would help them get further in life. Understanding that he is 'it', Gregor starves himself and dies the next day. The family happily disposes of his corpse and carry on with their lives, starting with finding a suitable husband for Grete.

Agamemnon is a Greek tragedy that follows the story of Helen of Troy, who was stolen by the Trojan Prince Paris, from her husband the Greek King Menelaus. Agamemnon sacrifices his own daughter for the smooth sail of the fleet of ships that day. He then sets sail to bring back Helen, also returning with Cassandra, a Trojan princess whom he has enslaved. Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife, had spread purple robes across the halls of the palace in anticipation of their return. She had urged Cassandra to come inside, but she had refused and Cassandra had started muttering curses under her breath, which stated that Agamemnon and Cassandra would be dead and that an avenger would come to seek revenge. She then enters the house, when we hear cries of pain from Agamemnon. Clytemnestra declares that she has killed her husband as revenge for him killing their daughter, and she is joined by her lover, Aegisthus, who is Agamemnon's cousin! They take over as the Chorus informs us that Clytemnestra's son Orestes will return to avenge his father.

Photos of the amazing year 12 performances







Evening of Shakespeare Rehearsal Update by Sanaa Pasha

As the rehearsals for “Evening of Shakespeare” get underway, we reflect on the process so far. For people passing by the drama workshop, noticing the various play rehearsals taking place over the last few weeks, it may seem like the summer drama production, “An Evening of Shakespeare” has just got underway, but it has been a long time in the making for Mrs Morgan-Long, Drama Society and the actors. Students returning to school after the Spring half-term holidays were welcomed back with audition posters lining corridor walls. For Key Stage 3, the play was “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”, for KS4 (Year 10 only) it was “Macbeth”, and for Key Stage 5 “Othello”. It wasn’t long before the audition sign up sheets were filled up, but this didn’t stop the eager dramatists. We were overwhelmed with how oversubscribed audition slots were, with Key Stage 3 audition sign ups being over seven-fold the slots that we had originally put out!

And so, we adapted accordingly, deciding to hold workshopping sessions for the Key Stage 3 students, before shortlisted individuals moved on to an audition. We had loads of fun helping the KS3 students act out scenes, playing around with characters and different dramatic techniques during the workshopping process. Then we were onto the auditions which saw both KS3 and KS4 students perform a monologue (from a choice of two) to perform to Mrs Morgan-Long, a Drama Society sixth form panel and their peers. While this may have been nerve wracking for the students, this was an extremely enjoyable part of the process for us in Drama Society as we had the privilege of watching lots of brilliant performances and seeing the dramatic potential that we knew would go on to thrive during rehearsals. We could see the hard work the students had put into delivering their best performance with stories about reading Shakespeare every night before bed and daily rehearsals trickling back to us. However, this made it really difficult when it came to casting, as there were so many truly phenomenal performances, and only a certain number of roles in each play. While we came up with our casting lists, many Drama Society members were also busy preparing for their own auditions for Othello which they had to perform to Mrs Morgan-Long and their peers, with Mrs Morgan Long casting all of the Othello roles.

Once the casting lists had been put out, we made a start on rehearsals and were really pleased to see how ready everyone was to give it their all. From the cast of each play, to the directors, and set designers, we could immediately tell we had a really great team, dedicated to making this a truly phenomenal production. One thing which was really lovely was having students from Year 7 all the way through to Year 12 helping each other, learning from each other, and everyone working together to cultivate a culture where we are all constantly striving to learn, improve and better ourselves. It’s not often that Sixth formers get the chance to really interact and form relationships with lower school students, so it was really nice to work together, and have fun together.

Currently, we are in the midst of rehearsals. From a directorial perspective, this is a busy time with us directors having meetings to run through our ideas and block scenes before the rehearsals. We have some really interesting ideas and fresh twists on Shakespeare’s classic plays with the famous tragedy of “Othello” being set in the 1940s and a playful and enchanting “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” contrasted with the gothic and macabre “Macbeth”. Actors are busy too, learning their lines, and sometimes having multiple rehearsals a week. Both actors and directors have already learned a lot from general skills such as teamwork and resilience to exploring different dramatic methods such as actioning, Stanislavski’s “Circle of attention” and developing characterization through techniques like hot seating. So far it has been a great experience, where we have learned a lot and enjoyed ourselves during rehearsals, while working really hard in the lead up to the long anticipated “Evening of Shakespeare” production, which will take place later in the summer.