



Dear Parents,

Apologies for the late arrival of this newsletter. As you can see, it has been an amazing week at St Edmund's...

TAGS

Firstly, I am pleased to confirm that all of our Teacher Assessed Grades were submitted to the Examination Boards ahead of the 18th June deadline. My sincere thanks to all teachers, Heads of Department and pupils in Upper Fifth and Upper Sixth for their patience and hard work. I would particularly like to mention Dr Sotillo and Mrs Bull who organised the checking and submission process superbly.

Drama News

A Midsummer Night's Dream...

Mr Whitman provides his review of a brilliant night in the Outdoor Theatre:

"During recent weeks, a chink was found in the wall of Covid-related restrictions that have curtailed St Edmund's life – all our lives – over the past months. Those who took a peep through it spied tantalizing glimpses of a world in which pandemics didn't feature and our pupils could enjoy what it is we offer – a glimpse of what we used to consider normal.

Normal, that is, by the standards of the Drama department. For a few intense weeks industrious preparation for the Upper Sixth A-level Drama practical had been taking place. The performance was to be performed outside before a small gathering, compensation of sorts (we couldn't help but think) for the performances St Edmund's pupils, parents, friends and staff had been denied throughout the year.

The evening began on the terrace in bright sunlight before George Burton, the night's designated minstrel, arrived to strum parents and staff around the outer wall of the school, past the tennis courts and into a hidden, little known part of the St Edmund's grounds. There, around the shimmering surface of a lake from which tentacles reached, torches flamed, fires flickered and fairies whooped and danced in a dappled glade. It was a magical sight and the perfect setting for Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



The performance opened with a flourish, a jazz number throughout which a host of Junior School dancers flapped and jived with contagious excitement, some of whom – Poppy Hendy



(F7), Jodi Hughes (F8), Juliette Matharu (F6) and Violet Vant (F7) – would appear again in Titania's entourage. Such delight was not to last. Quarrelling fairy royalty – Oberon and Titania – opened the dialogue and the fun-loving fairies were told in no uncertain terms to 'skip hence'. The exchange between Oberon (a commanding Matthew Bawtree) and Titania (a proud and equally commanding Amy Lawrie) shifted the tone dramatically and revealed immediately the skill of the actors in their syntactical dexterity and deft delivery of Shakespeare's early modern English. It wasn't only the fluency and control of the lines that was impressive: their cargo of clauses and diction was carried by an emotional intensity that made the dialogue the burnished mirror of thought and feeling.

Relief from Oberon's promised torment of his queen came with the bumbling arrival of the Mechanicals, led by the beleaguered Peter Quince (Lucy Henderson in managerial mode), whose many tasks included trying to supervise – or perhaps just cope with – the irrepressible dramatic aspirations and hyperbolic loftiness of Bottom (the hilarious Elizabeth Bourne). In addition to his own part of Pyramus, Bottom proved keen to steal those of Flute (a galumphing Maddie Marsh), allocated Thisbe in the play-within-the-play, through an impromptu audition in 'a monstrous little voice', and Snug (a deadpan Chloe Spry), playing Lion. Jess Phillips, playing Snout playing Wall, and Olivia Ness, playing Starveling playing Moonshine, would have their sublimely comic moments at the end, the former acting a chatty and obstructive wall keeping apart the lovers and the latter an exasperated explainer of dramatic detail.



The dynamism brought to the glade by the Mechanicals, motored by the zealous and strutting Bottom – his fretting would come later when he woke alone and ass-headed – was sustained by the entrance of Demetrius and Helena. The ingenuity of the costumes, designed by Tam Walker-Reid, was on display here. The magical transformations of Matthew and Amy into the imposing fairies, their metamorphoses completed by make-up designed by Ellie Walker-Reid, was also at work, and very helpfully, in the costume designs of Helena and Demetrius and Hermia and Lysander. Matching bathing costumes provided a handy visual clue as to who was destined to be with whom and allowed the audience to keep pace with the accelerated tempo and the young Athenians' tangled love lines. Helena might have been besotted with Demetrius but Demetrius was besotted with Hermia, who herself was besotted with Lysander who, once the mischievous and slightly yobbish Puck (a rarely still James Press) had mistaken Lysander for Demetrius, became besotted with Helena. As did Demetrius, whose feelings had also been changed by the amorous powers of the magical flower Puck had girdled the earth to find. The ensuing emotional tumult provided opportunities for the actors to demonstrate their range and versatility. The superb Beatrice Paisley-Day (Helena), suspecting foul play from Lysander (Carl Le Hegarat) and Demetrius (Rob Gain), moved from infatuation to fury, while the spurned Hermia (Ruby Coupe), struggled to fathom Lysander's sudden spite.

It was all performed brilliantly, not least because the emotional leaps and bounds, which complemented the very literal leaps and bounds of the cast as they zipped around the glade and leapt across water onto islands (and scaled trees in the case of Matthew and James), never menaced the cohesion of Mark Sell's directorial vision. Hermia's crumbling before Lysander's betrayal – raised brilliantly from the page by Ruby – seemed only to stress the comedy by adding a passion that stretched the genre tauter, and it was pretty taut already, having been adroitly streamlined by Assistant Director Howard Sykes. Carl skipped rapidly from shooing off Ruby to popping his biceps in Bea's direction before tussling with Rob, who moved easily from vehemently shunning Helena to pursuing her, in order to knock his rival out of the running by simply knocking him out.

The success – and it was a wonderful, joyous success – was as much to do with the pace the actors brought to the script as with their dazzling performances. The action moved smoothly from Titania and Oberon's tiff to their eventual reconciliation and from the emotional eddies of the lovers to their arrival in calmer waters, even if they didn't know what magic whisked them there. There was a good deal of knockabout fun too. The physicality of Puck and Oberon, Bottom's braying transformation, Helena's kick to Lysander's shin and Hermia's knee to Demetrius' ... well, you can guess if you weren't there to squirm ... brought to the verse a visual counterpoint that made for a perfect whole. The comedic conclusion knotted the threads together beautifully. The lovers found their beloveds, Oberon's pity released Titania from his spell and the hapless Mechanicals, happily reunited with Bottom, finally performed for all, chasing tragedy from their drama with their ham-acting, rebuking of the spectating lovers and downright refusal to die on stage quietly. Or credibly. Or with any dignity.

The evening, coming as it did after months of restrictions and distancing, was charged with significance. It was a time to meet with others, enjoy the grounds gilded in sunlight and celebrate the talents of our students, unbound and onstage at last and an absolute joy to behold, unobstructed by any wall."

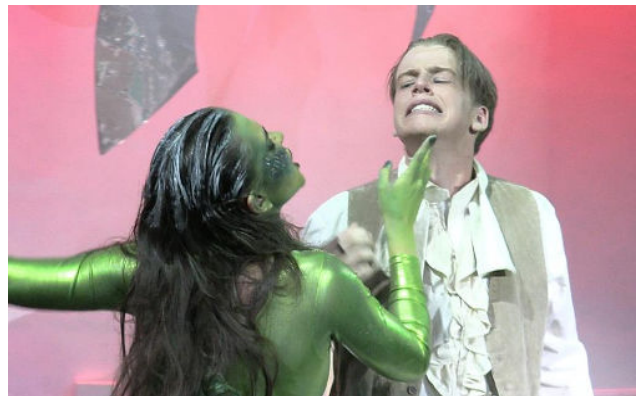
A full set of photographs of the production will follow soon (they are worth waiting for!)

A-Level Drama Practicals

Our Lower Sixth actors delivered two stunning performances of their A-level devised practicals.

Performing in the style of Antonin Artaud, famed for his visceral “theatre of cruelty” approach, the groups gave us shocking and brilliant adaptations of *The Madness of King George III* by Alan Bennett and *Bazaar and Rummage* by Sue Townsend.

Freya Reilly, Will Vant and Oliver Futchter gave *George III* the full Artaud treatment with a superbly acted exploration of madness, strikingly staged amid huge fragments of broken mirrors. Freya played Madness itself – given physical form as a crawling, leaping, twisted parasitic monster that tormented the two men.



In the dark and oppressive setting of the Undercroft, mad puppet master Qian Ye, brought to life three agoraphobic puppets (Billy Boarman-Powell, Olivia Harris-Harding and Esme O'Connor) who explained the horrific background to their afflictions and, eventually, wrought a terrible revenge.



These were ground-breaking performances for this group of actors as they were pushed beyond their previous limits by expert direction from Howard Sykes and Mark Sell. Once again, huge credit must also go to Cath Knowles-Lenoir for her design vision, Tam Walker-Reid for her stunning costumes and stage management, Lucy Walker-Reid for some extraordinary make up work and Jayden Lewis for his excellent technical work.

Organ Recital

Four St Edmund's pupils played in a splendid lunchtime concert on Thursday. Since the new pipe organ was installed in the Chapel at the end of last year, the building has not had its daily flow of visitors and it was an absolute joy for the small audience to hear the space resonate with the sound of all the different pipes. Mr Payne and Mr Bawtree opened and closed the event with their respective performances of Sonata in A major (1st movement) by Mendelssohn and Toccata by Mushel.

During the concert, our four pupil performers played:

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| Mark Lower (M5) | Prelude & Fugue in D minor (BWV 554) | J S Bach |
| Leo Routh (L5) | Prelude in F major (BWV 556) | J S Bach |
| Leo Watters (L5) | Prelude in G minor (BWV 558) | J S Bach |
| Rhyd Lowe (JS8) | Prelude & Fugue in B flat major (BWV 560) | J S Bach |

Each performance was introduced by Mr Bawtree who also spoke about the different stop combinations needed for each piece and the repertoire chosen for the concert enabled us to hear the various types of pipes the organ has. Thanks go to all pupils for their fabulous contributions and especially to Mr Bawtree for preparing the boys and playing in the concert.

Watson Social

Watson Lower Fifth pupils were all taken to Flip Out in Ashford on Thursday after school. It was great fun and so nice to be able to have some social time out of school. Pizzas were yum and there were smiles a plenty. Special thanks to Mrs Lea, Miss Dornan and Mr Anderson for their support.





Sports News

Mr Millard reports on the action

"Last Saturday was the Kent School's Athletics Championships at the Julie Rose Stadium in Ashford. Matthew Bawtree (U6) ran a fantastic 1500m PB in the Senior boys' 1500m, coming away with a bronze medal. Jildou Chappell (L6) embarking on 400m this season, ran a strong race, finishing in a superb 4th place. Henry Goodwin (L5), running over the 300m and using blocks for the first time, finished a brilliant 4th place in the Junior Boys' event. Congratulations to all on their excellent performances.



"We experienced mixed fortunes in our fixtures this week but some close fought encounters with our local opposition. There was a well-deserved victory over The King's School in Junior tennis. Some superb play was on show, with Iris Nazir and Charlie Gotke on top form. Michael Nkereuwem and Iona Lester made a fantastic partnership too, with powerful accuracy and good communicating in a superb 4th place. Henry Goodwin (L5), running over the 300m and using blocks for the first time, finished a brilliant 4th place in the Junior Boys' event. Congratulations to all on their excellent performances.

Congratulations to the boy's U15 cricket team for an outstanding game of cricket versus St Lawrence College this week. Our guests reached 96, before the first wicket fell, to a great catch from Stanley Allom, off Samson Buck's bowling. Charlie Alexander then removed the other opener, the batsman mistiming a shot to leg to boost St. Edmund's confidence. Despite St. Lawrence's third batsman also getting close to a half century, some excellent bowling from Henry Goodwin, four overs for 12 runs, kept the score to total which, although high, was not out of sight.

In reply, openers Theo Bawtree and Henry Goodwin began the chase in earnest. They put on 163, for the first wicket, Henry's combination of timing and, hard running earned him a superb 90 runs.

After our slow start we were up against it, and needed sixteen off the last over. Theo attacked but the St. Lawrence bowler skilfully held his nerve, and length, to, agonisingly, leave us one run short.

Disappointingly, the weather was not kind for Sports Day but, do not despair! We have three dates to complete the events before the end of term!"



Careers

St Edmund's students are invited to follow @stedsmfl and @stedscareers on Facebook and Instagram for various ideas, links, opportunities and inspo! Careers updates and links are posted on these handles now, rather than via email, so it is the best way to keep up with the current opportunities.

Any L6 pupils wanting to review their Careers profile or discuss ideas are welcome to contact Mrs Judi-Sprinks to set up a meeting. She will also be contacting all M5 pupils very soon about their forthcoming profiling sessions.

The L6 enjoyed a Careers session with a very dynamic visitor last Friday afternoon.

Sleeping **GIANT** media



Luke Quilter, co-founder and CEO of Sleeping Giant Media joined us via Zoom to test the students' awareness of internet search content, to share his story and to give them a first-hand experience of setting up a business through a presentation, short group tasks and a Kahoot quiz to finish (congratulations to Oliver Millard for winning the Amazon voucher). In the 14yrs that SGM has been in business, it has won various business awards, as has Luke for his entrepreneurship.

Have a great week!

Kind regards,

Edward O'Connor

Head

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