



Drama & Music 2020

Newsletter

A Celebration of achievements by the Drama & Music Students at WQE College!

WELCOME!

We hope this newsletter will give you an insight into the lives of Drama and Music students at WQE college, particularly with regard to our extra-curricular activities.

Drama at WQE

-Sharron Brannen



Drama may seem a small department within the huge College that is the newly merged WQE College with two sites at Regent and University Road and many, many more students than in previous years. Drama at WQE, however, remains one of the larger Centres for our chosen Exam Board EDUQAS- we maintain a cohort of approximately 80 students in both Year groups and the standard of work is always really high; a particular congratulations to the Class of 2019 who left with 60.6% A*- B grades and 100% pass rate, you were an amazing year group and we all miss you. This year the Class of 2020 were unable to complete their exams and caught up in the exam grade muddle- but I am delighted to report that this fabulous year group have weathered the pandemic 'storm' and done extremely well with 61% A*-B and 100% pass, and now that your commitment and hard work has paid off, you will be able to



progress to your hoped-for courses at University and work placements. I am so pleased that Year 2 this year had actually finished the performances in early March where the visiting Examiner was extremely impressed by your fabulous range of naturalistic contemporary text pieces; and creative and thoughtful Frantic Assembly style devised performances, they were a proud two days of performance exams for me watching you all. Well done!

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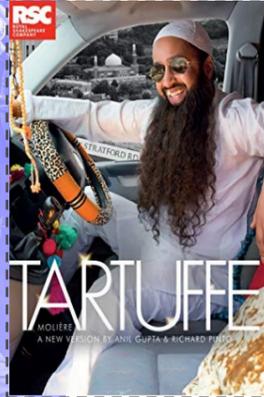
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As part of our course requires that students must see live theatre performance, we have visited some fantastic venues and watched some extraordinary plays over these last two years. Amongst these were 'Mother Courage and her Children' for Leeds Playhouse, were we were on our feet walking through the cellars of the rehearsal rooms in an innovative promenade performance.



We went to the RSC to watch a new and exciting version of 'Tartuffe' by Moliere reimagined as a rich family from Birmingham- it was so up to date and hilarious that the students were astonished that such an old fashioned play could be made to be so relevant today, and as the family on stage were Asian, many of our students were rolling around in their seats as they recognised the language, traits and behaviours that were very particular to this community.



At Warwick Arts Centre we were lucky to catch a performance by our Year 1 chosen practitioners Kneehigh Theatre Company 'FUP' a seemingly simple tale about a boy and his friend the duck. In true Kneehigh style, however, a lot of madness and fun ensues with them using live music on stage, interaction with a complex and interesting set and lots of puppet work and multi rolling- the Company bring the story to life in an amazing way.



In the summer we were lucky enough to go on our annual trip to see a West End Musical – this year we went to see 'Waitress', it was a lovely day out, the sun shone and we saw the City's sites, we enjoyed Trafalgar Square and Covent Garden before the show...but more later with a full review of the performance by one of our Year 2 Leavers from Tas Haresign on page 10.



Lately we have seen a very different performance from the Gecko Theatre at Nottingham Playhouse called 'Institute'. The piece dealt with a number of current issues and was delivered in an extremely physical and stylised manner that we all really loved . After the show the Company gave a very generous and interesting Q & A session, but there is a full review later in the newsletter from Year 2 Leaver Eva Salotti on page 7.



Music at WQE

By Beth Williams



in the informal, bustling space of J Building Café!

Much like the Drama department, Music is a tiny drop in the ocean that is the newly merged WQE College! But we are also one of the larger centres for Edexcel A Level Music, and indeed the only place in the city of Leicester to offer it. Since our 2018 newsletter, we have well and truly settled into the new specification, with last year's cohort gaining 75% A*-B grades. It is a rigorous and demanding course which requires students to learn and develop an enormous range of skills which stand them in good stead for further academic study, and the world of work. Students go on to a diversity of university of courses and careers: one former student has just qualified as a doctor, another is running choirs in prisons and a homeless charity! One student, Patrick Kendall-Smith, who left WQE in 2013 and is now working as a composer for TV and Film. You can read about his journey on page 30.

Although our 'core' is small, we are a lively community, with well over 70 students this year involved in A Level and extra-curricular music making: through Choir and Bands Enrichments, a Jazz Band, as well as students using our spaces for their own private practice and group rehearsals. We continue to come together at the end of each term for a concert showcasing a huge range of musical styles, and we have recently introduced a half-termly 'open mic' style sessions, where students can sign up to perform, solo or in groups,

Keep reading for more accounts and photos. Music students were also a key part of the college musical, the Christmas Extravaganza (December 2018), as they formed the live band which accompanied the on-stage action. Apart from a professional pianist, all of the students in the band were current or ex-WQE students. They had a huge amount of music to learn, as well as long and challenging rehearsals, but they were incredibly committed and their hard work paid off: many of the audience commented on how slick and professional they sounded!

Although our activity this term has been curtailed by such extraordinary circumstances, we have managed to get out for a good number trips and workshops over the past couple of years, including our regular visit to the New Walk Museum each September for the Leicester International Music Festival lunchtime concert, a trip to see a former student in Benjamin Britten's A Midsummer Night's Dream at Nevill Holt Opera, a trip to the West End to see Waitress, the biennial New York Trip with the Drama department, a lecture on Sound, Noise and Music from a university lecturer, and a composition project with professional composer Mark Simpson. Students have also collaborated on a 'virtual performance' of ELO's Mr Blue Sky! Watch this space!

Drama Workshops, Trips & Enrichment

Performances Touring into WQE

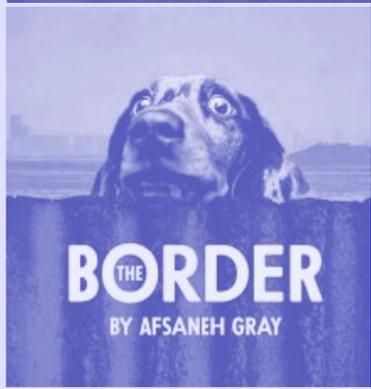
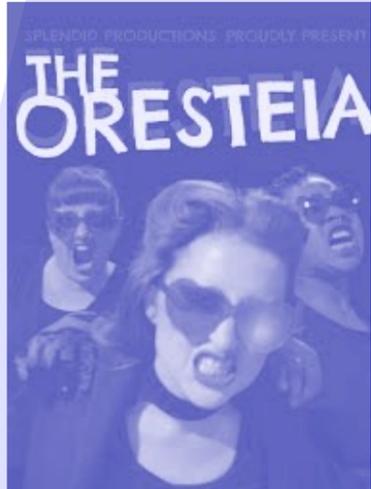
As a College we are very lucky to be supported by a group of alumni who fund many projects that departments just could not afford without their help, The Wyggeston Foundation have covered the cost of bringing a touring production in to our own Drama Studio every year, which ensures that every student can watch a live theatre performance at least twice in their time at the College. Firstly we welcomed Splendid Productions with a brilliant rendition of **The Oresteia**- which they made up to date and hilarious, so much more appealing to a young audience. They also gave a workshop that has really helped students to understand their particular style of theatre – more of this on page 8 from Mimi Casson, another of our Year 2 Leavers. This year we have been lucky to have Theatre Centre bring their new play **The Border** by Afsaneh Gray, a play for our times, dealing with immigration & refugees and helping us to discuss the B word (Brexit) in a more purposeful manner. A thoughtful Q & A at the close between actors and students really showed what an intelligent and considerate group of young people study Drama at WQE.

Boudica @ Curve Theatre

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama once again gave us the opportunity to see their third year students perform at the Curve Theatre; this year the production was a new version of 'Boudica' written by Tristan Bernays...it was not for the faint-hearted but in truth we all loved the blood thirsty and powerful portrayal of this female warrior - one of the few statues of a woman to stand outside the House of Commons.

'...and occasionally speech flashes into something really striking. "Flex your tongues like bows," Boudica commands. Not long afterwards, she is tearing out an enemy's tongue.'

- Guardian Review



INSTITUTE



Eva Salotti

On Thursday 23rd January 2020, drama students from WQE got the exciting opportunity to watch 'Institute' at Nottingham Playhouse, performed by award-winning physical theatre company Gecko. At the time, second year students were finishing our physical theatre devised exam pieces, so we all went hoping to find some dynamic physicality for inspiration. 'Institute' explored contemporary issues of men's mental health, with a particular focus on how men care for themselves and each other in a fast-paced world.

On first impression, the set of 'Institute' captured my attention. Filing cabinets and draws lined each side of the stage, and each drawer could be pulled out to create different environments, so we saw the stage flawlessly transform from a vast office space to a intimate 'date-night' in Italy. The innovative set design was amazing and was supported throughout by creative lighting and an emotionally-provoking use of sound.

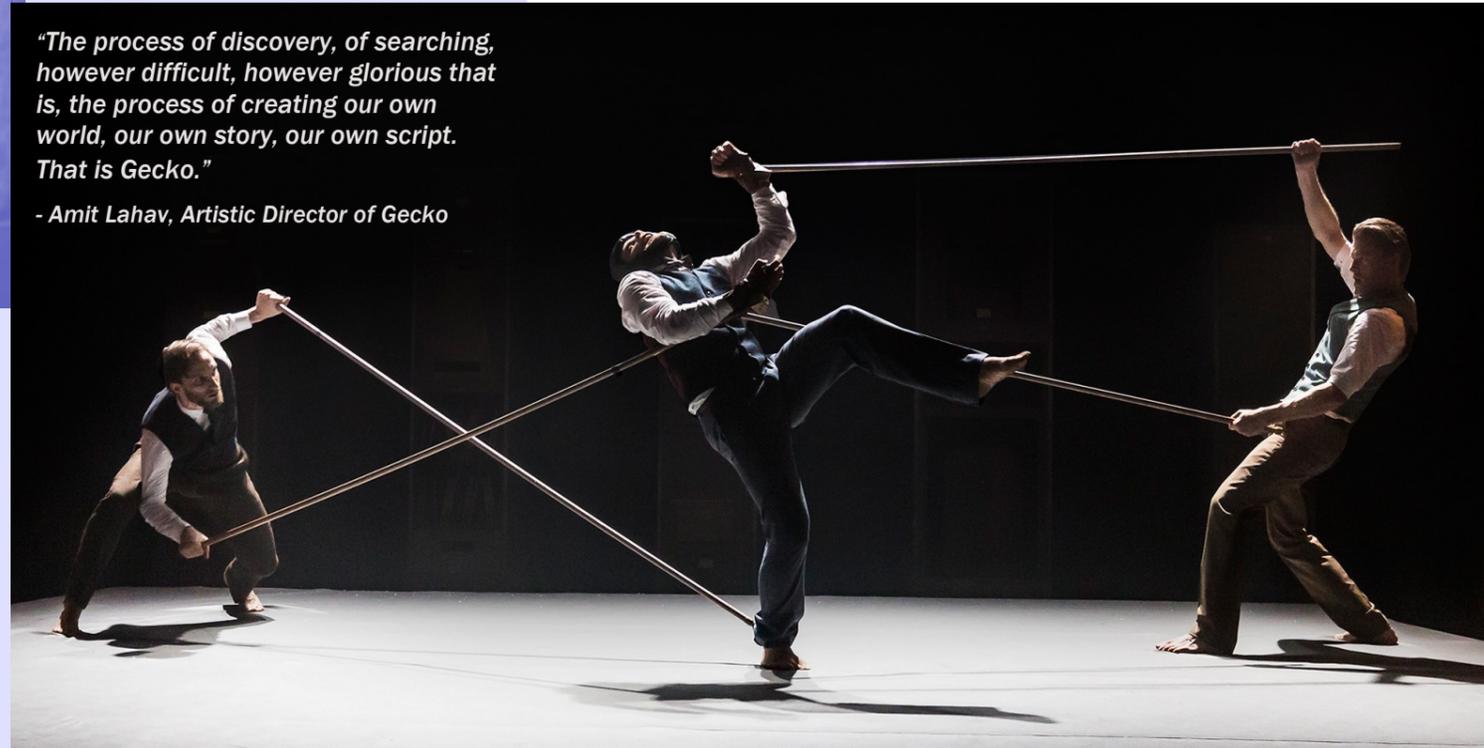
The cast of 'Institute' consisted of four male actors, one being Gecko's artistic director Amit Lahav, playing four relatable men each with their own individual issue – ranging from romantic issues to career choices to illnesses. The powerful message that seems to be conveyed throughout is that each man needs the support of others to overcome their own problems. I've never watched theatre that delves so deeply into a man's struggle with mental health and the visually-stunning physicality from each actor pulled it off tactfully. Feelings of self-doubt, heartbreak, suicide and pain are amongst

the hardest to physically convey to an audience. However the variety of choreography, from balletic movement to high energy combat to climbing up the walls, reflected all of their torments. Although the narrative appears a bit heavy and hard-hitting for a Thursday night at the theatre, comedic moments were intelligently weaved through the darker moments. Moments of thought-provoking physical theatre were broken up by humorous sections, like when two characters are left in infectious laughter over a simple buzzing noise going off. After the show, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to stay behind for a Q+A session with the four actors, including the founder of the company. Before any questions were asked, they spoke about how the performance was designed to reflect your own outlook on life and individual problems. A few people were prompted to explain their own perspectives of the performance; I stood up and shared my opinion that their performance highlights that people pretend to cope with their problems and act fine, but once it gets too much, you need to drop the façade and rely on others. No one else had the same perception as me, each audience members perspectives were different, proving that Gecko had successfully created an amazing piece of theatre that had different levels of meaning.

If you're a fan of physical theatre, Gecko's 'Institute' will not disappoint, and you'll leave with an abundance of interesting thoughts and philosophies in your mind. I'm so thankful I took the opportunity to watch Gecko's work, before coming back to college and performing my own physical theatre piece to an examiner a month later.

"The process of discovery, of searching, however difficult, however glorious that is, the process of creating our own world, our own story, our own script. That is Gecko."

- Amit Lahav, Artistic Director of Gecko



SPLENDID PRODUCTIONS PROUDLY PRESENT

THE ORESTEIA



Mimi Casson

In November of my first year as a drama student at WQE, 'Splendid Productions' came into college to perform their take on "The Oresteia" and conduct a workshop of skills their theatre company uses. I found this experience very useful as a new student as it really got me familiar with Greek theatre and how you can change and sculpt the plays/characters into different styles to make them more relevant to contemporary audiences.

The style of the play was non-naturalistic, however, they incorporated pockets of naturalism. My favourite part of the production was a semi-naturalistic scene which re-occurred throughout the piece. The ensemble used red scarves to represent the different members of the chorus, wearing them in different ways to portray each group differently. For example, they wore them draped over their arms when playing the gossiping women and wore them as sashes when playing simple-minded athletes/

warriors. This was an important part of the piece as it showed how society reacted at the time and gave the audience an insight into the wider picture of the plot, whilst also providing comic relief in a somewhat dark story. Additionally, as a drama student, this showed me the importance of physicality and vocality and how, when done correctly, (and enhanced with a piece of symbolic costume) they can completely change a character. For example, when portraying the gossiping women, they used elongated vowels, loud volume and high pitch, paired with a strong Essex accent and exaggerated hand gestures which illustrated the characters perfectly.

Before seeing this play, I hadn't considered the possibility of modernising classic plays to make them appropriate for a contemporary audience. I was skeptical of how much I would enjoy the play, but the way they made the characters so modern and the plot accessible was enthralling and completely changed my opinion on Greek Theatre. One way they made the plot accessible was through a physical sequence. As the three of them performed this symbolic sequence, they

also narrated what each action was portraying. It was extremely complex and fast but they repeated it and also did it in reverse which was highly impressive. This was one of my favourite moments of the play as it helped me understand the plot but was also greatly entertaining.

After the show, there was a workshop and at this point in the year, the two classes hadn't mixed that much so we were all still slightly shy and awkward, however, by the end of the workshop, we were all completely comfortable with each other and the group had gelled really well. The main focus of the workshop was to work on creating a positive group atmosphere which is essential for an effective ensemble; which was reinforced in this workshop. We began by doing individual work, standing on our own with our eyes closed and practicing our physicality and vocality in isolation to really

work on the details. For example, they would ask us to do things such as assume a physical position we would take when we feel small/hopeless or say something you'd say when you're angry. It helped being able to do this with our eyes closed. We were now comfortable acting without the fear of judgement, so a lot of us shouted/used expletives as they created an environment where we felt relaxed enough to do so. Then we moved into larger groups and began ensemble work where we would choose a formation and move in unison, at first just swaying, then with varying speed and then adding small arm movements or bends of the leg. This exercise helped us to create a group dynamic and tune into other actors' presence and movements.





Tasmin Haresign

On Wednesday 3rd July the WQE drama students visited the Adelphi Theatre in London to watch the West End performance of Waitress. With lots of students having heard the soundtrack to the musical before watching the play, we were eager to see these performances live in action. Waitress follows the story of Jenna, a baker and waitress at Joe's Diner in an unhappy and abusive relationship with her husband, Earl. This narrative was beautifully portrayed by Lucie Jones. Jones was accompanied by David Hunter who played Dr Pomatter, the man that Jenna began an affair with (whilst pregnant with Earl's baby). Whilst the production had a serious backbone, it was filled with witty dialogue that made it a friendly and light-hearted atmosphere, leaving it enjoyable for anyone. Characters of Dawn and Becky worked well to show the small-town lives of the waitresses, with Dawn's excitement on the prospect of online dating, and Becky showing a less naive and more cynical approach to life. Both performances make Jenna's aspirations of opening up a diner of her own even more ambitious. The ensemble cast and supporting actors created a dynamic performance with the upbeat choreography, working well to

contrast the darker or more intimate moments of the play. Jenna's vulnerability when Earl discovered the money that she had been hiding from him was raw and truthful. She had planned to leave with the baby once she had saved up enough but aimed to play it off as merely saving up money for the three of them. When Earl leaves with the money, she is left alone and utterly broken, this performance was brilliantly displayed in the song She Used to be Mine. When Jenna decides to end the affair after giving birth to Lulu, this was not the ending we had expected, but perhaps it was better. Jenna had found strength within herself, standing up to Earl. We saw that she didn't need the support of another man. Despite Dr Pomatter not getting the ending he wanted, a friendly moon pie was given to him as a thanks for showing her how good life can be. After her abusive relationship with Earl, it seemed fitting that she had a newfound sense of freedom. Jenna opens a heartfelt letter given by Joe, the now late owner of the diner, leaving her his position as owner of the diner, asking only for a pie to be named after him. The unveiling of the new name, Lulu's Pies (named after her daughter) filled me with pride for the character. We had watched Jenna's dream of opening up her own diner to be crushed when she fell pregnant. She had faced torments from Earl, and had lost all hope - so to see this growth and resilience was inspiring!

Community Theatre

In Community Theatre Enrichment, students from a variety of subjects choose to come together to learn a range of new drama skills and look at how drama can entertain, educate or honour different areas of our community. At the end of our skills sessions students pool their experiences, connections and interests in the community and we focus on one target audience. This year the class decided to make a piece for Primary School children, after some research we decided to devise a performance using Roald Dahl's 'The Enormous Crocodile'. We were really looking forward to working out how we were going to stage the enormous croc being spun into space and landing in the sun to 'sizzle like a sausage' when unfortunate events stopped our progress! I am very glad that we decided to film each section as we rehearsed – using physical theatre, ensemble work and masks to help recreate the variety of jungle animals that the enormous crocodile comes across on his journey to the village to attempt to eat a 'delicious child', perhaps I can 'splice' these sections together to offer our enrichment students at least a partly completed performance... and perhaps we may be able to use our script and devising work with other groups in the future. But I would like to congratulate the class for all the hard work and commitment that they have shown towards the performance so far.

Professional Workshops

Adam Ainsworth Drama lecturer from DMU who gave a University level practical workshop- and Maeve, an ex student currently studying theatre at the University of Leeds, also gave a practical Theatre workshop. Our students were put through their paces, encouraged to really engage and stretch and reach to this advanced and very focused work. The students taking part were all so committed and professional, I was delighted with their response and many said afterwards that the experiences had helped them to focus their ambitions and make some clear decisions about what they would like to do after College.

Dr Mark Crossley also from DMU visited on another occasion with a group of third year Performing Arts students, the students performed a piece that they had created in the second year using multi-media effects. The piece was inspirational and beautifully presented. They stayed afterwards, to discuss the course and the range of skills that they had acquired over the whole degree answering questions from our own students. They also spent time telling WQE students about the University experience from applying for halls of residence to making close friendships. Mark Crossley left us with a really useful Prezi that is available now to help students gain valuable insight into Uni work and life.

Drama Trips & Workshops



Splendid Workshop



FUP @ Warwick Arts Centre



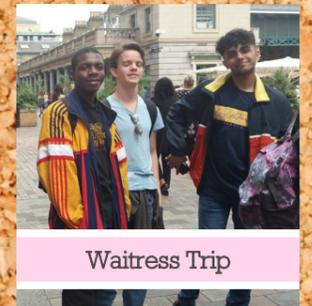
Dr Mark Crossley DMU Workshop



Waitress Trip



Splendid Workshop



Waitress Trip



Dr Mark Crossley DMU Workshop



Boudica Set & Costume Design



Students on the London Trip to see Waitress.



Community Theatre



Splendid Workshop



Students at Warwick Arts Centre



Community Theatre



Waitress @ The Adelphi



Waiting for Waitress!



Community Theatre



Splendid Workshop

Music Workshops, Talks & Opera



Ex Student Alert - Tim Morgan as Oberon!

The past two years have seen the introduction of the Creative Industries Fair at WQE: an exciting day of lectures, talks and workshops from universities and industry professionals about careers in Media and the Arts and routes into them. Sadly it was cancelled this year, but the event in 2019 brought a thought-provoking and insightful talk to first year music students. Martin Scheurigger, from the University of Lincoln, presented an interactive talk which encouraged students to consider the difference between noise, sound and music, and students were asked to demonstrate on their own instruments. This is a lecture he presents to first year undergraduates, so it was also a small taster of studying music at university.

Another event which focuses on progression and careers is the college's 'Futurewise' Day. In June 2019, we welcomed back two former WQE Music students, Tim Morgan and Izzy Young, to talk about their careers and how they got there. It was fascinating to hear two quite different, but coincidentally interlinked stories. Tim has had a hugely successful start to a performing career as a countertenor: when we spoke to him, he had just finished his post-graduate studies at the Royal College of Music in London and was about to start rehearsals for his first professional operatic role as Oberon in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. His training has also taken him to the Hague in the Netherlands to work with ...

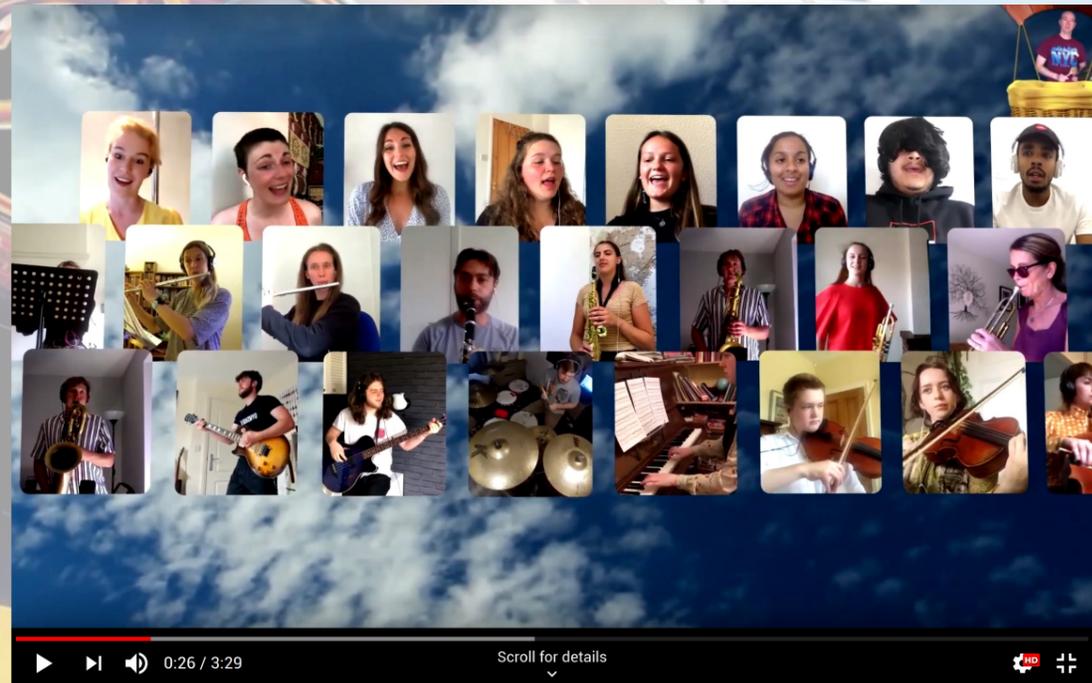


...internationally renowned countertenor Michael Chance and he has worked with numerous professional ensembles and conductors. Izzy explained that she was always more interested in the academic side of music, but threw herself into staging and directing musical and operatic productions at Durham University, and wrote a dissertation on women in opera. After graduating with a first

class honours degree, she gained a prestigious role with the Royal Opera House, London, as the Scheduling Coordinator for their Jette Parker Young Artist Scheme. Izzy and Tim, who did not know each other, had much in common with these operatic connections, and both agreed on the importance of hard work (of course) and getting involved with as much as you possibly can, at college, university and beyond!

We were thrilled to have been offered complimentary tickets to see Tim's debut at Neville Holt Opera as Oberon in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was rather late notice so only a handful of students could make it, but it was a magical evening (despite the rain) at Leicestershire's answer to Glyndebourne.





Mr Blue Sky Lockdown Project

One of the hardest things as a musician in lockdown was losing the ability to make music with others. You might have seen bands, choirs, orchestras and all sorts of others collaborating on music videos – so here at WQE, we thought we'd give it a go! We felt it would be a great project for our students to work on, and chose the song Mr Blue Sky by ELO. We'd been learning it in choir rehearsals before the college closed, and its positive, upbeat nature seemed perfect for lifting the spirits at such an unsettling time. Current students – and a number of alumni – volunteered to be involved, and recorded their parts individually before sending them in to be combined into one performance. Our former audio visual technician, Sheriton Swan, lent his expertise in helping create the final product. You can find the video here: <https://youtu.be/xC4J7M698q8>. I was so grateful to everyone who gave their time to take part, and I'm sure you'll agree the energy and talent shown is really uplifting. I hope it brings you a smile and ray of sunshine!

Composition Project with LIMF & Mark Simpson

Back in 2016/17, four A-Level students took part in an exciting composition in collaboration with Leicester International Music Festival and the Carducci String Quartet, culminating in a performance of Rebecca Burden's piece in the Carducci's Summer Gala Concert at the New Walk Museum. Incidentally, Rebecca has just graduated from York University with a First Class degree in Music! Many congratulations to her. In September last year, another LIMF composition project was launched, this time led by the young composer and clarinettist, Mark Simpson. In 2006, Mark became the first ever winner of both the BBC Young Musician of the Year and BBC Proms/Guardian Young Composer of the Year competitions, and has gone on to have a hugely successful career as both a solo clarinettist and a composer.



Open Mic & Band Enrichment

Our Open/Mic Bands enrichment continues to grow in popularity. This year we had 3 classes each week, with around 20 students per group. It is a great place for musical students from across the college to meet like-minded musicians and work in small groups to rehearse songs of their choice. Some groups choose to rotate every few weeks so they get to work with lots of different people, some groups find they gelled really quickly and choose to stay together. It is very much student-led, with guidance from the teacher on repertoire, performance skills, structuring songs, and how to rehearse effectively. The bands work towards regular performances in class time, but also prepare for the half-termly Open Mic sessions in Café J, and the end of term concerts.

The Open Mic sessions are a great way for students to gain performance experience, boosting their confidence and honing their musical skills. They take place during lunch breaks in a corner of the popular Café J,

where space is cleared for a small stage area and PA system. Many students and staff gather to watch, while others come and go, eat lunch and a chat, so it's an informal and relaxed atmosphere. They've brought an exciting, lively creative energy to J Building!

"When we had Open Mic performances at the J café I was really nervous. My friend Theresa and I had to prepare about two weeks prior to the event, and I was anxious because I thought we were gonna blow it. Other groups in our music class did a lot of practise for it as well and in the end the performances were amazing, though so many people watching us made us a bit nervous. I enjoyed it very much and the audience did as well."

-Felix Adu Agyekum, Music Student



The Launch

This year's project began with a special 'Talent Spotting' concert in the Leicester International Music Festival. Attended by all WQE music students, the concert was given by two young musicians at the start of their careers: Daniel Shao (flute) and Joseph Havlat (piano). They performed pieces by Mozart and Schubert, as well as a brand new piece for flute by Mark Simpson. In fact, it was so brand new that it had only been finished the day before the concert! After the concert, most of the audience left, leaving behind a large group of A Level Music Students from three different schools. We'd been invited to an open rehearsal of another of Mark's pieces – another new work for Oboe and String Quartet. We were introduced to Mark, who told us about his career so far, and about his new piece; and to the players, including the internationally renowned oboist, Nicholas Daniel. It was quite a challenging session, with some quite harsh, dissonant and 'difficult' music, but it was fascinating to see the music from a complicated score come to life, and to gain an insight into the professional rehearsal process. The players agonised over and discussed tiny details that might not have occurred to many of us! In October, three A Level Students who had

decided to embark on the larger project met up with students from other schools for a masterclass with Mark Simpson.

It began with him discussing and performing extracts of repertoire for solo clarinet, including pieces by Stravinsky, and his own

'Darkness Moves'. He then set them some short composing challenges, to complete then and there, and which he played through and gave immediate feedback on. This was a really exciting way of working: students were forced to get ideas down quickly, and hearing them come to life straight away was inspiring! He then set the challenge for the longer project: over the next few months, students were to compose their own piece for solo clarinet, using some of the ideas and techniques demonstrated in the masterclass. This was followed up by a one-to-one mentoring session in February, where students brought their works-in-progress to Mark. In each session, Mark played through the piece, giving constructive criticism on the work so far, and plenty of advice for what to do next. This really was an invaluable opportunity for the students! The end of this project was supposed to be two-fold: a day of recordings at DMU's studios, with a professional sound engineer, and performance of one or two pieces of Mark's choosing to be given in LIMF's September 2020 festival. Sadly, Covid-19 has put paid to both these exciting events. Mark is, however, planning to record the finished pieces at home, and some of the pieces will be performed by him in an online concert in September. The details are being finalised, but will be available on the Leicester International Music Festival website.

Music Concerts, Trips & Workshops



Masterclass with Mark Simpson



Spring Concert



Christmas Concert



The Oboe Quartet rehearsing Mark's composition



Spring Concert



Band Enrichment Open Mic



The Launch



Masterclass with Mark Simpson



Spring Concert



Masterclass with Mark Simpson



Band Enrichment Open Mic



Christmas Concert



Band Enrichment Open Mic



Band Enrichment Open Mic



Band Enrichment Open Mic



Mark Simpson talks to the students



Spring Concert



Student

Voice

An Interview with....

You decided to sign up to write and direct the student performance this year, why were you initially interested?

I was initially interested as my **dream job** would be to direct and write for film and I thought this would be a great opportunity to practise devising my own story and have experience working with actors to **create a performance**.

Tell us a little about your play?

The Grimdark Express is a murder mystery set on a train. It's a **closed door mystery**, which is a crime that has been committed in a room or other location that's been sealed from the inside - with no way out! At the beginning of the play the audience discover that one of the passengers on the train is the **murderer** and it is up to the lead detective to put together the clues before the train reaches it's destination.

What inspired your script in terms of topic or style of performance?

I am a big fan of Agatha Christie murder mystery novels and I **have enjoyed writing** murder mysteries stories as a hobby. The style of the performance was mostly naturalism. However, being a drama student (and with most of my actors being drama students), I couldn't resist adding some stylisation such as **chair duets and ensemble work** to make the performance more visually interesting.

Tell us about the writing process, is it difficult?

How do you go about it?

Yes, writing can be quite difficult. I'd never written a script before, I only had experience with writing novels, which is a very different process. I had experience **creating short films** before which did help make the process easier, but I still had to learn the correct format to write a script. I had to make sure that I was thinking visually, since obviously the audience cannot read stage directions! I also had to make sure that there was enough room for the actors to have enough **freedom to experiment** and be creative with their characters.

Who were your favourite characters to write and why?

The chief inspector was my favourite voice to narrate. She is a very uptight character **which created a bit of comedy** between her and the detective who in contrast is very laid back, so I had fun writing these scenes of conflict with the two characters.

Which is your favourite scene and why?

Possibly my **favourite scene** is when we first meet the detective. It was a great scene to direct because I enjoyed experimenting with some hilarious **comedic interactions** between her and the other characters. .



HOLLY POLE

What was your favourite rehearsal and why?

I don't think I have a **favourite rehearsal**. It was brilliant being able to physically work with the actors because they had their own ideas to bring to the story and it was a lot of fun seeing **my plot** come to life.

How do you feel that the cast responded to the script?

I think they responded really well. They brought the characters to life in their own way and so the performance became a great **collaboration of work** which became visually interesting for the audience.

Due to the corona crisis you have been unable to complete the performance, but what do you consider has still been the most positive part of the process so far?

Obviously it was very disappointing not being able to perform when we had all worked so hard but there were still many positive parts of the experience. It was brilliant **seeing my ideas brought to life**, but seeing the actors become more confident and also becoming friends over the creation of the play was probably the best part of the process.

What have you personally learnt most from the process?

I have learnt that the **process of writing a play is all about collaboration**. Although I wrote the play it was not all about me and only my ideas. My actors really helped to bring it to life and make it into something better than I thought it could be, which we were **all really proud of**.

Have you any plans to write for the stage in the future?

My initial plans for the future have always been in film. Whether it be acting or part of the creative process behind it, such as directing or screenwriting. However, I really enjoyed my experience working on my play and if possible **I would love to write for stage in the future**.

"My dream job would be to write and direct for film"

An Interview with....

You decided to sign up to write and direct the student Performance this year, why were you initially interested?

I love storytelling, I love making up little characters in my head and challenging them to respond to the most crazy situations I can put them in. This is why I've been so drawn to writing: prose, for film and now for the first time, stage. I had an **absolute blast** as assistant director for last year's college musical and I decided it was high time to have a crack at **writing and directing** a play myself! I had spent the summer studying scripts from some brilliant television writers like Russell T. Davies, Charlie Booker and Jed Mercurio and I thought I could do this: let's tell a story! It was so much fun to have full **creative freedom over a project**. I wanted to work with passionate people, and I thought I could woo them into joining me if I came up with a decent story and I think I might've succeeded!

Tell us a little about your play?

White-Red is an **historical** play set on the eve of the Russian Civil War. The play revolves around Joric Tolstoy, the youngest son of a deceased high aristocrat, who has become increasingly **disillusioned** with the nobility and has begun to garner some revolutionary Marxist-Leninist views. His older brother, Alexander, struggles to adapt to his new position as the head of his gentry whilst opposing Joric's radical ideas and actions in fear of his younger brother's safety. Whilst both brothers attempt to reform the nobility by throwing a **lavish** and inclusive 'People's Banquet', the stubborn political landscape of Russia and a looming revolution, once again pits these two loving brothers against each other. Will their **brotherly bond** save them from being consumed by this conflict, or will it be that very love that will spell their demise?

What inspired your script in terms of topic or style of performance?

One of my favourite books growing up was *Private Peaceful* by the brilliant Michael Morpurgo and I think as a text, that is certainly the biggest **influence** on White-Red. Private Peaceful tells the story of two brothers, Tommo and Charlie, who go to fight in World War I. Having been mis-sold the **grandeur** of conflict, they both struggle to survive in the battlefield. A rift grows between the once loving brothers over the conflict and over Tommo's envy of Charlie's marriage. The harsh reality of war leads the older brother Charlie to make the **ultimate sacrifice**, and that



DYLAN RANA

is something I wanted to mirror in White-Red. As for direction and style, I was heavily influenced by period television dramas like *The Crown* in my dialogue. I used realism to mimic the conversational style of television shows and I think the quick pace the play was written for reflects the breakneck pace TV episodes are notorious for. It is a very dark and bleak play and very pessimistic. It is a play about **betrayal** and people in power hold bad **intentions**, and I think that cynicism is inspired by the works of Armando Iannucci and the way his satire paints a helpless view of politics in shows like *The Thick of It* and *The Death of Stalin* on the big screen.

Tell us about the writing process, is it difficult? How do you go about it?

This was my first **stage play**, so I took the same approach I would writing a screenplay and found myself immediately shackled by not being able to use the simple cut! Whilst I had the story down pretty firmly from the get-go, it was the matter of piecing events together and I think **conjuring that dramatic glue** was the hardest part of writing the play. If I put too much of it, the scenes would feel bloated and drag on, though if I put too little I risked the audience not having a clue what was going on! Writing also took a lot longer than I expected, and I consistently missed deadlines as I would get week-long spouts of writers' block. Eventually though, I found **getting on my feet** and acting out the scenes I was writing in my bedroom certainly helped. Drama is a series of intense conversations and so I had conversations with myself as these **characters**. I became them and after a certain point what they would say about the issues that arose in the play would come ...

"It was so much fun to have creative freedom over a project!"

... naturally to me. I had to become familiar with Alexander and Joric's **voices** before I could come up with a draft I was happy with.

Who were your favourite characters to write and why?

White-Red is full of bizarre and **interesting characters** – and what I love about the play is that all of them are absolutely terrible people! This is a show packed with compromised and **scheming** people, it's a Machiavellian **funhouse!** But by far the most fun to see portrayed was those who held decent morals but were being strong-armed, if you will, by one of the ideological camps. For me, the most intriguing character is Bishop Marcellus, he shows **genuine care** for the wellbeing of Joric and Alexander. But, the Communists have the Bishop as a pawn by **threatening** to out him as gay to his deeply homophobic peers in the Church. The wonderful actor who played this role, Kevin, portrayed this weight of compromise so well and it was a joy to see a character having such a pivotal internal struggle.

Which is your favourite scene and why?

Any moment with grunt Boris Savinkov is **absolute gold!** On his very first line, he picks up a chalice on Bishop Marcellus' altar, takes a swig and exclaims: "Your vodka's s**t!". Classic! But as a whole scene, my favourite comes by the end of Act Two. After Alexander is threatened by his superior The Colonel to get Joric in check, Alexander has a **heated exchange** with his brother. This is the first time Alexander threatens Joric, pushing a pistol into his younger brother's hand and smashing it against his head, exclaiming "pull the trigger". This is definitely the **highest point of tension** in the play and certainly the catalyst for everything that goes wrong thereafter. **I'm really proud** of how tense that scene was in our production.

How did the cast respond to your text, and how was it to work with them?

I think it's really important for a cast to work with a text they believe in, and I was so **impressed** with how quickly our **wonderful cast** responded to White-Red from the get-go. I worked with a company of incredibly talented people and it is so humbling seeing **great actors** bringing your vision to life. The cast was able to build the important **meaningful relationships** between characters really quickly. Hamzah Khalid and Sam Kelly nailed the brothers' nuanced relationship. Everyone in our ensemble enjoyed working on the play and they all made **meaningful contributions** to make White-Red the best it could be!

Due to the corona crisis you have been unable to complete the performance, but what do you consider has still been the most positive part of the process so far?

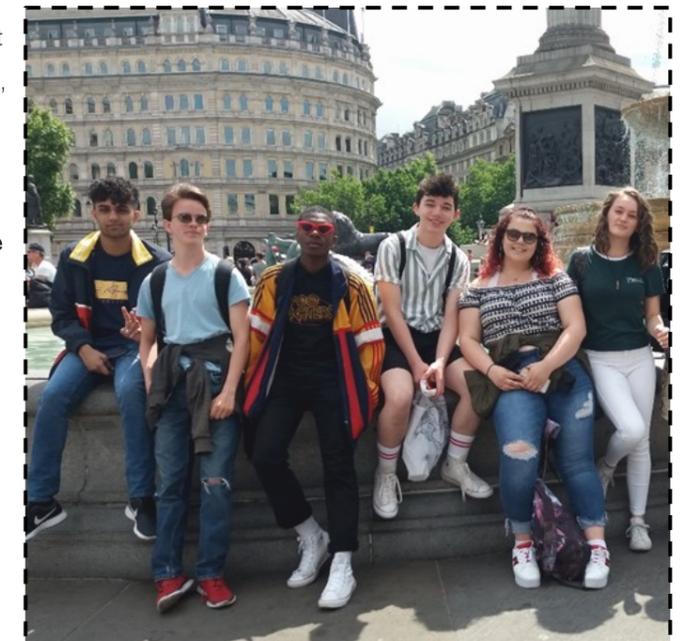
Of course, as a **director**, I would have loved all our hard work to be seen by an audience. I am, of course, gutted that we couldn't perform it. But, I have had **such a blast** working with the talented people in my cast, and I think the fun we had along the way was the most formative part of the process. **We became a family** and I really miss them! I'm sure the cast were etching to perform the play too, but I hope I could make the rehearsals as fun as I could've, and **I hope they enjoyed working with me.**

What have you personally learnt most from the process?

Murphy's Law - if it can go wrong, it will. I have learnt to **expect everything** to crash down: casting, rehearsals, bad scenes etc, and I realised how to **pick myself back up** immediately to solve the problem. I learned I couldn't hide from my responsibilities as director, and oh my, did I want to. It helped me become a better **director and leader**, it helped me become a compassionate listener, **to take criticism and advice** and to appreciate the input of everyone. At the start of the process, I was stubborn and wanted the play to follow my vision to the letter of the law. I have now learnt that isn't possible, and a far stronger piece will come out from listening to your cast, taking feedback, changing and **adapting the text** to suit the problems that arise. I learnt to not just put out fires, but use the heat to shape the tools I needed to make the play better – if that makes sense!

Have you any plans to write for the stage in the future?

Absolutely! I fell in love with the characters and world I built in White-Red and I hope I can show it to an audience later down the line. I am constantly coming up **with new ideas for plays**, and I just can't wait to write them down. I plan to join Durham Student Theatre and write for stage there. I so plan on just sitting there at university pumping out plays left, right and centre like some bootleg Shakespeare! **I love storytelling** and making little characters in my head and I never want to stop trying to share my daft ideas with the world. I plan to **continue screenwriting and filmmaking**: never put your 'eggs' in one medium. I'd say to anyone with a **burning idea or a passion for storytelling** to just go ahead and do it, write. You don't need anything fancy, just open up a document or find a piece of paper and let your **imagination run wild**. Stories are so personal to you, and you deserve to be shared! I want to thank Sharron and the performing arts department for giving me the opportunity to tell a story. **Drama is such a powerful medium to shout a message and I'm glad WQE continues to let any of its students do this.** If you're thinking of doing a Student Performance – do it! Be the bard of your own story.



A WEEK IN NYC

By Jennifer Ralph & Sophie Perrett



SUNDAY



Our trip to New York started at an unmentionable hour in the morning! We loaded our bags onto the coach in the dark and rain before setting off for London's Heathrow. Everyone was extremely excited and I admire anyone who was able to sleep. At Heathrow we checked in and went through security before being given some free time to get breakfast. My group of friends went and got pancakes! Our flight left at around 9 o'clock, the journey was okay despite a lot of confusion about seating. Entertaining yourself for an 8 hour flight was a lot easier than I thought it would be, with films and music provided on the plane. JFK airport was very busy and it took a long time to get through security.

Our first experiences of America were on the coach to the hotel. One of the most fascinating, yet morbid, things was a huge graveyard that spanned for miles, it was very different to anything we'd seen in the UK. We arrived at the hotel and were assigned our rooms.

After dinner we headed to the Rockefeller Centre. The New York Skyline at sunset was breath-taking. We could see the whole of Manhattan and it was exciting to see all of the places we were planning to visit throughout the week. Once it got too dark to see we headed back to Times Square for some late night exploring before walking back to the hotel, exhausted.



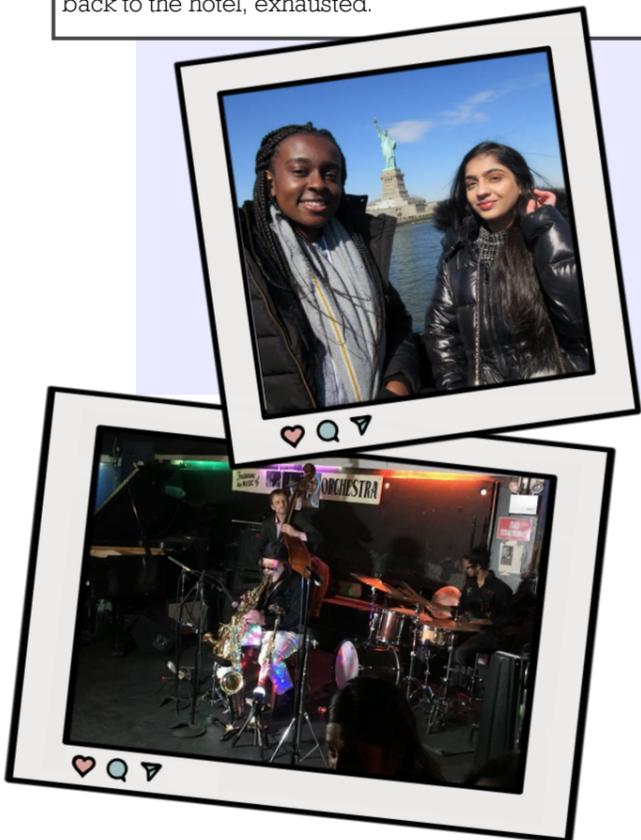
MONDAY

Our first full day in New York started with an early morning Subway to Battery, where we waited to get on a cruise to Liberty and Ellis Island. The boat ride was freezing, but it was worth the compromise for the amazing views. We took lots of photos around Liberty Island then got off at Ellis Island, where all people immigrating to America used to have to go through. The Ellis Island Museum was very interesting, it explored the story of immigrants coming to the US and had some lovely views across the Hudson of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

After the cruise, we headed to a Westfield's shopping centre for lunch. The outside of the shopping centre was spectacular in its self, with such an interesting design. However, it was sight-see only as most places inside were too expensive for a travelling student!

The most moving part of our trip was the visit to the Ground Zero monument. We were only there for a short time but I think it had a powerful effect on everyone. From the memorial we walked to the Brooklyn Bridge. Most people didn't make it all the way across but a group of us were determined and walked just over a mile to the other side.

We were all tired after so much walking but we still managed to find enough energy to spend an evening at Fat Cats Jazz Club. We bought food from different places around the club and had a lovely time playing pool and listening to live music before heading back to the hotel.



TUESDAY

Tuesday started with our first Broadway workshop, taught by two Broadway professionals and we learned the song and dance routine to 'All that Jazz' from Chicago. Watching our non-dramatic music friends attempt the routines was hilarious, as was watching the WQE staff avoiding the moves they didn't want to do by hiding behind their cameras!

At Midday we walked the high line. It is a railway line running over New York that has been converted into a walkway for tourists. It was strange and interesting to have an unrestricted view down the streets and avenues. The square nature of the city was really clear from the high line. The whole grid block design feels very unusual when you're used to the winding old streets in England.

After the high line we headed to China town and little Italy for lunch. It was nice to eat a meal that wasn't pure salt and grease, despite the high prices! After eating we had a little bit of time to explore China town and little Italy. We went to the Christmas shop where we were sorely tempted to buy a Bach bauble as a music mascot but managed to resist. Going to Chinatown and seeing the different cultures within Manhattan was definitely a special experience.

In the evening, we walked through Times Square to watch 'King Kong' on Broadway. The theatre was amazing! It had beautiful chandeliers and it all felt very posh. The show was spectacular. The set, lighting and animatronic gorilla were all so clever and it was very interesting to watch it all come together. The music was less convincing but it was still an enjoyable experience. After the show we were given some free time in Times Square where we watched a very entertaining street show before heading back to the hotel absolutely exhausted.



WEDNESDAY

Our second Broadway workshop was on Wednesday. An introduction to stage combat by a professional stunt man and fight choreographer. We learned how to (pretend to!) slap, wrestle, hair-pull, and the session ended with a choreographed mass brawl!

After lunch we headed to the Lincoln Centre where we were taken on a tour of three of the buildings: the ballet, the concert hall for the orchestra and the opera house. We were lucky enough to see rehearsals for both the opera and orchestra, which was incredibly inspiring.

After the tour, we headed to Central Park where we walked around, bought food from street sellers and took loads of pictures. Everyone was very tired by this point so most people took the subway back to the hotel. We were part of a small group who decided to stay in Central Park a little longer and then walk back down 5th Avenue. As a Fashion and Textiles student, it was a real treat to see all of the extravagant designs in the high end clothing stores on 5th Avenue. We really enjoyed the walk and stopping to buy some trinkets along the way. We also went inside the Cathedral. The building was absolutely beautiful and it had one of the biggest pipe organs I've ever seen. One of the things that really surprised us on 5th Avenue was the size and extravagance of the public library. We didn't go inside but the outside looked more like some sort of grand museum than a library!

Almost as soon as we were back at the hotel it was time to go out again! We walked down to Ellen's Stardust diner for dinner. This has to be one of the highlights of the trip; the waiters in the diner sing and dance on the tables and we really enjoyed singing along! The evening was only slightly spoiled by my friend injuring himself, however it did mean he got the whole New York experience by having to get a yellow cab back to the hotel.

After the meal, we were given the opportunity to ice skate at the Rockefeller centre. Only seven of us managed to find the energy to go. Skating under the fairy lights was quite magical, we were there late so there were very few others on the ice and it was the quietest New York had been all week. We skated for about an hour before walking back to the hotel.



POW!



KA-POW!



BAM!



THURSDAY

Thursday morning was an early start for those of us going up the Empire State Building. Out of all the days, it had to be the one we were going up 86 floors that was cloudy! With little expectations due to weather, only six of us from performing arts went to the top but it was well worth it. We could pick out the Statue of Liberty, Brooklyn Bridge, Central Park and the Rockefeller tower.

Later on in the morning we all met for the walk to Grand Central station – at almost 150 years old it's still an incredibly impressive place and the whispering gallery was one of the strangest experiences ever. From there we split up to get lunch (we would definitely recommend the Shake Shack) and make the most of our last afternoon in NYC.

By the time it got to Thursday we all knew our way to and around Times Square pretty well and with 5th Avenue only a couple of blocks away and Macy's across the street, this afternoon became a massive shopping spree for everyone to spend their last dollars.

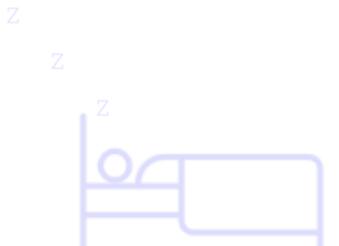
Unfortunately, it was finally time to go to the airport and leave New York. Though we stayed awake long enough to catch our last glimpses of the city through the coach window, it's safe to say everyone fell asleep after that. Newark Airport, New Jersey, was certainly an experience for those of us having to take two bags through security and wheeling a certain someone with an injured ankle through the airport, with the slight scare of having to get Taylor and his dodgy ankle cleared to fly home. At 22:35 we took off from New York and began the journey home.



FRIDAY

It was a quick flight (or at least quicker than expected at 6 ½ hrs) back to London and an even quicker breakfast before setting off in the coach back to Leicester.

Exhausted and spacey we got back to college at 13:30 and managed to catch up with those we left behind while it was lesson change before going home for a much needed, very, very long rest!



Leavers 2019

Aisha Rouf	Law	University of Warwick
Alex Sims	Drama & Theatre	UCA Farndon
Alliyah Mukri	Screen Acting	Middleweek Newton Talent Management
Amira Suleman	Fashion design	Regent University London
Anais Desai-Lewis	Fashion Design & Technology	Manchester Metropolitan
Chloe Mae Ryan	Business & Management	Sheffield Hallam
Courtney Molloy	Psychology	DeMontfort University
Deepali Foster	Language & Literature	University College London
Eesha Raniga	International Business	Aston University
Ella Harding	Acting	East 15
Emma Edwards	Costume Design	Nottingham Trent
Emma Watson	Psychology	Nottingham Trent Uniniversity
Eric Mawby	Film Studies	Birmingham City University
Eva Salotti	Teaching English as a Foreign Language	Vietnam
Haleemah Malek	Art & Design Foundation	DeMontford University
Hollie Pugh	Dance & Musical Theatre	Bird College Conservatoire
Inderjosh Heer	Nursing	Birmingham City University
Janki Karavadran	Media	Nottingham University
Jess Pugh	Veterinary Nurse	Apprenticeship
Joey Walden	Musical Theatre	Arts Ed
Laura Achurch	Applied Theatre	Birmingham City University
Maariyah Alli	Drama & English	DeMontfort University
Mae Pugsley Birch	Drama & Theatre Practice	University of Hull
Megan Manley	Theatre & Performance	University of Leeds
Megan Wiltshire	International Relations & Politics	University of Sheffield.
Mimi Casson	Education	University of Sheffield
Mira Modhvia		Birmingham City University
Mya Wadher	Psychology	University of Leicester
Olivia Needham	Music	University of Sheffield
Samuel Burrows		University of Lincoln
Severa Arfan	Psychology	University of Leicester
Sinead Samarczuk	Coaching & Science	Scholarship to University of West Virginia Sports
Skye Bussingham	Drama	Huddersfield University
Tasmin Haresign	Politics	University
Yasmina Berraoui	Musical Theatre	University of Chichester Conservatoire

Where are they now?

Goodbye to the Class of 2019, what an evening this was, we met at Highcross for a 'cheeky' Nandos with some brave students waiting until nearly 9pm to eat as they were in the middle of Ramadan. It was a lively and fun night, with nearly the whole of Year 2 present - which says a lot about the camaraderie this Drama group has created. There were tears and laughter, much speculation about where people would be in 10 years time, including me - and I was presented with some extremely generous gifts – thanks! I am going to miss you all. Stay in touch!



Drama



Music



Drama



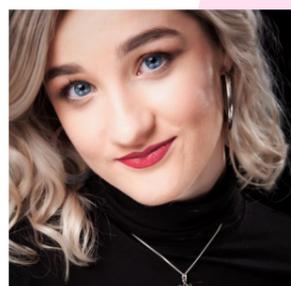
Hareet Deol

We are very proud of Hareet Deol who studied A Level Drama at WQE and then went on to the prestigious Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. His professional stage debut was in the critically-acclaimed, production of 'Memoirs of an Asian Football Casual' at Curve Theatre, this year he was nominated as best supporting actor in the Whatsonstage awards 2020 for his role in the Curve production of 'My Beautiful Launderette'. He is currently playing the role of Hassan in the TV series 'Ackley Bridge'. Hareet has been into WQE recently to chat with our Drama students about his current play and his progression to the professional stage.



Amelia Clarkson

Amelia Clarkson began her A Levels with WQE Drama and then went on to star in the TV Drama 'Our Zoo', she was also the young Jane in the film version of 'Jane Eyre' in 2011 starring Mia Wasikowska, Michael Fassbender and Jamie Bell. Currently she is involved in the TV drama series 'The Last Kingdom' playing the character Aelflaed. I remember Milly as a very bright student who was able to learn her lines incredibly quickly and was part of an ensemble who created an excellent contemporary physical theatre version of 'The Little Mermaid'



Rachael Mailer

Rachael Mailer took A level Drama at WQE and went on to University of Bristol to study Theatre & Film – whilst at Uni she joined the very successful Acapella Group 'The Bristol Suspensions' and appeared on 'Pitch Battle' on the BBC, toured America and won the 'Voice Festival UK'. Her short theatre piece 'Like a Plant?' has been commissioned by Southwark Playhouse, to be staged when live theatre is allowed to recommence. She is currently working toward being a writer for theatre and screen. We are looking forward to see what comes next!



Kaajel Patel

Kaajel studied Drama, Dance & Art at WQE and went on to study Fine Art at Wimbledon College of Arts, and since then Kaajel has never looked back. She is a professional practitioner of Acting, Art & Dance. Kaajel was commissioned to create a set design for the prestigious Royal Court Theatre in London and she has been teaching Art at Hoxton Hall in London; she joined the 'Taking Part' theatre project at The Young Vic in London where she toured the play 'Start Swimming' to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival to superb reviews. During lockdown Kaajel has kept a very busy presence on social media with dance classes, film making and much much more. She is an energetic and talented Creative and we are very proud of her achievements.



Harriet Samuel-Gray

When Harriet Samuel-Gray studied Drama at WQE she loved acting but dancing was always her strength; and after graduating from the renowned Bird College Conservatoire for Dance and Musical Theatre Harriet went on to join several West End Musical productions including 'Young Frankenstein' and recently, until current events closed the show, 'Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' at the Palladium. Harriet is a very busy individual as she has also appeared in many of our favourite TV shows as a dancer; the Brit Awards with Dua Lipa, Strictly Come Dancing with Laura Mvula, The Moba Awards with Professor Green and Laura Mvula and The X Factor.

Music

Alumni



Hannah Bailey

Hannah did her Musical Theatre degree at the London College of Music and since has had a variety of performing jobs, including Lead Vocalist on Viking Cruises and for TUI in Mallorca, a UK and Canada tour with The Adele Songbook, and the lead role in Cinderella in Brighton as well as Leicester Pantomime. She has also appeared in adverts for Max Factor and Heineken. During lockdown, she says she's been keeping busy: *'doing lots of training courses for teaching kids singing at Stage Coach, having singing lessons and lots of baking with my new business!'*



Gina Baker

Gina is a Vocalist and Community Musician. Since graduating from Birmingham Conservatoire, she has worked for multiple music making charities and organisations, as a conductor, singer and workshop facilitator. She has led vocal workshops in various settings including prisons, hospitals and offices. Gina has a strong interest in music and health and has volunteered as a tutor for Melody Music Birmingham, a charity helping those with additional needs to access and enjoy meaningful music making. During lockdown, Gina took on a number of music production projects, and she ran weekly online interactive singing sessions on YouTube for adults and children.



Luke Bryan

Luke has just graduated from Leeds College of Music with a First Class degree in Film Music. A multi-instrumentalist and composer, he collaborated with a number of other musicians in Leeds, and has toured the UK and Europe with the bands Uncle Frank and Radio Riddler, most recently supporting UB40 on their tour. He has two film scores currently circulating the festival circuit, one of which is due to be showcased at Cyprus International Film Festival. From September, he'll be starting a Masters in Music Psychology and the University of Leeds while continuing to work as a music teacher for Rock school UK.



Rebecca Burden

During her time at York, she ran the Contemporary Music ensemble (the Chimera Ensemble), took part in residencies with prominent musicians such as Shiva Feshareki and Anna Meredith, and collaborated with many composers. Through working with composers at the university, she went on to perform at the BBC proms at Battersea Arts Centre, and at Deep Minimalism 2.0 at the Southbank Centre as part of the London Contemporary Orchestra cellists. She has just graduated with a First class degree, and have recently been awarded the John Paynter prize. In September, she will be starting a postgraduate degree in cello performance in Trinity Laban.



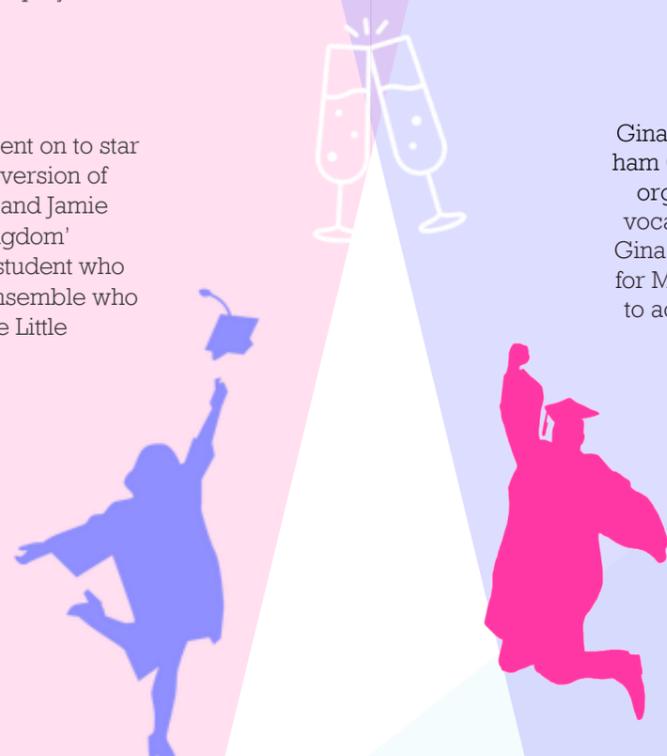
Katie Lear

Katie studied music at Leeds University, and has since had various jobs in Arts Administration, with Warner Music Group, Leeds University and the Philharmonic Orchestra. She is now the Marketing Officer at Opera North.



Matt Zara

Matt is a Guitarist, Session Musician, Composer and Producer. Signed to Big Deal Music in LA, and has worked on songs and albums with a number of high profile artists, such as Olly Murs, James Blunt and Jason Derulo



My Journey into Film Scoring

By Patrick Kendall-Smith

Finishing my A-levels at QE in the summer of 2013, I was adamant on pursuing a path of composing for film and television but had little idea of how to get there. I hope to elaborate on my story so far and give an insight into the strange world of media composition. My story started when I was accepted to study Music with German at Royal Holloway University of London, but I knew that composition was my desire. I was never the strongest musical performer and found composition without a screen challenging but I was certainly confident at how to read the emotions in a film, so I took the single module of film scoring in my second year of university. During this time I performed with the university orchestra as a cellist, which certainly helped with my understanding of the different timbres and tones available for screen music. In order to progress into the film scoring class in the third year of univer-

sity, only the top half of the class could progress. This taught me an important skill for the industry; competitiveness with other composers. I graduated university and took a year out to earn money to fund my Master's degree, which I took at Bristol University and required an entry portfolio of music composed as examples of my ability. At this point I had composed very little film music, perhaps three or four short examples, but I got a place there. The single year of my Master's degree, I must admit, was worth more than any of my three years at Royal Holloway in terms of what I learned and, ultimately, gained from it. The course consisted of 14, including myself, and right from the start it was a completely alien experience. The hours were long, the demands intense and the requirement to be bold and confident were vast, confidence being something I was lacking before my Master's. Assignments for the film scoring degree were regular, four modules per term with four assignments each and the portfolio being a grand project that one would be required to time manage over the year. The portfolio required me to source anyone myself, from students to professionals, to collaborate with and write 25 minutes of

“Being bold, networking, being persuasive, self-marketing and long-nights and dedication really are very important skills for the weird and demanding world of media composition”

music in 5-6 different clips as a showreel. My final portfolio eventually consisted of one genuine advert, one video game score, one trailer and two natural history documentaries - later shown in the cinema. In this industry the key really is “who you know”. As an example, I went to a networking event during my MA and met a fantastic director whom I wrote a short score for overnight - to this day we are still collaborating and are working together on a feature documentary for National Geographic. I graduated my MA with a distinction and kept in contact with a couple of my Bristol lecturers with whom I have done significant collaborations post-MA, one in particular who recommended me to beta test and compose for a Los Angeles music software company. This lead has gone on to introduce me to a film scoring hero of mine who I surprised with new orchestrations of his music. He was very impressed with the initiative and maturity of the orchestrations. Industry composers are always very busy and if they are boldly approached by a hard-working and competent individual it is very likely they will collaborate. As a result we are now embarking on a significant project together, which to my 17-year old-self

would have seemed a mere dream. As well as that, I am composing music for movie trailers, assisting with orchestrating and working on documentaries of my own. Being bold, networking, being persuasive, self-marketing and long-nights and dedication really are very important skills for the weird and demanding world of media composition. This is by no means the only path into the industry, and my experience, despite being still fresh, is likely outdated as things in the industry move quickly. Higher formal education may also not be necessarily indispensable, as anyone savvy enough can make it in the industry. But for me, the most worthwhile element learned so far is experience and that is something that cannot be taught.



WQE Drama

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