

# Performing Arts Report The Commonweal School Term Four March 2010

[www.commonwealarts.co.uk](http://www.commonwealarts.co.uk)

Spring has sprung, allegedly and there is much to report in term four. Due to a re gig of departments PE is no longer part of the XPA faculty and Art more aptly join us. Thank you to one and all for helping on the many exciting events and projects that happen here at Commonweal. Team work and communications are key to success. Thanks to our patrons Shirley Ludford from Swindon Community Radio 105.5, Dave King, editor of the Swindon Advertiser and Sandy Martin from BBC Radio Wiltshire and their respective teams for publishing/broadcasting a myriad of news and features about our much loved school.

We welcome Abbie Guilding as the latest edition to our hall of patrons. Abbie is an ex student and is a professional dancer, working at theatres all over the world. All being well Abbie will be coming into school after Easter to work with some of our dancers and give them an insight into how she came into the business and all it entails. Check her out on [www.myspace.com/abbieguilding](http://www.myspace.com/abbieguilding).

We often have last minute requests and as much as possible we rise to meet them. On Friday last week BBC Radio Wiltshire called as they were making a programme about the latest reality TV show Over The Rainbow in which Andrew Lloyd Webber is searching for the new Dorothy (broadcast Saturday nights on BBC 1). 45 mins later the reporter arrived and I took him to the Music Dept where I had arranged for a selection of our best singers to perform lines from the song Somewhere Over The Rainbow which the radio wanted as an introduction to their show. Sophie Goldsworthy had them all rehearsing, lyrics in hand. The reporter was most impressed! Rising to the challenge and teamwork once again prevailed!

On Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February we hosted a **Sing Up workshop** which was attended by St Joseph's, Greendown, Isambard, Nova Hreod, Warneford and Kingsdown schools. This was organised by Swindon Music Services. 89 students enjoyed the day and learnt various warm ups and delivery techniques, to improve their singing skills and give them ideas on how to deliver workshops to younger students in their feeder schools. Brenda Rattray, a well known jazz and gospel singer, led them through a lively programme which culminated with a sharing performance. Feedback from my evaluation with the students was most encouraging, with 98.88% of students stating that the workshop had improved their skills and aided their development in music. 94.38% said that it had increased their confidence and enthusiasm, 88.76% said it had improved their ability to perform in front of an audience, 73.03% thought it had improved their communication skills and 85.39% said it had aided their development to work as a team. The delivery by our students

to Lethbridge Primary and Even Swindon Primary is testament to this. The girls simply got on with the task and ran a very tight ship! The songs, written by our very own maestro Nick Weaver will be included in the next edition of Now That's What I Call Commonweal CD.

### **Evening of GCSE Dance 25<sup>th</sup> February:**

The GCSE Dance evening was a fantastic opportunity for dance students to showcase their exam pieces for their family and friends. The informal sharing was an essential part of the GCSE dance preparation, and had a real impact on the quality of students performances. Parents, friend and staff really enjoyed the opportunity to see the high quality of the students work. The Year 10s particularly benefited from the chance to see the Year 11s work.

A huge thanks to Nick Weaver for his invaluable technical assistance for the show and exams. Mrs Harman, Head of Dance.

I attended the **Artsmad** steering group on Thursday February 25<sup>th</sup> and funding is in place to support the initiative up until 2011. It is being led by Dienka Hines also SBC cultural education manager. I suggested that the Artsaward scheme be simplified in terms of paperwork to relieve the burden of yet another workload thrust on teachers. The focus is to be on advocacy and supporting existing advisors and centres to get more young people through the awards. Refresher courses for advisors are currently on offer.

I met with Dienka after the meeting to discuss ways in which our school could make better use of the Arts Centre. I suggested we use the theatre for workshops with visiting theatre companies prior to an evening performance and also to consider running week long drama projects during the holidays aimed either at G&T and or struggling students.

**The Big Swindon Does Art Day** at Lydiard Park on Saturday July 10<sup>th</sup> is progressing nicely. We are funding and helping to run the Youth Music Stage. Swindon Rock School (Swindon Music Services) are supplying all the back line and sound. Swindon Youth Services hope to run workshops prior to the event to make decorations for the tent.

We have been approached by Strawberry Green TV, an internet station that covers arts in the South West. They would like to come into school on an evening in May and discover the many talents inherent at Commonweal. The Frosted Tea Cakes, a yr 8 rock band, will play alongside The Commonweal Fab Four and 4 of the GCSE Dance girls. Oh apparently I am being interviewed as well!

On Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March The Commonweal Fab Four and the GCSE Dance girls performed at the Outlet Centre in Swindon as part of **JK Bennet's fashion show**

highlighting fashions this spring. The girls were on top form and were a credit to the school I am looking at other opportunities for later in the year.

**The Creative & Media students** were also on top form when two groups presented the outcome of much hard work and auditions for two shows, which were part of their coursework. One group was called Dance It and the other Staged. Each had to plan and present the final shows which were delivered during two lunch breaks. A fuller report by students can be seen in the latest edition of *Commonweal Matters*.

**Big Hat Arts & Disability Network** We welcome Sally Whitehead from St Luke's School to the group. The bank account and web site are both running [www.thebighat.org.uk](http://www.thebighat.org.uk) and plans for the Big Hat Cabaret at the Arts Centre on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July are all on target. The next task is for the network to put together a programme of events for 2010-2011 and this should be achieved in May this year.

Congratulations to Reach Inclusive Arts for staging a highly successful event that culminated at The Wyvern Theatre on 12<sup>th</sup> February. **Making it Art** involved Partner's Theatre Company who delivered a series of workshops at Commonweal, Crowdy's and Upland Schools as a lead up to a sharing performance on the Wyvern stage. Some of our Peer Educators helped our group both in the workshops and in the performance. Thanks also to Steve Coward and Debs Browning in helping to organise the students both in terms of getting them on time to the workshops and to and fro from the Wyvern. I took some inspirational pictures some of which feature in my creative photographic exhibition on show at the Arts Centre until 31<sup>st</sup> March.

There were **two trips this term**, one to Lion King in the West End organised by Debs Browning and one to Move It, a dance event in Olympiad, organised by myself.

We were invited to attend the launch of the **Quit competition** supported by Swindon NHS and delivered by Create Studios. Debs Browning selected 12 of her peer educators and we discussed ideas on how to create a 30 second – 1 minute advert to deter young people from smoking. We were successful in our application and have been given the opportunity to make two films. Nick and I will help in the delivery of this during the summer. This will entail the group working with professionals from the industry and all contributing schools will battle it out and the winner will be announced in September.

**Salsa Fitness.** Our community partnership with Claudia Stroud has now been extended to also include a Tuesday night session in the dance studio. This is open to the general public. Please see the advert on the school's performing arts web site or the poster in this edition of *Commonweal Matters*. We are also working with her to deliver three workshops in the Town Gardens during the summer term.

**The Spring Concert** this year was held at Christ Church as our hall is out of action due to the next phase of asbestos removal and general updating. Over 100

musicians took part, including drummers from Lethbridge Primary School and Christ Church choir. Many thanks to Laura Holmes, one of our governors, for running the beverage stall.

“It was a refreshing change to hold this year's spring concert at Christ Church. The building lends itself superbly to concerts and really added to the occasion. The programme this year ranged from traditional concert band, marching band style pieces to musical theatre and Romantic Piano solos. All the students involved worked hard and attended weekly rehearsals in their own time in order to make the evening a success. It was delightful to be able to share the performance with such a large audience, including many supporters from Lethbridge Primary School. I do hope that we can include the fantastic drummers in future events. As my last concert for a little while, I was very proud of what we achieved and have received many compliments about the high standard of the evening and that Commonweal Music is still moving ever upwards!

It was lovely to work with Helen Clements on this project - Helen and I worked together at Commonweal for two years between 2006 and 2008 before she moved on to Bradon Forest School. I am very excited that the department will be left in her capable hands (with the support of Aniela Zylinski of course) in my maternity absence. I would like however, to thank Aniela for all the preparation work she did for the Spring Concert. It was a shame she was not well enough to be there on the night, but I am sure there will be many more concerts for her to help organise in the future,” Mrs Sutcliffe Head of Music.

“It was a real pleasure to have the opportunity to take part in the Spring Concert and it was a fantastic night. The students were very positive and performed very well - in particular, Henry Wakelam and the band were superb. The school has really talented students and Mrs Sutcliffe and her team did a marvellous job organising the event,” Miss Clements Acting Head of Music.

**News from Nick Weaver Performing Arts Technician** (further updates in the latest edition of Commonweal Matters)

**Exams** I have been involved in assisting the Dance department in their exams which included an Evening Performance for family and friends. I can honestly say that it was another year of some fantastic work and even some cases of outstanding potential for the future.

My next challenge will be the Drama exams which is always an interesting process, as it all happens within a short space of time. I am kept on my toes for lighting and sound, and which culminates in two very exhilarating days of performances.

**The Hall** My next task is to strip the Hall down in preparation for the builders to remove all asbestos from the roof space. We are planning to upgrade the lights and sound, so I have had a number of companies tender and produce ideas.

The plan is that when we return after the summer, the hall will be reborn and ready for some new energy and ideas. Watch this space...

#### **Forth coming events for term 5**

- **Salsa Fitness** with our community partner Claudia Stroud continues every Tuesday and Thursday (term time only) in the dance studio 6.30 – 7.30pm.
- **23<sup>rd</sup> April Creative & Media Festival 2 – 4pm**
- Week commencing 26<sup>th</sup> April **Big State Work Experience** at The Wyvern.
- **Swindon Festival Literature workshops** 26<sup>th</sup> April at Commonweal, 27<sup>th</sup> April at Highworth Warenford, 28<sup>th</sup> April at Kingsdown School.
- **8<sup>th</sup> May Swindon Festival Literature** poetry slam final at the Arts Centre, Devizes Rd, commencing 11am
- **17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> May GCSE Dram exams.**