

Performing Arts Report
The Commonweal School
Term Two Dec 2009

www.commonwealarts.co.uk

I can't believe it's that time of year again, this term has been really busy, with our feet barely touching the ground! Thanks to you all for your continued support and here's wishing you a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Highlights this term have been another two successful nights of **Evenings of Entertainment** which were both sold out. Over 220 students were involved which is a 10% increase on last year.

"Despite huge disruptions in terms of access, facilities available and altered routines I was delighted that yet again, the quality of performance in the two Evenings of entertainment was exceptional. With over 220 students involved (20% of the whole school) it is clear that the arts are having a massive impact on the overall education of our students. If we needed proof that our students are both 'enjoying and achieving' – a key Ofsted criterion – then we have it in abundance. Well done to all students involved and once again, as huge thanks to the staff who make it happen,"
Keith Defter, Headteacher.

The Evening of Entertainment 2009 was, once again, a huge success. It was terrific to see so many students & staff working collaboratively to produce a show full of variety & talent. The quality of the performances was outstanding and parental feedback has been full of praise.

I feel that our year 11 students are worthy of particular mention. Increasingly they are playing key roles in their contribution to performing arts here at Commonweal.

- Ella Workman & Lauren Martin who have been running the year 6 and year 8 dance clubs.
- Josh Foyster as co-presenter of the show.
- India Collins-Davies did a terrific job as the stage manager.
- The quality of performances from our year 11 students was outstanding across all specialism's.

In Aniela's absence Richard Sutcliffe stepped in, providing invaluable support to the music department throughout the evening of entertainment technical & dress rehearsals and on both of the evenings of performance – good choice of husband Ali! Another incredibly busy term. Well done & thanks to everyone. Sue Derrick – Head of Performing Arts

Our **Salsa Dance** was very successful with the wider community and saw 60 people dancing the night away to the hot Latin sounds of South American band, Latin Fiesta. Our community dance partner Chilean Claudia Stroud provided the tuition in between the band playing. The food was a gorgeous spread of tapas put together by Ali Clarke in finance and her talented husband Duncan. All in all a real community spirited event. Thank you to everyone for giving up their Friday evening and making it an event to be remembered.

Week commencing November 9th was **Gambia Global Citizenship Week** which entailed various workshops to raise funds for our partner schools in the Gunjur. These included sponsored trampolining, cheerleading, performance poetry and a lunchtime concert. The Tuesday of that week was the Yr 7 arts and culture day when students learnt about the Gambia and participated in workshops in drumming, dance, art, visual storytelling and cookery demonstrations and tastings. The day culminated with a plenary in the hall where several young people got up on stage to share their dance and drumming routines they had learnt throughout the sessions. There were powerpoint and videos both in assembly and in the plenary which explained about the culture of Gambia, it's geographic location and info and footage of our bi yearly visit to the country. Many thanks to our African visitors for bringing their country to life.

I went to the Specialist School's Academy Trust's Community Dimension conference in Bristol this November and spent a pleasant day sharing ideas with other schools in our region. We are very much on target with all of our objectives.

We were pleased to once again support our partner special school **St. Luke's** with some funding for their **winter performing arts festival**. We hope some of the groups will perform on our stage at the **Old Town Festival** and The Big Hat Cabret next summer.

The language department at Commonweal benefited from SSAT funding when a specialist **Spanish drama company** came into school to perform to 64 Yr 10 & Yr 11 Spanish GCSE students. Miss Clements, head of languages, commented that the play was extremely useful and the students gained a great deal by being able to watch and interact with the cast.

Solomon Theatre also came into school this term to perform their alcohol awareness play to all of Yr 9. This is in partnership with Swindon Borough Council, the police and NSPCC professionals to highlight the dangers of this drug.

Drama Trips: Drama teacher Debs Browning has organised three successful trips this term. These are, Hey Babe at the Arts Centre 4th November, A Taste of Honey Arts Centre, 17th November and Blood Brothers in the West End on 15th December.

A big thank you and fond farewell to Jim Brown, senior education officer at Swindon Dance, one of our community partners. Jim is off to the sunnier climate of Spain to run a B&B. Jim was instrumental in setting up the **Big Hat Arts & Disability Network**. Representing Commonweal I have taken a lead role in this initiative and have been appointed the group's secretary. We are slowly expanding and have recently been joined by Music Alive and have invited St Luke's to join us. The Big Hat Cabaret takes place at The Arts Centre again next year, so please earmark the evening of Friday July 9th in your diaries.

There have been two dance trips this term one a GCSE workshop with professional company **Motionhouse** at Swindon Dance, which was of great benefit to the students personal development. The second was the **Bounce Street Dance Company** performance, *Insain in the Brain* at the Wyvern Theatre, which was a good example of a professional company at work.

Louise Harman, our Head of Dance recently set up a cheer leading group in school and the girls came 3rd in a **Swindon Schools Cheerleading Competition** at Isambard school on the 1st December. The team's routine was choreographed by Lauren Martin in Year 11.

With inclusivity firmly established in our way our thinking we are pleased to see that a Yr 10 girl from Crowdy's Hill School has joined our GCSE dance class at Commonweal. Another candidate for the Big Hat Cabaret in July!

KS2 & KS3 Dance INSET will be delivered by our dance specialist Louise Harman in our dance studio on Monday January 25th. I targeted all the primary schools in Swindon and am pleased to say that the session is now full.

Sing up In partnership with Swindon Music Service Commonweal have embarked on the 'Sing Up' project' this term. The project aims to encourage and nurture young singing leaders to go out into the community to help others to sing. The Chamber Choir have worked in Even Swindon School teaching a song to the year 6 students about moving on to secondary school. After Christmas the choir go into Lethbridge to work with their Yr 6. Both songs will feature on the next edition of our yearly CD, Now That's What I Call Commonweal. As part of the 'Sing Up' project, the chamber choir attended Isambard School for a workshop in singing leading and picked up various hints and tips on teaching.

Christmas As usual the music department are in popular demand both in school and in the community. This includes the Bath Rd Methodist Church Service on Dec 14th and a carol singing tour on 16th which includes two nursing homes for senior citizens and also Nationwide HQ where the choir will be singing with Nationwide staff choir. This was set up and funded via our SSAT funding as part of our community objective – music in a business setting.

We were also invited to perform at the Bloor Homes event where the Mayor of Swindon, David Wren switched on the lights at The Piazza, Angel Ridge. The Mayor particularly enjoyed their performance and referred to the students as the X factor candidates of the future and said he was "totally impressed!"

Community Carols For Prospect. We have a new initiative this year where we are encouraging our community and the wider community to create small community choirs and deliver carol singing in the street where they live. This is just for an hour between 6 – 7pm on the evening of 21st December. This is supported by the Swindon Advertiser and all funds go to the Prospect Hospice in Wroughton.

King William Street Primary School are using our lights and sound equipment again this year for their nativity play with Yr1 and Yr2 and the following week for their KS2 production of Peter Pan.

Spain 2010! The music department are destined for Barcelona in the Summer to perform several concerts and soak up some of the culture.

Artsmad is now being run by **Dienka Hines** the Culture Education Manager within Swindon Borough Council so will operate on a smaller scale whilst maintaining its key functions. I have been on the steering group since it came into being and fully support this excellent initiative which was set up by Helen Miah, Swindon Borough Council's Cultural Manager.

Artsmad Key Functions:

- Supporting high quality, accessible and joined-up opportunities for Swindon's young people to engage in the arts.
- Support for Arts Awards, Artsmark and Specialist Arts Colleges
- Line management and leadership of Culture Swindon's Education Programme.
- Advocacy and information sharing maintained through the Artsmad website and communication strategy.
- Encouraging partnership working and maintaining local and regional links and networks
- Supporting the development of new action research projects and new initiatives (locally, regionally and nationally).

Artsmad Steering Group

Members of the Artsmad partner organisations are part of the Steering Group, which acts as an informal advisory committee. The role of the group is advocacy, sharing information and good practice, quality assurance, strengthening partnerships and adding value to each other's work. The group meets four times a year and has a rotating chair.

Artsmad Contact: Dienka Hines, Culture Education Manager, Swindon Borough Council, dienka@swindon.gov.uk, C/o Lydiard Park, Lydiard Tregoze, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN5 3PA

Forthcoming Events Term Three

- 6th January - Big State Theatre Company workshops with Yr10 & Yr11 GCSE drama students.
- 12th January - GCSE Drama paper1, Unit 2
- 19th January – Yr 7 Art Trip
- 20th January – Yr10 & Yr11 GCSE French play – am only
- 26th January – Yr10 & Yr11 G&T art Drawing Day
- 27th January – Yr7 Hindu Dance/RE Day
- 28th January – Billy Elliot drama trip to the West End – evening
- 3rd February – Warhorse drama trip to the West End – evening
- 4th February – GCSE Music Performance- Exam 2
- 10th – 11th February – Sixth Sense Theatre for Young People, cancelled due to hall being out of action