

It would have been difficult to find better audiences than those that attended the inaugural production in our new Headmaster Porter Theatre in early December 2006. Their infectious

enthusiasm and standing ovations for the work of the energetic, talented performers made for a highly rewarding experience for all involved in *Les Misérables*. This stirring musical has captured imaginations world wide and the rapturous reception our production received was testament to the hard work and skill of its cast and crew.

Performances like those given by Ollie Poole as *Jean Valjean*, Ed Goodin as *Javert* and Laura Bridgstock's *Eponine* were not merely the product of natural ability but also the result of hours of preparation and commitment to the realisation of their individual goals. Equally committed and successful performances were delivered by Charlie Mackrill (*Marius*), Claire Bush (*Fantine*), Laura Wright (*Cosette*) and Kamal Shaddad (*Enjolras*), and a vitally important sense of comic contrast was created by Jessica Summers and Theo Sowerbutts as the grotesque *Thenardiers*. All of the fifty-three members of this cast who took their places on the battlements and streets of Paris in the vibrant chorus scenes devoted time and huge amounts of energy in the rehearsal period.

But this production was about more than what the audience saw and heard on the nights of performance. Moving into a new theatre a fortnight before curtain-up created a series of challenges that both staff and students behind the scenes met head on and overcame with expertise, long hours and plenty of prayer! With the live orchestra playing in a separate part of the building and being relayed through to the sound desk, the musical director viewing the stage action on a monitor and the actors viewing him via front stage screens, this production was as much a triumph for the new technology in the theatre as anything else. For some, the final curtain-call brought a sense of relief, but such emotion was far outweighed by the sense of achievement that was felt by all who had a hand in presenting the first production in the new Headmaster Porter Theatre.

The late Spring and early Summer

Terms are largely given over to productions performed by students from the Drama Department as part of their GCSE, AS and A2 examinations. Although not a requirement of the examination boards, it is department policy that these performances should be presented as full scale productions in their own right. In this way we believe the students will derive the greatest benefit not only in terms of their results but also in receiving the fullest theatrical experience in return for their efforts.

The season started with two AS Level productions: *Kindertransport* by Dianne Samuels and *Mad Forest* by Caryl Churchill. The first of these plays deals with the experiences of a young Jewish girl who escapes from Germany to England immediately prior to the outbreak of the second world war and is subsequently brought up by an adoptive family. Clearly, it required mature and sensitive characterisation from its cast. *Mad Forest*, meanwhile, examined events from the perspective of ordinary Romanians before, during and after the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in 1989. Strong ensemble acting was the hallmark of this work.

At A2 level the students are required to shape and adapt a Shakespearean text and present their own interpretation of its themes to their audience. Working with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the group set their production on a giant double bed and entertained their audience with a very physical and exuberant piece of comic theatre that managed also to find one or two darker and more threatening moments. For GCSE, students presented scripted productions of *The Exam* by Andy Hamilton, *Blue Remembered Hills* by Dennis Potter and *Missing - Dan Nolan* by Mark Wheeller, whilst a fourth group

presented their own original devised piece entitled *Training for Life*. These four pieces, very different in their demands and styles, provided a varied programme for their appreciative audiences who attended the performances given over two days.

The Junior Production this year was the musical *Oh, What a Lovely War!* created by Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop in 1963. This ensemble piece takes an ironic look at the 1st World War through the eyes of the ordinary tommies in the front line, their largely incompetent generals and leaders and their women back home in good old blighty. Using contemporary 1st World War Music Hall songs, the piece is presented as an end-of-pier entertainment which charts the progress, or rather the lack of it, of 'The War to End all Wars'. In documentary style, we are shown significant moments of WW1, such as the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the meeting between the British

and German soldiers in No Man's Land on Christmas Eve 1914 and General Haig's stubborn refusal to accept the inevitable disaster of the Somme offensive.

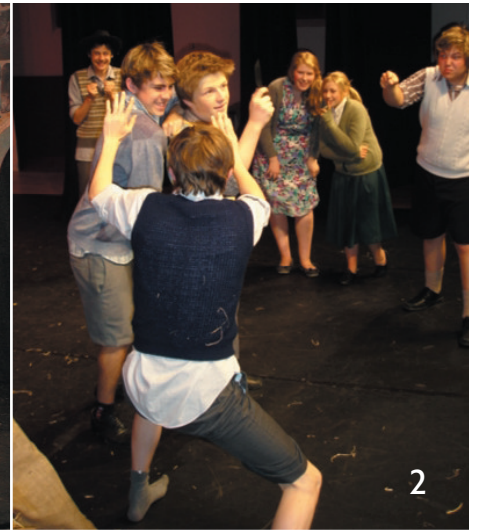
It was not an easy task for the young actors from Years 9 and 10 to capture the humour and irony

of the play but they managed to do so with considerable success. There were moments of strong comedy caught on stage only to be deflated quite aptly by the projection of the harsh reality of the conflict, either through slides of the terrible suffering of life in the trenches or through the news panel announcements of the appalling statistics confirming the futile loss of life that each new battle brought. Charles Precious as the strolling MC narrated the audience through the changing scenes and locations of the action with presence and confidence, and Andrzej Stuart-Thompson made the most convincing use of his voice

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1 LES MISÉRABLES. 2 BLUE REMEMBERED HILLS. 3 OH, WHAT A LOVELY WAR! 4 THE EXAM. 5 TRAINING FOR LIFE. 6 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.

to take on characters representing almost all of the various countries involved in the conflict. Rhys Shekelton certainly launched himself into the role of the Sgt-Major responsible for teaching drill skills to a bunch of rather feckless raw recruits, of which Will Twentyman's bungling tommy was the pick of the bunch.

In the second half, Gavin Stacey assumed control of the stage with a very

mature performance as General Haig and one that did much to capture his frightening righteousness and conviction. Ensemble singing was strong, especially when the girls got together, and there were a couple of well choreographed routines that were visual highlights of the piece. Kathryn Berry and Imogen Webb sang their solo numbers with great success; two very different moods and messages caught

perfectly in their performances. Musical accompaniment throughout the production was provided by a kind of 'Palm Court' duet of Jon Hutchings on piano and Alex Dunham on drums. Colourful, lively, witty and poignant, this Junior Production was a most rewarding presentation of a challenging piece of theatre.

Mr Tony Lawrence

'History', writes Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, 'is like a nymph glimpsed bathing between leaves: the more you shift perspective, the more is revealed. If you want to see the whole you have to dodge and slip between many different viewpoints.' Framlingham's historians have done plenty of dodging and slipping this year, with many students enjoying what they do and reaping their reward.

They have been building on a strong set of results from 2006 when the A grade pass rate at A Level was 71% and the GCSE A*/A rate was 62%. A number of last year's students are now engaged in further study of the subject at Russell-group universities: Rosy Lawrence, Abigail Mackrill, Leanne Newton, Will Poole and Alex Reid are all dating Clio in their tertiary education. In the current Upper Sixth crop, Claire Bush has a conditional offer to read History at St John's College, Cambridge, while Matthew Tubbs, Alex Cape, Tom Gaughan and Michelle Li hope to read the subject at other top universities.

Claire and Matthew were among a number of students who made excellent contributions to History Society meetings this year. They each spoke on their Personal Studies, an attractive area of A2 in which students can choose any historical topic that interests them and investigate it in a disciplined manner. Claire looked at Catherine de Medici and the role of women rulers in the Sixteenth Century (appropriate enough for a Head Girl!) and Matthew studied the effects of the Indian Mutiny on the Raj (nothing like Stradbroke!). Another interesting study was the Slovak Martin Sopussek's take on the Munich Crisis of 1938 considered from the Czech angle as well as the British.

Other History Society presentations were given by learned colleagues. Mr Hutchings ranged from Plainsong to Protestantism (though not wishing to go as far as the latter), Mr Jowitt discussed art in the same period, and Mrs Sanders talked on Chaucer and the Catholic Church. With Y12 students producing their own power-point presentations on Richard III and Y13 giving brief talks on Counter-Reformation saints, the society has clearly had an Early Modern bias, a healthy antidote to Hitler and All That!

The Sixth Form also enjoyed their annual trip to lectures by top university

experts in London. The Lower Sixth were enlightened by such luminaries as Steven Gunn and John Watts, while the Upper Sixth heard from Lars Fischer and Leif Jerram, the latter particularly impressing by his dressed-down style and direct delivery – no grey-as-dust historian he! We are always grateful to our efficient minibus drivers who save us from being at the mercy of a rail system that never delivers!

Other scholarly highlights may be mentioned in Years 12 and 9. Jonathan Waghorne and Harry Johnstone volunteered to write substantial essays for a competition run by Corpus Christi, Cambridge, a good experience in these days when AS examiners don't trust you to write in continuous prose for more than 20 minutes at a time! Year 9 should be well prepared for this by some excellent project work on topics of local interest: outstanding were Megan Byford Crane's 'Kett's rebellion', Eleanor Shallow's 'Old Cannon Brewery' with its very potable Appendix IV, Lauren Baller's Brandeston Hall 1541-2007, Olivia Castle's 'St Edmund's Southwold' and Charlotte Pring's 'Fressingfield Village'; but many others were highly competent and enjoyable reads. If Years 10 and 11 have to put their main focus on GCSE, this does not mean they are fallow years at all, and Year 11 in particular has some highly committed students who enjoy Pryor House Group, Latin and many other little extras that can humanise rigid courses. There is a very promising take-up for History from Year 11 into Year 12.

Some of the staff behind this deserve a mention. We are grateful to the English Department for lending us Dr Heard with her scholarly approach. We lament the departure of Mr Jowitt but wish him well with his artistic aspirations and look forward to purchasing Jowitt prints as they come on the market! We look forward to Ananda Harrison (Moreau 1996-99) coming to join us in September. And we share the delight of Mr and Mrs Marvell at the birth of Miranda.

You may go, then, to the Art Department for life drawing in a studio in the TAC: but if you want to look for Clio bathing in the dappled light of some distant century, come and part the leaves with the Historians!

Mr Mark Robinson, Head of History

Et vermis vertit. The barbarian exam boards keep trying to abolish Latin, sed usque recurrit.

Why? Parentes id cupiunt, and parental choice matters. Discipulique etiam id cupiunt when push comes to shove. Some at least catch the spark, while others get a serious GCSE (no "Classical Studies" here!) for their curricula vitae. Yes, it's hard work learning the grammar and vocabulary, but Rome wasn't built in a day and new vistas appear along the way to lighten the load: there's Domitian at his ambrosial feast enjoying Martial's wit, there's Horace making his Bandusian Spring famous, there's the Country Mouse who goes to the Big City but returns home after a bad experience with Molossian hounds.

All this was on the syllabus, unlike the tempting Catullan and Ovidian by-ways. So one hopes seven Latinists have collected a GCSE and that some have a treasure for life. Having dipped a toe into the Metamorphoses, they will be prepared for life's changes.

Years 9 and 10 have promising groups in the pipeline poised to drink at the Pierian spring, and Year 10 in particular will miss Mrs Sanders who over the last decade has so generously shared her classical expertise with many Framlinghamians.

Therefore let transient Education Secretaries do what they will; without Latin there could be no 'secretarius' nor 'educatio'. Like the bourgeois gentilhomme, they have been talking prose all their lives and not known it. Interim, verme verso, nos in Arcadiam imus.

Mr Michael Cooke



MESSRS COOKE (LEFT) AND ROBINSON