

Friday 15 November 2013 - Arts Newsletter

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## Prologue

There has never been a more important time to celebrate and promote the arts within schools. Nationally under threat from so many angles, the creatives could be said to be the life-blood of invention and the development of knowledge. The arts - visual and performing - provide excellent opportunities for students both in and out of the classroom environment. Creation, collaboration, seeking different perspectives, understanding cultural contexts, dealing with the technicalities of digital, performance - all these are integral to the arts and the Stephen Perse Foundation schools are all delighted to celebrate them.

To give a flavour of the arts is a challenge, largely because there is such a lot to include. This newsletter cannot possibly do full justice to groups and individuals but we believe it right to lift the lid on this area of learning.



*Dame Bradbury's on stage*

## Act 1 – Starting at the beginning

For our youngest in Nursery at Dame Bradbury's and Pre-Prep in Cambridge and Madingley, the arts are a completely natural way of learning. Children from our Cambridge pre-prep, and from other infant schools in the area, recently took part in a Drama workshop with an underwater theme. Taking the poem *Sea Creatures* by Meish Golder as inspiration, the children used props and movement to create all the different creatures and accompanied the performance with music they composed themselves.

Our strongest recommendation for the use of arts in learning surely has to go to the wonderful [Tumblr feeds](#) - live at our Cambridge Schools and shortly to go live in Dame Bradbury's. The enthusiasm with which these little gems have been greeted by parents is a great joy!

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## Act 2 – visual arts

Amongst notable achievements in recent weeks, Dame Bradbury's School has been recognised as providing outstanding arts provision by the national awarding body, Artsmark, our Senior School art department has just returned from a cross-curricular trip to Berlin and our 6th form students put on a cabaret performance evening for charity fund-raising before half-term and our musicians have sung Evensong in Trinity College Chapel.

A comment from a visitor to Dame Bradbury's encapsulates much of this. Referring to the annual art exhibition, they said it "is like a big box of delights - to be opened with great pleasure". In fact, Dame Bradbury's is a well-known local leader in the arts, organising the Primary Arts Festival in Saffron Walden with almost 300 Year 6 pupils from 10 different schools participating in various arts workshops.

Our Cambridge Junior School pupils have been exploring a diverse range of media. In Year 6 these have included clay, embroidered water-colour paintings and large chalk & charcoal drawings, some of which are pictured here. Our Year 5 students have explored bright landscape paintings in the style of artist Ton Schulten, whose work can be found here <http://www.tonschulten.nl>. They also explored wire sculptures of birds, and figures inspired by the style of Italian artist Alberto Giacometti. In Year 4 students have been making Roman soldier models and developing tonal shift paintings. Meanwhile our Year 3 have printed, used inks in cityscape pictures, and are now painting gold trees in the style of Austrian artist Gustav Klimt.



6th form open evening installation

At the other end of the Foundation, U6th student Emma Stanley stunned visitors to the 6th form open evening with her live installation based on German artist Clemens Bher's abstract street sculptures. Emma then delivered a talk on her work and shared tips with Year 7 students for their Project day, where the whole year group explored the theme of 'Illusions'. It shows how art can be such a powerful vehicle for communication and opportunity.

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## Act 3 – Performance art

Performance, direction, backstage, front-of-house, soloists, ensemble, orchestral players and singers - the performance arts need them all. It is certainly the case that many adults look back to their school days, and it is these performances that are remembered maybe far more than many academic classes - they are character-developing and life-enhancing.

Take for example the transformation of the 6th form coffee shop for one night only into a silvery, candle-lit bar for the Cabaret. The audience were entertained with an eclectic mix of music, singing, tap dancing and card tricks, all expertly introduced by our two comperes. Organised by U6 students Izzy Ray, Mitsouko Anderson and Richard Bradley, the evening raised £336.00 for charity. Fusing creativity and digital opportunities, the 6th form students are also writing, directing and filming their own horror movie which we hope to premiere next term.

At Dame Bradbury's, Year 5 children performed a specially adapted version of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' at the Mumford Theatre, Cambridge, as part of the UK's Shakespeare Schools' Festival. As one of the only primary school groups participating in the Festival, we are very proud of what they have achieved in understanding and mastering their lines and working together on the staging of the play.



Year 5 at Dame B's

Meanwhile, tickets are now on sale for *Metamorphoses*, this term's main senior school play, written by Mary Zimmerman and directed by Ms Barrell. This unusual and creative adaptation of the classic tales from Ovid is set around an ancient pool of water: the performance will take place in-the-round in the Senior School Hall in December. To enquire about tickets please email [hb@stephenperse.com](mailto:hb@stephenperse.com).

Drama fuses with sports to give dance. In the Senior School, the Year 9 Musical Theatre module group have been working with visiting choreographer Jane Eve, learning how to rock and roll and jive - they are incorporating their new-found skills into dance routines and devising their own choreography for a performance in February.

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## Act 3 – Performance art continued



*Shadow Puppet Fairy Tales from the Global Outlook Theatre Course*

In the Junior School, preparations are well under way for the Christmas Concert, with each year group rehearsing a short theatre performance on a different theme – whilst Year 3 will perform a tableau from a traditional nativity, Year 4 will take the theme of 'Snow', Year 5 will whisk us around the globe for Twelve Countries of Christmas and Year 6 will perform a condensed version of A Christmas Carol.

Dame Bradbury's music department sums up the feelings of the whole Foundation, "Our students pupils also develop a love of music whilst they are with us." The opportunity to learn a musical instrument develops perseverance and determination as well as musical ability. Our senior school has been running its own [music department blog](#) for a while now which showcases student work in class. This is more than a publicity stunt – it gives additional credibility to the students' work by giving a public platform. It is also remarkable how the use of technology helps enhance the quality of the production and gives a new lease of life to the creativity of the students – the iPad, GarageBand and SoundCloud are a game-changer for music!

To listen to this track is by Tanisha, Erica, Camille and Elanor from Year 9, click on the image which will take you to the Wordpress blog – scroll down to find the SoundCloud link embedded online.



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## Act 3 – Performance art continued

Evensong at Trinity College this week with our chamber choir:



## Act 4: Epilogue

With the cultural richness and variety that Saffron Walden and Cambridge provide, and with London so close to hand, it is not a surprise that inspiration comes from visits to galleries, exhibitions, theatres and cinemas.

Students travelling with us to Tokyo, Japan, or to Berlin, Germany, also experience art at every turn, but that will be for future learning newsletters to explore.

The arts are integral and must never be seen as anything less.