



Performing Arts Department (Theatre ARTS, Drama and

Notes from the Studios



A Semester Full of Inspiration! Performances, professional workshops, and field trips support a semester of creative activity in the Performing Arts Department.

The Performing Arts students had an opportunity to work with many different artists and classes to hone their performance skills over the semester.

The semester was full of performance opportunities for the Performing Arts students. In Theatre ARTS and Dance ARTS, the performance season started in October with outstanding short performances for *ARTS Night*. The students continued their performance season for Remembrance Day. Dance Council, Grade 9 Drama and Grade 9 Theatre ARTS created original pieces for the Remembrance Day assembly. The graduates ended the semester with an outstanding *Graduate Showcase* in January.

Semester two will bring multiple performance opportunities for the Performing Arts Students, including *Dance Expressions*, *Sears Drama Festival*, performances from Theatre ARTS 9 and

A Midsummer Night's Dream, and spring Theatre ARTS 12.





Department Head: C. Clarke

Performing Arts Department (Theatre ARTS, Drama and Dance) cont...

Fun From the Yellow School Bus

We love field trips and workshops! Highlights include:

- ◆ Backstage tour of the Canon Theatre and performance of *Wicked*
- ◆ Workshops with TOES for Dance
- ◆ Movement Workshops with Theatre ARTS Alumni Zac Levitt
- ◆ African Dance Workshops with Sharon Harvey
- ◆ Canadian Stage Acting Workshop and Performance of *Opus*
- ◆ Mask making workshop with Melanie Siegel
- ◆ Stratford Festival field trip to see *Crazy for You*
- ◆ Physical theatre workshop with *Theatre Gargantua*



Some Additional Notes from Drama Studios

Grade 10 Drama for English as a Second Language Learners

We used elements of drama in creating and communicating through dramatic works. We have learned how to gain confidence in ourselves, and how to better succeed in anything we choose to do. We had a lot of fun every day, and a good smile was our exit-ticket at the end of each class.

Grade 9 Drama and Theatre ARTS

Period one was always an exciting and active start to the day. The grade 9 Drama and Theatre ARTS 9 students engaged in many dramatic activities, including improvisation, movement, elements of comedy, Greek Theatre, camera angles and film making, technical theatre and playwriting. From Halloween make-up activities to creating short original works based on family stories, creativity thrived all semester in studio 112.





Department Head: C. Clarke

Performing Arts Department (Theatre ARTS, Drama and Dance) cont...

Some Additional Notes from Dance Studio



As we complete the first semester of the 2014-2015 school year, it is evident that the dance department has been quite busy! The students in the department have put on some outstanding performances with their own original pieces of choreography, participated in workshops with major contributors to the world of Canadian dance and continue to put dance on the map as a legitimate art form within the Alexander Mackenzie school community.

In the first few months of the school year all grades worked on solidifying their technique in both ballet and modern dance. Students were challenged with both practical and theoretical assignments and consistently went above and beyond expectations. In October, the students in the grade 10, 11 and 12 classes represented the dance department during our annual ARTS Information Night. These three classes also did an outstanding job performing at the ARTS Information Night for potential grade 8 students at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts. The dance students demonstrated outstanding levels of organization and professionalism and for that the teachers of the dance program are so very proud of them.

In November, students had the opportunity to complete a workshop with the artists of TOES for Dance. The contemporary workshops were lead by Toronto-based dancer Kate Holder, as well as the two founders of New York City's MADBoots Dance, Austin Diaz and Jonathan Campbell. Later on in the month, students went on a fieldtrip to see TOES for Dance at the YCDSB Centre for the Arts. This performance was filled with contemporary dance from young up and coming choreographers and dancers from Toronto and New York City. This performance showcased the power of dance education and provided a peek into our students' future. The grade 11 dance class also completed an African dance unit that culminated in a three-day workshop with African dance specialist Sharon Harvey.

The AMHS Dance Council has also been working very hard and has contributed to the dance program in many ways. The students have held weekly meetings and social gatherings to continue and solidify the bond between the students within the program. The Dance Council's mission is to increase the presence of dance within the hall of AMHS and this was definitely the case when they choreographed and presented a piece for the school's Remembrance Day assembly. The piece entitled *Heaven* was choreographed by the Dance Council co-presidents and grade 12 students; Zayn Molu, Olivia Petroff, Meagan Shallow and Natalie Shallow.

Most recently, our graduating grade 12 class just completed with a final culminating project known as The Graduate Showcase 2015. The senior students were each responsible to choreograph a piece of modern contemporary dance using student volunteers from the grade 9, 10 and 11 classes. All of the students' hard work culminated in a truly successful evening at the Vaughan City Playhouse. Congratulations to the grade 12 students on all of your hard work. Your choreography was absolutely beautiful and was a true testament to all of the hard work that you have completed over the last few years. A special thank you and congratulations goes out to all of the student performers who volunteered their time to make the performance what it was.

The first semester of the school year had its challenges and triumphs! As we look towards the upcoming second semester, we are sure that it will also be filled with excitement. Students can expect to work on original pieces of choreography with their teachers as well as working with guest choreographers for the 5th annual **Dance Expressions on Monday May 25, 2015 at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts**. Students will also be participating in other inter-disciplinary workshops as well as going to see a professional ballet performance by the National Ballet of Canada in downtown Toronto.

Congratulations and thank you to all of the dance students as well as their parents for all of their hard work and support. It has been a wonderful semester and we are sure that 2015 will bring the same successes!



Performing Arts Department (Theatre ARTS, Drama and Dance) cont...

Some Additional Notes from Theatre Studio

Congratulations to our Theatre ARTS and Drama students for another semester of in-depth exploration and creation! Over the last several months, students have engaged in a number of enriched performance units, gaining first-hand experience with a variety of cultural and historical performance traditions. Here are some highlights from the semester.

The Grade 12 Theatre ARTS students explored avant-garde theatre movements from the 20th and 21st centuries, culminating in a professional performance of a student-written piece highlighting the limitations of language in contemporary society. Students entered into the complex and talented minds of two of theatre's legendary rebels, Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett, exploring not only the ground-breaking technical and performance developments pioneered by these two dramatists, but also their philosophies, time periods, and approaches. Through a number of practical exploration activities, students worked on their feet through many universal dilemmas about personal responsibility, social order, and the nature of human existence. By using performance as an access point, students were able to critically engage with some of the biggest questions faced by every generation of artists, and learned how to do so in an engaging, theatrical, and entertaining manner. This year's Graduate Showcase performance, held at the Vaughan City Playhouse, highlighted the technical, performative, and conceptual skills that students have developed over three-and-a-half years of enriched, year-long Theatre ARTS courses. The show was a huge success, garnering positive feedback from parents, staff, and community members, who enjoyed having their assumptions challenged while also being thoroughly entertained by the well-crafted stories and characters.

Theatre ARTS students in grades 10 and 11 continued their journey through various cultural and historical movements, experimenting with forms as diverse as Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and the works of the Elizabethans, including Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Students delved into the social-issues based exploration of Theatre of the Oppressed by experimenting with forms such as Invisible Theatre, catching spectators off-guard and engaging them directly with the actors and the stories in order to help turn their existing perceptions of our world upside down. Students also had a chance to gain first-hand experience with the Shakespearean approach to writing, taking reconfiguring existing characters from a range of stories and putting them into a new situation and context together. The student-generated works that were produced this semester demonstrated new levels of creativity and authenticity, applied to some classical and foundational aspects of stage performance and drama-in-society work. Students discovered practical, relevant applications for traditional performance training and for dramatic exploration, both important streams of theatre work that can be pursued not just in high school, but in the world beyond, from higher education to community-based work and the professional stage.





Department Head: C. Clarke

Performing Arts Department (Theatre ARTS, Drama and Dance) cont...

Some Additional Notes from Theatre Studio

This year's Sears Drama Festival entry will tackle the issue of the competitive theatre world head-on with an entirely student-written and produced piece entitled "We Can't All Be Famous." The piece is contemporary, a bit edgy, and draws on established traditions such as Commedia dell'Arte in its use of stock characters from the theatre world to satirize our culture's obsession with competition, control, and perfection. The show features a large cast and crew which have been hard at work in rehearsals for several months, and will premier in school on February 12th with a buy-in performance before heading to Pierre Elliott Trudeau S.S. for the first round of competition on February 23rd.

The Dramatic Arts Council has been hard at work promoting departmental activities and performance. The Council will continue to celebrate theatre, drama and creativity at Alexander Mackenzie with the First Annual Film Festival on April 1st and the Excellence in Student Theatre Achievement Awards in June.



Music Department

Department Head: E. Hudspith



The AMHS Music Department would like to congratulate all of the music students who have worked so hard this semester and taken part in many different concerts and events.

We started off the semester with "A Trip Around the World", a dinner and concert organized by our Grade 11/12 Arts students. Next, was the winter concert, "Showcase", which featured 250 music students performing in concert bands, choirs, orchestras, and small ensembles. The Music Department's musical, "Anything Goes" was a huge success (with more details on a separate page). Finally, our Music Council hosted some very successful events for the music students, including a grade nine barbeque, a Halloween-themed movie night, and the always popular Holiday Party.

In second semester, we are looking forward to another busy schedule, including concerts, festival performances, and our annual extended trip, this year to the Atlantic Music Festival in Halifax, Nova Scotia. On Thursday, February 26th, we will hold our annual Coffee House and Silent Auction. Please contact the music department if you are interested in donating items for the auction.





Visual Art Department

Department Head: A. Bhatia

Thank you to all of the art students this semester who put forth such a great effort with their creativity and skills in creating a fantastic array of artworks. Many of these works can be seen on the walls around the school as well as in the foyer display cases. In September, Melanie Siegel came in to our grade 9 art classes to work with our students on creating felt pieces inspired by the Group of Seven. These pieces were then put together by Ms. Siegel to create 2 beautiful panels which will be further worked on in semester two by our arts students. In November, several works of art from Alexander Mackenzie students were on show at the International Quest Educational Conference at the Sheraton Parkway Hotel in Markham, where they received much praise. Our school also had a team of four artists at Quest that participated in 'Artonomy', a collaborative painting experience, along with teams from other York Region schools. This event was streamed live into the school foyer for the student body to observe our students in action. Another busy group of students has been the Yearbook class. The Yearbook is more than halfway complete and after having seen a proof of the cover we are certain that it will be one of the best ever!

Out and about.... our students went on a number of excursions this year including a trip to the Aga Khan Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario as well as on a few walks up to Mill Pond to do some *plein air* sketching in the fall. Next semester we will be heading off to the McMichael gallery. On May 13th, our Arts and Culture Council will be hosting our annual Java Night, which entails a variety of multi-discipline performances. Also In May, our senior art students will be curating our annual art show at Boynton House (in Richmond Green) as part of Doors Open Richmond Hill (May 7 -10), where we will once again showcase the talents of our excellent students. Here's looking forward to an exciting semester!



Emotions by: Harremie Park



Self Portrait by: Taia MacEachern



Expectations by: Jenna Caswell



Self Portrait by: Conan Chan



Alexander Mackenzie High School
300 Major Mackenzie Drive West
Richmond Hill, Ontario
L4C 3S3