

Web News | House Drama Festival

Reviewed by Elena Christodolou

Monday 19th November

The House Drama Festival is perhaps the most anticipated competition in the whole school. Months of hard work, commitment and determination are essential to succeed. Given a theme of opposites and a challenge to produce self-written plays, Mr. Proudlock did not make the work any easier this year.

Murray set the tone with "Attraction to the unknown," a comedy satirising "Hill Mill" and teenage problems. Directed by Jessica Livesy and Aisling Miller, the play kept the judges laughing and lightened the mood. However, their focus on humour and lack of substance perhaps hindered Murray's hopes to perform again on Thursday evening. Good performances all round but a special mention must be given to Omid Saliman.

"A Series of Snippets" by Cedars was a good effort. The play seemed to be primarily reliant on comedy, lacking the sincerity that is required for the success of any play. Raimondo Butera and Alex Stylianou dominated the play, leading the humorous series of clips where the characters comically clashed, consequently portraying the theme of opposites in an amusing fashion.

Excluding Alex Leighton's random outbursts onto stage in his underwear, McClure's house play, "Opposites With the Anderson Family", was by far the favourite of the evening. Directors Ben Corrigan and Nick Saffrin, perfected the balance between comedy and solemnity and successfully conveyed both the dramatic and musical abilities of McClure. The "news report" was an original idea even though it attracted a few cheap laughs from the crowd. The unexpected and unusual ending of the play would have been more effective had the previous scene not just switched from pure comedy. Overall, a brilliant play with exceptional performances by Natalie Kosky, Amy Green, Olivia Bernstone and Jake Davis.

Overall, Monday night proved to be successful and the crowd were nothing less than eager for the following plays. Up next: Ridgeway, Burton Bank, Atkinson and Priestley. Let the competition commence.

Tuesday 20th November

Tuesday night saw another exciting spectacle as the House Drama Festival continued. The evening kicked off with 'The Nativity Play', written and directed by Theo Hughes- Ford. One of the many great aspects of a borders' play, especially Ridgeway, is that they try and involve the whole house and really create a sense of team work and unity when performing their play. They always look like they're having fun, and tonight was no exception. The unusual, modern day adaptation of the age old Christmas story of the Birth of Jesus had the audience in hysterics. Memorable performances include those from James Alcumbre, who played Mary hilariously, Stefan Novakovic and Jun Hwang. It was great to see all the members of the house involved in each and every way. The play wasn't incredibly well acted, as many of the actors had no experience in this field and the jokes inserted were clearly there to please the audience. However, not much critique can be given to this play as it was intended to be exactly as it was; light hearted.

Ridgeway were followed by rival house, Burton Bank. This serious and moving play, titled 'Liberate Me', featured a schizophrenic who heard multiple voices in his head. The theme of opposites was displayed strategically in this play, as in the words of Mr. Proudlock, 'what better way to contract opposites than to expose the battle between the voices in the head of a schizophrenic.' Lead role, Ollie Bass, performed outstandingly, emulating the different emotions accurately. The play was short, sharp and quick, leaving a lasting impression on the audience. A particular mention must be given to the lighting and sound in the play as they really contributed to the play's atmosphere and mood. The fact that Siddarth Kohli wrote and directed such a powerful play reflects the mature approach and attitude all directors took this year. Some argued that the play was a little too serious for the House Drama spirit but overall, a very thought provoking and well acted play.

Ben Alderton, Harriet Cotton and Elena Christodolou led Atkinson next to the stage as they anticipated the performance of 'Back to Front'. Having written the play, Ben sat eagerly by the sound board to witness Atkinson's performance. It has to be

said, that this play was utterly unique. The play tells the story of two ex-servicemen who return from the home front to face what they left behind. The language and content were sophisticated and engaging, although, at the times, the script was a little too complicated and over written for the audience to comprehend. However, Atkinson managed to find the balance between comedy and drama as the play featured a number of funny quips from Seb Delamothe and Ollie Marshall but also captured the audience's attention with the fierce confrontation between John, who was played by Ralph Warman, and Grace, brilliantly played by Rose Miller. For the record, Rose is in Fourth Form and I think it's safe to say that everybody was impressed by her level of acting. The play took a different approach than the rest, revealing its individual nature but maybe it was too diverse for the drama festival. I guess we'll find out on Wednesday night.

To end the evening, Priestly performed 'The Whore of Mensa', written by Sam Morrissey. The play took the sophistication of house drama to a new level as the subject matter revolved around whores...who were paid to have intellectual conversations with customers. Natasha Warren directed the predominately lower school cast in a fashionable manner, earning the laughs and applause when expected. However, the content seemed out of the league of the performers, in the sense that not even half the adults in the audience understood the terminology and references used. The real question that needs to be asked is, was it too over written to reach the final? Nevertheless, the high calibre of acting accompanied by the frighteningly accurate American accents made Priestley's play dynamic and entertaining. The lead role, Oliver Bobroff, defied his size as he owned the stage in this performance. Other mentions go out to Hannah Douglas, who projected her lines with vigour and power, and Katie Newton, who performed brilliantly.

Credits go to all the cast and crew of each and every play. All four had a uniqueness and individuality to them that everyone strives for when putting together a house play. Until Wednesday night...

Wednesday 21st November

The last three houses were left to their plays as the anticipation for the results grew on Wednesday night. School House commenced with 'Hard Candy', cunningly directed by Guy Shaul and William Wright. The audience's attention was captured from the start as the funny, light hearted acting proceeded. 'Banff Enterprises' portrayed the reality of what job applicants will do to make their way to the top. From bribery to seduction, the 'fast paced series of hilarious interviews' proved to work in School's favour as the audience roared with laughter. Having to compete against two major drama houses on the same night, School stepped up and raised the bar.

After a number of unfortunate mishaps, Weymouth recovered smoothly, with excellent performances by Gaby Kountourides and Hannah Lloyd-Davies. Although they didn't manage to hold the audience's attention throughout the play, the acting constantly remained solid. 'Revenge of the Amazons' was a weak, yet comical, version of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', a classic Shakespeare play. Having to reenact one of the most famous and widely watched plays in the history of theatre, is surely a hard task and with organising and perfecting 17 speaking part, director Marley Hansen did the best she could. However, the play lacked organisation and structure, which led to the audience's confusion. The participation of a great deal of the house created a joyful vibe, allowing everybody to participate and enjoy themselves.

Working with the universal theme of opposites, Collinson decided to attempt a serious piece of drama rather than their usual comedy this year, performing 'Means to an End', directed by Amanda Pegram and Jennifer Bailey. Tommy and Gerald, played by Chening Duker and Luke Connolly were clearly crowd favourites. Both lower school boys performed fantastically displaying excellent concentration as well as phenomenal acting skills. Their relationship, along with its effects, was the focal points of the play. The audience was captivated all the way through and the roaring applause at the end proved that the play was nothing less than a success.

Final comments: Wednesday night

Forget concerts, GCSEs and A-levels...the real drama took place on Thursday evening in the Large. After a shocking announcement that four plays would be in the finals, Atkinson, Burton Bank, Collinson and Ridgeway waited nervously. The judge stood to deliver his verdict. Much advice was given: Atkinson was told to improve their working class accent, Burton Bank was questioned on its success without Oliver Bass and Collinson was criticised for the similarity between its script and Fight Club. However, very little was said about Ridgeway; his final comments being that it was like choosing between a spaceship and an orange. "The winners of the House Play Festival 2007 are Ridgeway!" An immense roar followed from the back of the Large; 'The Nativity Play' had won...Director and writer, Theodore Hughes Ford, jumped on stage to collect the prize and the cast ran back to house to celebrate, leaving the disappointed runners-up to lick their wounds...