



Upper School Newsletter- December 2009

We arrive at the end of a long term with the threat of snow and industrial action on British Airways and Eurostar, our hope must be that Wolf House and Jebson House are not occupied by stranded students (and their parents!) for the Christmas holidays. This has been a busy term with a tour preview evening, an highly successful tour to Canada, the Lynne Seymour Award (with the top prize going to Francesca Hayward), two pieces choreographed for a service at the actors Church in Covent Garden by Maud Boissiere and Grete Borud Nybakken and a fascinating collaboration evening between choreographers from the Royal Ballet School and young Composers from the Royal College of Music. It is good to know that a number of these pieces are being developed into entries for the Ursula Moreton Award in March.

Other events in the spring term will include the Young British Dancer of the Year and the BTEC evening on February 12th at which our first year students will be performing classical repertoire and a collaborative piece developed in partnership with students from Dagenham Parkway School.

Staff news

This term has seen Glenda Lucena covering the 3rd Year Girls while Petal Miller Ashmole has been away, she has been a delightful colleague and an inspirational teacher and we wish her well as she returns home to Venezuela. It will be lovely to have Petal back amongst us in January after the tragic loss her husband, former dancer David Ashmole.

We also have to say goodbye to Marie Louise Wohlgemuth who has taught English to our foreign students for the past 24 years. Marie Louise began her work at White Lodge and then moved to a full time post at the Upper School, first at Barons Court and then Floral Street. She has been my closest colleague at the Upper school and has acted as a counsellor and friend as well as an English teacher. Many professional dancers throughout the world have passed through Marie Louise's ESOL classes and have cause to be grateful to her. She has been a wonderful colleague to us all and has been completely flexible in fitting her job around the needs of the school, for a time this included regular French classes for the Director!

We have appointed Suzanne Mellor to replace Marie Louse and it has been good to have Suzanne with us for the final week of term- let's hope that she hasn't been put off and returns after Christmas!

Students

In addition to staff leavers we also say goodbye to one of our graduate class, Paul Russell who is taking up a full time contract with New Zealand ballet. Paul has been a wonderfully positive role model in the school and was recently awarded the gold medal at the Genee competition. We wish Paul every success and happiness in the future. Two other early recipients of contracts have been Sander Blommaert and William Bracewell with The Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet respectively; they will stay at the school for the rest of the academic year. Hopefully many more contracts will be offered once the audition season begins in earnest after Christmas.

Academic studies

This has been a good term of sustained and fairly uninterrupted work. A number of students have AS examinations as soon as we return after the holidays, hopefully amongst the festive celebrations there will be time for a spot of revision.

Wolf House and Jebson House

We are delighted that we have now completed the renovations to Wolf House and that we can now boast of being able to offer high class boarding accommodation to all students in the first and second year. The two new members of staff at Jebson House Alison Norsworthy and Pauline Kennedy have coped with all that could be thrown at them and survived. They threw a Christmas party on the final evening of term and great fun was had by all. At Wolf House there was similar fun and games on the final evening (all financed I might add by our wonderful PTA). Once again the staff have coped with new facilities and systems with little fuss or complaint. We will be sorry to see Margaret Alain leave at half term in February but look forward to Ruth Pepper returning from maternity leave. Margaret has been perfect for the job, a wise, professional and experienced head with a real sense of fun.

Parents

In January all Independent schools move to system of inspection that provides 5 days notice rather than 9 months as in the past. We will need to be in a state of readiness at all times and I have the exciting task of getting the School PIP (pre inspection pack) together just in case.

As part of this process we will be placing all of our key policies on the school website; some, such as the Child Protection Policy are a statutory requirement whilst others are there for your information. You will also find a number of these at the back of the student handbook which was sent out to all parents during the term.

Some parents have enquired about the possibilities of their daughters having the HPV vaccination. We have found that there are 4 pharmacies in the Covent Garden area which do this free of charge. Any parent interested should contact Carrie Brooke-Mellor at the school.

Another requirement is that we ask parents for feedback on how we are doing across a number of different areas. Please find enclosed a questionnaire which again should be returned to Carrie at the Upper School.

Postscript

It was wonderful to see so many parents, who had braved the snow to get to our open day. For those who heard of my concerns about my daughters wedding the following day, in the foothills of the North Downs we had a wonderful day- a perfect white wedding. The bride and groom remain cheerful despite finding their honeymoon suite for the night of the wedding double booked and the romantic trip to Paris on Eurostar a non starter!

I know that some students struggled to get home but understand that all are now safely on their way. On behalf of Gailene Stock and all at the School, we wish you a happy and restful Christmas and New Year.

Martin Fosten