



# Senior Dance

Lauren White



As the school year began, we were all anticipating Mrs Neill's announcement for the reformation of the dance team after our previous success, which had attracted many new students who were eager to try out. After one quick audition, full of excitement, we were split into the junior and senior teams and the hard work began!

Rehearsals began promptly with our choreographer Ruth Cobb, who had us working hard right from the beginning. This year, Ruth choreographed a dance inspired by 'The Mask' with our very own, bright green Jim Carey lookalike! It was a dynamic routine, showcasing our dancers' best tricks, and jam packed with incredible technique, while still maintaining the comedy aspect of 'The Mask' that everyone loves. During our Friday rehearsals, we would spend 30 minutes with Ruth and then a further 30 minutes with Miss Anderson who challenged us with some body balance exercises, to improve our fitness and strength, and even offered a morning class for those who were really keen to build up those core muscles! Within a few months, the dance was coming along amazingly, and with the support from our teachers the routine was looking slick.

Finally, after endless rehearsals and dedication from both students and teachers, we were ready to compete at our first competition, NICMAC! After some lastminute practice, we anxiously boarded the bus, kitted out in our dance team quarter zips and headed to Lisburn Leisureplex. Nerves were running high as we prepared to show what we'd worked so hard on, the excitement building up as we got into our fabulous costumes and added some last minute touches to our makeup. The atmosphere

was incredible, the overwhelming feeling of support allowed us to take the stage full of confidence as our teachers cheered us on from the audience. We gave it our all, only to find that while we had been dancing our hearts out, a serious snowstorm had been happening outside, meaning we had to give the awards a miss, as we rushed to get on the bus before we ended up stranded! Despite the disastrous weather, we were thrilled with our performance, and felt an even bigger motivation to continue rehearsing for the next competition.

With our second and final competition quickly approaching, not a single break was taken as we were back in the sports hall to make improvements, and to ensure we were ready to give our best performance yet! Our last competition was The Ulster Dance and Fitness Competition, which was being held in the Queen's PEC. Knowing this was our last chance to show what we could do as a team, we gave it everything we had, and it all paid off hearing the cheers from the audience as we ended our dance. As we all sat together in a big circle for the awards ceremony, surrounded by the other schools whose kindness and good sportsmanship made the atmosphere that much better, we were ecstatic as many of our dances had placed, the shouts of encouragement could be heard from a mile away! It was an incredible way to end the year, and we

were full of pride as we left the venue with our heads held high.

This year, some of the dancers had the opportunity to perform solos, duets and trios. The trio performed by Reece Wilson, Violet Coen and Keisha which was choreographed by Ruth, placed first at both NICMAC and Ulsters winning three Gold Medals for each. Mia Downey and Ruby Bushby performed a thrilling duet, which also placed first at NICMAC and Ulsters adding another two Gold Medals to our haul. Sarah Liggett's incredible lyrical solo also placed first at Ulsters earning yet another Gold Medal and Lauren White's Hip Hop solo placed first at both NICMAC and Ulsters adding an impressive 7th Gold Medal for the Team. Many of our dancers also received colours awards for their successes.

Overall, it was an incredible year for the senior dance team and on behalf of the team, I would like to say a massive thank you to Ruth, our choreographer, for her consistent creative direction and for always pushing us to do our best! I'd also like to thank Mrs Neill for her dedication to the dance team, as without her none of it would be possible. To Miss Warnock for her continued effort and support for our junior team, to Miss Anderson for always encouraging us to build our strength and stamina within dance and finally to Miss McCullough for always attending competitions to cheer us on and get some on-stage pictures that capture our love for performing! Their dedication and hard work are so appreciated as they allow us to do what we love, and support us fully, thus enhancing our school lives. Thank you for always believing in us!

# Extra-Curricular Dance Competitions

Mrs J. Neill



Banbridge Academy Dance teams, comprising of 62 pupils from Years 8 to 14 took part in both the NICMAC Dance Competition hosted in Lisburn Leisureplex and The Ulster Dance and Fitness Championships held at Queen's PEC. The Academy entered their largest ever turnout of Junior and Senior Dance teams into these prominent regional competitions. Our Junior Dance team, involving 35 Year 8-10 students, performed an upbeat, complex routine inspired by the Disney Movie 'Inside Out'; the Senior Dance team performed a stylish, energetic routine inspired by 'The Mask'. The teams were competing against schools from across the province including Regent House, Glendlola, Strathearn, Bloomfield Collegiate and the Royal School, Armagh. Both Teams performed well on each of the competition days, with the Junior Dance Team's efforts being rewarded with 2nd place and Silver medals at Ulsters.

In addition to the team events, individual pupils were entered into Junior, Intermediate and Senior Solo, Duet and Trio Dance sections with the school enjoying significant success in both competitions with no less than 6 Ulster Champion Titles in their sections. Year 9 pupils Rachel Pollock and Lauren Wilson won Gold Medals and 1st place at both the NICMAC and Ulsters for their Street Dance Hip Hop Duet, whilst Abigail Walker and Sienna Heasley were awarded Bronze and 3rd place at NICMAC and 2nd place and Silver at

Ulsters. Alexandra Duffy Year 10 was awarded a Silver medal at both for her Junior Solo, whilst Mya McKinney won Gold and 1st place for her performance in the Junior Song and Dance section of Ulsters. Year 12 pupils Violet Coen, Keisha Mould and Reece Wilson obtained Gold in the Intermediate Trio section for a stylish Jazz inspired routine. Lauren White won 1st place at both NICMAC and ULSTERS in the Senior Street Dance Hip Hop competition, achieving the Highest marked Senior Solo. Ruby Bushby and Mia Downey Year 14 completed the



sweep of awards with 1st place for the Senior Duet at NICMAC and Ulsters.

The squad, expertly choreographed and trained by Mrs Ruth Cobb (herself a former pupil of the Academy) managed by Mrs Jennifer Neill and coached by Miss Rebekah Warnock and Miss Sarah Anderson, have shown great school spirit, their commitment has been steadfast and they have worked really hard to gain credit in their chosen field. An exceptional effort from all involved.

