

Extra-Curricular Drama Society

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In February, my friends and I were extremely excited about an unanticipated announcement in Form Class: 'Anyone in Years 11-12 interested in joining a drama group, come to a meeting at break today in F69'. I couldn't believe it! This was a dream come true for me. I'd thought about trying to start a drama club before and loved the idea of having a drama group in school, but had no idea how to even approach it. I should probably give a bit of context... I'm what some would call a bit of a 'theatre nut'; I've been in mini shows and musicals with drama groups and just love watching theatre at any time-day or night. So I enthusiastically went to the meeting that fateful morning, and the rest you might say is history.

When we arrived at Miss Greenlee's class we were presented with our challenge- we only had a few weeks to put together an extract of between fifteen and twenty-minutes, taken from a play of our choosing to perform at Portadown Drama Festival. We eagerly accepted

the challenge and agreed to stay behind afterschool on a Wednesday to give it a shot.

When the first Wednesday's rehearsal arrived, we appeared with great enthusiasm, despite feeling physically

exhausted after a tiring game's session. We were given roles from the play, 'Daisy Pulls it Off' by Denise Deegan (which no one had ever heard of before) and started rehearsals. With our English schoolgirl accents and one Russian music teacher we began to see the spark of excitement in one another's eyes as we all knew this was going to be a lot of fun. The roles we were given that day stuck, and the part of Daisy Meredith (the lead) went to Olivia McDowell, Trixie Martin (Daisy's best friend) to Hannah Kerr, Monica Smithers (my character's best friend) to Olivia de la Torre, Clare Beaumont (Head Girl) to Belle Fitzsimmons, Mr Scoblowski (the Russian music teacher) to James Clark and Sybil Berlington (Who you could describe as the villain of this play, the arch nemesis of Daisy and Trixie) being played by myself.



There was a lot to be done in only a matter of weeks and we could see the fear in Miss Greenlee's face as time ticked by and it looked as though we might not have it 'polished' in time. When the festival finally came round, after a few additional extra practices, we were thankfully ready to perform! We got costumes sorted- otherwise known as hunting for dressing gowns at home and in a 'Mary Poppins-like' bag of costumes that had magically appeared; borrowing one of Mr Erskine's infamous bow ties; looking through the mountains of lost and found property to find hockey sticks; borrowing Geography textbooks from Mrs Dreaning and being given a bald cap that had just magically appeared! We learnt our lines, perfected our accents and eagerly made our way to Portadown Town Hall.

The school hired us a mini bus to go, so we were able to bring a couple of friends with us to watch and to provide moral support. The bus journey was so exciting, with nerves and adrenaline rushing through us all-it was both nerve wracking and thrilling at the same time! Over the few weeks of practice, we'd all gotten quite close, so it was really exciting to be able to do this as a group. We got to the venue and were brought straight through to the stage (a proscenium arch stage to be exact- see Miss Greenlee I do know my terms!) and got everything set up. It was time to shine, as they say. So we did!

There weren't many people there, but that didn't matter as we performed and it was actually good! Yes, there were a few slip-ups but that's inevitable with any show and given the extremely short space of time that we'd had to practise, we had all done brilliantly to win a gold medal at the end of the night. We were ecstatic, but slightly sad that this was probably going to be the final time that we performed as a group, or so we thought...

The following week we found out that we'd be doing it again, but this time for the Armagh Drama Festival. I don't know if you know anything about Drama Festivals or not, but it is a pretty big one and so rehearsals resumed again and with our adjudicators sheet from our last performance, we were able to fine tune our play into the best we could achieve with a few more weeks' practice time.

This time our transport seemed to have upgraded and we got into this fancy taxi (which we were totally not convinced was going to kidnap us) with 7 seats, and Miss Greenlee followed in her car behind. After a journey of excited chatting, we arrived and had to wait quite a while for our category. So, not wanting to waste any spare time, we got our costumes on and rehearsed for what was to officially be our last time on stage (yes, we did get some odd looks from some of the other group categories round us, but no one

questioned us... aloud anyway).

Then finally, the time came and we were the first to go on. We got set up, the curtain rose and our show began. It was a really good performance, perhaps one of the best we had achieved, on a much bigger stage this time and in front of a full house! With the bright lights beaming down on me, I felt ecstatic-there's nothing quite like theatre! I've yet to find the right words to describe just how amazing it is, but it is simply fantastic. This experience enabled me to stand with four of my best friends and two newly acquainted ones, and as I took my final bow I knew that this is an opportunity that I will not soon forget!

Our main competition was an A Level drama group. Their performance was fantastic, there's no denying it, but they'd had more time and this was the piece they performed for their A Level exam so unsurprisingly they won. We had still placed in second place and had another medal to add to, 'The Bann Players' collection.

We all went home with delighted smiles plastered on our faces and so grateful for the opportunity that Miss Greenlee had provided us with.

I would thoroughly encourage anyone to take on a challenge such as this; it is an amazing opportunity not only to develop your skills, but also to develop and create relationships with old and new friends across your year groups. I loved taking part and I know for a fact that I'm not the only one.

In conclusion, on behalf of our entire group, I want to sincerely thank Mrs Neill for her work behind the scenes and of course to Miss Greenlee, for all the hard work you put into this club. You pushed our abilities and helped us learn how to develop our skills further; I cannot wait to see what you do with this year's group, but we all know there's nothing like the O.G!