

Hunchback goes to Hungary!



Hungarian Consul General enjoys 30th Anniversary of quality performances

Drama students at Richard Challoner School in New Malden delivered polished performances of a new dramatisation of Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* to packed audiences over three nights this week. The second night was a Gala Performance and Reception for VIP guests including the Hungarian Consul General, Mr Lajos Olah, as well as the Mayor of Kingston, Cllr Margaret Thompson.

This special event was to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the school's first Drama tour to Hungary and several students from the original tour were also in the audience. Spine-tingling versions of the National Anthem as well as the Himnusz, the Hungarian Anthem, were performed by one of the school's choirs and preceded the *Hunchback* performance.

With strong links established by the school's former Head of Drama and the play's writer and director, Neil Zoladkiewicz, the Challoner performers aged 13 to 18 travel to Budapest as a theatre company every February during half-term to perform plays and run workshops. Next month they will be performing *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at the Kolibri Theatre, as well as giving a performance and workshops at St Imre's High School. A second production of Oscar Wilde's *'The Importance of Being Earnest'* directed by the current Head of Drama Leigh Norton, will also be performed at the International Buda Stage.

Reflecting on the school's links in Budapest over the past 30 years, Neil commented: "We have been appearing in the beautiful city of Budapest almost every year since 1990! Therefore, the city and the Kolibri Theatre are almost a second home to the Challoner Theatre Company! It has been a unique educational experience not only for our own students but also for the Hungarian students who come to our performances. It has been an exciting venture and I am so very proud of all the students who have taken part over the years. We were also honoured that the Consul General and the Mayor were able to attend our special Gala Performance and Reception."

The cast of *'The Hunchback of Notre Dame'* comprised GCSE and A level students as well as several from the lower school, led by Poppy Harry Bagnall as Esmeralda and Oliver McConville as Quasimodo, the Hunchback. The cast demonstrated the wealth of dramatic talent that Richard Challoner currently has in the school. The young performers immersed themselves in the play's colourful characters, and demonstrated their keenness over the past three months, giving up their Sundays and evenings to deliver high quality performances.

Highest level accreditation for exceptional education Packed Activity Break

Members of the Richard Challoner School community in New Malden are delighted that the school has been successful in achieving accreditation at the highest level in relation to its Professional Learning programmes for staff development, and for its Principled Curriculum Design. In both these areas, the school's practice has been recognised as transformational.

Over the course of the last term, staff have been working towards an application for accreditation in two strands of the Framework for Exceptional Education. Designed by the SSAT Leading Edge Network, a national network specifically for high-performing schools, this framework provides a rigorous and aspirational structure for self-review, peer-review, collaboration and planning in a number of key areas of school leadership and development.



Reflecting on this accreditation, Sean Maher, Head Teacher, commented: "It is wonderful to be recognised by SSAT for the work that we are trying to do around staff professional development and the curriculum. If we truly want a world class education for our young people, then we must invest time and energy into making our teachers the very best in the world whilst at the same time teaching a carefully constructed and appropriate curriculum. We are delighted for our staff and our students."

As well as affirmation of the school's current vision in these crucial areas and the chance to reflect and plan for future growth, this accreditation also gives the school an opportunity to express heartfelt thanks for the support given by families, staff, governors and the local community.