

'Behind the Scenes at Ark Putney Academy': A guide to Drama at APA

Form Behind the Scenes at Ark Putney Academy': A guide to applications and what Ark Putney has to offer 'Behind the Scenes at Ark Putney Academy' is a series of blog posts written by Sarah Sterne, a parent and governor at our school. Sarah writes from a parent's perspective about the challenges in selecting a Secondary School, getting past the jargon of new progress measures and finding the right learning community environment to suit a child's individual needs.

Post 5: Drama at APA

When choosing a secondary school, something you may consider is: *What opportunities will be available for your child to participate in the performing arts?* Participation in the performing arts and drama in particular, can contribute to confidence building and can provide a real sense of achievement. Being involved in drama is being part of a community which is beneficial on a number of levels.

Drama at APA

I had the pleasure of being in the audience of the Shakespeare Schools Festival in November 2016, which took place in the Royal Academy of Drama. Three Ark Network Schools took part and Ark Putney Academy put on a very striking performance of Hamlet. I was also invited to meet the Head of Drama at APA, Sara Young, who gave me some insights about how the production was put together.

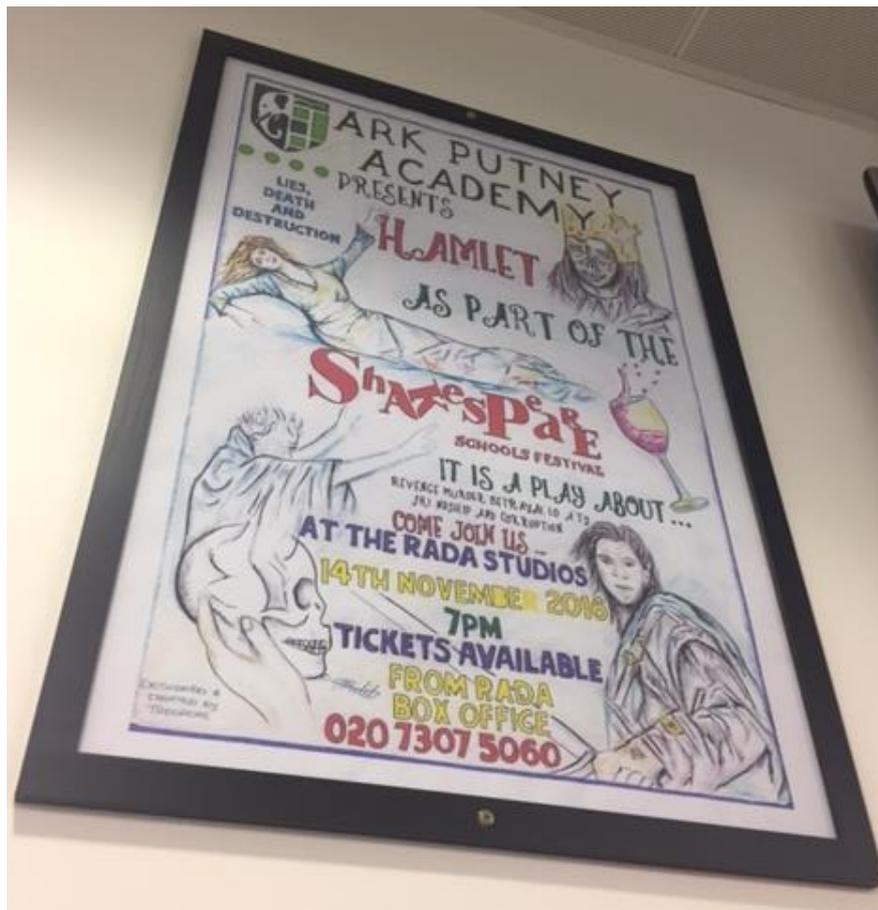
Firstly, I'd like to congratulate all the students that took part in the production. Your lines were delivered with clear articulation and your skilful body movements created dramatic effect. I am so impressed with the way you tackled the Shakespearean language and brought the plot to life. I would also like to congratulate Ms. Young and the staff that supported her during the project, your contribution was very important. Also, it was fantastic also to see so many staff from APA in the audience; APA staff have created a uniquely supportive community.

The initial audition for the play was inclusive and open to all year groups. This style of audition is called 'Workshop Audition' and it enabled the roles to be tailored to the strengths of individual students. This production was Hamlet 'with a modern twist', because each character was played by two or more actors. Not only did this approach mean that more students could be included, it also greatly supported the drama of the final production. Whilst one Hamlet said the lines, another

Hamlet shadowed, using body movements and facial expression to convey the mood of the moment.

The Stage Director of the Shakespeare Schools Festival feedback that, ‘the characters’ doubling was used creatively, allowing us to see their inner feelings as well as what the outside world perceives’.

Students that participated, including understudies, were expected to work as group and show commitment to the rehearsals and final performance. As the project progressed and the students gained confidence, they were loyal to the team and developed a sense of purpose. The workshop approach facilitated learning as a shared experience and students began to direct one another, with one student taking on the role of assistant director. This approach gave the students ownership over the production and raised their status amongst their peers. The final performance was of such a high standard that six APA students were invited to audition for the RAaW London Film and Theatre Company.



The brilliantly designed poster to advertise the play was created by a student in Year 10, raising the profile of the play further amongst the rest of the school.

The future of drama at APA

The future of drama at APA looks very bright not least because of the new facilities that are due to open in January 2017. APA will be opening a new theatre within the school, which will have tiered seating for the audience, top of the range audio and lighting and of course a stage with wings. The theatre will be used for curriculum drama lessons and productions. The technical equipment will serve not only to enhance the performances but also to create opportunities for students to develop their production skills. Ms. Young is looking forward to future collaborations with the English and French departments. The first performance in the new theatre is set for March 2017 and I can't wait to see it!

References:

The Shakespeare School's Festival: www.ssf.uk.com

RAaW Film and Theatre Company: www.raawlondon.com