

News from Elmhurst

Patron HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

January 2012

Welcome...

Yet another term has flown by; it has been an extremely busy start to my second year at Elmhurst, with lots of new initiatives making it feel far more so than my first.

I was pleased to hear students cheer when I announced Robert Parker's appointment as new Artistic Director from September 2012. Desmond Kelly and I have already begun to work with Robert to ensure a smooth handover. I am also delighted that Desmond is continuing his relationship with the school as Artistic Advisor – the Elmhurst team is getting ever stronger!

The solos competition showcased some outstanding dance performances this year. I have had the fortune to observe the students over the past 16 months and it is a pleasure to see them make such progress in their dance training. The air was tinged with a great level of confidence and judges Chi Cao and Elisha Willis, Principal dancers with Birmingham Royal Ballet, commented on how enjoyable it was to see the students' passion and love of dance. Thank you to the Friends of Elmhurst for organising the event and for their generous contributions to the school.

Last term I enjoyed visiting all the Houses to review the school's boarding provision. It is always good to see students in their living environment. I was welcomed with hot chocolate and biscuits, and had the opportunity to judge the decorated doors in Fischer House. Thank you to the students and House Staff for being so welcoming during my visits.

The new Christmas card competition was a success with 17 entries. The winning students were Olivia Holland, 6:3, for her stunning photography of Birmingham Royal Ballet costumes, Thomas Varney, Year 7, for his excellent depiction of the Nutcracker, and Isobel Holland, Year 9, for a collage of a ballerina. Billy Brook, Year 9, deserves a special mention for the use of IT in his art work. Olivia's photograph was our featured Christmas card this year.

The Elmhurst Christmas activities were extremely enjoyable this year. Many thanks are due to parents and friends of the school for supporting our lively Christmas Fayre, to Edgbaston Old Church, Mr Robson and the choir for a festive Carol Service, and to Mr Griffiths for organising enrichment activities in the final week of term.

I would like to take this opportunity to say farewell and thank you to Ann Mason, Librarian, and to Tom Hinds, IT Technician, who left us at October half term and at the end of term respectively.

Jessica Ward, Principal

Artistic News

Appearing with Birmingham Royal Ballet

Over the past months many Elmhurst students have been selected to dance in Birmingham Royal Ballet's productions. *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Nutcracker* (featuring PVPs, Lower and Upper school students both in Birmingham and at the O2 in London over Christmas), *Checkmate*, *Pineapple Poll* and *La Fille mal gardée*. All students have been and continue to be a credit to the school.



photo: Roy Smiljanic

Guest teachers and masterclasses

In November the renowned choreographer Stephen Mears taught an audition workshop based on his hit musical *Crazy for You* to the 6:2 and 6:3 students. *Crazy for You* is currently enjoying a hit run at the Novello Theatre in London. The Friends of Elmhurst were invited to and enjoyed watching one of these workshops. All voted the session truly inspirational. Mr Mears imparted some valuable information to the students about the audition process.

On another occasion the students had the pleasure of a workshop based on *Legally Blonde* taught by Zak Nemorin.

Sabbatical in the States

Elmhurst's Head of Jazz and Tap, Thorey Mountain has been given leave of absence from the school for the duration of the spring term 2012. Miss Mountain is refreshing her knowledge of American/Rhythm tap in New York and the



Takeshi Watanabe, winner of the Barbara Geoghegan Award; photo: Elaine Mayson

West Coast. She is also observing current trends in jazz and tap in the USA to bring back to school. During her absence Miss Mountain's classes are being taught by Michelle Blair and Sarah Harvey. Elmhurst teachers Jenny MacNamara and James Grundy also have input into some classes.

Visit www.elmhurstdance.co.uk for more information about Michelle Blair and Sarah Harvey.

Cecchetti Classical Ballet Awards

Elmhurst had major success at this year's Cecchetti Classical Ballet Awards held at Sadler's Wells Theatre in November. Takeshi Watanabe won the Barbara Geoghegan Award, Miles Gilliver was runner up and Joseph Taylor won special commendation. Congratulations to all.

Elmhurst Associate Programmes

Students in Sunderland, Plymouth and Manchester continue to work hard on their Elmhurst dance training. We have received some excellent feedback on these classes from parents, thank you for your continued support.

Birmingham PVPs have had a good term's work, and many parents very kindly supported the student Christmas Fayre as this was an open day for watching their children in their ballet classes. We are delighted to welcome Jenny Brennan back from maternity leave.

Classical Spectacular

Graduate students, Giulia Bellotti, Corey Annand, Lydia Arnoux and Daisy Hulbert gave beautiful performances representing Birmingham Royal Ballet as part of Raymond Gubbay's *Classical Spectacular* at the Manchester Evening News Arena and the Birmingham National Indoor Arena, dancing *The Dying Swan*, in perfect unison, in front of thousands of people. They had costumes especially made for them by Birmingham Royal Ballet. All four girls had a wonderful time and had a huge success. Not many dancers get the opportunity to perform in front of so many people at one time, not only accompanied by a full orchestra but fireworks as well.

Cheltenham Charity Concert

Our resident Choreographer Samira Saidi is busy creating a ballet on 6:2 students to the Strauss Waltzes for a performance at the Cheltenham Mayor's Charity Concert on 4 February 2012.

Trampoline & Tumbling World Championships Opening Ceremony



From September 2011 the Year 10 jazz dance lessons with Mrs MacNamara focused on creating a performance piece to form part of the Opening Ceremony for

the Trampoline & Tumbling World Championships, which took place at the NIA Birmingham, 18–27 November.

The opening ceremony, 'Flight: Dance of the Skies', was directed by Dennie Wilson, who requested the Year 10s for this project following their outstanding summer show performance in Year 9. Jenny MacNamara then created the choreography for the students to perform.

All who saw the students commented on their talent, professionalism and energy.

Young Creatives

Shaun Mendum, 6:2, has applied to the Young Creatives 2012 Programme run by Youth Dance England.

If accepted onto the project Shaun will have an opportunity to create his own choreography, working with fellow Elmhurst students and the support of a professional mentor; he would also attend skills-building workshops, and a four-day rehearsal intensive at White Lodge. The programme culminates in a one-off performance at the Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House, in May 2012.

Shaun was one of 50 applicants from the Royal Ballet School, Rambert, Central, BRIT School and many youth dance companies across the UK who attended an audition day at the Royal Opera House on 27 November. He was accompanied by Mr Griffiths, and fellow students Joseph and Gabrielle. Shaun had to perform a task with his chosen dancers, then had to repeat it with new dancers.

One of the highlights of the day was meeting Wayne McGregor (Resident Choreographer with The Royal Ballet) who was involved in the audition panel and interviewed Shaun on his choreographic processes.

There are only 12 places for the course so please keep your fingers crossed that Shaun will be selected.

Tap Captain!

Jessica-Jo Marshall in 6:2 has been given the job of Captain of the England Tap Team – the biggest UK team ever to take part in the World Championships. Congratulations Jessica!

Solos Competition

The solos competition proved to be a very exciting evening with a packed house of Friends and Governors. There were 43 very strong entries in four categories. Year 11 winners were Corrine Cox and Leo Dixon. 6:1 winners Marika Kobayashi and Paul Oliver. 6:2 winners Michaela Clarke and Caspar Stadler. 6:3 winners Eri Nishibara and Takeshi Watanabe. The marks were extremely close with a separation of just one in many cases.

Congratulations to all students who took part and many thanks to the tutors and pianists who worked so hard to produce a polished and professional result. Our sincere thanks also go to the judges for the evening, Birmingham Royal Ballet Principals Elisha Willis and Chi Cao.



Charitable Elmhurst

Operation Christmas Child

Elsie Allen and Rebecca Scanlon of Year 11 organised a shoe box appeal for Operation Christmas Child, the girls invited the charity in to talk in assembly. The students were obviously touched by the assembly as we were able to send 70 boxes of gifts to other parts of the world for less fortunate children. Thanks to Elsie, Rebecca, Mrs Moreton and Miss Haw for supporting this.

Women v Cancer: Cycle Kenya report from Helen Siddle

18 months ago I signed up for a challenge of a lifetime, raising valuable funds for Breast Cancer Care, Ovarian Cancer Action and Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust. We also made a donation to the Faraja Women's Cancer unit in Kenya. I never once anticipated how much this challenge would take over my life as I embarked on my cycle training and fundraising.

The actual challenge was far better than I ever imagined. I did question my level of fitness but I had no worries or Hakuna Matata as the Kenyans say! We were minor celebrities being welcomed by Kenyan officials with camera crews and press photographers. All we were doing was trying to raise awareness of cancer and with 78 of us cycling 400km over five days, I think we succeeded.

Words cannot describe the feeling of one minute free-wheeling 16km downhill to then be faced with a 23km hill in blistering 41 degree blazing sunshine that took me personally 5½ hours to climb. Reaching Gold on that hill was a personal challenge but one that I embraced wholeheartedly. I was determined right from the start to cycle every kilometre and not get on the bus unless they dragged me on kicking and screaming!

Cycle Kenya has changed my life because I know if I want to do something out of my comfort zone and I put my mind to it, I can succeed. I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without my extremely supportive family and friends and I can't thank everyone enough for the support and words of encouragement offered me along the way. Whilst in Kenya, Facebook notifications offering me more words of encouragement received on my mobile reduced me to tears but spurred me on to keep going.

There were a lot of tears, saddle soreness and aching limbs each day but the overall feeling of pride outweighed everything else. I have made some fantastic friends during my ten days away and I am extremely proud of everyone's achievement. I'm going to continue with my cycling and I'm looking to see what challenge I can take on next!

General News

Christmas Fayre



Saturday 26 November saw the second Elmhurst Christmas Fayre, and it proved to be an even greater success than the first. All houses were represented with stalls ranging from a tombola and mulled wine to cakes and handmade crafts. There was a lively trade in Elmhurst bears with some high-pressure selling resulting in nearly 20 finding new homes. Staff, students and visitors were treated to some beautiful performances from the flute and vocal choirs, and a good time was had by all. The final total raised was close to £800 and all funds will be used on improving the social activities offered to the students.

The Carol Service

On the last morning of term the Reverend Canon Dr Alison Joyce, our School Chaplain, welcomed us to Edgbaston Old Church for the Christmas Carol Service. The school community was joined by parents, Governors, friends and Birmingham Royal Ballet staff to participate in a celebration of Christmas music and readings.

Our chief guest this year was, once again, David Bintley, CBE, Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet and Artistic Advisor to the school, who very kindly gives up his time for this event whenever he is in the country and always brings an interesting and unusual slant to the Service by his choice of reading. This year we were delighted to welcome Birmingham Royal Ballet Principal Natasha Oughtred for the first time. The school choir has been greatly extended by Mr Robson, our Teacher in Charge of Music, and now boasts a membership of some 80 students.

The peripatetic music team were able to show us the results of the work they do throughout the year with contributions from the Guitar Ensemble, the String Trio, the Chamber Choir and the Flute Choir led by Mrs Careless.

This wonderful event illustrated so clearly the incredible skills of these multitalented young people.

Miss Ward ended the service with a delightful reading and the school departed with warm good wishes for a wonderful Christmas holiday.

A retiring collection was taken for Edgbaston Old Church Organ Restoration Fund.

Fundraising and Development

Anna Hainsworth, our Fundraising and Development Officer, has been busy working on funding applications to continue and develop our Elmhurst Associate Programme in Sunderland, Manchester and Plymouth. This programme brings Elmhurst quality training to cities visited by Birmingham Royal Ballet on tour and is working to promote Elmhurst as a centre of excellence across the country.

In November, Anna attended a Calthorpe Business Alliance event, hosted by Calthorpe Estates. We are working hard to improve our profile amongst Birmingham's business leaders and events such as these can be very helpful in getting the Elmhurst brand out into the wider community.

Thank you to all those who contributed vouchers for the Morrisons 'Let's Grow' scheme. We're delighted to have collected over 1000 vouchers, which have been used to purchase 'grow your own' equipment and seeds for our planned school vegetable patch.

Easy support...

If you haven't done so already, please sign up to EasyFundraising and EasySearch to support Elmhurst. It's an incredibly easy way to raise money for the school, simply by shopping online in your usual stores, but accessing these stores through the EasyFundraising site.

Simply

1. go to elmhurstdance.easysearch.org.uk and bookmark the page for when you want to search on-line. Every time you use EasySearch you will raise money for Elmhurst.
2. go to EasyFundraising and sign up (select Elmhurst as your charity!). Then use EasyFundraising to shop with over 2000 well-known retailers, including Amazon, Argos, eBay, John Lewis. It won't cost you any more, but whenever you buy something the retailer will donate money to Elmhurst via EasyFundraising. You just need to remember to enter the shopping sites via the EasyFundraising site.

Do you tweet?

Are you following us on Twitter @ElmhurstDance? We now have over 400 followers and would love to hit 500 before the Easter break!

Spreading the word

If you or anyone you know would be interested in supporting Elmhurst, please contact Anna on 0121 415 2861 or email anna.hainsworth@elmhurstdance.co.uk and she will be happy to give you more details.

The Elmhurst Way



The Elmhurst Way: pictures by Annika Amos

2011-12 DIARY

SPRING TERM 2012

Term begins: 9 January
Half Term: 11 - 19 February
End of Term: 29 March

SUMMER TERM 2012

Term begins: 23 April
Half Term: 2 - 10 June
End of Term: 13 July