



SUMMER 2016 ISSUE 11

# Et Cetera

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL

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Cover shot:

Guy Johnston

## HEAD'S INTRODUCTION

Young musician of the year in 2002, Guy Johnston came to give us a private cello performance. He and our choir, who sang for him, were soothing balm as we began to close another year of diligence and a hundred things more than we should ever have taken on. Filling the vastness of the school hall, his performance of the Prelude from Bach's first cello suite was delivered with striking sensitivity and poignancy. It was a masterful, captivating show of virtuosic ease and grace - a performance of tremendous power and startling poise. The resonance in our wooden hall, the harmonic buzz of perfectly-tuned arpeggiated chords held our audience captive, before he released us back into an awestruck silence. He was deeply appreciative of our choir's recital of a selection of their current repertoire. With such beautiful music, I was able to reflect on the many achievements of the term. Guy Johnston was taken aback by all that school has to offer and his astonishment was a timely reminder to me that when one is so surrounded by so many encouraging people, that one becomes accustomed to it and just expects it. So, Guy Johnston's intake of breath leads me to thank students and staff for: the many visits (Italy, Snowdonia); the ever popular Duke of Edinburgh award; the packed revision and intervention activities; the free time of so many staff on Saturdays and in holidays to teach; the impeccable manners that students reveal in each assembly; the personal warmth of Year 13 in their leavers' assembly; the Mayor of Kensington and Chelsea for including our school in so many events; the Holland Park Trust for continuing to fund activities; the choir for their stunning music; the welcome each year at the Campden Hill Residents' garden party and on the list could go. The thread running through it all of course is a great many people making school matter, matter more than it may strictly need and that is why leading it is such a privilege and a humbling experience. I am ending the year teaching Year 12 some poetry – Philip Larkin, and it has been a fitting closure, I am deeply at home amongst students just as I was ending my first year of teaching some thirty-four years ago.

MR COLIN HALL  
HEAD



## ARTISTIC ENDEAVOUR

Thorpe Lodge, tired, dilapidated and in need of major renovation, took on a shine to house the exhibition of our A2 artists. Whilst Mr Chappell persists in being absent from the photograph with his students, it is his guiding eye that has assisted a second year of exceptional performance. Over 150 people came on 16th June to a Private View including a number of next September's art aptitude students. An installation, 4m square paintings, a profound level of technical expertise was matched only by a discernible mature emotional line running through all of the exhibition. The capacity of students to capture feeling was stunningly palpable. Having completed A2 a year (or in one case two) early the students will be free next year

to work beyond 'A' level. Some have applications to the most prestigious of art colleges and so they should. Their work is already more than worthy of an undergraduate show and an example of what exceptional teachers can do. What Mr Chappell has achieved goes beyond description: the students' work is rich in meaning and exquisitely rendered with practical skill. The work of the last two years will form a permanent exhibition in our gallery; a testament to a profound moment in time in the development of the teaching of art. The art aptitude students looking to join us in September were rightly over-awed.

MR COLIN HALL, HEAD



## PERFECT TENSE

June 30th saw the sixteenth Perfect Tense, and whilst it is an event of undiluted pleasure, each successive year the number of people we disappoint increases. Do we know enough? Do we encourage more people to make their work exceptional and widely known? What exactly marks out the people who are chosen by teachers? These questions are important. For attendees this year, Thorpe Lodge Garden was resplendent, the choir sang, amongst other pieces, some Byrd, Ave Verum Corpus, some Hubert Parry, My Soul, beautifully and friends of the school graced the Hall to celebrate some exceptional young people. Whilst much of the achievement is all too obvious, a number of the back stories are private and some students' awards have behind them courage, disadvantage, illness, bereavement, difficulty and challenge – making those young peoples' success all the greater. Thirty students received an award in the name of a friend of the school. These awards are given to students who have some particular connectivity with, or relevance to, the person after whom the award

is named. Sometimes this is information which is for sharing, but sometimes private and personal to those two people. For example, the Celia Birtwell award went to Phoebe Ingleby; The Sally Clarke award went to Gabriel Rumney; The Katharine Kent award to Sarah Bagheri; The Elizabeth Rutherford cup to Suki Griffiths; The Brigid Jennings' bowl to Griffin Tory (a winner in all of his seven years and the extraordinary winner of the Melinda Libby cup when he was in Year 8). This year the coveted Melinda Libby cup went to Tom Harris. The House prizes were: Anderson Award - Catchik Jordan, Baker Award –Toska Ibrani, Bennett Award –Lailita Docherty, Chappell Award –Sidney McLeod, Seeley Award –Leonardo Rossi. Alumni of the school came back and as the sun set one thought, of course, of the children's success, of parents' success in creating such children, but also of the importance of all children and the determination to spread such attitudes and virtues even more widely.

MR RICHARD NORTHOVER  
DEPUTY HEAD



## ALUMNI

Valmir Selimi, now Dr Valmir Selimi, left us six years ago to Cambridge to read medicine. He has just qualified and he returned to school to come to Perfect Tense. Sally Clarke, our friend, met him for the first time and was astounded by his sensitivity and gentle confidence. What a thorough delight it is to be retaining our contact with a man of such intellectual and personal distinction. We look forward to a long and sustained relationship with this most illustrious of former students. From his same year group (2010 leavers) we also had the privilege of the company of Bel Powley who is so very much in demand as an actress both here in Britain and in the USA. She was joined by Kitty Wordsworth (also a 2010 leaver) still feeling so connected with her alma mater. From that vintage, Sam McCann, about to become a primary school teacher. The joy of seeing such alumni reminds one just how important school is and what a circle it is. One can see that very soon all of those twenty four / five year olds will be creating and giving warmly to the next generation. Just as Bel has astounded Hollywood with



stunning performances in a variety of styles, genres (indeed even accents), Dr Valmir Selimi's work in Cambodia as a medic has been a thrilling foray into emergency medicine at the hardest edges. Saving lives, he told us, was an hourly inevitability, not a mere daily ambition! Sam McCann, similarly, will leave a profound impact as a primary school teacher: charming, charismatic, warm-hearted and generous, children will fawn over his avuncular care. Our 2015 alumni added to the pleasure: Violet Smart, now a very successful rower for the blues and a confident singer for many-a-college choir, has made an deep impression beyond her Theology degree. Omar Sabbagh, freshly down from Cambridge, delighted us with his quirky ebullience and effervescence. Both were joined by Rosie Lloyd-Reed who brought her trademark gentility. How wonderful to see our students blossom as adults and build a new generation of alumni.

MR NICHOLAS ROBSON  
DEPUTY HEAD

# A Whitsun Wedding

*"The glare of that much-mentioned brilliance,  
love,  
Broke out, to show  
Its bright incipience sailing above,  
Still promising to solve, and satisfy  
And set unchangeably in order"*

The languor of the close summer heat may be a universal reality, but at Holland Park it certainly does not sap teachers of energy and frustrate children over dreams to escape sweaty and dull classes to the impending summer holiday. Instead, returning to lessons on Monday 20th June after their preliminary AS examinations, students in their first year of A Level study were greeted by something altogether more exacting and exciting. In one such lesson, Colin Hall introduced Philip Larkin's critically acclaimed 1964 collection, *The Whitsun Weddings*. It was dynamic, moving, transformational. A Wedding was organised with two of our newest teaching colleagues, Ms Carla Bromhead and Mr Robert Orr, dressed and acting as bride and groom (all during their free periods). I played the vicar, surpliced and dog-collared, leading the ceremony and introducing the hymns. Wedding cake accompanied by tinned salmon sandwiches and tea made this a distinctively 1960s affair. There was confetti and hat donning colleagues observing the lesson in their finest wedding outfits. Footage from cine film home-recordings of family members arriving for a wedding in 1963. Music from Cilla Black. And what a true sense there was of this complex and ambiguous

eponymous poem. The Whitsun Weddings follows the poet's autobiographical experience, encountering a series of wedding parties on a train journey southwards. Whatever scorn so many believe Larkin had for the working class he depicts, for the drudgery of their lives, the modesty of their tawdry accoutrements – in Colin Hall's lesson there was such a powerful sense of Larkin's pricked emotion. It is not easy to provoke students' sentimentality about weddings, particularly weddings of such humility and lowliness. Yet, the lesson grasped that sailing 'bright incipience' of love, its promise and freshness. Students, in celebrating the unexpected were given a glance of Larkin's own experience of the recorded events. Larkin wrote in 1981 of the poem: "You couldn't be on that train without feeling the young lives all starting off, and that just for a moment you were touching them ... It was a wonderful, a marvellous afternoon. It only needed writing down." Typically, leading from the front, Colin prepared, designed and led an experience of tremendous sentiment and of powerful meaning. The dialogue that ensued developed a depth of understanding about the context and various readings of the text – and sent students scurrying off to read Andrew Motion's autobiography and watch the many documentary films available on the poet's life. And now there are at least 16 more students thrilled and excited about one of the 20th Century's greatest literary figures!

MR NICHOLAS ROBSON  
DEPUTY HEAD



# KATHARINE KENT CONCERT

As a hush settled on our audience of supportive parents, governors, alumnae, friends (amongst them Katharine Kent), musicians from across the school performed music from across the ages. There was jazz, rock, music from the romantic era, from Elizabethan England, contemporary classical music, folk music. There was an eye-watering array of talent and skill. Students in their early years at Holland Park and those a few years older, joined together in an ensemble of sweet harmony. Yola Khodja's 'Natural Woman' was a powerful and sensitive rendition of that invigorating and potent song. Gabriel Rumney's violin solo, Obertass by Wieniawski was breath-takingly virtuosic. He has some competition on the violin, though, from Lachlan Morris-Wilson, whose Take 5, showed profound promise of a real performer in the making.

A cover of The Stone Roses' number Fools Gold by our very own school rock band was slickly polished and authentically produced. The school orchestra's foray into the world of Beethoven (contrasted superbly by a Thunderbirds tour de force) was a marked moment of development under the skilled baton of Amy Chapman, and Thomas Cattermole. Verve in articulation and sensitivity in texture and dynamics made this a thrilling performance and one that shows great promise for the future. Musicians from our A Level music group showed their gifts on the piano. And the school choir, of course, was delighted to support it all with much music from its repertoire.

MR NICHOLAS ROBSON  
DEPUTY HEAD



## THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

...whether or not with the sound of music it is difficult to say, but the Welsh mountains gave welcome fun, walking and fresh air to students who secured their place on the VIVO Reward trip. Competition to gain a place was fierce and the joyous company of its leader, Ms Pilling (and the warm wit of Mr Seal) were doubtless reasons why this is an enduringly popular part of our extracurricular. The mountain expertise of Laurence Dawson and Ian McClelland and their passion for the outdoors is a wonderful asset to urban students. So, it is hoped that come September all students will be earning their VIVO's. The Vivo reward programme is open to all students and it celebrates and rewards the day to day performance and attitudes of students. September will bring a chance for new moments to shine.

MR ROSS WILSON  
DEPUTY HEAD

## IT'S NOT JUST CRICKET

England's cricket fortunes are much followed as well as emulated here and summer sporting activity was much celebrated in the PE team's annual adventures in Devon: a five day long exploration of all kinds of outdoor activity. Swallows and Amazons – very alive and kicking. Their endeavours, following on from other foreign tennis and Netball tours to Malta, seem to have ignited a palpable enthusiasm. And a good thing too. In September, Mr Mitchell becomes Head of PE and will also be overseeing the Duke of Edinburgh Award, ably assisted by Mr Wagg and Mr Ball. We will have the largest PE team we've had for many years and we are excited about the rich diet of exertion planned in the coming school year. Let's hope students can rest well in the summer in preparation!

MR RICHARD NORTHOVER  
DEPUTY HEAD

## YEAR 13'S LEAVE TAKING

...culminated in two events: Mr Hall's final assembly and the Sixth Form Dinner. In the former, Mr Hall entrusted his Year 13 audience as he spoke warmly and personally. As an observer of my students, it is all too clear to me the extent of so many sixth formers' affection and Mr Hall's trust. It was a moving event. The Sixth Form dinner in Chelsea saw Sid McCann deliver a speech on students' behalf, he did so with eloquence, charm and warmth. Sid is the third of a line of McCanns and what a joy we have had from that family. In the presence of a number of Sixth Form teachers, elegantly clad – Ms Oxtoby in an eau de nil duster coat – students exchanged memories and looked back on seven years.

## ST GEORGE'S LUNCH CLUB

As regular supporters of our local lunch-club for the elderly, we were very pleased to host and entertain our local members and volunteers on Thursday 16th June. Our school caterers put on a delicious spread of three courses and, mid-meal, the school choir came to perform a few of their favoured numbers for our 30 diners. Taking pleasure in singing for their supper, we were also the beneficiaries of a very kind donation from St George's church, raised to support the work of the music department. The money has been used to pay for our first anthologies of music for the school choir. Much as with the festival concert, the school choir is privileged to work with so receptive and supportive a local community.

## MOZART

...and open to all...on Saturday 3rd December, we will be repeating last year's wonderful performance of Messiah, a Come and Sing event. This year it will be Mozart's Requiem, directed by Mr Robson and performed courtesy of Monsignor Curry, at Our Lady of Victories Church.

## ST GEORGE'S FESTIVAL CONCERT

Having for many years sent members of our school choir to augment singers from the local community, instrumentalists from the Royal College of Music and vocal soloists at the annual St George's Festival Concert, we were overjoyed to have its own slot for the first time this year. Returning from Durham Cathedral in January, the choir's repertoire has burgeoned and students have enjoyed a growing confidence in performance – and this was so much in evidence at the festival concert. Extended work by William Byrd, John Bennet, Thomas Tallis, and John Dowland formed the basis of our two sets, sparkling performances which were given a very warm reception from a filled St George's church. Andrew Wells, director of music of St George's festival concert, spoke effusively about the quality of the school's performance and how it measured up to the festival chorus, comprised of adult singers. I was pleased to glow with pride, directing the group and seeing them flourish into a highly accomplished band of musicians – and we are very excited about being invited back for future years!

## LADY BORWICK

Amongst our high-profile events this year was a memorable visitation from our local MP, Lady Victoria Borwick, who delivered a seminar with a selection of our students on public life and work in the houses of parliament. Having been fortunate to host the Right Honourable John Bercow the year before, who chaired a Sixth Form debating society's debate, this was another fascinating insight into a life in national politics – and yet more generously-given time by hard-pressed servants of the state. Lady Borwick's question and answer session navigated such issues as the implications of an EU referendum on national politics, matters of housing in London, the problems of gender equality in politics and the invasiveness of the media. Treating us to anecdotes about her work with Boris Johnson, with Transport for London, with media organisations, she gave a revealing expose of the skills required by and challenges facing those at the heart of frontline politics. Having toured the school and visited an array of lessons, she then shot off to a late-morning appointment – the commons' Science and Technology Select Committee!



## ARMED FORCES DAY

Invited by the Mayor and in the presence of the Mayor and Lady Borwick, the MP for Kensington, our students proudly represented us at the flag raising to mark Armed Forces Day. It was an opportunity for the school to express its gratitude to all who endeavour to make Britain a safe and tolerant place to live.

MR SIMON DOBSON  
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

## LIVE ON STAGE AND IN PRINT

Ms Nightingale will be leading a group of students who will be performing live in a London theatre as part of our involvement in the Shakespeare Schools Foundation and Ms Hennah will be working to again with First Story to publish students' writing.

MS AMANDA REDFEARN  
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

## LOOKING FORWARD

The intrepid (and glamorous) Ms Pilling, ever at home in sophisticated surroundings, is also a keen (and glamorous) adventurer. She plans next year to launch 'World Challenge'. This international organisation, takes students to the far reaches of the globe on an adventure of a lifetime. There will doubtless be a queue of students wishing to sign up to this highly acclaimed opportunity and if accepted they will, with Ms Pilling's energy and enthusiasm, be required to raise substantial amount of money to fund the experience. Throughout the course of the year, school will direct some of its charitable fundraising to assist students in their pursuits. And not only will students attending the visit get to explore far flung places, they will also establish a valuable portfolio for their future. This is but one of a myriad of extra-curricular activities which Ms Pilling is giving up her holiday time to lead.

MS ALEXANDRA PUGH  
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

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Chater Jordan | *(still) Rebirth and Redemption, 2015-2016* | Film