

# The Berry Bugle



'The student voice of Mulberry School for Girls'

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## Solidarity is how we change the world



Maryam Naasir, Leana Waigo and Rahimah Warsame

The first 'Partnership of Equals' conference, organised by the Mulberry Schools Trust, took place at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on Friday 12th October 2018. Over 400 students from schools across London and around England came together to discuss topics which affect us. In particular, we discussed gender inequality, with the expressive arts as a key focus.

**The day began with a discussion between Grayson Perry and Jude Kelly which opened up the conversation about gender equality and gender identity. As Grayson Perry identifies as a transvestite he was able to share his experience on how gender stereotypes affect his daily life and others like him. This inspired us to explore the challenges we face in relation to our gender identities and sexuality.**

Following this we explored gender in dance, helped by a panel which included choreographer Matthew Bourne. The conversation got us thinking about gender inclusion and cultural diversity in the performing arts. The afternoon was dedicated to the exploration of gender in Shakespeare's plays and we had the chance to watch an open rehearsal led by Director Carrie Cracknell as well as engage with a panel of actors and directors about gender in theatre. We learned acting should be based upon character interpretation and not stereotypes. One participant said "I learnt how gender inequality affects the arts and how important it is to be aware of this". Edwina Dunn, Founder of the Female Lead, then explained her work as an advocate for



Syed performs his winning poem.

female role models and shared the stories of many inspirational women. The final keynote speaker, Baroness Shami Chakrabarti, gave a meaningful speech to close the conference, which inspired us to take action for gender equality.

The conference included many opportunities for students to share their talents. These included a dance performance which challenged the roles of gender by the outstanding students from Mulberry School for Girls and Heston Community School, as well as a thoughtful Shakespeare performance by Mulberry Academy Shoreditch. Prior to the conference we were given the opportunity to write poems and enter them in a competition which was judged by a specialist panel. All the poems were published in an anthology, 'Letters to our Daughters' and the winning students performed their poems at the conference.

Students said they learned that "solidarity is how we change the world" and that the conference inspired them to "break gender stereotypes". The message of the conference is still being spread by our Year 10 Partnership of Equals leadership group who are launching campaigns to promote gender equality through assemblies, displays and surveys.

The day sparked conversation about gender equality between young people from across the country. It had a large impact on us and developed our understanding of these issues. We are very proud of our peers for their amazing contributions to the day. We would also like to thank the Mulberry teachers and staff for supporting us. We hope this conference will inspire a future in which we can enjoy a true 'Partnership of Equals' between all genders.



The panel of actors and directors discusses Shakespeare.

# War Requiem workshop

On Wednesday 14th November Mulberry Young Critics were invited to the London Coliseum Theatre in Trafalgar Square to immerse themselves into the world of opera and critical writing.

**The first half of the day involved watching a dress rehearsal performance of *War Requiem* to honour the WW1 centenary. Involving a children's choir and projections of images from war both old and current, the performance was a moving and powerful message about the cycle of war and destruction.**

In the afternoon, Mulberry students were invited to a masterclass aimed at developing skills for critical writing led by a professional arts critic. Following this, the students were challenged to review a live performance of *La Bohème* which will receive feedback from the English National Opera.

Ultimately, the Young Critics Programme aimed towards introducing opera to a new generation of young and diverse critics. The feedback from the students was enthusiastic, and opened the door to the world of opera.



Views from the top balcony at London Coliseum.

# Congratulations to the Year 11 class of 2018!

Our Year 11 results this year have put Mulberry School for Girls in the top 130 (4%) of all secondary schools in the country (selective and non-selective).

**This is based on the "Progress 8" measure - the average progress made by all students in their best 8 GCSEs - and has no adjustment for disadvantage.** This is a tremendous achievement by our students and reflects their hard work and determination, the creativity and commitment of their teachers and support staff, and the patient support of their parents and carers. We are all very proud!

# Autograph photography trip

Hannan Bouda

On the afternoon of 14th November 2018, my photography class went on a trip to Autograph in Shoreditch.

**Autograph aims to share work produced by artists who use photography and film to highlight issues of identity, representation, human rights and social justice.** The exhibition included work by 16 to 19 year-old London photographers, responding to the shifting political climate they live in. Going there and gazing at the photos taken by young adults was a wonderful experience. The tour guide, Ali, showed us around and helped us during our exploration of young Londoners' photography. I'd definitely recommend this photography exhibition and I'd go again if I had the chance.

# Tahmila wins Met poster competition

Congratulations to Tahmila Yasmeen who won the competition for best Christmas poster in Tower Hamlets! As a reward, Tahmila was invited to the Metropolitan Police HQ to meet Commissioner Cressida Dick.



The competition winner!



# Measure for Measure

On 15th November, the Year 11 and 12 Drama students watched Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* at the Donmar Warehouse, an acclaimed theatre in London's West End which produces many innovative productions every year.

**The play was adapted and directed by Josie Rourke and the most interesting aspect of this production was that the director shortened the original play and created two versions.** The first time it was performed (before the interval) was authentic to the Shakespearean time in its setting and costume, whilst the second half was the same shortened version of the play but set in the 21st century and the roles of Angelo and Isabella (the two main characters) were switched. The director chose to do this so the audience could see the play's exploration of power from different gender perspectives. In the first half, Angelo takes advantage of Isabella; in the second re-telling of the play set in the 21st century, the tables are turned, and Isabella assumes the powerful role over Angelo.

We were really lucky to see the Hollywood film star Hayley Atwell, star of *Captain America*, perform as Isabella and *Dunkirk* star Jack Lowden perform as Angelo, which made the experience more exciting for us. It was a privilege to watch both of them act in real life and close up; the chemistry between the two was very effective and believable. It made the switching of the roles after the interval really interesting, as we saw how they reacted to each other once the status had been changed between the genders. A really memorable moment in the play was the transition from the Shakespearean half to the modern-day version. The designers of the production did this through the lighting, sound, and rapid costume change which took place on the stage. All these combined to create a discordant and disjointed atmosphere which put the audience in shock and a state of confusion as we realised we were being

dragged from Shakespeare's time to the modern day. Just before the transition, the lights began to flash, the music of hymns was played in reverse, and the scream of Isabella ripped through it all. We thought that Isabella's scream represented the rage of women that has been bottled up over the centuries. At the end of the dramatic transition, it was as if Isabella was propelling herself through the centuries into the 21st century to see how power feels and so, in the second half, we watched Hayley Atwell, take on the lines of Angelo, but still keep her name, Isabella.

We also liked how the costumes of the 21st century mirrored the costumes of the Shakespearean setting, so we could see the connection between the characters from one setting to the next. Isabella's costume for example changed from a nun's costume in the first half, to a power dressing outfit for the second half, but there were subtle similarities between the two in the styling of both costumes. They used strong spotlights throughout the play, as if telling the audience, we need to spotlight the issues around gender and power in this play.

It was a really interesting concept and made us realise how Shakespearean themes are still relevant to an audience today and we loved watching it.



A scene from measure for measure

## Becoming activists at Gal-Dem

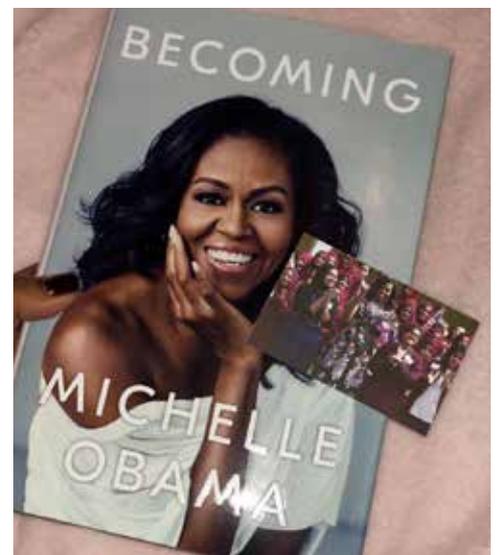
Isra Shorif and Saheba Hussain

On Tuesday 27th November a group of Mulberry student ambassadors were invited to a workshop organised by Gal-Dem magazine to discuss issues surrounding race, gender and equality in our society, focusing on Michelle Obama's newly published book *Becoming*.

**G**al-Dem is a magazine created by women and non-binary people of colour which addresses topics not always explored in the mainstream media. The magazine encourages people from all backgrounds to engage with the work they do.

The purpose of the trip was to discuss the issues Michelle Obama, former first lady of America, faced while growing up as an African American woman and how that shaped her to become the woman she is today. Her book, '*Becoming*', was the initial focus of the workshop. We also discussed how it relates to our lives.

Rianna Walcott, editor of and contributor to the book *The Colour of Madness: Exploring BAME Mental Health in the UK*, led the group discussion. We read compelling extracts from the books, which helped us consider the root causes of discrimination and how to tackle them.



A fond Mulberry memory of Michelle Obama's visit.

# Letters to our Daughters: Poetry anthology competition

Congratulations to Maryam Naasir who won joint second prize in the Partnership of Equals poetry competition, which was held by the Mulberry Schools Trust to explore gender equality. The winners were announced during the Partnership of Equals conference by poet David Neita.

**O**ur students worked with a number of performance poets to create deeply moving poetry. The entries were inspired by a poem that was written by President Barack Obama for his daughters called *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters*. The poem describes the contribution of great women to our world, the work they have done and the values they have shared. It is a letter of hope, love and care for them. It is a letter from a father who celebrates the fact that his children are girls and who commits to standing by them as they grow. It is a letter of confidence in all that they can become and the choices they will make as they take their place in life.



Dave Neita performs for our students.

## Real By Maryam Naasir

The clock reads one minute to twelve.  
As her child yells,  
Cars pass by, tyres humming along  
to the city music.  
Dull murmurs carry themselves  
through the wall,  
wrapping around her like a comforting hug.  
Her eyes fall on the child held in her arms,  
a smile lingering on her lips.  
She watches as he begins to settle,  
she watches as a final tear falls  
onto his delicate cheeks.  
And she wonders.  
She wonders how many tears he will  
shed silently, because real men don't cry.  
She wonders how many times his kindness  
will be confused for weakness, because real  
men are tough.  
She wonders how many times her son  
will be told to 'man up'.  
She places him besides his sister as she  
stirs gently in her sleep.  
And she wonders.  
She wonders how many times she will  
feel uncomfortable in her own skin,  
because real women have perfect features.  
She wonders how many times she will

be told to 'stop being dramatic', because real  
women are emotional.  
She wonders how long it will be before  
her daughter feels insecure about herself.  
She gazes at her children sleeping  
silently.  
Distant sounds echoing around them  
like a melody.  
She knows she will raise her son to  
not be part of the 'real men' but  
as a real man.  
She knows she will raise her daughter  
to not be part of the 'real women' but  
as a real woman.  
And she knows she will raise her children,  
the people of the future,  
as equals.  
Lights blink through the window,  
casting shadows against the walls.  
Voices carry themselves through the floors,  
flowing from ear to ear.  
Night lies still above the ground as  
change is beginning.  
A mother whispers goodnight to her  
two sleeping children.  
And the clock reads twelve.  
A new day has come.

# Action for conservation

Joannah Muriel

This year, SEND students are taking part in a conservation programme called WildEd, run by Action for Conservation.

**T**he scheme seeks to unite young people with the natural world and develop conservation areas within the school community and local area. So far, students have made bird feeders from recycled bottles, conducted bird surveys, tracked animal footprints, harvested and prepared vegetables and even made a 'bug hotel' to attract wildlife into the school's garden. Not only this, but the conservation programme is cross-curricular, and will cover Arts, Food Tech, Drama and Science.

On 5th December, we have been invited to attend a *Dragon's Den* style conservation presentation at the Rich Mix in Shoreditch. Girls will have the opportunity to discuss their



Mulberry students with green fingers!

Wildlife projects alongside eight other schools from London. The event aims to acknowledge fantastic conservational achievements and be a really fun afternoon!

We're all very excited to continue our wildlife programme and our commitment to the environment!

## Theatre tackles gender roles

On Thursday 29th November the whole of Year 9 and Year 10 were given an absorbing performance and workshop by Futures Theatre. Futures Theatre delivers authentic female stories that raise questions around gender, sexuality and independence.

**F**utures Theatre's performance centred on two best friends preparing for night out, giving snapshots of relationships that tackled often ignored issues around expected gender roles for young people today. After a funny and thought-provoking show, the students were then welcomed by the performers to question the events on stage, and voice their own opinions on the characters' actions.

The interactive performance and workshop was received warmly by students and staff. Year 9 and Year 10 thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to respond to the issues raised by the performances and to voice their own reactions to the events in the play.



The absorbing performance at Mulberry's main hall.

## Film review: Three billboards outside Ebbing, Missouri

Year 10 student

Rating: 4.5/5

Genre: Drama

Director: Martin McDonagh

Actors: Frances McDormand, Woody Harrelson, Sam Rockwell

**I**n this film, Mildred (McDormand), a mother of two children, lost her daughter. She wanted justice. She didn't care how she got it but she knew she wanted justice for her daughter. Mildred wanted to find out who was responsible for her loss, but felt as if the local police department didn't care. They closed the case without finding out who her daughter's rapist and murderer was. Therefore she put up three billboards in her town, which caused a lot of controversy. The billboards were directed to the police, mainly the sheriff. The billboards were the only thing everyone in Ebbing, Missouri was talking about.

What I liked about best about the movie was that it was not what I expected. At first I thought only people who were older in age would like this movie and I didn't think younger people would be interested. However it wasn't just full of violence and threats (though bear in mind there might be some scenes that viewers might not like), it was humorous, heart breaking and overall the story line was really good.

# Opera take-over

This autumn term Mulberry opened its doors to the English National Opera, exposing the school community to the power of opera and engaging students and staff.

**D**uring the Opera Squad takeover day, Mulberry school was transformed into a site of live pop-up performances by ENO professional opera singers. During break and lunchtime, students gathered to watch a variety of performances including a rendition of Gershwin's *Summertime* outside the library, and even had the chance to try on opera costumes.

Throughout the day, students from Years 7 to 9 joined workshops with professional opera performers, including a unique Science and Singing workshop for Year 8s. These live performances and workshops are part of a year-long residency within the school, and Mulberry students will create their own piece of opera. Both students and staff were given an enthralling insight into the world of opera, and are looking forward to the upcoming events in the next terms.





# Welcome Mulberry Academy Shoreditch!

Mulberry Academy Shoreditch (previously Green Spring Academy Shoreditch) joined Mulberry Schools Trust in September.

**The Trust now includes three schools: Mulberry School for Girls, the founding school; Mulberry UTC, our specialist technical school for 14-19 year old boys and girls in Bow; and Mulberry Academy Shoreditch, a mixed 11-19 school in Bethnal Green.**

Together with the other Trust schools, Mulberry Academy Shoreditch will work in partnerships with families, other local schools and the community it serves to provide outstanding education in East London.

Ruth Holden became the academy's Executive Principal in September, bringing 15 years of successful leadership experience. She describes the academy as providing "an education filled with excellent teaching, academic rigour and high standards, opportunity at every turn and a range of experiences that will inspire, engage and challenge all students."

Students from all three Trust schools have already been working together at the Partnership of Equals Conference and in preparing for the Model United Nations Conference in December. We look forward to many more opportunities for shared learning, enterprise and voice.

