What Makes a WOW Education?

Tasnin Shahid, 10B

The WOW – Women of the World Festival is a festival of talks, panel discussions, debates, music, performances, film and comedy with a common theme of female empowerment. The festival, which takes place at Southbank Centre – the UK’s largest single arts organisation under one roof - brings together women who all share their great stories, from those involved in arts, science, law, finance, sport, politics, fashion and family life and those who are active supporters of equality. Mulberry School for Girls was involved in WOW – Women of the World Festival for the second year running, having made their debut in talks and panels in the first ever WOW in 2011. This year, Mulberry hosted a young women’s conference, which took place on Friday 9th March. It brought together different girls’ schools and women and men involved in women’s education to address the question, ‘What makes a great WOW education for twenty-first century girls?’

The day included panel discussions between a variety of women with successful careers in education, enterprise and media and included responses to the questions, ‘What inspired you to become the woman you are?’ and ‘What should young women’s education look like in the twenty-first century?’. Many women explained how they made it to the top and others also stressed how important creativity was for them across the curriculum. One young woman said “I learned to respect myself and my abilities as a woman”.

Delegates were also treated to a fantastic performance of Mulberry School’s award winning play, The Unravelling...
and to some highly engaging and thought provoking performances from spoken words artists; Holly McNish, Kat Francois, Joelle Taylor and Natalie Fiawoo.

Attendees of the conference also got to choose two workshops in which to participate throughout the day including ‘Lessons for my daughter’, which explored the complex and dynamic relationships between mothers and daughters. Another workshop, ‘Better Together: women of all ages learning together’ was delivered in partnership with Magic Me, a company that runs arts projects that bring together people of different generations, whom Mulberry have worked with many times.

All in all, it was a very inspiring day which truly reflected the spirit of the WOW four day festival in supporting the empowerment of women from all areas of life in realising their potential, after all, we are the future!

As well as organising the conference on young women’s education, Mulberry School also played an important part in many of the other events over the four-day WOW Festival at Southbank Centre. They appeared on panels debating important issues, ran a successful stall at the WOW market and gave some inspiring speeches. Below is an extract from the speech given by Shabana Khanom, Year 13, and Khadija Khatun, Year 10, at the launch of the festival.

As a young woman growing up in a world where we are still striving for equality, we think it is incredibly important that we women unite together and do not just think of individual success. We must celebrate the strengths of women so we can learn, grow and gain in confidence and self-esteem. Through honing our abilities, highlighting our achievements and standing on the shoulders of giantesses, we can create a future that is so much brighter and is defined by true equality. As a young person, I’m often accused of not caring about issues concerning me in the world. And it is expected of me to mutter the horrendous word ‘whatever’. However I am a woman who has been empowered by history, teachings, inspiring women and events such as this one. I am here to say that I care about equality and that we believe we can achieve it.

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fected by things like vandalism and littering and the reasons behind it all. They also made PowerPoint presentations to show which communities they belong to and some of the issues which prevent these communities from being the best they can be. The most concerning issues were government funding, racism and pollution. This is proven by surveys from 2011-2012 on the Tower Hamlets internet page which is accessible for all students to look at.

Government funding is affecting everyone, even schools; schools may not have enough money for new resources because of budget cuts. A lack of local funding has severely affected local resources such as libraries and leisure centres which are all special to our community, especially the elderly and young people. This was also a finding of the survey on the Tower Hamlets web page.

The most exciting part of this research topic though is that Year 7 students will be writing letters to their local Member of Parliament about these issues and ways to improve the local community. Pupils have been working in small groups and each will pick a statistic about which they want to raise more awareness. Maybe some of our thoughts will be heard. Miss Kelly, Music teacher and 7E’s Citizenship teacher, stated “Year 7 students are embarking on an exciting research project on issues in their local area.”

We hope that our letters will make a difference to Tower Hamlets and the resources which are being provided for us. The survey suggests that vandalism, litter and graffiti can be taken care of by fining anyone caught affecting the community or simply by handing out leaflets on the sort of things people love about their community and why it means a lot to them. This should make all vandals think twice about others before harming the community! These are the thoughts and ideas of Year 7 pupils and people who live locally.

Swan Song Dance

Abida Siddiqua, 8R

This term Year 8 are performing a variety of different dance pieces in their dance lessons. 8R are dancing to the Swan Song which was originally choreographed by Christopher Bruce. They are creating their own production piece similar to the original. The dance itself includes many lifts, jumps, and turns.

The phrase ‘swan song’ is a metaphor for a performance given just before death or retirement. Swan Song was created for London Festival Ballet and was first performed at the Teatro Arriago, Bilbao, Spain on 25th November 1987. Traditionally Swan Song consisted of a group of three dancers; the cast was originally all male though it has been performed by an all female cast. Swan Song is a work which demands considerable stamina and rehearsal.

8R performed their Swan Song dance assessment on Thursday 9th February.

Women, Creativity and Ambition

This year’s International Women’s Day celebration was based on the theme of ‘Women, Creativity and Ambition.’ and featured a special guest speaker from The Fawcett Society. The theme encouraged students to create a vision for their future and think about how we can help shape the world to empower women.

As an introduction to IWD, Year 7 pupils enjoyed a short film about inspirational women, as well as performances produced by the Bollywood dance group and Junior Choir.

Year 8 and 10 watched a revival of The Unravelling play performed by Year 10 Drama students who also performed at Southbank Centre as part of the Mulberry WOW Conference the next day. The play explores a mother’s legacy to her three daughters who through storytelling discover the power to write their own future and change their lives.

Year 9, 11 and Sixth Formers supported the A-Level Drama students who rose to the challenge of performing their devised examination piece based on Ambitious women to a large audience.

Social Justice

Anisa Zareen Khalique, 8B

Once again this year Mulberry School hosted its Annual Youth Conference for current sixth formers and extended its invitation to many other sixth forms within Tower Hamlets. This award-winning conference, brings Sixth Form (and Year 11 G&T) students together from across a whole range of backgrounds to explore key social and political issues in contemporary life. Speakers at past conferences have included Billy Bragg, a politically radical singer and songwriter, Shami Chakrabarti, the Director of Liberty, and Tony Benn

It is always a vibrant and exciting event. This year’s theme was Social Justice - Global and Local and was attended by over two-hundred students from thirteen schools across London. The main
the students who attend the Youth Conference is the first step towards making a change in society. We strongly encourage students to find out about current events as one needs knowledge to make a change. This conference is primarily student-led and organised. From deciding the speakers to introducing them, organising workshops to giving speeches, it is all done by the students. This helps them to take the initiative and gain self-confidence. This year, Razia Shahab gave a powerful and inspiring speech to close the conference. Students who attend the event also have the chance to socialise and debate issues with other students of their age in workshops. Representatives of some impressive organisations provided workshops, including YOUth Inspire, the Women’s Environmental Network and the European Parliament. The students attending were very fortunate, as they had the opportunity to hear and ask questions to well-known and influential speakers, gaining a small part of their knowledge about the big world out there. The key note speaker this year was David Lammy, MP for Tottenham, and Ed Vulliamy, the International Correspondent for the Guardian. The conference this year also showcased Justice in Action, a documentary that students from Mulberry are currently making with Fiona Lloyd Davies. The documentary is based on the genocide that occurred in Bosnia in the early 1990s. Students who attended the conference said it was “A very inspiring day - great speakers, great ideas and a welcoming and supportive environment. I have absolute admiration for the student organisers. What an achievement!” and also felt “it was excellent all around. There were many highlights the other students coming up and sharing their views was an extra bonus. Talking to students of other backgrounds was really helpful and interesting.” It just goes to show how much knowledge can be gained from attending the Youth Conference.

STEM Skills

Nadirah Tahsin 9R

The STEM Leadership Qualification (SLQ) is an extra qualification that two science groups in Year 9 are doing as they have already finished their KS3 course. The SLQ is a BTEC qualification which is equivalent to one GCSE. STEM stands for science, technology, engineering and maths. The SLQ helps to improve and develop skills in those areas. The course broadens your experience in STEM learning, including learning about the various different types of career paths that you might want to consider pursuing in the future. Very importantly, it helps to build communication skills in young people making them more confident in what they say and how they express themselves. Moreover, it helps to improve the pupils’ leadership and team working skills by working in teams and groups. For example, on a trip to the Science Museum students took part in workshops on Climate Science Journalism and found out how to become a journalist and what the key elements are in producing a good article. The students had to create a double page spread magazine article on different aspects of climate change. The best articles were submitted to the Science Museum to be put into their Climate Science magazine. Students also went on a trip to the Natural History Museum where they did a workshop on The Colour of Nature. Many students have enjoyed this course as they have learnt and experienced science in a new way. Mahisha Shahjahan described how “it’s not really like a science lesson, but it really teaches us skills and qualities to use in other subjects too.” Lena Begum believes that “it gives us an insight on environmental science and helps to develop our views.”

The students have worked alongside people from Conserve Me who are students in Queen Mary University who are studying biodiversity in depth. In this project, students are studying biodiversity and why so many species are becoming extinct. Some other projects are a bit like The Apprentice in which they are in groups and are assigned tasks which they have to complete before the deadline. However the students have a longer period of time to get their work up to scratch!

The SLQ course is a great opportunity for Year 9 students as they are in the most important year for picking options based around the profession they may want to pursue in the future. The course gives them an insight into different careers and how the real world works. In the future we would like to give this opportunity to all the students in Year 9 to help them with their options. The STEM Leaders Qualification is a great course to take part in and it really does help us to understand the complex issues within science in a fun and engaging way.
The Best Album of 2011

Promi Ferdousi, FE13

Jamie Woon is a local Londoner who attended The Brit School, belonging to a talented bunch including Amy Winehouse, Adele, Jessy J and Leona; musicians who have certainly rocked the pop industry. Mirror Writing is Woon’s attempt to combine neo soul vocals with the cool and understated beats of dub step. Purists of each genre may scoff when listening to Spirals, with its echoed vocals and raw guitar strums, however an average listener will find it very easy to like. There’s an element of familiarity, which borders on predictable, but the soulful singer manages to salvage it by adding an eerie vibe with computed sounds and good lyrics. An excellent collaboration with Burial brought Woon’s single, Night Air to life. This piece contrasts archaic church singing with house groove shifts, interweaving his soft and exotic voice. Matching the spooky melody are the lyrics, ‘I’ve acquired a kind of madness. Daylight fills my heart with sadness.’ Adding a dimension of frustration and vulnerability, Night Air was written to enable the listener to feel at ease when chaos swarms around. Lady Luck on the other hand, has failed to move some. Incorporating a very Justin Timberlake-esque sound, the artist sports a boring melody with unimpressive lyrics about attaining the ‘little light’ that is a woman’s love and attention. Each of the three verses follows the other with no change in energy levels and very little melodic movement. In contrast, Shoulda is a track that stands out with its minimalist melody, which allows the songster’s voice to cut though the cloud of gentle bass rhythms. The song represents the troubles of a pair of lovers who are moving at different paces. The wistful lyrics remind the listener that not all relationships are smooth and perfect - ‘I walked when I shoulda run.’ On the other hand, the bridge dons a funky bass line that fills the listener up with nostalgia. A break from the melancholic tune adds a fresh verve to the song which lightens the otherwise heavy atmosphere. This particular song is a cathartic experience for your ears and will leave you remembering that moment in your life when you made a mistake but wouldn’t change a thing if you could turn back the hands of time. Despite not hitting it off with the public ears, Jamie Woon has certainly impressed the minority, who - including myself - have been buying tickets to his sold out tours of underground gigs. Woon’s unusually high but soulful voice seems perfect for reverberant drum patterns and clipped computer sampled sounds. His album, Mirror Writing is definitely a must buy as every person will find at least one song they can relate to. Even though Rihanna, Adele and Beyonce have climbed their way to the top with great albums, to me, Jamie Woon’s record is the best of 2011, reminding my ears of the smooth seventies whilst keeping me grounded to the twenty first century’s heavy bass lines.

The Not So Iron Lady

Sultana Begum, FE11

As one of the dominant political figures of twentieth century Britain, Margaret Thatcher was Britain’s first female Prime Minister. The mere mention of Margaret Thatcher, despite her leaving office over two decades ago, still divides the nation as it did when she was in power. Even now, Thatcherism still continues to have a huge influence in our lives. The Iron Lady is based in the present day and features flashbacks of Thatcher’s early life, her rise to power and the defining events of her premiership and downfall. In one vignette, she is hosting a dinner party at her Belgravia home, clearly confused as to who is present, muddled in her thinking and humiliation as she struggles with names and battles to keep up with the conversation. The aim of the film seems to be to speculate on the extent of Thatcher’s dementia, rather than to explore the very real and fascinating events of her political career. For example, the Poll Tax riots are only covered in a brief clip as a part of a montage. This was a very personal film about a very political woman. There is a flash of the old Thatcher and her mastery of argument - then it is gone. Watching scene after scene showing this once all-powerful women as old, bewildered and scared, my discomfort turned to rage. The film is more focused on the confusion, loss and brittle character of Thatcher, which is unfair. Thatcher’s political achievements are overshadowed by the emotional issues of her life. Therefore, The Iron Lady succeeds as a film about old age and loss but is uninterested in the achievements and controversies with which Thatcher malformed Britain.
Perfect Dystopian Fiction

Nabilah Chowdhury, 10Ra

The Hunger Games is a trilogy written by Suzanne Collins aimed at fourteen to eighteen year olds. This is a book with a mixed genre of dystopia and action. Collins creates a vision of the future where people are entered into ‘The Hunger Games’, a ruthless competition in which each contestant, or tribute, tries to kill the other until only one remains. The world as we know it is no longer. North America has been destroyed, and in its place is the continent of Panem. President Snow is the dictator of the country, who holds The Hunger Games in order to satisfy the entertainment needs of the Capitol. Every person from each District is forced to watch the bloody event on live television. Two Tributes aged twelve to eighteen are chosen from each District by the lottery and are forced to participate in The Hunger Games and fight their way out, until there is only one person left standing. The catch? You will have to fight the person you have come to trust the most.

The story follows Katniss Everdeen who lives in District 12, a place rich in coal. Katniss is immensely skilled with a bow and arrow, and frequently goes hunting with her best friend Gale. When the yearly Hunger Games comes around, Katniss’ younger sister, Prim, is selected to take part in the competition. In order to save her sisters life, Katniss willingly offers to replace her sister in the Games. Her partner Tribute is a teenage baker called Peeta. Though at first Peeta and Katniss are awkward around each other, they later become close friends and begin to trust each other. Once entered into the violence and aggression of the Games, Katniss and Peeta have to work together in order to triumph. But only one can win - how will Katniss be able to kill the person she has come to trust above all others? I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. The story entranced me from the moment I started reading and intensity of the action had me gripping my seat until the final pages. Reading from the perspective of Katniss was a very refreshing and new experience. I felt a deep admiration for Peeta, because throughout the book he remained strong and defended those whom he cared for, and despite his not being the main character, I was drawn to his silent heroism. In addition to this, I was able to relate on a personal level to many of the minor characters which impacted me greatly, even after I finished reading the book. My favourite part of the book was when the Games actually began and the contestants started to fight against one another. These scenes created an adrenaline rush within me, and I was eager to read on. This series would be perfect for lovers of dystopian fiction. I would definitely recommend you to try out this book because, even after you have finished, the story will be etched on your memory. My overall rating for this book is five stars.

Heavenly Suspense

Naema Begum, 7E

The Lovely Bones, by Alice Sebold, is surely a book that will leave you bewildered long after you finish the last page. It was a number one bestseller and is now a huge motion picture. The story is narrated by Susie Salmon and is centred on the Salmon family, an ordinary suburban family who struggle to cope with the murder of their eldest daughter.

The story is about Susie, aged fourteen, who has been killed by her neighbour Mr Harvey. Her death was a tragedy that left many people traumatized. From heaven she looks upon those whom she loved on earth and sees how her murder is affecting them. She sees them grow and do things that she never had the chance to do in her life. Years go by and things are not looking up for Susie, she may be in heaven but she doesn’t realise that her life hasn’t finished just yet ... in fact, it has only just begun. Although this novel is brilliantly told, some readers may find that it is not quite a satisfying read. The first half of the book has so many twists and turns that each page will leave you hanging in suspense. However, the second half does not measure up to the quality and suspense of the first. It is less absorbing and interesting since the story flips over to how Susie’s life is in heaven. Overall, The Lovely Bones is captivating enough to read in one sitting; it is elegantly structured and will keep you gripped all the way through. Alice Sebold has indicated how Susie’s life is in heaven. The story is about Susie, aged fourteen, who has been killed by her neighbour Mr Harvey. Her death was a tragedy that left many people traumatized. From heaven she looks upon those whom she loved on earth and sees how her murder is affecting them. She sees them grow and do things that she never had the chance to do in her life. Years go by and things are not looking up for Susie, she may be in heaven but she doesn’t realise that her life hasn’t finished just yet ... in fact, it has only just begun. Although this novel is brilliantly told, some readers may find that it is not quite a satisfying read. The first half of the book has so many twists and turns that each page will leave you hanging in suspense. 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