



I M A G I N E

FINE ARTS AT ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL





from:

Allison McHorse, SSES '16

Sophomore year we were doing mock auditions with Mr. Dolan in Acting II. One of my main take-aways from that particular class was confidence. Before we “walked in” we all had to do our own warm up and at the end we stood up, made ourselves take up as much space as possible and yell as loud as we could “I AM BEAUTIFUL AND I HAVE A SECRET.” The secret part because it makes you feel more interesting. Over this summer I said this many times over before walking into college interviews (not theatre related) and constantly use this mantra any time I need a confidence boost. Although I don’t remember anything about the script, I know that we barely got through any of the auditions because we were all laughing and making jokes the entire time. The ensemble that we created through that class was amazing. It was always my respite from whatever stress was going on on the hill. Getting to hang out, explore, and create art with some of the coolest people I know has always been a gift and an amazing part of my St. Stephen’s experience.



Elizabeth Hansing Moon: An inventive and effective production of "Waiting for Godot" brought this classic to the Hines Hall Black Box stage. This small theatre is transformed for every production, allowing students and teachers to find new ways to tell their stories



from:

Daniel Salazar-Harper, SSES '18

Last year in “Cabaret,” I met another student in the cast who also lived in my dorm who had a beautiful voice. After working with him for months on the show, we became best friends and even roommates for this year. If I hadn’t participated in the musical, I probably would have never talked to him otherwise.







from:

Sam Oberle, SSES '17

My absolute favorite memory of theatre here at St. Stephen's was being part of the "Crimes of the Heart" cast in 2014. This is mainly because of all the surprises it brought. I was surprised I got into a six-person show as a sophomore, I was surprised at the amazing talent of the other five actors, and I was surprised at how much I grew as a result of the show. I was part of a cast of four seniors, a junior, and me, so I felt very outclassed at first, but as we all grew and developed the show, I became more and more comfortable making big choices and really expressing myself as part of the cast. It was an amazing experience that I feel really helped me grow and develop to be not only the actor I am today, but the person I am today.





from:

Brooke Silverstein, SSES '19

Coming to St. Stephen's, I knew that I wanted to do theater, but I was beyond nervous. I had no idea what it would be like, what kind of people did it, and if I would even get into the production. At my first rehearsal for “The Addams Family,” I questioned my decision to do the show. I only knew one person and not very well, and everyone else seemed so close. But thankfully, I persisted with the show. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity or else I wouldn't have made some amazing friendships and lifelong memories.





from:

Cecilia Cosby, SSES '18

It was really hard to come to a new school. At the beginning of the year, I felt very alone. It was hard to find the comfort and family I had at my old school. I decided to turn to theatre because I had been in theatre at before. I stepped out of my comfort zone and auditioned for the musical. It was tough to put myself in such a vulnerable situation in front of strangers. Even though it was challenging, I'm extremely grateful for the experience. I made many new close friends. I got so comfortable with my cast that at the Greater Austin High School Musical Theatre Awards, a friend and I washed all our stage makeup off in the sink together. It took an hour and our hair was dripping in our long gowns as we sat in the audience. I hadn't been that comfortable with anyone in a while. Our laughter and shared embarrassment formed a strong relationship. Because of theatre, I found my place at St. Stephen's.





from:

Luis Mendoza, SSES '16

I came to St. Stephen's during my sophomore year and spent the majority of Fall Term brainstorming ways I could get sent back to Saudi Arabia. I felt lonely and scared, and desperately wanted to go back to where I felt I belonged. However, I decided to not skip every class until my points got high enough to reach expulsion and instead auditioned for the musical. I auditioned with my roommate, and that was really the only person I had a strong connection with within the cast. This changed throughout the rehearsal process; there's just something about being with a group of people late at night that makes it easy to build relationships. During these rehearsals I realized that the "cool theatre kids" I had been scared and intimidated of were just people like me. In rehearsals for later plays, our connection grew more and more. Now as a senior, I'm grateful that theatre has given me the opportunity to make the best friends I have ever had.





from:

Ella Benjamin, SSES '19

During the production of “Jungalbook,” one of our main props was a river. This river started out as a long piece of thin and persnickety purple tulle which two of us waved from the sides of the stage - hard to work with. We knew we’d replace it, but we figured out how to work with it, and started slipping into a routine. The more we ran the scene, the more comfortable we got with the difficult prop. The show grew and grew - we got a set, we changed the stage, we worked with an audience. We got a new river - a long painted fabric on a dowel. We adapted to the new version of the familiar prop as we changed locations, but it wasn’t easy work. We had to learn new places to be, new ways to move the huge prop, and how to make it look polished. Technical rehearsals soon rolled around and the one river turned into two. Soon they were joined by lights, sound, and choreography, and something wonderful happened - we saw the whole scene in all its glory for the first time. The prop highlighted the actors, and the lights and sound brought you up close and personal to this pivotal point in our show. Everything and everyone worked together to make this scene special. Once we started performing, we saw how powerful the scene had become. Our show, like the river, had grown and changed with us - it started as an idea, and throughout the theatre process and with the help of the community, it became something wonderful.





from:

Noah George, SSES '19

This year I was given the opportunity to work with a group of seniors on their senior offering to the school. It was an experimental piece of theatre that combines elements of improvisation, creativity, musical theatre and playwriting. Experiences like that are what make our theatre department at St. Stephen's so unique. Not only is it a great place to learn acting, directing, designing, and other aspects of theatre, but it is a community that provides its members with all the support and understanding that one could ever need. Making the transition from middle school to high school wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be thanks to all the teachers willing to help and other students who gave advice on the do's and don'ts of high school. I can honestly say that the theatre department at St. Stephen's is one of the most supportive and nurturing communities on campus.



Theatre Focus students perform in "Spirits to Enforce."



Students from across the school perform in the annual musical, "A Chorus Line."



Members of Theatre Focus play a musical improv game as part of an improvised musical production.



Actors perform a scene from the St. Stephen's site-specific production of "Macbeth."



The Middle School tech crew is ready to start the production of "The Sound of Music." Working with Mr. Whyburn, the Middle School Crew learns all about what it takes to make the magic happen on stage.



Theatre Focus gives students the opportunity to work with guest artists from around the country. Here, students perform a piece devised in a workshop with the New York Neo-Futurists.



"Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory" and the other Middle School musicals almost always include a special guest or two from the Middle School faculty in cameo roles. Ms. Laws and Mr. Morgan make their debuts while waiting for the Candy Man.





Maria considers her dilemma with the Mother Superior and the nuns in "The Sound of Music."



In "Junglebook," three actors collaborate to create the character of Hathi the Elephant.



This year, a small group led by MS Theatre Director Jeremy Sweetlamb created their own winter play. "Spoiler Alert: Everyone Dies" had the audience on the edge of their seats, eager to unravel this murder mystery.

DANCE



from:

Amanda Cedillo-Johnson SSES '18

Oh Dear Higher

Power, what have I gotten myself into this time? I pace back and forth behind the curtains as girls rush behind me. In the last few minutes before the show I can't help but remember every dance class leading up to this show. (it was a really good show btw)





from:

Helen Harman, SSES '16

Sounds So Significant was my second Chrysalis show, so I knew more about what to expect this time- although the nerves remained. I remember standing backstage before the opening piece, trying not to talk, wishing I could go over it one more time before the show started (but it was too late and the house was nearly filled). It's always a reassuring feeling to have everything go as it should during the show- it reminds you how hard you've worked to make it that way. I was really proud of the company as a whole before, during, and after the show. I remember sitting in the studio when a piece was going perfectly and feeling this bond with everyone in the room and realizing what a good group of people we were. I felt that same trust and affection for everyone onstage during our shows, and that's where I found the most value in being in Chrysalis.



from:

Kisara Moore, SSES '17

Being in “Sounds So Significant” with everyone really was a significant experience for me. I’ve loved dance since I was five years old, but being in “Sounds So Significant” has totally changed my perception of it. My old dance studio was a strict place that only taught a specific type of Russian ballet. I learned the skills for dance, but not the true spirit like we had in our show. I don’t remember a single person during the show not looking passionate about what they were doing. This especially stood out at the beginning of the ocean piece when everyone was swaying back and forth with their eyes closed—y’all looked like ocean waves, seriously! I could just feel that y’all were truly absorbed by what you were doing (and I guess also just exhausted from being in the other pieces :)). It was pretty magical.



from:

Mae Mouritsen, SSES '17

The lipstick stains

on my water bottle, the dark blue bruises on my foot, and too many tutu selfies on my phone left me with a feeling of nostalgia for the show that hit me about an hour after our last run. Looking at my legs alone, I can see marks and mementos from the show. I have a bruise on my knee from hitting the ground too hard, blisters on my toes from dancing barefoot, and a large red spot on the bottom of my foot from dancing with a sewing needle in my pointe shoe. Of all these very minor injuries, nothing hurt as much as realizing on Saturday afternoon that the show was over (I was soon reconciled when I remembered we would be performing at ISAS). I feel as if it is important to note that while I did have my fair share of mishaps, mostly relating to my impeccable amount of clumsiness, every bruise, blister, and leg cramp added just enough pandemonium to make my experience as enjoyable as it turned out to be. So thank you to every single person in the cast and crew, thank you to Ms. Strand for making it happen, and thank you to all the Chrysalis girls who make my day brighter in every class and rehearsal. Without all of you, my blisters, bruises, and bumps would not hold comedic memories or remind me of the bliss that came with being in this production. They would merely be blisters, bruises, and bumps; and who wants that?

Sounds So Significant



from:

Clara Lack, SSES '17

As the lights started to dim and the chatter of the audience faded to silence, the butterflies began. I bounced on my heels backstage, going through the opening piece in my head one last time and mentally checking off everything I could've possibly forgotten. Red lipstick? Check. Flower pinned in my hair? Check. Slit in my skirt on the left side? Check. My nerves were soon calmed by excited smiles and hugs from the other girls, and the whispers of “merde” being exchanged as we awaited our cue.

I have never been one to enjoy being in the center of attention, and the idea of having to perform on stage in front of people was absolutely terrifying to me. After the first performance, though, I found I was almost entirely over my nerves and couldn't wait to do it all again. The show was so much fun to perform, and, after weeks of rehearsal, our hard work to bring out the essence of each piece had finally paid off. Ms. Strand and the other girls in Chrysalis have taught me so much over the course of a year, and being in “Sounds So Significant” has been an incredible experience. This is my first year to do Chrysalis, and I could not ask for a more encouraging and supportive community. I am so grateful for each of the girls in the company, and, of course, the wonderful Ms. Strand. I cannot wait to perform the show again in a few weeks at ISAS, and I know I will always cherish the memories I've made in Chrysalis.

Sounds So Significant



from:

Valentina Duarte, SSES '16

Although I was only part of the student piece last year and had an amazing time, this year was a completely different and amazing experience. As we all stand backstage to begin the first piece of the show, we are overcome by nerves, but as the girls start wishing good luck to each other all those nerves fade away. Whether you are in the piece that is performing or not, the energy from everyone is positive and you can't help but smile and have a good time. After the show, you have mixed feelings of excitement and sadness because although we made it through the nerves, you realize how much you are going to miss this experience. I loved dancing with every girl in the company and it was nothing but a great experience that reassured me how much I love to dance. I cannot wait until we perform again in ISAS and for another great show next year!!!



from:

Annie Farnsworth

Until I was about

twelve years old, I loved to dance. I danced ballet from the time I was six until I was thirteen. When I was young, dance class was fun and no one cared who was better than anyone else. As I grew a little older, though, classes began to get more intense, the girls more competitive, and the teachers more scary. People cared about who was “the best,” and “the best” was mostly tiny skinny girls, short and wiry and possessing impeccable control. I was tall and gangly and in the most horrible throes of adolescence. My teachers were no help to my self-esteem; they constantly told me I was doing everything wrong, often in an exasperated tone that made me feel, to put it frankly, like sh*t. So when I moved to Austin, I vowed I would never put myself through that again. But then there was Chrysalis.

Ms. Strand is not like any other dance teacher I’ve ever had. She corrects with patience, kindness, and good humor; she nurtures and laughs and is at once a glorious mentor and one of us girls. And the Chrysalis girls -- I cannot imagine a bunch of people I’d rather spend my time with. No one is hateful or competitive; love and support abound during long afternoon practices and performance days alike. I am no longer afraid to mess up, be big, use my long and awkward limbs to full advantage, because I know that no one is going to judge me for it. I have so enjoyed every laugh, every mistake and every triumph of this year because I’ve been through it with all of you. Because of Chrysalis, I love to dance again.

Sounds So Significant



from:

Makaa Copeland, SSES '16

I took my first ballet class here three years ago, and I was truly terrible, hilariously so. Ms. Strand, you are a miracle worker, thank you for believing in me and guiding me even when I mispronounced “grande plie.” I’ve been in the dance shows for the last three years, and each time was wonderful, but this year’s Chrysalis team was so much like a family to me and I’m so glad that I have gotten to know all of you talented goddesses. From Helen and my’s secret handshake before “As She Waves Goodbye,” to lying on the couch with Ali, to Itzel and I chanting “We are sexy m*f*” to get in the zone for the hip-hop, and many more uncountable moments with all of you Chrysalis gals, I have really made some awesome memories. Dancing this year with all of you was an honor and I’m lucky to have been in an ensemble with you guys. It took a couple of tries but our trio in “As She Waves Goodbye” was perfection at ISAS. I can’t really explain how it feels to dance such meaningful pieces with support from everyone, but it really is powerful and magical. Thank you, Ms. Strand, for giving us all that gift.





In art, the hand can never execute anything higher than the heart can imagine.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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