

Choir Barbican trip - 5th February 2018

Early Monday morning, amid a slight snow flurry outside, 35 very excited students were checked in, introduced to their group leaders, issued with high visibility jackets and then shepherded onto the awaiting coach to take them on a day that they will remember for a very long time. Our destination was the iconic concert hall at the Barbican in London, where the choir were to perform.

After a seemingly never ending journey, we arrived outside the Barbican. The students sensibly donned their high visibility jackets to cross the road in their groups and eagerly headed into the artists entrance. We navigated the maze of back stage corridors until we finally found ourselves entering the side door and into the concert hall itself. The choir were delighted and somewhat awestruck at the size of the stage and auditorium.

We then found our dressing room, which we shared with other schools, and the children fuelled themselves for the first rehearsal with a quick snack and drink. 2 hours of serious rehearsal followed once all the schools had arrived - a total of over 800 performers!

An hour for lunch & then back for another 2 hours rehearsal - a schedule which anyone will appreciate is tough.

During this time, the adults busied themselves in the auditorium with checking and labelling up all of the T-shirts all of the schools were to wear for the performance whilst watching these amazing young people be put through their paces.

A 2 hour break for dinner, with lots of water bottle refills, and it was show time! The massed choir, in bright orange T-shirts looked nervous, but as soon as the doors to the auditorium opened to let families, siblings, friends and public in there was a ripple of excitement.

A small pause at this point to comment on a few observations and make a few thanks as a Governor:

- White Court School children behave brilliantly. The self-discipline and manners with which the children conducted themselves, and the respect for instructions given by supervising adults, was notable. They were great representatives of the school and stood out.

- The hard work of all the teachers - Miss Parish, Miss Wood & Miss Lomas - who taught them lyrics and melodies was obvious - huge thanks to them for the time and effort put into this enriching experience.

- Mrs Deans, who managed to arrange for the School to take part this year & did much of the planning but who unfortunately could not be with the group on the day

- Mrs Brewster for leading the trip on the day and all of the team behind the scenes. I would like to note that it was obvious that a huge amount of effort goes into preparing for trips like this, which is not necessarily visible as a parent other than the few forms we fill in. I saw risk assessments, medical consent lists, medicines, inhalers, emergency contact numbers, itineraries, walk permission lists, leader plans, t-shirt order forms and more all evident on the day thanks to the co-ordination and hard work of

the office staff and teachers in planning this trip. We also seemed to have the highest adult to student ratio of the schools there and the safeguarding and well-being of the children was every adult's priority under Mrs Brewster's direction.

- Parents for helping children learn their words, calming nerves, packing enough food for a very long day, dropping off at 7.45am & picking up at 11pm

- Volunteers. As mentioned, we had a high adult to child ratio partly due to parent/carer volunteers who boost staff numbers on trip such as this, highlighting how important the support and involvement of our school community is in participating in activities.

Once the concert began, the nerves dissipated and a superb concert followed, raising money to support Barnardo's. The dedication of the children over the last few weeks clearly paid off and their enjoyment of the day was evident from the grins on their faces as they sang their way as part of the massed choir through songs from musicals such 'Oliver!', 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang', 'My Fair Lady' and 'Annie'. They ended with 'Revolting Children' from Matilda, followed by a rousing chorus of 'Land of Hope and Glory'. A particular mention should be made of the two White Court Year 6 soloists who sang at the front of the stage in a packed auditorium during 'God Help The Outcasts' and gave a wonderful performance.

The choir worked very hard, behaved impeccably, sang brilliantly & made a lot of people very proud. I hope all involved enjoyed their very long, but exciting, day and will treasure the memory of performing in a world class concert hall.