

<b>REGULARS</b>	<b>READING AWARDS</b>	<b>AWAY FROM THE HERD</b>	<b>MORE PLACEMENTS</b>
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# COMIC CAPER

*Shrey Nagalia reviews the recently-staged School English Play, Black Comedy*



Light was darkness. Darkness was light. And dim light was...well, dim light. But there was nothing shady about Peter Shaffer's *Black Comedy*. It was just brilliant. Once the obligations and restrictions that usually accompany a formal Founder's Day production were done away with, what The Doon School audience saw in the MPH was a play that was not only different in its use of theatrical conventions, but was refreshingly daring in its choice of theme and characterization. 'Kudos' to the director for having the courage to stage the play and 'well done, lads' to the cast and crew for pulling it off.

The first striking feature of the play was its set design. Having a double-storeyed set not only allowed the director to space out the action more easily, but also made it possible for him to create a fuller spectacle for the audience. The exercise of quickly shifting attention and catching all the action from left to right and top to bottom added to the energy and deliberate confusion of the play. Moreover, what I found particularly intelligent was the way the walls of Aditya Rathore's bedroom and basement were made to fold in at the front, thus doubling up as mini-wings on the stage itself. These mini-wings allowed the actors to quickly enter and exit the scene while never exactly leaving the action of the story. The Socratic electrician disappeared easily into the basement to fix the lights while the sexy Rhea tantalised everybody by staying out of sight in the bedroom upstairs.

Another aspect of the play which deserves praise is the use of props. Many times, props are forced onto the stage to merely beautify it and they end up as useless objects bearing no relevance as far as the plot is concerned. In *Black Comedy*, however, the props were not only used to fill out the massive MPH stage and create the world of Rathore's apartment, but were also well utilized by the characters to create comic visuals and situations (my favourite instances being when the lovers' seat is used to cart the passed-out Persis Daruwala out of the room, and when each character picks up a bottle to bludgeon Aditya Rathore to a pulp). As a result, there was never a dull moment in the play and the audience was kept busy in trying to catch up on all the conversations and simultaneous movements happening all over.

The costumes too (or the lack of them in Rhea's case!) contributed greatly in creating visually appealing scenes and seemingly-authentic characters. Once adequately accessorized, clothed and touched up with mascara and lipstick, Vihaan Khanna and Shashank Peshawaria looked like real Delhi hotties (they certainly had my mother confused, who kept asking me how these beautiful girls ever manage in an all-boys' school!). Raghav Puri too, looked like a genuine Parsi while the pink shirt and diamond stud certainly worked for Jai Sharma.

But at the end of the day, it is not the stage or the props or the costumes that make a play as entertaining as we all found *Black Comedy* to be. It's the energy and spontaneity with which the actors carry out their roles and make us believe in the world on stage. I was deeply impressed with the way each cast member was able to stay in character throughout the one-hour performance and carry out roles which were clearly



*(contd. overleaf)*

## Regulars

### APPOINTMENTS

Arvind Sharma has been appointed **Boy-in-Charge** of the Science Society for the forthcoming year.

Uday Shriram and Arjun Sethi have been appointed **Boys-in-Charge** of the Nature Club and Bird Watching.

We wish them a fruitful tenure.

### CHECK-MATE

In the **Inter School Open Chess Tournament** held at Selaqui World School, Sarthak Gupta was the winner and Harshit Tiwari emerged fourth. Congratulations!

### ON COURSE

The School golf team comprising Kartic Sharma, Nikhil Narain, Sumaer Sandhu and Bharat Ganju, participated in the **Inter-School Golf Tournament, 2009**, held at the **Chandigarh Golf Club** on November 1. The team stood third overall. Kudos!

### WRITING ACCOLADES

The following are the results of the **Bakhle Memorial English Essay Contest, 2009**:

**1st:** Vivek Santayana

**2nd:** Sachit Taneja

The following are the results of the **Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma English Essay Contest, 2009**:

**1st:** Vivek Santayana

**2nd:** Revant Nayar

Congratulations!

### GIBSON MEMORIAL

The School participated in the **15th JTM Gibson Memorial Inter-School Debates and Quiz** held between October 30 and November 1 at Mayo College, Ajmer. The quiz team comprising Aayush Jain and Shoumitra Srivastava qualified for the stage round and emerged fifth.

The debating team comprising Vivek Santayana, Arnab Sahu, Shoumitra Srivastava and Sachit Taneja emerged **Runners-up**, losing to the host team in the final round of the debate. Sachit Taneja was adjudged **Best Speaker** in the JAM section of the preliminary round. Vivek Santayana was adjudged **Best Speaker** in the second semi-final debate and also the **Best Speaker Overall** of the competition.

Congratulations!

### HEALTH WORK

The School doctor, PVD, MPT, SRT, AHK, under the supervision of Amrit Burret and MCJ, conducted health checkups and medical examinations for children in the village of Sapparabasti on October 28. Deworming medication was also administered to 82 boys.

### COLOURING ART

Nikhil Sardana, Pranit Verma and Chandrachuda Shukla have been awarded **Art Colours**.

Congratulations!

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demanding, both physically and vocally.

Uday Shriram must have lost quite a bit of weight during the month-and-a-half long practices. Carrying all that furniture up and down, constantly moving on stage and energetically portraying a character that was on the brink of a nervous breakdown must have been very challenging. Jai Sharma impressed all with his portrayal of a jilted metrosexual neighbour. It was commendable the way he maintained his high-pitched voice and physical movements, making his character, Jai Jauhar, a real delight to watch. Raghav Puri's timing of movement and dialogue delivery could not have been better and he really did make Persis Daruwala one of the most interesting characters in the play. Ankit Chowdhary and Abhilaksh Lalwani, though having comparatively smaller roles, nevertheless carried them out with near-perfection and made sure that even their cameos were as energetic and entertaining as the others. Rishi Sood, portraying a stiff, hard-to-please Colonel, did very well in maintaining the booming voice and the hard-boiled nature of his character. As for the ladies, well, it's probably toughest for boys to play female roles. But as I said before, Vihaan Khanna and Shashank Peshawaria not only looked their parts, but played them to the hilt. Vihaan's mannerisms and tantrums certainly did make 'her' look like a posh NRI while Shashank's bold and uninhibited performance is certainly not going to be forgotten for a while.

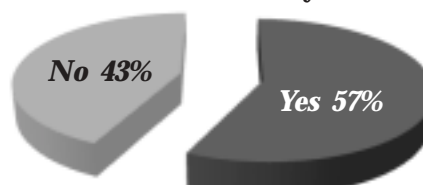
On the whole, each actor was not only acting brilliantly, but was also reacting to the other actors' performances. This is why their overall comic timing was spot on, verbal exchanges were perfectly coordinated, movements were smooth and not contrived, and the entire show was full of energy from start to finish. To top it all off, the AV guys made sure we saw everything (when intended), heard everything (we were in the MPH remember?) and the stage committee complied with all of the crazy demands that such a crazy play made. So, KAR & Co, when's the next show?

### CORRECTION

In the article entitled *An 'IDEAL' Conference*, the author incorrectly referred to Prince Andrew of Greece as Prince Alexander.

### Opinion oll

**Do you think Delhi will be ready to hold the Commonwealth Games next year?**



(325 members of the community were polled)

**Next Week's Question:** In your opinion, does the media play a role in spreading alarm by sensationalizing news unnecessarily?

# ACCREDITING PAGES

*Dhruv Velloor* questions whether the Reading Awards truly serve a purpose

Preposterous. If there was one thing the School as an institution of merit did not need, it was this. We seem to have deemed it necessary to commend people who read. Perhaps, with the institution of the Reading Awards, a few people in School have been motivated enough to pick up a few more books than they would normally have. Perhaps, given the deplorable literary condition most Doscos find themselves in, any change for the better would have been desirable. But are the Reading Awards really achieving their stated aim?

Why have them to begin with? Must we offer incentives for everything, and are awards all that matter? Isn't reading a prerequisite to an understanding of the world, to an ability to consider oneself educated? Isn't reading something that we should simply consider ourselves obliged to do, in order to learn?

Many of us (this writer included) find the very idea of the awards offensive. To read to achieve the Reading Awards is to say that reading is only necessary in order to gain these awards, which then lead to such other things as House Colours, or a Scholar's Blazer (which are supposedly the true indicators of young men of worth). This implies that the purpose of all things, including the most basic kinds of learning and development of the self, is gaining some sort of recognition and standing. It is to say that if we do not desire these awards, there is no need to read at all. The School, in trying to encourage the reading habit, is going about it the wrong way. It must realise that, in offering an incentive for every quality and every habit considered desirable in a human being, it is driving every Dosco towards a way of thinking that is solely gain-motivated.

Why must we read according to some set criteria? Must we only read books that are available in the School library? Is it absolutely necessary to read African authors or Hindi writing? Granted, we must also try to read books so that we can gain some sort of cultural and linguistic learning from them, but what is so wrong about just reading what we want, as long as we do it with a passion? What sin are we committing by reading the works of only a few authors or poets, when that is what we love doing? And, in any case, if the number of pages is the measure of how good a book is, Hemingway ought to return from his grave and come to Doon to commit suicide a second time.

At this rate, we'll end up considering some very odd scenarios. For example, we may just create a 'Bathing Awards' to encourage people to be more hygienic. Boys will be asked to fill in the details of how often they bathe every day, in a ledger, and medals will be awarded to them according to how many times they shower in a year. Those who qualify will be asked to appear before a panel for an interview to decide whether the baths they have recorded have been extensive and soapy enough, and whether the candidates display sufficient knowledge about towels, shampoos and loofas, and washing between their toes with a passion. Those who do fulfil the criteria laid down (at least 600 baths in a year for the

Bronze, and so on) will be considered 'clean' people.

I'm sure the School wouldn't want to implement something as embarrassing and absurd (not to mention downright stupid) as that. And if the School can keep the 'Bathing Awards' out, why can't the Reading Awards, if not done away with entirely, be at least reworked? It is obvious that the Reading Awards are not truly effective in inculcating a reading habit, and that all they are doing is making us greedier. They are disregarding the essential purpose of reading – to enjoy yourself and to 'learn how to learn' – and in so doing, are negating the reason for their existence. In short, they are defeating the very purpose for which they were instituted.

## Daring to be Different

*Shashvat Dhandhania* on the damage herd mentality causes

Though society has long abolished (legally, at least) practices like that of sati, child marriage and the caste system, it seems that inside School, people have strong prejudices about what other people do. These prejudices are rigid and restrict a person from spreading his talents into areas in which he might excel. Anyone who likes to study is termed a 'rutt', someone who plays a sport at a higher level is called a 'stud', although this is not construed negatively. On the other hand, anyone working for a publication, STA, SUPW or any activity which does not have a majority following, is a 'servant' or a 'lend'.

Today, we as a community are ready to take notice of someone when he performs in a sport, speaks confidently or gets high marks in tests. As soon as someone is thus noticed, he cannot even think of doing any other activity, as society has already judged him for doing a certain thing and he is expected to do only that. Doing more than one thing well is greeted with near disbelief. The School, I feel, mainly constitutes two kinds of people. The first kind are not interested in doing anything but judging others. The other consists of those who are known to excel in one field. This often leads them to not venture into other fields. Of course, there are other things too that our community must realize: that it is important for us to understand what is wrong with our system and accept it, before we can think about acting upon it.

For example, people who do not have the same interests as the majority, are treated like outcasts, often called rude names and made fun of. This 'fun' is also extended to physical abuse at times. So, the ones who do not stay with the opinion of the majority end up saying something like: "I am an outcast. I do not get along with the mob. I like being different and that is why there is no place for me. I want to have an identity of my own, unlike most others. Is it that people cannot stand me being different from them?" Or, "Oh! I am so sorry, I am ready to do anything for you, please accept me in society, and please do not ostracise me."

When someone does want to show his individuality, this is the choice he gets. In most cases, what we

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do see is that he doesn't have the courage to face the sniggering and finger-pointing, he backs out and joins the herd once again. The others, who are an ever-decreasing minority, may choose to face the music. The consequence that they face is that they are not allowed to live in peace. They are not given any freedom. They are made to feel ashamed of being 'different'. The very interesting thing about it is that if they have a certain 'something' in them, it will always make them strive to stick to their chosen path. This 'something' does not make them feel ashamed, but proud of having their own identity. They have, in one word which says it all, courage.

*"Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage you can't practise any other virtue consistently..."*  
-Maya Angelou

## PLACEMENTS - 2009... continued

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