



Hills news

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Alumni news from Hills Road Sixth Form College.

alumni

Autumn 2025



Jonathan Sansom (far left) standing with peers at the GenAIEdu Conference.

Director of Digital Strategy shares Hills AI vision at National Conference

Jonathan Sansom, Director of Digital Strategy took to the stage to deliver a keynote talk entitled 'Can we keep students out of the Cognitive Valley? Educator-Led GenAI Design with Copilot Studio' at the fifth National GenAIEdu Conference, at Ulster University in Belfast in August.

Jonathan said: "It was a privilege to represent the College on a national stage and share how we're approaching the use of AI. By sharing our work and our values, we're making sure our community is prepared not just to adapt to a digital future – but to help define it."

The conference brought together leading voices in education and technology to share ideas on how AI is transforming teaching and learning.



A slide from the presentation

“The talk was a showcase of our belief that AI as a tool should empower teachers and support students but not replace the human side of education.”

OFSTED, 2025

Tap or click to find out more!

Here you can read the stories of alumni from across the decades.

Julia Paternain
Class of 2018



Julia recently spoke to us about her time at Hills Road, from 2016-18 and her remarkable performance at this year's World Championships Marathon in Tokyo, where she received the Bronze medal. Alongside studying at the College, Julia trained with the Cambridge and Coleridge Athletics Club. Her advice for aspiring athletes is simple yet powerful: "It's difficult to balance GCSEs or A levels with running, but it's doable. You don't have to be the most talented. Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard. Consistency matters most – just show up day in, day out."

What subjects did you take?
History, Maths, Politics and Spanish

What enrichment did you do?
Problem solving

What's your best memory of Hills Road? Lunchtime catchups with friends at the Leisure Park

After Hills? University in the USA.



"I loved my time at Hills Road – it was really special. Having freedom and structure at the same time really helped with my running."

Julia Paternain

We are deeply grateful to Patrick Martin, a student at the Cambridgeshire High School for Boys from 1958-65, for his generous legacy gift to the College's History department. His bequest is funding the digitisation of history learning resources, supporting a European study trip to Belgium and Germany, and establishing the Patrick Martin Award for History.

Patrick's friend, Stephen Shaw, shared fond memories of their long friendship: "Patrick had a great affection for his Cambridge school. In particular, he held

deep admiration, respect and gratitude for his history teacher, Mr Barlow. After Patrick's death, I discovered a collection of letters between Patrick and Mr Barlow, written over many years. One that made me smile was where Mr Barlow had written, with his trademark firmness, "You know my name. Will you please stop addressing me as 'Mr Barlow!'"

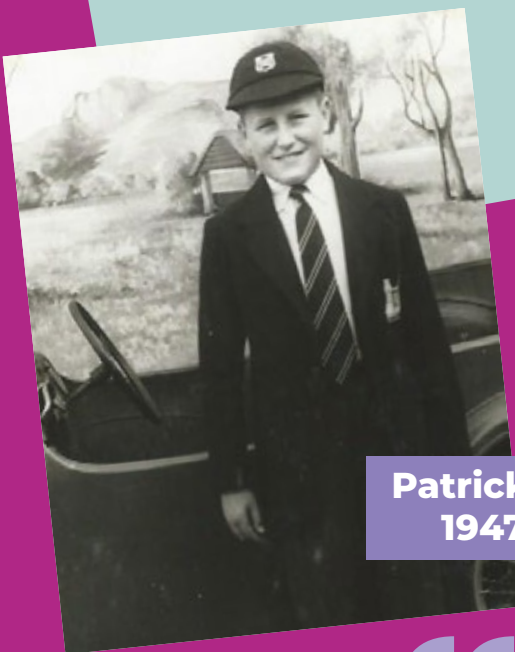


"We often talked about our old schools, and what was always clear was Patrick's great affection for his Cambridge school."

Stephen Shaw

What did Patrick study at Hills (known then as Cambridgeshire High School for Boys)?
GCE A levels in English, History and Geography as well as GCE O levels

After Hills?
History at Hull University.



Patrick Martin
1947-2023

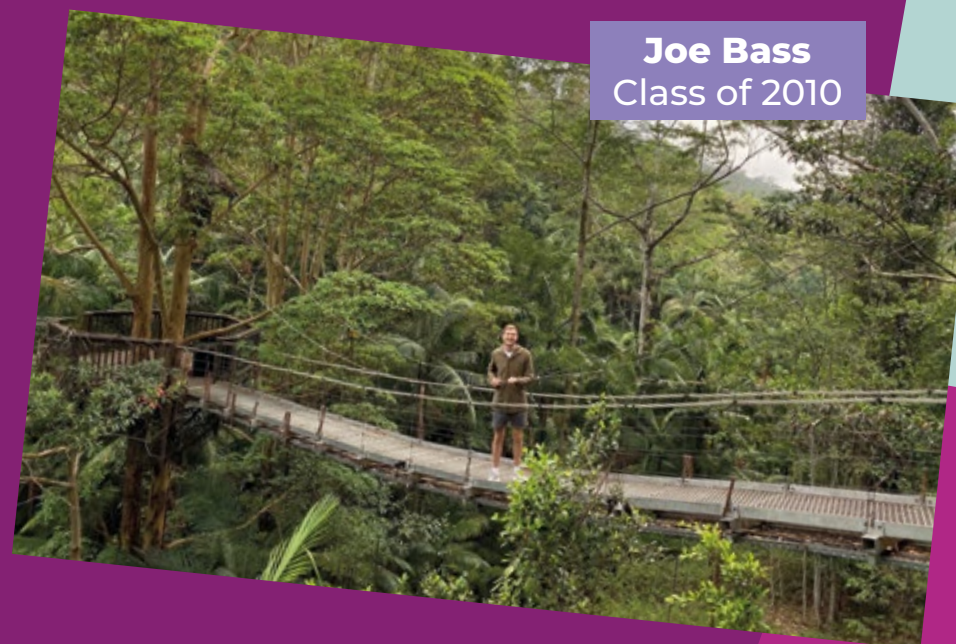
"I didn't take the traditional university route – instead, I jumped straight into touring theatre productions around the UK and at the Edinburgh Fringe. Before long, I found my way into television, starting as a Production Runner and working my way up the ladder."

Today, I'm proud to be the Executive Producer of Soccer Aid for UNICEF and over the past 12 years, I've been lucky enough to produce multiple BAFTA and NTA-winning shows like I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here! and Britain's Got Talent, alongside major sports events including the Ryder Cup Opening Ceremony.

Looking back, my time at Hills Road played such a big role in shaping who I am today. The work ethic I developed there has been fundamental to my growth in the TV industry, and being surrounded by so many ambitious students and passionate teachers gave me the belief that there's no ceiling to what you can achieve when you put your mind to it."

Joe studied Theatre Studies, Performance Studies and Business Studies.

Joe Bass
Class of 2010



Anna Elia
Class of 2017

"My memories of Hills Road are full of working hard but also being in an environment where learning was valued, where I tried many new things for the first time and made new friends."

After Hills, I studied Business Management at the University of Nottingham. My first role after university was as a Graduate Food Buyer at Lidl. I never imagined how well-suited I would be to food buying; fast paced, tough negotiations, and relationship management – all combined with my passion for food (and eating!).

Now, I'm a Senior Buying Manager at Ocado Retail, where I lead the breakfast division. Every day is very different; some days consist of negotiating in supplier meetings; others I spend product sampling in the commercial kitchen or visiting factories.

Looking ahead, I'm excited to continue developing as a leader in the retail space and I'm grateful to Hills for giving me critical thinking skills, confidence, and curiosity which helped shape my path."

Anna studied Human Biology, Physical Education, Business and Psychology.

Tap or click to find out how you can support the College!

Anna Martin, Teacher of Media Studies, Film Studies and English Literature at Hills reflects on her time as a student and a teacher.

“I first walked through the doors of Hills Road in 1989, a wide-eyed student with a love of words and a desire to understand the world through literature. It was the first time in my academic journey that it was not only acceptable – but encouraged – to take pleasure in learning for learning’s sake.

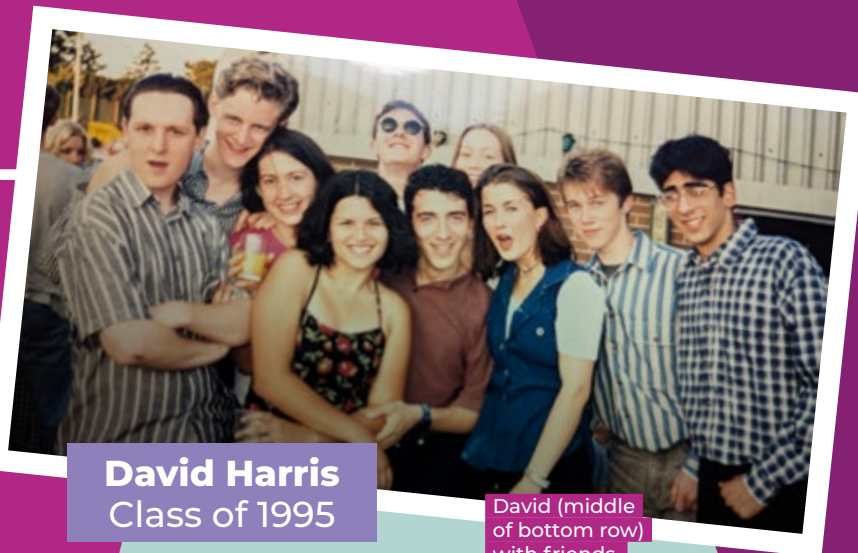
I was lucky enough to be taught by two legends: Charlie Malyon (History) and Jean Welsh (English Literature and Tutor). Their passion, rigour and generosity shaped not only my academic journey but what it also meant to teach with integrity and heart. They both made the classroom a place of challenge and joy, and I’ve carried their influence with me ever since.

Almost ten years after leaving, I returned to Hills – this time as a teacher of English Literature. Hills Road remains a place where ideas matter, where students are encouraged to think independently, to ask questions, and to find their voice.

Since that morning 36 years ago, I’ve worn many hats – from student to double tutor, from classroom teacher to HoD to Curriculum Director. With each role, I’ve had the privilege to work alongside some truly amazing colleagues. Their creativity and unwavering commitment to nurturing students’ curiosity and empowering their growth remains nothing short of inspirational.”



Anna Martin
Class of 1991



David Harris
Class of 1995

David (middle of bottom row) with friends.

“I came as part of a group of good friends from Bottisham, but each of us quickly made new friends that then combined into one large friend group. The teachers were excellent, especially Mr Harvey who inspired me to do Biology for my degree, and Dr Cook, Head of Chemistry, who persuaded me to apply to Oxford. As a dyslexic kid who had been told at primary school to focus on a vocational rather than an academic career, Hills Road truly helped me step up.

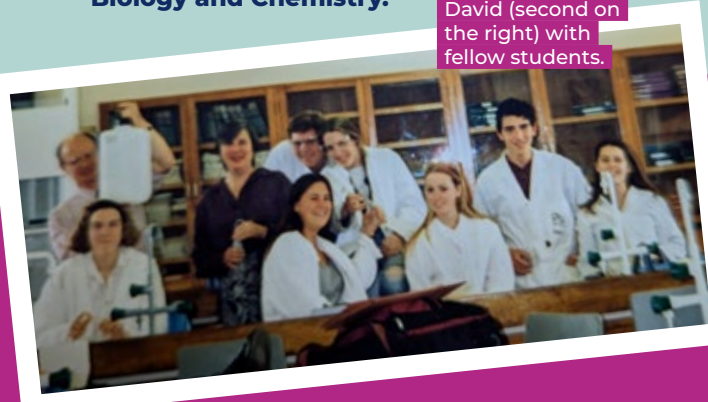
I had a blast – from participating in plays put on by Roger Dalladay through to great nights out in the Junction. A few of us had gap years and four of us directed a play – Tom Stoppard’s *The Real Inspector Hound* – at the Robinson Theatre after we left. Two of the four later became professional actors: Tim Key and Salima Saxton.

I was the environment rep on the Student Council and that interest continued with a 25 year career working in sustainability and green finance, mostly with FTSE and the London Stock Exchange Group.

I still have a great group of friends from my years at Hills Road who I still see regularly including Rob Hinch, Laura Minett, Trushar Bavaria, Kate Brand, Huw Williams, Paul Jessop, Emma Jane Moss, Tom Smith and Jenny Hibben – great times, great memories. I’d love a reunion with those I’ve lost touch with...”

David studied Maths, Biology and Chemistry.

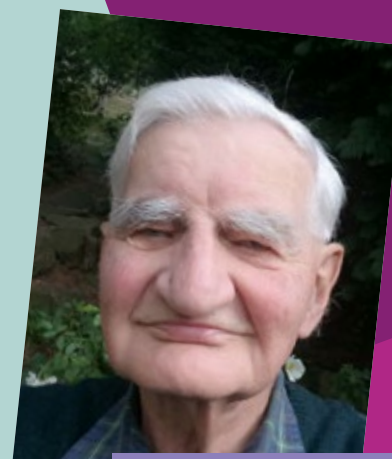
David (second on the right) with fellow students.



Tony Jackson and Michael Hall share their memories of Cambridgeshire High School for Boys.

“I played rugby, hockey, cricket and tennis and I was in the athletics team running the 440 yards. I also sang in the combined choir with the Girls’ School in Long Road (happy days!).

Among the school staff I remember the headmaster, Mr Newton-John (Olivia Newton-John’s father), who was a great singer in the choir. I also remember Mr Layng who taught Latin and Mr Denis Fielder who conducted the choir and gave me piano lessons in the hall.



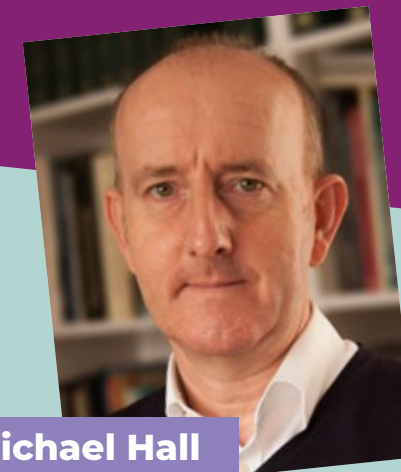
Tony Jackson
Class of 1954

I was in the Air Cadets and I remember going to camp at various aircraft establishments for a week each summer: on one occasion I was given my first ever flight (in an Avro Anson) – amazing.

The school playground was heaven for train spotters. We were not allowed indoors at lunch time unless it was raining, or were in the chess team! Or, in my case, I was allowed to listen to my A level music set works on the gramophone.”

Tony studied Maths, Further Maths, Physics and Music at A level as well as O levels.

Tap or click to find out how you can support the College!



Michael Hall
Class of 1975

“I arrived at Cambridgeshire High School for Boys in 1968 from a small village school, unprepared for the shock of joining 600 boys. The school’s strong theatrical tradition helped me settle in, and I had an enjoyable acting career, culminating with the evil Caliph in *Hassan*.

The excellence of these productions owed much to Roger Dalladay, who taught Latin. His greatest influence on me, however, was through a course in art history he taught in the lower sixth. My turn to publishing, writing and editing also owed something to Roger – I briefly helped him edit the school magazine – but my greatest debt was to two inspiring history teachers, George Barlow and Charles Malyon, who taught me how to write.

Thanks to them, I was qualified for a career in first illustrated books, at Thames & Hudson, and subsequently on magazines, as architectural editor of *Country Life* and editor of two art-history journals, *Apollo* and *The Burlington Magazine*. That gave me the confidence to write books on the history of architecture, art and collecting.

My years at CHSB and Hills Road set me up for a career in ways I didn’t foresee.”

Michael studied History, English and Latin at A level as well as O levels.

First cohort completes the national Environmental Leaders Programme



Thirteen Hills Road students have successfully completed the Environmental Leaders Programme, developed by the WWF, RSPB and the Leadership Skills Foundation.

The programme involves around 50 hours of learning, with students researching, planning, leading, and evaluating their own projects. During the academic year, they developed and led sustainability

“The Programme encouraged me to take initiative and carry out a project that enhances biodiversity in my college and build on my problem-solving skills in a fun and interactive way.”

MAITRI PATEL

Thought-provoking presentation on Climate Change inspires Hills staff

Students James and Shreya recently took centre stage when they delivered a powerful presentation to College staff about the urgent importance of climate change and how both teaching and support staff can embed it across the curriculum and in their everyday work.

Speaking with confidence and passion, they ran through climate basics, climate justice, climate anxiety and climate education. They highlighted the growing impact of global warming on young people's futures and emphasised that tackling climate change is not just a scientific issue, but one that connects with all subjects.

Shreya said, “It was a wonderful experience to share my voice with both teaching and support staff about



“Climate change is an issue that affects every generation, but it is young people who will live with the consequences the longest.”

CHRIS GRAHAM,
HEAD OF SUSTAINABILITY



Planting dogwood to encourage biodiversity.

projects both on campus and in their local communities.

Arran Forrester led a planting scheme that introduced 50 dogwood plants to create bushy habitats. These will grow over time to support biodiversity, alongside bulbs and wildflowers planted by students in other areas of the college grounds.

Maryam Ali ran a sustainability workshop with her former primary school, teaching younger children about reducing waste and protecting the natural world. She said, “I developed key transferable skills for my future whilst having fun.”

The students represent the second-ever cohort to complete the programme nationally and were the first group from Hills Road to take part – hopefully the first of many! Congratulations to them.

climate education. It reminded me that even small conversations can be part of something bigger, creating waves of change for our planet's future.”

Staff described the presentation as ‘thought-provoking’ and ‘inspiring’. Teachers were encouraged to follow a QR code link to make this climate education pledge:

‘I pledge to make changes to my teaching to make sure young people are prepared with the knowledge and skills needed to take action on the climate crisis.’

James said, “It was a great opportunity to teach others about what's important to me, and it felt great talking to so many people who were listening to what I had to say.”



Students with School Court residents.

Hills students join forces with InCommon to bridge generations

In March, a new chapter in student volunteering started to take shape. Anita Irving, Careers advisor, contacted Volunteer Cambridgeshire about meaningful opportunities for Hills students seeking valuable work experience. The request led to a partnership with InCommon, a UK charity dedicated to connecting younger and older generations through shared community experiences.

Following an engaging video discussion, InCommon introduced a unique initiative at School Court, a residential care home in Cambridge. The project invited Hills student volunteers to spend time with residents, to share stories and to participate in the Cambridge Intergenerational Walking Project, which aims to strengthen community ties while promoting understanding across age groups.

When the College's Medicine Society (MedSoc) found out about this opportunity, interest was immediate.

“Thank you Hills for helping us set up the workshop and recruit the students! They were all really polite, kind and personable with the older neighbours.”

ROSIE SHAMROCK, PROGRAMME
MANAGER AT INCOMMON

“I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to the School Court Care Home. It was a brilliant opportunity to exercise clear communication as well as empathy, patience and teamwork – all of which are fundamental skills for the future.”

ROSS, HILLS STUDENT

With only 12 places available, spaces filled quickly, demonstrating students' enthusiasm to give back to their community while gaining hands-on experience relevant to their future careers.

For aspiring medical students, volunteering in a care home offers more than just an impressive experience for university applications: it cultivates empathy, patience, and communication skills – qualities essential to anyone entering the medical field.

As the collaboration between InCommon and Volunteer Cambs continues to grow, it stands as a powerful example of how volunteering can enrich education. By bringing generations together, the initiative not only strengthens communities but also inspires young people to lead with care and understanding.

Film Studies students get hands on experience

Three A level Film studies students, Leia Nottage Y12, Oliver Bowman Y12, and Monty Sherman Y13, were recently selected to participate in the British Film Institute's annual short course programme. Over five days, they learned about important aspects of filmmaking such as pre-production, post-production, film theory, and even produced two short films during the course.

Monty, who is also studying Media Studies said, “I found the experience extremely valuable, and we are now part of the BFI alumni network.”

Leia said, “Being on set was an incredible opportunity to discover whether a film career is the right choice.”

Oliver also spoke highly of the programme, recommending it to anyone considering working in the film industry. He said, “The BFI offers further training including editing, festival planning, and costume design, which has inspired us to want to go on one of these specialist courses.”

Congratulations to Leia, Oliver and Monty for gaining hands-on experience and joining the BFI alumni community!



From left: Leia, Oliver and Monty.

Sofia shortlisted in the John Locke Essay competition

Sofia Olanrewaju has been shortlisted for her essay on international humanitarian law. Sofia, who is studying A level Biology, Maths and Politics, was selected from over 60,000 entries worldwide.

"The law essay category in the John Locke competition piqued my interest as it had three challenging questions. Law has always fascinated me as a subject with deep complexity, yet it is an integral value in society."

My chosen question, 'Is Vladimir Putin a war criminal?' stood out to me most, due to its currency, and because it covered a sector of law I had not yet explored (international humanitarian law).

Sofia conducted extensive research to write her essay. She was able to uncover disturbing conversations between Russian soldiers, which PBS reporters had intercepted.

She said, "This essay competition has expanded my outlook on potential legal career sectors. While I was



initially more attracted to corporate law, my interest in international humanitarian and international trade law has definitely increased.

"The experience also helps me to better understand that anything is

possible if you try. I didn't expect an award, particularly not after I saw that over 60,000 students submitted an essay. I think the competition reminded me that I can aim high, and I hope to maintain this attitude in my university education and beyond."

Translating German into a win for Maggie



Congratulations to Y12 Hills student Maggie Boyd, who is the East area Level 4 winner in the Anthea Bell Prize translation competition run by Queen's College, University of Oxford.

Over 22,000 students participated in the competition and a team of 32 judges, including Oxford Modern Languages undergraduates and leading professional literary translators, assessed nearly 5,000 entries to the competition.

The Anthea Bell Prize for Young Translators is an initiative of the Queen's College Translation Exchange, whose mission is to inspire lifelong engagement in languages and international culture, and in particular to motivate more students to study

"I really enjoyed the competition because it was an opportunity to put the translation skills I have learnt in class into practice. I like translating fictional text as it's a more creative way to practise German."

MAGGIE

modern foreign languages throughout their time at school, college and beyond. The competition was launched in 2020 and was inspired by the life and work of the great translator Anthea Bell.

Women swimmers' National Finals success



A huge congratulations to our women's swimming team, who competed in the National Finals at Birmingham. They qualified for the finals where they won the East region by breaking the regional record in the Medley relay! They also won the East region in the freestyle relay. As a result, overall, they qualified with 5th quickest in the country for the Medley and 11th for Freestyle. Their hard work paid off with excellent finishes, placing 12th and 16th in their events against the best in the country. Well done to Ella Deaton, Lauren King, Emily Pak, Izzie Thomas, Alice Watts and Genevieve White.

Hockey players are going national!

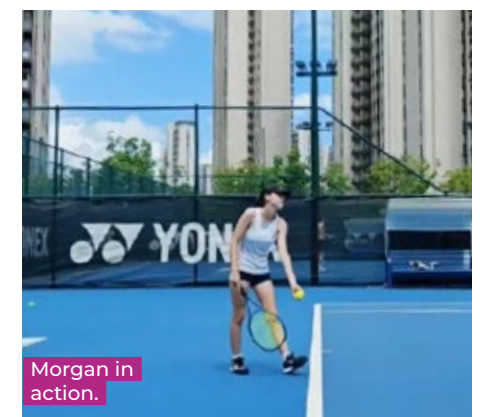
The mixed hockey team had an amazing performance at the East Regional event. They faced Oaklands in the final and secured a brilliant 3-1 win, putting them through to the national finals in April! Congratulations on bringing home the regional title.

In other hockey news, four students, Isla Ridley, Ella Robers, Ben Journeaux and Harry Hood, have made the AoC Colleges National Hockey team, where they will compete at Nottingham in April for England's College team. Good luck, we'll be cheering you on!



Y12 Tennis players qualify for National Championships

Congratulations to Y12 students Pax Zhang and Morgan Gall on qualifying in the recent regional tennis matches to go through to represent the East region at the AoC Sport National Championships in April.



Marnie, Danny and Tom produced theatre shows for their Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). As well as hours of rehearsals, they organised sets, costumes, sound and lighting. Head of Performing Arts Lydia Aers shares her comments.

Chatroom (pictured right), an EPQ production by Marnie Pounds.

“A truly brilliant piece of student theatre, tightly and intelligently directed by Marnie, showing a real grasp of theatricality and a sensitive take on a challenging play. Wonderful performances on stage made for a completely compelling, entertaining and heartfelt piece of theatre – a real smash.”



When the Wind Changes (pictured below), an EPQ Production by Danny Standring.

“A cleverly written and serious piece by Evie Granger about the lead up to World War II featuring some stand out performances from student actors.”

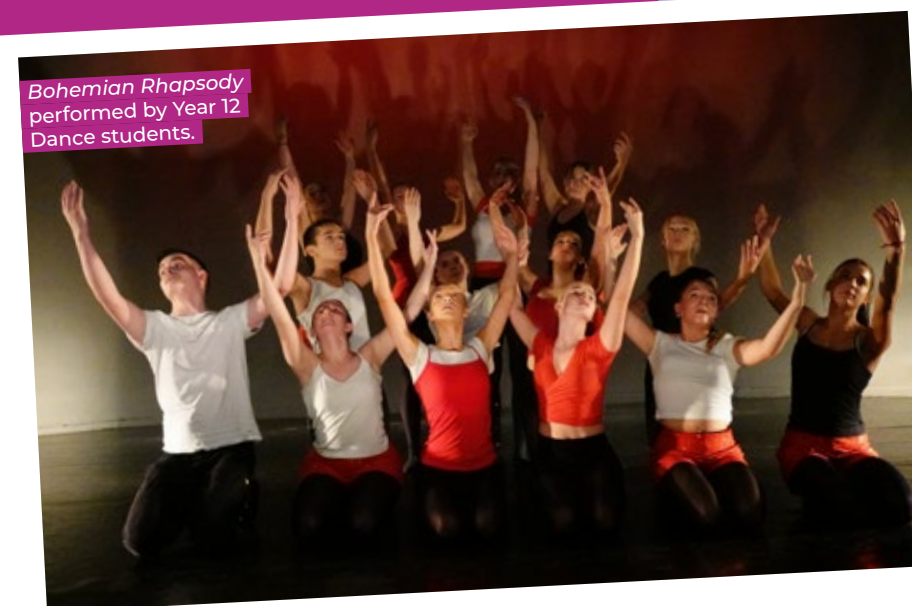


That thing called Love (pictured above), an EPQ original musical written and directed by Tom James.

“We are so lucky at Hills to have such talented and committed all singing students – what a super well written show showcasing some wonderful singers, actors and musicians as well as a fabulous stage crew.”

Our Autumn Dance showcase

Vice Principal Ali Kirkman shares her highlights. “I was really impressed with the dancing ability across such a wide range of genres, and I loved seeing how the familiar faces in Year 13 have progressed. There was also singing, which was the icing on the cake for me, an avid musical theatre fan! There were so many excellent performances, the standouts for me were the tap dance and the final group number to *Bohemian Rhapsody*.”



Transported to Transylvania

Principal Jo Trump reviews this year's Christmas musical: “In the penultimate week before Christmas, the Robinson Theatre stage was transformed to the castle and landscape of *Young Frankenstein* in a sell-out run that had audiences on their feet. The costuming and stage set were worthy of the West End and the quality of the Year 12 performers was stand-out too. The show was a blockbuster of singing, dancing, slapstick and laughter with some incredible talent: from the pit band to the whole cast ensemble numbers, to some extraordinary comic timing, physical theatre and glorious voices. We are so lucky to have a purpose-built theatre and professional theatre staff who can support our students to deliver performance quality at this level.”

Y13s devised performance exam work

The super-talented Year 13 Drama and Theatre students performed in their own devised pieces in November as part of their final exam work. These pieces were entirely created from scratch by the students over three months, and were an amazing range of topics and theatrical styles, from a playful musical retelling of Aeschylus' *The Oresteia* to a powerful piece taking last year's Texan floods as a starting point and a compellingly dark and political piece, *Jump!*, about the 1980s stock market crash.



Tap or click to get tickets for all upcoming productions!



Ros Couchman, Music teacher, conducting students at a concert earlier this year.

A magical evening of musical mastery at our Autumn Chamber Concert

The College's annual Autumn chamber concert on 6 November filled the Recital Room with warmth, talent and an impressive range of musical styles.

Under the expert direction of Music teacher, Ros Couchman, the Chamber Choir opened with John Farmer's lively *Fair Phyllis* and Eriks Esenvalds' lyrical *My Song*, setting a radiant tone for the performances that followed.

Trumpeter Joshua Fay, accompanied by Director of Music, Kate Murdoch on piano, performed Peeters' *Sonata Op. 51: Aria*, delivered with poise and clarity. Maria Tavares Jefferis on the treble recorder brought Handel's *Sonata in C major: Larghetto & Allegro* to life with elegant phrasing, joined by accompanist Roger Bond.

The concert continued with Misha Norman's captivating rendition of Chopin's *Scherzo*

No. 2 in B flat minor, played with energy and sensitivity. The trio of Shihua Zhao (violin), Koko Fish (cello) and Matteo Nacher Saltara (piano) presented an expressive interpretation of Debussy's *Piano Trio in G major: Andante espressivo*.

Kellen Beech offered a thoughtful performance of Chopin's *Nocturne in C minor, Op. 48 No. 1*, filled with deep musical maturity. Bassoonist Alex Greenham, again joined by Kate Murdoch, followed

with Elgar's heartfelt *Romance*, its lyrical beauty resonating throughout the room.

Soprano Lila Shaw Mitchell delivered Donizetti's *La Conocchia* with charm and confidence, accompanied by Toby Heath on piano. Ollie Warne-Holland concluded the classical section with a mesmerising performance of Scriabin's *Sonata No. 2 in G sharp minor, 'Sonata Fantasy', Op. 19 – Andante*.

The Jazz Orchestra, directed by Trevor Barlow, concluded the evening with an energetic finale. With lively renditions of *Mas Que Nada* by Jorge Ben, Gordon Goodwin's *The Jazz Police* (arranged by Mike Lewis), and *Libertango* by Astor Piazzolla (arranged by Paul Murtha), their infectious rhythm and joy brought the audience to its feet.

From Renaissance choral works to sophisticated jazz, the concert showcased the remarkable breadth of our students' musical talent.

“I was so impressed with both the exceptional musical talents of our students and with the range of instruments – treble recorder and bassoon solos!”

ALI KIRKMAN,
VICE PRINCIPAL