



See what some students have done for their EPQ.

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Exciting opportunity for Film Studies students.

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Students shine in the Christmas musical.

See page 10



A termly round-up from Hills Road Sixth Form College.

Hills news

Autumn 2025 hillsroad.ac.uk



Welcoming Y12s to join the Afro Caribbean society.



Finding out more about the Astronomy club.



Y12s signing up to join the First Aid society.

G Block comes alive as Year 12s explore College clubs and societies

This year's clubs and societies sign-up day was buzzing with excitement as Year 12 students got their first taste of college life beyond the classroom. With a brand-new sign-up system, G Block turned into a mini festival of fun; it was the perfect chance to see what the College's clubs and societies are all about.

Year 13 students pulled out all the stops to show off their passions, transforming classrooms into creative displays filled with props, posters, and even live demos. One minute you could be examining bug specimens, the next you were learning climbing knots or peering through a telescope.

There was something for everyone – whether you're into science, sports, nature, reading or just trying something completely new. The Bug Society caught plenty of curious eyes, while the First-Aid group impressed with hands-on skills. The Climbing and Astronomy clubs also had a crowd of excited recruits looking to scale new heights or stare at the stars.

By the end of lunch, G Block was full of energy and laughter, with students swapping stories, signing up for clubs, and already planning what to try next. It's safe to say this year's sign-up day was a huge success – and a great way to kick off college life.

“It was fantastic to see so many students exploring new interests, signing up to student-led groups and taking the opportunity to meet like-minded people.”

TIM LOMAS,
VICE PRINCIPAL

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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



“The experience also helps me to better understand that anything is possible if you try”

SOFIA

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



Principal Jo Trump presenting Maggie with a certificate.

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.



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.

Find out more about our AI strategy here hillsroad.ac.uk/about-us#AI

“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.”

JONATHAN SANSOM, DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY

Community week makes over £600!

The Student Council organised an immensely successful first-ever Community week at the College in November. There was an eco-friendly clothes swap that not only encouraged environmentally friendly practices but also sparked interesting fashion discussions! The five-a-side football charity matches were a big hit, with some real talent being shown, including a very popular staff team.

Food was donated to the Cambridge City Foodbank, and extra clothes from the Clothes Swap were donated to local charity shops. Alisiah, Chair of the Student Council, said, "We are delighted to announce that an incredible £614 has been raised so far, going to a great cause: Médecins Sans Frontières. Thank you to students and parents/carers for a successful and enjoyable Community week."

In brief

Black History Month: This year's theme, 'Standing Firm in Power and Pride,' recognised some events and people, including; the 1963 Bristol Bus Boycott, which challenged racist hiring practices; Claudia Jones, who established the Notting Hill Carnival as a celebration of culture and pride and Lord Paul Boateng, one of the first Black MPs elected to Parliament. History students studying the reasons for Kenyan independence for their Y13 coursework were encouraged (along with other members of the College community) by the head of History, James Parmenter, to visit a new exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London that examines three wars Britain fought in the 1950s.

Hello Yellow Day: On 10 October, students and staff were invited to wear something yellow. Hello Yellow is a national campaign led by YoungMinds to raise awareness of young people's mental health and it was fantastic to see so many students getting involved and showing their support – a powerful reminder that kindness, visibility and connection really do matter.

College speakers: This year we have hosted financial journalist Adam Shaw, well known for his appearances on TV, and Iain Mahony, who explored Men's Mental Health and modern masculinity.

Guest Speaker Programme:

Alumna SuRie, best known for representing the UK at the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest with her song 'Storm', returned to the College. She has performed internationally, starring in acclaimed musicals such as *Annie Get Your Gun*, and has worked as a pianist, vocalist, and composer. She has just released her fifth album, *Larger Frames* and she shared her insights into the creative process; the realities of the music industry and what it takes to build a successful career in the arts with the audience.

As part of the Y12 study programme, the EPQ offers the chance to develop real independence, resilience and maturity. Here are a selection of interesting projects from our talented Y13s.

Writing a D&D book for neurodivergent people

“I wrote a short book for beginner players (specifically for neurodivergent people) on Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) to help them understand the game and how to play it. In this, I included a short three-session campaign in Cambridge during the Bubonic plague in the 1300s. I decided to write a book to challenge myself as I am doing non-essay subjects that are not creative. I made it for neurodivergent people as I have dyslexia and have always found the original D&D books to be very difficult to understand, as they are quite large and complex. I included the campaign to make it easier for beginner players and I did some historical research on the city I live in, as I love history, which I was then able to continue into sixth form.”

IZZY FITZGERALD



Writing about the impact of AI on women's rights

“I chose to write about the impact of AI on women's rights because it was the intersection of many of my interests, like feminism, technology, and politics. I also wanted to gain a thorough understanding of a rapidly developing and important field so I could help myself and others stay educated. I am extremely proud of both my final outcome and the personal growth I experienced from my EPQ.”

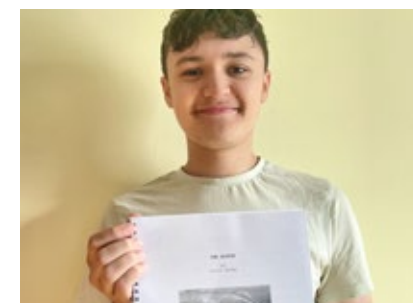
LILY HURREN

Creating a graphic history novel



“I wanted to learn more about my family history and Scottish highland culture at the same time as learning about national global history in the 1200-1800s, and I would love to end up doing a subject in the future that is history-related. I have loved drawing my whole life, but wanted to develop my techniques, try out new mediums, and also render history, which is sometimes quite inaccessible to people who aren't already interested in it, more accessible by making my research into a graphic novel.”

LILA SHAW-MITCHELL

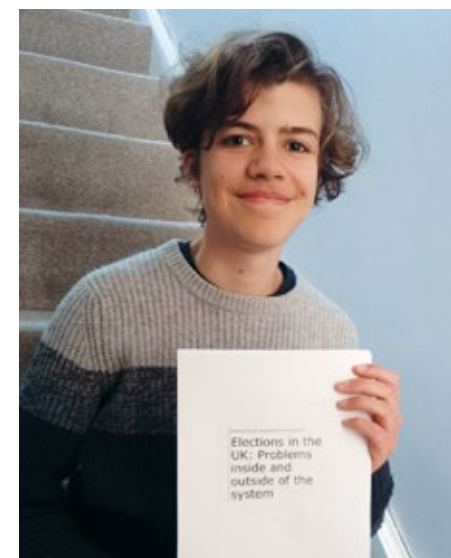


Writing a play script

“To decide what my project focus would be, I drew inspiration from my hobbies and interests –such as Doctor Who, Stranger Things, Lego minifigures, music, and Marvel! I decided to write a science-fiction playscript that combined these passions. I'm proud of the final draft, as it's professionally formatted and features a carefully developed plot.”

LOUIS BROWN

Writing a dissertation on electoral systems



“I chose to write a dissertation on electoral systems, evaluating the one used for general elections in the UK and alternative systems used elsewhere, then discussing problems that affect elections outside of the system structure. I assessed the different issues using criteria I developed using theories of philosophy. This is an incredibly important topic, and I wanted to contribute to the engagement of young people in politics through my primary research, especially since the voting age has been recently lowered.”

ESTHER WALDEN

Making a traditional piece of Bosnian clothing

“I decided to make a Jelek, a part of the traditional Bosnian attire. I wanted to replicate the traditional Jelek. This meant I would have to use the same materials and make it look like how it did in the past, such as making the traditional deep neckline.”

MARYAM MEKIC



Painting an icon

“I created a painting of Gerard Way, the lead singer of My Chemical Romance. I knew immediately that my EPQ would have something to do with Gerard and MCR, because they're my main interest and passion. I have always been extremely inspired by them, so I knew I could be motivated to create something really cool based on them. I really wanted to create something based on the cheerleader outfit Gerard wore twice during MCR's 2022 tour, because it was the first time he had ever worn a dress on stage and it made me very emotional at the time.”

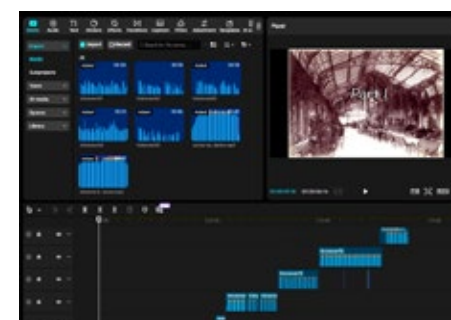
MIMI CAVALIERE

Writing a video essay about Jack The Ripper

“After careful consideration and a lot of mind mapping of ideas including technology, travel and engineering, I finalised my idea on true crime as I love a good true crime Netflix documentary.”

It dawned on me that I wanted to make my EPQ more challenging, so I opted for an artefact by creating a video essay as I felt like my writing skills were strong.”

CHRISTY SUNNY



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.

Find out more about the recent achievement of an alumna and how an alumnus has contributed to the College.

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."

Julia's journey

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 supporting the digitisation of history learning resources, funding 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'!"

To find out more about supporting the College, email:
lbrinson@hillsroad.ac.uk

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.

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

Stephen Shaw

Women swimmers' National Finals success



Four of the team: Ella Deaton, Izzie Thomas, Emily Pak, Lauren King.

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!



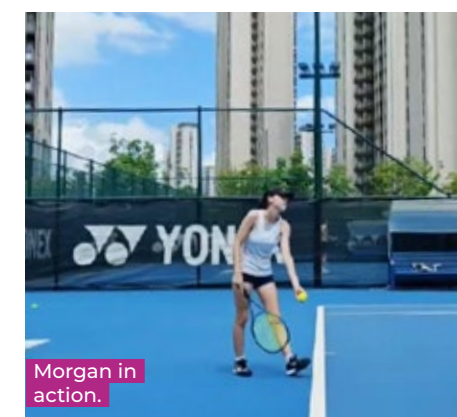
The Hills Road mixed hockey team.



Pax in training.

Y12 Tennis players qualify for National Championships

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



Morgan in action.

Congratulations to Marnie, Danny and Tom who all produced theatre shows for their EPQs. As well as the hours of rehearsals, they organised the sets, props, 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.”



Chatroom.

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.”



When the Wind Changes.



That thing called Love.

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 all dancing 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*.”



Bohemian Rhapsody performed by Year 12 Dance students.



Young Frankenstein.

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.



Students performing *Jump!* for their devised performance exam work.



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**