

“TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE”

Hamlet
by Heathlands School
at Grove Theatre, 27th March 2023
appraised by Martin Leonard

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Heathlands School for your marvellous interpretation of Hamlet as part of the Spring 22/23 Shakespeare Schools Festival. It was a great night at the theatre, and I'd like to take this time here to mention a few things that I really loved!

You took the stage with great confidence and filled the space with your presence and acting panache. Hamlet is a complex play full of conflict and competing character motivations, and you handled this superbly, creating a world full of grief, suspicion, and anger, but also tenderness and love. I was mesmerised throughout.

Your reactions to the unfolding action were fantastic. I loved your fearful and urgent response to the appearance of the ghost, emphasising their supernatural nature. It was remarkably chilling how the ghost haunted the stage in specific moments, such as when Claudio was praying - reminding the audience of former relationships and the causes of the current unrest in the court of Elsinore.

You built the growing sense of unease in the story superbly, which finally snapped in a brilliantly performed final sequence. The duel between Laertes and Hamlet was gripping to watch, before deadly chaos ensued. First Gertrude died, and then Claudio and Hamlet too - leaving a stage strewn with bodies. A final devastating image, emphasising the tragic end to characters whose own desires for power or revenge had ultimately led to their downfall.

This was a compelling and captivating Hamlet, performed with precision and skill from a talented cast.

We're thrilled to back in a theatre with you again this year and have been so impressed by your commitment, bravery and resilience. We hope that you and your teachers are very proud of what you have achieved.

Looking forward to seeing Heathlands School in the next Festival!

“A COMPELLING AND CAPTIVATING HAMLET, PERFORMED WITH PRECISION AND SKILL FROM A TALENTED CAST.”