THE DRAMA AND THEATRE DEPARTMENT AT HARROW AIMS TO DEVELOP BOYS’ SKILLS IN FOUR CORE AREAS: EMPATHY AND AWARENESS, COMMITMENT AND DISCIPLINE, CREATIVITY AND CLARITY, AND ENSEMBLE.

Drama is taught on the curriculum across the School. All boys follow an introductory course in the Shell year, and then Elective programmes in the Remove and Fifth Form that explore collaborative working and communication skills. Boys may also opt for Drama and Theatre courses at GCSE and A level.

Drama is a core aspect of the School’s co-curricular programme. The department produces at least three major School productions during the year: the Rattigan Society production, the School Shakespeare Play and a Junior Rattigan Society production. School plays aim to extend the most committed, enthusiastic actors and technicians in the School, forming companies across house and year groups. The repertoire is diverse, encompassing musical theatre as well as contemporary and classical work. Productions are often staged in conjunction with partner schools and have recently included Cyrano de Bergerac, Hamlet, Around the World in Eighty Days, Julius Caesar, Oh! What a Lovely War, Treasure Island and The History Boys.

Each year, six of the 12 houses also produce individual or combined productions. Directed by beaks and encompassing a range of dramatic styles and genres, house plays provide opportunities for boys with different levels of experience. The repertoire encompasses period classics as well as contemporary drama. Some of the productions this year were A Few Good Men, Marie Antoinette, The Laramie Project and The Ladykillers.

The annual season also includes the Shell Drama Festival, in which all boys in their first year are involved in a short ensemble-based performance directed by Sixth Formers, as well as a variety of pupil-led productions. In 2018, the inaugural Harrow Fringe Festival showcased a series of short plays written and directed by boys. 2018 also saw the department staging its first production designed to tour local primary schools, devised by a company of boys from across the years, under the direction of a Theatre Director in Residence.

In addition to Speech Room, the School’s Ryan Theatre is equipped to industry standards and staffed by a team of creative, technical and administrative professionals. Boys interested in the technical elements of drama can learn about scenic design and construction, sound and lighting design, stage management, costume and make-up through practical involvement and professional mentoring. Boys make up the production crew for all productions.

Drama scholarships are awarded to enthusiasts of outstanding ability and potential as performers, directors, playwrights or technicians, whom the School hopes will set the benchmark for drama in their commitment and ethos.

Harrow’s long-established and vibrant theatrical tradition has nurtured the talents of dramatists such as Richard Brinsley Sheridan, John Galsworthy (Small Houses and Grove Hill 1881), Terence Rattigan (The Park 1929) and Richard Curtis (Rendalls 1970), and actors including Edward (Rendalls 1950), James (Rendalls 1952) and Laurence Fox (Rendalls 1991), Cary Elwes (West Acre 1976), James Dreyfus (The Head Master’s 1982), Simon Williams (Newlands 1960), and Benedict Cumberbatch (The Park 1990). Some boys may follow these footsteps into associated professions but, for many, Drama at Harrow simply helps them to become young men with emotional intelligence, who can possess, articulate and implement a creative vision.