

Friday 27 May 2022

Behaviour, Balance, Barbershops, Becket and Musical Benchmarks

Dear everyone

I had a fascinating, albeit brief, conversation with one of the specialists that come into school from time to time. This time with a behavioural psychologist. As ever, I'm curious to understand what drives certain behaviours and I wondered what post lock-down effects were becoming dominant. I think I see them, but then am I looking for them?

Short fuse and rage are right up there, and, according to my interlocutor, the phenomena of a deep sense of unsettlement as a consequence of lock down and COVID which triggers primal survival responses. We're not settled, yet. It's much more complex than this simplification, but there is the nub of an idea there.

On top of this, we're in the storm of wave after wave of questioning about ourselves, and in particular the concept of identity, bias, notions of equality and what that all means. In all this noise, how can we make sense of anything, least of all ourselves? And why is our discourse so often clunky and uncomfortable? Again, in our brief corridor moment, the idea posited was that we're forming new ideas of community, and that requires a new language, a new way of understanding each other.

In our discussion, I noticed the hand gestures. My colleague put their hand to their mouth, and mimed a kind of physical struggle to form words. That memetic made much more sense to me. It is a physical feeling, this stumbling frustration to be understood.

I remember at school, when asked if I believed in god, I would always ask for clarification: what does god mean to you? To say yes, I reasoned, was to believe in a conception of god that is yours, and may not be mine. This precocious position was not a popular response and it would frustrate my peers, sometimes to the point of open aggression. Teenagers are prone to these kinds of encounters, as we sometimes also are as adults. Finding agreement, however difficult, is worth the effort despite it pushing us off balance.

And talking of balance, here is a picture of me in rehearsal with the Head of Francis Holland School, Sloane Square, Lucy Elphinstone, upside down, in a lift she had never done before in her life. Come and see the finished piece at the *Strictly Heads* event on Sunday 26 June. A line up of star celebrity judges (see the Circular). Buy your tickets here now, and all in a good cause: <https://www.trybooking.co.uk/BNSZ>



As for competitions, our own Sophie Wilson, Reception teacher and the EYFS lead, with her quartet were crowned Women's Quartet Champions at the European Barbershop Convention. You can hear them here – Sophie is second in from the right:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqPLeeyusxo>

If you'd like to see something extraordinary over the half term break, come and see the Becket Pageant and Parade being performed at Guildhall in which some of our children are performing. This short trailer gives an exciting glimpse:

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/N9EuMVMCBsE>

And tickets can be bought here:

<https://www.becketpageantforlondon.com/tickets>

A last word for music, and music exams in particular. Our music teachers always have your child's best interests at heart. The ABRSM exams are an outcome, not a goal specifically, and are entered when your children are musically ready. The summer term is short, too. So, while it can feel frustrating to wait, however, all good things come to those who do, and is a better outcome for children, as well. Do have a chat with Mark if you need some clarity on this.

Have a great weekend

Simon