



SWALLOWS & AMAZONS

*By Arthur Ransome, adapted for
the stage by Helen Edmundson,
with songs by Neil Hannon*

8–10 February
7pm | PAC

WHITGIFT



Front cover illustration by Fletcher Elliott (Upper Sixth Form)
Photography by Alex Hill

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Swallows and Amazons still lives in my heart as a very fond memory from my childhood. Having read the book many times, watched the film adaptations, I have always been fascinated by the beautiful relationships depicted and how well it explores a child's desire for adventure and independence.

Swallows and Amazons is a tale about John, Susan, Titty and Roger, who have their wish granted to sail on their boat *Swallow*. The adventure really starts when they encounter Nancy and Peggy, the owners of *Amazon*, and the wicked Captain Flint. From then on, we meet beasts of all shapes and sizes, from cormorants to barbarians, from pirates to parrots, and many more exciting interactions lie ahead.

Drama has been the centre of my life throughout all my time as a student at Whitgift. From my very first production, *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*, to extravagant musicals like *Guys and Dolls* and *Billy Elliot* and grittier dramas such as *Lord of the Flies* and *Not About Nightingales*. I have been so fortunate to be part of such a diverse range of plays, as I'm sure will continue long after I have left.

When I saw the opportunity to direct a Junior Years production, I seized it immediately. I knew I was never going to get an opportunity like this ever

again. A play like *Swallows and Amazons* is incredibly necessary at a place like Whitgift, as in an ever-changing modern, screen dependent world it is important for us as students to remember and reflect upon childhood and the adventure of it. Despite being set in the 1930s, it feels timeless. It's a reminder to take a step back and remember the world in which we live, and how beautifully human it all is.

Putting on this play has made me remember how much fun a production can be. Not to say it hasn't been challenging, doing a play with songs and acting is no simple feat, but the cast have been really committed. I have met many incredibly talented people who deserve so much credit for this production. The cast themselves are remarkable. They embodied everything I wanted in this play – kindness, playfulness and a little bit of anarchy at the same time. They've been a joy to work with, and I know they will all have a large part to play within future Whitgift Drama productions. I'd like to thank all the creative team and everyone who has pitched in to help make this miraculous production what it is today.

Finally thank you for all coming to support us, and I hope you all become engrossed in the world we have created.

Oscar Robinson
Director of *Swallows and Amazons*

ARTHUR RANSOME'S 'SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS' AND THE TIMELESS ART OF THE CHILDREN'S ADVENTURE NOVEL

"It's like in a book." At once there was a clamour. "Treasure Island—" "Swallows and Amazons—" "Coral Island—" Ralph waved the conch. "This is our island. It's a good island. Until the grownups come to fetch us we'll have fun."

It is no coincidence that in the allegorical adventure novel, William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', British school boys, stranded on an island, list idyllic children's novels, such as 'Swallows and Amazons', to build enthusiasm for their own exciting yet frightening situation; these novels are the adventure tales of Golding's childhood reading. Whilst Golding's novel challenges these traditional childhood adventure narratives, of British children bringing civilisation to an untamed setting, his childhood reading provided him with the knowledge to construct his dystopian subversion.

Arthur Ransome includes references to children's adventure novels as well in 'Swallows and Amazons'. 'Robinson Crusoe' is incorporated into descriptions of island life, and the curmudgeonly character of Captain Flint is named after

the parrot in 'Treasure Island'. However, these allusions didn't prevent Ransome's use of his own experiences; he sets the novel in the familiar, yet sublime, Lake District, which was ripe with opportunity for fictional pirate adventures.

An adventurer in his own right, Ransome was a foreign correspondent for The Observer, prior to becoming a novelist, and landed an interview with Leon Trotsky in 1917, starting an eventually close relationship with the Russians. He was recruited by MI6 as a secret agent due to these ties with the Bolsheviks, and one could argue he led an existence in line with the popular young adult action series, 'Cherub', today.

Children's novels such as 'Swallows and Amazons' provide a timeless portal for children to experience adventures outside of the (often digital) confines of their own lives. Along with pirate exploits, the protagonists in Ransome's novel are active explorers, partaking in sailing, swimming, fishing and camping based upon Ransome's own childhood. In Chapter One, Ransome writes, 'The

island had come to seem one of those places seen from the train that belong to a life in which we shall never take part. And now, suddenly, it was real. It was to be their island after all.' Stories such as 'Swallows and Amazons' allow adventures and captivating islands to be 'real' for all children, including those living in the urban landscape of London or further afield.

However, children's literature is not exclusively a domain for the young; childhood favourites often are a source of familiar comfort and joy for adults, with Phillip Pullman being known to re-read Ransome's works. Old Whitgiftian Neil Gaiman, who writes for both children and adults, has said 'When I'm writing for kids, I'm always assuming that a story, if it is loved, is going to be re-read.' Therefore, young or old, consider transporting yourself to an adventure by reading, or re-reading, a novel such as 'Swallows and Amazons' because, in the words of Ralph in 'Lord of the Flies', you'll "'have fun"'!

K Glanz
Teacher of English



*'And now,
suddenly, it was
real. It was to
be their island
after all.'*

CAST

<i>John</i>	Sam Warren
<i>Titty</i>	George Pang
<i>Roger</i>	Monty Moffitt
<i>Susan</i>	Rahul Chakravarty
<i>Nancy</i>	Teddy Proud
<i>Peggy</i>	Patrick Carswell
<i>Mother</i>	Logan Brunni
<i>Mr Jackson</i>	Gabriel Alam
<i>Captain Flint</i>	Marcos Byrne
<i>Charcoal Burner</i>	Hamish McMillan
<i>Charcoal Burner</i>	Seb Wade
<i>Pirate</i>	Alby Edwards
<i>Pirate</i>	Rupert Noble
<i>Policeman</i>	Ethan Carmalt
<i>Policeman</i>	Lewis Buamah

ENSEMBLE

Benjamyn Gnanaseharam, Oscar Morrison, Xavier Taylor-Smith, Daniel Ampleford, Leo Archer, Ameer Lunga, Krish Patel, Elliott Schroeder, Kai Motaung, Ishan Ramakrishnan & Harry Mortimer

BAND

<i>Conductor</i>	F Ellson
<i>Piano</i>	Lucian Ng
<i>Violin</i>	Joshua Park
<i>Violin</i>	Ting Wen
<i>Clarinet</i>	Michael So
<i>Cello</i>	Ethan Tse
<i>Cello</i>	A Weakley
<i>Percussion</i>	O Turner

CREATIVE TEAM

<i>Director</i>	Oscar Robinson
<i>Musical Director</i>	F Ellson
<i>Assistant Director</i>	J Morris
<i>Assistant Director</i>	H Harding
<i>Producer</i>	E Jupp
<i>Assistant Producer</i>	A Saer
<i>Choreographer</i>	G Dixon
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	D Jenkinson
<i>Sound Designer</i>	A Hill
<i>Production Assistant</i>	Y Dudnyk
<i>Stage Manager</i>	A Saer
<i>Social Media Artist</i>	Justin Kravets



CURIOSITY AND COURAGE (WITH A TOUCH OF CAUTION)

When my grandmother could no longer drive, she would pack a sandwich and a flask, walk down to the bus station, and choose a destination for the day. She wanted to see things, to do things, to experience the world and not let it shrink any further away. She would never have been able to imagine that, decades later, her granddaughter would up-sticks to the Middle East; spend a month trailing through the north Vietnamese hill tribes; or book to go to North Korea for Christmas, ending up in Japan because of the Ebola crisis. For my grandmother and me it all started with books; finding and creating imaginary worlds then, later on, seeking out real adventures in the real world.

Adventure stories are an important part of the canon of children's literature. I read all of the classics: *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Many adventure novels have made it onto the television: *The Borrowers*, *Around the World in Eighty Days*, *Treasure Island*. And, there were those which became films: *Peter Pan*, *Watership Down* and *James and the Giant Peach*. Some fantastic productions have

been staged: *Matilda*, *War Horse* and *Harry Potter*. Immersive experiences have taken it one step further, combining theatre, technology and innovative use of space to provide a sensory experience: *Alice in Wonderland*, *The War of the Worlds* and *Jurassic Park*. *Swallows and Amazons* has spent nearly a hundred years migrating through prose, television, film and theatre, continuing to inspire children's imaginations and sense of adventure.

A location which has been admired by creatives, from the writers of the Old Testament to Steven Spielberg, is Jordan. *Indiana Jones*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and the second *Mummy* and *Transformer* films were shot there for good reason. It has landscapes of epic, mythic and Biblical proportions – it is believed to be the location of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as Jesus' baptism. In order to reach Petra's spectacular Treasury, you have to walk three quarters of a mile through a 200 meter high tunnel of red sandstone. Winding my way through on my first trip, I knew what to expect at the end, but breaking out into the sunlight and the hidden city was a sublime experience.

My fifth trip to Jordan was very different. A year and a half into Covid pandemic, still teaching virtually, and trapped in my apartment by a military enforced curfew, we were told that if we could get out of Kuwait in the next four days we could go. With a job at Whitgift waiting for me, I had to get out. There followed one of the most stressful adventures I have ever had but the stop-over in familiar, delightful Jordan gave me space to breathe. I look forward to returning to Jordan for another adventure and, until then, there are books to be read!

G Dixon
Teacher of English



*'It was like exploring a place
that you have seen in a dream,
where everything is just where
you expect it and yet everything
is a surprise.'*



SWALLOWS & AMAZONS

THANKS...

Mounting a theatrical production in such a busy school requires the help and goodwill of a great number of people. We would like to thank: the Headmaster and the Governors for their support; Director of Drama, J Hammond, for his support and guidance, subject teachers for their patience and good faith in helping the performers to balance their studies with rehearsals; S Vary for sending letters and organising the calendar; G Maudsley for designing the programme; the marketing team for compiling the programme and advertising the show; the catering team for providing dinners during show week and for organising interval refreshments; the Music department for extra rehearsal space, C Pennicott for managing the box office; the cleaning staff for cleaning up after long rehearsals, and, finally, the parents of the cast for supporting their children to attend rehearsals, learn lines and commit to many exhausting rehearsals.





'The island had come to seem one of those places seen from the train that belong to a life in which we shall never take part.'





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