

WHITGIFT

All animals are equal
*but some animals are
more equal than others...*

ANIMAL FARM

7–9 February | 7pm | PAC



ANIMAL FARM

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On Friday 23 February 1917, the Russian population, fed up with decades of incompetent and suppressive rule from House Romanov, would erupt into a mass uprising involving clashes with police, demonstrations, and protests across the city of Petrograd.

On Friday 17 August 1945, the animals of Manor Farm reach their breaking point with the drunken and abusive Farmer Jones and run him off the farm in a collective (and symbolic) act of defiance, sparking hope for a brighter future.

Unfortunately, the good intentions that fuelled these revolutions failed to last.

Animal Farm is legendary. Orwell's original fusion of animal fables and allegorical satire has remained relevant for decades, thanks to its incredible cast of characters, poignant themes, and shocking ending. Upon reading Tatty Hennessy's script for the first time, I immediately went to the School library and took out the novel, so I could discover more about it. The story is incredibly moving; it strings the reader along with brief respites of hope and progress, only to pull the rug out from under their feet when these themes are inevitably corrupted. I was utterly enthralled from start to end, a feeling that was only enhanced by my understanding of the real-world events the story is based on thanks to my studies in A Level History. I knew immediately that I had to bring this incredible story to the Whitgift stage.

I've adored all things Drama for years, since my first proper show *Seussical* in Year 6, I've made every effort possible to be involved in productions, however I can. Whitgift has continued to facilitate this interest since the moment I arrived, with a myriad of shows to be involved in, some of my fondest memories have been made with the companies of *When It Rains, Not About Nightingales*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Chariots of Fire*, and some of the cast members have become my closest friends. The only regret I could possibly have when it comes to Whitgift productions is that I didn't join earlier. While I do mourn my imminent leaving, working with this cast has left me certain that the future of Whitgift Drama is in good hands.

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Directing *Animal Farm* has been one of the most incredible experiences of my life, both inside and outside of school. After seeing Oscar Robinson's excellent *Swallows and Amazons* last year I knew I had to follow suit. Directing has always been the most attractive role in the creative industry to me. This is due to the sheer amount of expression a director can have over a project, in more aspects than other roles can allow. As soon as the applications were opened for the director of the Junior play this year, I knew I had to take advantage of this once in a lifetime chance. *Animal Farm* is such an important story for younger students to have the chance to tell, as far too often younger actors are constrained to a list of largely good, but simple and inoffensive plays that don't trust them to depict a more complex and nuanced story.

I believe this sentiment couldn't be more wrong, as over the course of our rehearsal process the cast have truly come into their own as these characters. They understand the subtleties present in the dialogue and put this into practice excellently while bringing elements of their own personalities to the roles, to compliment them further. They even surprised me

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with the incredibly powerful emotion they are able to evoke in the more intense moments in the script. *Animal Farm* is not an easy play to perform, but by all accounts, the cast have done an excellent job of making it their own; I wish every single one of them the best for their future endeavours in acting.

A massive credit must also be given to the production team. As an actor I have enjoyed working with members of the Drama department greatly, but as a director I came to appreciate just how much they elevate the quality of every single Whitgift production. Without their assistance I would have been lost from day one, and I am so grateful to have had the chance to work with such a talented and dedicated group, this production owes a debt to you that can never be repaid.

It has been an incredible process working with such a brilliant cast and crew to produce this show, and I am certain their considerable efforts will be apparent onstage. It's time for the revolution to begin!

Matthew Lee
Director

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Cast

<i>Benjamin (donkey)</i>	Joe Sigrist
<i>Blue (dog)</i>	Danny Montgomery
<i>Boxer (horse)</i>	Milo Lamond
<i>Clara (hen)</i>	Rahul Chakravarty
<i>Clover (horse)</i>	Patrick Carswell
<i>Milo (pigeon)</i>	Kai Galliet
<i>Minimus the Pig (pig)</i>	Arshia Saffarizadeh
<i>Minty (sheep)</i>	Xavier Taylor-Smith
<i>Mollie (horse)</i>	Ellis Pang
<i>Napoleon (pig)</i>	Xander McMillian
<i>Nutmeg (pig)</i>	Max Kan
<i>Old Major (pig)</i>	Hamish McMillian
<i>Snowball (pig)</i>	George Pang
<i>Squealer (pig)</i>	Monty Moffitt
<i>Mr Jones (Farmer)</i>	Louis Motte
<i>Mr Pilkington (Farmer)/Old Major (pig)</i>	Euan Miller
<i>Farm Hands</i>	Oliver Oldham Otto Shaw
<i>Animals</i>	Julien Gande Zebulon Duffy Noah Williams Alfie Roberts Austin Alders
<i>News Reader/Voiceover</i>	Ethan Hamilton

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Creative Team

<i>Director</i>	Matthew Lee
<i>Producer and Stage Manager</i>	CO Aluko
<i>Choreographer</i>	AE Weddell
<i>Assistant Choreographer</i>	GL Dixon
<i>Costume Co-ordinator & Assistant Stage Manager</i>	EM Wells
<i>Musical Director</i>	JJ Schoff
<i>Pianist</i>	MZ Zang
<i>Technical Director</i>	DP Jenkinson
<i>Lighting Design</i>	AJ Hill
<i>Stage Technician</i>	DO Olufowora
<i>Lighting</i>	Jack Coppin
<i>Sound</i>	Max Edwards Arjun Kashyap
<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>	Orlando Watt
<i>Hair & Make-up</i>	HI Macgregor

Photography by AJ Hill

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'A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING EUROPE - THE SPECTRE OF COMMUNISM!'

What has followed from Marx's original doctrine that 'workers of the world, unite!' has been the quivering knees of capitalist leaders whose authority is shaken by the prospect of there being no ruling class.

Mass Hysteria.

An anxiety that only deepened in 1917 when the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, overthrew the Tsarist regime in Russia, creating the first socialist government in Europe. Ever since, the word 'communism' has become synonymous with totalitarianism in the West – a result of the likes of Stalin and Mao implementing brutal dictatorships in the name of Marx and the working class (perhaps to the detriment of Marx himself).

Animal Farm, written by George Orwell in 1945, is a satire of the revolution and dictatorship in Russia. To Orwell, the dream of proletarian emancipation is still alive. The Soviet Union was not a failed socialist experiment, but rather a malicious corruption of the original doctrines of socialism set out by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The story is more than simply an attempt at mocking the Stalinist regime. Behind the seemingly absurd story of pigs overthrowing their human masters is a tragedy of the broken

promise of socialism. The likes of Lenin and Stalin overthrowing the out-of-touch Tsarist regime only to instate a just as out-of-touch, murderous dictatorship.

Animal farm is fundamentally a work of fusion. In the words of Orwell himself, it was 'the first book in which I tried, with full consciousness of what I was doing, to fuse political purpose and artistic purpose into one whole', and in many ways his work symbolises the socialist principle itself – a story so simple and unambiguous, were it not entirely critical of the USSR, it might be allowed for print as an example of 'Socialist Realism' itself. It is an easy,

yet aggressive parable: a dictator pig named 'Napoleon', a purge of political rivals, a revolution gone wrong – as Colin Burrow writes, Orwell 'like Dickens, knew what he hated'.

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Marx made one thing clear (in his otherwise somewhat unclear parameters for a communist society): that violent revolution was necessary. And so, by framing Orwell's story in the structure of a play – this production captures the physicality of the revolution, whilst ensuring that the audience is still unsure of its success by literally portraying the barnyard animals as people and vice versa – hammering in Orwell's original symbol of man as beast, such that there could be no confusion.

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THEATRICAL ADAPTATIONS OF THE NOVEL

Some might accuse Orwell's socialism as being too trivial. To once again quote Burrow, 'Orwell's brand of socialism was always more akin to a system of manners than a political system'. And whilst it is true that Orwell does not often concern himself with the actual mechanics, the nitty gritty, of the revolution – his work cannot be disregarded as uncontroversial. At the time of its publication, the Soviet Union and Britain were allied in war – and so such a scathing review of its system and the intense corruption that had ensnared the nation was shocking. This was coupled by some such as TS Elliot considering Orwell's work to be "unconvincing" and "Trotskyite", making it almost unpublishable at the time. Simultaneously considered too scathing of Stalin and the communist revolution, and yet too sympathetic of Trotsky and the socialist ideal; the reception of the work itself is a story of contradicting ideological dogma and Realpolitik.

And yet, in fairy-tale like dimensions, Orwell finds a home for a revolution of his own – a bed-time story for a Marxist dream that had been pushed uneasily to sleep by a brutal regime.

One question remains: is there light at the end of the tunnel for a socialist world? As Orwell resolves with a game of cards between pigs and men in the newly renamed 'Manor Farm', perhaps not...

Go Kitajima and Reuben Karas
Upper Sixth Form

The theatre has always been a way to transform the figurative to the physical; nowhere is this better seen than in the many adaptations of famous literary works, ranging from simple children's stories to more complex and mature narratives. Whitgift has been responsible for quite a few productions of these in the past years, such as *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2019), *Swallows and Amazons* (2023) and now *Animal Farm*. To commemorate the School's newest endeavour, here are a few of the most inspiring theatrical adaptations that Whitgift (and other theatres) have performed throughout the years:

Fantastic Mr Fox was a 2001 adaptation of the Roald Dahl book by David Wood, which was performed by Whitgift in 2019 and was directed by Mr Daniel Pirrie. Like most of Roald Dahl's books, it has been lauded as a children's classic, receiving multiple adaptations including: an animated stop-motion movie (dir. by Wes Anderson – 2009), a musical and even an opera! Wood's stage play version was first performed in Coventry's Belgrade Theatre and later by Whitgift, with many of the junior students playing some of Dahl's colourful characters, such as Fox, Badger and Mole.

Another Whitgift play, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding was a dramatic and disturbing take on the worst sides of humanity and how it could be found in the most unlikely of places. Taking place during World War II, Golding's novel was intended to be a biting satire of R. M.

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Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* and other children's adventure stories, taking on many themes of religion and evil, acting as a template for Golding's war trauma and worldviews to be fully expressed. Only a handful of adaptations of this legendary book have been created since its publication, including two film adaptations and Nigel Williams' stage production, performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in July 1995. Whitgift performed Williams' stage play in 2018 with Mr Daniel Pirrie as Director and the Junior School boys in the roles of the boys on the island.

In the direction of Fantasy, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has bedazzled (and confused) audiences for generations on and off the stage. The book follows the story of a young girl named Alice and her ongoing search for a white rabbit in a strange dream-like world full of odd characters like the Mad Hatter, The Queen of Hearts, the Cheshire Cat as well as many others. Carroll was inspired to write it when he and Reverend Robinson Duckworth rowed up the river Isis (in Oxford) with his friend's (Henry Liddell) three young daughters. The most well-known version of the tale is the 1951 animated Disney film, but the stage has brought up a healthy number of physical adaptations such as Whitgift's

2018 production which combined *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* being a culmination of both the original novel as well as its loose sequel. Despite the lack of a female cast, Mr Paul Wilson pressed on with a multitude of First Form students playing the roles of the various peculiar characters of *Wonderland*, four of whom (Luke Ward, Alex Braglewicz, Bakari Leon and Kevin Croos) will be appearing in the Sixth Form play next month, *The Bacchae* by Euripides.

As for now, the School is taking on their next literary adaptation – George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Similar in tone to the School's earlier production of *Lord of the Flies*, the play will depict the Stalin-era undertones of the original book's aggressive characters and dissect its deeper symbolic meaning. There have been stage iterations of Orwell's allegorical novella in the past, such as the 1985 National Theatre version, Guy Masterson's solo performance in the Traverse theatre in 1995 and National Youth Theatre's 2021 touring production. Much like those, this production aims to capture the wild, raw spirit of rebellion emanating from Orwell's writing.

Otto Monge
Fifth Form



THANK YOU...

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; J Searle 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; C Pennicott for managing the box office; the cleaning staff for cleaning up after long rehearsals, and, finally, the parents of cast for supporting their children to attend rehearsals, learn lines and commit to many exhausting rehearsals.



WHITGIFT

FORTHCOMING DRAMA EVENTS

The Bacchae

20-22 March

7pm

PAC

A Tale of Two Cities

19-21 June

7pm

Big School

www.whitgift.co.uk/events

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Haling Park

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