Canford School: The Addams Family - Captivating, Theatrical and Full of Eccentricity

As an NSTA representative, I had the pleasure of visiting Canford School on Thursday 4th December 2025 to watch their wonderful production of *The Addams Family.* This fresh, new musical offered eccentric characters, fierce loyalty, and a reminder that difference should be embraced, not feared. Directed with impressive finesse by Helen Ryan and Daniel McQue, this rendition showcased the remarkable talent within the school's theatrical community.

After hitting Broadway in 2011, *The Addams Family* quickly became a successful retelling of the 1991 classic film. The story features every father's nightmare: Wednesday Addams, the ultimate princess of darkness, has fallen in love with a sweet, normal young man from a respectable family. This show is a comical feast that celebrates the wackiness in every family and reminds us that it is our differences that makes us so special.

Upon entering the Layard Theatre, the clever use of set was visually striking, depicting The Addams home as grand, gothic and delightfully creepy. Kevin Wilkins, with James Wilson and Charlie Diggle, impressively reused materials from past Canford productions, a fact that only added to the grandeur of the set. With Musical Director Will Ings guiding a superb ensemble of musicians, and quirky choreography by Claire Camble Hutchins, this was a show that felt polished, precise, and rich with talent.

All cast members were incredibly effective in their roles. As Gomez, Michael conveyed his passionate love for Morticia, his flair for the theatrical, and his unwavering loyalty to his children. Michael's authentic accent, strong characterisation, and command of the stage made Gomez instantly captivating, guiding the audience through the twists and turns of family relationships. His warmth, wit, and cheeky innuendos elicited raucous laughter from the audience, making this a thoroughly impressive leading performance.

Mimi's portrayal of Wednesday was captivating. She commanded every moment with excellent stage presence, shifting seamlessly between Wednesday's trademark deadpan strength and the unexpected vulnerability that emerges as she navigates love and family tension. Her interactions with Gomez, Pugsley, and Lucas were brilliantly nuanced, each relationship revealing a different facet of her character. Mimi's rendition of "Pulled" showcased a near-perfect blend of sensitivity and boldness, switching effortlessly between teenage angst and traditional musical-theatre belting.

Comedy can be very difficult for young actors, requiring excellent timing and the ability to balance exaggeration with authenticity, but Felix excelled in the role of Fester, charming the audience with his character's whimsical oddity.

Evie's performance as Morticia was equally impressive, with her effortless poise, striking characterisation, and fierce passion shining through in the musical numbers. She brought the Tango scene to life with defined intensity and precise footwork.

Alexia brought Pugsley to life with wonderful energy and engagement, using facial expressions to capture every bit of his chaotic enthusiasm. She embraced Pugsley's extroverted and slightly unhinged nature with confidence, using expressive physicality and purposeful posture to highlight his eagerness for trouble and emotional reliance on Wednesday. Every line was delivered with clear, crisp speech, ensuring the humour and heart of the character landed every time.

The truly dynamic troupe of Ancestors elevated every moment, backing the leads with exceptional skill. The lead Ancestors' choreography was executed effortlessly, packed with personality and sass. The ensemble's presence highlighted the collaboration in this performance and created a genuine sense of community. It was fantastic to see pupil leadership and some lead Ancestors assisting with choreography.

It cannot go unmentioned that the whole 'Addams' experience was made extra special by the lighting design by Hector. The audience saw incredible levels of attention to detail, from the colours used to set the mood, to LEDs within the portraits, and the seamless transitions between lighting states. The diverse design ensured that no lighting seemed repetitive and every moment complemented the show's direction cleverly.

The costumes and makeup were flawlessly brought to life (or back from the dead!) by Claire Camble Hutchins. The character looks were wonderfully in keeping with the theme and visually striking, adding impact as the show began.

This production left the audience laughing, gasping and cheering, reminding all of us that there is something special about embracing who you are, because when you are an Addams, being delightfully strange is simply part of the fun. Canford's cast made us truly feel part of the family.

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