

Dear Readers,

It has been three years since you read an issue of 'The Circle Times'. Much has changed in all this time; numerous batches of children have passed out of school, we have hosted the first inter-school MUN in Shikshantar, a girls' cricket team has been established and even an extension of the old building has been constructed!

We have missed sharing our experiences, thoughts and memories with you. Thus, we have resurrected the newsletter! 'The Circle Times' is Shikshantar's newsletter- a medium for us to communicate what is going on at school and what new and interesting things we are up to. As you sip your coffee or tea and let the warmth sink in with the- slowly-becoming-chilly- breeze fondling your face, let us take you back to feel a different wind: the rush of excitement and the holding of breaths - the unmistakable air of Hamara Manch.

Hamara Manch is the Shikshantar birthday celebration for the senior school. For Shikshantar's 16th birthday, the performances were spread over two days- 9th and 10th grade performed on the 27th of September, and 11th and 12th grade performed on the 28th.

It is hard to think of any event other than Hamara Manch which brings us all together the way this one does. It is never only about the stories that tickle the audience, the colourful notes that tug at their hearts or the beautiful movements that leave them in awe. For us, the sweat and tears put into the preparation of the performances are memories that will forever be engraved in our hearts.

The chill that runs down our spine before taking the step on the stage, that faint scent of make-up in the air, the fear that no voice will leave our throats when our turn comes to speak- these are sensations the performers experience. It can be a task to express these personal perceptions, but journalists, photographers and designers have come together to help you witness the Hamara Manch once again- slightly differently. When you move your eyes across the typed words, what you will see is a peek behind the curtains- a glimpse of September in our school.

There are reports on plays such as 'Julius Caesar', 'Kuch Toh Gadbad Hai', 'Fairy Fails', articles on preparation of the dance performances and commentaries on the execution of the musical performances by 9th and 12th grade. We'll leave you now to feel the anticipation, exhilaration and emotions one more time through the eyes of the journalists. We hope you enjoy!

Yours in earnest,
The Editorial Team

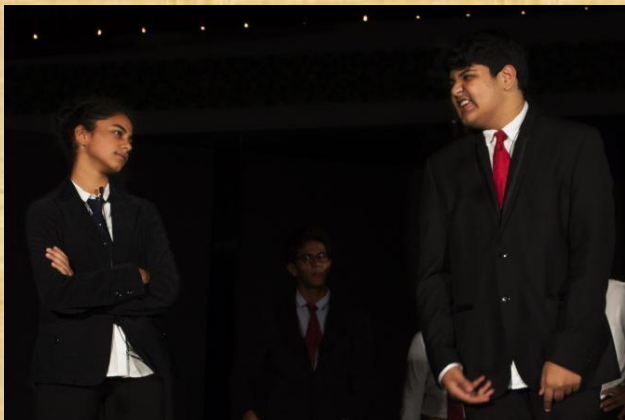
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VENI, VEDI, VECI!

Hamara Manch is where we as children showcase our talents, and that is exactly what we aimed to do with our play Julius Caesar. There were scintillating conversations where we discussed the ideas ever so slightly. We didn't want to 'settle' for a traditional play. We wanted a contemporary Indian twist on it.



Our minds gravitated to the idea of performing a Shakespearean classic that was relatable to our audience. Harvey Cocks once said, "An actor must never be afraid to make a fool of himself" and that is exactly what we did- make three-inch fools of ourselves! For acting has no shame and nor did we. With the play only in our heads, we thrived to put it on paper and rather unanimously decided on the few people who were most suited to write it. The script writing process was an interesting one. Different people wrote different scenes, but we really needed the perfect people to play the roles. Auditions were



- *By Pratyush Panda, IX*

held, roles were decided and all of a sudden we had a play to direct!

The stage was our canvas and the play our paint. Innocent children were shouted on, bad jokes were cracked but we still lacked a touch more of deftness. Acting is not all that constitutes a play; several things go unnoticed by the audience.

Backstage help, sound and lighting are a few of those things. The light, sound and overall technical aspect of our play was quite unadorned as yet. Those controlling the light and sound had to pay close attention for a detailed and thorough understanding of the scenes. Positioning the spotlight for each scene to bring out the best in our actors and adding soundtracks to add to the humour was a salient task. It required patience and utter focus and those who did it deserve a recognition which they are scarcely given.

Though we did have our differences, they were shadowed by our goal of providing our parents and friends with a memorable performance. Julius Caesar wasn't a one-man show, it was a team effort and that's what really showed on stage. Not that it was the most appealing performance but it showcased our earnest efforts. We may not have achieved perfection, but we came close!





KUCH TOH GAADBAAD HAI...

Parth Jhunjunwala & Rehan Mathur, X

Sometime in the first week of September, it all started in the lunchroom where we sat down and asked ourselves what we wanted to do this time for Hamara Manch. At first, very few people were interested but soon the room filled.

A lot of people have claimed that they spend a lot of time thinking about an idea, when the idea itself is staring at their face. But this time we had been staring at the idea on our television screens- for the last twenty years on weekends. CID was and is a cult television show that taught us more about the wonders of forensic science than any science class could. It was relatable to parents and students alike. This was it. We held our breaths and dove.

It was an unknown ocean to us. We were the directors, editors, actors, playwrights. But even in these new jobs thrown at us, we were students, learning about the magic done behind the stage. We stumbled, fell on our faces and got up in this process of experimentation. A team of dim-witted investigators and their antics messing up, but still solving the case with the help of witnesses formed the background of the satire on the investigative system. We sat in deliberation and tried to tie all the one-liners and the slapstick together in a surreal experience which included a lot of name calling and arguments. Ideas came in, the scripting was completed and we started to act seriously. We thought about ridiculing other Indian daily soaps which had become famous for their TRP gimmicks, over-the-top acting and exaggerated reactions- meticulously making it all a part of our presentation. Dividing roles and then enacting them was our work in the following weeks.

Run through started and we realized that the other acts were equally funny and well-conceived. We practiced a lot and went through disastrous rehearsals where nothing seemed right. We concentrated on our performance and quickly reached the birthday of our beloved friend.

The air was full of tense over-thinking and nerves. So many days of practice led up to these twenty minutes of comic timing and not laughing at our own jokes. The backstage was a frenzy of voices, colours, microphones, props and actors. And they finally announced our name.

“Chalo, chalo jaldi chalo Shashi”, and the play began.

At that moment, the lights dimmed and everyone rushed about waiting in position for their entries onto the stage. What followed was the outcome of our weeks of hard work. The actors were cheered upon as they entered the stage and the next twenty minutes were filled with laughter, cheer and comedy even though some faulty equipment came to say hello. The liveliness of the audience was all that we could ask for. They kept us going and pushed us to the best of our capabilities, all of which, made Hamara Manch 2018, a truly memorable one!

TO THE MOON AND BACK!

- Aditya Chauhan, IX

Hamara Manch 2018 was a blast. "The Pajazzas" performed one of the first ever jazz performances at school. It was a unique idea, the seeds of which were sown at the beginning of the term. Our music teachers had introduced jazz to us at the very beginning of the year. Most of us loved the new style of music with the room for improvisation and the opportunity to add our own touch to the music.

In the summer our teachers held a music workshop for some of the enthusiasts. They learnt jazz and later performed it in front of the whole ninth grade. They played classical jazz songs such as Tuxedo Junction, California Blues, and Route 66. The performance was brilliant and that inspired many of us to try out jazz.

As Hamara Manch approached, we were pretty much clueless. I had left my play and joined a lost band with many instruments but no music! Then one of our band members remembered the lovely jazz performances earlier that year and we decided to try something new, rather than just singing the cover of a trendy pop song. We decided to try out jazz, and we ended up doing a timeless classic called "Fly me to the Moon" by Frank Sinatra. The song itself had a lot of instruments and it was a pretty hard song to perform, so we decided to call it our version of the song.

As we started our practice, we had no idea of what we were doing. Two of our members had instruments they had never worked with before and our singers (including me) struggled to harmonise as a duet. We fought and argued, changed the scale and octaves of our singing (basically almost everything)! BUT, to be fair, we had an incredible amount of fun on the way too.

One of the most unique things about our band was that we were using one of the most "jazzy" instruments called the double bass. Most people would describe it as an overgrown violin. One of our band members, Nikita, who is 6 feet tall was perfect for the job

Now, on the day of Hamara Manch you would expect no problems: we were ready and our song was sounding half decent, we were confident. NO. Absolutely not! After waiting for the other performances to get over, our turn to shine finally came. We walked onto the stage nervous but confident at the same time. At first (the first five seconds) everything was going well and we were fine. Until, as soon as my cue to sing came, the most annoying sound from the mics interrupted our song (and no it was not my voice)! We simply started again. When we started out for the second time, the instruments were great and my cue to sing came closer, suddenly I realised that my mic was not working! I did the best I could and exchanged my mic with my fellow vocalist. I sang the first part and handed over the mic to Anya (our other vocalist). Finally the compering team brought me another mic, right after the wonderful instrumental solos and the other vocal part of the song. From that point onwards, we were somehow even more confident and our song turned out perfect.

We had:

Dhruv on the drums

Raghav on the guitar

Shansita on the keyboard

Nikita on the double bass

Anya as a vocalist

Aditya as a vocalist

TRIDA

- Tvisha Sethi, X

Dance is a beautiful form of expressing oneself. This common belief among the five of us (Tvisha, Roopsha, Ishita, Devina and Ananya), led to the idea of 'TRIDA', a graceful blend of our country's traditional dances.

What is dance without music? Thus began the first step towards this journey- choosing our songs. We agreed to keep our music contemporary and fresh, which would be the cherry on our cake. After immense debate and trials, we created a track of three melodious songs; Breathless by Shankar Mahadevan, Naino Se by Adnan Sami and a Malayalam folk song, 'Kuttanadan Punjayile' remixed with a western twist by the very popular Vidya Vox (a singer who has successfully created her mark among the vast world of the internet).

Surrounded by tension and a time crunch, the process of choreography began. Despite being best of friends, we had heated arguments almost everyday. From choreography to costumes, positions to music, we had five different opinions on everything!

Conflict was not only internal. People around us would constantly tell us to cut short our track or decrease our performance time. We definitely seemed to come under the pressure of time. "Quality over Quantity". But we were determined to persevere through and complete the challenge we had taken up. Injuries, fights, exhaustion and stress - all stared upon us whilst we put in our complete and honest efforts.

We decided to keep our costumes traditional. Our look depicted the dance form that each of us portrayed. The seven-piece, majestic Bharatnatyam dress, the extremely prominent 'ghungroos' in Kathak and the gorgeous statement jewellery in Odissi. With all our preparations, costumes, nerves and prayers, we hopped onto stage and gave it all we had.

At the end of it, the cheers and applause from our friends and family made it all worth it. We were overwhelmed by the response. 'TRIDA' gave us struggle but also gave us strength. We are proud of our efforts and stand as mature and confident dancers today.



BACKSTAGE STORIES: DIFFICULT DANCING

By Ananya Kedia, XI

What the audience saw on the evening of 28th September were a number of well-coordinated, energetic and spectacular dance performances by the students of class XI and XII. Little did they realise what amount of effort the dancers had put in behind the scenes.

The dancers of class XI- Illusionatii- have been performing together since class VII. This year, they were unsure of whether they wanted to dance at all. After discussing a number of ideas, they finally decided on the theme, 'Evolution of Dance'. However, theoretical ideas and their practical implementation are two very different things! The dancers had to deal with countless numbers of problems like injuries, illnesses, lack of time and criticism. There were constant changes in their dance performance till the last day. Despite all this, Illusionati delivered an impressive and fun performance that made the audience travel through the 1970's disco, 1980's footloose, 1990's street dancing to the trends of the 21st Century. The highlight of this performance was how well the songs and steps connected with the audience.

Children of class XII performed a 'dance battle' named Sweet Disaster based on the theme of how challenges push us down and how we fight against them and emerge braver. Their performance was full of energy and coordination. What was most appealing about this presentation was the clarity with which the dancers did

stunts like knee spins and cartwheels on the cemented stage.

The Hamara Manch ended with an Indian classical dance performance named 'Panic at the Disco'. It was a fusion of Bharatnatyam, Odissi and two gharanas of Kathak- Jaipur and Lucknow. Many were sceptical of ending the Hamara Manch with a classical performance.



But the eye-catching recital was exuberant and was able to channel all the energy and excitement that had been built up on the stage since the evening had commenced. The sound of the ghunghroos was perfectly in rhythm.

The twirling of the anarkalis of the Kathak dancers as they took chakkars was a glorious sight to see. Every year, dancers meet and with collaborative efforts come up with something to perform on the manch.



There are always the same complications- sharing the dance-room, searching for inspiration, deciding on the costume- but the memories that are made during practice sessions stay with us forever. Dancing together means group effort, endless practising, hard work, but most of all, a lot of fun!



HE'S MY MAN!

- By Rohan Agarwal, XI

'Fairy Fails', a hilarious parody was performed on Hamara Manch 2018 by a large group of talented eleventh graders.

When Hamara Manch time came around, some students had their eyes on preparing a musical, doing something new. However due to the lack of preparation time, and lack of consensus, the plan fell through. After long periods of brainstorming and argumentative discussions, the core group of script writers initiated a story line relating to parodies of fairy tales. After consultation with other members of the Theatre group, and incorporating the inputs given by each member, five small skits were created from different fairy tales. Initially these skits were supposed to be enacted separately as small humorous plays. However, all the segments were based upon the same central idea. Thus arose the need for a connecting link between the segments, and that's the role that the Genie and Aladdin served. The two characters, clad in shiny clothes, gave their brief commentaries before and after each segment. This involvement kept the audience engrossed and added to the comedy.

The ideology behind the play as quoted by Paritosh Panda (Empyrean) was, "to discuss whether fairy tales with their happy endings would end in the same manner if they took place in the modern day and age."

Soham Dey (Vyom) found the experience of cross-dressing as the highlight of this year's performance and something he looks forward to try again on stage in the future. He also felt that the play went down very well amongst the audience. Several other actors and actresses also felt that the play turned out to be better than expected. They felt that the practice session were rather average and it was only on the final day that they actually managed to pull off everything perfectly. The light hearted, well-thought out comedy turned out to be a huge hit amongst the audience. Each segment of the play would be well remembered for its own interesting story lines. *Snow White* featured everyday life scenarios through the theme of sexual harassment. *Cinderella* featured Cross-dressing and the theme of homosexuality. *The Hare and the Tortoise* proved to be absolutely puntastic! *Hansel and Gretel* depicted the diet specifications of the new generation while *Rapunzel* was a big hit for its superbly articulated Punjabi dialogues.

All in all, through each segment, the changing times were depicted in a light hearted, hilarious and engrossing manner by students of Vyom and Empyrean.



Signing out Sincerely

- Ramanika Roy, XI



As the young musicians stepped on the star crossed stage, the echoing cheers of Shikshantar crowd filled the air. They could see their loved ones somewhere among the silhouettes of some known, some strangers. The lights flashed, the mics screeched, their frequency increasing as if beckoning the young talents to give their journey a glorious end.

This Hamara Manch, the 12th grade students were determined to defy all odds and practice until the end. Lead guitarist Yash Kulkarni said, "We practiced really hard, we used to fight for practice rooms with fellow students and try to extend the amount of time we were getting to practice by negotiating with our teachers." From transporting the musical equipment two floors up and down, to practicing in whichever room could be spared, the students had their hands full all day round.

The final day, 28th September was a night full of promise. It was opened by vocalist Gauri Goyal singing "*What a wonderful world*" by Louis Armstrong, a song she felt best expressed her love for her school and those in it. Gauri brought her own touch to the song by singing it acapella. She then performed the classic "*We will rock you*" which was a surprise to everyone showing her rebellious side and as expressed by her was, "fun to perform." She was followed by Aadya Verma along with electric guitarists Arjune and Yash, together known as Trillanium. The band was accompanied by drummer Aryan Bammi, Bassist Manu Batra and guitarist Ishita Agarwal. With "*Fix you*" by Coldplay and "*Wake me up when September ends*" by Green Day, Aadya had the crowd both touched with her soulful singing and by the end of *wake me up*, had the audience jumping off their seats. Following her, Jitvan and his band *Laparwah* performed a set of songs by Indian rock band *Local Train*, namely *Aftaab*, *Dil Nawaaz*, *Vaaqif* and *Bandey*. Jitvan's performance brought a sense of euphoria with the skilled guitar and thrilling drum solos that brought about a smooth transition from one song to the other. The song *Bandey* was a nostalgic experience for the audience. It was a song performed by *Laparwah* last year as well and yet again, the band thrilled the audience with a beautiful rendition of it.



According to fellow musician and student Avi Aggarwal (Empyrean), "The 12th graders were really confident and that was clearly exhibited in their fabulous performance, which overflowed with strength and soul. Thus they gave the audience and themselves a fitting last performance."

From animated discussions, rigorous practice sessions, spontaneous jamming to hardcore performances, our 12th graders truly closed the show (if not literally) with sentiment and soul. We now have our aspiring seniors bidding this long known home of theirs a good, long and graceful goodbye.



More glimpses...



Class XII students performed a heart-warming, meaningful play- "Chalti ka Naam Zindagi" on their last Hamara Manch. Marked by some brilliant performances, the play was pitched perfectly to make the audience laugh and reflect at the same time.



The music presentation by Class XI students included a variety of songs performed by a large group.