

Curtain Up 2011

Ninety seven members of Girlguiding North East England met together near Pontefract for a weekend devoted to the performing arts and resulting in a production of Oliver. Guides who were just 10 and had not previously been away as a Guide came to join older Guides, Senior Section members and adults for a weekend of singing, dancing and fun. Many girls were the only representative of their unit, but, as always in Guiding, friendships were forged quickly, but will last a lifetime.

Friday afternoon was audition time and more than half the girls auditioned for solos, while the others were entertained with a selection of brilliant craft activities, courtesy of a visiting leader. Thanks to the wonderful facilities at Ackworth School, and radio mikes, we could give parts to girls we could not previously have considered. Many of the girls have wonderful voices but needed help with amplification to perform in a large theatre. It is a tribute to our "techies" that, when I talked to one of our VIPs afterwards, she said she didn't realise so many people had been "miked". We later danced the night away and, even later, dreamed of "Food, Glorious, Food," until it was time to bounce out of bed ready for a full day of action.

Small groups worked hard to perfect songs, dance routines, scenes of the show and adults rehearsed with individuals. Other people worked on props and on technical aspects, but after lunch it was time for a first run through. It was very obviously a first run through, but gave us all more idea of what we needed to do and the rest of the day zoomed past and soon it was time for our evening swim in the wonderful facilities.

Ackworth School is a wonderful place and as we, eventually, headed towards the bedrooms, we felt honoured to climb the stairs of such an old, beautiful building.

Sunday passed too quickly. The dress rehearsal took almost all morning and soon it was time for last minute briefings and to hide the cast away from the audience arriving from all over the region.

Leonard Bernstein (and Charles Dickens!) would have been proud. With four girls sharing the part of Oliver, and another four the part of Nancy, and with several other parts split, it allowed many girls to display their strength to an extremely appreciative audience. I had a few anxious moments, and a few girls needed help, but, as a member of the audience said as she left; "That's a hard act to follow. We will struggle to reach that standard in the three months we have to prepare for our show. You have done it in two days." Well done girls!

The girls went away, bubbling and happy, singing "Cheerio, but be back soon," and "Fare thee well, but be back soon, remember our tune, BE BACK SOON," at the top

of their voices. It was wonderful to see so many of them increase in confidence and skill in just 48 hours.

As always, with any large event, it is only possible due to the dedication of a large team of helpers. Special thanks must go to Gareth, Verity and Emma. Gareth played the piano whilst Verity directed the drama and they both spent hours practising songs with individuals, small groups and the whole groups. It takes an amazing amount of stamina to play the piano for nearly 14 hours solidly, and then to get up at 8.00 a.m. on Sunday to start again! Emma led the dancing, and she too worked solidly so that the choreography looked professional. All the other adults worked extremely hard as well and I am very grateful to them all for the part they played. Thank you to the whole team of wonderful leaders; it was a privilege to work with you as well as to lead a team of such talented guiding members.

The last word must go to a girl, so, in an age of technology, here is a quote from a 16 year old who posted on Facebook, "Wishing I was back at Curtain Up, getting up actually wasn't a struggle there."

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