

Stratford Trip 09

On October 14, a group of about 23 very privileged Alexander Galt students, and 4 teachers met at Provigo in Lennoxville to board a bus that would be the beginning of a long but worthwhile journey to Stratford, Ontario. After joining 9 Massey-Vanier students and 1 teacher, and driving for a very long and tiring night, we arrived. Our trip consisted of 5 plays, a backstage tour, 2 pre-shows with the actors, and a tour of the costume warehouse.

With a budget of 57 million dollars per season, you can imagine the splendor to be found in every aspect of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival theatres. In our first pre-show, the one for Macbeth, we met 3 of the actors who outlined the story for us, and helped us find a deeper, richer understanding of the play. For our first performance, we had a choice between Shakespeare's "Macbeth" and "A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum". Colm Feore played the troubled Macbeth, with Yanna McIntosh as his murder-pushing wife. Within mere seconds the audience was whisked from scene to scene, and the effects went the extra mile in setting the creepy mood.

After supper we gathered back at the theatre to see "West Side Story". Everything from the dresses lit up like Chinese lanterns, soaring in on a cable, to the intricate dancing was perfectly executed. The wardrobe department outdid itself, and the chemistry between Tony (played by Paul Nolan) and Maria (played by Chilina Kennedy) was not only visible, but audible, when they sang together.

After heading back to our residence for a good night's sleep we went back in the morning for another pre-show. This time we were getting the concept of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream". In the afternoon we saw the performance; complete with N.A.S.A space arm technology set work, this show put a rugged twist on an old favorite. There were also some great laughs, mainly surrounding poor Bottom (Geraint Wyn-Davies), the character whose head is changed to one of a donkey.

That evening's performance was Edmond Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac". Once again, starring Colm Feore as Cyrano, this play brought some of us from laughter to tears. The beautiful Roxanne (played by Amanda Lisman), thought she was in love with one

man, but found it was another, sadly when she realizes, it becomes too late. With such swashbuckling, fast-paced excitement, this play brought something for everyone.

The next, and final play was Oscar Wilde's hilarious masterpiece "The Importance of Being Earnest". The set would have looked just as good from 2 feet away, or 20. It was extravagant, detailed and had a sophisticated sheen. The wardrobe section, once again, created impeccable works with the costumes, truly one in a million. It was an English comedy like no other, until you've seen this play, you cannot imagine the vital "importance of being earnest."

The backstage tours left students awestruck with all the details needed for a show of this grandeur. With every corner we turned we found more and more tasks to be completed before opening night, and then every night until closing. With 16 or 17 productions going on in 4 theatres per season, the amount of set and prop preparations and changes is mind-boggling.

Even our time outside of the theatres was magical. Stratford is such a quaint and friendly little town, much like Lennoxville. Around every corner was a park, a toyshop, or a river, complete with swans gliding along the surface. Considering the amount of work you don't see, we believe this trip is well worth the expenses and long drive. Well-liked by all who went, and highly recommended by yours truly, this year's Stratford Shakespeare Festival will not be forgotten, and next year's will not be skipped.

Chloe Giddings and Melissa Major.