

NEWSLETTER 43 – SEPTEMBER 2010

'Minimus the Musical'

Well it happened! I can hardly believe it but it happened. After eight months of intensive work, the children of Years 5 and 6 at Clifton High School did four excellent performances. When they received a standing ovation on the last night and I looked at their happy, triumphant faces, I was so proud of them all. They mastered a whole range of songs and complex choreography and performed with aplomb. Thanks to generous sponsorship, we were able to have the costumes professionally made and a beautiful souvenir programme in full colour. The message of the musical is simple: Latin and Greek are important, useful and relevant. The Romans were just like us in so many ways and learning about them is COOL! In the first half of the musical we meet the characters of the wonderful family at Vindolanda, the family, the slaves, the animals and the chorus of Batavian soldiers. In the second half of the show, various events happen and this includes a little from Minimus Secundus. Lepidina goes to her friend's birthday party; the Governor of Britain comes to dinner with the disastrous crashing of the peacock; the family visit Eboracum to go shopping and meet Barates the flag -seller. Children who study Minimus have told me how much they enjoyed recognising the characters, the stories, the events and details from the Vindolanda writing tablets. One group from Cheltenham were particularly pleased to hear the soldiers singing about receiving socks and underpants, as they had just studied that particular writing tablet that morning before setting off to see the musical.

We all felt rather bereft when it was over and we were keen to perform it again. I am delighted to say that Boris Johnson has encouraged us to take the show to London. I hope it will be possible to perform it next Spring or Summer at Scope, the open air theatre outside of City Hall where Boris is based and opposite the Tower of London. It would be a wonderful setting. As yet, no date has been fixed, but I am working on it.

Meanwhile, we have received a very exciting invitation. In November we will be performing Minimus the Musical at the International School in Geneva. We will visit from November 24th to 26th. The school consists of eight schools, both primary and secondary and has a total of four thousand students. We will be performing the musical three times, once on each of the school's three campuses. It is an enormous challenge for such a young cast, but they are embracing the challenge with enthusiasm. We will be taking our wonderful costumes and armour but will have to adapt the show to suit the local conditions to some extent. There will be a full report of our visit in the next newsletter. We are very grateful to Dr Nicholas Tate and the International School for this invitation, for giving us the opportunity to perform again and to the host families who will be looking after the children.

For a report on the musical and some splendid photographs, see the website under Barbara's news page; www.minimus.com

Other Recent Events

I am very sorry that the Manchester Training Day had to be cancelled due to lack of support. Last year we had to cancel a planned Minimus day in Chester. I am keen that Minimus is not seen as a text book for the South of England. If you live in the north and have comments or suggestions to make about how the project can support you better, please do get in touch. If you are in a school which could offer it as a possible venue for a training day, please also get in touch. Remember that training days are always held on Saturdays and that your school would need to cater for approximately twenty delegates. In addition, it is also very helpful if your school is near to a main railway station and/or is well served by public transport.

We ended the term with another successful training day at James Allen's Girls' School in Dulwich. Those of you who have been to JAGS will know that we are always well looked after with an excellent lunch. I am grateful to Linda Soames and Oliver Makower for speaking on that occasion.

Do consider attending a training day if you are planning setting up a Minimus Club in the near future or to teach it on the timetable. It is also helpful to attend a training day for a second time if you attended several years ago and want to be updated on the material and the work of the project itself.

Mythology Competition News

Once again Pam Macklin has masterminded a very successful Mythology Competition and I am very grateful to her and her two judges, Brian and Diana Sparkes, for all their hard work. This competition has been sponsored by the Jowett Trustees in Oxford and it has been gratifying to see it grow in recent years. It is now an international competition and this year we attracted entries from Australia and Belgium as well as the UK and the United States as in the past. Please do consider entering next year's competition. The children have a fairly free rein when it comes to choosing the medium for their entry. Artwork is always popular and we had some pleasing pieces of written work, poems etc submitted, but in recent years we have also had a board game, some lovely clay models and a beautiful cushion was decorated. In other words, encourage your pupils to let their imaginations go. If you are in any doubt as to whether their proposed entry is acceptable, please get in touch with Pam Macklin, competition organiser. Please note that all entries must be individual with the exception of drama. Children can perform a play in a group and submit it on DVD. Please note that the play must be in Latin and of course teachers can be consulted to ensure that the Latin is accurate. Nevertheless it must be basically the pupils own work. The entries can largely be done at home and there is plenty of time before the submission date. The entries are photographed and sent by email. If a school has more entries than it is allowed to send in, I suggest that you hold an internal competition with your own small prizes and then submit the best ten. The children receive book tokens and lovely book plates to stick in their chosen books.

Pam Macklin adds:-

2010 saw the largest number of entries to date with a worldwide spread of nationalities. Using digital photos and e-mail has certainly attracted more schools. Many thanks to the teachers for encouraging their pupils to take part but more especially for submitting the entries with all the work that involved. Once again due to the generosity of the Jowett Trustees the judges were able to award a substantial number of prizes. Visit the website to see the winning entries and to find out about 2011's topics or contact pam@nethaus.co.uk for details.

Some Important Notices.

1- Circulation of the newsletter.

The next newsletter due to be published in May 2011 will be the last one sent by post. In order to keep receiving the newsletter, it is essential that you send us an email address. The newsletter that is published in October 2011 will ONLY be sent via email. It will also be available to download from the CUP and Minimus websites.

We look forward to receiving your email addresses. Please send them to nicolaprince99@hotmail.com

2 – Buying items from Minimus et Cetera

MEC is a small business run from our utility room! We are therefore not in a position to accept payment by card and at training days delegates should bring cash or their cheque books. We also do not issue invoices. The only way to order our range of goods – pencils, pens, stickers, post it notes, erasers etc is by completing an MEC order form and sending it to us complete with a cheque. We can of course send you a receipt if you wish, when we send your order. I hope this is clear as there have been some confusions recently. Please also use the most up to date order form which you can get from the website or from us direct. Erasers have recently increased in price to 50p each and the minimum postage for an MEC order is now £2.50. If you were not able to see the musical but would like to watch it, it is available as a DVD. The cost including post and packing is £15 and you can order it again from MEC. The availability of the DVD is on the latest order form; if it is not there you are using an old form.

3 – Continuity of Clubs

If for any reason you are no longer able to continue running a Minimus club, please do get in touch with me as soon as possible. It may be possible for us to find someone in your area who is willing to take it over. Please do this in good time as it is such a shame if a club has to fold.

4 – School Visits

I always enjoy visiting schools and working with the children. I have a little more time this year but not as much as I had imagined! Please get in touch if you would like me to visit your school. If it is local to Bristol, it will not be a problem. If it is further afield, I am afraid it may not happen, though it is always worth contacting me. I can do no more school visits this term as the musical is taking up all my spare time. Do get in touch in January if you would like to try to fix a visit.

Future Events – Training Days

Five training days have so far been arranged for this academic year. Dates and venues are as follows:

Sat 27th November 2010 - James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich, London

Sat 29th January 2011 - Haberdashers Monmouth School for Girls (Junior School), Monmouthshire

Sat 12th March 2011 - Sarum College, Salisbury (It is opposite Salisbury Cathedral and can provide overnight accommodation)

Sat 7th May 2011 - Wymondham College, Norwich, Norfolk

Sat 11th June 2011 - James Allen's Girls' School, Dulwich, London

Please note that the price of a training day is £60 and we require a cheque with your application form. We have not put the price up for many years and I am sure that you can appreciate with the rising costs of food, transport and photocopying, we now need to increase it. Those of you who have been will agree that it represents good value for money.

Sales Figures

I am delighted to report that sales of the first book have now passed 114,000 copies. When I received the recent breakdown of sales from CUP, it was especially striking how many of those sales are now in the USA. Thank you to all our American supporters, I know that you appreciate being kept in touch via the newsletter and the American newsletter that you receive via email from Ruth Anne Besse in Laurel, Maryland. If you do not receive that newsletter, please contact Ruth Anne (rabesse17@gmail.com), a member of the PLP Committee. At present our wonderful filmmaker who made the DVD is re formatting it to work for an American market. I gather that the DVD of the musical will play on a computer, but not yet on a DVD in the States. Watch this space, we hope to rectify this situation soon and you will be able to order it as with all other MEC goods and pay via Paypal in dollars.

Your support

The Primary Latin Project is enormously grateful to all of you who support us either occasionally or on a regular basis. This was especially valuable in bringing the musical to fruition. We run the project on a shoestring always trying to keep the cost of any event as low as possible. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of the Classical Association which gives generously to our Grant Fund, of the Jowett Trustees who sponsor the Mythology Competition and to our many patrons. If you are in a position to make a small donation at any time (cheques payable to Primary Latin Project) you can be assured that your money will be appreciated and well spent in promoting Latin, and through it Greek, to the next generation.

With my thanks as always for your encouragement and support, **Barbara Bell**