

Glee Club History

While most schools can rightly boast of a history of musical productions King's may be somewhat unique in that the very name 'Glee Club' is indicative of a long-standing, formal organisation that has been responsible for annual productions for the last 70 years.

Prior to its establishment by Mr Lin Saunders and his wife Helen in 1937 there had been, from time to time, concerts and choral recitals on an ad hoc basis - music has always been an important part of the College's curriculum. That first 'Glee Club' performance was little more than the familiar concert but within a very short time the Saunders were auditioning, planning, rehearsing, outfitting and presenting light opera that encompassed a variety of well known and loved shows.

Students fondly remember the several Gilbert & Sullivan opera that graced the Old Gym 'theatre', and tunes from 'Yeoman of the Guard', 'The Mikado', 'The Gondoliers', 'Ruddigore' and 'Pirates of Penzeance' could be heard when those involved recalled their days 'in the limelight'.

What was then 'Big School' very closely resembled back-street London theatres and it was not until the building of the 'Great Hall' in 1970 that a large stage, orchestra pit and seating for nearly 1000 provided facilities that did justice to the hours of preparation for each year's annual production.

It was not until 1974 that boys were not cast to take female roles. Philip Bird had been appointed to take over as Director of Music from Lin Saunders and arranged for girls from various Colleges to contribute to 'Pirates', 'Joseph And His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat', 'Noye's Floode' and 'Oh, What a Lovely War!'. Once girls arrived on campus in 1980 things took a turn for the better - at last there was an ever-increasing number from which to audition for these roles and the selection of shows became easier.

'Joseph' had 3 subsequent appearances, and Broadway shows featured in the ever-widening selection.

The change of Terms in the school year added to production ills - the Glee Club had been traditionally fitted into Term 1, sometimes running later into the second Term - suddenly full scale, ambitious shows had to be sandwiched into a 9-week term; still the Glee Club continued to entertain with a tradition that provides enjoyment, a rich experience and much history to everyone involved - cast, production team and the many hundreds, if not thousands who have attended their performances.

In 2006 the Glee Club presented 'The Boyfriend' and in 2007 a superb production of Barry Manilow's Copacabana.