We hope you did not miss this year’s production of Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* – a musical based on a 17th century tale about a romance between a Prince changed into a Beast for being selfish and unkind and a beautiful girl imprisoned in his castle and how they and the servants in the castle and the villagers managed to live happily ever after. It is a relatively modern musical first produced on Broadway in 1994 and then ran for 5464 performances, finally closing in July 2007. It is a magical story designed to entertain people of all ages. Our presentation last week was enthusiastically received by all who saw it and was another outstanding success. If you were there, you know that the presentation of this musical was excellent, that the singing and dancing by both chorus and soloists was strong and polished and that all involved should be very proud of their achievements. I can assure you that they worked hard, particularly on Sundays and on many days during the second term holidays; they achieved a high standard and definitely deserved all the praise they received. The staff were pleased with the attitude and effort of a great group of students who readily accepted the challenges put to them. It was great to see the joy they gained from their involvement. A special commendation needs to go to our principal actors. They spent hours improving their singing, their dialogue, their gestures and their stagecraft. They have gained from the experience and we enjoyed their ability to sing some entertaining songs, sometimes accompanied by the chorus and some complicated music arrangements and choreography.

The organisation of a musical involves not only the cast on stage (singing, dancing, acting) but also there is a lot of ‘behind the scenes’ assistance required – ticket selling, costumes, make-up, program design, photos, making sets and props, lighting, sound and microphones, ushers, drivers – the list goes on. It was great to see the competence and efficiency of a number of students in many of these areas – changing sets, changing microphones, organising props, operating lighting, organising and changing costumes. We had fabulous and colourful costumes, great props, interesting scenery, all of which added to the spectacle produced. Teachers and students involved in these areas were extremely busy, spent many hours in preparation and displayed great organisational skills.

Many of the teachers and students in the Music Department were also extremely busy. This musical had accompaniment not only for singing and dancing but also for dialogue. This meant our accompanists and musical directors were always actively involved in all rehearsals and were required to concentrate on some challenging and entertaining music during the whole 2 hours of each performance. Laura Bomford was our choreographer again this year. She has a great talent for encouraging students to accept a challenge in dance and movement, a talent for turning ‘doable’ routines into a great spectacle. She worked the students hard and the results of her efforts were evident in all of the chorus numbers, which were performed with precision and great energy.

It was also very pleasing to hear some good comments by a number of the technical staff we employed at the Alexander Theatre. They commented positively on the behaviour and attitude of all the students involved, on their organisational skills, on their ‘theatre savvy’ and particularly on the quality of their performance in this musical, whether it was on stage or backstage.

Some are saying again it was the best ever, but they’ve said that before. It certainly was an excellent production and an extremely entertaining spectacle. To everyone who contributed in any way to this year’s production of *Beauty and the Beast*, we hope you feel rewarded for your involvement and efforts. It is really great to see what young people can achieve when they are given the responsibility and the opportunity. Their talent, their energy and enthusiasm was well worth seeing.

*Congratulations to everyone involved this year and thank you!*

Ken Nailon – Director