

## English Department hosts Bell Shakespeare's timeless Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth

Last week on Tuesday 8 September, Bell Shakespeare's talented acting troupe visited Mater Maria's Year 9 and 10 students. Instead of travelling into the city to the Opera House, Bell Shakespeare transformed our own Byrne Theatre into a day of rotating performances for our Stage 5 students. Selena Conna organised the travelling actors to present the timeless tales of Shakespeare for us as it aligned with our close study of the plays this term.

The Year 10 students were enthralled with the woes of 11th century Scotland as the troupe brought an abridged version of the tragic tale of Macbeth to life, warning audiences throughout time of the dangers of being overly ambitious and falling prey to superstitions. Our classes claimed that seeing some of the scenes come to life really cemented the ideas into their understanding and they would be able to transfer that into their upcoming essays. These performances lay the foundation to understanding literature that sets a precedent for the upcoming senior studies.

Later in the afternoon, Bell Shakespeare yet again transformed the Byrne Theatre into another setting. Verona came alive for us as we were led through the streets of Italy to witness Romeo's wooing of Juliet and their star crossed love that followed. Students were riveted as the troupe brought the young love to life and incorporated some discussion along the way as to why the behaviour was so rash and how it lead audiences to consider

reason over irrationality. The talented actors kept the action moving rapidly to be able to fit the entire play in within our class time period of 1 hour.



The essay focus for the Year 9 Assessment task is about bringing the stories to life in modern times and these performances not only proved the claims yet provided the students a deep understanding of Shakespeare's craft. The characters have so aptly captured aspects of ourselves that they continue to mirror society through the changing times and give us a change to reflect on ourselves and our relationships paying heed to the choices we make and how they affect others. Hence, the ongoing engagement with these plays fills us all with moral grounding and proves the continual necessity for recognising the essence of literature.

**Jennifer Leigh-Jones**