The Brentwood School: Blood Wedding - Poetic Storytelling, Powerful Performances and Expressive Movement

As a National School Theatre Awards representative, it was a pleasure to be invited to watch a performance of *Blood Wedding*, on Wednesday 7th October 2026, performed by the senior students at Brentwood School. Directed by Mrs R Clark, this, originally 3-act production was condensed into two acts, presumably for reasons of expediency. The decision to present this production in the round immediately immersed the audience in the action of this tragedy.

Blood Wedding is a complex story, and this adaptation by Ted Hughes, based on David Johnston's translation of the original Spanish play *Bodas de Sangre* by Federico García Lorca, placed greater emphasis on dialogue, removing much of the props, costumes and physical staging associated with the original work. This pared-back approach allowed the text to take centre stage and helped the audience focus on the unfolding narrative.

Set in a claustrophobic rural Spanish community, the plot revolves around a long-standing family feud between the Mother's family and the Félix family. The Mother's surviving son is set to marry the Bride, who secretly harbors deep, forbidden passion for Leonardo. On the day of the wedding, the Bride and Leonardo elope into the forest on horseback. The enraged Son/Groom tracks them down through the woods, driven by honor, vengeance, and a cycle of ancestral blood, resulting in a fatal knife duel where both Leonardo and the Son kill each other.

The principal roles were all well cast. Ellie, as the Mother, delivered a particularly commanding performance, demonstrating excellent characterisation. Her facial expressions were carefully defined and conveyed a strong sense of foreboding and anxiety about the impending marriage between her son and the Bride. Her fears were rooted in the longstanding feud between her family and the Felix family, members of whom were believed to have murdered both her husband and her other son. This history of violence provided a convincing foundation for her premonitions and concerns.

Simi played the Bride, a woman who was once engaged to Leonardo Felix and who continues to harbour deep feelings for him. Her performance was sensitively handled, and her confidence in the role grew noticeably as the play progressed.

Charlie gave a good performance as the Son/Groom, portraying him as a decent young man with a degree of strength and determination. His performance nicely demonstrated that the character lacked the darker, more dangerous romantic qualities embodied by Leonardo, which provided an interesting contrast between the two characters.

Korede gave a particularly engaging performance as Leonardo, successfully conveying the character's more passionate, impulsive and potentially dangerous nature. Korede also worked well alongside his fellow principals, contributing positively to the overall strength and dynamic of the ensemble.

Amelia played Leonardo's wife with good characterisation, effectively conveying her doubts and suspicions about her husband's fidelity. Her revelation that she is pregnant adds another layer to her concerns and makes her uncertainty about their relationship all the more poignant.

The ensemble was excellent, providing strong support throughout the production. Individual performances were consistently engaging, and the cast worked well together to sustain the atmosphere and momentum of the play. They were further supported by a team of off-stage voices, which added depth, volume and atmosphere to the production.

The first and second acts of the original were combined, allowing this production's second act to open with the scene featuring the Woodcutters in the forest. This provided an opportunity for a beautifully choreographed dance, devised by movement director Mr G Hicks. The sequence was performed superbly by the cast, whose movements were precise and well-rehearsed. Tireni, as the Moon, was an outstanding lead dancer.

Ted Hughes's 1996 adaptation places particular emphasis on the power of language, giving the dialogue and the characters' emotional journeys a central role in the storytelling. Brentwood School embraced this emphasis on language through its clear, uncluttered staging. The performance space allowed the audience to feel close to the action, while the carefully chosen props supported the unfolding narrative, complementing the action without distracting from it. This purposeful visual approach kept attention on the characters and their relationships, allowing the emotional complexity of the story to remain at the heart of the experience.Although the minimalist approach placed considerable emphasis on the dialogue, this was welcome given the complexity of the storyline and allowed the audience to concentrate on the development of the characters and the narrative.

Brentwood School's production of *Blood Wedding* brought together expressive principal performances, committed ensemble work, and purposeful movement. It is always encouraging to see a classic play brought to the stage. The cast demonstrated a clear understanding of the narrative and communicated it effectively to the audience. The staging placed the text and characters at the heart of the experience, allowing the emotional complexity of Lorca's tragedy to remain central. Overall, this was a well-supported production that benefitted from strong ensemble work, effective movement and convincing principal performances.

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