

reporters' club drama



Drama

On an island of fun and magic

A stage adaptation of a popular book allows students at Island School to flex their artistic talents. Our junior reporters were on hand to find out more ...

Last week, our junior reporters went to the Kingdom of Kensuke. Setting foot on the imaginary island - or rather, the hall of Island School - they met the friendly cast from Faust International Young Theatre. They spoke to the show's director, Nicholas Atkinson, and several student actors ...

Director Nicholas Atkinson with actor Dylan Heyler and actress Paris Shivey during an interview with Young Post.
Photo: Chris Lau



The adaptation of *Kensuke's Kingdom*

Director Nicholas Atkinson chose student actors for the show after a tough round of auditions. Their duty was to perform in his adaptation of *Kensuke's Kingdom*, a story by Michael Morpurgo. The story is about a young boy, Michael, and his dog, Stella Artois. One day, they fall off a boat and are washed up to a mysterious island. There, they meet the island's only dweller Kensuke, from Japan. At first, there is some hostility, but later they become friends.

Atkinson said he first learned about the novel after seeing his friend use it as a teaching text. The story fascinated him and he decided to adapt it into a play. His play features a lot of colourful and realistic backdrops to simulate the feeling of being on a deserted island.

Most of the actors are first-time performers. One of Atkinson's jobs is to calm their nerves. He tells his actors: "If you don't believe what you're doing, the audience won't believe you either."
Sonia Tsui, Cassandra Lee

In *Kensuke's shoes*

Kensuke worked as a doctor for the Japanese Navy during the second world war. He has been stranded on an island since the war. He has completely lost touch with the outside world for around 40 years. Then one day, Michael comes along. At first, Kensuke is suspicious of him but over time the two castaways grow closer.

Two young actors, Victor So King-hung and Andrew Koo Cheng-kang, alternatively play the role of Kensuke. They have both tried to enter the character's mindset. "[I need to] think like Kensuke," Andrew says. "Think about how the character will behave and speak [with an accent]."

The actors read up on the history of the war and watched many documentaries about it, including the nuclear bombs America dropped on Japan. "[That] helped me to understand Kensuke's rage towards Americans," Andrew says.
Kerrie Chiu



Student actors rehearse for the play under the direction of Atkinson.
Photo: Jonathan Wong

Student actors Andrew Koo Cheng-kang and Victor So King-hung talk to junior reporters.
Photo: Chris Lau



A teen father figure

Dylan Helyer is 17 and has lived most of his life without a father. Now he's playing one.

In the play, Dylan plays Mitch's father. He has had no model for a father-figure at home and needs to play a much older man. So Dylan found it difficult to identify with his character.

"My dad left when I was two, so that didn't leave a very good impression on me," he says. Dylan asked his friends about their fathers to get some insight and understanding about the character. Some of his friends' fathers, he notes, "were not very nice". He also dug into television series and films to look for "dads passionate about their kids".

Dylan has always taken on dark roles in the past as an actor. This time, he will be trying something different. "I've always played sinister, evil figures," he says. "Now I'm playing this larger-than-life, really positive guy."

There is a youthful spirit to the father character and Dylan says he can identify with that. So he finds playing him a rewarding experience. But he also concedes that "it's a bit of a challenge".
Leya Lam

The show will be held at the Academy for Performing Arts from January 31-February 3. For tickets, visit www.hkticketing.com



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Young Post organises regular activities for our junior reporters. If you wish to join, send your name, age, school and contact details to reporters.club@scmp.com with "jun rep application" in the subject field

Compiled by Chris Lau