***Dragon***

In conjunction with the Confucius Institute at Glasgow University, CISS was given the opportunity to take 350 pupils from all over Scotland to see the premiere of the play ***Dragon***at the Citizens Theatre. This wonderful co-production between the National Theatre of Scotland, Tianjin Children’s Art Theatre and Vox Motus is highly unusual given that there are no words spoken throughout the play. The audience is invited to take a visual and emotional journey using their imagination. The use of puppetry, illusion and music allows this to happen.

Written by Oliver Emanuel, the play is described as *“A show for adults, teenagers and children with vivid imaginations.”* ***Dragon*** is the story of protagonist Tommy, a 12 year old boy, struggling to cope with his grief after his mother passes away. Ignored by his sister, bullied in school and struggling to relate to his grieving father, Tommy encounters a Dragon one sleepless night. The play tells the story of his relationship with the dragon. The dragon goes everywhere with him and slowly his life begins to improve.

Throughout the play the dragon is depicted in many different forms: it is drawn, imagined, heard and of course seen in the form of different puppets. There is a range of puppets used, from large, imposing ones, to colourful and delicate ones. They seem to represent Tommy’s struggle with his emotions. Unlike in western mythology where dragons are portrayed as evil and dangerous creatures, Chinese philosophy depicts them as fortuitous. It is popularly believed that everyone has a dragon within them and that one must learn to balance that dragon. This is exactly what Tommy has to achieve throughout the play.

The play has been described as *“…overcoming the language barrier by using no words at all.”* This is apt as two of the cast members come from China and do not speak English. As a member of the audience, you certainly cannot tell that the actors do not share a common language as they have a wonderful connection and everything appears perfectly seamless. Both children and adults were captivated from the get-go.

Dragon will be touring Scotland before hopefully heading to China in 2014.