



ASHDOWN'S ALUMNI

ALUMNI GET-
TOGETHER
APRIL 2011:
CHECK
ASHDOWN'S
WEBSITE IN
FEBRUARY!

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ALUMNI CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERT CUM DINNER 2011

Ashdown House was informed by the MIT Development Office in 2009 that Prof. Vernon Ingram left a bequest to fund an annual classical concert at Ashdown House. Beth and Vernon Ingram were Ashdown Housemasters from 1984 to 2001. Vernon was an accomplished pianist and the Ingrams started the tradition of an annual Ashdown House concert. The music practice room in Ashdown House is named the Ingram Room. The first concert was held in April, 2010. Once a date is selected, we will let everyone know. Please check the website in February 2011. Don't forget, 2011 marks MIT's 150th anniversary, so do join us as we celebrate this special year!



Andrew with other current Ashdown students on an Ashdown outing

MOVING ACROSS THE POND...

ANDREW SWEET

When considering housing possibilities at MIT, I was skeptical about moving back into a student dorm. After living in private accommodation for a few years, it struck me as something of a regression, especially at a time in life when independence and identity, both socially and as a researcher, seemed so important.

Nevertheless, I plumped for Ashdown and, on hindsight, I

couldn't have made a better decision.

It didn't take long to realize that a bit of dependence can go a long way when you're a new graduate student at MIT. After dealing with problem sets, exams and research frustrations, it's a comfort to know that your social life can always fall back on one of the many activities arranged for us at Ashdown.

I PLUMPTED FOR ASHDOWN AND, IN HINDSIGHT, I COULDN'T HAVE MADE A BETTER DECISION.



Back home in England, you could effectively interpret a dorm social event as a pub crawl around town. While this feature wasn't absent from MIT's schedule, it's been refreshing to see so many more activities available: from apple picking, hiking trips in New Hampshire to origami lessons and an Argentinian film series back at the house. I even made my own small contribution to proceedings as a croupier in Ashdown's very first casino night in 2010.



On top of these one-offs, we continue to be treated to regular events, like brunch and coffee hour, which seem to act as collective social wake-up calls across the residence.



As the end of my first term at MIT approaches, I'm happy to report that the skeptic inside me has been proven wrong. Not only has Ashdown provided the social crutch I didn't realize I'd needed, but it's also encouraged me to contribute to a unique and vibrant community.

ASHDOWN'S FIRST ALUMNI CONCERT!

IRENE CHEN

When I was first asked to plan a music recital for the Ashdown alumni event, I didn't quite understand the connection between a reunion and a music recital. To make matters worse, I have never outgrown my childhood fear of performing at piano recitals, yet I had committed myself to performing a few pieces after some of the performers were forced to drop out of the recital due to their busy schedules.

The concert itself was made possible by a bequest left by Professor Vernon Ingram, who was

a former housemaster along with his wife Beth. Not only were the former housemasters great enthusiasts of classical music, but Vernon also played the piano and encouraged music recitals in Ashdown.

As former art officer and fellow performer, I thank the musicians who volunteered to play last April: Anandh Swaminathan, Arvind Thiagarajan, Miaoqing Fang, Kevin Kung, Jim Abbott and Joey Zhou.

Not only was there a variety of classical pieces from different historical periods, but there was also performances from different

backgrounds. Notably, Arvind and Anandh performed a wonderful traditional piece of music from South India. Miaoqing impressed everyone with her fabulous singing voice, despite having to announce that she had a very bad cold. I certainly felt like I should not have anything to fear from performing if Miaoqing was able to sing such difficult pieces with a sore throat. I played one of my two pieces, skipping the last piece out of nervousness, yet that was the only flaw in a night of wonderful performances. And I doubt anyone noticed because my performance was followed by some amazing piano performances by Kevin and Joey. Jim made a short speech near the end of the recital, helping me to understand why Ashdown music recitals are such a great idea.

The performances brought together current students with alumni, sharing everyone's appreciation for classical music.



Personally, I felt encouraged and inspired by my fellow musicians and am happy to have faced (although not to have conquered) my fear of performing.

Earlier that day, former Ashdown alumni experienced a tour of the new building, and I think they must have been surprised at how new and different the building layout is compared to the old Ashdown. However, the night ended in knowing that the community interactions in Ashdown have not changed. Both Vernon and Beth would have been happy to know that this tradition in Ashdown continues to exist.



Orientation BBQ '10

AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ON HIS CULINARY EGGSPERIENCE IN AMERICA...

RAHUL BHATTACHARYYA



As an international student, I am amazed at how diverse the food scene is in the US. Cuisine in this country is a potpourri of ethnic delicacies from across the world. Fancy some Brazilian, Afghani or South African food? Chances are there is a restaurant that specializes in just that a few blocks from where you live. I've developed a strong fondness for teriyaki, falafel and avocados – foods that were just words in some fancy



PUMPKIN
CARVING @
ASHDOWN...



THANKSGIVING
DINNER...



ASHDOWN
RESIDENTS HARD
AT WORK:
COMMUNITY
SERVICE (ASPIRE)

cookbook.

Every once in a while though, I get this craving for the native dishes I was raised on – that mushroom and pea curry my mom would whip up for my birthday, or those whole wheat rotis I would pinch from the kitchen while my brother was distracting my grandmother from her cooking. In my first year at MIT, after the euphoria of the welcome barbecues had died down, I decided to try and cook one of my favourite eggplant dishes – it’s a gastronomic fiesta with mustard and sesame seeds, crushed peanuts and a coconut spice base. I had had my mother painstakingly write the recipe down and so was convinced that I could replicate this marvel ... at least in theory!

Armed with a shopping list of other mundane essentials, I headed out to Shaw’s to buy the one item missing on my list – eggplant. Only thing is I had no idea, an eggplant was called ... well an eggplant. In my native Mumbai, we refer to that bulbous purple gourd as a ‘brinjal’. After a few futile attempts to locate the evasive brinjal, I noticed a sympathetic looking store hand organizing the shelves. Walking up to him I asked hopefully if he knew where I could find my holy grail. He looked perplexed for a minute and then his face creased up in a mischievous grin before he replied,

“Dunno, you sure it’s legal?”

We walked over to the vegetable isle and he helpfully started pointing out vegetables the store did have especially the more exotic (translate: expensive) ones.

I was slowly losing heart and was about to write off the great brinjal as another vegetable not available in America when I noticed a purple hue behind the jalapeno peppers. In a flash I picked up the familiar shape I was so used to seeing on every vegetable vendor cart in the back alleys of Mumbai and excitedly gesticulated to the store hand that I had found it. He looked quizzically at me and remarked, “Oh, that’s an eggplant it’s really common here” leaving me staring at the brinjal and thinking “Egg-plant, really?”

Over the past few years I’ve become better at cooking the brinjal ... err eggplant curry. I think I’m at the point where I’d be comfortable subjecting my friends to my cooking. So if you’re feeling adventurous let me know and I’ll call you over the next time I make it. I promise to keep a tub of ice-cream at close hand ... just in case :P



THE AUTHOR AT THE
FOREFRONT OF THE
PICTURE. HE WAS
HIKING WITH OTHER
ASHDOWN RESIDENTS!

MIT-HARVARD DANCE PARTY!

KEVIN KUNG

The MIT-Harvard orientation dance party, “Double Decade Delirium” was held on Saturday, September 25. While the floor in the Hulsizer room played music from the 2000s, the other floor in a large tent in the courtyard boomed out music from the ‘90s. The mix of music from two decades—such as the Butterfly Song, Macarena, and RoboCop—was intended to bring back fond memories familiar for student who grew up with such music, and to create conversation opportunities between them and other incoming students.

Originally planned for Friday, September 3, it had to be subsequently postponed due to the approaching Hurricane Earl. Nonetheless, the postponed party nevertheless drew a large crowd of at least 500 students—about 30% of them coming afar from Harvard.



There were two cash bars, as well as free pizzas and soft drinks inside the two dance floors. The walls of the dance floors were studded with popular posters from the 1990s and 2000s, while black lights, disco balls, and other glittery decorations lined the dance floors and ceilings. At the beginning, students—in typical MIT fashion—were somewhat timid on the dance floors. But as the crowd grew larger, the dance floors also gained momentum. Overall, people had such a fantastic time that when the DJs ended the party at 1 a.m., a ubiquitous “boo” was heard everywhere.

STAY IN
TOUCH!

WE'RE ON THE
WEB!

[HTTP://ASHDOWN.
N.MIT.EDU/](http://ashdown.mit.edu/)

ANY COMMENTS
OR QUESTIONS,
PLEASE EMAIL
THE ALUMNI
COMMITTEE:
[ASHDOWN-
ALUMNI@MIT.EDU](mailto:ASHDOWN-ALUMNI@MIT.EDU)



At the entrance, attendees were given party favors such as glitter hats, sunglasses, and ties. Emily, a volunteer caricature artist, impressed many attendees with her skill and humor.

