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Coming to a High School Near You

By Lou Fancher



From left: Connor Jone (John Proctor), Abby Woodman (Elizabeth Proctor), and Abby Faber (Mary Warren) rehearse *The Crucible*. Photo Ed Meehan

Lamorinda's high school theater departments are gearing up for three ambitious, powerful fall productions. Within a one month span, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Mary Zimmerman's *Metamorphoses*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare, will give young, local actors a chance to shine.

Taking time out from their already overloaded schedules, directors Dan Meehan (Acalanes), Heather Cousins (Miramonte), and Jamie Donohoe (Campolindo), provided insight about the plays, the students, and their personal connections to the magic of theater. Here, presented in chronological order based on opening night schedules, are the questions and their answers.

Acalanes

Under the direction of Meehan, students will present *The Crucible* from November 2-5.

Who chose the play and why?

I chose the play. I picked it for a number of reasons. First, it's just a great play with a lot of intense drama in it. It's been some time since The DramaDons have done something with such intensity. Second, I think the play still has something to say today about nature, power, and fear. Finally, *The Crucible* is a play that is in our Junior English Curriculum and it's always great when we can sync up and do a play that supports curriculum in other disciplines.

What role do the students play in the production elements of the play? (Lighting, set design, choreography, technical crew, or any other item.)

The students play a huge role in the production of our plays. Not

only do they perform all the roles, of course, but they also create sets, acquire the costumes, set and run the lights and sound and run the house on the nights of the performances. Basically, when the play opens, my role of director scales way back and I watch them do it. I'm only needed when something really big happens. This, however, is extremely rare.

What is the most challenging aspect of this year's production?

I think costumes are the most challenging part of this play. We've got 20 kids to clothe and a very specific time period. The costume crew is up to the challenge though. I know they are going to come through for us.

What is the best part of directing high school plays?

I love working with the students. It is quite gratifying to help them learn the play and put together a challenging work of art.

Were you ever in high school theater productions and what memory could you share from that experience?

I was involved with theatre through all four years of high school. I went to Northgate High School and work with Jack Derieux. I still vividly remember the process of every one of the plays we did. I guess the best part about it was the sense of camaraderie we shared in putting on a production and the sense of pride we felt when we knew we had pulled it off. Jack is a mentor and good friend of mine and I still go back to the things he taught me way back when.

Miramonte

Metamorphoses will be performed by Cousin's students No-

ember 17-19.

Who chose the play and why?

I chose the play because it is an opportunity to work collaboratively as part of an ensemble and experiment artistically with style and design. In our version, we will have a Greek chorus, 30 cast members, many musical instruments, and a pool of real water on stage. Miramonte has a very strong Latin program and classic literature is a very important component of the curriculum. Our Latin program will participate and help promote the show.

What role do the students play in the production elements of the play? (Lighting, set design, choreography, technical crew, or any other item.)

The production is entirely student-run by our resident theatre company, the Miramonte Players.

What is the most challenging aspect of this year's production?

Finding the right balance between some of the sillier moments and some of the heavy drama.

What is the best part of directing high school plays?

My students are capable of anything. Nothing is too sophisticated for them. Their talent is immense and their ideas are innovative.

Were you ever in high school theater productions and what memory could you share from that experience?

Being a part of the theater program at Northgate High School was the most important part of my high school life. It is what I looked forward to every day. It is where I met my favorite friends and my favorite teacher. Had it not been for drama, no one would have known who I was because I was somewhat shy, although I took on a completely different persona on stage. Because I had an opportunity to shine in so many school productions, I gained a confidence that lasted through my life.

Campolindo

Donohoe's first production at Campolindo will showcase his students on December 3-4.

Who chose the play and why?

I made the choice. I've always wanted to show the students how much fun Shakespeare is, and this play in particular contains a lot of "locker room" humor that is often downplayed or completely cut from theatrical and film versions. The bawdiness is what brought audiences to this play in the first place, and it's why our kids (and many parents!) love Southpark. Also, this play zeros in on many issues modern teenagers struggle with daily: questioning identity, trying to live up to parent expectations, feeling hopeless and lost, even the notion of teen-age sex. How do you present these issues tastefully yet in a way that speaks to our kids? This is the challenge we're trying to work through.

What role do the students play in the production elements of the play? (Lighting, set design, choreography, technical crew, or any other item.)

There are student leaders for all technical aspects (light/sound, set design, make-up, costumes, and so on). There will be some parents helping with set construction, but mostly this is a student run production. We also have two assistant directors each responsible for major scenes.

What is the most challenging aspect of this year's production?

As a first year director and drama teacher, I'm learning how much I don't know. I'm having to ask for help a lot more than I'm used to. But the level of involvement from the community is spectacular. If and when this production flies, it

won't be because of me. It's the sum of all of the countless folks out there who are putting their love into this play.

What is the best part of directing high school plays?

Witnessing the sheer faith these kids have in each other and in the production. They trust each other and, because of that, they are willing to put themselves out there in ways I don't typically see in the quad at lunch, on athletic fields, even in the counseling office. Watching these incredible characters blossom from these guys and gals is pretty amazing.

Were you ever in high school theater productions and what memory could you share from that experience?

I was in a couple of musical pro-

ductions (long ago) at Campo. I was a shy kid, but I remember getting up on stage and thinking "Hey, this isn't so bad." And then I started to actually long for the moment when the heat of the stage-lights struck me.

<p>Acalanes: The Crucible November 2-5, all shows at 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Miramonte: Metamorphosis November 17-19, all shows at 7:30 p.m.</p>
<p>Campolindo: Romeo and Juliet December 3 at 7:00 p.m., and December 4 at 12 noon and 7:00 p.m.</p>	

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Running lines for *Metamorphosis*. Photo provided by Heather Cousins

Girl Scout Leaders and Celebrate Founder's Day, Juliette Low's Birthday

Submitted by Sandra Patterson (Service Unit Director)

The Girl Scouts Lafayette Service Unit welcomed new leaders during the fall Leader Meeting held on September 28 at Girl Scout Camp Twin Canyon, located in Lafayette.

They follow a long line of volunteer leaders starting with Juliette Gordon Low, founder of Girl Scouts USA, who was born on October 31, 1860.

On Halloween this year, Girl Scouts will celebrate the 150th anniversary of Juliette Low's birthday.

On March 12, 1912, she gathered 18 girls in Savannah, Georgia, to register the first troop of Girl Scouts in the USA.

In developing the Girl Scout movement in the United States, Juliette brought girls of all backgrounds into the out-of-doors, giving them the opportunity to develop self-reliance and resourcefulness.

She encouraged girls to prepare not only for traditional home-

making, but also for possible future roles as professional women—in the arts, sciences and business—and for active citizenship outside the home.

Girl scouting welcomed girls with disabilities at a time when they were excluded from many other activities. This idea seemed quite natural to Juliette, who never let deafness, back problems or cancer keep her from full participation in life.

How Six Figure Income Families Get Thousands of Dollars in Free Money For College

Local man teaches free workshops to help parents save thousands in process

Moraga—East Bay parents that are planning on sending a child to college in the next few years, but aren't quite sure how to pay for it can now rest a little easier. Gerna Benz of Bay Area College Planners has been educating families in the community for over 15 years.

'It's really sad, but most parents that we talk to have done real well financially, but never found the time to save for college, and now they're facing a bill of \$18,000-\$45,000 a year, and they don't know who to turn to,' he says. 'Further, most of the time, all they hear is to not even bother applying for any aid because they make too much money. However, most of the time, that is simply not true even if they make a six-figure income.'

Gerna would know, because his group has worked with over 1400 families in the last 10 years ranging from single moms to corporate CEO's, and they say they can help anyone get through the process and save a bundle.... no matter how good of a student they have or how much money they make.

'I got started in this because I was a very good student, but no one told us anything about how to access money for college, or even how to pick a career...so I didn't go right away. But, I vowed that I would learn the process and devote my time to helping families not fall into the same trap that we did. 'Simply put, we show parents the truth that they aren't hearing anywhere else about how the college process really works and save thousands of dollars in the process.'

Lamorinda parents will have an opportunity

to hear Gerna speak. He is teaching his class 'How to Give Your Kid a 4-Year College Education Without Going Broke!' on Saturday November 13th at the Moraga Library located at 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, CA 94556 from 11:00am-12:15pm.

'We'll discuss everything from the greatest myths about the college process, to how to send your student to a fancy private school for less than the cost of a junior college...it'll be like learning how to get a brand new Lexus for the price of a used pick up truck,' he grins.

Topics will also include why private scholarships and 529 plans are a waste of time, how to double or even triple the amount of free money you receive from each school, and how to avoid the one mistake that will kill your chances of getting any money at all that almost every other parent will make this coming January, and much, much more.

'They will learn a ton, and I do my best to make the class fun,' he says. 'It's like I'm giving them a super bright flash light to navigate a pitch black cave, while all the other parents continue to stumble around blindly! 'Don't forget: the class is totally free, but seats are limited. Also, we are not sure when we will be teaching these classes in the East Bay again since my November and December calendars are already filling up, so come on out and see me.' You can reserve a seat online at www.baycollegeplanners.com or by calling our 24 hour reservation line at (877) 924-3726.

Submit stories to
schooldesk@lamorindaweekly.com