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# The solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short life of man is now a board game

By Sora O'Doherty

Several years ago Orinda resident Evan Ho was discussing life, when he called to mind the board game, The Game of Life, the classic board game where the game pieces are little colored convertible cars and players drive around the board collecting spouses, children, college degrees and jobs. Ho's vision is a bit darker, a bit more sarcastic, and definitely a bit more adult. He decided to create his version of a board game, with a philosophical slant, aimed at a market of highly educated adults.

Ho is a stock analyst who works remotely for a company based in New Jersey. He has been living in Orinda for about five years, and has a son in Sleepy Hollow Elementary School. About a year ago, Ho decided to start working on the game he'd thought up. He sat down at his computer and started to write. It took him several months to gather the raw material for his game. After developing a prototype, he played the game with people he knew and with people he didn't know. They seemed to find it entertaining enough to convince Ho to move into production.

The game is called "Hobbs, the Board Game," after the English philosopher Thomas Hobbs, best known for describing the life of man as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Players move through some 70 squares on the game board, and collect cards based on different stages of life: from childhood, through adolescence and middle age, and finally to old age. Each player starts out with 100 points, but points are lost throughout the journey owing to stressful life situations such as, "Head buried in your phone, you just missed your child's first steps in life," which loses the player 4 points. But this card is also marked with an R,

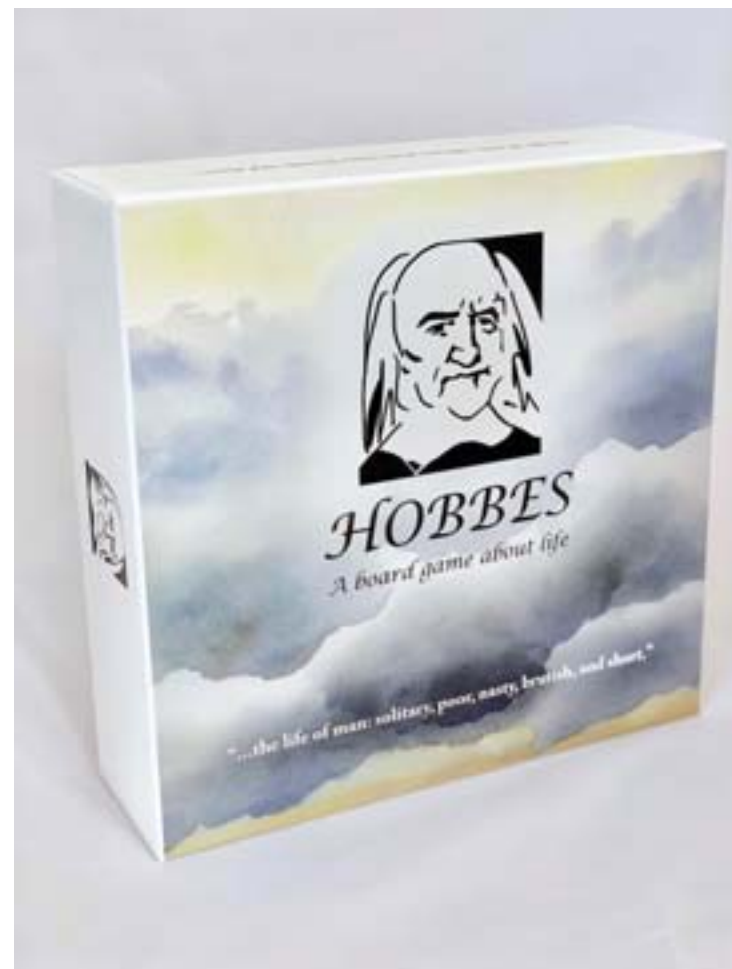


Photo provided

"Hobbs, the Board Game," created by Orinda resident Evan Ho.

which means that the player who draws it can inflict it on another player. Players occasionally pick up points by drawing a "philosophy card." Philosophy cards bear nuggets of wisdom from the classic philosophers such as a card that reads: "Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit - Aristotle," which earns the player points back.

Ho selected a game manufacturer in Michigan. This cost more than using a company in China, but Ho, whose Chinese parents came to the United States through Hong Kong and Taiwan, wanted to maintain more quality control over his product. He commissioned Berkeley artist Susan McAllister to create the cover art. He sells the game online and at local book stores, including Orinda

Books and Alexander Books in San Francisco. Ho admits that he sees the retail online giant Amazon as "the death star."

Ho is promoting his game through word of mouth advertising. He has donated some games to local fundraisers, for example. "This is a game for people with a sense of humor," Ho says. There is no other game out there that is based on philosophy, he says. "Philosophy is good for people," he maintains, adding, "the word 'philosophy' means 'love of knowledge.'" If Hobbs takes off, Ho has several other philosophers in mind for other games.

Ever esoteric, Ho has priced his game at \$28.26 online. If you wonder why, check out the Book of Proverbs.

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## Holiday songs at Diablo Women's Chorale concert in Lafayette



Photo provided

Submitted by  
Jennifer Mack

What do you get when you mix "Fa-La-La" with "Cool Yule," add a dash of "Christmas, Baby Please Come Home," and fold in a blend of other winter holiday songs? You get the Diablo Women's Chorale fall concert, "Winter's Light," at 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8 at Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Road, in Lafayette.

Backed by live musicians, the chorale will present a program of jazzy, uplifting music to kick off the beginning of the holiday season. Grab your friends and family members and join the chorale as they lighten a winter afternoon with songs from Lisa Loeb, George Michael, Irving Berlin, Phil

Spector, and many others.

The Diablo Women's Chorale - one of the oldest community choruses in the Bay Area - presents public concerts in December and May/June each year. Members include women from all areas of the San Francisco East Bay who share a passion for music and a gratifying sense of community and fun.

Director Stevie Greenwell is a well-known vocalist and choral educator. She earned a Bachelor of Music at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, and served as Director of Vocal Studies at Marin School of the Arts from 2012 to 2018 where she was awarded the "Golden Bell" from the California School Boards Association. Stevie now performs with the

Thrive Choir, the Jazz Mafia Choral Syndicate, and other artists around the Bay Area.

Accompanist Rebecca Hass is a pianist, teacher, and songwriter and holds a bachelor of music degree in piano from Ithaca College. Her extensive experience includes accompanying classical performers, musical theater classes, vocal competitions, church choirs, the Prelude Singer-Actor Performance Lab at the MacPhail Center for Music in Minneapolis, and the St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Arts.

Purchase advance tickets online at [www.DiabloWomensChorale.org](http://www.DiabloWomensChorale.org) or call 1-800-838-3006.

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