

This Friday - Outdoor Theater for the Younger Set!

By Lee Borrowman



The cast of Aladdin, Jr on the Hacienda stage

Photo by Lee Borrowman



Rachel Pergamit

If “Man and Superman,” the current Cal Shakes production at the Bruns Amphitheater, is a bit too much for your family, head out to Moraga this Friday instead. The heat of Agrabah will fill the air when young performers take the outdoor stage in the Disney musical “Aladdin, Jr.” Audience members are encouraged to bring picnic dinners, blankets and lawn chairs to the evening performance at the Hacienda de las Flores at 7:00 on July 27th.

Producer/Director Rachel Pergamit has been teaching children’s theatre for twenty years. A veteran performer and director, she founded the After School Drama Club in 1999, adding a Summer Drama Camp in 2006. Pergamit started performing with the Moraga Playhouse when she was seven, later directing for the Children’s Theater division and Main Stage. She has worked for theater companies all over the Bay Area, and is currently the Assistant Artistic Director and a member of the Board of the Galatean Players and the Production Coordinator for the City of Walnut Creek Civic Arts Education program.

To prepare for Friday’s performance, the cast of children, ages 8-13, has spent 3 weeks learning the ins and outs of producing a musical from theatre professionals. Pergamit says, “The kids are learning the basics of live performance -- how to put together a show and perform it for a live audience. But more than that, they are gaining self-confidence and inner strength. They are being challenged in a safe and comfortable environment. We create theatre in a low-key, high energy atmosphere. This isn’t about creating a star but instead about teaching the children

how to work as an ensemble.”

Debbie Parish’s daughter Emily has enjoyed performing with the After School Drama Club, and after attending a performance of last summer’s production insisted on joining the cast this year. Parish says, “Rachel (Pergamit) is great with the kids. It’s wonderful to have a local arts offering that kids can take advantage of.”

Drew and Rachel Jackson are in their second year at Summer Drama Camp. Their mom, Mary Cosola, believes that kids respond well to Pergamit, who manages to be an effective director while giving the kids an opportunity to have fun. Additionally, Cosola says her kids get some of the same advantages from being in an ensemble cast that children get from participating in organized sports. “They learn to work as a team, and do their part to support the group effort. Everybody wins in the end!”

What does the cast have to say? “Come see us! We’re going to be fabulous!”

Pergamit’s production staff includes Music Director Frank Ryken, who is also the Chorus Master of the Moraga Community Chorus, choreographer Nicole McGann, and Brian Pergamit, co-producer and Technical Director.

Advanced tickets are \$6 and can be purchased by calling 925-300-8337. Tickets are also available at the gate for \$7. Gates open at 5:30 for picnickers. For more info, go to www.AfterSchoolDramaClub.com.

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