

Acalanes High School • Bentley School • Burton Valley • Camino Pablo Campolindo • Contra Costa Jewish Day School • Del Rey Donald L. Rheem • Glorietta • Happy Valley • Joaquin Moraga

Lamorinda Schools

Lafayette Elementary • Los Perales • Miramonte • Orinda Academy Orinda Intermediate • Saklan Valley School • Sleepy Hollow Springhill • Stanley Middle • St. Perpetua School • Wagner Ranch

Acalanes Choir Puts on a Hilarious Musical The Mystery of Edwin Drood

By Andrea A. Firth



Acalanes students perform The Mystery of Edwin Drood

Photo Chris Wickman

Over the past weekend, the Acalanes High School Concert Choir had sold-out audiences laughing, shouting, clapping, and voting during their performance of The Mystery of Edwin Drood. Audiences voting?—Well that does not seem to make sense. However, in this wacky musical almost anything goes (or maybe that was last year's show). Based on an unfinished novel by Charles Dickens, this musical (created for Broadway by Rupert Holmes) has the ending determined by audience vote. Allowing this level of spectator participation required the actors to be spontaneous versus rehearsed and to often improvise more than memorize.

Bruce Lengacher, the Director of Choral Activities at Acalanes and the show's Producer, led a cast of 70 with musical support provided by members of the Acalanes Orchestra and Symphonic Band in a show that employs the British pantomime and music hall traditions popular in the late 19th century. "One of the great things about this show is that there is no fourth wall," explained Lengacher. "From the moment that you walk into the lobby, the actors

are interacting with you. It's kind of a circus atmosphere. It's really fun."

The story of Edwin Drood is written as a play within a play—that is the actors are playing actors—which has each lead playing dual or triple roles. The music is drawn from multiple styles and includes big full-cast numbers alongside poignant solo and duet pieces. The student-designed and constructed set for the Acalanes production was comprised of several plywood periactoids. That's theater speak for multi-sided, painted props that are easily moved to create different backdrops.

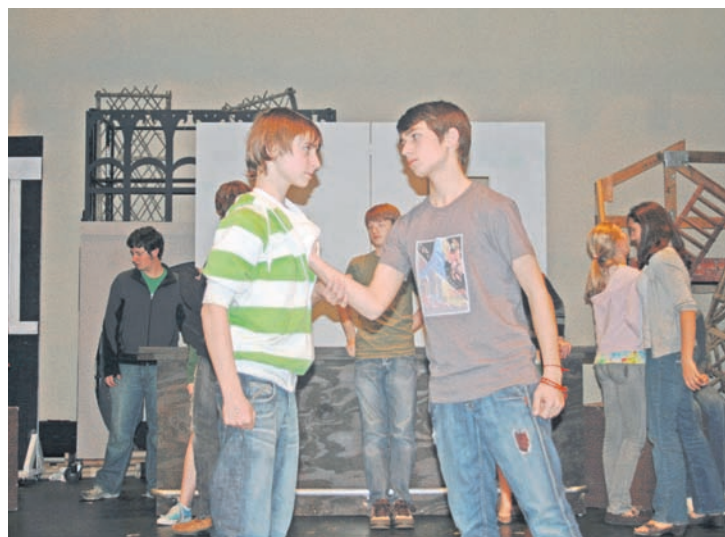
In addition to an ensemble that could act, dance, and sing, the depth of talent among the Acalanes lead performers for Drood was remarkable. Vinnie Urdea gave stand-out performances as The Chairman (a sort of Master of Ceremonies) and the ditsy Mayor Sapsea entertaining the crowd with his comical delivery of written and impromptu jokes. Emily Radosevich, who spent much of the evening mustachioed or bearded as the cross-dressing Edwin Drood, belted out her songs and in character hammed it up for the audience. With his swarthy complex-

ion, long sideburns, and sinister grin Cameron Gordon looked and played believably evil John Jasper. And the sweet ingenue Rosa Bud (who was voted the murderess in the show I saw) played by Yvette Dickson probably had the best vocals of the evening.

Alex Frankel was so realistic as the Reverend Chisparkle that he could lead a congregation tomorrow, but a real Anglican minister probably is not that funny. Janette Wallen combined her terrific comedic sensibility and tremendous vocal talent to deliver scenes both funny and moving in her part as Princess Puffer. Tyson Moore was a crowd favorite in his hilarious portrayal of the thespian-wannabe Bazzard. While Sara Garewal and Maxwell Cazanov as the Landless siblings used their best Indian accents to a humorous end. Jason Long who played Durdles and Andrew Bon-temps as his sidekick added more laughs as did the high-kicking Jessica Bruns who played Flo. Student Producer Gina Connolly pulled the show together with the assistance of Student Directors Bruns and Bon-temps.

Miramonte Performs Les Mis

By Andrea A. Firth



Max and Daniel Coleman rehearsing for Les Miserables at Miramonte

Photo provided

Tackling a musical that portrays the struggle of a downtrodden man trying to redeem himself in the face of social injustice while set in France as the Napoleonic Wars rage is pretty heady stuff for a high school production. When the musical is the legendary Les Miserables based on the book by Victor Hugo, it is even more remarkable. "I couldn't have imagined in my wildest dreams that such an epic show could ever be performed at a high school," states Miramonte drama teacher and acting coach Heather Cousins. A school edition of the musical (almost identical to the Broadway version) released with amateur

royalties and "the immense talent of the Miramonte students" makes this possible according to Cousins.

To master this larger-than-life show, the cast (with the female leads double cast) has been working on the production since December with rehearsals lasting up to six hours or more. In addition to the grueling rehearsal schedule, sophomore Max Coleman has found that playing the lead role of Jean Valjean has presented some other challenges. "The major difficulty with the role is demonstrating my age," says Max. "The age difference between my character and me is about 50 years! Another difficulty

is that I have to show that I am dying of consumption (tuberculosis) throughout the entire play."

Max and his fraternal twin brother Daniel, who plays Thenardiers the corrupt innkeeper in the play, have been performing in musical theater since they were in grade school, and mom Ellie Schwartzman could not be prouder of her singing thespian offspring. Asked if he could relate to the story of the wretched ones, Max responded, "One of the main themes of Les Miserables is the peasants' rebellion against the cruel and unjust monarchy, and I definitely sympathize with that belief." He clarified his answer to state that the monarchy in this instance did not represent his parents—but he does believe that the cruelties found in the show in some ways parallel current events of today.

Les Miserables will be performed at the Miramonte High School Theater (750 Moraga Way in Orinda) on March 13, 14, and 15 at 7:30 pm; March 20, 21, and 22 at 7:30 pm; and March 16 and 22 at noon. Advance tickets can be purchased through the Miramonte High School website www.acalanes.k12.ca.us/miramonte or at the door.

Campo Musical Goes to the Prairie with Oklahoma!

By Andrea A. Firth



Lauren Zampa as Laurey Williams and Harry Thomas as Curly McLain

Oh what a beautiful morning—not the typical first words from a teenager when they awaken, but Campolindo High School students will soon be singing this phrase as they perform in the school's upcoming Spring Musical Oklahoma! Always a popular event, the Campo musical has morphed to become an institution at the High School. Dave Pinkham will once again stage direct the production that will include close to 80 cast members, with the principal roles double cast, and an orchestra of about 25 musicians.

When choosing the musical for Campo's production, Dave has to find a show that can support a large cast and Oklahoma! fits the bill

"I find it very difficult to do a show [at Campo] with this much talent floating around unless I can have a cast of 60 or 70 people." He adds, "We haven't gone back to the 40's or done Rodgers and Hammerstein in the 11 years that I have been involved. So it just seemed time to do a real classic." Influenced by the London revival of Oklahoma! in the late 1990's, Dave has tried to present a realistic portrayal of the Midwestern prairie in 1906 by employing an earthy color palette and simplicity in the set and costumes.

Senior Susan Brinckerhoff landed the leading role of Laurey in the Territory cast. Although she has been a member of the school choir for four years, her previous experi-

ence with performing in a musical consisted singing in the ensemble for only one year. "It was kind of a surprise for me, but it has been really amazing working with people who are a lot more experienced," says Susan. "Everyone has been really nice and supportive." Probably like many students at Campo, Susan had never seen the musical Oklahoma!, and like a teen of the 21st century she fixed that by renting the DVD version of Shirley Jones and friends singing on the plains. And although she is a little nervous for opening night, Susan feels all the rehearsal will leave her well prepared.

Ryan Chiles, who has performed in the musical in all four years of high school, will play the part of Curley in the production. "What I like about the story is that it feels real. It's grounded in good morals," states Ryan. Although he is looking forward to putting all the practice and rehearsal behind him as opening night approaches, Ryan notes, "You develop an attachment to [the show], so it's kind of bitter sweet when it ends."

Oklahoma! will be performed at the Campolindo Performing Arts Center over two weekends in March. Evening performances start at 7:30 pm on Thursdays (3/13/ and 3/20), Fridays (3/14 and 3/21) and Saturdays (3/15 and 3/22) and matinees start at 2:00 pm on Saturdays (3/15 and 3/22). Tickets can be order through the Campolindo Choir website www.campochoir.com.

My Housing Guide

EDUCATE & EMPOWER YOURSELF



My Housing Guide founder & Assoc. Broker with Prudential Orinda. Top Producer featured in Wall St Journal.

Sellers, did you know???

...73% of homebuyers used the Internet as an information source

...74% of homebuyers viewed a home they saw online

Give yourself the selling edge at MyHousingGuide.com

925-580-8801

STOP Agonizing

Food, Body and Weight
Spring workshop

March 20th (Thursday)

7-9pm @ Moraga Dahn Yoga
Early Registration by March 15. Only \$10

START Healthy Living

DAHN YOGA

We are on ABC news now. Go to www.dahnyoga.com

Call to reserve your space
925-377-9642 (YOGA)

452 Center St., Moraga (Next to TJ Maxx)

Your choice

6⁹⁹

Welcome Mats

- Choose 18" x 30" rectangular mat or half-round mat with scrolled decorative rubber edge
- Fade- and weather-resistant
- Rubber-backed natural coir fibers

W 367 474, 847 143 B6 While supplies last.

Get outstanding low prices on quality products

MARCH BARGAINS of the month

MUSIC LESSONS

www.musicandart.org

Lamorinda Academy of Music and Art

Private and group lessons
Piano, string instruments, voice
Competitions, Tests, Fun

All Ages & All Levels

925-299-1240

5⁹⁹

Your choice
4-Pk., 13W Compact Fluorescent Bulbs

- Choose soft or natural white bulbs
- Equivalent to 60W incandescent
- 120V, 10,000 hours, medium bases

E 784 643, 627 B6 While supplies last.

7⁹⁹

24" Indoor/Outdoor Push Broom

- 60" cushioned steel handle
- Patented tight-grip bracket
- prevents loose handle
- 5-year manufacturer's warranty

W 687 866 F4 While supplies last.

ORINDA HARDWARE & RENTAL

56 Moraga Way, Orinda 94563 925-254-5429

www.truevalue.com/orindahardware

© 2007 by True Value © Company, Chicago, IL 60631 **Sale 3/01/08 - 3/31/08**