

Published October 27th, 2010

## 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  
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 November 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.

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

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 productions (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.

Acalanes:

The Crucible

November 2-5, all shows at 7:30 p.m.

Miramonte:

Metamorphosis

November 17-19, all shows at 7:30 p.m.

Campolindo:

Romeo and Juliet

December 3 at 7:00 p.m., and December 4 at 12 noon and 7:00 p.m.



Running lines for Metamorphosis Photo provided by Heather Cousins

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA