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## Opening Tonight at AHS: The Boyfriend

By Lou Fancher



From left: Quinn Maarse, Brennan Quinn, Lindsey Long and Scotty McCormick in costume Photo Lou Fancher

"She breaks it down so the kids have success, but some of them were pretty funny, before they got it," he laughed.

Quinn has learned more than just dance steps from participating in the musical.

"If we didn't have the musical, I think the class would run dry around the second semester," he speculated. "This gives us a chance to come out of our shell and get to know each other."

He's heavily involved with Leadership, the student government at Acalanes, but said choir gives him a special self-confidence.

"No one is going to judge you if you sing a wrong note, because it happens to all of us. Even when I'm outside of the class, I don't second guess myself as much as I used to."

Quinn's favorite part is a duet, *Won't You Charleston*, because it epitomizes what he is trying to say to a love interest in the production.

"I want her to stop playing games and just dance with me and be with me," he explained, voicing a preference he shares with his character.

Which leads to a relevant subject: In the 1920's, women were gaining the right to vote. *The Boy Friend*, frothy entertainment with a cast of women toying, teasing and chasing men while attending Madame Dubonnet's School for Young Ladies, is hardly a Suffragette's dream.

"It's ironic," Lengacher said, "we have a very strong female presence in this class, but they haven't brought that up. They're looking at it as a show, as a snapshot of that time period, rather than as a social comment on the time."

He too, has a favorite moment in the production.

"It's when I see that kid who may have been in the shadows step out, for the first time," he said, his expression filled with twelve years of fond memories.

The production runs just under two hours and is almost entirely produced by the students. Parents chair just four of the committees, with students covering performing, marketing, production, set construction, costume design and playing in the orchestra.

Acalanes High School is bouncing all the way back to the 1920's with *The Boy Friend*, this year's musical, opening March 2nd in Lafayette.

Bruce Lengacher, Director of Choral Activities, has been at the school for twelve years. Each fall, he selects three musicals, then presents them to the choir.

"The entire ensemble listens to them and hears the synopsis, and then they vote," he explained.

This year, it was actually *Little Women* that won, but the orchestra didn't have the instrumentation for the libretto, so their second choice became number one.

"I think they chose it because it was upbeat. I described it as *Tempest* meets the *Great Gatsby*-with lots of dancing," Lengacher recalled.

Brennan Quinn, 16, plays the rich, many-sweatered Bobby Van Heusen.

"I sing bass and it goes pretty high, so that's a challenge," he said. "The show requires a lot of energy because we have to sing and dance at the same time. It's fancy footwork, but it's doable."

Lengacher said Diane Kamrin, the show's choreographer, works well with all levels of dancers.

With cash-strapped schools, the project sounds expensive.

"Actually, the musical pays for itself," Lengacher said proudly. "Last year, we made money. The budget for this year is under \$10,000 and securing the rights is the biggest part of that: \$3,400. Our Boosters and Lafayette Partners in Education raise funds too."

For the students, parents, and especially for Lengacher, the pay off goes beyond monetary profit.

"It's not even the singing skills they learn;" Lengacher confessed, "it's the collaboration, problem-solving and gaining appreciation for things around them that makes it worthwhile."

Acalanes High School's The Boyfriend

Book, Music, Lyrics, by Sandy Wilson

March 2-5 at 7:30 p.m.

Acalanes High School Performing Arts Center

All Seats General Admission

\$15/adult, \$13 for students and seniors (age 60 and up)

Go to [www.acalaneschoral.org](http://www.acalaneschoral.org) for tickets

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