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The Halls are Alive with the Sounds of Music

By Cathy Dausman



Ron Pickett Photo Daniel Jordan

When it comes to performing arts, Ron Pickett is a triple threat. The Orinda Unified School District music teacher earned his degree in music, dance and theater from Brigham Young University with a teaching credential from Chapman University. His mother, who started him on piano lessons in the second grade, instilled in him his love of theater.

"I've always been a performer," Pickett says. "There are eight millimeter films of me dancing when I was 2 years old." During school hours, Pickett works as the vocal music teacher at Glorietta and Wagner Ranch elementary schools, with Recorder instructions for third-graders thrown in.

Pickett teaches "up to 10 half-hour classes a day," with 20 to 30 students per class. He also directs the Ensemble Singers, comprised of Glorietta and Wagner Ranch fourth- and fifth-grade students who rehearse once a week during recess. These groups perform at special events throughout the year. When he's not teaching, Pickett still performs - acting, singing as a high tenor, and dancing in live theater - although "the dancing becomes a little more limited the older I get," he confesses.

"I am most often in a musical because of my vocal skills, but I just recently was in a French farce with no music, and I enjoyed just the acting and comedic timing," he says.

But it's not all fun and games for Pickett or his students, in spite of the subject matter. Sounding

every bit like the nearly 30-year teacher he is, Pickett says he likes to involve as many music-related subjects as possible.

"We learn history, social studies, language arts and, oh, the math involved in music is amazing! What I hope to teach children about music is that it affects all aspects of our lives," he says.

Pickett's payback often comes in the form of visits from former students. "Many return to see musicals at their elementary schools," he notes. "Some even come back to help with make-up, sound or other technical aspects. Many continue with their singing and become involved in their high school or college choirs and musical performances. Some have graduated from prestigious universities like NYU and others have gone on to perform on Broadway or in community theaters."

He explains how rewarding it is as a teacher to hear his students "continue to make music something that is important, something that they treasure and love.

"Music," he says, "should be continually important to all our successes."

Pickett is currently playing Uncle Max in the Contra Costa Civic Theater production of "The Sound of Music" through July 19 in El Cerrito. For ticket info, go to <http://www.ccct.org/shows-sound-of-music.html>.

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