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Cal Shakes Summer Conservatory Students Take to the Stage

By Clare Varellas



"The Tempest" Photo Jay Yamada

educational stuff: they learn about the history, they learn about Shakespeare. Everybody seems to really seriously get along, and my daughter has made a whole bunch of friends. Every summer they see each other."

It is the sense of community that the camp fosters, in addition to a love for theater, that Cal Shakes director of artistic learning Clive Worsley emphasizes as a goal in planning the program. As students spend about six hours together each day for two or four weeks, he watches friendships form and grow, and perspectives widen.

"We take great pains to emphasize the importance of mutual respect, trust and acceptance, tolerance for people who may not appear on the surface to have anything in common with you, and what winds up happening is that we rebuild this lovely sense of community for the few weeks that these students are with us together," said Worsley.

Of course, the amount of teamwork required to put on Shakespeare's complex plays helps build community, too, especially on such a short time frame. After brief auditions on the first day of this two-week session running from July 20 to July 31, students were divided into plays based on their age group and cast into roles. Each morning several hours were spent on classes surrounding stage combat, improvisation, vocal techniques, text analysis, movement, Shakespearean history, and acting, with the afternoons dedicated to rehearsal.

The result: half-hour versions of "Twelfth Night," "The Tempest," "Hamlet," "King Lear," "As You Like It," and "Richard III" that Worsley described as "fantastic." Students in this two-week session performed their plays one after another, every hour on the hour between 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. on the final day of camp.

"Even though it was just two weeks, I felt very prepared, very on top of my game, and I felt like everybody there was on top of their game," said Isabella Fleury, who played King Lear in "King Lear."

Maybe students' confidence and ability is a product of thorough training, but maybe also of an uplifting celebration of humanity and togetherness that only Shakespeare and talented acting teachers can bring to life.

"As one of my staff members likes to say, we are training humans who could be actors, not

Ninety-three performing arts students aged 8 to 18 performed six edited Shakespeare plays on the stage of the Bentley Upper School Theater on July 31, a product of only two weeks of training and rehearsals.

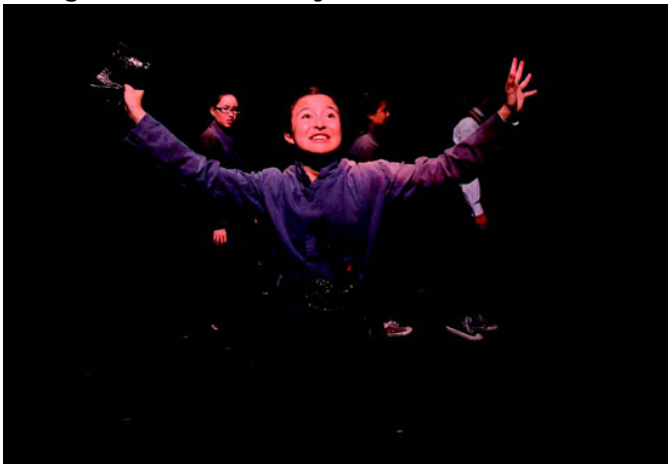
The students, a crew ranging in both age and acting experience, were participants in California Shakespeare Theater's Summer Conservatory, a program of two- and four-week summer camps aimed at delivering brief, but impressive training in acting, and a lot of fun, too. The program, which includes a two-week session and four-week session in both Lafayette and Oakland, has run every summer since 2002, enrolling about 300 youth annually.

"I really like how they make fun, because there is always fun," said Laura Fleury, mother of 14-year-old participant Isabella Fleury. "They do

actors who might be human," said Worsley, quoting Lamorinda conservatory coordinator Brett Jones.



"King Lear" Photos Jay Yamada



"Macbeth"



"Twelfth Night"

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