

# The talented singers of Acalanes choral program excel all year

By John T. Miller



The women of Acalanes' Bella Voce along with director Bruce Lengacher. Photo John T. Miller

Listening to the Bella Voce women's chamber choir practice in their rehearsal space at Acalanes High, it is easy to hear why they would win Unanimous Superior ratings at their festivals throughout the year.

With no one in the audience other than this reporter, they sang with unbridled joy and euphonic precision a contemporary Spanish language song "Martes," by Joseph Gregorio, under the direction of Bruce Lengacher, their musical instructor.

I applauded when they finished, but Lengacher nodded and mentioned casually, "You were just a little sharp on those last high notes there."

The chorus agrees, and I can sense the sopranos vowing to nail those notes the next time around.

### Superior Ratings

All four of the Acalanes ensembles scored high in their festival outings this year, while also participating in a whirlwind of activities that helped continue their tradition of being one of the best performing arts programs in the area.

At the California Musical Educators Association (CMEA) Choral East A festival hosted by Acalanes in March, both the Chorale and Women's Ensembles achieved Superior ratings, while the Concert Choir

scored a Unanimous Superior rating. The Bella Voce and Concert Choir went on to garner Unanimous Superior ratings at the Napa Valley Choral Classic Invitational.

### Year in Review

The Concert Choir attended the Choral Institute in Occidental with Head Royce Academy, Ruth Asawa School of the Arts and ECCO, the high school ensemble of the Piedmont East Bay Children's choirs. Together they worked with L.J. White to present the world premier of "I/WE" at the First Unitarian Church of San Francisco.

All four ensembles participated in the Mixed and Women's Fall Choral Classic festivals with the other district coral programs, and they performed a pair of winter concerts in December: "Winter Wind, Winter Moon."

In January, Bella Voce and the Women's Ensemble worked with Volti, a professional chamber choir, on a Renaissance piece and a modern composition.

Later that month the combined fine arts departments began their nine-week production schedule of "Bye Bye Birdie," which ran for three performances in March.

Bella Voce also competed at the Northern California Women's Choir Golden State Competition at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, placing fourth out of ten schools, thereby earning a spot in next year's competition. "We probably could have done better," said Lengacher, "but the competition coincided with closing night for our musical, and a

majority of the cast was also in Bella Voce."

Later in March, Bella Voce and Concert Choir toured Los Angeles, where they participated in a workshop with Dr. Chris Peterson at CSU-Fullerton, and an advanced vocal workshop with Disney composer and arranger Bret Simmons. They also attended an Anaheim Ducks vs. Buffalo Sabres hockey game. "We didn't get to be on the ice for the National Anthem, but we sang our own arrangement loudly from the stands," said Lengacher.

The choirs finished the season with their Spring Choral Concert "He Said, She Said," in April and the Pops Concert "Broadway and Beyond" in May.

### Notable Performers

Lengacher, in his 18th year as choral director at Acalanes, made special mention of three students who brought talent and energy to the program: Sarah Manning, who will attend University of Colorado at Boulder next year, did original graphic designs for the musical, Spring and Pop concerts; Conrad Rocha, a junior,

Rocha choreographed the musical and co-choreographed the mass choir numbers for the Pops as well as for Concert Choir's song; and Emma Broback, who will attend UCLA, received the Arion Award, recognizing her as the outstanding choral musician.

The choir is generously funded by LIPE and the Acalanes Performing Arts Boosters.

## TeenWrites

### A summer full of expectations

By Analie Fernandes

"Driiiiiing." It's the last school bell of the year, the only time that any of us are happy to hear the obnoxiously loud call to order. Everyone in my class cheers, then rushes out the door, calling goodbyes over their shoulders and waving to friends. The parking lot is a mess. Yearbooks are being passed around with colorful pens. Groups of teenagers are packing into cars like sardines. Car doors are open, leaking loud music. On my way to my friends' car I hear "Despacito" and "That's What I Like" at deafening volume. Traffic is awful. Everybody's heading the same direction — downtown, to get food. It's a mass exodus into freedom — the start of glorious, beautiful summer.

What I love about summer is that the minute that last bell rings, all my responsibilities wash away, like sand castles, smoothed by the waves. There are no more AP classes, no more sports, no more clubs. I'm left with a blank slate, with pristine, untouched sand, ready to be shaped however I want. Summer-time is freedom in its purest form — a fresh start.

Usually, my summers are carefree, a collection of long days spent relaxing in the sun in various locations. This year is different. I've been ambushed by nostalgia, what used to be known as YOLO in cringier days past. I can feel the pressure to have a memorable summer more keenly this year than ever, my penultimate summer as a high schooler. My sentimentality is easily translated into melodramatic introspections. I don't have much time left as a teenager, and I'll never be this young again. My window to make memories that will be worth remembering decades later is closing. It seems almost as if I'm failing to truly experience adolescence unless I do something amazing this summer — as if a mundane summer reflects a mundane personality.

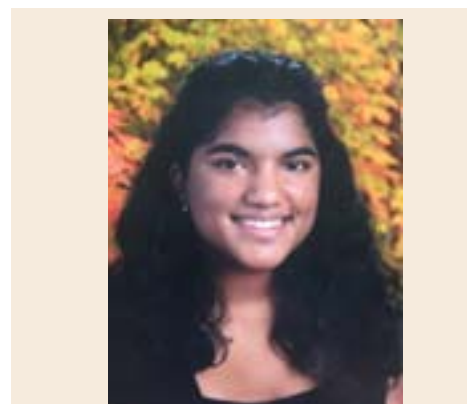
After all, our society has idealized the sunny season, making it into a hallmark of teen culture. Our parents tell us stories of old roadtrips and beach vacations with friends. We watch movies and read books about teenagers and their amazing, life-altering summertime adventures. Think about it: "Dazed and Confused," "Grease," "Dirty Dancing," "I Know What You Did Last Summer." All are cult classics, all are centered around sum-

mer adventures,

I had fallen into a trap.

My summer was being crushed under the weight of a lifetime of expectations — and if I wasn't careful, my entire senior year would be crushed too. I was suffocating all the fun out of summer, fixating on perception rather than feeling. It took some time for me to realize that the reason that all these stories resonated with me wasn't because I wanted to do what these characters and people did. Rather, I wanted to experience what they did. I wanted a summer that was spontaneous, relaxing, fun—and those things are entirely within my control. I can make my summer whatever I want it to be. I needed to realize that what I'll cherish the most won't be manufactured moments, modeled after old stories, but the happy memories I make when I let my life play out naturally.

So I will make a pilgrimage to the beach with my friends; I will watch the waves wash up and do cartwheels on the sand — but it won't be because I'm trying to live up to an idealized story. It'll be because I love the beach, because my friends want to collect seashells, because it's sunny and we're in California, and "What else would we do?" because we're young, because it's fun, because we can do what we want. It'll be because we're only young once and summer is what we make it.



Analie Fernandes is a rising senior at Berean Christian High School, where she is the editor-in-chief of the school newspaper. She has called Lafayette home for five years, having previously lived in New York, Tennessee, and Ohio. Analie's favorite authors include George Orwell, Elizabeth Gaskell, and, of course, Jane Austen!

## In Memory

### Karen David Ross

October 21, 1942 - May 24, 2017



Karen David Ross was born Karen David Resnick on October 21, 1942, in Rockford, Illinois. Her parents were Rose David of Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada and Jerry Resnick of Chicago, Illinois. Karen is survived by her husband, Dr. Joel C. Ross and her three sons, Kevin Ray, Keith Michael and Curtis Paul Ross. She was the grandmother of four, Jakob Castillo, Samuel O'Brien, Lukas Augustin and Emilia Ann Ross. To her grandchildren, Karen was just "Nana" or "Gummy." She was loved by her daughters-in-law, Claudia Castillo and Catherine O'Brien Ross, and by Taralyn Tietjen, the fiancée of Dr. Curtis Ross. She was loved by her brother, Kalman Resnick,

and his wife, Benetta Mansfield, of Chicago, Illinois and her dear Aunt Eileen Lasky (Aunt Babe) and Uncle Marvin Lasky of Rossmoor, California.

Karen grew up in Chicago where she graduated from Goudy Elementary School in Evanston, Illinois and then graduated from Evanston Township High School. Karen graduated with a bachelor's degree in teaching from the National College of Education, now National Louis University. While a student at National, she met her husband, Dr. Joel C. Ross. Karen and Joel were married on July 3, 1963, in Wood Dale, Illinois. Their first son, Kevin Ray Ross, was born in 1967 in Skokie, Illinois. In 1969, Karen and Joel moved to Travis Air Force Base in Travis, California, where their second son, Keith Michael was born. In 1971, they moved to Orinda, California where they lived for 44 years. Their third son Curtis Paul Ross was born in 1978. In 2015, Karen and Joel Ross moved to Rossmoor.

During her time in Orinda, Karen founded Rossera Designs, a successful interior design business. Rossera Designs provided sophisticated design services throughout the East Bay and San Francisco and elsewhere in California. Karen also participated in many activities in her community, including serving as a docent at the Oakland Museum of California and volunteering at her sons' schools in Orinda and with Raphael House in San Francisco. She travelled extensively throughout the world with friends and family. She was a passionate collector of antique estate and costume jewelry. Several of her signed pieces will be donated to the causes she felt most close to.

Karen leaves behind the legacy of her family and the affection of her many friends. She will be dearly missed by all those that knew her. Her passion and energy will never be forgotten.

Aunt Babe's description of Karen says it all:

Karen lived every day of her life to the fullest. To say it was *joie de vivre* is putting it mild. Being dull was not her style. Her presence never went without notice. She will be missed by one and all.

Karen died on May 24, 2017 from complications stemming from a stroke in 2012. During the past six years, she fought her health battles with a positive attitude, a strong sense of humor, and a commitment above all to her love for her family.

There will be a celebration of Karen's life at the Lafayette Veterans Memorial Building on June 17 between 12 and 4:00 p.m. to commemorate the woman we knew and loved.

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