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## High school musicals return to the stage this spring

By Jenn Freedman



Rehearsal for Campolindo's "Cinderella" Photo  
Cindy Cattell

Federation), and professional athletes. These students deserve the same consideration and opportunities," Superintendent John Nickerson wrote in a letter to Dr. Sohil Sud, co-lead for Safe Schools with CDPH.

"Our job as theater artists is to tell a story," Miramonte's director Heather Cousins explains.

"Our storytelling is severely compromised if the audience cannot distinguish who is speaking and talking, not to mention the physical exertion required to dance in heavy costumes under hot lights."

Regardless of the decision to mask or unmask, the shows will go on . and the music and theater departments are planning all-out productions, complete with large casts, full sets, costumes, student pit orchestras, props, lights, and more. And the students are excited! "I've been looking forward to this year's musical for the past two years, and it has not disappointed. The rehearsals are such a special space to me; the long hours spent singing and dancing with all my friends are what I've missed so dearly during COVID," Senior Ruby Vanhouten at Campolindo shares.

First up, Acalanes High School will be performing "Beauty and the Beast" in early March. "It is incredible to have everyone together again and be able to stage a musical! The performing arts is all about collaboration and working together to create a performance. Not being able to simply be in the same room for almost a year and a half was so difficult, but it makes coming back together something to celebrate more than ever before," director Lauren Gibson says.?

"And so much of what we do is driven by the students. We have a student director, a student producer . it's almost like a leadership class. They learn all sorts of social skills that pertain to everyday life; it's a whole experience. It's not just about the actors, it's about the stage, and the lights and every detail that brings the production together," Co-producer and technical director Ed Meehan explains.

"Beauty and the Beast" will run March 2-5. Tickets can be purchased at [www.ahsperformingarts.org](http://www.ahsperformingarts.org).

Campolindo High School will feature "Cinderella." Unique to Lamorinda schools, Campolindo leverages the help of parents to bring their shows to life. "We have an amazing community of students and parents who come together to create our shows. More than 150 students and nearly as many parents help out in one way or another to bring our show to the stage," producer and musical director Mark Roberts shares.

"The students have been incredibly resilient and ferocious in their appetite to present artistic work in spite of enormous challenges," Roberts adds.

Stage director David Pinkham explains one of the challenges of a two-year hiatus: "We've lost some significant continuity in the program, with students who were sophomores in the last production now jumping right into the leadership position as seniors. The community we build between the cast members, crew, orchestra and staff is the most valuable part of the entire process, so we've been working hard to bridge the continuity gap and bring along the freshmen and sophomores."

"Cinderella" runs March 11-13 and 18-20. Tickets can be purchased at [www.campochoir.com](http://www.campochoir.com).

Miramonte High School's spring musical is "Pajama Game." This 1950s classic is a love story set amongst a labor dispute in a pajama factory. "After doing a few contemporary musicals, we wanted to expose our

Full scale, live theatrical productions are back at Lamorinda high schools this spring, after two years of improvising (at recording studios, outdoor amphitheaters, and more) during COVID. However, while California Gov. Gavin Newsom announced on Feb. 28 the state will stop requiring masks in schools as of March 12, the date falls after many of these high school productions are scheduled to begin. The Acalanes Union High School District is urgently requesting the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to allow the performers to take to the stage unmasked, similarly to what other extracurricular activities are already doing.

"We believe the change [to the public health guidance] would have significant and lasting benefit for California's students by allowing them to perform unmasked.

Performing Arts has not had the strong and coordinated advocacy like sports has had through 'Let them Play,' organizations like CIF (California Interscholastic

Federation), and professional athletes. These students deserve the same consideration and opportunities," Superintendent John Nickerson wrote in a letter to Dr. Sohil Sud, co-lead for Safe Schools with CDPH.

students to something more classical, and coming out of the pandemic, we wanted a lighter, happier tone," explains director Cousins.

Miramonte has a unique model for musical theater. To participate in the musical, students must enroll in the Musical Theater Workshop class. "We adopted this model years ago and it has been working very well for us ever since. One of the benefits is knowing exactly who will be in the show before the school year even starts. That is helpful when it comes to choosing a show," Musical director Meredith Hawkins says.

In addition, the costumes, props, lights, sound, and set are entirely designed and created by students enrolled in Miramonte's Stagecraft program.

The Miramonte show runs March 10-13 and tickets are available at [showtix4u.com](https://www.showtix4u.com).

The music and theater departments welcome the Lamorinda community to support their programs by attending the live performances this spring.

The district had not received an update from CDPH on masking for the performing arts before press time.

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