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High Schools Take on Classic Musicals

By Lou Fancher



The Wizard of Oz features: Max Fleer (Scarecrow), Neris Newton (Dorothy; Jacqueline Garell not pictured), Sophie Woodlee (Glinda), Connor McCormick (Tinman), Carter Soso (Cowardly Lion)
Photo submitted

Campolindo and Miramonte High Schools are taking on musical theater icons with their upcoming productions of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Both musicals are also film industry giants, which lends familiarity, but leads to certain expectations.

"We're doing a fairly faithful retelling of the film, although scenes are compressed and locations are 'accordioned' into one place," says David Pinkham, the director of Campolindo's show.

Last year, Pinkham asked students and parents to make suggestions when developing a list of productions to consider. *Fiddler on the Roof* was mentioned enough times that it caught his attention.

"And, it's wonderful story telling, it has a lot of strong female roles and we wanted to do a traditional show," he added.

The most challenging part of directing the musical has been getting students to relate to the deep-rooted family traditions at the production's core.

"As a community, we do things the way they do things on TV: we don't have the same connections to place or family," he said, his tone a mix of regret and practical acceptance.

Shannon Sullivan, 17, plays Tzeitel, the eldest daughter, and has found a way to relate to her character.

"She is more sheltered than I am, but she wants to try new things, like I do," Sullivan said.

A question about art in the schools brings an immediate, fervent response from Sullivan: "That's why I came to Campolindo: for the great music program. If they ever cut it, I would be so offended and so hurt. The arts push and challenge in a way science will never do for me."

At Miramonte, Producer Petra Michel is master of everything Oz. With her flair for fashion, it's no surprise that tremendous energy has gone into procuring costumes.

"The Munchkin costumes created the biggest challenge because we needed to transform fully grown teens into tiny, sweet munchkins. We started with colorful felt hats that I found at a trade show, and student costume designer Hannah Reed added ingenious hoop skirts. Parent co-chair Stacy McCormick finished the costumes with a tiny, little vest," Michel explained.

Over fifty students are involved in crafting, performing and producing the musical. Sporadic rehearsals began in December, but picked up a steady pace in the new year. With several rehearsals a week, students scramble to fit in homework, extracurricular sports and family responsibilities.

"I realized it was crazy when I was in fifth grade, so I dropped all sports to do theater," 15-year-old Daniel Cook said.

Director Heather Cousins explained that the 1978 adaptation is not a replica of the film or book.

"Many references are new, giving it a more modern twist. But we honor the most iconic and familiar moments, [paying] tribute to the film wherever possible," Cousins reassured.

Both productions open on March 17th.

Campolindo High School's *Fiddler on the Roof*

Performances are Thursday, March 17 at 7:30 pm, Friday, March 18 at 7:30pm., Sat., March 19 at 2 pm and 7:30 pm, Thursday, March 24 at 7:30 pm, Friday, March 25 at 7:30 pm, and Sat., March 26 at 2 and 7:30 pm. For ticket information go to www.campochoir.com.

Miramonte High School's The Wizard of Oz

Performances are March 17, 18, 24, 25, 26 at 7:30pm and March 20 at 3pm. Reserved Seating \$12-\$17, General Admission \$10-\$15. Purchase at www.showtix4u.com.



Tevye (Ben Thomas) and Golde (Carolynn Stuart) of Campolindo's Fiddler on the Roof Photo Kathie Wicker

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