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# SMC Production Deftly Tackles Tough Topics

By Lou Fancher



Saint Mary's College cast rehearses "Lie of the Mind."

Photo Andy Scheck

Saint Mary's College Associate Professor Frank Murray has no fear.

What else would cause a theater director working since 1988 in the performing arts division of a small, private college to stage playwright Sam Shepard's "A Lie of the Mind," a blistering, inextricably tangled tale of two families?

Perhaps Murray would prefer "courageous" to "no fear,"—which leads directly to the crux of the play's attraction for Murray and long-term fans of Shepard's hypnotic word-smithing: language.

"I wrote my dissertation on Beckett and Shepard," Murray says, in an interview prior to the eight-member cast's second-half run-through.

Murray saw the last show of the original 1985 play's run in New York, where it ran nearly five hours and he says, was "at times, excruciatingly slow." SMC's version is the revised, just-under-three hour production.

Yet the function of "Lie's" language, how it butts up and wrestles against the action, despite the lengthy delivery he experienced in 1986, fascinated him.

"It think there's disorientation caused (by the words). There's simultaneous past and present; there's not seeing what has happened in a 25-year old relationship; there's a woman who's been beaten nearly to death saying, "He is my heart," about her attacker," Murray says.

At the play's center are Jake and

Beth, a married couple whose difficulties have pinnacled at the depths of a life-threatening beating the young husband has avenged upon his spouse. They've retreated to their separate families; not so much for recovery as to gird their loins and lingering animosity for post-trauma life.

"It's a play about theater as much as it's about two families. It says to us, "What does theater do for us?" Murray suggests.

In addition, he might be asking the young actors a related question: "What does biting into a world of contrasts—dark/light, lies/truth, male/female, hate/love, laugh/cry, forgive/resent—teach you about yourself and your world?"

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## Czech Children Saved from Nazis

Documentary screening at Orinda Library Theater to shed light on 1939 rescue

By Laurie Snyder

"The important thing is that one should not become indifferent to the suffering of others. That one should not stand by and just raise one's hands and say, 'There is nothing I can do. I'm just one little person.' Because I think that what every one of us does matters."

Commentary by Holocaust survivor, Margit Meissner, in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum video, *Why We Remember the Holocaust*



Mother taking out her child from the train at the Wilson station in Prague. Photo provided

Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland. Winton's heroism remained unknown until the discovery in the attic by his wife, nearly 50 years later, of a suitcase containing photos and transport plans for the children. Although many of the children's parents perished at Auschwitz, the little ones Winton saved grew up to work for the World Monetary Fund, government agencies, universities, and the media. One, Ben Abeles, invented propulsion systems for the Voyager and Cassini rockets.

The film screening could not come at a better time. April was designated as Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month by the California Legislature in 2010. It was also recently the time of Yom Hashoah with Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance days scheduled across the globe.

Students and families are particularly encouraged to attend the screening of "Nicky's Family," which begins at 5 p.m. The cost is \$5 per person. Proceeds will benefit Orinda's Sister City program, which was initiated to help the residents of Tábor in the Czech Republic to strengthen their emerging democracy. For information about the screening or the Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation, please contact Bobbie Landers: (925) 254-8260.

The Orinda/Tabor Sister City Foundation will present a special screening April 28 of a film about a time when there was indisputable evil in the world – before and during World War II. But, unlike so many films and books which recount the horrors of this era, "Nicky's Family" is an inspiring story about one ordi-

nary man's compassion and bravery in response to the genuine wrongs being committed around him.

Produced by Menemsha Films (www.menemshafilms.com), this acclaimed documentary details the 1939 rescue of more than 600 Czech and Slovak children by Nicholas Winton, a young British citizen, following

## Yom HaShoah – Days of Remembrance Resources

Learn more about the Holocaust and what you can do help end genocide and other mass atrocities worldwide:

Digital/Web Resources:

- Enough Project: www.enoughproject.org/
- The Righteous Among the Nations (YadVashem database of rescuers): http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/search.html?language=en
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum – Online Exhibitions: www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/
- USC IWitness (USC Shoah Foundation video testimonies of Holocaust survivors and other materials for teachers of students ages 13 to 18): http://iwwitness.usc.edu/SFI/About.aspx

Books:

- "Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy," Eric Metaxas
- "Man's Search for Meaning," Viktor E. Frankl
- "Night," Elie Wiesel
- "The Last Jew of Treblinka: A Survivor's Memory 1942-1943," Chil Raichman
- "The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies," Guenter Lewy
- "The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals," Richard Plant
- "The Reawakening," Primo Levi