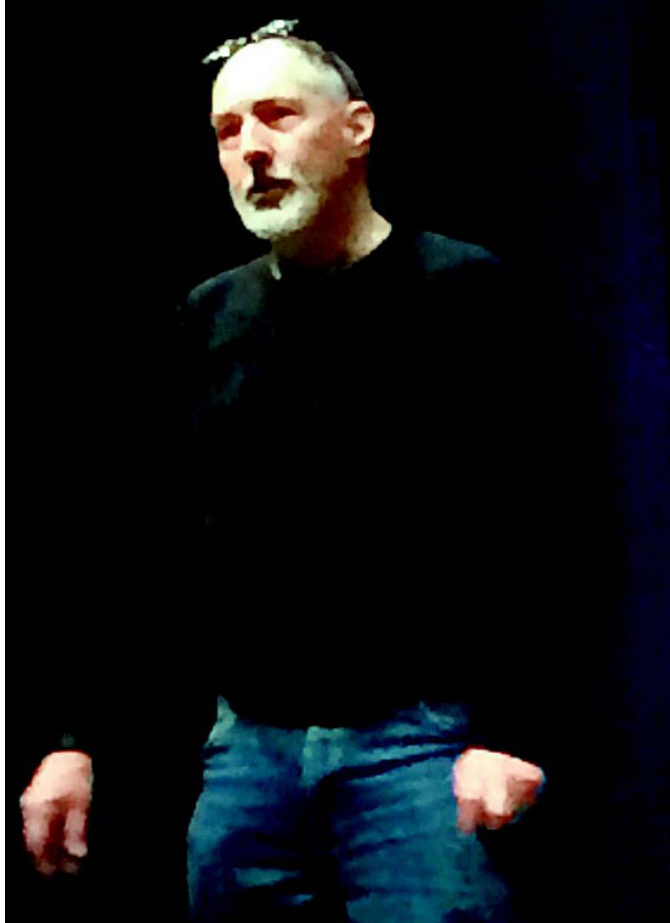


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## Campo Stage Director Living the Dream

By Diane Claytor



Dave Pinkham works with the 2015 "Les Miserables" cast at Campolindo High School.  
Photo Diane Claytor

ranch management, first in California and then Texas. After several years, they returned to Lamorinda and Pinkham changed directions, moving into the tech world as an IT services solution director. Performing arts were still in his heart and he occasionally performed in community theater productions, "but never very seriously," he said.

Then things changed. His son, Bryce (nominated for a 2014 Tony), then in elementary school, was attending a summer theater program at Diablo Valley College (DVC), culminating in a production of "The Music Man." Pinkham picked him up one day, started talking with the director who "handed me a script and said 'Here, read this.' I don't know what I said," Pinkham reports, "but apparently he could tell I had done some acting." Again, he got the part and again, he had a fabulous time. "I just picked up where I had left off 15 years earlier and it was so much fun," he said.

Pinkham continued performing locally. But as his "day job" responsibilities grew, he realized that he was unable to commit to long-term productions. So, with his son becoming more involved in theater, Pinkham started helping out with "behind-the-scenes stuff like technical directing, set building, lighting." His daughter, Jenna, was dancing at CAPA so Pinkham became involved there too, helping with sets, lighting, technical directing. Even now, with Jenna long gone, Pinkham still has that job.

When his kids went to Campo, Pinkham continued doing the technical work there. Then things

Several years ago, following another very successful Campolindo High School musical production, Stage Director Dave Pinkham was called on stage and introduced to the audience as a "man who was living a dream he never even knew he had." According to the Moraga native and longtime Lafayette resident, that introduction was absolutely right on.

When the curtain rises next month on "Les Miserables," Campo's 2015 musical production, Pinkham will be celebrating his 12th year as stage director - and loving every minute of it. "It is so much fun in so many ways," he said. "I love working with the kids. I love the whole progression that I get to see. I love seeing the students blossom and come into themselves."

But Pinkham, who has directed both classic high school musicals and those slightly less familiar to Campo students and audiences, wasn't always a fan. In fact, he says, as a student at Miramonte, he was a "drama geek." When a friend suggested he audition for Miramonte's musical, Pinkham, then a senior, claims he was "completely unfamiliar with American musical theater. I didn't really know what a musical was." But he got the part. "It was a blast. I loved everything about it," he remembers fondly. That was the beginning - and end - of his musical theater career, at least for a while.

With Animal Science degrees in hand, Pinkham and his wife, Mary Alice, went into horse

changed again. In 2003, Gene Peterson, Campo's choral director, acknowledged that he wasn't a musical theater director and eventually asked Pinkham to take on the role. "I was reluctant at first," Pinkham admits. But he gave it a try. "We did 'Bye Bye Birdie' and I had a ball." And the rest, as they say, is theatrical history. "Gene opened the door to something I might not have done otherwise and I've never looked back."

As stage director, Pinkham has numerous responsibilities. He and current choral director, Campo graduate Mark Roberts, first choose the show. "Once we complete one production, I'm working on what we'll do next," Pinkham stated. "I think about the students coming in - what's the pool for lead parts, are there more sopranos or altos? What's available, is it accessible and is it big enough for the approximately 100 students who participate every year?" He also considers costume and set requirements, what the other schools have done recently, and, perhaps most significantly, "is it something we can achieve with the quality I want?" He and Roberts audition and select the cast, often with help from an outside choreographer and vocal director; and then Pinkham "takes the overall artistic vision of the show and pulls everything together. The program has grown so much," Pinkham continued. "It's pretty much a year-long project for me."

Roberts is thrilled to have Pinkham working by his side. "Dave is an irreplaceable member of the Campo Musical Theater staff. He has ... overseen the expansion of the program from ... around 60 students to an extracurricular endeavor annually involving over 100 students. He is a rare mix of visionary, artist and coach as he designs and builds sets while simultaneously educating actors and singers on stage presence and movement. He is relentless in the pursuit of perfection, taking on so many responsibilities within the show that no one is even entirely aware of all he does to bring the show to the stage."

Pinkham would love to return to performing and keeps reminding himself that "it's never too late. One day, I'll get back to it." Until then, he said, "I'm just having so much fun doing what I'm doing. It's an absolute pleasure in every respect."

"Les Miserables" opens March 12 and runs through March 22 at Campolindo High School. For tickets, visit <http://www.campochoir.com/spring-musicals/ticket-ordering-information>.

#### Alumni Night - "Les Miserables" 11 Years Later

In 2004, Campolindo High School, with David Pinkham serving as stage director, presented "Les Miserables" - a big, grand production. Now, 11 years later, Pinkham is still stage director and Campo is bringing back this acclaimed musical. In celebration of this revival, a Les Miz Alumni Night will be held on Saturday, March 14. All who were involved in the 2004 production - cast, crew, builders, orchestra, designers, volunteers - are invited to be part of the audience on this very special night. "Alumni will be invited up on stage for a reprise of at least one of the numbers from the show (and we'll even provide some music to refresh the memory). And we may organize some other 'reunion-ish' event as well," Pinkham reports. "We also have it on good authority that Gene Peterson (Campo's former choral director) will be there as well."



The 2004 cast of "Les Miserables" Photo Barbara Brady-Smith

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