

**GET AHEAD IN MATH THIS FALL**



**MATHNASIUM**  
The Math Learning Center

**GRADES K-12**  
Pre-Algebra • Algebra 1 & 2 • Geometry  
Pre-Calculus & Calculus  
SAT/ACT Preparatory  
Individualized Instruction

**HOMEWORK HELP FOR ALL LEVELS**  
**Flat Monthly Fee**  
Drop-in any time, no scheduling needed!

**1 WEEK FREE TUTORING & HOMEWORK HELP**  
Must present coupon. New students only.

3435 Mt. Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette  
(Golden Gate Way at Mt. Diablo Blvd.)  
(925) 283-4200 www.mathnasium.com

**Orindan Pens Dark Holiday Humor**

By Sophie Braccini



Sean Murphy evokes some scary holiday fun with his new book, shown here with it at Orinda Books. Photo Sophie Braccini

**“A**n Undead Night Before Christmas” is a delightful, frightfully funny comic book created by young Orinda author and illustrator Sean David Murphy.

“Twas the night before Christmas, though night would soon fall, not a creature was stirring in the old castle hall...” Sean David Murphy’s spin on Clement Clarke Moore’s poem does start with some familiar words, but soon, the quaint feel of an English cottage slides into the frightening cold of a Transylvanian winter that has not had a Santa visit in many centuries. But old St. Nick feels brave this year, and he doesn’t want to postpone his visit to the forsaken land. Will Santa survive

the ordeal, or will he and his reindeers become the Christmas feast for the undead of Transylvania?

Murphy explains that every year, his family meets family friends, the Downs, and that is has become a custom to read a different version of Moore’s 19th century classic tale. “Variations have been written for different regions,” says the author, “but nothing had been done yet for Transylvania. I had to do something!” Humor and good cheer is what gets these two families together, and humor is something that Murphy has in an abundance.

Murphy created with his drawings a very cool atmosphere for the

album. Most of the drawings are in black, white and grey shades, with the powerful red of Santa matching the red eyes of the undead piercing the night. This simple color contrast immediately creates a frightful feeling, though the very primary color red is a reminder that this is all a joke.

The young author, who says that he wants to orient his career toward animation, gives good example here of how drawing can create movement. The first pages are still, to establish the atmosphere of the tale, but as the action unfolds Murphy drew pages where readers get the feeling of the characters moving, faster and faster.

It is obvious that the young man is attracted to the fantastic and mythical world, and that he had a lot of fun drawing his undead monsters.

The text itself rhymes nicely, and the story itself progresses a little bit predictably, but all in good fun. This album is perfect for any tween or teen with a sense of humor and an attraction for what’s a bit out of the ordinary. Don’t worry, parents! Santa will survive in the end.

The author of the book self-published his work on Amazon and it can be purchased locally at Orinda Books.

Murphy was raised in Orinda and still lives there. He graduated from U.C. Santa Cruz with a degree in environmental studies but decided that his passion was in illustration and animation. For more information visit [seandavidmurphy.com](http://seandavidmurphy.com).

**CAPA’s ‘Nutcracker’ is a Holiday Treat**

Submitted by Lynn Davis

**S**now falls onstage and the Christmas tree magically grows to great heights in the California Academy of Performing Arts presentation of “The Nutcracker” at the Campolindo Per-

forming Arts Center from Dec. 16 through 18 at the Campolindo Performing Arts Center.

This Lamorinda family tradition for over 20 years is a feast for the eyes, filled with surprises

and delights for all ages. The story is narrated as it unfolds, guiding young viewers through the beautiful ballet and making it much more enjoyable for little ones (and grown-ups!) who might not be familiar with the timeless story of Clara and her magical Christmas Eve dream.

Anything is possible with enough talent and enthusiasm, and both are abundant in this group of young dancers. This production is large, with more than 100 local performers, extravagant sets, live narration, and elegant costumes, many of which are new this year including hand-sewn tutus from Russia.

While the studio demands excellence and precision in the dancing, it also seeks to involve ballet students of all ages, adding to the spirit of the performances. Six- and 7-year-olds are delightful as the spun-sugar Christmas angels, and advanced high school ballerinas take on the more demanding, classic roles of the Snow Queen, Rose Queen and Sugar Plum Fairy. Local high school football players and other athletes even appear as party guests.

Two Performances will be held at 5:30 and 8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 16, at 2 and 7 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 17 and at 1 and 5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 18. Tickets for the general public are \$22 and can be purchased at [www.capashows.eventbrite.com](http://www.capashows.eventbrite.com).

**IT'S OUR BIGGEST SALE OF THE YEAR**  
BIG SAVINGS ON THE STYLES YOU'LL LOVE.

**Incredible Savings, Promotions, and Upgrades On Shutters & More Going On Now!\***  
Contact your local Style Consultant for amazing offers in your area!

Schedule your FREE Consultation today!  
925-216-4857 // [BudgetBlinds.com](http://BudgetBlinds.com)

**Budget Blinds**  
The Best in Custom Blinds and Window Coverings

\*Applies to selected window treatments and Roman and Panel® shutters sold through Budget Blinds®. Ask for details. Not valid with any other offers, discounts, or coupons. Valid for a limited time only. Offer good at initial time of estimate only. At participating franchise only. ©2016 Budget Blinds, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Budget Blinds is a trademark of Budget Blinds, LLC, and a Home Franchise Concept Brand. Each franchise independently owned and operated. Franchise opportunities available.

**TOWN HALL THEATRE COMPANY**  
LAMORINDA'S PREMIER LIVE ENTERTAINMENT VENUE

**The Best Christmas Pageant EVER!**

by Barbara Robinson  
directed by Lynda DiVito

**December 3-17**

**TOYS FOR TOTS** collected at each performance

**TOWNHALLTHEATRE.COM**  
925.283.1557  
3535 SCHOOL ST. LAFAYETTE, CA