

Young orphans are put to work scrubbing the orphanage floor.



Portola Elementary School Presents 'Annie'

By Patricia Koning

Portola Elementary fourth-grade teacher Michelle Nunes is having a hard time getting students to stop smiling. Smiling students usually are not an issue at Portola. However, Nunes is running through a practice run of the school play. In the song "Hard Knock Life," the orphans are most definitely not happy.

On Friday, June 5, and Saturday, June 6, Portola's drama club will present "Annie." Both performances are open to the public. They will be held in the school's multipurpose room.

Nunes has been leading the drama club and directing plays for all of her 11 years at Portola. She previously started the Tracy Community Theater and a children's theater program in that city. "I've loved theater since I was young. I acted in plays at Foothill High School and the Pleasanton Playhouse," she says.

Tryouts for Annie were held in the fall. Every child interested in participating is given a part.

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Lauren Cairel (left) as Annie comforts one of the younger orphans.

ANNIE

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Nunes explains that all parts in the play are important. "For example without the maids and butlers in Annie, three whole scenes would not work," she says. "I do this because participating in a dramatic performance builds the students' self-esteem. Many discover talents they never realized they had."

Many students became interested in Portola's drama program after seeing performances, such as fifth-grader Jessica Perez, who plays the role of Grace Farrell. As is Mr. "Daddy" Warbucks assistant, she selects Annie to spend the Christmas holidays in his home.

"Singing makes me feel happy," says Jessica.

Fourth-grader Alejandro Buenrostro comes to the performance with a bit of theatrical experience—two years ago he was in "Jack in the Beanstalk." He plays Rooster, Ms. Hannigan's brother, who tries to pose as Annie's father to collect a reward offered by Daddy Warbucks. "I really like my character because he's so silly," he says.

Fifth-grader Lauren Cairel finds her role of Annie easy because she's playing a kid her own age. In the original script, Annie is 11

years old. "I'm excited but nervous," says Lauren. "I'm still getting used to the idea of singing all alone in front of an audience."

Sophia Cuadra, another fifth grader, finds her role of Ms. Hannigan challenging because she's playing an adult—and a mean one at that. "It's hard to be so mean to my fiends in the play," she says. "But of all the roles I've played, this is my favorite."

Performances are at 7 p.m. each night.

The school is located at 2451 Portola Ave., Livermore, 606-4743.



Pictured are Sara Stoebe (as Martha) and Mark Jordan (as George).

'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe?' Opens in Pleasanton

The next Studio Theatre production for Tri-Valley Repertory Theatre is the 1963 Tony Award winner for Best Play, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe?"

Performances are weekends, June 5 to June 28. Curtain time is 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. on Sundays.

The Broadway production was considered a shattering and memorable experience and proclaimed Edward Albee as a major American playwright. Albee's "marriage play" takes place in the living room of George (Mark Jordan) and Martha (Sara Stoebe), in which the playwright explores the destruction of the American dream.

In the play, George and Martha invite a new professor and his wife to their home after a party. Martha is the daughter of the president of the university where George is an associate history professor. Martha and George continue drinking and play the games they know so well, engaging in relentless, scathing verbal and sometimes physical abuse in front of Nick (Matt Davis) and Honey (Lydia Bruno). The younger couple is simultaneously fascinated and embarrassed. They stay even though the abuse turns periodically towards them as well.

The play is directed by Susan Hovey and produced by Carol Hovey.

Performances are at the Tri-Valley Rep Studio Theatre, 1048 Serpentine Lane, Suite 309, Pleasanton.

Tickets are \$25 for adults (18-60), \$22 for seniors (60+), \$20 for juniors (under 18), and \$19 each for groups purchasing 20 or more tickets. Tickets may be purchased on our website at www.trivalleyrep.com or by phone at 925-462 2121.

The play contains strong adult language and adult content.

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