

T H E A T E R
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A R T
D A N C E

SPOTLIGHT

Culver City Academy of Visual & Performing Arts

March 2006

www.avpa.org

Volume 1 Number 8



A Festival of Short Films

For an evening of fascinating entertainment, come to the 8th annual Frost Film Festival, March 3 and 4, at 7 pm in the SPoT. Students from high school film departments throughout Los Angeles submitted films which they hoped would be selected. Films from these high schools will be screened: Burbank, Santa Monica, Crossroads, Harvard-Westlake, Pacific Palisades and Culver City.

Did you miss seeing "The Sky is Falling" – last year's 16mm project for the film department? Stick around after the festival and you'll get another chance. One version of the first semester film project "Ramblin' Man" will also be shown each night.

Tickets are \$5 at the door.

March Auditions—*Antigone*

Auditions—Tuesday, March 28 @ 5:30 in the Frost.
 Callbacks—Wednesday, March 29 @ 5:30

Students must prepare one of the one-minute monologues which will be posted at www.avpa.org

AVPA Explores Love and the Cold War with *Chess*

Chess—a smash-hit on both London and Broadway stages—is coming to the Frost, March 22-25. The collaborators on *Chess* are giants of rock and rock musicals. Tim Rice wrote the lyrics and the music is by Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, formerly of ABBA. They've created a complex, exhilarating rock opera that, against the backdrop of the cold war, explores how an ancient game becomes a metaphor for romantic rivalries, competitive gamesmanship, super power politics and international intrigues.



Some of the *Chess* cast in rehearsal

The pawns in this drama form a love triangle: the loutish American chess star, the earnest Russian champion and a Hungarian American assistant who arrives at the match with the American but falls for the Russian.

From Merano to Bangkok, the players, lovers, spies and politicians manipulate and are manipulated to the pulse of an amazing rock score that includes the hits "One Night in Bangkok" and "Heaven Help My Heart."

Chess is playing for one week only, so don't miss it! Performances are Wednesday through Saturday, March 22-25 at 7:00 pm. They'll be two additional late night performances Friday and Saturday nights at 10:00 p.m. Tickets are \$15 general and \$13 ASB/seniors/faculty. Reservations are available on-line at <http://www.avpa.org>

Want to get in the *Chess* spirit early? Order your *Chess*-logo cap, t-shirt or sweatshirt at <http://www.cafepress.com/cchsavpa>

Art Student Exhibition: TNA

AVPA art students will exhibit their work on Saturday, March 4, from 7-10 pm in an exhibition called "Teen Night Action" (TNA). It's a night of art, entertainment and more for high school teens at the Museum of Contemporary Art/California Plaza (250 South Grand Ave. in Los Angeles). It's free with an invitation, which you can get from Kristine Hatanaka.

Another Trainwreck

Did you miss last month's Trainwreck Theater? March provides another opportunity to see these students serve up hot, fresh, and refreshing improvisational comedy. Performances are Friday and Saturday, March 10 and 11, at 7:00 in the SPoT. Admission is \$7 general/\$5 ASB.



James Woodman, Rezwan Kabir and Ariel.

Students Prepare for MOCA Exhibition

This year, AVPA's art students are creating a "zine" for their annual exhibition with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Their work will be published in April. An opening reception coincides with the launch date of the "zine" and will be Sunday, April 23rd from 4-6:30 at the MOCA California Plaza location.



The student project follows the example set by the exhibit co-organized by MOCA and the UCLA Hammer Museum. The "Masters of American Comics"

Jennifer Shapiro and Noel Ekker

exhibition, on view simultaneously at both museums, examines 15 key American artists who helped define the form and brought it to the highest level of artistic expression. The exhibition showcases an extensive selection of about 900 original drawings, progressive proofs, vintage-printed Sunday pages and comic books.

The students have received tours of the shows at both museums and are working with MOCA educators to create their own individual comic book pages which will form their zine.

Production Begins on Spring Film

Jeff Goebert, a senior in AVPA's film department, has worked in various capacities on the spring film project every year since he was a freshman, but it's always been his dream to direct one of them. This year he gets his chance based on the results of his directing one of the *Ramblin' Man* teams.



Jeff Goebert and James Bentley

The students wrote screenplays which they pitched to everyone in the department. This year the students chose a riotous farce by CCHS senior, Frank Clark, about what two young men go through when they want to rent a movie they were embarrassed to be seen with.

Jeff knows what his hardest challenge will be in directing this film: making this very culturally specific spoof appeal universally. This task is made even more difficult for him because the films he's directed in the past have all been serious.

This year, the film will be in High Definition (HD) format instead of 16mm—a first for the film department. The results should be significantly increased quality and colors in the final film. Casting begins the first week in March and the film will be shot on location, mostly at Movie Mecca on Washington Blvd., during the first week of spring break (April 3-7). The final film will be screened at Sony Pictures Entertainment on June 9.

Music Student Performs in New Musical

By Tony Spano

Nehemiah Williams, a 10th grade Academy music student, recently performed in a workshop production of "13" - a new musical by Tony award winning composer Jason Robert Brown. Nehemiah auditioned and was

selected to play the electric bass in the production's band. The Center Theatre Group put this production together during the month of February, culminating in two performances at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. The performance was both to help the creators see their work in progress so that they can make revisions to it, and to show potential investors the quality of the



Nehemiah Williams

work. Celebrities turned out for the performances, including Jason Alexander and Kirk Douglas himself. "I really enjoyed the experience," Nehemiah said. "It was really cool to get our own dressing rooms!" The musical deals with a Jewish boy about to turn 13 and all the adolescent drama associated with his relationships with the other kids around him. In keeping with the teenage theme, the band was also made up of teens, mostly from Hamilton High School.

Nehemiah was given an entertainment work permit and was required to participate in rehearsals 5 to 6 hours a day for 3 weeks. "Though I got to miss a lot of school, we had to attend our own school for about 3 hours a day so we wouldn't get behind," Nehemiah explained.

AVPA Art Students Semifinalists in Music Center Competition

Ben Hersh and Ricky Ibarra have been selected as two of the fifteen semifinalists in the Music Center's Spotlight Awards in the Visual Arts. Their work was selected from over 400 applicants in the two-dimensional design category.

The Music Center Spotlight Awards program is a nationally-acclaimed recognition and scholarship program for Southern California high school performing and visual artists.

As semifinalists, Ben and Ricardo will exhibit their artwork at the Bobbie Greenfield Gallery at Bergamot Station. The opening reception is on March 19th from 2-5pm.

There judges will select a first and second place finalist in each category and honorable mentions to be announced at the Gallery Awards Reception. The artwork will also be displayed at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion during the Spotlight Awards Final Concert on April 29th.



Ricardo Ibarra and Benjamin Hersh

Beyond the Abstract

At the Pink Elephant Music Showcase at the end of February, students performed their own original compositions as well as prepared pieces. The concert opened and closed to scenes from "2001, A Space Odyssey" projected on a screen with the Pink Elephant musicians playing the familiar music by Richard Strauss. Then the Pink Elephant members teamed up with their bands or performed solo pieces throughout the evening. AVPA's Chamber Singers and Jazz Combo also performed.



Mimi Markoe, Melody Jackson, Isiah Chancellor, Katie Fleeman, Shawn Barrera, and Matt Wygal

Artwork from the AVPA's Starving Young Artists flashed across the screen during one segment and Iman Sylvain performed a dance to original music by Brendan Kempf.

Ramblin' Man Screenings at Movie Mecca

Thanks to the generosity of Dean Edward and Janet Osborne of Movie Mecca on Washington Blvd., the film students got to hold a screening at the video store in February. They showed the two

versions they made of *Ramblin' Man*. The films were screened three separate times to full audiences who happily munched on popcorn as they watched the results of an interesting project – two teams adapting a single script into film.



Back L-R: Erin Perez, Marcos Avila, Marcelo Algarate, Frank Clark, Dean Edward & Janet Osborne of Movie Mecca and Tony Spano. Front L-R: Stacey Wilson, Karol Mora and James Bentley

Education Foundation Makes Grants to the Academy

The Board of Trustees of the Culver City Education Foundation announced awards on February 14th and AVPA was fortunate enough to pick up funding for several projects, including:

- Java Drama, the culminating performance/exhibition of the year where all Academy departments join together to provide an evening of fun-filled entertainment
- Equipment needed for this spring's film project in High Definition (HD) format
- Additional recording equipment for the music department, expanding on the equipment purchased earlier in the year with an Education Foundation TIP award for Steve Day and James Bentley. The equipment will be used to create CDs of original material.

AVPA Foundation Funds Workshops

Thanks to the generosity of our parents and supporters, the AVPA Foundation has recently been able to help fund several workshops and projects, including:

- Monologue workshop for the theatre bootcamp
- Two dance workshops
- A guitar workshop for the music department
- A stipend for an artist in residence and postage for MOCA mailing for the art department.

One of the dance workshops—Francis AWE & the Nigerian Talking Drum Ensemble—took place February 15. Students from dance, music and theater participated



Francis Awe at workshop

in this high energy exploration of the Nigerian dance, the Obatala. But the students didn't just make music and dance. Francis Awe and his wife, Omowale, used the dance as a gateway into a cross-cultural discussion of values and spirituality.



Omowale Awe with workshop participants

What Makes AVPA Faculty So Special

By Trudy Sonia

I confess, I have a spy in the Academy. If I feed him just the right meal when he comes home, he tells me AVPA stories. And recently I got one that touched me so much I wanted to share it in these pages.

This is college application season for our seniors. My spy told me about Jessica Erskine who had a chance to audition for the theater department at UCLA. She was scared, and Darryl Hovis suggested she contact Vanessa Mizzone, who teaches AVPA theater classes in addition

to her work with the Actors' Gang. Jessica didn't want to bother Vanessa, but Hovis insisted, standing over her until she made the call. Vanessa didn't miss a beat. Not only did she work with Jessica on her two monologues, she took her up to UCLA and showed her exactly where she'd be auditioning. Wow.

The next day I'm up at the Academy and I hear Penelope Yates' beautiful singing counterbalanced with Cari Ann Shim Sham's* instructions. Curious, I peek through the curtains to watch. Later, I corner my spy. Penelope had her own audition coming up and Cari Ann was helping her choreograph her piece.

Then I heard about Lisa Michel helping Stefanie Vasseghi prepare two arias for her auditions – in Italian, no less. And Cari Ann writing amazing letters of recommendation to the program Dana Murphy wants badly. And Kristine Hatanaka bringing in faculty from various art colleges throughout the school year so they can talk about training and careers in art.

I know there are many more stories just like these because our amazing AVPA faculty give their all for their students. I feel honored that my spy and I are privy to this level of dedication.



In the

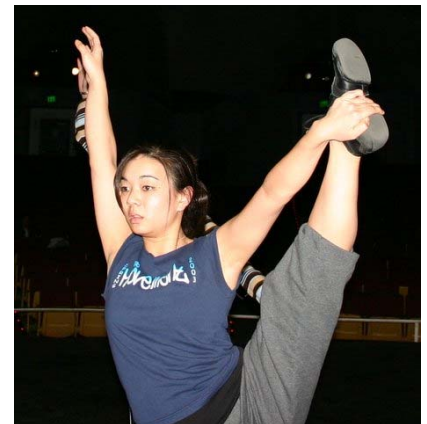
Lisa Kobashi has been back in Los Angeles for less than a year, but she's become an invaluable addition to the Academy. Last semester she volunteered her time and expertise to teach a lyrical jazz class as well as helping out with the ballet class. Currently she teaches a jazz dance class.

When asked what she liked best about working with AVPA students, Lisa couldn't say enough about the students' dedication to the optional classes she teaches.

Since she was six Lisa's been passionate about dance. She joined the competitive dance team, Fusion, and competed not only in teams but also as a soloist.

As a CCHS student she danced in several AVPA musicals including *The Wiz* and *Pippin*. At the same time she was training at the Edge Dance Studio in Hollywood and Stefan Wenta's school of ballet.

While at UC Berkeley Lisa earned her bachelor's degree in



Lisa Kobashi warms up with her students

psychology, but she danced and choreographed for two on-campus dance teams. After she graduated, she took a position with a small consulting firm and taught lyrical jazz in the evening.

Lisa currently works at an investment bank in Century City, which consumes much of her time. But dance is still her passion. She's formed a hip-hop dance team, Dizruption, has choreographed shows for dee-Lightful Productions, and will continue to offer classes through the AVPA – adding intermediate ballet to her jazz class this spring.

The Academy is fortunate to have Lisa's talent and dedication.



The Real World Edition

Here's a sampling of what's happening with students, alums and faculty outside the Academy.

Ben Sieke, (Music, 2004) has several upcoming performances at CSU Long Beach including:

- University Symphony Orchestra, Mahler: Symphony No. 1 on 3/3 & 3/4
- Wind Symphony & Symphonic Band on 3/14
- Drums & Drummers on 3/27
- World Percussion Group & Steel Pan Orchestra on 3/30

http://www.csulb.edu/~music/home_pg/home.html

Ben's sister, **Ali Sieke**, (Theater) has been cast in an untitled film that's a senior thesis project at the Art Institute of Los Angeles. It's a disturbing comedy about a Catholic school girl named Alexis who lives with her mother and grandfather. Ali plays Alexis. The film will be shot March 4 and 6 in Fontana.

If you know of other alumni or student activities outside the Academy, contact tsonia@comcast.net.

Faculty Favorites

So when we asked Darry Hovis to tell us his favorites for the Spotlight, we thought we were into the tenth verse of "My Favorite Things" from "The Sound of Music." Here's a selection from Hovis' list. Want more? Sign up for the Blurred Vision Yahoo Group. (Subscribe by sending an email to AVPA_blurredvision_subscribe@yahoo.com) Then you can get all the latest theater news and learn the rest of Hovis' favorite things.

Favorite Theatre Company: The Evidence Room is always taking risks that seem to be paying off. Bart De Lorenzo has the ability to tell a great story and the La

Jolla Playhouse where I served an internship always does interesting work.

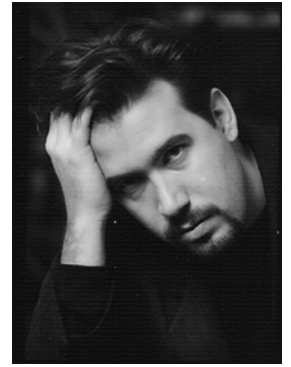
Favorite Director: For theatre, right now it's Anne Bogart. I admire her philosophy and approach to the art of theatre.

Favorite Actors: I have a thing for the "old school" actors like Gregory Peck, Jimmy Stewart, Audrey Hepburn, Paul Newman and Sydney Portier. They all had class that most actors today can't touch. Of the current crop of artists, Johnny Depp, Kevin Spacey, Samuel L. Jackson, William H. Macy, Charlize Theron, and Sean Penn are interesting. I am also very intrigued at the work Terrance Howard is doing.

Favorite Plays: "One Flea Spare" by Naomi Wallace. The characters are rich, yet accessible. The play has a wonderful sense of love layered underneath the desperation. "Gennagarry Glenn Ross" by David Mamet. What testosterone! Neal Bell's "Therese Raquin." Such wonderful characters, and such a beautiful, but tragic story.

Favorite Playwrights: Right now, I am very much into Naomi Wallace. Her language is poetic and her words conjure up great images. Of course, Shakespeare is the master of the English language. I love Sam Shepherd for his sense of desperation that inhabits his work. And Christopher Durang.

Favorite Production: The last production I saw on Broadway was "Sweeney Todd." Although I love the musical, I had to be talked into seeing this particular production with Patti LuPone. I was expecting a rehashing of the same style. I was wrong. It was simply brilliant. Simple, stark, and full of wonderful energy. How the heck did the company move about from playing their instruments, to changing costumes and props, and still be right on cue for their scenes?



Fundraisers

Please support these Academy fundraisers.

Spaghetti Lunch at San Gennaro's

On March 4, come to the San Gennaro Café, 9543 Culver Blvd., in Culver City between 11:30 am and 1:00 pm for a spaghetti lunch. Not only will you be served your meal by your favorite AVPA film students, you'll get to see a comedy show by Clay Bravo and her comedy company. Proceeds will help finance the film department's High Definition (HD) film.

Blurred Vision Car Wash

Bring those dirty cars to the Elks Lodge (11160 Washington Place), on Sunday, March 12, between 11am and 4pm and get them scrubbed clean. Proceeds help send Blurred Vision to the Fringe Festival in Scotland.

Film Car Wash

What? Your car's dirty again? Bring it to the Valero Gasoline station at 10332 Culver Blvd. on Sunday, March 19, between 9am and 1pm. Proceeds from this car wash will help produce the Spring HD film.

Comedy & Magic Club

Not much time left to go to the Comedy & Magic Club in Hermosa Beach and help the Blurred Vision students out at the same time. Show times are 8pm Tuesday through Thursday only until April 20th at 1018 Hermosa Avenue. Tickets are \$10 each, all of which goes to the Blurred Vision Fringe Festival fund. Attendees must be 18 or older and there's a two beverage minimum. Contact **Estela Narrie**, narrie_estela@smc.edu for tickets.

Elks Servers

For the past month or so, and for the next several, Blurred Vision students have been serving dinners at the Elks on Friday nights. The students earn tips, which go into their account for the Fringe Festival. Want to help? Contact Dan Nannini (DanNannini@aol.com).

DVDs

Don't forget that the film department has great DVDs of this year's theater performances plus film projects available for just \$20. Contact **James Bentley** (jbentley@avpa.org) for your copy.

And if you've got used DVDs you'd like to donate to the Fringe fundraising effort, contact **Alison Seike** (alissavesttheworld@aol.com).

Café Press

Order your AVPA T-shirts, sweatshirts, caps and coffee mugs – and especially those *Chess* T-shirts – at <http://www.cafepress.com/chsavpa>. The AVPA gets a small percentage of every purchase you make, so you can help the Academy at the same time you buy cool gear.

You are receiving this newsletter because you've expressed an interest in the AVPA. Please feel free to pass it on to others. If you no longer want to receive it, please contact tsonia@comcast.net

AVPA 2005-2006 Season

FROST FILM FESTIVAL

March 3-4, Sony Pictures Theatre

TRAINWRECK IMPROV THEATRE

March 10-11, Sony Pictures Theatre

CHESS

March 22-25, Robert Frost Auditorium

TRAINWRECK IMPROV THEATRE

April 21-22, Sony Pictures Theatre

DANCE-OFF!

April 27-29, Robert Frost Auditorium

ANTIGONE

May 18-27, Sony Pictures Theatre

JAVA DRAMA DOZEN

TBD

YOUNG FILMMAKERS FILM PREMIER

June 9, Sony Pictures Entertainment Lot

*Always check www.avpa.org for schedule changes.

Contacting the Academy

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