
Academy of Visual & Performing Arts Culver City High School

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For Immediate Release

My Heart's in the Highlands: A Benefit Performance for AVPA

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When Inez Bush came across the play, *My Heart's in the Highlands*, by William Saroyan, she knew she had to find a way to incorporate it into the Culver City Schools Curriculum. And as the District Arts Consultant for the Culver City schools, she was in a unique position to do just that.

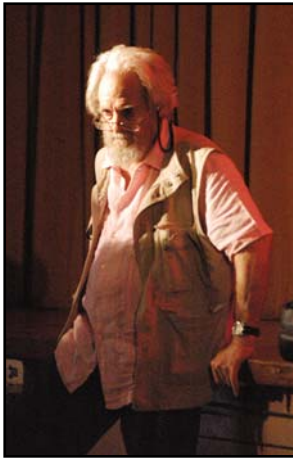


My Heart's in the Highlands is a bittersweet comedy-drama about a boy and his father following their hearts in search for the "Highlands." The playwright uses Robert Burns' song and the word "highlands" as a metaphor for nostalgia for the childhood home, wherever that may be. This play, Saroyan's first, was written in 1939. He went on to win both a Drama Critic's Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize for his plays.

This production is directed by Corey Allen, the award winning director and actor. Allen started his acting career in 1954 and was often cast as a brash, arrogant young tough. He retired from acting in the 1960s and turned to directing. Allen first read *My Heart's in the Highlands* when he was eleven. According to Allen, "I realized that as we make our way along our own path to the highlands, we can expect many moments, both bitter and sweet, and that we can only appreciate one in the awareness of the other." Sixty years later, Allen is still trying to share this realization.

Bush was participating in the NEA-funded Teacher Institute, which is part of the Music Center's education program, when she realized *My Heart's in the Highlands* fit

beautifully into the criteria for an "anchor work" – a classic work of art that can form the basis of units tied to many areas of the curriculum.



Bush encouraged students from the Culver City schools to audition for parts in the play. Two elementary school and three middle school students from CCUSD were cast as actors while several students and alumni from the Academy of Visual & Performing Arts (AVPA) are also involved in the production. Culver City 4th and 7th grade students will attend performances of the play as part of their curriculum. Bush says, "Implementing this show as part of our students' curriculum has been a challenging, but rewarding experience. I now know first hand how teachers will be creating exceptional learning environments using anchor works like *My Heart's in the Highlands*."

But not only is *My Heart's in the Highlands* a valuable part of the curriculum for Culver City students, it's also an opportunity to raise money for the Academy of Visual & Performing Arts. According to Darryl Hovis, AVPA's artistic director, "We're very fortunate to be involved with this production. The students are getting an opportunity to work with professional actors while the Academy benefits financially."

My Heart's in the Highlands will be performed at the High School's Robert Frost Auditorium, 4401 Elenda Street in Culver City Friday through Sunday, September 23-25 at 7:00 p.m. On Saturday, September 24, there will also be a 2:00 p.m. performance. Tickets are available at www.avpa.org and are \$15 for general admission and \$12 for seniors and students. For group rates, call 310-842-4200 x6009.

The Academy of Visual and Performing Arts (AVPA) at Culver City High School offers a comprehensive arts curriculum after regular school hours for students who are committed to excellence in Art, Film, Theatre, Dance, and Music. Established in 1996, AVPA enjoys tremendous community support from SONY and other design, recording, and theatre companies in the area. For more information, go to www.avpa.org or contact Tony Spano at 310-842-4200 x6094 or x6009.

Picture Captions:

- Corey_allen: Corey Allen, prolific award winning director and actor, directs William Saroyan's heartwarming play, *My Heart's in the Highlands*.
- Mac_johnny: Michael Bell (Mr. Macgregor) and Dillon Bush (Johnny) contemplate the highlands in William Saroyan's heartwarming play, *My Heart's in the Highlands*.