



Educational Assistance Center

THE ADVOCATE: A Newsletter Devoted to Disability Equity

A VERY CURIOUS INCIDENT... OXNARD COLLEGE THEATRE DEPARTMENT PRESENTS SHOW ABOUT NEURODIVERGENT BOY: HIGHLIGHTS INCLUSIVITY

Oxnard College presented its first play of the 2024-2025 season. Heather Molloy, EAC staff, interviewed Nicholas Pappas, Director, to get his insights on inclusion and representation “The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time.”

H: What is The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time?

N: The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is a play adapted by Simon Stephens, based on the best-selling novel by Mark Haddon. The play won the 2013 Tony Award® for Best Play. The play follows a 15-year-old autistic boy named Christopher who has an extraordinary brain.

H: As director, what led you to select this play for production at OC?

N: There were a lot of parameters that needed to be considered: we have incredible support from administration but are still building infrastructure so we wanted something exciting, but not too big. I also wanted something to represent OCTD at this moment in time. Art speaks to us differently at different points of our lives. I first read the novel in 2006 and remembered it as a book full of clever ideas about an autistic boy, and I read the play in 2015, but remembered it as not serving my purposes then. So, imagine my surprise when, rereading the play in 2024, I was sobbing.

N: Maybe I’ve become a softy in my old age, or maybe it’s the wisdom that comes with life experience, but the theme of the play - don’t settle for the expectations that others place upon you, rise past those expectations and prove you belong - spoke to me in ways it hadn’t in 2006 and 2015. I also feel this message sums up the spirit of the students in the OCTD perfectly.



H: Your casting choice was very inclusive of individuals with different ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and abilities. What considerations, if any, were made to make the experience accessible to all students?

N: First off theater is for everyone. Especially educational theater. College is an environment where people should try different things, scary things, difficult things.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION OR SUGGESTION FOR NEXT MONTH’S CONTENT?

Contact Heather Molloy at heather_molloy1@vcccd.edu

N: When casting the play, it was important for me to look past the exterior of a person and consider what they need on their educational journey. One of the most important things I can do as an educator is create a place that is inclusive of everybody, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, and ability. Those of us who are drawn to theatre are often outsiders who create community and, eventually, a family to show the world the power of empathy. I truly love my OCTD family. I also think the great power of theater is that it teaches empathy and understanding. If I don't lead with empathy and understanding, I've failed as an educator and a human being.

H: How important is representation in the arts, specifically on stage?

N: Representation in the arts is vital. People need to see positive versions of themselves on screen and stage. They need to see their own stories reflected back to them. They need to know that voices like theirs, and by extension their voice, is important and has worth. I'm white presenting, but I'm actually Indigenous. I'm Ojibwa. Every time I see positive representation of Indigenous people in media, my heart sings. For many in our community, especially with much of the political rhetoric being spewed at the moment, positive representation must feel few and far between. As an educational theatre program in its infancy, I'm still trying to get where I want to be when it comes to the stories we tell. That will come with growth, but for now I can at least populate the stage the same way I see the world around me - full of beautiful human beings who are individuals with different ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and abilities.

H: What is your upcoming play?

N: In the Spring we're going to do Ken Ludwig's *Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery!* This is how the publisher describes the play: Comedic genius Ken Ludwig transforms Arthur Conan Doyle's classic *The Hound of the Baskervilles* into a murderously funny adventure. Sherlock Holmes is on the case. The male heirs of the Baskerville line are being dispatched one by one. To find their ingenious killer, Holmes and Watson must brave the desolate moors before a family curse dooms its newest heir. Watch as our intrepid investigators try to escape a dizzying web of clues, silly accents, disguises, and deceit as the cast of actors deftly portray more than forty characters. Does a wild hellhound prowl the moors of Devonshire? Can our heroes discover the truth in time? Join the fun and see how far from elementary the truth can be.

It runs March 20, 21, 22 @ 7pm and March 22 @ 2pm. If you want to get involved?

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EVENT PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICHOLAS PAPPAS

DID YOU KNOW?

The term “neurodiverse” was originally attributed to Judy Singer, an Australian sociologist. Singer published research in the late nineties of the 20th Century specifically about Asperger’s Syndrome (AS) or what is now referred to as high-functioning autism (HFA). The term, now said to have been developed collectively among Autism activists and allies, is currently known to represent varying cognitive abilities, functions, and behavior in humans. Neurodiversity can refer to individuals with or without Autism. The term “neurotypical” is used to describe individuals of typical developmental, intellectual, and cognitive abilities as defined by a physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist.

TIPS AND TRICKS: PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE

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Person-first language is a way of destigmatizing the communication used regarding individuals with disabilities. Person-first language emphasizes a person's individuality ahead of their condition, disease, or disability. For example, use

- The boy with vision impairments NOT the blind boy
- The woman who uses the wheelchair NOT the wheelchair-bound woman
- The person who uses an AC device to speak NOT a mute person or person who can't talk

Person-first language seeks to acknowledge the inherent and equal value of every individual by describing what they “have” rather than asserting what they “are.” It is a means of asset-based thinking rather than deficit-based thinking.

EAC STAFF SPOTLIGHT: NATALIE TOLILA



Natalie Tolila has over 20 years of experience in executive and administrative support, project and event management. Throughout her career, she has directed day-to-day operations and managed projects ranging from departmental procedures and processes to website development and full-scale live events, including organizing a 5K/10K/Half-Marathon for four consecutive years.

Natalie holds a bachelor’s degree in communications and media from California State University, Northridge, and recently became a Certified ScrumMaster®. She believes in lifelong learning and is always eager to explore new growth opportunities.

In her free time, Natalie enjoys spending time with her family and friends, attending concerts, and expressing her creative side through different artistic avenues, like calligraphy, oil painting, and making personalized gifts, greeting cards, and customized party decorations and favors.



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