

# ABCDE FOCUS



Your drama newsletter

WINTER / 2024

## President's Message:

Happy New Year! Reflecting back on this past year in the ABCDE, I have had so many great experiences. Working on the executive always fills my professional bucket as I get to collaborate with such a skilled and talented group of teachers who care about high school theatre education in BC. Our October conference was an indication of that care as the conference was so well organized. The workshop leaders taught us so many new things, the vendors were informative and welcoming, and the vibes throughout the two days were positive and fun. At the AGM we honoured two teachers as Drama Teacher of the year, Lisa Williams from Highland Secondary in Comox, and Stephanie Henderson from Frank Hurt Secondary in Surrey. Our Distinguished Service Award went to Colin Plant from Claremont Secondary in Saanich. All are worthy recipients, and only a small sampling of the amazing drama teachers we have in our province. We also bid a fond farewell to two long-standing members of the executive. Colin Plant has been on the executive for many years as President, and past-president, and could always be relied on to clarify Robert's Rules or BCTF policies. We're going to miss his depth of knowledge and guidance. Gord Hamilton, who has been an ABCDE executive fixture for 25 years, has "retired", though he'll be continuing his role of organizing the NTS/BC Drama festival. It's hard to imagine the executive without him, but I'll admit, I'm still texting him and calling him to ask him questions, so he's never going to be able to fully escape us. We thank them both for their years of service. If you were at the conference, and have feedback, we are always happy to hear your thoughts and ideas.

And now, it's 2024. It's fresh start, full of new beginnings, and this year that is especially true for me as I take on the role of President of the ABCDE. I'm excited about continuing the work that Heather Lee has done so well over the past 6 years. I'd like to thank her for her hard work and I'm thankful that she is still around to guide me through the ins and outs of "presidenting." I'd like to welcome Zach Wolfman and Meghan McGuinness Gill to the executive. Fresh faces and new ideas are always appreciated. Zach is our new Communications Director, so if you have show photos, lesson plans, or travel diaries, or anything of interest for the newsletter, send him an email at [zwolfman@sd38.bc.ca](mailto:zwolfman@sd38.bc.ca). Zone festivals are already happening around the province, and the chosen productions are getting excited about the National Theatre School/ BC Provincial Drama Festival at Douglas College, May 2nd to 5th. Other schools are gearing up to head to Vernon for the Goodwill Shakespeare festival April 25th to 27th. You can choose to be delegates for either of these amazing events, so look for details on our website. And speaking of the website, we'll be updating and freshening up those pages soon as well. The members of the ABCDE executive continue to look for new and better ways to serve the Drama teachers in BC, so if you have any questions, ideas or comments don't hesitate to contact one of us. Have a great second semester.

Christine Knight, ABCDE President

## SPOTLIGHT ON ZONE FEST



90 Seconds by NDSS in Nanaimo



TRAP by GP Vanier in Courtenay



Seven Brides for Dracula by Wellington Secondary in Nanaimo

### ABCDE EXECUTIVE 2023-2024

#### PRESIDENT

Christine Knight (SD#72)

Christine.knight@sd72.bc.ca

#### PAST PRESIDENT

Heather Lee (SD#54)

hlytle@sd54.bc.ca

#### VICE PRESIDENT

Lana O'Brien (SD#22)

lobrien@sd22.bc.ca

#### TREASURER

Coco Roberge (Sd#43)

nroberge@sd43.bc.ca

#### SECRETARY

Zelda Coertze (SD#43)

zcoertze@sd43.bc.ca

#### COMMUNICATIONS-DIRECTOR

Zach Wolfman (SD#38)

zwolfman@sd38.bc.ca

#### MEMBERS AT LARGE

Meghan McGuinness-Gill (SD#45)

mmcguinnessgill@wvschools.ca

Brian Billo (SD#34)

brian.billo@abbyschools.ca

Laurie Anne Lorge (SD#22)

llorge@sd22.bc.ca

#### (DIVERSITY & INCLUSION)

Sharmila Miller (SD#42)

sharmila\_miller@sd42.bc.ca

## SPOTLIGHT ON THIS YEAR'S ABCDE CONFERENCE



Peter Abando shares his wisdom



ABCDE members learn some Choreography



Susan Bertoia workshop



Special guests



Touring the Art's Club prop shop



Lunch group discussions



**TEDI SCHOLARSHIP**

**Given to Cherice Leung for her work with Diversity and Inclusion in Education.**



**DRAMA TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

**This award is for an exemplary teacher and ABCDE member. It may go to anyone who teaches K-12 and incorporates Drama in and beyond the classroom, such as touring shows to other schools, going to see other people's theatrical work, having professionals in the school working with students etc.**

**was awarded to Lisa Williams, Highland Secondary, Comox AND Stephanie Henderson, Frank Hurt Secondary, Surrey.**

**Congratulations to these two outstanding teachers!**





### **SIMPSON and LYNDS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE**

**This award is renamed after Laurie Lynds and Keith Simpson who founded the ABCDE, to honour their years of contribution. This award is for an individual who is an advocate for Drama in B.C. schools and whose work reflects the policies and goals of ABCDE.**

**2023: Colin Plant, Claremont Secondary, Saanich**



### **LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**

**Given to Gord Hamilton, for his 25 years of service to the ABCDE Executive.**

## SPOTLIGHT ON SD23 - OKANAGAN MISSION (OKM)



Our own Ryan Grenier directed this incredible production with a book by Kyle Jarrow based on the original series by Stephen Hillenburg. Music Director Zach Griffin brought to life the musical production conceived by Tina Landau with original songs by Yolanda Adamns, Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith, Sara Bareilles, Jonathan Coulton, Alex Ebert of Edward Sharpe & the magnetic zeros, The Flaming Lips, Lady A, Cyndy Lauper, John Legend, Panic! At the Disco, Plain White T's, They Might Be Giants, David Bowie and Brian Eno.

These students never fail to be all into their work even with a history of six years or just one! They always bring positive and encouraging energy to every show.



The whole cast and crew of Spongebob the Musical worked hard to make this show the amazing production that it was. Everything came together including sets, costumes, and props that bring the undersea world to life.



A big shout out to everyone who comes out to support wonderful highschool shows like this one! There is certainly no shortage of budding talent in our schools.

Congratulations to these students and best of luck to the grads in their future.



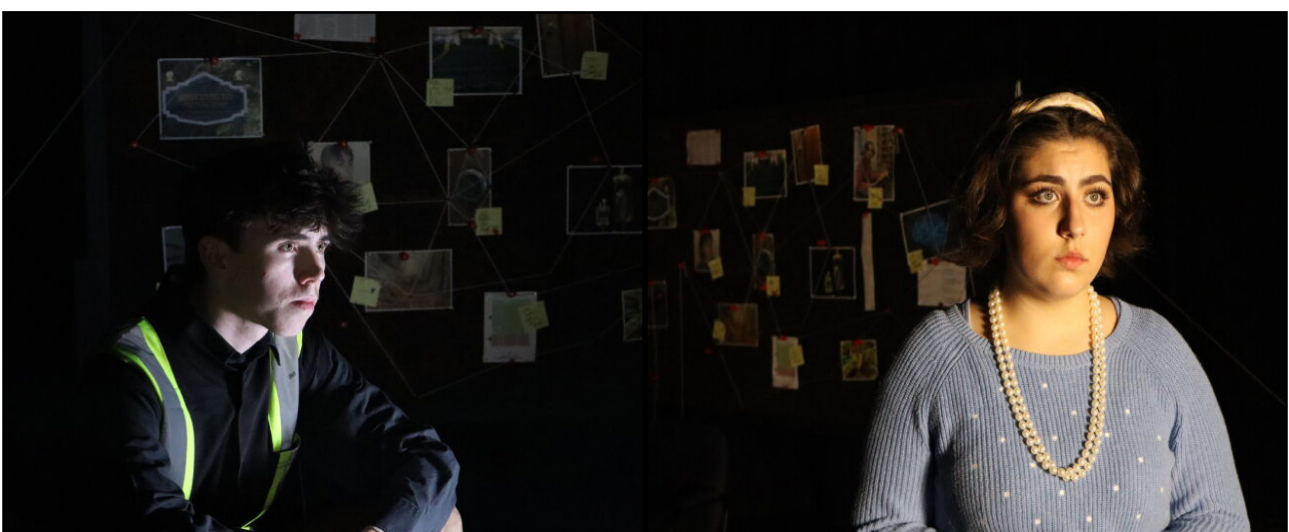
**Do you have something to say? Something to share with your fellow members of the ABCDE? Or just a burning desire to be published? Please send your articles, letters, photos, lesson plans, ideas, etc. to [zwolfman@sd38.bc.ca](mailto:zwolfman@sd38.bc.ca) and I'll put them in the newsletter!**



**"Alice by Heart" at Kalamalka Secondary's Apple Box Theatre in Coldstream.**



**"Alice In Wonderland" at Fleetwood Park Secondary School.**



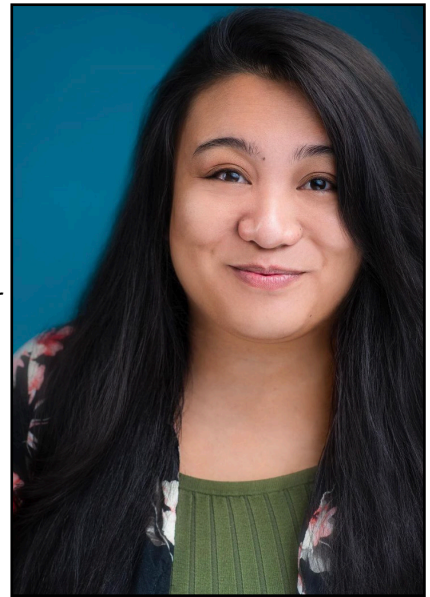
**"Trap" by Stephen Gregg, directed by Lori Mazey from G.P. Vanier at North Island Regional Drama Festival**

## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT ON CAITLIN MAIRA

Caitlin Maira taught improv at this year's Fall PSA Conference and we asked her to share some of the reflections she had working with us. Caitlin is also an alumni of Riverside secondary SD 43 in Port Coquitlam with drama teacher Coco Roberge.

**CAITLIN:** I think my biggest struggle with artistic life after high school was just understanding that it exists. My entire life I was trained to believe that art wasn't a real career option; that only certain people got the opportunity to pursue artistic ventures and you had to be in the upper echelon of talent to even get the chance to try it out. It was purely just a hobby in high school. And then as I got older, I believed that it was just more and more impossible because I didn't pursue it right away and "you can't teach an old dog new tricks". But then I got over that notion by understanding that you're never too old to try something new. Which I know is hilarious as someone who was in my mid twenties when I realized this but still.

Working with ABCDE was such a whirlwind because it was so rewarding to be able to teach something to drama educators who would then teach it to their students. Coco was someone who affected my life and my outlook on theatre in high school so teaching that to teachers like Coco felt almost full circle. In terms of teaching improv, I think my biggest takeaway, and I think drama educators understand this, is understanding that improv education is not linear whatsoever. There are different skills that you can teach but besides the basics of improv (yes and, etc.) it becomes more about honing skills and helping students become more rounded improvisers. There is no right or wrong pathway to learning improv. Coco was an inspiration to me in that she loved, and continues to love, theatre so much so that it shows. As I take more and more improv classes, I realize that I learn best from those who care so much about the craft that it feels like their obligation to share this knowledge and passion with everyone they know.



Overall, this artistic journey has taught me more about myself than I ever thought possible. I find it to be like therapy in that I have discovered myself in the different characters that I portray. I know I have so much more to learn but I am so ready to never stop learning. Like I said, improv and art generally is not linear.

**Caitlin is an improviser, writer, and dancer in Vancouver on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations.**

**Thanks again Caitlin for sharing your wisdom and expertise with us this year at the FALL PSA Conference "Under the Umbrella" held at Arts Umbrella on Granville Island.**



## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT ON ERIKA BABINS

Erika Babins taught choreography for non-dancers at our fall PSA. Erika is a director, choreographer, and educator based in Vancouver on unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations. An avid dancer and actor from a young age, Erika completed her Diploma in Musical Theatre from Capilano University. Since then she's worked on everything from large scale musicals, tiny indie tours, site specific theatre, webseries, and corporate galas across the province. Erika is a firm believer that art is for everyone, and that everyone deserves to have their stories told. She loves being able to nurture the growth of young artists and empower them to advocate for themselves and the stories they want to see in the world.

**ERIKA:** I've always said that the easiest, most effective, and indeed most fun way to add new tools to your teaching toolkit is to get in the room with other instructors. The amount of times I've read how to do an exercise online or in a textbook and been left confused but, the moment I watch a colleague teach the same thing, it feels intuitive and simple! That's why I was thrilled to join the ABCDE conference in October to teach a workshop on Choreography for Non-Dancers. My only regret was how short the time together was.

The workshop focused mostly on skills for drama teachers with limited dance training to aid them in teaching a musical theatre unit, or staging a school musical when there are not the resources to hire an outside choreographer.

A question that came up that we did not have the time to explore was what to do when the students in the room are also shying away from movement. In my experience coming in as a guest choreographer for high schools, I've observed over and over again that students think they are moving with "show energy" when in reality, their limbs are limp, their movements small, and their faces blank. It's important to recognize the perceived risk that students feel when we ask that they step out of their comfort zones and dance in front of others. Moving the body can be a very vulnerable act and, beyond the trepidation most students feel when asked to try something new in front of their peers, students without formal movement training don't have a concept of what full out feels like in their bodies. I have a few tips to help save your voices from yelling "More energy! Smile! Engage your hangs!" over the roar of the music and singers:

- 1.** Video tape rehearsals. This can help with retention, and for catching up students who were absent but, more vitally, when students watch back the work they did, they can better attribute how it feels with how it looks and it becomes a tangible metric to mark themselves against.
- 2.** The following exercise is a sure fire to get energy into students' bodies when prepping for a choreography or any physical staging:



- a.** Take out a \$20 bill, gift card, or something else of value and place it on desk.
  - b.** Tell the students that in a moment, when you say go, the first one to the prize can claim it.
  - c.** Go on a nice rambling speech about expectation and anticipation. Maybe count 1, 2, oh nevermind, ready, set, goblin market.
  - d.** After the exercise, ask the students to reflect on what it felt like to have energy coursing through their bodies in order to prepare them to rush for the prize.
- 3.** Tell the students that the first time you tell a student "it's too big, dial it back a little" that you'll give them a prize (make it good!). The catch is that the bigness must be in the world of the show. I.e, shouting your lines or falling on the floor doesn't count as "too big". in over a decade of teaching, I've had to give out a prize for someone truly going too big in rehearsal once.

## **B.C. National Theatre School DramaFest**

The DramaFest takes place at Douglas College in New Westminster from May 2-5, 2024.

This year we're on track to have the largest festival we've had in years and it's all thanks to the ABCDE Drama Teachers in the province!

There are four ways you can attend the DramaFest:

1. Participate in a Zone Drama Festival and be chosen as the Outstanding Production.
2. Participate with a group of your students as delegates.
3. Have your students submit their one act plays to the ABCDE Youthwright Playwriting Competition, which is adjudicated this year by Canadian theatre icon John Lazarus.

The top three playwrights are then invited to bring a production of their play to the DramaFest.

4. Join us for DramaFest for a Day, an opportunity for teachers to come and play with us.

## **DramaFest for a Day!**

Here's a fantastic Pro-D opportunity for all teachers.

If you've never been to the DramaFest and are interested in experiencing what all the buzz is about, then join us on Sat. May 4 for a full day of workshops, a catered lunch, and evening performances.

Make a day of it and be part of all the excitement that defines the B.C. NTS DramaFest!

\$40.00 for Certified Teachers (ABCDE Members)

\$25.00 for Preservice Teachers (an ABCDE membership is included)

Stay tuned for registration information which will be posted on the ABCDE Listserv and elsewhere soon.

**Contact Sharon Conrad @ [theatre.garden@yahoo.ca](mailto:theatre.garden@yahoo.ca)**