Teens fly their 'Wings' to the Fringe

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Article Launched: 08/02/2007 08:24:26 PM PDT

WHEN NINE teenagers head to Scotland next week, they'll be bringing childhood fears along with them.

It's OK, though, because the fears are part of the play, Mary Zimmerman's "The Secret in the Wings," that they'll be performing at the acclaimed Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Before jetting off to Scotland however, the teens, all San Domenico School students or recent graduates, will kick off their production, directed by Beth Kellermann, with performances on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday in Dominican Hall on the San Domenico campus.

"The play is a display of basic human emotions," said 17-year-old Katrina Frudakis of Novato, who plays many roles in the production, including an ogre. "It shows us that no matter how old we are, we're still children. Therefore, if it was a hit here, it'll be a hit overseas."

Tony Award-winning playwright Zimmerman has taken offbeat fairy tales and woven them together to create stories that are "rather dark and a little twisted," according to Emily Ludlow, a San Domenico sophomore who performs in the play. Ludlow also adds that in spite of the darker undertones, the play includes powerful, universally appealing themes that should hopefully captivate their unfamiliar audience.

The play combines parts of "Beauty and the Beast" with lesser-known European fairy tales to explore the darker side of human desires. Critic Hedy Weiss of the Chicago Sun Times called the production "hauntingly beautiful, a meticulously cut gem of theatrical craft."

The Fringe Festival always attracts a diverse group of performers and theater lovers, so universal appeal is essential. The annual August festival is one of the world's oldest and most respected venues for alternative and often bold performances. This year's festival will include 31,000 performances of 2,050 shows in...
250 venues hailing from all corners of the globe in all different languages. The average attendance of each performance is between five and seven audience members; lucky for the San Domenican girls, they will have a few family members to fill the seats.

Kellermann was well aware of the eclectic audience when deciding on the play and hopes that these fairy tales are able "to touch upon something in very audience member - regardless of age or country of origin. This material seemed a way to share commonalties," Kellerman said. "I hope each audience member finds something that resonates with their own understanding and experiences."

As San Domenico senior Callie Ballard of Ross said, "It's about childhood fears and triumphs - everyone can relate to those."

Last summer Kellermann flew to Edinburgh for a "familiarization trip" along with other festival directors, of which there are approximately 50 representing the United States.

Kellermann was able to bring her experience of the festival back to her students in Marin to prep them for this year's performance.

The San Domenico troope was anonymously nominated by someone connected to the American High School Theatre Festival.

The cast of nine girls has been rehearsing intensely all summer, and most were already accustomed to working under Kellermann, who is entering her sixth year as the school's director of performing arts.

"She is one of the most brilliant directors I have ever had the privilege to work with," said Ludlow, who has been acting with Kellerman's direction since seventh grade.

Ballard, 17, who has only been acting with Kellerman for three years, trusts her director's choice. In 2005, Kellermann had directed another Zimmerman play, "Metamorphoses," which was a hit. So Ballard jumped on board quickly. The fact that Brad Pitt had performed in the Fring Festival during his high school days didn't hurt the cause, she said. "And also," she joked, "the people I'm going with aren't exactly horrible either."

Novato native Amanda Jones, a 2006 San Domenico graduate, came back to Marin from Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania to participate in the production as a stage manager. She could not be more excited.

"I can't wait to be in a place just dripping with so much creative theatrical energy," Jones said. "I can't stress how flat out the theater geek in me is transfixed on the idea that I'm going to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. It will be the experience of a lifetime."

IF YOU GO

What: Mary Zimmerman's "The Secret in the Wings" performed by the San Domenico Upper School theater department

When: 8 p.m. Monday, Aug. 6; 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 8 and 5 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 9

Where: Dominican Hall on the San Domenico campus at 1500 Butterfield Road in San Anselmo

Tickets: $10, $5 students and seniors

Information: 258-1989