

OUR COMMUNITY QUERY: AT THE CLOSE OF UPPER SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES WE NO LONG EXTEND THE PRIVILEGE TO SENIORS TO EXIT FIRST. ARE THERE OTHER TRADITIONS THAT REINFORCE HIERARCHIES THAT WE ARE WILLING TO GIVE UP AS A COMMUNITY, IN ORDER TO PROMOTE OUR QUAKER MISSION? ARE THERE TRADITIONS AND HIERARCHIES THAT WE THINK BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITY? — UPPER SCHOOL

AMONG FRIENDS



FRIENDS ACADEMY MONTHLY E-LETTER | FEBRUARY 2018 >> WWW.FA.ORG



THE ARTS COVER STORY



Backstage **Pass**

The making of an FA all-school musical! | **PAGE 3**



ALSO INSIDE

Get **CONNECTED**

... To FA!
Find out where, when and how. **PAGE 10**

FROM THE HEAD

An informational e-newsletter published monthly for Friends Academy parents, grandparents, faculty/staff, trustees, former trustees, and the Alumni Board.

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Friends Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities available to students at the school. Friends does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial assistance program, athletic and other school-administered programs.



*“Wanted: A nanny for two adorable children...”
And one mother!*

Mary Poppins has probably saved my life at least a dozen times.



ANDREA KELLY
HEAD OF SCHOOL

As a young mother, the 1964 Disney movie, based on a series of books by P.L. Travers in 1933, provided exactly 94 minutes of the best nanny service around... she came in especially handy when trying to finish last-minute dinner party details, grading homework and all-around Mom duties.

And so it was that this Disney classic became a fixture in our household – and soon will at Friends Academy, when the all-school production of *Mary Poppins!* opens tomorrow night, Thursday, February 8th at 7:30 p.m. in the Dolan Center Theater.

In this issue of *Among Friends*, we pull back the curtain and receive personal backstage passes to see how the magic comes together with Director of Arts Tracey Foster.

From post-Thanksgiving on, the largest cast ever (120+ students from grades 3-12) came together in a journey, of not just memorizing songs, blocking and choreography, but also what it means to learn from young and older alike.

For cast and crew, magic happened everywhere – in the small quiet moments where kids from different grades would talk quietly and absorbedly with each other to the dazzling, spectacular all-cast ensembles.

So, read on and find out why “anything can happen if you let it!”



THE ARTS COVER STORY



Making magic, finding meaning and forging life-long bonds

“O

ne of my personal passions as an educator is to create opportunities where students can learn from one another. I think there is a special kind of understanding that develops when you are open to learning from people of different ages,” began Director of Arts Tracey Foster, who is also directing Friends Academy’s current show – an all-school production of *Mary Poppins!*

This year, auditions drew a record number of students and the final cast numbered 120+ third through twelfth graders.

“The key in any large production, but especially

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By TRACEY FOSTER, DIRECTOR OF ARTS
& ANDREA MILLER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

ORCHESTRA		
CTR	F	107
SEC./BX	ROW	SEAT
Saturday Feb. 10, 2018		
7:30 pm		
ADMIT ONE THIS DATE		
The Friends Academy Theater and Dance Department Presents		
MARY POPPINS		
NO REFUNDS PRICE NO EXCHANGES		
Stud/Srs \$12 Adults \$15		
SEC./BX	ROW	SEAT
CTR	F	107
ORCHESTRA		
Mary Poppins		
Saturday Feb. 10, 2018		
7:30 pm		
CTR	F	107

this one, was to make sure we were finding meaningful roles and responsibilities for all students,” emphasized Foster.

Every four to five years, The FA Arts Department stages an all-school musical for students in grades 3-12. In traditional school structures, involving a number of grades in a production can be daunting, if not impossible.

“Here at Friends Academy we seek out opportunities to work cross-divisionally, so students of different ages can learn from each other. *Mary Poppins!* is one example of how we do this. Younger siblings can learn from older siblings much faster than in

same age groups,” said Foster.

Foster is also quick to point out that student learning is also highly reciprocal. “While it is easy to see what the fifth grader is learning from the twelfth grader, what I love is that if you look a little deeper you quickly understand that the twelfth grader is learning just as much from the fifth grader.”

Using multi-age learning helps build a kinder, safer environment. “The moments where an older student who has never learned a dance is being helped by a younger student who has taken a dance class for

Continued on next page

CLICK TO WATCH VIDEO



VIDEO! Pull back the curtain and head to Flight School with cast members from this year’s all-school musical production of “Mary Poppins!”

many years by the time he/she is 8 is priceless. There is a vulnerability that comes into the atmosphere when an older student allows himself or herself to learn from a younger student that amplifies the learning experience.”

As a teacher and director, Foster treats all performers, regardless of age, with a high degree of professionalism. “I have worked with students of all ages and multi-age groups my whole career, so it feels very natural to me. I really don’t change my style much at all. I don’t speak to younger students in a different tone of voice or ‘baby’ them. In order for students to be effective, they need to be empowered. So regardless of the age, you are always giving them agency,” explained Foster.

All-school musicals will generally draw a larger number of students – this winter, *Mary Poppins!* set a school record in both number of auditions and the final cast.

“At Friends, we try to create an inclusive environment. We want the door to feel open to every person who wants to walk in. This means we don’t make cuts. Everyone may participate as long as you can make the rehearsal schedule.”

Starting from Square 1

Once the cast is set, some of the most important work takes place in the opening weeks. “By its very nature, being on stage can be scary;

Continued on next page



At an all-school rehearsal, senior Ellis Collier designed and led the cast through a series of “get-to-know-you” activities that laid a foundation for risk-taking and fun for all.

and if you are doing it well, you are very vulnerable,” shared Foster. “So, I start by creating a safe place, where students feel that they can try things, take risks and be vulnerable.”

Foster asked senior Ellis Collier (Burt) to lead a series of “getting-to-know-you” activities that stretched over several weeks of rehearsal. “Students learned names and things about each other, found commonalities, spoke in small and large groups, and began to create value and meaning in the experience,” said Foster. “Just as importantly, we explored the story of *Mary Poppins!* ... and why we are telling it.”

All hands on deck

The magnitude of an all-school production, especially one requiring flying apparatus and effects, requires a group of dedicated adults, who work behind the scenes.

“Normally, the Director is the primary coordinator with both the cast and production team, but because that work can become so big, we work in a series of teams,” explained Foster.

Foster and Theater teacher Andrew Geha normally alternate directorial duties between the Fall Play, Winter Musical and Middle School Play. “When I direct, I often ask Andrew to coach actors. This allows actors to work in a small group setting as they develop their character and gain a

Continued on next page



Dressed for the first time in costume, cast members run through a nearly finished set.



Costumes hang categorized by role and performer.



Flight crew director Andrew Geha and member Wyatt Mullen '19 manipulate Ellis Collier's (Burt) gyrations through the air.

deeper understanding of their specific job telling the story.”

The Theater Department core team includes Dance teacher Kimo Kepano, who directs all choreography, Technical Director Michael Grant, who builds the sets and coordinates technical details, and Pia Fleischmann, who designs the costumes (over 200 in *Mary Poppins!*), with support from Middle School Science teacher Selina Collier and students; and functions as the Production manager, coordinating purchasing, scheduling, securing royalties and “anything involving paperwork.” In addition, core team members connect to the

Music Department, lighting designers, sound engineers and scenic painters, as well as a host of students who work backstage.

In *Mary Poppins!* the added flying effects means even more hands on deck are needed. “Flying is definitely one of the coolest things we do in a production,” said Foster. “And anytime you are lifting people into the air, whether it is a lift in the choreography or flying someone 20 feet in the air (like we will be doing in this show), safety is the primary concern of everyone involved.”

The *Mary Poppins!* Flight Crew, headed by Andrew Geha with support

from Lower School Music teacher Sara Alt, parent and alum Michael Briemann '90 and Jesse Park – including students Wyatt Mullen '19 and Henry Schoeffel '20 – and 12 cast members spent four days training with a professional flight company, Flying by Foy, who must issue an ultimate stamp of approval to the cast and crew.

Foster decided she wanted to fly at least one student from each grade in 6th-12th. “The rest of the cast also has to learn about and participate in the safety,” added Foster.

Beyond the magic of flight is of course, the magic of music. Practicing independently, with principal actors and then in small groups, the band moves to the Theater Orchestra pit for dress rehearsals, as they work out

timing and tweak scenes. A monitor in the pit allows Music Director Mike Mattia to see the stage from a camera in the balcony. Likewise, a pit camera trained on Mattia is projected to a monitor in the balcony, which the cast can see from the stage.

“The last week before the show we have four rehearsals where we coordinate all the technical elements and the music, choreography and acting. Actors finally get to wear their costumes and are suited up with microphones. We are flying every day. Set changes are being incorporated and actors start using props,” shared Foster.

The control center of any production is always centered squarely with the Stage Manager, which in *Mary Poppins!* is Ali Foley '19.



Junior Olivia Lizza leads one of the four student-run choreography centers during “Mary Poppins!” rehearsal.



A silhouetted Mary Poppins (Claire Sweeney) glides over the rooftops of London in a walk-through of this scene during dress rehearsal as the band plays below in the Orchestra pit.

“With a headset on and script in her hand, she has a cue for everything – from lights, to flying, to set changes, actors’ entrances and so much more. At the start of each performance, the Technical Director officially ‘gives’ her the show and it is hers to run until it is over.” With one adult on headset, students run most of the production by themselves.

With hours until opening, the show is coming together from all corners of the Dolan Center and for Foster, the

story of *Mary Poppins!* and the journey of the cast are intertwined.

“I chose this musical because at its heart, it is a story about learning and growing up. It shows some of the difficulties of being a family and the power of love. It shows that education is a personal process, and is most powerful when it is experiential. It embraces the idea that it takes a village to raise a child and it shows us that magic lives in our heart and minds.”

Here at Parent Council, we are very excited for the community-building activities and meetings we have planned for 2018. We recognize that lives can be busy, so in order to more easily highlight how to get involved, Parent Council has created a monthly “Get Connected” e-mail that will provide you the exact dates, times and places about where and when you can connect with the FA Community.



**Parent Council - “Get Connected”
February 2018**

DATE	EVENT
Friday, Feb. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8th Grade Parent Coffee (JH, 8:15 am)• Health & Wellness Gen. Meeting (Ron Baskind Conference Room, 8:15 am)• ALL-SCHOOL Skating Night at Beaver Dam (7:00 – 9:30 pm)
Monday, Feb. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• FA Auction Meeting and invitation stuffing (JH, 8:15 am)
Wednesday, Feb. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6th Grade Coffee (JH, 8:15 am)
Thursday, Feb. 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Mary Poppins!” All-School Musical (Theater, 7:30 pm)

Get CONNECTED

Friday, Feb. 9

- 7th Grade Coffee (JH, 8:15 am)
- Mary Poppins!" All-School Musical (Theater, 7:30 pm)

Saturday, Feb. 10

- Mary Poppins!" All-School Musical (Theater, 2 & 7:30 pm)

Tuesday, Feb. 13

- 12th Grade Parent Coffee (JH, 8:15 am)



INSIDE FA

Weekly Update
Dec. 11 - 17, 2017

NOTE: Some browsers may clip the bulletin. Click "View Entire Message" to read.

IN THIS ISSUE

All School >> [Join](#) Andrea Kelly for "Coffee and Conversation" Arts >> Celebrate the holidays with MS Concert this week!
2018 Auction >> The many ways to support the FA Auction Development >> [Give](#) to the Annual Fund by Dec. 31st; deduct from 2017 taxes
Diversity >> FA holds Educators of Color Open House
Lower School >> How does history come alive?
Middle School >> Making math real, relevant in 7th grade
Parent Council >> All-School Skate Night and Skate Swap
Quaker Life >> Help [cook](#) for Glen Cove Men's Shelter
Summer >> Early Bird [enrollment](#) by Jan. 31st
Upper School >> Hurricane Relief continues

NEED TO KNOW

Visit the Parent Info Hub

Include a grandparent in our "Inside FA" mailing list and let them stay connected to everything that happens at Friends each week. E-mail first/last name and e-mail to [Andrea Miller](#).

SPOTLIGHT

Click to view Full Calendar

ALL SCHOOL

This Week >>



Monday, December 11, 2017
8:00 AM
All day
Tuesday, December 12, 2017

INSIDE FA

Weekly Update
Dec. 4 - 10, 2017

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INSIDE FA

Weekly Update
Dec. 18 - 19, 2017

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We wish you a very happy holiday!

INSIDE FA

Weekly Update
Nov. 20 - 26, 2017

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From our school family to yours... We wish you a very happy Thanksgiving holiday!

IN THIS ISSUE

All School >> Today at 2 pm - "Breaking Bread" Meeting for Worship
Early Childhood >> City Planning In Pre-K
Lower School >> The Academics of Baking
Middle School >> A week of all-things-French!
Parent Council >> [Shop](#) and give back to FA
[Purchase the Nov. 20 - 26, 2017 Inside FA Bulletin](#)

Q:

Are you reading *Inside FA* each week?

A:

Yes!
Why?

It's what you need to know this week at FA... in one bulletin... at the start of every week... delivered to your inbox.