

## Paper Mache for 4-11-25 by David Read

My friend and fellow columnist, Cynthia Fontayne, did a wonderful job covering National Poetry Month last weekend in her "Furthermore" column. It got me thinking about whether there is a National Community Theater Month since there is such an abundance of theater currently happening in Yuba-Sutter. It turns out there isn't a specific month, but World Theater Day is celebrated annually on March 27th, and March is also recognized as Theater in Our Schools Month. This is a perfect set up for this week's Paper Mache topic. Please note, I do choose to use the "theat-er" spelling versus "theat-re." I've read various explanations for the difference. One denotes the physical space versus the art form or that "er" is the American spelling versus the English spelling, etc.

Sorry I missed the opportunity to descant on this topic in March, but let's review. World Theater Day was initiated by the International Theater Institute in 1961, and is celebrated annually on March 27th to recognize the art of theater and its power to unite people across cultures. Theater in Our Schools Month is recognized in March by the Educational Theater Association as the official month for celebrating theater in schools.

Why does any of this matter? Community and high school theater are more than just local entertainment. These local performances nurture creativity, foster connection, and empower individuals in ways that ripple throughout Yuba-Sutter.

Not everyone has access to professional stages, but community theaters and school plays open the door for people of all ages and backgrounds to explore acting, directing, set design, and more. For many students, their first taste of performance comes on a high school stage. That was certainly the case for me, and it changed my life. This exposure can ignite a lifelong passion for the arts, encouraging future careers or simply enriching lives with a deeper appreciation for theater.

Theater helps build confidence and communication skills. Standing on stage, delivering lines, and working collaboratively with cast and crew requires trust, discipline, and courage. Theater brings together people from different backgrounds to work toward a common goal, creating friendships and a shared sense of accomplishment. Audience members, too, benefit from these productions. They offer affordable entertainment, opportunities to support local talent, and stories that reflect the unique perspectives and issues within the community. For many students, the drama club or theater group becomes a safe haven, a place where they feel seen, valued, and supported. I know I did as a shy, awkward, non-athletic high school student back in the late 60s. The bonds formed backstage and under the spotlight can be life-changing and they certainly were for me.

I got to thinking about all this recently as I was working on our personal calendar trying to schedule our attendance at several shows over the next few weekends. Let's see, tonight we'll attend MCAA's "The Lightning Thief: The Percy Jackson Musical," now playing at the Marysville High School Auditorium. Next weekend, we'll see "Happy Birthday, Mr. Shakespeare," an original work at The Acting Company and then it's on to the Yuba College Theater for "Stupid F#\$%ing Bird," an adaptation of "The Seagull" by Chekov. And finally, we'll see "The Addams Family Musical" at Yuba City High School's Back Lot Theater. What a month!

But wait, there's more... blowing our own Yuba Sutter Arts & Culture horn for a moment, our Convergence Theatre Company and Center Stage Productions are bringing a boatload of additional shows to town between now and this summer. Watch for upcoming announcements about "Steel Magnolias," "The Aristocats," "Mary Poppins," and "The Music Man." So many shows, so little time. See you at the theater.