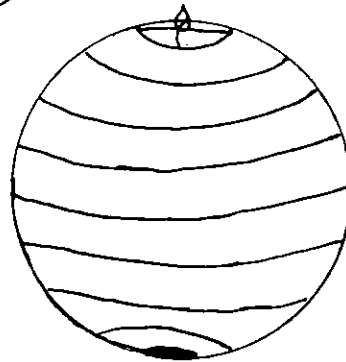
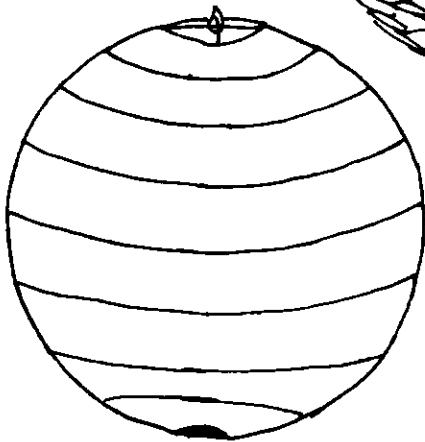
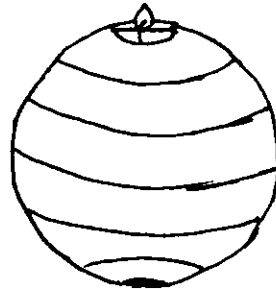


Selected Play Reflections on the
19th Annual
Theater Magic Production



The Subject Tonight is Love



The Life and Poetry of Hafiz



Adventurers (1st Grade)

... My favorite part of the play was the first night when I didn't know how it was going to go but then I did my parts perfectly...

~ Clara Rosenberg, age 6

... Before the rehearsals started I felt nervous about getting up on stage and speaking my lines in front of the audience. I took lots of deep breaths, and I calmed myself. It felt really easy when I took a deep breath...

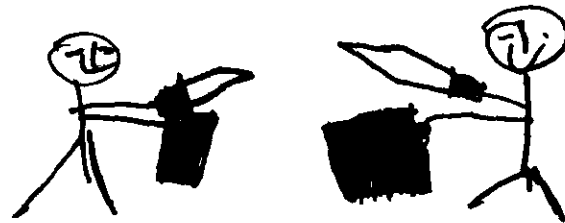
~ Neil Devnani, age 7

... The war scene was scary and awesome! The war scene had fighting and a loud gong. I liked the sound of the swords clinking against the shields...

~ Edan Cho, age 7

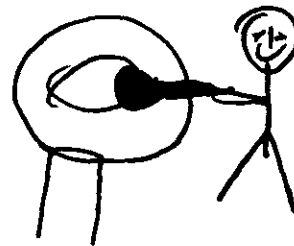
... I loved my beautiful angel costume. It was sparkly. I hope I can be an angel again in another play...

~ Lylah Urrutia, age 6



... I loved the war scene. It had loud music and the music had a lot of instruments...

~ Akshay Singhal-Nulu, age 6



... My favorite part of the play was the war scene when Muzaffar beat Abu Ishac...

~ Vincent Barragan, age 7

... I had to practice a lot to remember when to go on stage to say my lines. I was proud of myself for remembering!

~ Joseph Dieckmann, age 7

Discoverers (2nd and 3rd Grades)

I liked my part as Hafiz' brother because it was the biggest part I've ever had. You have to have a good sense of acting. We used movements instead of having lots of lines... It was so dramatic to be in the war scene... Our director, Matthew, was a good director. He was very strict, but he was funny, too. Matthew is very British...

~ Dominic Christiansen, age 8

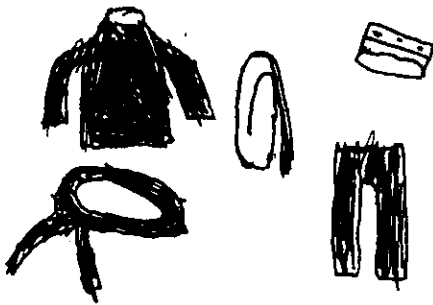


My favorite part of the play was the war scene. The war scene was a powerful scene. The people who were in it felt powerful, brave and astonishing. The lights were flashing red, and there were red ribbons hanging from the ceiling. The war scene was noisy because of the gong, the music, the clashing of the swords and the yelling.

~ Elijah LaCour-DeLyle, age 8

The war scene was very interesting because of the fighting, lighting and the sounds during the scene. ... The soldiers fought with their shields. The girls with waving streamers looked like fire on the battlefield. The fighting was exciting! The sounds of the war scene were very loud and intense.

~ Faroz Aghili, age 8



The costumes that were my favorite were worn by the pre-k, first grade, second grade, third grade, and some of the fourth and fifth grade, because they had black pants. The second thing I enjoyed about the costumes is how they fit. The pants and shirts were easy to move in. Mostly everyone had a clip for their hats. The clip was so the hat didn't fall off. The costumes in this play were magnificent.

~ Finn von Bunau, age 8

This year my school had a play called *The Subject Tonight is Love*. It contained an exciting war scene that was choreographed by Jorge Tejada. There was also an exquisite all-school poem.

The war scene made me feel exhilarated. There was so much going on – there were props hitting shields and streamers everywhere! Jorge made each move so vivid, we could not forget it.

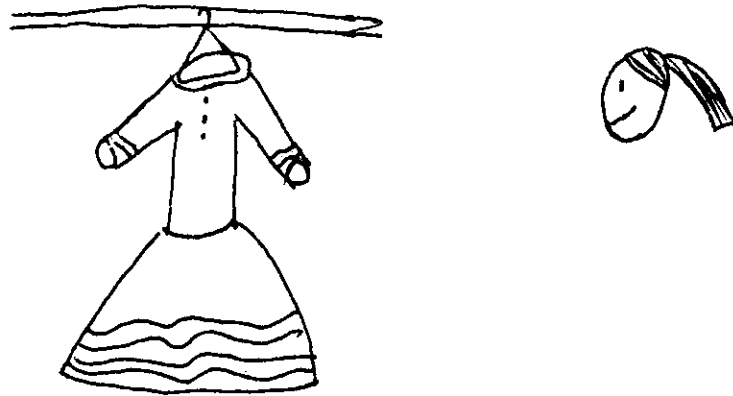
But one of the most exquisite scenes was the all-school poem. I liked the way we did the movements. It was soothing.

~ Gaurav Chakravarty, age 8

I loved the Bismallah dance because it was inspiring. I liked being in the front because everyone could see me. And at the beginning we got to sing Bismallah. It took only a short time to teach us it. My teacher taught us the song; her name is Marguerite. She is really nice. Lots of girls liked the dance.

I love my costume. I got a dress. Asha put a lot of work into it. It was a green dress and had a lot of colors. I also liked the boys' costumes. Asha used plastic hats and put fabric on them. The women who helped me were good at braiding hair and giving ponytails.

~ Kaia Flores, age 7



My third favorite part of the play was the entrance – it was cool. It was cool because we all walked in wearing our radiant costumes. ... We all took our bows at the beginning of the play and the audience liked it.

My second favorite part was my feeling of accomplishment when it was all over. I was cheerful and the audience was cheering while the classes took bows in consecutive order, and finally the Hafizes: Shuba, Adam, Finn, Reza and me. The audience clapped a lot for me; it made me feel joyful.

In my opinion, the best part of the play was the war scene; it was dark and sinister....The red lights made the scene full of tension. ...Warriors slashed, ducked, whirled and blocked with their swords, shields and bodies. It was very exciting and it seemed violent.

~ Mace Drobac, age 9

I liked 'Hatcheck Girl' because it was funny when the boys hit each other. My favorite performance was the last one because I got to have a lot treats. I had a cupcake and the cupcake had vanilla frosting on it and it also had sprinkles.

~ Nakai Brock, age 8

The dance I liked the most was the all-school dance. I liked it because the music was very active and I liked the dance moves. Marguerite was our dance teacher. I loved her choreography because it was incredible.

I liked the war scene costumes because they covered up my whole body and there was a headdress, and the headdress was my favorite part of the costume.

~ Nina Ulaganathan, age 8

Our school play this year was called 'The Subject Tonight is Love.' It was a love story full of poetry. One of my favorite poems was 'A good poem is like finding a hole in the palace wall – you never know what you might see.' This sentence is a simile comparing a good poem to a hole in a wall. I like it when poems use figurative speech. Another poem had the words 'Nibble at me. Don't gulp me down.' I liked the poem because Shuba said the words beautifully.

The third poem was called 'I am a Hole in a Flute.' I really liked the poem because it talked about a flute and creatures that I thought were animals.

~ Pailyn Tayjasanant, age 9



My favorite part was the war scene. It looked like a real battle! The lights were dimmed red. There were two types of soldiers. There was hand-to-hand combat and many soldiers fighting in the front. There were also girls with streamers that represented fire and blood.

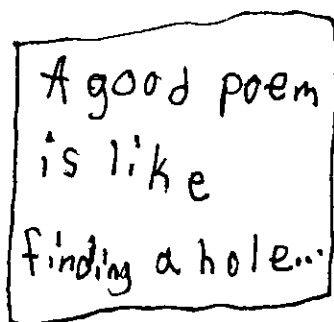
~ Ryan Jiang, age 8



I liked my costume. My hat and pants were black. My shirt was white. My colors looked beautiful together.

The war scene was spectacular because director Matthew made us do a great job!

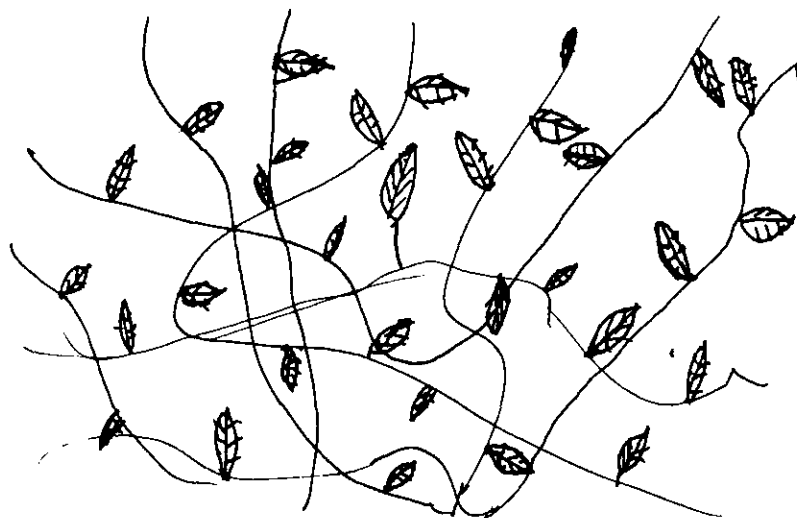
~ Thandapani Chandrasekaran, age 8



The poems were astonishing! I loved how Hafiz put all his hard work into his poems. They were about love and his love for God.

I loved my costumes. My costume contained a green sash, a golden vest, black pants, a white shirt and a black hat. It made me feel very happy.

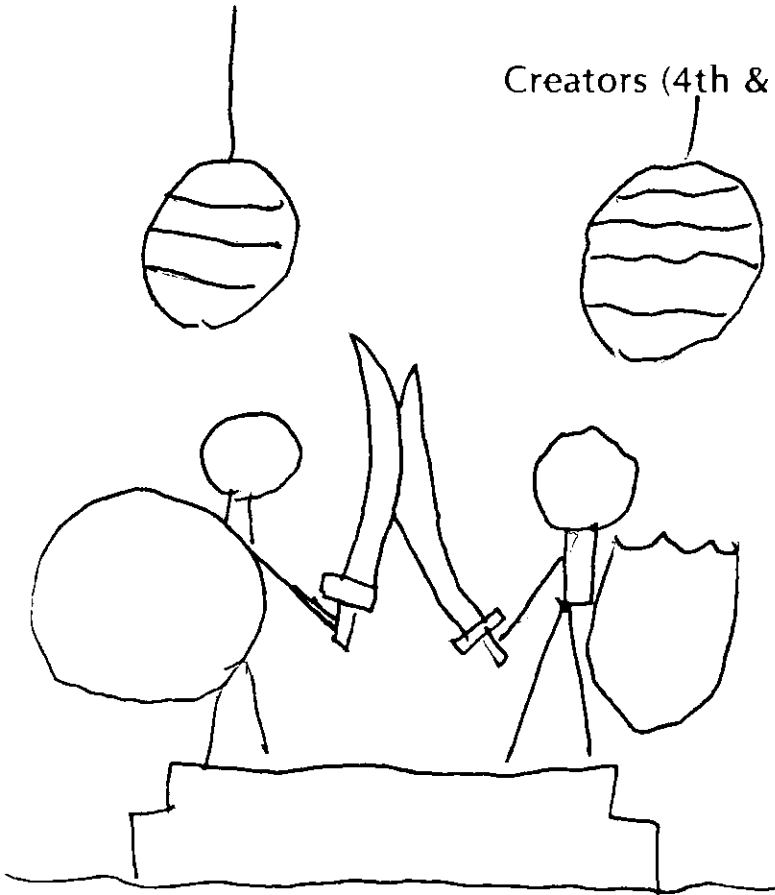
~ Vivek Punn, age 7



I really liked my costume and all the other costumes, as well. My costume was a green dress with a leafy design on it. Kaia's was exactly the same. Nina's was blue and Pailyn and Nakai's were pink. Asha cut out all the pieces and some of the parents sewed them together. My mom did a lot of work on them. I think the play wouldn't have been the same without the beautiful costumes.

~ Serena Peters, age 9

Creators (4th & 5th Grades):



This year we did a play about the Sufi poet, Hafiz, and his journey to God. I was in four performances, two at night, and two during the day. The whole school was involved. Our teacher, Mathew Sloan, directed the play. A lot of work went into the play. The costumes, props, and set were so lifelike. The lights and sound worked with the set to make the dances and scenes stand out. I had a lot of fun performing. It was an honor to be in such a great play.

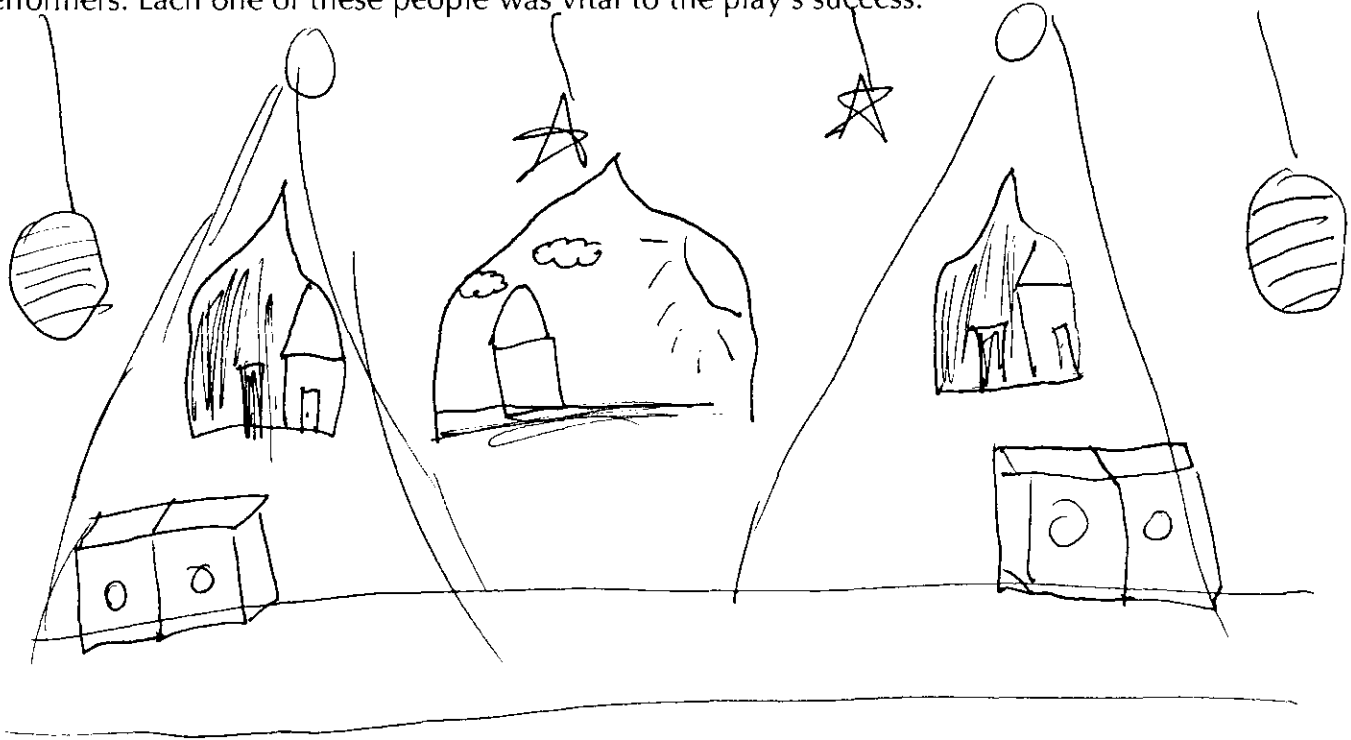
I felt many emotions in the play process. For my first performance I was really nervous. I had never been in a play before and I had no idea what to do. On my other performance's I wasn't as nervous, because I knew what to do. The play was great; however, I was relieved when it was over. I couldn't wait to relax for two weeks.

My favorite scene was the war scene. I started out as a soldier in the front row. Then, Mathew gave me a fighting partner. I got to learn the choreography for the big battle. I started practicing the choreography with a foam pad for a shield and a stick with padding for a sword. It was my favorite scene because I got a sword and shield, and I got to fight a partner. My favorite dance was the Nazcan dance. When the girls spun slowly, the sequins on their dresses glittered. I thought the dance was lively.

All in all the play was fantastic! The teachers put a lot of work into the play. Our director, Mathew Sloan, fit everything together like a giant puzzle. A lot of parents volunteered to help set up the stage. I even spent some time setting up the swords and shields on the Sunday before the first performance. I enjoyed being in the play. I am so proud to have been in such a great play, and I hope everyone else felt the same way.

~ Andrew Dollente, age 11

This year the community of Living Wisdom preformed a production of *The Subject Tonight is Love*. The play tells the story of the life and poetry of the mystical Sufi poet, Hafiz. Marguerite Fishman choreographed the dances; Mathew Sloan directed the production; Gary McSweeney designed and operated the lighting; Erica Glazzard created and presented the slide show; Helen Purcell did sound; Craig Kellogg did the soundtrack; and Asha Praver and her friends created the costumes for each of the performers. Each one of these people was vital to the play's success.

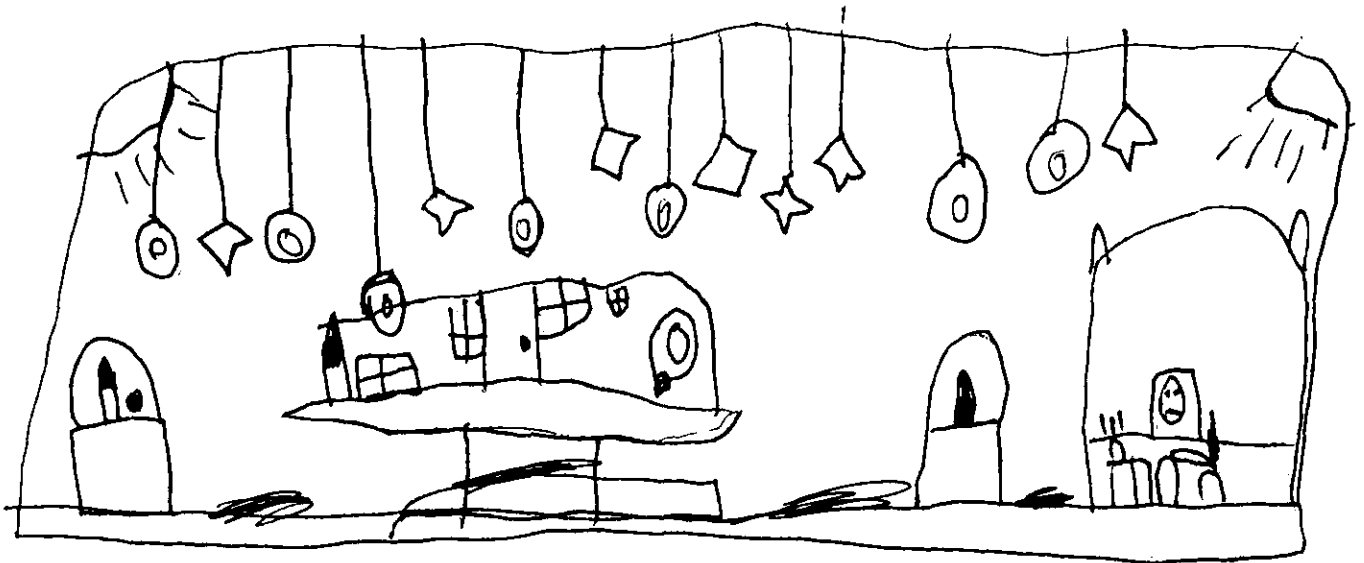


Marguerite Fisherman choreographed and miraculously produced the dances for the play. She is one of the best dance teachers I have ever had. (And I've been dancing for a while.) She knows how to motivate us to doing our best. I guess you could say she knows kids. Whenever I don't understand a part of the dance, she is able to explain it to me clearly. If I still don't understand it, she shows me – that always works!

Gary McSweeney did the lighting design and operated them during the play. They were breathtaking. He spent so much time planning the lights that they came out flawlessly. My favorite lighting effect was during the war scene. Gary had a mix of red light and some gold. The effect it created on the stage with the hanging paper lanterns looked spectacular. The lights, plus the streamers, music, and gong, made this the most spectacular scene I have ever seen. It was A-M-A-Z-I-N-G!

The play was spectacular! It was a royal blessing to even be in the same room as the performance, let alone participate in it. This year, barely any people counted their lines and complained. I guess the saying, "There are no small parts... only small actors." really changed people. It was the best performance I have been in and I've been in over 35 of them! Every time it just gets better. Long live LWS!

~ Divya Thekkath, age 11



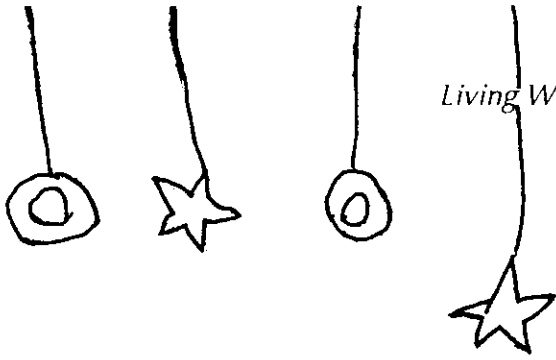
This year we did a school play on the life of Hafiz, a famous ancient poet from Persia. It included breath-taking costumes hand made by Asha and her helpers; sets beautifully hand painted by the teachers, students, and parents; songs from Persia; poems written by Hafiz; exquisite dances choreographed by Marguerite; and wonderful lighting designed, programmed, and operated by Gary.

The dances, choreographed by Marguerite – our best and only dance teacher – were fantastic! They included real Sufi dances taught to Marguerite by Kelly Olivier's grandmother. After months of stumbling and falling, we pulled it off. Most of the dances were perfect or near perfect. We had many dances including The All School Dance, the Nazcan, and the Disciples' whirling dervish dance. They were all flawlessly performed at the time of the play.

This year, I had many emotions before, after, and during the play. Every performance was different. Before the first performance, I felt very nervous. I had no idea how the play was going to be. I didn't know whether it would work, blow up, or get a standing ovation from the audience. Wednesday's play went well, there weren't many mess-ups. After Wednesday's performance, I felt extremely good inside because I knew we did a good job and that we knocked the audience dead. I felt about the same on Thursday, with the exception that I messed up a couple lines. I was really annoyed with myself for messing up; however, life went on. On Friday, I felt close to flipping out because I was a little sick, and I knew that whatever I did would be on film. I didn't mess up that much. I missed one line, but I recovered, remembered the line, and said it. I felt pretty good after Friday's performance, mainly because I went to bed straight after it. On Saturday I don't feel I performed that well. I forgot a few lines, but I felt good knowing that I did a reasonable job. After the play I was so tired, but I went out for ice cream and candy anyway.

All in all, the play went well. Other than a couple of slip-ups, like forgetting lines or missing a scene, the play was good. We had a ~~good~~ **great** director, beautiful costumes, flawless lighting, perfect writing, magical dances, and great props. So needless to say, and I might be repeating myself, the play went great!

~ Finn Mennuti, age 11



I felt many emotions during the performances. In the first performance, I was very nervous and excited because it was my very first play. I was worried in the first performance that I was going to forget my lines, or forget when to go on. I needn't have worried because everything went well. On our second performance I was not as nervous. I was more excited. On the third and fourth performances I was not nervous at all. I was very excited and I couldn't wait to go on stage.

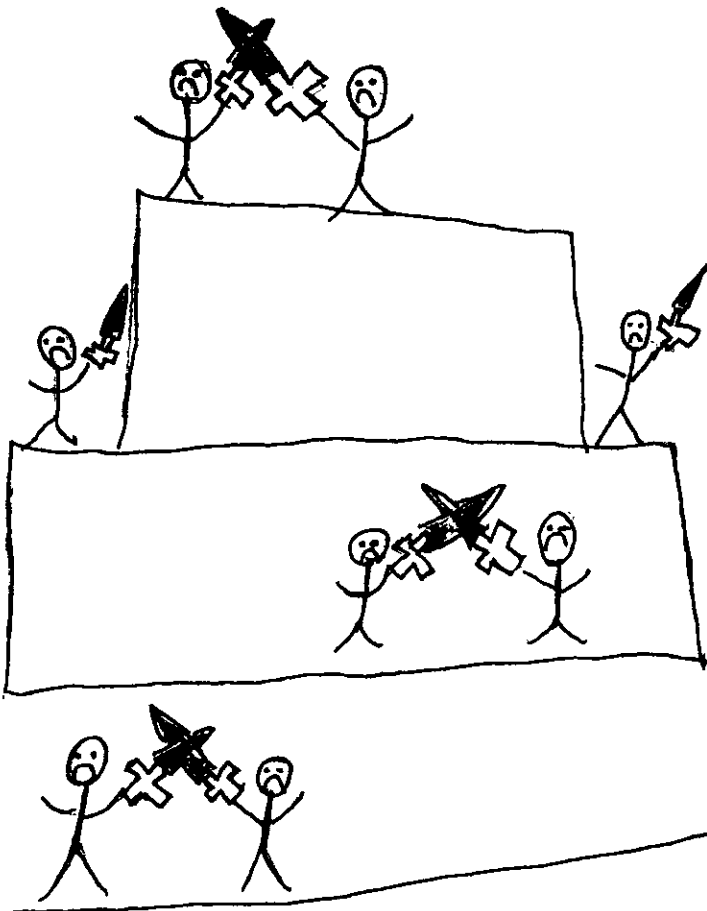
My favorite line in the play was when Hafiz said, "God belongs to only you!" The reason it was my favorite line is because I like to think God belongs to only me. This makes me feel safe and secure.

My favorite part of the play process this year was when I got to say my lines. It felt good to get up on stage in front of a lot of people and say my lines. I had never done this before. It gave me a feeling of accomplishment.

I enjoyed Saturday's performance the most. I felt courageous to perform in front of my dad and step-mom and I knew I would succeed. Another reason I liked the Saturday performance was because there was a lot more applause. The audience seemed more engaged. Of all the poems performed in the play, my favorite was, "Why are there so few in the court of the perfect saint?" I thought it was very funny when they all slapped each other.

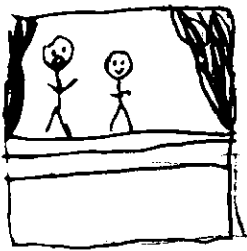
This play was the first play I have ever done in front of an audience and it was very fun and I hope to do it again!

~ Joey Mattia, age 10

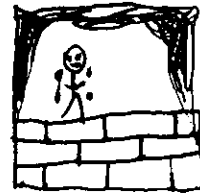


My first performance I was really scared and excited. The only thing I wanted was to do well. For the first performance and my first scene, I felt like hiding off stage. However, this wasn't an option. I went on stage and performed. As soon as the blackout happened I came straight off stage. After I was off stage, I was amazed and relieved that I hadn't made a mistake. After my first few lines, I became much more confident in myself and I projected my voice. On the second performance I remained very confident, so I did well. On the third performance, everyone, including me, got a little overconfident so we didn't do as well. On the last performance we gathered ourselves up and gave the best performance of them all.

I thought the best part of the play was the ending because it was very happy. I enjoyed taking my bows with my friends. After we finished each performance I felt a sense of accomplishment. I felt like a star. My favorite lines in the play are the last line, "I find my heart infinite and everywhere." and the line before the intermission "Ouch!!!!!" I like those lines because the first one is wise and the second one is funny. I also like them because they both lead to breaks in the performance, the intermission and the end of the play.

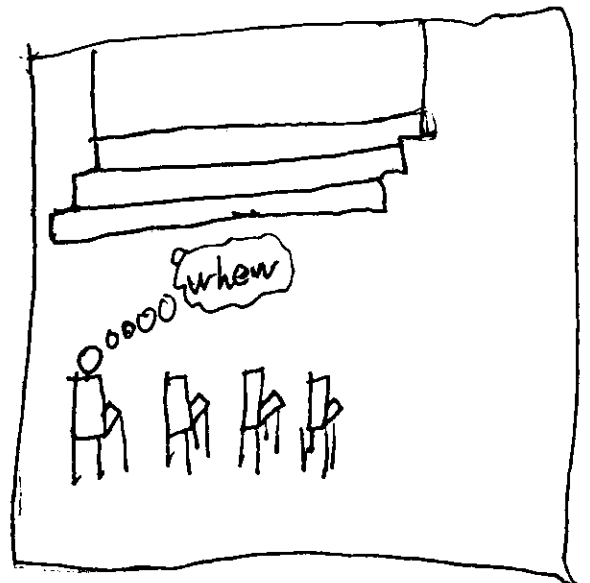


My favorite dance was the All School Dance because it was chaotic and energetic. I also liked it because the choreography is very complicated and matches the music perfectly. The choreography of the dance suited me well. I enjoyed grouping together as a snail, the chaotic parts, and the energetic parts.



This year in the play I learned patience, how to overcome stage fright, and to be determined. This play was a great experience.

~ Jason Fu, age 9





On the first performance, before we went on stage, I felt anxious because I thought I was going to mess up. After I finished I felt a lot better. I felt confident and courageous. I knew that if I could do one out of the four plays, I could do them all.

My favorite costume was Muzzafar's costume. I liked it because it had my two favorite colors, black and gold. I also liked it because it had gold coins that danced around. His turban was awesome because it matched his costume.

My favorite lighting effects were during the war scene. It was an awesome shade of red and the theater was very dark. My favorite poem in the play was "Meadows of God." It was awesome at the end when everybody lined up behind Mariah and put their hands out. It looked like she had twelve hands.

I felt joyful after the play. It was so fun! It was the best play ever. The play was enjoyable to be in. I hope I will do it again next year.

~ Caleb Flores, age 10



The war scene was really intense. The soldiers were marching slowly from the back of the sanctuary in beat with the cool war music. At first, the crowd did not notice the soldiers coming from the back. As the soldiers came closer to the stage the crowd started turning their heads to see them. The soldiers froze on stage prepared for battle. Then, the director, Matthew Sloan, smashed a mallet onto the gong. Everybody jumped in his or her seat. The battle began with the soldiers fighting each other with wooden swords and shields. At the end there was a crescendo of music, everybody on stage froze, and then a blackout. A martial artist, Jorge Tejada who was previously my teacher (he can break 12 bricks with his hand) choreographed the sword actions and fight pattern.

The next cool thing in the play was the costumes. I think Asha did a superb job on them. The boys' costumes were hand-made by Asha and her helpers. It must have taken hundreds of hours to make the boys' costumes. I loved the lighting in the play. It made the play come to life and be interesting. I feel, without lighting the play wouldn't be a play, it wouldn't be as exciting. The lighting is such a vital part of the play.

I felt a bit nervous and excited as most people are before going on stage. The nervousness plus the excitement made me full of energy on stage. After all of the hard work I think the play turned out great. I had great fun despite the pressured experience of the play process.

~ Quincy Linder, age 10

This year we did an amazing play on the life of the mystical Sufi poet, Hafiz. Every student participated in some way. I enjoyed the play process thoroughly; it was awesome! And I learned a lot about Persia and Hafiz's time. I also learned about Sufism. Of all the plays I have ever done, this was the most fun.

Wednesday's performance was nerve wracking for me. "No more time for errors and mistakes. It's time for the first one, no more do overs for anyone!" Thankfully I didn't mess up. For a little time during the first performance I panicked, but then I realized I have done this play a billion times in rehearsal.

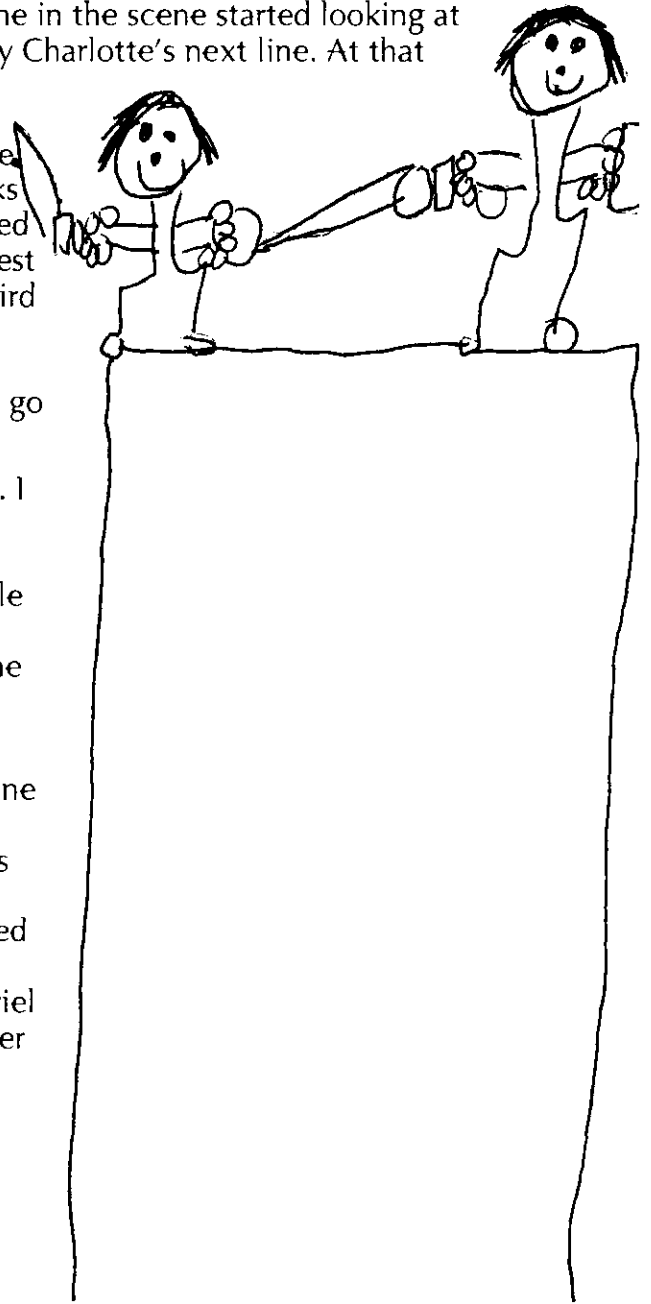
Undoubtedly, the scariest moment for me was when Director Matthew told me I was filling in for Charlotte forty-five minutes before show time! I panicked for a few moments, but then I realized it wouldn't be that hard because I could memorize three lines in forty-five minutes. However, I missed a line because Director Matthew didn't show me the new version of the scene. I was memorizing the old version. During the performance Vivek asked me "Ready?" I answered, "Not this time." He asked, "Why not?" I replied, "I am in the next scene." "Oh," he said. During the scene, I said my first line then Vince said his line. Then there was a fifteen second silence. At the start of the silence I thought someone else had messed up. Everyone in the scene started looking at me. Suddenly, I realized they were looking at me to say Charlotte's next line. At that moment Ruth whispered my line to me and I said it.

My favorite scene in the whole play was the War Scene. It was really intense and drama filled. It took four weeks to choreograph two and a half minutes! I especially liked it because I got to fight Hugo Pappalardo, one of my best friends. It was a blast fighting him. However, it felt weird to be fighting my best friend. Luca's dad, Jorge, choreographed the fighting part of it. Jorge is a professional martial artist and teaches at a school that I go to.

My favorite props were the wood scimitars and shields. I got to stage fight with them. They made performing in the War Scene really fun. They were so life like. They made us look like professionals who were able to handle real scimitars and shields. My side, the good side, had swords and shields spray-painted silver. Hugo's side, the bad side, had shields spray-painted gold and swords spray-painted silver.

All in all, I learned a lot of life lessons and teachings. One of the lessons I learned is, if you want to achieve something you can always do it. Hafiz shows this in his search for God! He eventually found him at the end of forty, frustrating, years. Also, in the end he got frustrated with his teacher, Attar, because he felt he had gained nothing from him. However, when the Archangel Gabriel came to Hafiz he realized the love he had for his teacher and his only desire was to serve him.

~ Pongsa Tayjasanant, age 10

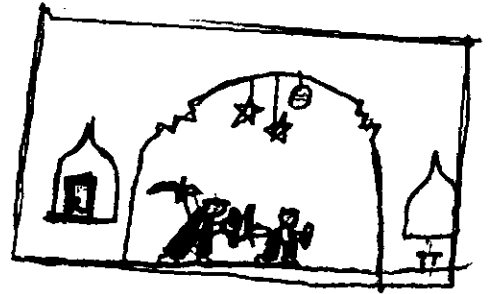


This year we did a play on the life of the mystical Sufi poet, Hafiz. Every student in the school was involved. The play told about Hafiz's life and poems. During the production, we studied about Hafiz and learned how to perform in a play.

During the performances, I felt many emotions and feelings. Before the first performance I felt nervous that something would go wrong with the lighting, or music; or that someone would get seen in a blackout (like Adam). However, during the other performances I was confident that everything would go well. While we were performing, I felt kind of scared since more than two hundred people were watching me. To handle this, I just focused on my lines and forgot about the audience. Of all my performances, I liked Saturday's performance best. We had a good audience and nothing went wrong.

I have learned many things from my play experience. The most important thing I learned is that you should always encourage yourself and never give up.

~ Tyler Keen, age 9

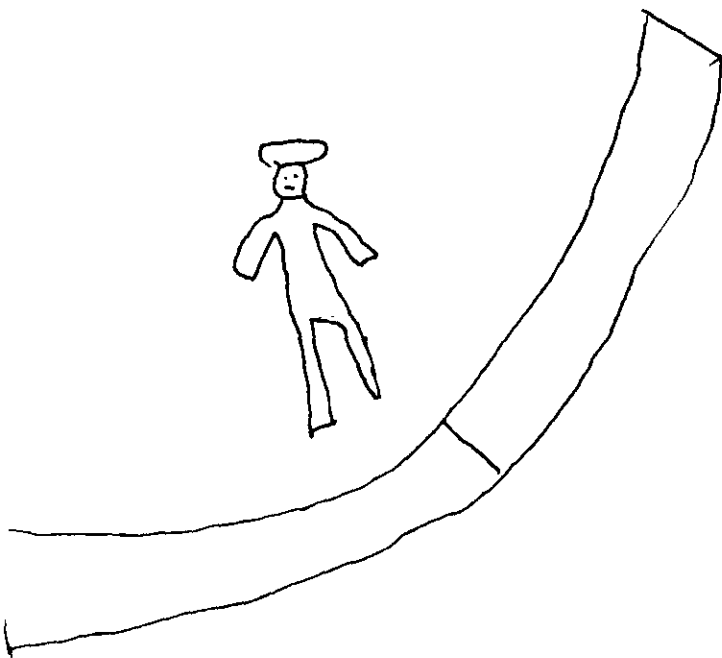


The lighting for the play was amazing. Gary McSweeney set up the lights. He put up different pieces of clear plastic to create different dramatic effects. For example, during the war scene he used red gel paper to create a scary, horrible, dramatic scene.

This year's costumes were cool. However the boys' costumes were very simple. The girls' costumes were fancy and colorful. My favorite costume was Hugo's. He was playing Muzzafar. It was all dark and scary looking. Asha did a good job. Some of the girl's costumes were rented. The boy's costumes were spectacularly hand made by Asha and her helpers. The ones that were handmade were very Persian looking.

I really liked most of the scenes and lines in the play. There were twenty-six scenes in the play and roughly one hundred and fifty lines. My favorite lines were my own because its fun to say lines. My favorite scene was the war scene because of the effort that went into it.

~ Matthew Roberts, age 9



I felt many emotions before and during the performances. On the day of the first performance, I felt happy and excited to act in the play. The next morning, I felt a little tired; however, I was excited to perform the play. On Friday I felt good, and I was ready to perform. On Saturday, I was really tired, and I didn't want to perform. However, When I arrived at school, and saw everybody, I got into my costume, and I felt energized to perform once again. After the last performance on Saturday night I felt good because I knew that the next day was my birthday. I enjoyed the Friday night performance the best because it was fun. They were filming, and I felt really good.

My favorite line in the play was, "Legend told that anyone who performed a forty night vigil at the tomb of the famous saint Baba Kahi would win their heart's desire." It was a fun line to say. I like legends, and it would be great to fulfill a desire like that. I think that the most important line in the play was Shubha's line in the last scene when she said, "God belongs to only you." That is very inspiring.

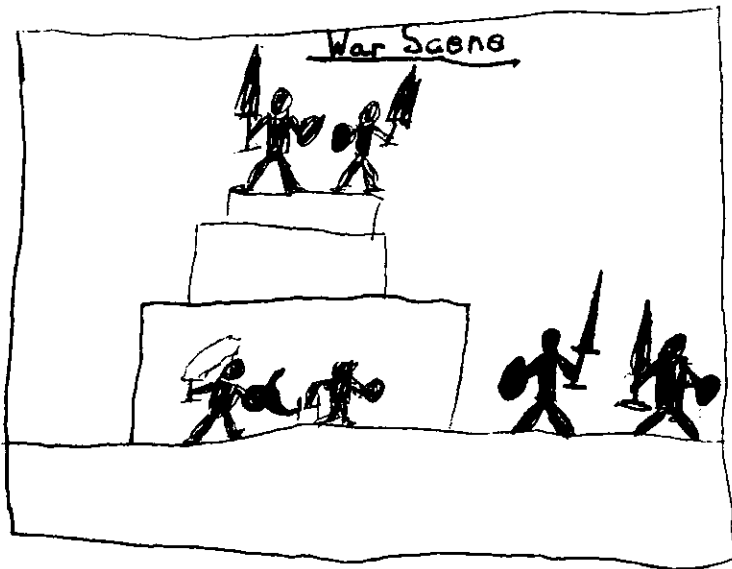
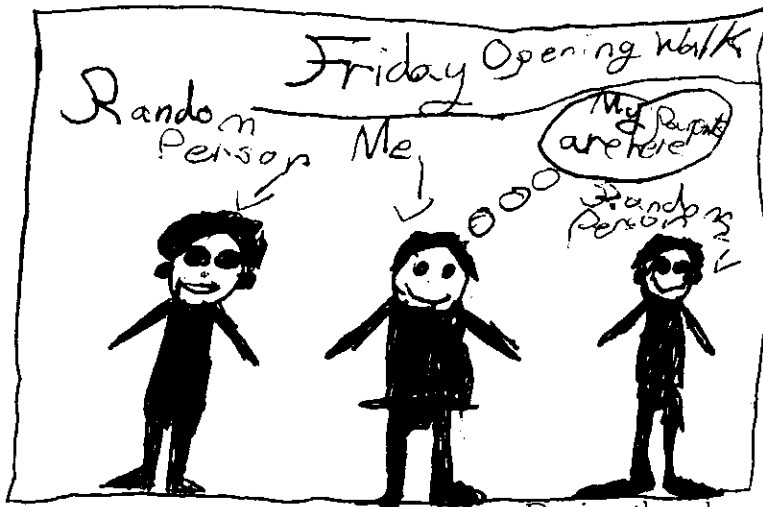
My favorite part of the play was saying my lines for the first time in front of an audience on Wednesday. The scariest moment in the play was when I fell down the stairs in a blackout. I almost missed my next scene. I handled this moment by getting up, running to my place on stage as fast as I could, and going on with the play.

My favorite scene in the play was when four people recited the poem, "Why are there so few in the court of a perfect saint?" It is a funny poem, and it made me laugh when they hit each other on the head and cried, "Ouch!"

I learned about Hafiz's religion, poetry, and life. It was a great play, and I enjoyed being in it.

~ Rishi Deshmukh, age 10





During the play process and production I felt many different feelings. On Wednesday's performance I felt very nervous, not because it was my first play ever, but because I hadn't performed in such a long time. I was convinced I was going to make a mistake, but I didn't. On the morning of the second performance I felt very angry. During Wednesday's performance a few Middle Schoolers, from another school, had been very rude. They laughed and pointed at some of the performers. By the end of Wednesday's performance I was very angry. On Thursday's performance, more children were being rude. It was very frustrating. The performances on Friday and Saturday night were fine except my PARENTS were there. Having them watch made me feel nervous; however, I did fine.

My favorite line from the play is "God belongs to only you." I like this line because Hafiz means God belongs to everyone and everything in this world. My favorite dance in the play was the Disciple Dance. I liked this dance because the music was awesome, the dance was amazing, and it was executed splendidly.

From this play, I learned that every single person on planet Earth matters. And that God belongs to everyone. I also learned how to perfect my Theatre skills. This year I learned also how to do a Sufi dance and song. This year's play was my favorite ever. All in all, it was a great success.

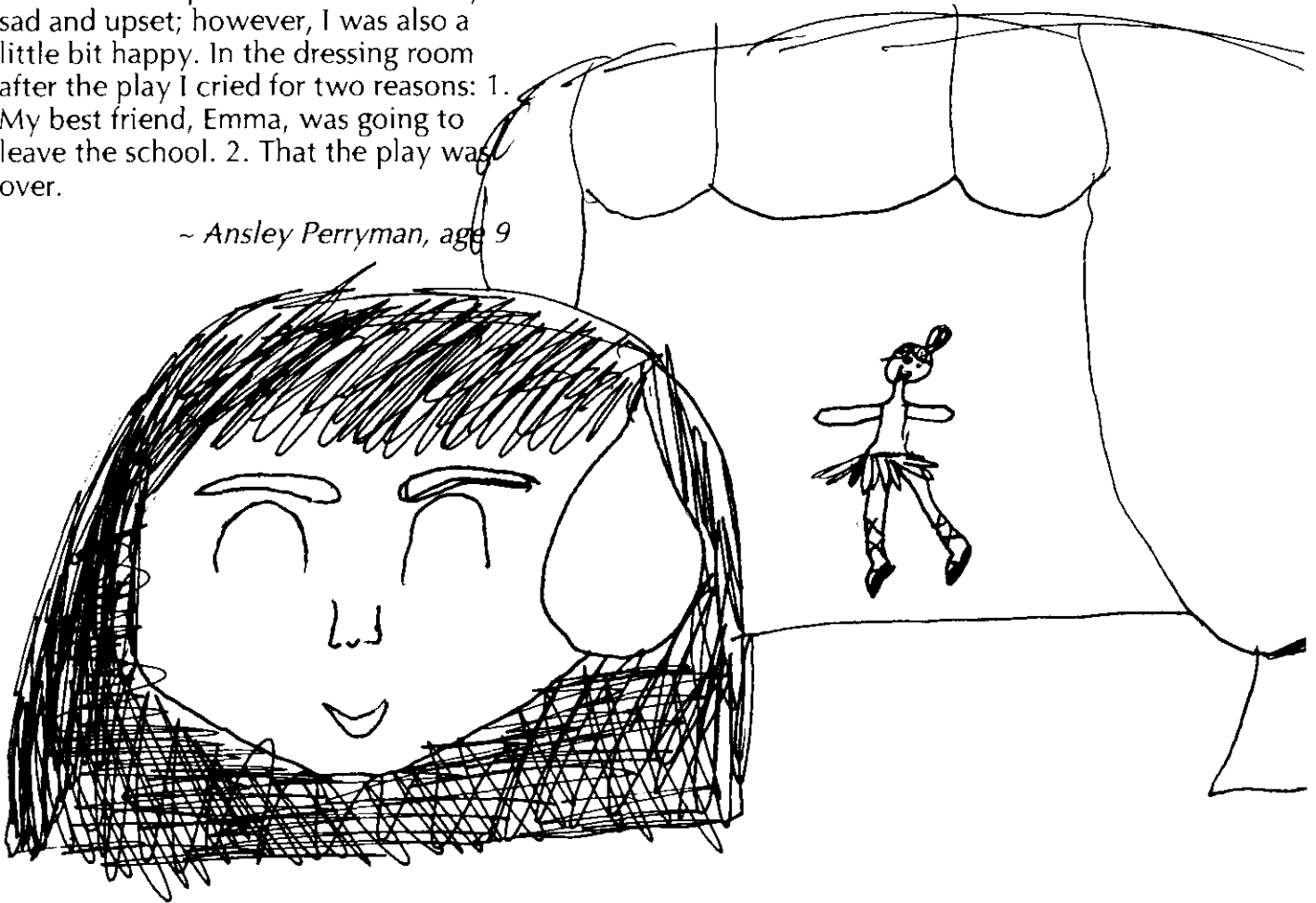
~ Kalyan Narayanan, age 9

On Wednesday I felt very nervous. It was the first time we had performed. Questions were running through my mind: "Would I make a mistake?" "Would I miss a cue?" "Would I forget a dance step?" When I finished my first dance I didn't feel nervous anymore. The dance made me feel confident. After the performance, I felt relaxed because the play was over until the next day. On Thursday I felt a little worried but it didn't even come close to matching up with Wednesday. On Friday I felt a little less worried. And finally, on Saturday I felt relaxed, confident, and happy. I didn't even feel worried.

My favorite lines in the play was "Holding hands and climbing . . . together . . . I see . . . it is God's love that binds our hands together." I found it very touching. Also, I thought it was good because my friend said it with power and exuberance. The most important line in the play was "To God belong the east and the west and wherever you turn there is the face of God." I feel this line is saying God is always with you, God is always in your heart. Shubha, as Hafiz, said this line slowly and with feeling, which just added a "cherry on top." It was a great line made better by her power and feeling.

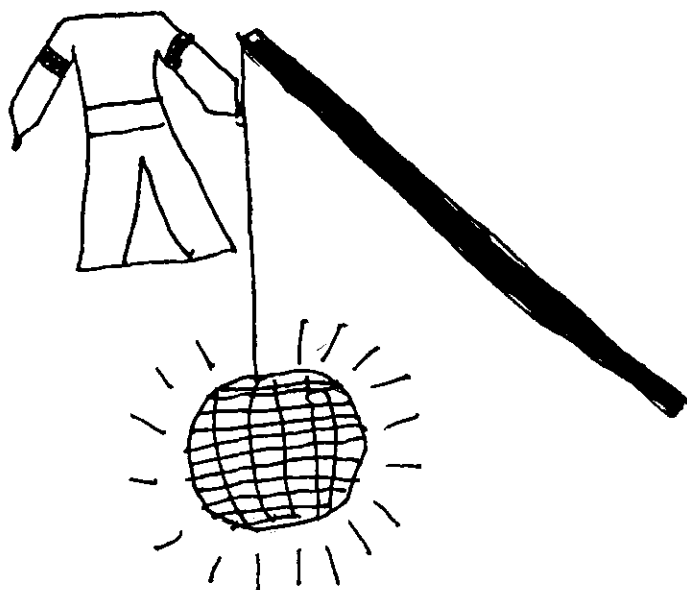
After the final performance I felt very sad and upset; however, I was also a little bit happy. In the dressing room after the play I cried for two reasons: 1. My best friend, Emma, was going to leave the school. 2. That the play was over.

~ Ansley Perryman, age 9



Before the first performance on Wednesday morning I was happy and excited to perform. This year, on the other performances I still felt happy and excited. Each new performance is a new adventure! Sadly, on the last play I felt ill. I didn't think I could perform. However, I performed the war scene and finished the play.

The script this year was well written. My favorite two lines in the play are "The jewel in the eye starts to dance." and "Lanterns of love." I like "The jewel in the eye starts to dance." because it sounds beautiful, like the end of a spell. I like "Lanterns of love" because it brings beautiful images to mind.



My craziest moment in the play was on Friday night after the "Lanterns of Love" poem. I dashed out the door because I was in scene 11A. As soon as I was out the door, I realized it was pouring rain. Only one thing to do- run!

The props, set, and costumes this year were awesome! The props made by Maria were cool! I would really like some of those paper lanterns for my room. The set made by Salvia and her special helpers was spectacular! It would be so fun to jump through the arch and visit the town square then jump back! It was fun to paint the set and the shields for the play. The costumes, whether made by Asha, my Mom, special helpers, or rented, were all cool! My favorite costumes were Shak-e-nabat's and the narrators' costumes. The costumes this year were far from dull!

These are the people I would like to thank: Thank you Asha, Gary, Maria, Salvia, Ruth, Erica, Helen, Adam, Craig, Marguerite, and of course Mathew and all the actors! I would also like to thank Sowmya. She always helped me when I went the wrong way in the Bismala dance. Thank you. This play was very good. The meaning I will take from this play is, "Never give up." After the last play, all I wanted to do was go home. Hooray for the play!

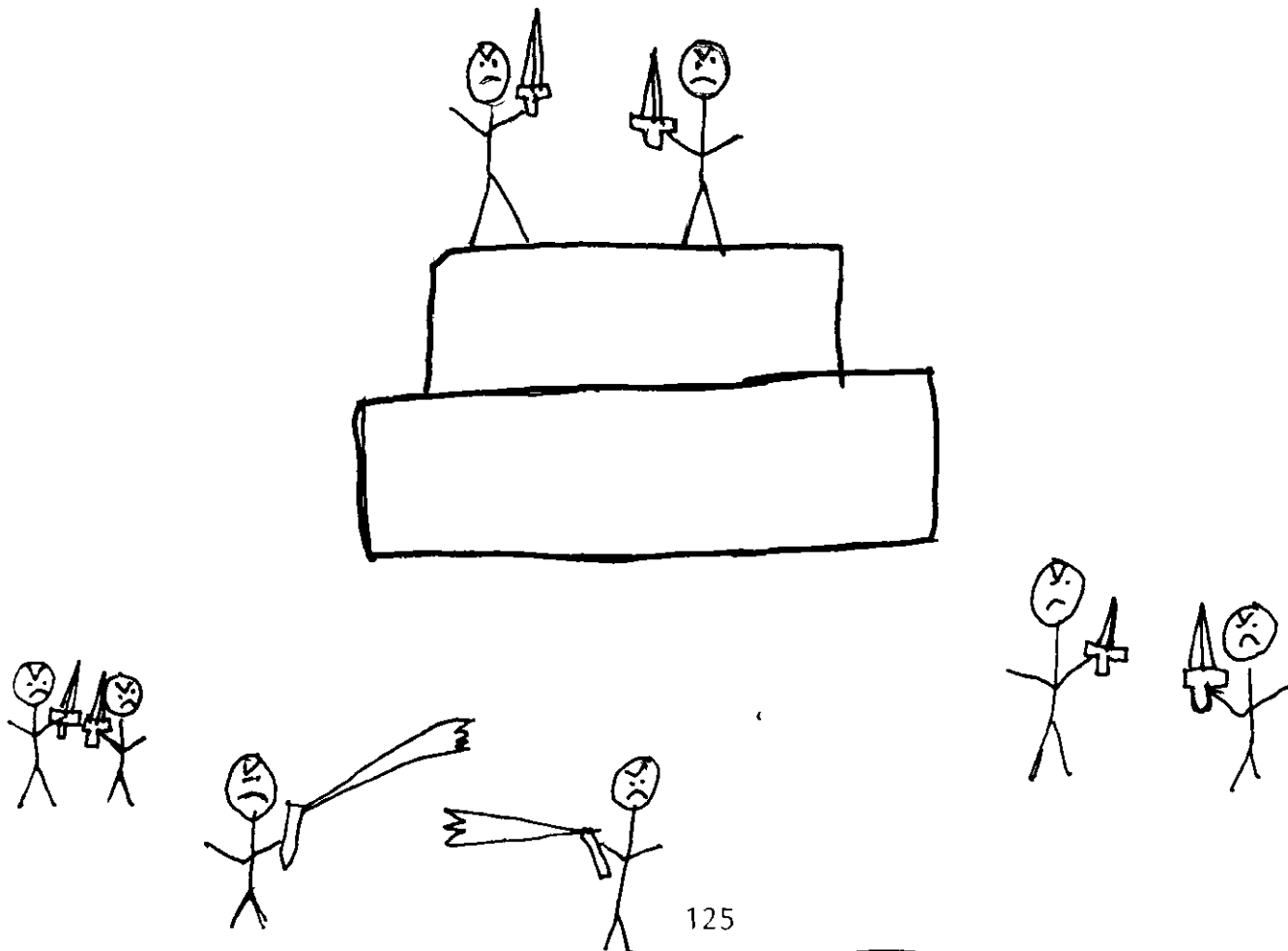
~ Elizabeth Peters, age 11

I was nervous before the first play on Wednesday morning because if I made a mistake, I wouldn't be able to re-do it. I was also glad because we had no more run-throughs or rehearsals. When Wednesday's play was over, I felt excited to perform the next three plays. My favorite performance was Saturday night, because it was the last time the play would be performed. Also, it was my only night performance because I was too sick to perform on Friday night, and it was the only time my family would see me in this play.

I think the most important line in the play was "Once upon a time, long, long ago, the poet we know as Hafiz was born in the city of roses and nightingales, Shiraz, Persia, in the early 1300's, to devout Muslim parents." I think this is the most important line in the play because this was when Hafiz was born; if Hafiz hadn't been born he wouldn't have existed; if he hadn't existed, we wouldn't have this play. Therefore, that is the most important line.

I was really happy after the final performance on Saturday night because I was going to go to get ice cream. Also, we had just finished performing the play for the last time, "Yay!"

~ Charlotte Glen, age 11

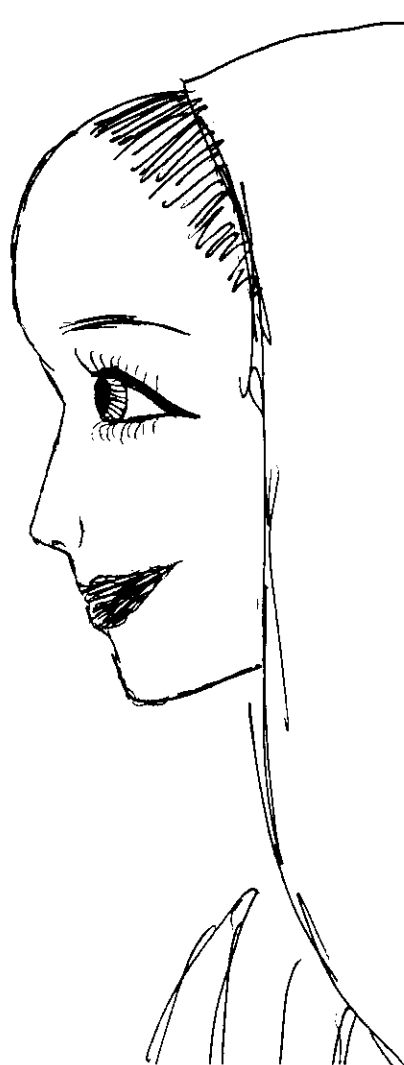


As in previous years, Asha and her friends either rented or made the costumes. The boys' costumes consisted of a white shirt, black pants, and a gold belt. They were distinguished by wearing differently designed hats and different colored belts. The girls' costumes were all individually designed. They were all intricate and beautiful in their own way. Some of them had long, shimmery veils, while others were brightly colored in patterns of leaves and flowers. They were all exquisite. My favorite costume was my own. I loved the mixture of deep green and gold in the fabric. It was so detailed, with a gold ribbon choker, a sparkly gold veil, and a tasseled green-and-gold vest. I also had billowy green pants. I wore my hair in two buns. It looked really cool and medieval under my veil.

On the morning of the first play, I was excited and not at all nervous. In fact, it was hard for me to believe that it was the actual play, and not just a dress rehearsal. It was very exhilarating and fun. I think the first performance was the best one. Everyone was excited and doing their best. In other performances, I felt some of the magic was getting lost. I wasn't as excited about performing.

I loved all the dances because each one had different music and movements. My favorite dance was the All School Dance. Everyone danced together on stage. All the colors of our elaborate costumes made a marvelous effect. I also loved the Nazcan Dance. It was fun to perform with all my best friends.

My favorite scene was the war scene. The effect of all the dark costumes, the red lighting, the music, and weaponry was very dramatic. I also loved how some girls got to stand in the aisle and wave streamers that signified blood and fire. It was spectacular!



I learned a lot of patience from this year's play. We rehearsed many times, especially the poems. Sometimes I had to hold my arms up for a long time. We had to do this in my favorite poem, "Lanterns of Love." All the actors had to hold up their lanterns above their heads. It really made my arms ache. However, all our hard work and the music made this poem one of the most beautiful in the play. I also gained in confidence this year. Usually, I get stage fright before the play, which immediately goes away when I begin acting. This year all I felt was excitement and happiness. This helped me enjoy the experience more thoroughly. I had a lot of fun.

At the end of Saturday's play, one of our best productions, and which a lot of my friends and family attended, I was happy; however I was also very sad. Everyone had worked so hard, it felt tragic that it was over. I know that I'll never experience anything like our Hafiz play ever again. I'm so glad I got to participate in the magic with everyone else who was in it or who watched it.

~ Chloe Christiansen, age 11

Explorers (6th, 7th, & 8th Grades)

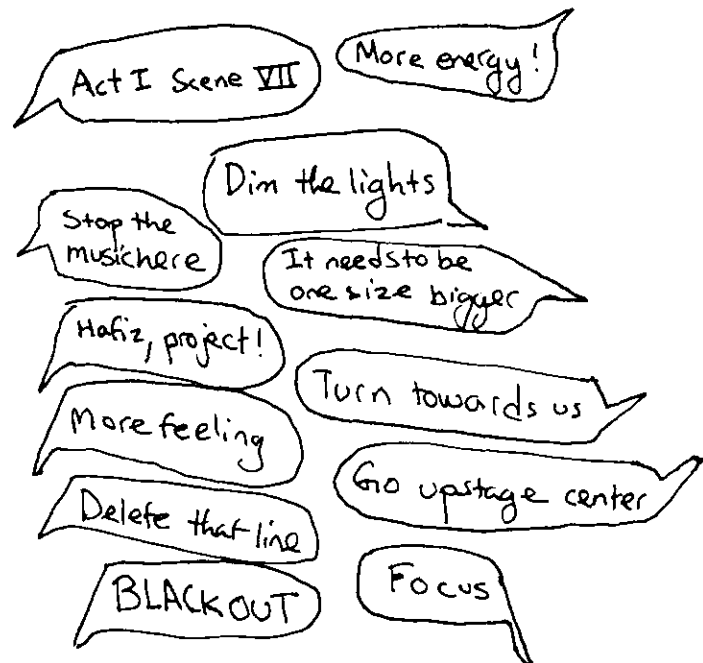
How Does Learning to Act Help in Life?

By Shubha Chakravarty, age 13

Every year, our school does a play about some great human who has made an impact on the world. The play highlights people who are from all over the world, allowing us to learn about a new culture every year. We spend six weeks of our school year working on this production. We give up class time and personal time to make this play the best it can be. But is doing all of this worth it? Why do we spend so much time and energy for a school play? It is because learning how to act in theater is an amazing skill that can open up opportunities for the future.

Public speaking and stage confidence are two of the many life skills that make a huge difference in life. Participating in a play helps give you these skills. In recognition of this, all UC colleges now require one year of performing arts in high school. This is also one of the reasons all students from Pre-K to 8th grade participate in our productions. This allows for exposure to these experiences at a young age. As we go through more and more plays, our stage confidence increases and our ability to speak to a large group of people grows. Whether it is giving a presentation at school, or leading a team of workers at work, throughout life, situations come in which we must talk to a large number of people.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, "Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand." This means that the best way to learn and understand something deeply is to experience it. One of the main goals of our productions is to help the actors and actresses learn about the time, culture, and politics of the main characters. By playing a part in a play of a 1300's Persian poet, we begin to learn and understand what the Persian civilization was like in that time. In 20 years, I may or may not remember that $a^2+b^2=c^2$, but I will remember the troubles the blacks went through during the Civil Rights Movement, and what Martin Luther King Jr. did to help them because of the play we enacted on his life.



While it is true that we put quite a lot of time into the play, our school academics continue, and when possible revolve around the play. During the Hafiz play, we did research about Persia and Islam. Studying this broadened our knowledge for the play, and, in return, the play helped us understand what we were studying -- a win/win!

The play goes hand in hand with academics in some surprising ways. For example, class and rehearsal go on simultaneously. We can be sitting in a Spanish class, when all of a sudden, a voice comes on the intercom saying, "I need all the actors for Act one, Scene

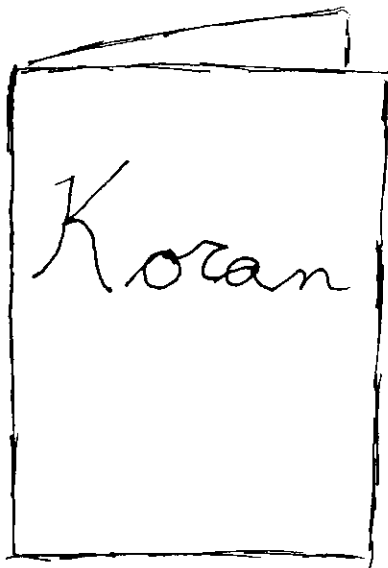
seven." We stop what we are doing and quietly leave the classroom and head over to the theater. In the theater, we bare our souls. The director always asks for more energy, more projection, and more feeling. Then the scene is over and we run back to class bursting with adrenaline, only to sit down in a chair and quietly listen to what is happening. To do this at a young age takes tremendous control both mentally and physically. Learning how to do this increases self-control and calmness, two hugely important qualities.

In the end, is giving up a little class time really giving up academics? I believe that in doing the play we learn more than we could otherwise imagine. We learn things that we may not understand by reading a chapter in a book, things that will go with us even as we grow and leave this school. This is the exact reason our school does these plays; in order to provide education for life.

The Ways of the Play

By Kelly Olivier, age 14

It was very interesting to be a part of this year's play about the Persian poet, Hafiz. This is my first and only year at Living Wisdom School, because I came as an eighth grader, so I only get to do the play once. Even so, I can attest to the fact that the plays at my other schools pale in comparison to an LWS production. It felt wonderful to be a part of something that was of such excellent quality, to watch other actors try to express their parts, and to learn the Sufi style of dance and music. Having my grandma come to help teach the dances and to refine them was especially fun. All in all, I enjoyed everything, because it is amazing to see something so rough become polished.



For me, the most inspiring part of the play was the disciple dance. When Marguerite, our dance instructor, was casting the dances, everybody wanted to be in the disciple/ dervish dance. After they were about two weeks into practicing it, I asked Marguerite if I could be a part of the dance. I didn't have a character in the play, but I had some poetry, and I was in almost every dance. I am very good at spinning, and she figured out that it would be very interesting to add me in. She said yes, and added me in as the lead disciple. It was complicated, and it took us a while to get it right. When my grandma came to rehearsal and watched us practice, she gave us very helpful advice. She said that while we are spinning, we should look at the place where the walls meet the ceiling and keep our elbows straight. When I followed her suggestions, it was very meditative and calming. I can now understand how a practiced dervish can spin for half an hour and not get too dizzy or tired. When we got it right and were dressed in full costume, it had an otherworldly quality to it. When my parents watched the play, they said that having me come in right before the dance started added an interesting aspect to the dance. They said that it made them think, "Who's that girl?" when I came in. Out of everything, that was my favorite part in the whole play.

In the play you don't only learn on the stage, but you also learn off the stage. My teacher, Gary, assigned each of us a topic that had to do with the history behind the play. I did my report on Modern Sufism in America, while someone else did theirs on Persia in the 1300s. Listening to all the middle schoolers give their reports on Sufism helped me to learn more about Sufis, their history and where they come from. Sufi art is beautiful and a lot of it has a spiritual aspect to it. When Max did his presentation on Sufi art we noticed that many pieces of their art have wings of some kind in them sometimes on a bird or hidden in the background. Our teacher showed us a video about the culture and practices of modern day Iran. I didn't really know anything about Persia and the Middle East before this, and the play really allowed me to expand my knowledge in that area.

This play and all the rehearsals have helped me with public speaking. I noticed that after we performed the play, I was much more comfortable with speaking louder on stage, and I now do a much better job of speaking in front of the class. This will help me my whole life when I have to get up in front of people and tell them my ideas or present information.

I deeply enjoyed being part of a play that was so well executed, from the costumes, to the set, to the lighting and sound. This play has taught me important skills, and it has expanded my knowledge of Middle Eastern culture, art and religion. I really wish that I could have been in this school longer to be in more of the plays and because the kids and teachers are all wonderful and energetic.

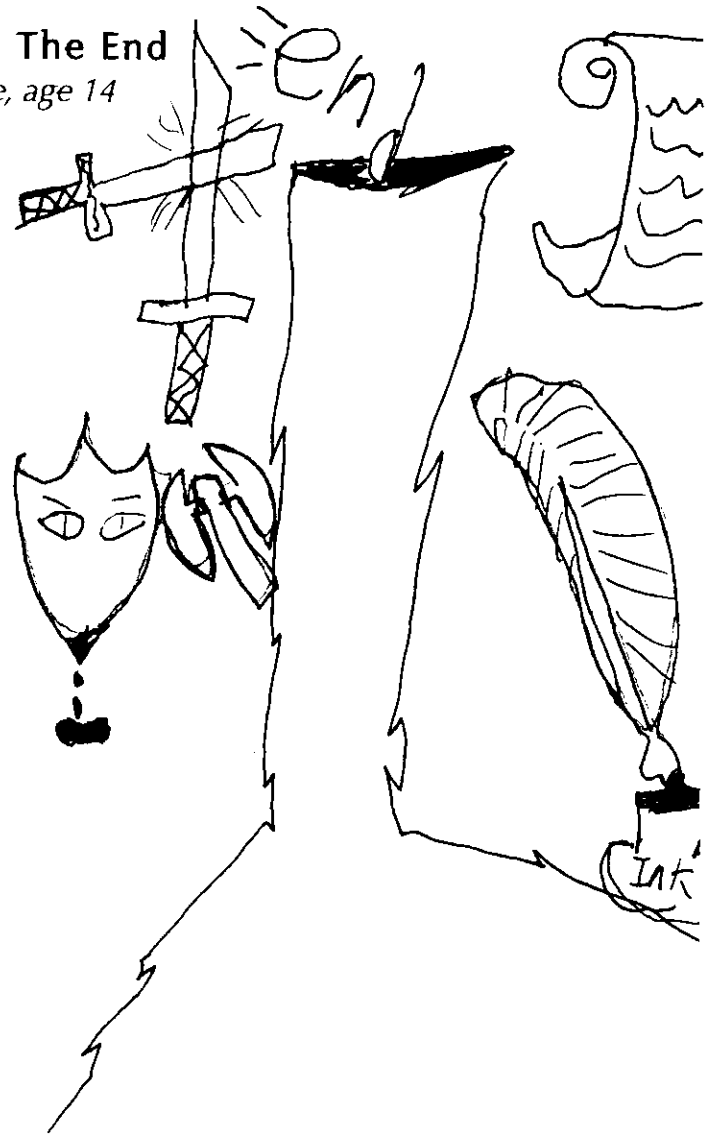
War, Poetry, and The End

By Adam Larrimore, age 14

How Do "War, Poetry, and The End" come together like salt and pepper on fried eggs? The answer lies in the details of the experience of this year's play on Hafiz, a 14th century Persian poet.

I mention the war scene or the final bow because they were my favorite part of the play. I chose the war scene first because I really FELT it. The loud music, the good acting, dazzling lights, exquisite sound, including Matthew's well timed passionate striking of the gong, all came together in that one scene, and I think it blew the audience away. It sure did strike fear inside of me and got the point across about what was happening in Hafiz' times. I think the scene was the best one I have been involved in.

On the other hand, the final bow on the last night was amazing. People in the audience went berserk! This was a very, very, very deeply satisfying moment in my life. Having 300 people clapping, cheering, whistling, and smiling for me and my fellow actors is a truly divine feeling that everyone should experience at least once in their life. The whole experience was delicious.



The poetry too, was a divine experience. My favorite poem in this year's play was "The Small Man Builds Cages."

The Small Man
Builds cages for everyone he knows
While the sage,
Who has to duck his head
When the moon is low,
Keeps dropping keys all night long
For the beautiful, rowdy prisoners.

To me, "The Small Man" represents a wealthy businessman who is building cages for his employees that keep them from seeing God. He works them long hours, tells them to keep their minds on making money, and keeps everyone working hard doing his corrupted business. But the sage comes along, and he is very aware of these types of situations, and maybe he wants to bring God's message to earth and free people from their cages, telling them there is hope and that they should keep following the path that God has given them. That is what this poem means to me.

I feel that you cannot take in these poems in one brief reading. You have to read them many times, ponder, and see old meanings in new light. You should take a few minutes and look above at this wonderful poem and try to absorb it again and again to try to understand the truer, fuller meaning. It might open an inner door within your heart and you might not like what you see, but isn't that the beginning of change? At first, I thought how weird to have a man building cages. Then I thought about what the poem was saying metaphorically and how the small man was not keeping people in actual cages but was keeping them in a spiritual prison. He was keeping people from seeing God or a higher Being. In other words, the man was preventing people from having hope or faith.

Surprisingly for this year's play, I was not nervous one bit. As I looked out at all the people in the audience, my brain didn't say, "Oh God, all those people are looking at me!" nor did it tell my palms to get sweaty and clammy and my knees to bend and shake in fear. Instead my brain said, "Hey, whatever." I was still acting with all my might, but my brain's nervous part just did not kick in like it has in the past. I think this calm energy came in part from the fact I played the head role of Hafiz. I tried to fully absorb his character into myself and to be calm. It worked very well.

This year's play was the best play for me because I felt a deep connection with the script. It had real meaning for me. It was more than just a play.

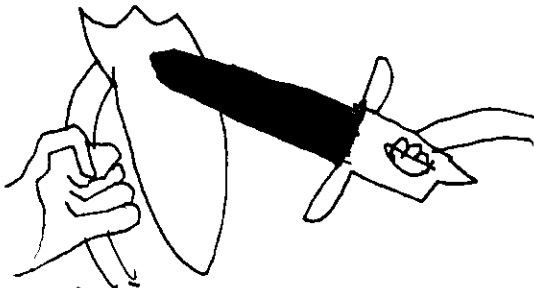
Hafiz: A Man With Many Words

By Kieran Rege, age 14

Our play process went very well this year. We spent hours having rehearsals, setting up props, adjusting the lights, synchronizing the sound system, and memorizing our cues. Thankfully, it paid off. All of this hard work resulted in a memorable and very well done theater production on *The Life Of Hafiz: The 13th Century Persian Poet*.

The play process always starts with the exhilaration of seeing the scripts for the first time. You can't help but wonder what part you're going to have. Not only that, but you realize that whatever part you play, it will end up being something you'll have to be committed to for over a month and a half. I always become curious about how it might

change as the play process goes on. When I looked in my script for the first time, I found out that I was one of the many narrators of the play, as well as the father of Hafiz. Some additional dancing parts were assigned to me later on, and I have to be committed to every single part.



Next would come rehearsals, which end up being the most unpredictable part of the whole play process. Things change constantly, but thankfully it's for the better. Parts can get changed around, scenes can be rearranged, and parts can even be cut (although I've never seen that actually happen before). Scheduling can also get sketchy. Some scene rehearsals can happen over twenty minutes past the intended time. Dress rehearsals can also happen at times that we didn't originally plan. While it may not feel like all of these sudden changes can lead to a great actual performance, it actually does.

The actual performances are exhilarating, and that can unfortunately lead to some problems. The amount of energy in these plays can make some of the kids get a little hyper, which makes it harder to control their own energy. Sometimes it can even be hard for me, but I manage to get through it. I find it really helpful to imagine that there is no one in the audience. Besides, when it comes the theater arts, you need to be focused in order to have any fun at all. I have found that very helpful in my five years of doing theater production at LWS. Every year, the Saturday night performance ends up being slightly out of control because it always has the biggest audience, but by working together, we pull through and we have so much fun.

The Living Wisdom School theater productions are easily my highlight of the year. I have so much fun performing them. Sure, during rehearsals, I felt stressed at times and nervous that I might not be able to pull myself together. But that's how theater works. The important thing is that I didn't stop giving it my all. When it comes to theater arts, if there are no bumps, there won't be any magic.

Play Process:Garland :: Parts:Flowers

By Sowmya Chandrasekaran, age 13

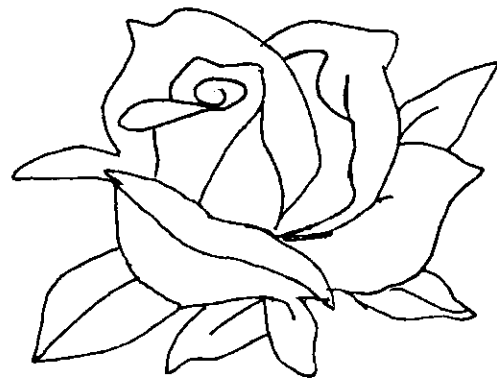
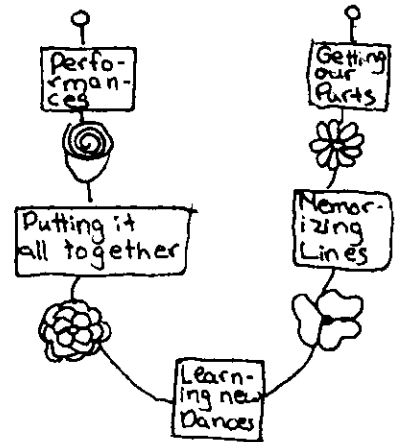
The play process is like a garland, each flower a step towards completion. The first flower you string on is the first time you read your lines. The second flower is when you start memorizing. As the garland grows, so does the play process. Before you know it, half of the garland is finished, and the play is halfway to completion. A month goes by, and "Poof!" The dances, poems, props, costumes, and everything else is finally in order, and the once empty garland is full of gorgeous flowers, each one making a difference. I had many favorite flowers on my play garland as we prepared this year's play on Hafiz, the great Persian poet, but if I had to pick one, I would probably pick learning the new

dances. The dances were gorgeous, and all the spinning made the shining costumes sprinkle shimmers all over the stage. However, as similar as the messages of our annual play might be, every type of dance that we do for these plays is always creatively different; that's what makes it so much fun to learn them!

This year's play garland was overflowing with all sorts of beautiful poems: happy poems, love poems, sad poems and wise poems. The poems that I understood were so cleverly composed, often disguised behind metaphors. One of my favorite poems was, "The Small Man Builds Cages". It was much easier to understand, compared to the other poems and had a rather witty meaning. I think that the small man is a person with a lot of ego, and so he tells everyone what to do and how to do it. However the sage knows what everybody is capable of and so he gives the imprisoned people a key at night to free themselves. In a way, I think that the poem delivers the message of how oppressive some people can be.

The hardest flower to weave into the garland was my balcony scene. When I first started out with my lines, they sounded bland and void of feelings; however, they ended up better than I had hoped, because of my friend Shubha's help. Ever since she found out I had trouble with the balcony scene and with putting feelings into my lines, she took her recess, lunch, and other free time to help me get it right. I admire her patience with me, as I think that it is a quality that is necessary for anyone who helps others with theatre arts, especially when it comes to putting in feelings. She was an example to me, because she showed whatever she told me to do with my lines, in her own lines. Out of everything else that I've done in past school plays, the balcony scene was a breakthrough-experience for me.

All in all, this year's play process was something that I really enjoyed. It was full of meaning, dedication, love, and peace. Hafiz showed great respect to his God after his sincerity led the way to true devotion through poetry. Something that I might take from this play into life would probably be that to accomplish anything, there must be true devotion to whatever it is that you're doing. Hafiz was devoted to writing poems, not just for the amusement of his Shah and other people, but to cover a deeper, hidden meaning inside. All of the flowers in the garland took time to bloom, but when they did, the garland became a gem!!!



Theater Magic Made Possible

By Mariah Stewart, age 13

Every year, Living Wisdom School plays are better than the last. Our play this year about Hafiz has certainly outdone all the previous plays in my time at Living Wisdom School. Matthew Sloan, our director, plus the actors' teamwork and focus made this play a success. Matthew asked us to give it our all and to go beyond our limits and comfort zone to feel as if we were all living in Hafiz's lifetime. I was asked to not only say my lines, but to believe that they were truly my own words. In our play, *The Subject Tonight is Love*, we gave it our all.

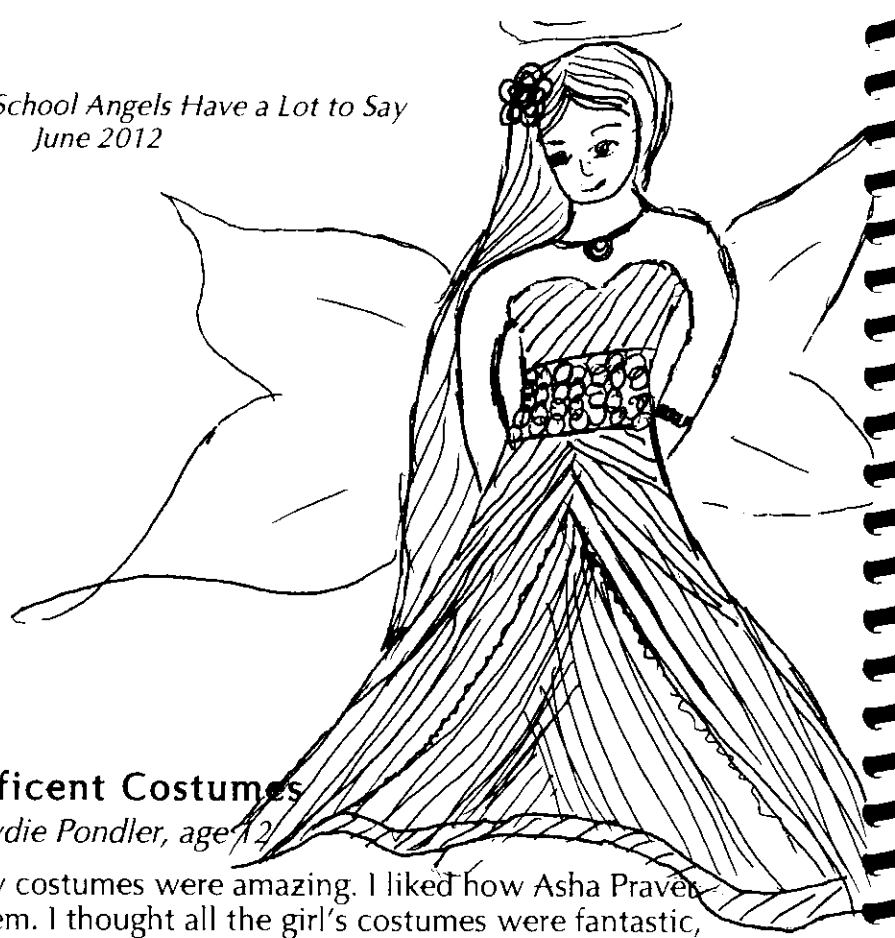
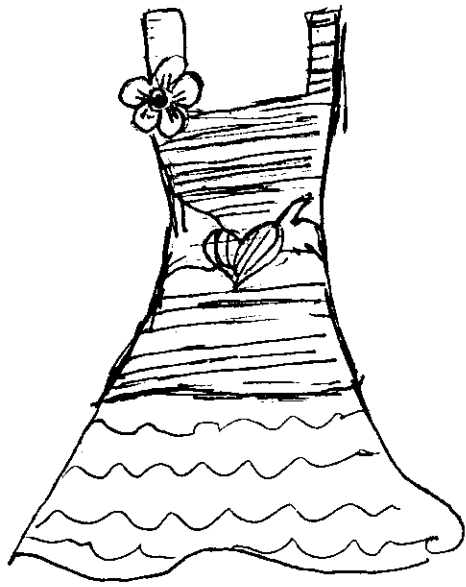
"Take it from the top." These are words all actors would hear over and over again from our director Matthew. Matthew has an incredible amount of patience as he teaches us actors to be in character and take on all aspects of the play process. As Mavash, Hafiz's wife, I had to let go of all tensions. Matthew worked with me even right before a show to help me relax, to do even better than before. Sometimes to help us perform better, Matthew encouraged us to relate some of our parts to our own experiences. However, I had never experienced war in my life, which made things a little more complicated. Still, I pictured myself in the situation to try to see how I might have reacted, felt and carried my body as Mavash. By the time I got onto the stage, I felt as if the story were actually happening to me. I think this made my performance more vivid and true and helped the audience truly experience Hafiz's life.

Whenever I act, I try to convey the deepest meaning possible. When I recite the poems I am in, I put as much emotion and feeling as possible into it because that is when the audience can start to understand the deeper meaning of it. As an actor, that is what I strive for. I strive for audience members coming away from a play and saying, "Wow, I really got something from that." Once I have done this, I have accomplished my mission.



The teamwork that went into this play was very heartfelt and supportive. Sometimes it took the form of a comforting word, but sometimes it involved going the extra mile, reminding someone about a prop or line. For example, on a dark and stormy performance night, as we made our way in costume to the theater, one of my schoolmates shared her umbrella with me. Sometimes teamwork means rearranging a hairpin or skirt that isn't in the right place, or helping with costume changes to make the transition as smooth as possible. One of my friends had to wear a huge afghan for one scene and take it off immediately after. My friends and I were there to help her get ready for her next dance. Without teamwork, this wouldn't be half the play it is.

Underlying the success of our plays is the fact that we all put out energy. Swami Kriyananda wrote a book called *Education for Life* where he states in his preface that when you put out energy and try your hardest, there will be rewards. This play is just one example of his philosophy. His advice applies to many things in life. I am so grateful that I have experienced the truth of this principle. Learning this now has been a great gift.



Magnificent Costumes

By Jeydie Pondler, age 12

This year's Living Wisdom School play costumes were amazing. I liked how Asha Praveen puts all her hard work into making them. I thought all the girl's costumes were fantastic, but I liked the boy's too.

For example, the angel costume that Jeannessa wore was sparkly. When the mirror ball was turned on it showed a lot of inspiring light and sparkles and made me want to be an angel! Mariah's costume was stellar. Her costume was a golden yellow, and it shone on stage. She looked so dazzling that it would make any girl want to wear her costume.

I like how Asha makes the design match the colors of the costumes and the headdresses. She always puts something on the costume that will make it interesting. She puts a scarf to make the costume come out more so they grab the attention of the audience. Her art would make someone want to wear that costume.

I thought Asha did a fabulous job on my costume. I wore a skirt that was a soft cream gold with a top with sparkles around my neck. They blended perfectly together. I also like the headpiece that came with my costume because it fit in with the other part of my costume and my radiant color skin.

I like how she turned costumes from previous plays into this year's costumes so the school can save a lot of money. I think this is a really great idea, and I would do the same. Also I like how she makes some amazing hats out of simple fabric – dark green and white.

When I grow up I want to be a fashion designer like Asha or design costumes for plays. I have a really hard time figuring out how to put my outfit together each morning. This shows how much I care about fashion. Something that inspires me to get into fashion is the variety – from sparkly to plain, from pinkish to blue. I would enjoy doing boy's costumes, too. I enjoy the costumes that Asha made, and I really appreciate all the hard work that goes into them. Thanks to her we have amazing costumes for our plays.