



WEEK OF MARCH 15, 2010

Shawnigan Parent News



Photo: *Kiss Me, Kate*. For more photos and stories, go to <http://www.shawnigan.ca/now>

The School Musical and Beyond!

As we all head off to different points on the globe this March Break, many of us will do so whistling a tune from last week's musical. The success of a Shawnigan musical is ensured only through the work of many committed students and adults for many months. This issue of Shawnigan Parent News is dedicated to everyone in our community who helped stage *Kiss Me, Kate*, be they sport coaches or teachers who patiently gave in to musical scheduling changes, or parents who contributed by making special plans for their actors, traveled to see the show, or helped "backstage."

The ultimate guarantee of a great show, of course, is in the quality of the actors. We congratulate all of our cast, and offer here a profile of the two leads. As our actors take a well-deserved break, we call your attention to the various student groups who are on tour and invite you to check our Internet site for updates from Thailand, the UK and Argentina, as they become available. Visit www.shawnigan.ca for news from abroad.

Student Profile – Amanda D. '10 (Strathcona)

Following her wonderful performance as Lilly Vanessi/Katherine in *Kiss Me, Kate*, Amanda reminisced about past Shawnigan roles. "I arrived at Shawnigan in grade 10 and took on the role of Miss Sarah Brown in *Guys and Dolls* and the next year played Miss Dorothy Brown in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. After those two "Brown" and rather understated roles, Amanda was due a new colour of character. This year, she shone brilliantly as the vibrant and defiant, Lilly Vanessi.

"The best thing about my role was that it was a new one for me. Lilly and Kate are both so headstrong. I loved working with Jeff (Fred Graham/Petruchio), too. He and I both want to become professionals so that really helped with the chemistry between us on stage. Jeff is a great guy and sometimes he is almost as effusive as the character he plays! All the leads for this show were great to work with and we got very close as the play moved toward production."

Amanda has enjoyed working with Gregg Perry and Shannon Bryant as well. "I've worked with Mr. Perry for three years and his vision is always certain—he lets us know what he wants, but gives us leeway to find our own way into our character. He really listens to us.

"Mrs. Bryant is an amazing teacher and singing coach. She has influenced my singing tremendously over the last two years. She has been instrumental in my success singing in German, one of my biggest hurdles so far." Amanda's singing recently earned her five first placements in the Cowichan Music Festival and an invitation to sing at the gala concert. "I sing in several languages and styles, but my favourite language to sing in is French."

Amanda plans to attend university next fall and continue operatic training. In five years, she says, "I see myself (hopefully) on stage in London." That's a long way from her hometown of Jasper, AB!

Amanda's parents supported her when she told them she wanted to come to Shawnigan and, Amanda says, they are happy to support her in following her dreams further. For now though, Amanda plans to enjoy the last couple of months at school concentrating on academics and enjoying more time with the girls in Strathcona.

Student Profile – Jeffrey T. '10 (Copeman's)

Anyone who has seen Shawnigan Musicals for the past four years will appreciate Jeff's roles. He brings such enthusiasm and joy to the stage that he is impossible to miss! J.C. Squires in *Music Man*, Nicely-Nicely Johnson in *Guys and Dolls*, the unforgettable Mrs. Meers in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and Jamie in *The Last Five Years* make up his Shawnigan stage history. What better way to cap

Upcoming Events:

- March 19** March Break begins
- April 5** March Break ends
- April 24-25** Leave Weekend
- June 5-6** Leave Weekend

For more **travel information** and a link to **next year's calendar** go to: www.shawnigan.ca/now/travel-information

off his high school career than with the captivating Fred Graham/Petruchio role in *Kiss, Me Kate*?

Now that the production is over, Jeff relates that, "Fred Graham allowed me to be very self-centred on stage and to exploit the narcissist within. This was a very conceited character. I'm not sure whether he did love Lilly, or just the idea of it—the play had many unresolved issues. Working with Amanda (Lilly Vanessi/Katherine) was so much fun. She is so talented and it is great to work with someone who has the same energy level and who has the same ambitions. The whole cast was amazing and we became very close during the 4-day musical camp."

One aspect of musical theatre Jeff wishes he had done more of at Shawnigan was dance. His roles have not called for a lot of footwork. "I always wanted to do a dance-heavy show." Jeff has spent many of his holidays honing his dancing skills with private dance lessons in preparation for university auditions. "I haven't received acceptances yet, but have auditioned for two universities (NYU and Syracuse) before the Olympic break and two others (Carnegie Mellon and UCLA) during the break. My audition program consisted of two songs and two monologues as well as a ballet combo and Jazz combo dance. The dancing was generally performed in groups of 3 or 4 with a bit of rehearsal time beforehand. It was hard, but a lot of fun, too."

Jeff would like to thank Mr. Perry for all his support in the musical fine art. "I have learned a lot about myself as an actor and I couldn't have done it without him." Mrs. Bryant has also "been there" for Jeff, "...since the third day of grade nine. She has helped me grow as a singer and really, as a person, and I am going to miss her so much next year. Mrs. Bryant is like a combination sister and mother, so I guess she is like a really cool aunt!"

Thanking his parents for giving him the opportunity to come to Shawnigan and for supporting and recognizing his talent is important to Jeff. "I am so grateful to them for seeing that I wasn't going to be tops in sports or academics and for encouraging me to pursue theatre." Although Jeff's hometown is Lafayette, CA, his parents have been able to see every one of his performances at every show while at Shawnigan. Apparently they even help with set breakdown after the show!

Jeff feels that, despite the extra work of moving the set to Duncan and back, it is worthwhile performing on the Cowichan Theatre Stage. "It makes the musical that much more special for the actors and a more exciting endeavour to take it off campus and into the larger community. It really gives you more of a professional feeling. Getting ourselves onto the bus and traveling to the show, putting ourselves out there for a wide audience, is wonderful. After all, high school lighting is not as bright as professional stage lights!"

No matter where he goes to University next fall, in five years Jeff sees himself standing under the bright lights somewhere, "...acting on Broadway in an ensemble part or in Hollywood acting on a TV series."