

***Candide* and the 2013 Drama Festival**

- Alex Kerai

At its core, Drama Fest is a fun, collaborative and exciting day of theatre filled with hundreds of students from around the state who have been going through just as many rehearsals as everyone else has and are anxious to show off their work. Since everyone understands the time and effort that goes into creating a Drama Fest show, there is a greater appreciation for everyone else's work. As MHS's technical director Greg Dana said, "The actors felt each other's pain for the other performances [that we saw] because you knew that it could have just as well been you."

For Drama Fest 2013, Marblehead High School performed its own adaptation of Voltaire's novella *Candide*, which was written by MHS students and directed by Steve Black, with assistance from Chris Martel. It was technically directed by Greg Dana. Stage management was done by Max Levine and Biz Nuccio. Lighting design was by Alex Kerai, sound design and composition by Addy Sleeman, with the sound board run by Baie Rogers. Set design was completed by students from various art classes. The cast included Andrew Dalton (*Candide*), Joe Boyce (*Pangloss*), Tatiana Dalton (*Old Woman*), Annie Krivit (*Cunegonde*), Malachi Rosen (*Brother of Cunegonde*), and Lauren Nohelty (*Paquette*), along with a large ensemble comprised of students from all grades.

Marblehead High School had the honor of hosting the preliminary round to Saugus, Peabody, Salem, B.C. /Newton Country Day, Malden Catholic, Austin Prep, and Covenant Christian Academy high schools. This involved a lot of extra hours and planning for the Festival Staff, which was all coordinated by Biz Nuccio and assisted by staff members Baie Rogers, festival stage managers Elizabeth Payne and Emily Kauffman, and myself, who had to assist the other schools at the Performing Arts Center (PAC) for their tech hour. During that hour stage managers from the school would mark the stage where they wanted to place props and put actors while actors worked on projection, and the tech crew worked on sound and lighting design. And finally, after months of preparation, came Drama Fest...

During the day of the preliminary round of Drama Fest, I got to see all eight shows. They all were incredible! To witness the time and effort that every person (cast and crew) put into the show is great, and it creates a wonderful result. *Candide* director Steve Black said that "the opportunity for so many students to create art, collaborate, and foster friendships was completely worthwhile. I am proud of the festival we hosted and proud to be a part of a community that supports arts education for our own students and others."

The shows that we, the *Candide* cast and crew, watched during the preliminary round were excellent. We all were thoroughly impressed with the quality of work that had been produced, but as MHS advanced to the semi-final round, we were curious to see the magnificent shows that were to be performed Saturday, March 9, at St. John's Prep.

After moving on from the preliminary round of Drama Fest, MHS had one week to to prepare for the semi-final round and to adapt *Candide* to fit the Prep's stage. There was lighting, blocking,

entrances and exits that all needed to be adjusted in order for the show to work. It was a stressful week of planning and execution, but we did it. We were all proud of our work and anxious to experience the semi-finals, something MHS had not competed in since 2011. The shows that we saw at the semi-finals were some of the best we had ever seen. The acting and execution of every show was brilliant, leaving us all thoroughly impressed by all the work we saw that day. Still, the spirit of Drama Fest was there with everyone congratulating one another on a job well done after they finished. Sadly, MHS did not move on from the semi-final round at St. John's, but MHS did win acting and production awards during both rounds of the festival.

Marblehead High School's production of *Candide* won a total of five awards for all star acting and student achievement. These were awarded to: Tatiana Dalton (two-time winner) for her portrayal of the Old Woman, Annie Krivit for her role as Cunegonde, Andrew Dalton for his interpretation of Candide, Joe Boyce for his role as Pangloss, and Kyra Jones for prop management. The judges complimented the actors of *Candide* for their energy and enthusiasm for the show. But the final takeaway from the two nonstop weeks of theatre, and months of rehearsal beforehand, is the experience. The fact that everyone in Drama Fest has so much fun and is so nice to one another is great. As tech director Greg Dana said, "You got to see twelve other shows from other high schools, and you were able to self-evaluate your performance as well as others." He continued summarizing the events of the past months by saying, "It's not the winning, it's the experience."

Alex Kerai was the lighting designer and board operator for Candide and part of the Festival Staff.