

## **Los Alamitos' Captivating Comedic Production of "Puffs"!**

by Ariana Gomez, a sophomore at Tesoro High School

"Puffs" by Matt Cox is the story of Wayne Hopkins, attending a Certain School of Magic and Magic. Over seven years, Wayne learns what it means to be sorted as a Puff.

Throughout the show, Wayne (Jack Hardwick) meets memorable characters like Leanne (Addie Schumacher). Addie Schumacher brings Leanne's vibrant energy to life with bold physicality. For example, in year seven, she cartwheels and spins to strike down the death buddies around her. While drunk on Adult Buttered Beverage, Addie Schumacher dances animatedly and unabashedly out in the house.

Other notable characters in "Puffs" include Mr. Voldy (Nathan Spolter). Nathan Spolter projects a smoky diva-like voice that suits Mr. Voldy's personality. During his announcement in year seven, he employs dramatic tones that captivate the students' attention. Also, his sauntering strides in year five portray Mr. Voldy's self-confidence perfectly.

The ensemble has great comedic timing, like when they exclaim "Hi!" and wave their flags in sync. They explore their emotions more profoundly as years go by, though their grief over Cedric only ever surfaces for a few moments. Some actors' eyes are very expressive, while others rely solely on their voices to convey emotion.

Although "Puffs" is a prop-heavy show, prop masters Olivia Graser and Sarah Roudabush design all 150 props superbly. Using yellow flags for the Puff signature item showcases their enthusiastic personalities. A red mop that stands in for Ron serves as comedic relief in every scene it appears.

Sound and lighting designers Fabrizio Cuevas and Shilah Shurki take the 500+ tech cues in stride. The whooshes sound in sync with each wand movement, even in complex scenes like the death buddies chase. Despite occasional mic bumps in Act 1, the background sounds and action onstage remain undisturbed. Lighting color changes clarify the setting. For instance, the train station begins lit by warm yellow lights, but stark white lighting later marks the train station as the afterlife. Collaboration between light and sound elements creates a truly immersive experience throughout the entire show.

"Puffs" is about learning to accept yourself and your role --whatever size-- in the story of life. Distinctive, memorable characters in all roles show that everyone has a little important and unimportant inside; what matters is what you make of your life, not your importance.