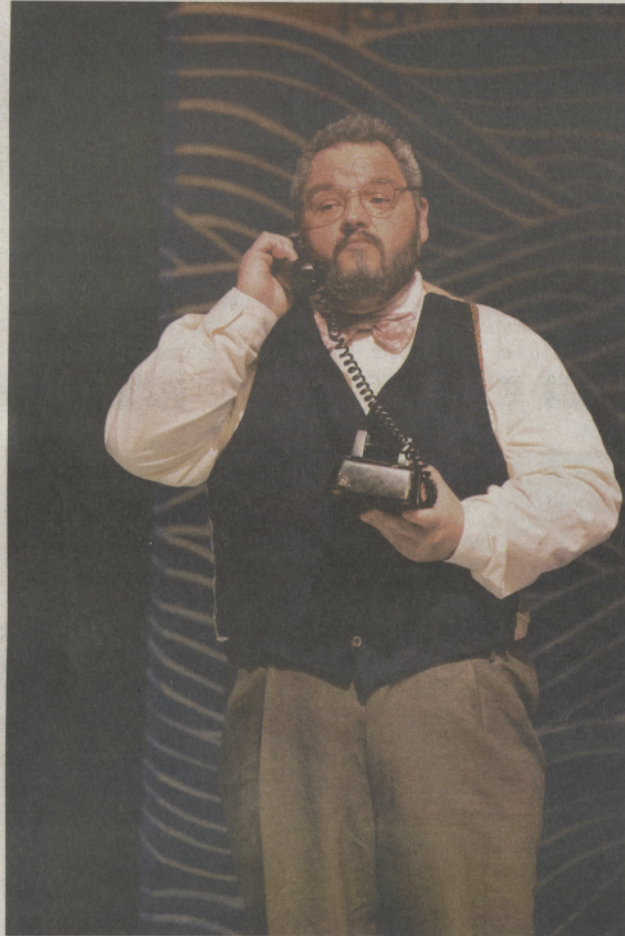


Count your lucky stars

Student production reflects the bravery of children during the Holocaust

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Above: Matt Mazza, who plays Papa Johansen, speaks on the telephone.
Photo Credit: Joseph Lohmolder

Clackamas Community College's theater department staged Lois Lowry's "Number the Stars." Thirteen performers told the story of Annemarie and Kristi Johansen, two young girls seeking refuge for their Jewish friends and family during the Nazi occupation of Denmark in World War II.

Matt Mazza, a CCC student, portrayed the role of Papa Johansen, Annemarie and Kristi's father. He also played the role of an unnamed German SS officer. Papa Johansen's clear goal is to protect his family, and to keep the devastating knowledge of what's actually happening at the time from his two young daughters. Of course, the SS officers goal is much the opposite – to scare and frighten the family.

Mazza said it can be challenging swapping between such polar opposite characters, but there are tricks he utilized to stay in character.

"I try to think of how I need to impact the person I'm in the scene with," Mazza said. "I'm trying to think of what I hope their reaction is going to be."

In 2019, Oregon passed a new law that requires schools to teach about the Holocaust. Mazza found this law significant, as he thinks we are slowly forgetting about what truly happened back then.

"Sadly, I think we are seeing the rise of things that we haven't seen since the 1940s," he said. "As these [events] are being forgotten, it seems like they are rising up again, so I think it's important to keep people aware of what happened."

Hannah Jacobs played the role of the main character, Annemarie Johansen. "Number the Stars" originally debuted as a book, which Jacobs read as a kid. "I really loved the book. I've always loved it," Jacobs said. "[It's told] through a child's eyes, so when you're reading it, you can really connect to it.

Jacobs tried to integrate her real life into playing the role, as to feel more connected to the character. Playing an older sister, Jacobs reflects on her relationship with her little sister in real life.

"When I'm bickering with my little sister, [in the play] I think of how I bicker with my little sister in real life..." she said. "After the lines are memorized, the acting really puts it all together."

Jim Eikrem, CCC's theater director, said the choice of "Number the Stars" was also due to the success of the 2019 spring term play, "And Then They Came for Me" a play also educating about the Holocaust.

Eikrem said that, "[Number the Stars] is a great choice in

demonstrating not only the bravery of our protagonist Annemarie Johansen, but also how a community can band together to combat hate."

Weeks before opening night, tickets for some shows had completely sold out. Because of the education requirement, middle schools and high schools in the Clackamas area brought students to watch the show. The theater department stated that the Holocaust plays added an additional three matinee performances for the schools.

"Number the Stars" was overall easy to understand, heartwarming and educational. If you missed out on this year's show, be sure to buy tickets well in advance next year, as it seems this new educational requirement will quickly fill the house.

"Number the Stars" ran May 18 - May 29 at Niemeyer Osterman Theatre on the Oregon City campus.



Left: Hannah Jacobs plays Annemarie alongside Greta Van Eck as Ellen.
Top: Hannah Jacobs discusses the safety of her family with Jared Atkinson.
Bottom: Luna Rengert, from left, Valentina Pelaez Lacaden, Greta Van Eck and Hannah Jacobs help their neighbors free the Nazis.

