

# SHS prepares to open musical 'Urinetown'

**English teacher takes over as director for spring productions**

By Katherine Lacaze  
Seaside Signal

Seaside High School's spring musical "Urinetown," a satirical comedy, explores socially relevant themes and simultaneously celebrates and pokes fun at musical theater itself.

The play opens Friday, Feb. 26, at 7:30 p.m. and will be performed through March 5 at the high school's auditorium.

"The whole point of the show, is it's about sustainability and choosing a way of thinking and a way of life that is moderate," said LeeAnn Schmelzenbach, the director and an English teacher at the high school. The play also examines the idea that "all musicals are ridiculous and awesome."

Originally produced in 2001, the play features many styles of music, including jazz, contemporary and traditional Broadway showcase. Greg Kotis wrote the script and Mark Hollmann produced the music, with lyrics by Hollmann and Kotis.

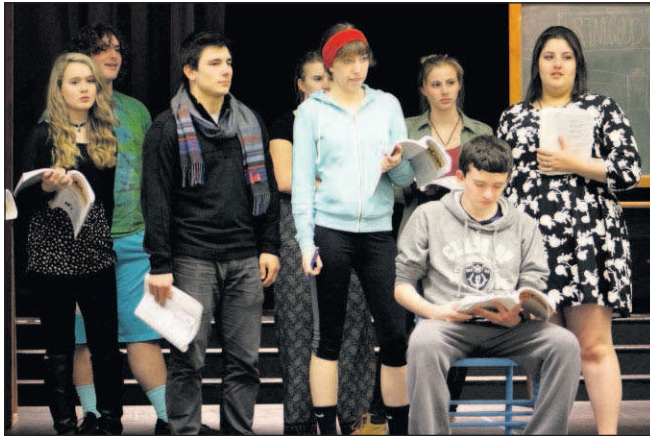
The plot centers on the futuristic, dystopian city, Urinetown, where people must pay to use public toilets because of a 20-year drought and a ban on private toilets. The Urine Good Company holds a monopoly over the enterprise of public amenities, including toilets. A young hero, observing the inequity between the rich and poor, leads a rebellion, assisted by a character symbolically named Hope.

Although parents may be wary of the title, the show is family-friendly — no swearing or gambling, drugs and alcohol references. Some of the themes — such as the satirical critique of greed, the legal system, populism, bureaucra-



SUSAN BAERTLEIN/SUBMITTED PHOTO

Seaside High School's theater students are preparing to open their spring musical, "Urinetown," on Feb. 26.



KATHERINE LACAZE/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Cast members from Seaside High School's upcoming production of "Urinetown" practice a song during rehearsal. The students include (front row, from left) Annie Stafford, Nathanael Ward, Lucy Swenson, Daniel Kuszmaul and Chloe Kincaid; and (back row, from left) Chance Giguere, Alison Zagata and Klara Bedrnova.**

cy, corporate mismanagement and social irresponsibility — may go over the heads of young audience members, but they will enjoy the comedy and music.

"I think there's something in it for everyone," Schmelzenbach said.

The cast includes 27 stu-

dents, and about 12 to 15 additional students for tech and makeup. For the third year,

Vanessa Rush, who teaches music and choir, is the musical director. Rich Small is overseeing choreography. The show will be accompanied by a live band.

Schmelzenbach is directing the musical in place of Head Secretary Lenore Morrisson, who has directed both the spring and fall plays for the past 11 years. Morrisson will still assist with the production by overseeing costumes, set, props, lighting and other technical aspects. Schmelzenbach also is assisted by senior Joseph Harkins, who wanted to step off the stage and help direct this semester.

Schmelzenbach, who joined the staff this school year, did musical theater in high school and worked backstage for a myriad of productions at the John and Orah

Brandt Fine Arts and Convocation Center during her college years at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho.

The goal is to split the high school's theatrical productions between two people, so neither gets burned out. Schmelzenbach anticipates directing the spring musicals for a while.

"I'm going to do it until I can't do it anymore," she said, adding she's already started sifting through ideas for next year, which shows she has "bought into this idea of directing."

Although Schmelzenbach has not directed before, this experience has shown she has the ability and skill set to do so. She was recommended to

"Urinetown" by her best friend from college, who said he had the most fun acting while doing that show. When she read it, she was drawn to its darker humor and satire. She also liked that this was something new for the high school.

"The deciding factor is that it requires a large cast," she said. "That really made me excited about it. In high school, theater is supposed to be an experience everyone can enjoy, and I think that's really true of this show."

Instead of having one star, eight people share the lead. The cast — which features two exchange students, 17 seniors and several new students — fell into place smoothly following auditions in mid-December, Schmelzenbach said.

"Most of the kids are in choir or band, and that really plays to our advantage," Morrisson said.

Using her skills as an English teacher, Schmelzenbach alerted her cast members to the metaphors, wordplay and other literary devices that make the play so rich.

"It makes the show more interesting to them," Schmelzenbach said.

She said she is encouraged by the individual ideas and creativity students bring to their characters during rehearsal.

For more information about the show, contact the high school by calling 503-738-5586. The high school is located at 1901 N. Holladay Drive. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$6 for senior citizens and students and \$4 for high school students with their Associated Student Body card and elementary students.

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