

Much Ado, and Worth it!

SUBMITTED BY BRUCE ROBERTS

In 35 years of teaching, I've been in many classrooms, and the scene is pretty much the same: rows of desks and chairs, maybe a table in front, student work on the walls, a teacher desk somewhere.

But Room 26 at Ruus Elementary School in Hayward was a very different scene recently. There was student work on the walls, but the desks and chairs were all pushed back, clearing the front half of the room for action. The desks were covered with props, and along the front board were keyboards, guitars, drums, a trumpet—all fronted by two sets of microphones.

I had entered a different educational world, one where after school, following a normal day, 28 fifth and sixth graders gathered to rehearse a Shakespeare play—*Much Ado About Nothing*.

Under the direction of teacher Paul Garrison, for the next hour plus, these devoted kids sang, danced, played supporting music, and acted—from memory—Shakespeare.

And throughout, they were on cue, and very focused and respectful of their performance. The only sounds heard were those of the musicians and the actors. Props came on, props went off, all with impeccable timing as the show must go on.

Amazing music though was an unforgettable feature of this production. Talented student musicians and strong-voiced singers combined to

punctuate the rehearsal with modern songs that reinforced the themes of the play. Was Shakespeare a fan of Queen, of the Stones, the Beatles, Springsteen? No, but in 2016, Room 26, he would have been.

Supported by a grant from the Hayward Education Foundation, which added a guitar to the music mix, and risers for the audience viewing of the final performance, Mr. Garrison is grooming his kids for a real performance, in front of adults instead of each other.

Many of the cast are also in Mr. Garrison's class all day, so the work on the walls reflects that these are serious students, besides being hard-working actors, singers, musicians. Mr. Garrison is proud of them all.

There are still tickets available to three of their performances—June 7, 8, and 9, in the Ruus Elementary Library. All performances are free, but phone (510) 723-3885 to make the necessary reservations. You won't be sorry!

Much Ado About Nothing
Tuesday, Jun 7, Wednesday, Jun 8,
Thursday, Jun 9
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Ruus Elementary School, Library
28027 Dickens Ave, Hayward
Reserve: (510) 723-3885
www.ruus-shakespeareans.org
Free

