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BHS stage fills with Caribbean beat

By Paul Gately/ pgately@cnc.com
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The stage at Bourne High School will transform into a windswept Caribbean island Friday night when the BHS Drama Club presents its fall production full of music and dance and the passions that teach life's lessons.

"Once on This Island" was first staged on Broadway in 1990. It is a musical fable and blended love story. The music and dancing are elements that tell the story, and the cast includes 21 students.

Some youngsters took specialized dance instruction from Jean Appolon, a professional dancer from New York. And two more dancers, Christina Machaby and Angie Hartley, will perform in "The Nutcracker" this holiday season at Cape Cod Community College.

"We have some talented kids," said Mary Colella, high school theater teacher. "They're having a blast with this island-sound Caribbean music. There are lots of drums and percussion. It makes you want to move your feet; so the kids have had a lot of fun with this one."

The drama club this year includes 11 seniors who have gone through the theater program with Colella. She says four of them plan to pursue further study in the performing arts.

The leads in "Island" are Meghan Cook and Jeff Toombs. The surprise of the play is elementary school student Brenna Joyce. She plays the young girl, Little Ti Moune, who is frightened by the storm. She awakes and is soothed by the storytelling of the peasants, who know a thing or two about life and how it can beat you down, if you let it.

By play's end, the little girl realizes the power of love and that it is more than reasonable to be who you are.

"I pick these plays we do for educational purposes," Colella said. "To expose students to as many different composers and plays as is possible over their four years here. This one was relatively easy to stage, though we need the space to dance. The choreography is a little bit difficult; its roots come from Afro-American dance; it's Haitian.

"This is a must-see production if you like singing and dancing and storytelling," she said. "It's an upbeat, fun and lively show. It's from the same team that wrote "Ragtime."

The storytellers in the cast are Stephen Lee, Kyle Garcia, David Smith, Joshua Trask, Warren Randolph, Taylor Timmins, Angie Hartley, Christina Machaby, Melinda Brennan, Amanda Marshall, Emily Moscaritolo and Jennifer Toombs.

Colella is also thinking forward to the spring production. She is leaning toward Rodgers and Hammerstein. It could be "Babes in Arms" (1937) or "South Pacific" (1948).

In the interim, the BHS thespians must prepare for the Massachusetts High School Drama Guild competition this winter. Bourne High School will host regional competition March 5.

The local presentation will be "Ezigbo: The Spirit Child," a Nigerian piece.

Photo Gallery



"Once On This Island" opens at Bourne High School tomorrow night. (Staff photo by Paul Gately)

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"Once on This Island" will be presented Nov. 12 and 13 at 7:30 p.m. as well as Sunday, Nov. 14, at 3 p.m. at Bourne High School off Trowbridge and Waterhouse roads. Tickets cost \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. For reservations, call 508-759-0699.

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