

Testimonials of Fair Oaks Theatre Festival Performers & Volunteers

About 3 and a half years ago, I auditioned for my first show with the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival. It was my second audition ever. I was 19 at the time. I had initially gotten into acting because; I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life, but to receive financial aid I had to have a major declared. I chose Theatre Arts because I was always interested in acting, or performing arts in general, but never entertained the idea of actually doing it. I had dropped out of high school at the age of 16, and didn't know anything beyond working overtime in fast food establishments.

Since joining the theatre community I have made countless friends, have had numerous experiences I never imagined I would have, and found my voice. I've always loved singing, but now I sing out loud and proud.

This year of the festival, I must say, has to be my most exciting yet. I will be playing the role of Hero in A Funny Thing Happened on The Way to The Forum, my biggest role in a musical yet, and a Wickersham Brother in Seussical. We have amazing casts for both shows, and I cannot wait to play with a real live audience.

Rashad Jahi Strother

What it's meant to me - a 71-year-old retired school teacher.

Fair Oaks has given me the opportunity to act, sing, and even dance with some very talented people. It's made me feel productive being in shows, which have delighted audiences. Because of my age, the memorization, movement, and timing required to keep up with the cast has enabled me to keep my mind and body agile. The festival has given me a chance to know and perform with some pretty special people- kids, teens, adults, and some seniors. I've even developed some friendships.

Charles Preston

The summer of 1995 was my first summer with the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival. I was cast as Pitti-Sing in The Mikado. Little did I know what fate had in store for me that summer. During the run of the show I was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma. I went to Bob Irvin, the director, and let him know. He told me that whatever I needed to do would be fine with him. If I wanted to stay in the show, that was fine. If I needed to drop the show, that would be fine too. At that point, the show became the one part of my life that was something I could look forward to. It became a place to escape all of the horrible stuff I was facing, doctor's visits, surgeries, bone marrow test, the prospect of chemo. I was able to spend a few hours a night in the make believe land of Titipu. A land where I wasn't sick, a land of silliness and laughter and friendship. It was the one thing that got me through a very difficult time in my life.

I tell this story to show how important this theatre is to me. I think that people need an opportunity to escape the trials of everyday life. Theatre is therapy! I think it gives people an outlet to express themselves. It allows you to laugh to cry to be silly to yell, all in a safe environment. It allows you to get out emotions that can build up inside and create discord in your life. Like I said, it's my therapy! I will be celebrating my 11th year of remission this summer! I can think of no better way to spend it then with my family at Fair Oaks Theatre Festival. I feel so grateful and so honored to be a part of such a wonderful group of people and I look forward to each and every summer I come.

Analise Langford

“I started performing here at age eleven, three years ago. It was so exciting to be able to be a part of such a professional production. Having already preformed at recitals, choir, acting school, musicals at my grade school, this was such a great opportunity for me! I am a serious musician/actor and to be able to perform in this venue, live theatre, under the stars, and under the direction of Bob Irvin, was a dream come true for me! Everyone is so professional, and teaches you what you need to know from the auditions, to the directing, to the dancing, to the singing, and the places where you will be on stage. It all begins slowly, and each piece is like a part of a puzzle, until the performance is complete and all the pieces form a picture that the audience will truly enjoy.”

“One day when I reached my goal of being a musician, actor, and director of films, I will take with me what I have learned and observed. I will also perform in theatre as much as possible. So thank you Bob Irvin, and everyone at Fair Oaks Theatre Festival! Your enthusiasm is contagious and theatre will always be a part of me!”

Brady Tait

“I have met amazing and kind people at the Fair Oaks Theatre Festival that I know are going to be life long friends, including the Fair Oaks staff, Tony and Barbara. Since we perform in the summer it tends to be very hot and many of us are wearing costumes that make us even hotter. The staff at Fair Oaks is very kind by putting lots of fans and water coolers backstage to make us more comfortable. I find that very kind and I appreciate them greatly for that. Also, the actors there are awesome to work with and everyone I meet becomes my friend that will stay with me for a long time. Most of all, these experiences have taught me teamwork and responsibility. It takes a lot of people to put on a show that’s as awesome as ours and they all have to work together and try their best or it won’t be as awesome.”

“Before Fair Oaks I had a hard time working with people but now I can work with people I hardly know and we can put together a beautiful piece of art. To have teamwork everybody has to have responsibility. Everybody has to be trusted to show up on time, do their best, and improve any way they can. I do my homework and what my mother asks me to do at home because I know that if I don’t I won’t be able to take my part in the play and it won’t be as good as it usually is. Friends I make at Fair Oaks will stay with me forever and I will never forget them or my experiences at Fair Oaks Theatre Festival.”

Anna Russell-Madonia

“My wife, Lillian, and I became involved in theatre back when we assembled the panels of the buildings before each season, and took them apart at the end. Somehow I got involved with bagging the popcorn and in a couple of years found I was “the Popcorn Man” much of the time. This has led to a lot of good times and a lot of good friends among the crew, the cast, and the attendees. Of course by mid-season you find yourself humming the music along with the performances, even if you flunked-out at the auditions.”

Roy L. O’Neal, M.D.