



MORE THAN A BIG BRASS BAND – Conductor Vince Fejeran led the Skagit Community Band's brass band contingent in its first fall concert in Maple Hall Saturday. The inclusion of a cello and percussions made the music more complex and robust in support of Chris Kelley's tuba solo.

– Photo courtesy of Carol Havens

## World premiere opens Nov. 8 'Pray the Gay Away' coming to Lincoln Theatre

By MaryRose Denton

Inside the community hall of Mount Vernon's St. Paul's Episcopal Church gather a group of thespians, singers and dancers. It is a mid-week run through of "Pray the Gay Away," with only five more rehearsals before opening night. The scene being worked on as I entered was one of the more serious and pivotal to this musical, examining the controversial practice of gay conversion therapy. It is being billed as "a serious musical comedy" with a musical score reminiscent of the pop '80s sound mixed with soulful ballads, "a full-blooded musical with an irreverently comic heart."

"Pray the Gay Away" takes place in small town Minnesota during the early 1980s. Through musical storytelling and satire it depicts a fictional conflict of beliefs and identities between the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's theology that "homosexual behavior is intrinsically sinful" and a Youth Pride LGBTQ support group fighting for human rights.

The local community, caught in the middle, deals with the collision. Lindsey Bowen, theatrical director brings her energy and passion to the stage production. She explained, "Our cast is made up of 43 actors who are diverse in age, gender and social backgrounds. This blend has proven to bring a great amount of passion and discussion throughout the rehearsal process and to this production." As I watched from the wings, I witnessed this passion and dedication.

Afterwards, I sat down with the mastermind, creative and musical director Conrad Askland, to talk about this timely play, from inception to world premiere production. This is Askland's fourth full-length musical and, he said, "by far my best work." Askland took a two-year hiatus from his career as musical director of Cirque du Soleil and Rock of Ages to write and develop "Pray the Gay Away."

"It is not the show I want to do but the show I have to do," he says rather openly and humbly. "This is a story that has to be told. We are seeing a roll back in the rights of LGBTQ community. It's not just about gay rights, it's about human rights."

The seed thought of this story began years ago, while he was working as a musical director to Rock of Ages aboard a cruise ship. After a cast member shared

his tale of undergoing conversion therapy, Askland began to research the topic. He learned both sides of the controversy, leading him to write about it in the best expression he knew how, musical theater. In the words of Willy Nelson, "music is a common denominator that brings us all together. It cuts through boundaries and goes right to the soul."

Asked "why premier a play of this magnitude in the Skagit Valley?" Askland replied, "This is my home, my family is here, my theatre family is here. And besides, change starts in your own corner." The Theater Arts Guild agreed and without hesitation agreed to produce the play. Other local alliances quickly formed, with PFLAG Skagit, Burlington Lutheran Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and Skagit Unitarian Universalist Fellowship uniting to "generate support and champion LGBTQ and all human rights" said Matt Bianconi, the play's producer.

A TAG member, Bianconi finds the message of this play as extremely relevant, "bringing a discussion to the stage highlighting the conflict between some

religious beliefs and gay rights, something so many people have struggled with."

With Askland focused on the production, I asked Bianconi his wish for the future of the play. "It is worthy of national attention, for sure," he smiles. "But our main goal is to reach others who are struggling, let them know they are not alone and hope they feel connected within this local community."

Bianconi said he and Bowen have found "the community support has been overwhelmingly positive and supportive." While the play may expose the horrors of conversion therapy and the damage it causes, it also is about redemption and reveals to the audience a message of hope, of connection and of inclusion.

Askland confessed he pondered the question, "When people see this, will they still feel the same?"

"Pray the Gay Away" is a beautiful, humorous and heart-breaking story that may have the audience leaving the theater with more questions than they entered with at the beginning. May new conversations begin.

## 'Addams Family' more a hoot than howl

By Ken Stern

Timing is everything. "The Addams Family" opened last week, a perfect fit for Halloween. It runs through Nov. 17 at the Whidbey Playhouse.

Elders of a certain age will recognize the characters, their dress, mannerisms, voices, personalities and tell-tale musical score. Director Stan Thomas is picture perfect in conjuring up the 1964 TV show based on Charles Addams mid-century New Yorker cartoons.

Turned into a musical in 2010, Thomas, producer Andrew Pierzchala, the costumers, production team and cast bring this 21st century version to Oak Harbor, complete with subtle political zingers, such as Gomez, pulled between wife and daughter, observing, "I am trapped, like the moderate right."

This is as much a cartoon as a comedy brought to life, all caricature in homage to the original.

Bailey Wend as Morticia is perfect from black hair to Transylvanian accent to her posturing of arms and hands – just like on TV. Husband Gomez (Fernan-

do Duran) is her match in every way, down to his costume, and his character's mannerisms, his left hand in dinner jacket.

Gomez shares emceeing duties, of a sort with a perfectly made up Fester (Matt Montoya, light on his feet; also assistant director). While Gomez is ring master for his immediate family, Fester directs generations of dead relatives, all whom met untimely deaths. The overwhelming female ensemble wear floor length white gowns, white wigs and are powdered up like 17th century French royalty.

The ancestors have come into our world for a night but are

(Continued on Page 7)

## Honor Veterans Day at elementary school

Military veterans will be honored at 12 p.m. Nov 8 in the La Conner Elementary School gym. Students will perform songs and poetry.

Contact the elementary school to have veteran family members recognized: Ann Van Pelt, 360-466-3172; avanpelt@lc.k12.wa.us.

## Duckworth and Kochuten on UW Dean's list

Seniors Nolan Burgmeier Duckworth and Marina Ann Kochuten made the Dean's List at the University of Washington for Spring 2019 Quarter. They earned this honor by completing at least 12 graded credits and having a grade point average of at least 3.50 (out of 4). Students are notified that they have achieved this distinction when they receive their grades for the quarter.

Source: UW News

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**Friday, the return of Ronnie Nix**

7-9

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Promotion for this event is funded by Skagit County Tourism Funds, visitskagitvalley.com



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# WHAT'S HAPPENING

**By Eileen Engelstad**  
**Wednesday October 30**  
**1 to 2 p.m. - Ukulele Fun & Song Circle.** Beginners welcome and loaner ukuleles available. Meet each Wednesday. Free. Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Ave., Mount Vernon. 206-790-4862 or yoga-heartspace0@gmail.com.  
**4 p.m. La Conner HS Girls Soccer** vs Orcas Island. Home match.  
**5:30 p.m. - La Conner HS Girls Volleyball** vs Orcas Island. Home at Landy James Gym.  
**7 p.m. - Meet an Astronaut.** Heide-Marie Stefanyshyn-Piper, astronaut, will be at Anacortes High School, 1600 20th Street.  
**7 p.m. - Mount Vernon High School Jazz & Mariachi Night.** Students from the acclaimed Fine Arts Department perform. Free. Lincoln Theatre, 712 S. First St., Mount Vernon. lincolnthatre.org or 360-336-8955.  
**Thursday October 31**  
**1 to 3:30 p.m. - Thursday Dancing,** to the Skippers or Good Vibrations. Each week at Mount Vernon Elks. Public welcome. 2120 Market Street, Mount Ver-

non. 360-336-3682  
**3 to 6 p.m. - Anacortes Hal-loween Party.** Free fun for the whole family, with food, games, prizes and CANDY! Anacortes Elks, 1009-7th St.  
**3:15 to 4 p.m. - Halloween Costume Parade & Town Trick or Treat.** Dress in your costume best. The parade heads south on 1st St. in La Conner. Participating shops will be handing out candy  
**3:30 p.m. - Halloween Story Time.** Drop-in story time with costumes and snacks. Anacortes Library, 1220-10th St.  
**3:30 to 5 p.m. - Downtown Mount Vernon. Trick or treating,** followed by a costume contest at the Lincoln Theatre. Free. 712 S. First St.  
**6 to 8 p.m. Live at Sips.** Mike Bucy performs. La Conner Sips 608 S 1st St. La Conner 360-610-9773.  
**Friday November 1**  
**9 a.m. to noon - Fiber Friday.** Bring any fiber art project (quilt-ing, knitting, etc.) to work & visit with others. Free. Pacific North-west Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum. 360-466-4288 / qfamuseum.org  
**7 p.m. - La Conner HS Home-coming Football Game** vs Con-crete. Whittaker Field.  
**7 to 9 p.m. - Live at Sips.** Ronnie Nix performs. La Conner Sips 608 S 1st St. La Conner 360-610-9773.  
**Saturday November 2**  
**3 to 6 p.m. - Chowder by the Channel.** La Conner Kiwan-is presents a chowder contest and silent auction. Vote for your favorite chowder. \$8. La Conner Elementary School.  
**Monday November 4**  
**1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - Mon-day Dancing,** to the Skippers or Good Vibrations. \$7 Each week at Mount Vernon Senior Center 1401 Cleveland Ave., Mount Ver-non. 360-336-3682  
**2 to 3 p.m. & 5 to 6 p.m. - Food Bank:** La Conner Sunrise Food Bank is located in the Gar-

field Masonic Lodge at 602 S. Third St. behind the Methodist Church. All are welcome, both those who need groceries and those with food to share. 360-488-3878 / laconnerfoodbank.com.  
**Tuesday November 5**  
**9 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Medicare Open Enrollment.** Experts help explore Medicare options, based on coverage and prescription needs. Maple Hall, La Conner. Appointments mandatory. 425-513-1900.  
**10 a.m. to noon - Skagit County Republican Women's Meeting.** Speaker is District 1 Commissioner Ron Wesen. Civic Garden Club, 622 S. 2nd, La Conner  
**10 a.m. to 3 p.m. - Maker's Market** at Maple Hall. 100% hand crafted items from local ar-tisans, including foods, carvings, scarves, and other gift items. Cash only. SeniorCenter@town-of-laconner.org.  
**10:30 to 11:15 a.m. - Fall Early Enrichment.** Parents or caregivers and children ages 2-5 years old participate in a fun morning of art, stories, and sen-sory experiences on Tuesday mornings until December 10. Free. Museum of Northwest Art 121 First St., La Conner museu-mofnwart.org / 360-466-4446.  
**3 to 5 p.m. Author's Recep-tion.** James H. Keefe talks about his book, "Two Gold Coins and a Prayer, the Epic Journey of a WW II Bomber Pilot, Evader, and POW" at Seaport Books (see arti-cle on p. 1)  
**6:30 p.m. Author Speaks at High Scgool.** James H. Keefe (see above) speaks at La Conner

HS Auditorium.  
**7 to 8 p.m. - Beginning Line Dancing.** Adults and teens 13+, each Tuesday. \$6 drop-in; \$25/ five classes. Burlington Commu-nity Center, 1011 Greenleaf Ave., Burlington. Register: burlington-wa.gov/recreation or 360-755-9649.  
**7 to 9:30 p.m. - Folk Dancing.** Skagit-Anacortes. Learn to folk dance each Tuesday to a variety of international music. No partner necessary. First time free, then \$5. Bay View Civic Hall, 12615 C Street, Bayview. 360-766-6866.  
**Wednesday November 6**  
**1 to 2 p.m. - Ukulele Fun & Song Circle.** Beginners welcome and loaner ukuleles available. Meet each Wednesday. Free. Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Ave., Mount Vernon. 206-790-4862 or yoga-heartspace0@gmail.com.  
**3:30 p.m. - Teen Writing Group.** For high school students. A professional writer leads the group, introducing new prompts each session. Anacortes Library, 1220-10th St.  
**Thursday November 7**  
**1 to 3:30 p.m. - Thursday Dancing,** to the Skippers or Good Vibrations. Each week at Mount Vernon Elks. Public welcome. 2120 Market Street, Mount Ver-non. 360-336-3682  
**6 p.m. - Pajama Story Time** First Thursday of every month. All ages welcome, pajamas en-couraged! Anacortes Library. 1220-10th St.  
**Friday November 8**  
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## Addams . . . (Continued from Page 5)

stuck here until the family solves the dilemma of teen-age daughter Wednesday (Gabby Eaton, all in black, with white striped socks) wanting to marry Lucas Beineke (Max Hanesworth, couldn't be better as a clean cut young man from Ohio).  
 Wednesday has invited Lucas and his parents to dinner and enlists her father's support against Mor-ticia's firm resistance. Gome-z has to choose.  
 The oddest thing about the Addams family: they tell the truth. They prefer death to life and blood and gore to sweetness and light, but they don't lie. Now, stuck with normal Ohioans, including buttoned up father Mal (Tony Pooler) and wife Ruth (Dianna Gruen-wald), the Addams have to act normal. Wednesday sings "One Normal Night," as does Lucas, for his fam-ily is not normal, either.  
 All this must be great fun for the cast. Except for playing zombies, what can be better than to be long dead family, across the cen-turies, in wigs and gowns singing in ensemble and performing simple dance numbers together? And, they get to have scars and stitches on their faces. This is the essence of commu-nity theatre that Whidbey Playhouse does so well.  
 Mention must be made of pre-teen brother Pugsley Addams (Laurianna New-comb, yes, a girl), Grandma (Geri Thomas), Lurch (Ron Wilhelm) and Cousin Itt (Sabrina Cray), who never says a word but makes her presence known.  
 Suffice it to say the Be-inekes stay for dinner, are subjected to the family truth telling game of "Full Dis-closure," also a song, and the plot goes awry when a truth telling potion is drunk by Ruth, not Wednesday.  
 Will Wednesday and Lucas mate? Can Gomez get out of Morticia's dog-house? Will the Beineke parents survive the night?  
 And what's not to like about a death defying, Goth dressing family that is stuck on truth and love?  
 How do musical come-dies typically turn out?  
 Go see for yourself. For tickets and times, Thurs-days-Sundays: 360-679-2237, whidbeyplayhouse.com/.

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**Football . . .**  
 (Continued from Page 4)  
 The hosts did plenty of damage on the ground as well.  
 Trent Paulson ran seven times for 55 yards and two scores. Nick Fountaine and Collin Neal added one rushing TD each for the winners.  
 Luke Marble, Bradey Wyles and Joseph Mus-ni found pay dirt for the Braves, who fell to 1-6 overall going into Friday's Homecoming date with NW2B rival Concrete.  
 La Conner head coach Peter Voorhees had to re-shuffle his lineup due to some injuries, but the Braves still managed to move the ball well between the 20 yard-lines.  
 It was in the red zone where La Conner strug-gled, however.  
 La Conner left points on the field by failing to capi-talize on early scoring op-portunities deep in Vikings territory.  
 Still, the Braves trailed just 14-13 at intermission and briefly pulled ahead with a fourth period score.  
 But Bellevue Christian answered with two big plays in the late going.  
 The first was the 42-yard strike over the middle from Cornett to Parsons, setting up the Vikings' go-ahead touchdown. The second was a 48-yard Paulson TD dash, an insurance score that provided the final margin of victory.  
 La Conner will look to regroup this week for its home rematch against Con-crete, which escaped with a 21-14 defeat of the Braves in the teams' Oct. 11 meet-ing in their Lions' Den.  
 In related notes:  
 • The La Conner High boys' soccer team fell just short in an upset bid at un-defeated league leader Orcas Island on Saturday. The hosts prevailed 2-0 despite a strong defensive effort by the Braves, whose ledger dropped to 3-10, with seven of those setbacks being by three goals or less.  
 • The Lady Braves lost their Saturday soccer match at Orcas 1-0 in overtime. La Conner head coach Chris-tian Warman credited the Lady Vikings' goalkeeper with making a couple clutch saves on La Conner shot attempts in the extra session. The two teams are slated to meet again today (Wednesday) at Whittaker Field at 4 p.m. in La Conner's annual Senior Day match. The Lady Braves (1-5 in league; 3-6-1 over-all) were at Friday Harbor Monday afternoon.

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**top ten**

**Least Vaccinated States**

1. Mississippi
2. Texas
3. Florida
4. Georgia
5. Indiana
6. Arizona
7. Nevada
8. New Jersey
9. New York
10. Wyoming

Source: WalletHub

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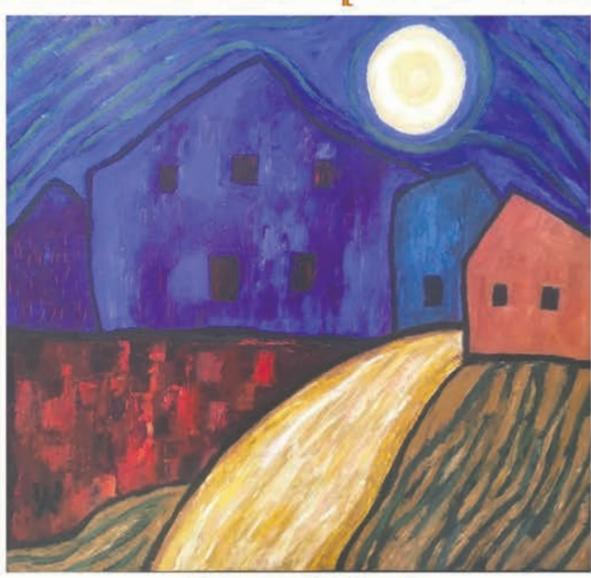
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Becky Fletcher	Nicolette Harrington
Clayton James	Ed Kamuda
Peregrine O'Gormley	Roger Small
Christine Troyer	Pieter VanZanden
Thomas Wood	Lynn Zimmerman

**Vote for your favorite in the Open Show**  
 Friday, Nov. 8 through Monday, Nov. 11