

Director's Notes

When I was first approached to stage manage Descendants in the Spring of 2020, I was happy to help, but had never heard of this show. After watching it I was thrilled by the concept of telling the story of the children of the famous Disney characters we know, set to a modern hip-hop musical vibe. Although the production team at the time worked behind the scenes in preparation for the show, the pandemic had other plans. Like all other theatres and much of the world at the time, MCYT had to shut down and Descendants was put on hold. Here we are almost 3 and a half years later, and I have the absolute honor to now be the director of this amazing cast of 33 of Maricopa's most talented youth. If you had asked me 30 years ago if I would be doing this, the answer is 100%!

I had the fortune of being taken under the wing of several directors as a child. I met Jody Elder in the fall of 1986 at only 5 years old. She was directing my first play A Christmas Carol at Coolidge High School and cast me as Tiny Tim. She invited me to join the summer program in Casa Grande that following summer under her directorship, and I spent the next 7 summers in her program playing every role from Tom Sawyer to John Darling to Rumpelstiltskin. I am so grateful to you Jody. I know you are shining your light down here on me still; giving me the guidance and I know you would be very proud of me. I owe you so much. This and all performances of my life are dedicated to you in honor of all the time you poured into me, and youth like me. At 12 years old I met another director who cast me as Winthrop in my first college musical (This was also my first college credit). I went on to work with Cass Foster at every fall production at CAC Signal Peak Campus through age 16. He took lots of extra time out of his way to coach me and taught me absolutely everything he knew about theatre and the theatre world. This is also where I began learning stage craft. Those college students were happy to make the little guy use the drill and I was all for it. These shows always fell during the College Theatre Festival Season. I had the extraordinary opportunity to participate and compete at the collegiate level starting at age 13 with many other very talented community colleges and was able to watch their shows for free. I did not realize at the time just how special and unique it all was. Cass even wrote me letters of recommendation that I could keep and use for my future. I cannot thank you enough Cass for seeing something in me that I have only yet begun to see in myself. You taught me that when I put myself in the shoes of my adversaries and "play" in their lives for a bit, I better understand and forgive them. I'm rusty these days. I met Manuel Leybas in 1994 when he cast me as Ben Oyler in CGUHS world premiere of Go Toward the Light the musical. He introduced me to "Organic Acting" and taught me how to really embody and live inside the character and acquire their traits. I even worked directly with the mother of the boy I was portraying to better understand who Ben was and what the world around him was like at the time. The parallels in my and Ben Oyler's lives now are mind-blowing. Thank you, Manny for introducing me to method acting before I even knew what it was and further expanding my creative mind.

I want to thank my awesome mom for driving me to ALL those rehearsals years ago and always being there for me. I want to thank my amazing dad and stepmom for their continued love and support. Lastly, I want to thank the most amazing human I've ever known. My husband, Shivam. You are the love of my life, my rock! I do not know what I did to deserve you but I am so grateful that we are joined in our 7 lifetimes and eternity together. I love you.

Thank you to my talented cast and crew.
I could not do this without you.
Sincerely with love,
Andrew Noah Coonts - Director