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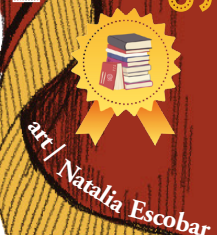
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art | Natalia Escobar

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ALUMNUS DONATION TO CHS THEATRE

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The lights are about to go down on the final showing of Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief. The kids at Camp Half-Blood have taken a bow. Clapping has begun to fade, when a satyr steps out from the midst of the cast with an announcement.

Though the CHS theater department has always stunned audiences with their performances, the department is self-sustaining and relies on profit from shows and donations to fund their productions. As Theater director Mohammed Mangrio examined the projected budget for this year's season, he found that the program was falling \$10,000 short of its aim. Between the costly expense of putting on the ultimate show of the year at Bridges Auditorium, and the ongoing audio upgrade campaign, Mangrio was feeling slightly concerned. However, during a lunch meeting in December with former theater directors Don Fructi and Krista Carson Elhai, Mangrio received a bit of hope. A former CHS student and theater tech alumnus had made a sizable donation to the ongoing audio campaign.

On Jan. 21, 2023, CHS alumni Jaryd Hochberger's \$100,000 donation was announced to an exhilarated audience. A 2006 graduate, Hochberger

my life, that I always kind of think about in the back of my head," said Hochberger. "The theater was one of them."

Eden Hankins, president of the Claremont High School Thespian troupe is another person considers the CHS theatre program unique.

"We form a really strong community in the theater," Hankins said. "Because we spend so much time here it becomes a home and family to students, who do not just become exemplary performers and technicians but also use theater to make an impact."

With the donation, students will be able to learn more about both the acting and tech side of theatre as new opportunities become available that were not previously possible.

"Students will be able to have greater artistic freedom, as having more money to be able to make bolder choices opens up more opportunities on the design side of things," Mangrio said. "The improvements we will make with the donation will allow the theater to further align with industry standards, which prepares students for the theater world if they plan to further pursue it."

The donation will first be used to complete the audio campaign and give the theatre's audio and light-



art | Natalia Escobar
photos courtesy of
Vivian Li

chose theater as his elective during his freshman year because it was "just one of those classes," but he soon became hooked. Though Hochberger did not take any other theater related classes for the rest of his high school career, he continued to work shows, making sure each production ran smoothly. Being a tech person allowed him a sense of freedom as he explored his identity away from his parents within a close knit community.

"Back then, you had all the camaraderie of all the tech theater people," Hochberger said. "It was really tight knit, it was like every time after shows going to Chili's or Applebees—that kind of community aspect is what kept me there."

Hochberger is now attending nursing school while working part-time in an ICU and serving on the Board of Governors at Cedars-Sinai; he no longer participates in the arts aside from his YouTube channel, but he still carries the life lessons he learned while at the CHS theater with him today.

"It was a job that I enjoyed but didn't get paid for," Hochberger said. "It really solidified my work ethic. Doing that and having a schedule, somewhere to go, something to do and people to direct; delegating tasks, managing people, managing personalities. That's how it shaped me and that's what I have carried with me to this day."

Hochberger was first inspired to donate after seeing a post about the theater's audio campaign posted on Krista Carson Elhai's Facebook page. Having received a windfall late last year, he was put in a position to give back to his community.

"I thought about the places that had a profound effect on

ing equipment a sorely-needed upgrade. Decent microphones and other audio equipment is almost as important for the success of a show as a decent acting performance is. Due to the age of the current audio equipment, microphone glitches have become a common mishap during shows. Mangrio anticipates a noticeable increase in audio quality by next month, having already ordered an overhaul of the current audio system.

For decades, students have relied on older, traditional lighting fixtures to use in performances and for rehearsals. A more modern and computerized lighting system is considerably expensive, so the department has been slowly upgrading the lighting over the years. This new equipment will allow show production to reach new heights and give both technical theatre students and performers more chances to better emphasize their talent for generations to come.

The donation will also be used to fund the end-of-year show run of "Matilda" at Bridges Auditorium in June, which is a costly production because of the large stage, greater costuming, and more props.

The CHS theater is undoubtedly a special place on campus. It provides entertainment, instruction and, above all, community. Throughout its decades-long run, the program has helped students build skills they will use for the rest of their lives, leaving an impact they will remember long after they leave the hallways of Claremont High. Jaryd Hochberger's donation will leave as lasting an effect on the theatre program as the program left on him.

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