

Teenage Drama Workshop celebrates 50th year

BY DANIELLE FAIRLEE

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Certainly, teenagers are no strangers to drama. But for 50 years, a different kind of teen drama has flourished on the campus of California State University, Northridge.

The Teenage Drama Workshop, which celebrates its 50th season this summer, brings together aspiring actors, singers, dancers and playwrights from all over the San Fernando Valley for an annual immersion in the theatrical arts.

Students 12 to 18 years old study with university instructors, learning about acting, improvisation, dance and musical theater. They then present three full-stage productions at CSUN.

With rehearsals under way, lines being memorized, sets being built and costumes being readied for opening night, TADW students and staff took a night off Saturday to celebrate the organization's golden anniversary with a reunion that brought together current and former students, supporters and instructors.

Online

To see more photos from the 50-year celebration of the Teenage Drama Workshop, go to The Valley hub on valleynews.com.

Oscar-nominated actress and TADW alumna Mare Winningham sent along her best wishes in the form of a letter read by her teenage niece, Nora Finch, who is in her third summer with the program.

"Whenever I am asked in an interview, 'Where did you train for a career as an actor?' I always respond, 'The Teenage Drama Workshop at CSUN,'" Winningham wrote. "What gave me a jump on other young actors were the focused experiences I had at TADW in speech, movement, improv and musical theater."

The reunion celebration was filled with moving and heartfelt testimonials from current and past TADW students.

"You create yourself here," said Jennifer Sills, who attended TADW from 1999 to 2004, appearing in such plays as "The Wizard of Oz" and "Charlie & The Choco-



Photo by Danielle Fairlee

The guest of honor at the 50th anniversary celebration of the Teenage Drama Workshop was William Schlosser, left, the workshop's co-founder. He shares a bright moment with Doug Kaback, TADW executive director, and Brent Rosen, TADW managing director and an alumnus of the program.

late Factory."

"At 20, I'm a better person because I came here," she added. The guest of honor was

TADW's co-founder, William Schlosser, former chair of CSUN's Department of Theater.

"The workshop is a wonderful part of the community, but it is also a wonderful part of the life of each member," Schlosser said.

TADW student Will Coates, 17, of Sherman Oaks said he never aspired to be an actor or singer

when he first joined the workshop. But he soon learned he could sing and act and will star as Captain Hook in TADW's production of "Peter Pan" opening Friday.

"Peter Pan" will be performed at 7 p.m. on July 20, July 26 and 28, and at 11 a.m. on July 21, 25, 27, 28, Aug. 1, 2 and 3.

"James and the Giant Peach" will be performed at 7 p.m. on July 25, 27, and 28; at 11 a.m. on July 27, 28, Aug. 1, 2, 3 and 4, and at 2 p.m. on July 26.

The "10 Minute Play Festival," featuring original short works by TADW students, will be presented at 7 p.m. on Aug. 2 and 3.

Admission is \$10 for adults and \$7 for students and seniors. Tickets can be purchased at ticketmaster.com or by calling the CSUN ticket office at (818) 677-2488. All performances will be in Nordhoff Hall on the CSUN campus, 18111 Nordhoff St., Northridge.

For more information, call the TADW office at (818) 677-5811.

Danielle Fairlee's two sons, Matthew and Ian, are participating in the Teenage Drama Workshop. She posted this story July 15 to The Valley hub on valleynews.com.