



AN OGRE OF A TIME...The cast of *Shrek* at Franklin Elementary School in Westfield performed together on March 2 and 3.

Franklin Fifth Graders Perform *Shrek the Musical, Jr.*

WESTFIELD – All of our differences make us unique. That theme pervaded the third annual fifth-grade show at Franklin Elementary School in Westfield, *Shrek the Musical Jr.*, performed on March 2 and 3.

"I'm so proud of our cast and crew for all their hard work and dedication to making this year's show such a success," said Emma Schwartz, director and producer of the show.

The production, now an established tradition at Franklin School, begins as soon as the winter break ends, with rehearsals, set building, costume making, audio/visual technology, and learning the songs and choreography. Ronit Horowitz, musical director, and Gail Brickman, choreographer, brought their talents to the production, making

the show once again a success.

The cast featured Devon Brickman as Shrek, Sophia Schwartz as the Donkey, Lily Dalglish as Princess Fiona, Dev Daswani as Lord Farquaad, and Mia Ebel as the Dragon.

The show is funded by the Franklin School PTO. "It's wonderful to work with the students, whose enthusiasm, hard work and devotion to the production and performance is second to none," concluded Ms. Schwartz. "I'm also grateful to their parents, whose help is critical to the success of the performance. And, of course, we're grateful for the ongoing support of Principal Cambria and her staff, who together with the Franklin School community, make this such a rewarding experience for our children."

Five Engaging Films Planned For Jewish Film Festival

WESTFIELD – The Jewish Film Festival of Central NJ will present five films this spring at the Rialto New Vision Theater, 250 East Broad Street in Westfield. Screenings begin Tuesday, April 10 and run through Monday, May 7. All films start at 7:30 p.m.

The spring series begins with *The Testament* on Tuesday, April 10. In *The Testament*, an uncompromising Holocaust researcher uncovers highly classified evidence that suggests a long-buried secret in this Best Film winner at the Haifa International Film Festival.

On Monday, April 16, *Bye Bye Germany* will be presented. In this bittersweet and engaging salute to European Jews who chose to reclaim their lives, the audience meets a Holocaust survivor who winds his way through post-war Frankfurt.

Next up is *Ben Gurion: Epilogue* on Wednesday, April 25. This docu-

mentary is a rare and fortuitous piece of cinematic archeology, which imparts new insights into David Ben Gurion, a treasured historic figure. Amir Sagie, New York-based Deputy Consul General of Israel, will join the audience for a post-film discussion.

Humor Me, showing on Tuesday, May 1, stars Elliot Gould. It is a heartfelt father-son comedy about a struggling playwright who is forced to move in with his joke-telling dad in a New Jersey retirement community.

Closing night on Monday, May 7 features *The Last Suit* about an aging Jewish tailor who leaves his life in Argentina to journey back through time and halfway around the world to find the man who saved him from death at Auschwitz in this bittersweet road trip movie.

Visit www.jccnj.org for more information, movie trailers and pricing. Tickets can be purchased online at www.jccnj.org, by mail or in person at the JCC in Scotch Plains.

The Jewish Film Festival of Central NJ is made possible by funds from the Union County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs, a partner of the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

The JCC of Central New Jersey is located at 1391 Martine Avenue in Scotch Plains. The JCC of Central New Jersey is a constituent agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWestNJ, United Way of Greater Union County and the Westfield United Fund. Financial assistance is available for membership and various programs.

Goodbye

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Subordinate themes of bullying, abuse and eating disorders provide substantial food for thought.

At the end of the show, the director Erik Bloomquist, the cast and Mr. Bullock himself provided a talk back in which they fielded questions from the high school students in the audience. "For how many of you did one or more of the characters resonate with you or someone you know?" asked Mr. Bloomquist. Almost all hands shot up. Pressures of being the best in school, being jealous of another teen and bullying all enter the mix at one point or another. Human interaction and acceptance of each other was the collective attitude the actors said brought them together in this piece. "Theater is therapy," said Chris Cherin who played Ben's best friend.

The intent of the playwright, he shared with the audience, is to take this show with an important message on the road to schools all over New Jersey and beyond.

Confessions

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

These new in-laws have easy, believable banter and an onstage relationship that we buy into immediately. Ms. Sullivan plays the role of Candice comfortably, handling concern for her off-stage drunk husband with aplomb. She has captured the right mix of angst, joy and frustration of a wedding day when emotions roller coaster around sharp curves and dips.

Mr. Gandy, as Martin, is a gentle giant whose remembrances of his recently deceased wife are shared tenderly. Playwright Kelner has given the actors funny, wry, lovely, poignant dialogue that rings true.

Top-notch acting made this play zip along like a stone skipping on Lake Placid. Director Lynn Polan moved the show along at a beautiful pace, not rushing the tender spots, but letting it ride the waves of emotion.

Through humor and pathos, Kelner's *Cocktail Hour Confessions* reveals not only the characters' attitudes toward grief, disability and race relations, but asks the audience to explore its own unspoken feelings on these topics.

POPCORN

Love, Simon
You've Got Blackmail
3 popcorns

One Popcorn, Poor — Two Popcorns, Fair — Three Popcorns, Good — Four Popcorns, Excellent

By MICHAEL S. GOLDBERGER
film critic

While director Greg Berlanti's *Love, Simon* is at once funny, serious and important, it's a darn shame that it is so very apt...that this astute tale about a teenage boy's struggle to make his gayness known is revolutionary at all. Memo of inquiry to American civilization: It's the spring of 2018, and this fact of life is just making the mainstream? Well, better late than never. Truth is, attitudinal changes come slowly, especially to the narrow-minded. But the seed of tolerant reformation, boosted during the enlightenment of the '60's, has finally gained pragmatic traction.

Today's kids, who have of late heroically evidenced that they'll be fully capable of steering our ship of state - and the sooner the better, if you ask me - see the current sociopolitical landscape through mendacity-proof glasses. They've thus far resisted forsaking their juice boxes for the Kool-Aid. And as such, they're hardly threatened by the hate-mongering, homophobic purveyors of prejudice who, for the most part, they consider as antique as the dial telephone in granny's kitchen. It's simple math. Cut someone out because they're this or that and you have less friends.

Still, it isn't yet all Nirvana and acceptance at Creekwood High School, where Simon Spier, winningly portrayed by Nick Robinson, will play out his coming-of-age story courtesy of a romantic triangle or two that collide and force the issue he wasn't ready to confront. He's gay, but neither his parents nor his circle of best friends know. He's been planning to keep it that way until next year, when he goes to college. However, when his pal Leah (Katherine Langford) tells him of an online coming-out by a gay student who calls himself Blue, Simon's interest is piqued.

Using the alias, Jacques, he makes contact and soon, via mutual commiseration and joyful, cathartic truth telling, a cyber tête-à-tête develops. It's *You've Got Mail* (1998) revisited, but with a dark kicker. Borrowing from the playbook of current events down Foggy Bottom way, when Simon doesn't log off at one of the school's communal computers, a snooping party not opposed to blackmail if it'll serve his selfish interests, tells Simon that he knows what he knows.

Since Simon isn't about to sic the already overloaded and lately harassed FBI on the jerk, he figures his only option is to concede to the extortionist. It'll entail some ill-advised matchmaking. Of course, if Sir Walter Scott went to Creekwood, he might have warned Simon, "Oh what a tangled web we weave when we first practice to deceive." Increasingly, due to these dubious machinations, Simon, whose integrity was heretofore unimpeachable, comes under increasing scrutiny. In the vernacular, some of his homies are wondering, "What the...?"

While all of this is quite serious on several levels, it is a credit to director Berlanti that his interpretation of the witty screenplay by Elizabeth Berger and Isaac Aptaker, adapted from Becky Albertalli's novel, "*Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*," remains quite buoyant. Mixing various modes of comedy with its more solemn eruditions, including a healthy smattering of sophisticated sarcasm, the movie charmingly promotes the al-

truistic aura that comes of shedding the bigotry that, since time immemorial, has shamefully engendered misery for untold millions.

But the gravity is never lost on us. Mulling this injustice while Simon tries to extricate himself from the corner he has been painted into, we land on the philosophical square that asks, why can't people just give each other a break already? We disdain the root venality of the life-ruining repressiveness that serves only the misdirected and sanctimonious vanities of the sadly insecure. In confiding his plight to a pal, our title character opines, "Why just us...why don't heteros have to come out?" Fantasy scenes comically illustrate the proposition.

Complementing the intelligent meditations on the cause célèbre, a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed ensemble cast of fellow classmates entertainingly creates the sociology that is Creekwood High. A telling thumbnail sketch of Americana, it is both reminiscent and profoundly contemporizing, from the cliquish cafeteria coterie, to the time-honored camaraderies you will cherish forever, to vice principal Worth's (Tony Hale) humorously good-natured confiscation of cellphones. I could practically taste the delicious, frosting-topped cake served in my own lunchroom, only 10 cents extra.

Apportioning superbly blended ladles of honey and vinegar in its elucidations, this is the first movie from a major studio about gay teen romance. As significant as it is engaging, it is a fine example of the American muckraker petitioning our better instincts. While institutions, jurisdictions, courts and the great unwashed are bound to follow so long as our democracy remains intact, again it is left to art to be the pathfinder, the arbiter between primitive fear and our humanistic nature to progress. All of which is why you'll at least like, if not *Love, Simon*.

Love, Simon, rated PG-13, is a Twentieth Century Fox release directed by Greg Berlanti and stars Nick Robinson, Katherine Langford and Alexandra Shipp. Running time: 110 minutes.



PHOTO FINISH...The winners of the Fanwood Memorial Library's first annual Teen Photography Contest are pictured with Mayor Colleen Mahr and Library Director Dan Weiss. All the award-winning photographs are currently on display at the Fanwood Library and are available to view online at www.fanwoodlibrary.org/your-town-through-your-eyes.

Fanwood Library Teen Photo Contest Winners Announced

FANWOOD – The Fanwood Memorial Library has announced the winners of its first annual Teen Photography Contest. The contest category was "Your Town through Your Eyes," and it was open to Scotch Plains-Fanwood students in grades six through 12. The library was overwhelmed by the entries it received and selecting the two winners (one high school student, and one from the middle school) was a difficult decision.

The 2018 winners are:
Grand Prize: High School: "Growing Up in Fanwood" by Sophia Rosahl, grade 12, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Grand Prize Middle School: "Connections" by Thomas Metzger, grade seven, Park Middle School.

Honorable mentions: "There's No Place Like Home" by Nic Turner, grade eight, Park Middle School. "Night Life" by Ryan Eng grade nine, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. "Grasshopper Shadow Duality" by Peter Shih, grade nine, Academy of Allied Health Sciences. "The Joy of our Neighborhood" by Catie Wilson, grade 8, Park Middle School. "We Come as a Community and Leave as a Family" by Erica Lee, grade 8, Park Middle School. "Coloring Rain" by Mia Schmidt, grade nine, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School. "Mystic Morning" by Delaney Connolly, grade eight, Park Middle School.

Mayor Colleen Mahr, Library Director Dan Weiss and library staff and trustees were on hand, along with the families of the recipients, as the awards

were presented by the Fanwood Library Board of Trustees at their March meeting. All the award-winning photographs are currently on display at the Fanwood Library, and are available to view online at www.fanwoodlibrary.org/your-town-through-your-eyes. Each grand prize winner received \$50, and \$10 was awarded for each honorable mention. Students will also be presented with their photo printed on canvas to take home once the display is over.

Event to Benefit Special Needs Community

WESTFIELD – The public is invited to join Savory Spice Westfield and Chef Christine Migton of Chez Catherine on Monday, April 16 from 7 to 9 p.m. for a night of cooking and giving.

The evening will benefit the John M. Migton Foundation's Boxwood Junction, an organization striving to provide an inclusive community for those with disabilities. Attendees will experience a cooking demonstration and enjoy appetizers and wine.

The event will take place at Savory Spice, 138 East Broad Street, Westfield. Tickets are \$30. All tickets sales will go directly to Boxwood Junction. Reservations are required and spots are limited.

To make reservations, visit Savory Spice Westfield, call (908) 264-8947, or email westfield@savoryspiceshop.com. For more info about Boxwood Junction, visit boxwoodjunction.org

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Thank You for Your Continued Support!

APRIL 2018 WESTFIELD MEMORIAL LIBRARY EVENTS

550 East Broad Street, Westfield 908.789.4090 www.wmlnj.org
Hours: Mon-Thurs 9:30 am - 9:00 pm Fri & Sat 9:30 am - 5:00 pm
Sunday 1:00-5:00 pm

Closed March 30 for Good Friday and April 1 for Easter
Friends of the Library Giant Book Sale April 24-28

Check website for all dates and times

PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

CHECK WEBSITE FOR ALL SIGN UP INFORMATION-SOME RESTRICTIONS*

4/4	7:00 pm	Christopher Dean Band
4/5	10:00 am	Zumba Gold for Adults*
4/6	1:30 pm	Norman Lear (video)
4/9	2 & 6:30 pm	Foreign Film: <i>Frantz</i> German 113 minutes
4/11	7:00 pm	Meditation: A Stress Antidote
4/13	1:30 pm	TGIF! Movie: <i>The Producers</i>
4/14	2:00 pm	Celebrate Poetry w/ Tiferet Journal

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN-CHECK WEBSITE FOR SIGN UP INFO

4/6, 13	10:00 am	Playgroup for Babies 0-23 mos.
4/6	3:45 pm	Chess Club for Kids-No age limit but players must know how to move pieces
4/7	10:00 am	Paws to Read-Beginning readers read to library dogs in ten-minute segments
4/10	6:30 pm	Evening LEGO Club 5+ years
4/3, 10, 17	10:30 am	2's on Tuesday Storytime
4/3, 10, 17	1:00 pm	Crafternoon Storytime 3 1/2-5 yrs
4/5, 12, 19	10:30 am	3's on Thursday Storytime