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CAST SPOTLIGHT: HANNAH WAGES AND RAYMOND NELSON

April 15, 2021 by Brigid O'Leary

FREDERICKSBURG, VA—The opening performance of “A Special Covid-19,” a musical based on the pandemic of 2020, reflecting the challenges of our current times as lived by someone with a disability, is looming—only two days away. The two-act musical completely written, directed, and performed by a cast and crew of people with disabilities has a cast of 10 and two of them are Hannah Wages and Raymond Nelson.



“I feel like a lot of people were talking about the coronavirus, but we never saw the worried side of it.”


Hannah Wages

Fourteen-year-old Wages was cast as Augusta Shaw, the school principal who breaks the news to her students that, due to COVID-19, schools will be closing for the foreseeable future.

“I was really excited and thought, ‘that’ll be fun,’” Wages said about being cast in the role. As a fan of musical theater—who can’t decide between *The Greatest Showman* and *Carrie: The Musical* for her favorites — Wages often sings or plays songs from musicals at STEP VA Open Mic events. Now, she’s enjoying the experience of being *in* a musical. When asked what her favorite part about being in the musical, Wages couldn’t decide. Though she eventually decided on singing and being with her friends, she said she’s enjoying “everything.”

It’s a step toward ‘normal’ for her and her family, and Wages said that while the musical is fun, it’s also very real.

“I feel like a lot of people were talking about the coronavirus, but we never saw the worried side of it,” she said.



“I chose [to give my character an accent] because I like to do different voices. They make the characters interesting.”

Raymond Nelson

In a role that complements Augusta Shaw, 17-year-old Raymond Nelson plays the role of Mario Longtooth, an anchor on the Red News Network who keeps the residents of the musical world informed about what's happening with the community.

“I felt happy and excited and honored to be asked,” he said about being cast in the show.

Though Nelson has no aspirations to be a news anchor in real life, he definitely has acting chops and assumes an accent for his character with ease, never deviating from it for the duration of the show.

“Mario’s voice is inspired by Ringo Starr and his voiceovers on the Thomas The Tank Engine videos. I chose it because I like to do different voices. They make the characters interesting,” he explained.

Nelson, whose favorite song of the musical is “I Miss My Friends,” also has a talent for art and designed the playbill cover for the musical, of which he is particularly proud and had a lot of fun creating.

Sponsored by STEP VA Inc, a local 501c nonprofit that “empowers people with special needs through artistic expression and sensory exploration,” the musical will hit the stage at Fredericksburg Christian School this Saturday, April 17 at 6:30 p.m., and again on April 18 at 2:30 p.m. Both shows have limited seating due to the ongoing pandemic. All tickets must be purchased in advance, as no tickets will be sold at the door. For

those unable to attend in person, a livestream will be available for Saturday's show. The livestream will be made available to online ticket holders on April 17th.

Tickets for both general admission, in-person seating and the live stream are available online at stepva.org.

For more information, to donate, or to purchase tickets, please visit www.stepva.org.

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