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**The Herald**

## MPC Theatre begins a season on the road with a co-production of 'Grease' at Carmel High's new performing arts center

By LILY DAYTON  
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When asked how it was going with Monterey Peninsula College Theatre Company's first on-the-road production, department chairman Gary Bolen said, "It's a daily adventure."

He didn't mean it facetiously. Sure, the challenges of producing a show in a new theater space while the MPC Theatre begins a massive renovation are many.

For one, the tech shop has been moved to a Sand City warehouse, where the set must be built, dismantled, trucked to Carmel High School, then reassembled almost like IKEA theater set pieces.

Then there is the hitch that Carmel High's theater is not just new to MPC players, but literally still in the making — with lighting and sound technicians installing electrical equipment as MPC crews get ready for the theatrical production.

But, as Bolen said, "If it was easy, it would be no fun." And, if this first road show production can be described as anything, it's fun.

In co-production with Carmel High School's Theatre Arts Department, MPC Theatre Company presents the musical "Grease," opening tonight (Thursday).

Co-directed by Bolen and Michael Jacobs, the production stars Lana Richards in the role of innocent Sandy, and Chris Marcos in the role of "bad boy" Danny.

Also appearing in this production are Matt Pardue, Dominik Haws, Erika Lygren, Linda Dale, Nico Abiera, Brenda Gonzalez, Ethan McDaniel, Carissa Redfield, Camilla de la Llata, Roxanne Cheysson, Tyler Winick and Dale Thompson. The production also features

MPC Theatre alum John Radley.

The creative team includes musical director Brian Handley, vocal director Sean Boulware, choreographer Susan Cable, scenic designer Dan Beck and scenic artist Carey Crocket.

In what has been described as America's original "high school musical," the Greasers and their gals — the "Pink Ladies" — reign at Rydell High School.

When sweet Sandy Dumbrowski moves into town and steals gang leader Danny Zuko's heart, she shakes everything up.

Will Danny manage to keep his cool to maintain his tough-guy image in front of his gang, or will he finally admit to Sandy that "You're the One That I Want"?

"Grease" was nominated for seven Tony Awards during its initial 1972 Broadway run, closing as the longest-running show in Broadway history after playing 3,388 performances.

In 1978, the film version of "Grease" became a blockbuster hit, starring John Travolta and Olivia Newton-John.

The film produced one of the best-selling soundtracks in history — with favorite songs that have come to define an era, such as "You're the One That I Want," "Summer Nights" and "Hopelessly Devoted to You."

After winning three Tony Award nominations during

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its revival Broadway run in 1994, a new Broadway production of "Grease" opened in 2007 and was nominated for a 2008 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical.

MPC first produced a successful run of "Grease" in 2002, which Bolen also directed. For that initial production he also collaborated with Cable as choreographer and Beck as scenic designer.

"It would be really easy to say, 'We did everything right; let's do it again,'" said Bolen. "But we have a new cast — a larger cast — and an entirely new space. We have to re-imagine the way the show looks in each of the numbers. We're reinventing this thing as we go along."

This is one of the reasons why Bolen is grateful for veteran performers, such as Marcos and de la Llata, who have had years of acting experience in productions on the Peninsula but are still young enough for adolescent performers to connect with.

With 60 percent of the cast from Carmel High's theater arts department, this is an important component of the show.

"They have tremendous energy," said Bolen, speaking of the high school actors. "It's going to be explosive from the first moment of the show. They're blended with seasoned performers like Chris and Camilla who give a stabilizing, veteran presence."

"'Grease' is something I've always wanted to do," said Marcos. "It's just a good time. The music is really fun — there are a lot of familiar tunes."

Though he gets many questions about dance steps from younger cast members, Marcos said mentoring involves not so much telling them what to do, but just being there as a young adult.

"It's showing them what kind of attitude to take to the stage, modeling professional behavior."

"Grease" will be the first musical that Carmel High has produced in 20 years. Though the high school has a theater department and a dance department, this production marks the first time the two have come together — and Bolen said that he's been amazed at the results.

When he saw the visual and performing arts show that opened the new theater last month, he was

eager to work with Carmel High musicians for "Grease."

"This is a coproduction," said Bolen, "but it's not going to look like a high school production. My expectations were high and they have been met."

Lily Dayton can be reached at [montereybaylily@gmail.com](mailto:montereybaylily@gmail.com).GO!

#### THEATER OPENING

- What:** MPC Theatre Company and Carmel High School Theatre Arts Department present "Grease"
- Where:** Carmel High School Performing Arts Center, 3600 Highway 1 at Ocean Avenue, Carmel
- When:** Opens at 7:30p.m. Thursday, April 7; continues at 7:30p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 2p.m. Sunday through April 17
- Tickets:** \$10-\$20 with discounts for seniors, young adults (16-25) and military at MPC Box Office (646-4213) 3-7p.m Wed-Fri. or at [www.mpctheatre.com](http://www.mpctheatre.com)
- Information:** 646-4213 or [www.mpctheatre.com](http://www.mpctheatre.com)



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