

ISSUE 10:
 March 2022

Welcome to the SCVi Leader Newspaper! This periodical has been created with the sole purpose of allowing the Learners at SCVi to have a greater understanding of the world around them, which they will receive both by working on or reading the Leader. Most news in today's world is either exaggerated and depressing, or carefully selected by the internet to fit into each of our specific viewpoints, but the Leader's aim is to hopefully break that pattern, by providing unbiased news chosen by our own Learner-Led staff!

Hugo Turner - Editor In Chief/ Layout design

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Hugo Turner, Editor in Chief

Fiction or Reality: The Social Relevance of Can't Pay? Don't Pay

by Hugo Turner

Image Credit: DoLA.com. Pictured: Kaili Hollister as Antonia

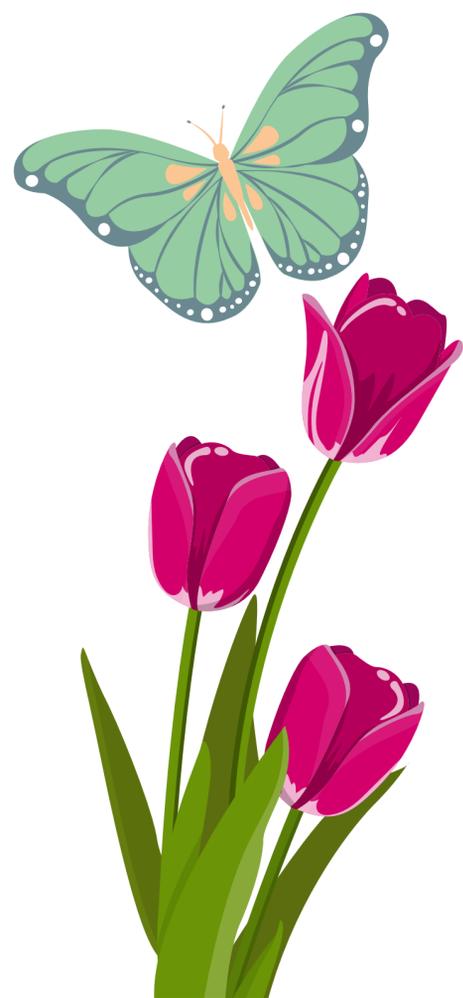


So what does the Actors' Gang current production of **Can't Pay? Don't Pay!** have to do with present day real life? Apparently, everything!

Founded In 1981 by Academy Award-winning actor Tim Robbins (Shawshank Redemption; Mystic River), the Actors' Gang set out to produce "relevant and vibrantly entertaining plays". The Actors' Gang is known for not only their plays, but their educational programs at local schools providing students a safe space to express themselves, as well as the Prison Project, a program

established to help rehabilitate prisoners who participate in an intensive program allowing them to express their fears, choose empathy over anger, overcome gang barriers, and prepare for life beyond bars.

Over the years, the Actors' Gang has infused almost all of their plays with a clear social relevance. Such relevance is especially apparent in their latest production **Can't Pay? Don't Pay!**





Current Events

Originally written in the 1970's by Nobel Prize winning playwright Dario Fo, a longtime mentor to Robbins and supporter of the Actors' Gang, *Can't Pay? Don't Pay!* is a farcical drama/comedy taking place in an exaggerated(?) version of modern day America. It follows recently unemployed and very poor housewife Antonia, as she joins a revolt protesting rising supermarket prices that have forced her to settle for a diet of dog food and birdseed. When the revolt leads to looting at the supermarket, she and her friend Margherita scramble to find a way to hide the "liberated" goods from the authorities and their husbands! The play uses satirical and absurd scenarios in order to offer a perspective on issues that have remained relevant since the 70's, with a few extras that reflect on current events. It covers topics such as inflation, rampant joblessness, and workers' rights.

In an interview with the Cast, and Director Bob Turton, I was able to gain new insight into the political nature of the play, and how the Cast and Crew were able to combine the age-old unresolved societal issues in the text with the modern societal problems that current audiences might be aware of.



Clockwise, left to right: Luis Quintana, Hugo Turner, Kaili Hollister, Bob Turton, and Jeremie Loncka on the set of *Can't Pay? Don't Pay!*



Current Events

“There are sections of the play that Dario Fo has written in to be overtly political” says Jeremie Loncka, who plays Antonia’s husband, Giovanni. Referring to a politically charged speech given by Luis Quintana, who plays Margherita’s husband Luigi, Loncka says, “So like Luis’ speech, you bring stuff in and riff based on current events that are happening. Those (speeches) are always changing and designed to change.” About his added reference to the recent Uvalde shootings, Quintana said, “I added thoughts and prayers.” The fluid political awareness extended throughout the casting of the play, with Stephanie Galindo (who is Latino), saying that playing four characters in the play reminded them of “one of [their] people, immigrants, that came here from a country, and has to work four jobs.”

Can’t Pay? Don’t Pay!’s run started before Covid, and was the last show the Actors’ Gang did before the pandemic. But when the pandemic hit, the show was forced to close its run.

During my interview I got some insight as to why, when the lockdown lifted, they continued performing this particular production instead of starting something new. Director Bob Turton explained: “There was a joke, when there was a lull in numbers, and I was like, Hey, COVID numbers are down a little bit, so we’re going to reopen the play next week. So if you guys can just clear your schedules, we’re going to do a couple of rehearsals and whatever. It was a joke.” But as Turton explains, once the lockdown was over, the choice of which play to perform became clear. “It became like: Oh my God! All these things were happening in the world that were directly from the play. So it just became an inevitability that we had to bring it back.”

Current Events



Adding to this, Kaili Hollister (who plays Antonia, the main character) stated that she saw “people outside of an apartment building downtown, with signs that said: Can't pay? Don't pay!” in protest of being expected to pay rent and fearing eviction while being unable to work to make money during the Covid lockdown.

Can't Pay? Don't Pay! emphasizes womens' roles and rights in both relationships and society. Regarding this, Hollister acknowledges the contributions Fo's wife, Franca Rame, made to the play, “I was really inspired by Dario's wife. When I started researching Dario, when we started working on this play, I realized how much he was influenced by his wife, who was a really amazing actress in Italy. And she really helped him create very strong female characters that had a lot to say, especially for that time, the seventies.”

Staged in a style similar to multi-camera sitcoms, Lynde Houck sees further influence on the relations of women in Can't Pay? Don't Pay! coming from the famed 50s sitcom I Love Lucy. “Dario Fo wrote a lot for television. So I think in a lot of the play we are basically, you know, Ethel and Lucy,” Houck adds, explaining the relationship between Antonia and Margherita in the play. About the Actors' Gang, Houck says, “I genuinely think this is one of the best theater companies in LA. Being from New York, where there are 40 that are amazing, here there are just a handful.”

Inflation and the Housing Crisis are still big issues, and are affecting many people today. According to Larry Gross, Executive Director of L.A.'s Coalition for Economic Survival, “No one is talking about preserving our affordable housing” in the current Mayor's Race. This is why Can't Pay? Don't Pay!'s run is instrumental in increasing public awareness of these issues. And with primary elections set to occur tomorrow on June 7th, it couldn't have come at a better time!



Can't Pay? Don't Pay! runs for another week and will have its final curtain on Saturday, June 11th, don't miss it!!!.

Art is a powerful tool. It allows people to be exposed to situations they couldn't before see, and feel things they couldn't before feel. It allows not only the creation of immersive fantastical worlds, but also ones that are very real and relevant. When it comes to theater, the Actors' Gang seems to understand this better than any other company.

The Walkout: What SCVi's Protest Means

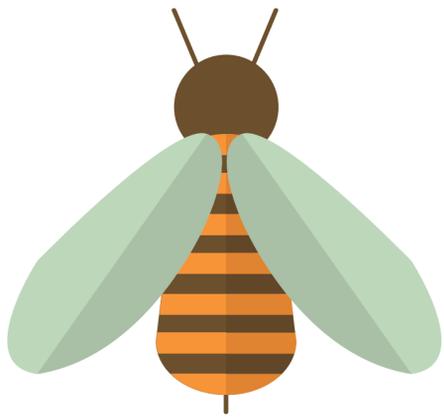
by Diamante Cameron



Image Credit: LA Times

On Thursday, May 26th at 9:00am dozens of students at SCVi got up and silently walked out of their classrooms. The students stood in the quad with signs that demanded their voices be heard. They demanded that they should not have to go to school in fear, that these horrors shouldn't continue. The students demanded action not thoughts and prayers.

On average, everyday 120 people die and 200 people are injured from gun violence. This is not a problem that we can sit idly by and let more and more people lose their lives from. There needs to be more people caring about this and actually making a difference, but one organization that is desperately trying to make some sort of difference is Every Town For Gun Safety. Originally Everytown was called Mayors Against Gun Violence and was started by, as the name suggests, mayors. In 2006 13 mayors around the states combined into an organization to try and push laws for better gun safety. Then in 2012 Shannon Watts, a stay at home mom, created a group called Moms Demand Action in response to the horrific Sandy Hook shooting. A year later Moms Demand Action and Mayors Against Gun Violence merged together into what is now known as Everytown.

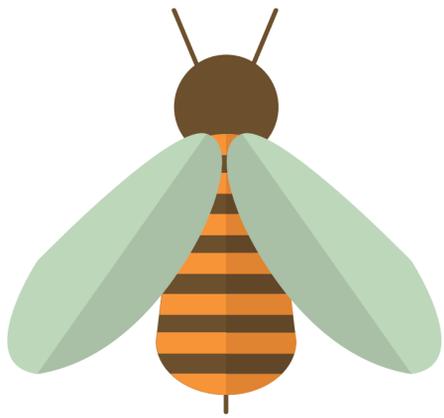


Then on February 14th, 2018 an expelled student killed 17 students and injured 17 more at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland Florida. This atrocity created a new wave of protests and movements to try and prevent something like this from ever happening again. One of the biggest movements was March For Our Lives, a protest that was created by the new Students Demand Action organization. This march had over 40 locations and 2.5 million people in attendance, yet even with media attention law makers turned a blind eye and continued to do nothing. And though it must have been so disheartening for no actions to be made, Students Demand Action continued to make protests and legislations in order to stop gun violence especially at schools.



Image Credit: NBC

The most recent protest was a nationwide walkout in reaction to the Texas elementary school shooting that killed 19 people. At 9am students and teachers from all over the nation walked out of the classroom. At SCVi the majority of students and a lot of teachers all joined in the quad to protest gun violence. We stood there with signs saying things such as “school is for learning not lockdowns”, “we deserve to feel safe”, and “fix this before I text my family from under a desk”. It was honestly surreal. The amount of students there and the somber anger of it all. There have been so many tragedies over the past couple years, Sandy Hook, Parkland, Sagus, and the list goes on and on for pages. The majority of people have become too numb to it all. Children dying in their classrooms has become something that just happens, something that I myself have caught myself thinking “when” and not “if”. School shooting drills happen as often as earthquake and fire drills. This is not normal and this is not ok. No student should be in fear every time they hear a loud bang. We shouldn’t have to lock our doors, teachers shouldn’t have to act as guards. This horror should never have started much less should it seemingly never stop. The time to act was before the trigger was pulled in the first place, no one acted then so we need to act now.



In the Doghouse: Inside SCVi's You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown

by Paul o'Brien

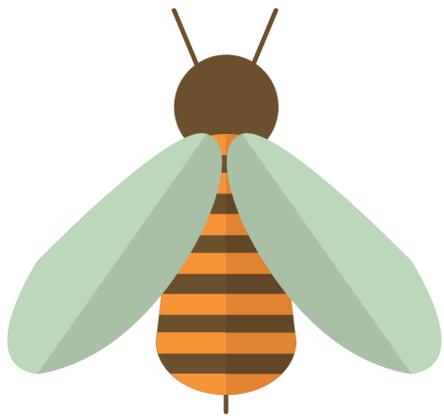


Left to right: Dia Cameron, Lucy Zavala, Hugo Turner, Bella Abarta

Theater is a large part of SCVi's curriculum and community. Every year since the High School has opened, SCVi has done at least 2 productions. However, with the rise of COVID-19, and the ensuing pandemic, these productions obviously could not happen. But in the 2021-2022 school year, things really kicked back into gear for theater with the fall 2021 production, *Butterfly at the Bottom of the Box* and most recently, spring 2022's production of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*. As the first musical since COVID, *Charlie Brown* marks an important step in the full recovery of SCVi's theater program but its production was not without its quirks.

The first thing I would like to touch on is the fact that the show was double casted. The show only had 6 characters, however more than 6 people auditioned so we had to double cast the play, meaning that one cast would perform one day and the other on the other day. Both casts went to the same rehearsals however, allowing each pair to share ideas and improve their depictions of the character, something I found very helpful in portraying Snoopy.

However the double cast wasn't the only quirk that happened during production. At the beginning of production, a small outbreak of COVID happened within the cast right after auditions. This put us slightly behind schedule, but another hiccup caused even more delay. Due to internal confusion, licensed scripts and the rights to the show were not purchased until weeks into the rehearsal schedule. With these delays in view, the two casts had to really work hard to get the production ready in time.



The final thing I will talk about is the hours. For the rehearsals, we usually ended up staying from the end of school, to between 5:30 to 7:00. This time commitment made it much harder to do outside schoolwork, in my opinion the experience of working on the show was well worth it.



Paul O'Brien (left) and Noah Memel (right) as Snoopy

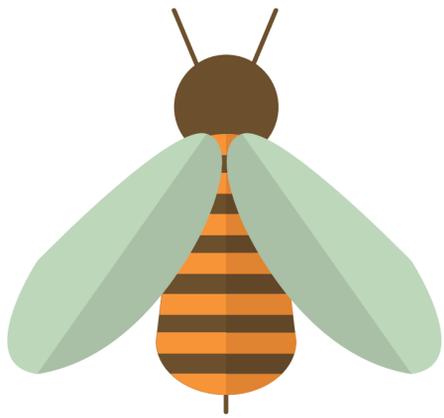
It took a lot of time and effort, but in the end the show turned out fantastic. Despite everything, I had tons of fun performing this show with all of the amazing people who worked on it. The theater program here is a gateway to meeting all sorts of interesting people and learning fascinating new skills. I would love to do it again next semester with whichever play they choose, and I encourage others to do the same.

Can't Pay? Don't Pay! A Review

by Hugo Turner

A lot has happened in the last two years, with issues over homelessness, joblessness, inflation, adequacy of working environments and pay running rampant. Then, like it wasn't already bad enough, a literal plague called Covid came along and hilariously decided to make everything worse. But all through the chaos, the human spirit has remained, showing itself unbreakable even in times of hardship. This is what the current Actor's Gang production of Can't Pay? Don't Pay! pays tribute to.

Written originally in Italy by Nobel Laureate Dario Fo and Franca Rame in 1974, Can't Pay? Don't Pay! Is now being performed at the Actor's Gang headquarters at the Ivy Substation in Culver City (read the first article in this issue for more information on the Actor's Gang itself). Can't Pay? Don't Pay! is a farcical and satirical play that gives critique on the causes of social and financial desperation and serves as a call to action against them.

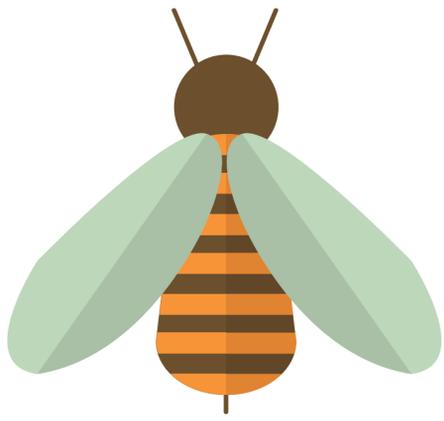


ation in the banter and even sometimes blocking. This fluidity makes each performance an experiment and adds to the show's re-watchability. Even on subsequent viewings you never truly know what's coming, and I feel there's a strange sort of beauty in that.

Another thing that really allows *Can't Pay? Don't Pay!* to shine is its cast's excellent performances. Kaili Hollister plays a brilliantly funny Antonia, whose explosive, boisterous attempts at hiding the stolen goods make for an endlessly entertaining and effortlessly watchable crux for the story. Paired with Lynde Houck's Margherita, who serves as an anxious, strait laced foil to Antonia's comic hijinks (or as Lynde describes it, "the Ethel to her Lucy"). Opposite them are their husbands, Jeremie Loncka's Giovanni, and Luis Quintana's Luigi. Loncka does a great job as the bellowing, thick-skulled Giovanni, making him brash and aggressive but not unlikeable (which leads perfectly into his amazing character arc). Quintana's Luigi plays a politically conscious, much calmer (though still very funny) foil to Giovanni's hotheadedness.

Set against the two families is the dynamic duo of Steven Porter and Stephanie Galindo (He/They), who, throughout the performance, take on the roles of a pair of Police Officers, FBI Agents, Undertakers, and Giovanni's father and his nurse, respectively. The two blend perfectly into each new role, alternating characters often on a moment's notice, and bringing freshness to these quick-change shifts, playing each one masterfully.

Porter's physicality is perfect for farce, especially when he is introduced as a tough as nails police officer who behind closed doors reveals his life-long passion for modern dance. This is only rivaled by his skill in acting, creating some of the best comedic moments in the show. I saw the play multiple times, including a performance when Porter was out of the country, and the play's director, Bob Turton slid in seamlessly and hilariously to deliver a wild and intensely funny performance. Turton does an amazing job, providing a somehow even more animated yet just-subtle-enough interpretation. Playing alongside both Porter and Turton effortlessly is Stephanie Galindo, who subtly improvises their performances to match the energy and dynamism of Porter and Turton, respectively, making her sidekick characters memorable and hilarious.



Steven Porter and Stephanie Galindo as FBI Agents

Staged in a one-room tenement apartment, with the rest of the city projected around it in cartoonish sketch style, the set resembles that of a multi-camera sitcom (FRIENDS, BIG BANG THEORY). This complements playwright Dario Fo's fast-paced writing originally influenced by his largely TV background.

Bob Turton's fast paced directing further enhances the sitcom style, utilizing not only the set, but the stage areas around the set, as well as the seating area, pulling in the audience as part of the production.

Can't Pay? Don't Pay! is a hilarious and intriguing production, different in that it seems to prioritize being a call to action and political piece, over its narrative. But what causes it to really shine is the way the team at the Actor's Gang blend the characterization with contemporary politics, creating a hilarious experience that must be enjoyed and appreciated on its own terms.



Student Art!



This Issue's Theme:

Empowerment



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