

## **"Move Toward the Darkness" at Laguna Hills' The Addams Family 4/29/22**

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"The Addams Family" follows the story of an ungraceful union between two families. When Wednesday Addams and Lucas Beineke become engaged, their vastly different upbringings clash against one another to tell a heartfelt tale amidst a semi-monstrous backdrop.

Two outstanding performances come from Wednesday's parents, Gomez and Morticia Addams, played by J.P. Van Dam and Emily Ash, respectively. Van Dam, even when onstage completely by himself, still manages to fill it with his energy and enthusiasm, not to mention superb comedic timing. Maintaining a thick Spanish accent throughout the show, Van Dam excellently portrays the character of Gomez, also evidenced by his interactions with other characters including Morticia. As Morticia, Ash maintains her composure as the stern yet loving matriarch of the Addams household. Keeping a regal posture and switching effortlessly between a sweet and serious tone, Ash professionally takes on her character's persona and consistently brings the show back to its core message of family.

Contrasting the gothic-style Addams' are the more grounded characters of Mal and Alice Beineke, played by Nicolas Fuller and Grace Bissonette, respectively. Fuller expertly plays the conservative and controlling father that foils Gomez, and adeptly switches to the more laidback version of Mal following his character's revelation. Bissonette shines through her exceptional voice. In the song, "Waiting," Bissonette takes to the stage (or more accurately, the table), delivering a powerful solo number that demonstrates her full range as both a singer and actress.

Skillfully assisting the production are its technical teams, especially stage management, co-led by Audrey Masson and Monica Zaki. The team calls all lighting cues in a timely manner, which are then executed by Taylor Squires, Kiley Luke, and Andrea Weaver. The timing is especially effective in moments such as when Gomez steps out of reality for a split second to air his grievances to the audience, as the stage goes dark and a spotlight is cast on him with no delay whatsoever. All of these technical elements greatly contribute to the comedic timing and overall pacing of the show.

With a lively cast and accomplished crew, Laguna Hills High School succeeds in being both comedic and meaningful in its performance of "The Addams Family."