

El Dorado's "Big Fish" Catches Its Audience Hook, Line, And Sinker
written by Myles Zintl, a junior at Los Alamitos High School

In a time that prioritizes a good story over a real one, where does the truth go when its witnesses won't speak it? "Big Fish" is about a son revisiting his father's bedtime stories- and what truth they may hold.

Blake Schalliol plays Edward Bloom, a former traveling salesman and current senior citizen facing his mortality. Schalliol flits between the mythic, youthful hero in Edward's stories and the real-world Bloom at odds with his adult son- Will Bloom, played by Thomas Wu. Will bears both youthful inexperience and aged skepticism, faced with fatherhood and losing his own father; Wu takes these complex traits in stride, complaining about the lack of realism in his father's stories while sitting in the midst of one or exuding joy at the prospect of having a son. Together, Wu and Schalliol are magnetic, torn apart by their differences in "This River Between Us"; Schalliol's low-swinging notes are neatly contrasted by Wu's tight tenor, reflecting the sharp divide between their mentalities of fable and fact.

Edward's most entertaining story by far is the bombastic opening to Act II, in which he saves an army general from assassination by the notorious Red Fang, played by Owen Switzer. Switzer not only juggles multiple roles onstage, but also choreographed the entire musical, including "Red, White, and True". As patriotic dancers sing at a morale booster for a group of soldiers, Schalliol spots Switzer's assassination attempt and tries to stop him- ducking, bobbing, and weaving through the dancers, at one point even jumping into a tap sequence with the other dancers in perfect synchronization. These antics culminate when the two exchange a volley of poisoned darts, involving masterful sleight-of-hand by both actors- leaving the audience cheering.

The actors' efforts on-stage are bolstered further by a robust tech department. Especially worthy of note is the EDHS Set Team, with their efforts exemplified in the musical number "Daffodils", in which flowers pop one-by-one out of bushes, lanterns descend from the ceiling, and wooden panels rotate to reveal hundreds of strips of daffodils. This transformation happens seamlessly- all at once transforming from the dull greens and grays of Auburn University to a dazzling, surreal shimmer of gold coating the stage.

El Dorado's "Big Fish" is a surprisingly human spectacle that's sure to leave the audience reeling!