

Orange Lutheran's *Into the Woods* is Anything but Agony
written by Evan Pagan, a senior at Los Alamitos High School

Fairy-tale characters wish for things they cannot get, but will it be happily ever after when everyone is seemingly happy? These woods hold these answers, mysterious and magical as they may be.

Faith Novak's Witch is impeccable, with every screech and cry, every hunched and screamed response in Act One, to the fabulous glamour of Act Two, yet still infused with utterly sensitive acting, tenderly and cruelly caressing Rapunzel, and a nasally voice, reminding that the Witch still has her bite. Novak explodes with passion and anger in "Last Midnight," blowing the audience away with a fierce belt and incredible acting choices.

Baker and the Baker's Wife, Corey Navarro and Aylania LeBlanc, are adorably sweet, with maturity and tenderness. Navarro quietly devastates the audience with a soulful yet simple "No More," with a beautiful vibrato and wonderful control over his instrument. LeBlanc charms and shows every single thought with "Moments in the Woods," creating a wonderfully feisty yet tender character, with every quizzical expression and witty remark.

Kyle Monson is light and free as Jack with stunning vocals in "Giants of the Sky." With a perfectly bouncy physicality and wonderful sense of playfulness, he is a standout. His wide eyes and earnestness perfectly contrast with the rest of the ensemble. The Princes, Cinderella's being played by the delightful silly and vocally perfect Peyton Simon, and Rapunzel's with Eli Zarubin's robust vocals and proud swagger, leave the audience in hysterics with their their hilariously over the top "Agony" and "Agony Reprise." Lily Elliott's Cinderella possesses a crystal clear soprano, especially clear and crisp in the very intricate "On the Steps of the Palace," yet her royalty and sweetness are as clear as her diction and enunciation.

The standout song is the second act number "Your Fault," the five actors nailing the iconic Sondheim patter. The climax of the story is delivered perfectly with tension and suspense with the actor's incredible musicality.

Overall, Orange Lutheran makes not just children listen, but everyone lean in, for incredible acting, beautiful ensemble work and vocals that are well beyond high-school students. *Into the Woods* takes more than two, but charms everyone into knowing that no one is alone.