

## Imagination Takes Flight at Fullerton Union's Mary Poppins written by Hailey Aguilar, a junior at Newport Harbor High School

Sometimes the most extraordinary changes arrive in the most unexpected ways. The high school production of *Mary Poppins* captures this idea beautifully with vibrant performances, lively choreography, and imaginative technical design that bring the beloved story to life.

The musical follows the troubled Banks family, whose children Jane and Michael struggle under their father's expectations. When the mysterious nanny Mary Poppins arrives floating in with her umbrella, she introduces them to playful lessons and adventures. Alongside her companion Bert, Mary helps the family rediscover the importance of joy, imagination and togetherness.

Zoe McLaughlin leads the production with a remarkable presence as Mary Poppins. Her clear, soaring vocals fill the theater with effortless strength, particularly in "Practically Perfect," where her graceful posture and confident presence introduce the magical nanny. Jacob Thompson shines as Bert, captivating the audience with animated facial expressions, energetic body movement, and a distinctive accent.

The supporting cast brings delightful personality and humor to the production. Kayla McVicar portrays the frantic maid Mrs. Brill with sharp comedic timing, using exaggerated frustration and sarcasm that causes frequent laughter. Alejandro Thompson complements her well as Robertson Ay, their chaotic dynamic creating memorable comedic moments. Annejulissa Mercado and Aubree Lara as Jane and Michael share wonderful chemistry, capturing the innocence of childhood while singing sweetly together in "The Perfect Nanny." Emma Day also makes a striking impression as Miss Andrew, delivering a commanding vocal performance that made her appearance unforgettable.

One of the production's greatest achievements comes from student choreographer Rio Gomez, who choreographed the entire show. Her work is most impressive in "Step in Time," where fast-paced tap sequences, coordinated sweep props, and synchronized movements create a thrilling number. Despite the complexity of the number, the ensemble maintains a clear rhythm and cohesive visual flow.

The technical team further enhances the show's magic. Lighting fills the stage with playful pinks, blues, and greens reflecting the story's childlike wonder, while fog drifting across rooftop scenes creates a dreamy atmosphere. The costume crew crafted over 161 costumes, designing Jane and Michael's pastel wardrobes to emphasize their youth while allowing Mary and Bert's outfits to be safely rigged for flight.

Through energetic performances, creative choreography, and thoughtful technical work, this production of *Mary Poppins* delivers a joyful theatrical experience, reminding audiences that imagination can make any day extraordinary.