

JITTERS. Senior **Alessandra Peña** reads the show's advertisement for the first time, minutes before the opening act begins. Waiting behind the curtains for their turn to perform, the actors felt many emotions. "I felt so much adrenaline rushing through my body while I was backstage because I remembered how much time it took us to perfect all of our lines, dances, and songs," Peña said.

Photo provided by Valeria Castillo

“As my seventh year being a partner actor, the group became my second family. I love every moment with them.”

- Alessandra Peña '23



BEFORE THE SHOW, junior **Valeria Castillo Colmenares** gives the corresponding prop to the lead role of the play. Castillo worked backstage, helping the actors get ready and managing props. "In between scenes, I had to make sure the actors had the props they needed," Castillo said. *Photo by Irma Becker, Area Stage Company*



AFTER THE SHOW, junior **Andrea Malpica Alcalá** takes a picture with an actor in a leading role. Malpica worked with the group over the summer, and to support them she went to watch the second day of the show. "It was fun spending time with the actors and seeing the performance," Malpica said. *Photo provided by Andrea Malpica Alcalá*



UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT, junior **Sofia Suarez Barajas** dances next to her partner actor during the second scene of the show. Suarez worked every day for six months with her partner actor, practicing the choreographies for both acts. Suarez encouraged her partner actor to follow her along, in order to not miss any steps from the dance routine. *Photo provided by Irma Becker, Area Stage Company*

helping out

Students took on roles to inspire others in a musical theater performance.

Senior **Alessandra Peña** reviewed a promotional flyer for "Disney's Aladdin, Jr.," with one of the actors of the Inclusion Theater Project at Area Stage Company just minutes before the curtains were drawn. It was June 3, opening night, and all of the work they had put in for the past six months would finally be revealed to a live audience.

Peña, along with junior **Sofia Suarez Barajas**, participated as partner dancers to guide actors with disabilities during every choreography of the show. Having participated in the volunteer summer program for seven years, Peña said she relished every moment when she helped actors choreograph their dances.

"I met most of them when I was in fifth grade, and throughout the years, I have seen them grow not only as actors but also as mature, resilient individuals," Peña said.

The cast showcased a two-hour musical performance, where they learned all of the songs, dances, and their respective scripts during a five-month period. Peña and Suarez helped the actors execute their best performances in every scene of the show.

"Working with these actors is always a very inspiring activity. Seeing them perform high-quality shows and put their entire effort demonstrates the potential and dedication they have for acting," Suarez said.

The actors and volunteers spent countless hours rehearsing every day. This helped them grow comfortable with one another. Junior **Andrea Malpica Alcalá** was also a cast member who participated in every rehearsal before the show, and attended their final production of the summer.

"My favorite moment was when I got to see the finished show because I felt so proud of what we had achieved as a team," Malpica said.

Inspired by the actors' performance, Peña said she plans to volunteer one last time before she leaves for college.

"I want to participate one more time. It is always a beautiful experience. I cannot express how extraordinary it is to see the actors' smiles at the end of every show," Peña said.

Story by Valeria Castillo



ON THE go

*Senior **Marcelo Gaitan** traveled abroad to build a family home.*

Senior **Marcelo Gaitan** shovelled dirt at an abandoned outdoor space to provide a new home for a family. Gaitan traveled for seven days to Antigua, Guatemala to participate in The God's Child Project, where he was assigned to construct a 192-square-foot house for a family of five. "It felt great making a change for this family in Guatemala, because now they will have a comfortable and safe place to eat, sleep, and raise their children," Gaitan said. *Photos provided by Marcelo Gaitan*

A DIFFERENCE making



Blue Missions volunteers helped provide new bathrooms and access to sanitation.

Sawing a metal rod with the help of the owner of the house, junior **Luciana Hornstein** took part in the Blue Missions trip along with sophomore **Chloe Lyon** and junior **Lucca Jimenez**. These students had the opportunity to work on a sanitation project for a remote community in the Dominican Republic. "It was a great learning experience, and it helped me put everything into perspective and realize that life is truly about the simple things that make you happy," Hornstein said. *Photos by Luciana Hornstein and Chiara Zecchini*