

# Moorpark College Theatre Arts Presents spring production “Kinky Boots”: Preaching acceptance in an increasingly diverse world

By Claire Boeck

The Moorpark Theatre Arts Department premiered their spring production “Kinky Boots” on Thursday, March 10, 2022, in the Performing Arts Center.

After a long and discouraging battle in the face of COVID-19 precautions and district procedures, Director John Loprieno was finally able to bring the theater department back onto Moorpark College’s stage without masks being required for the performers.

The department had a rocky start to the eight-week-long production after numerous obstacles including being unable to rehearse inside or have tech crews gather in groups larger than two or three people, according to Loprieno.

Other aspects of the production initially suffered because of COVID-19 related restrictions, such as the performers’ makeup.

“Part of our curriculum is teaching makeup as well as hair design, so it’s hard to show off student work with makeup when half your face is covered,” Loprieno said.

However, thanks to a nearly last-minute decision by the Moorpark administration, “Kinky Boots” returned to Moorpark College on the main stage with a new set of guidelines allowing the actors to perform mask-free if they choose.

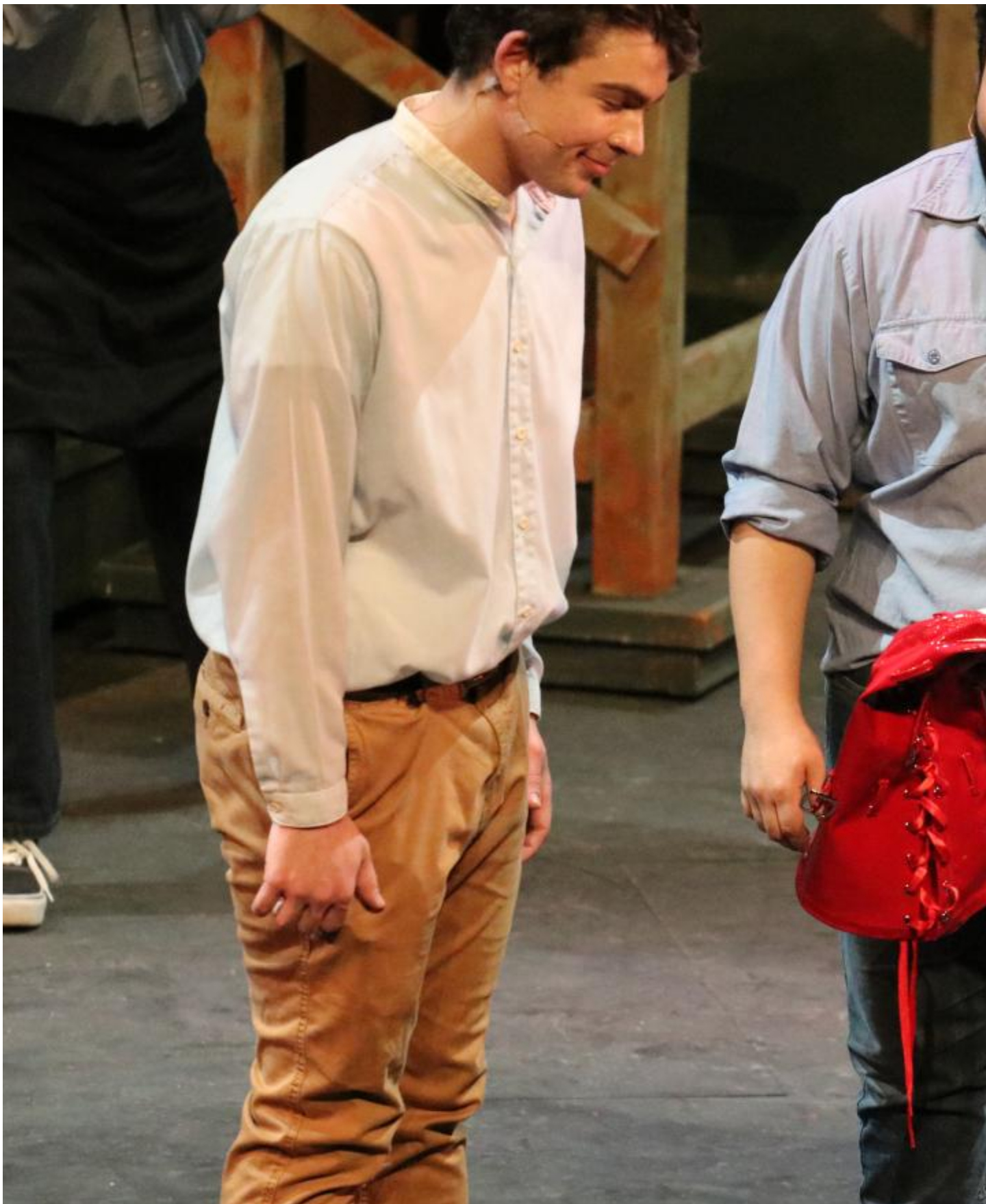
Performers who choose not to wear a mask are required to get a negative COVID-19 test twice a week and must put on a mask as soon as they leave the stage.

“Bottom line is we want to be safe for everybody, whether it’s for students or our audiences,” Loprieno emphasized. “So I fully appreciate what our administration has to weigh in terms of making these decisions.”



Christopher J. Thume commands the stage as Lola the drag queen in “Kinky Boots” at the Performing Arts Center on March 9, 2022 in Moorpark, CA. Photo credit: Claire Boeck





Dylan Woodford (Left), Efren Balam (Center), and Debbie Runge (Right) perform in "Kinky Boots" at the Performing Arts Center on March 10, 2012.

"Kinky Boots" was a 2005 British film that was adapted into a Broadway musical in 2012, loosely based on true events.

It tells the story of Charlie Price, who inherits a struggling shoe factory from his father. Throughout the course of the musical, Charlie develops a friendship with the boisterous drag queen Lola, who introduces a new way of thinking and living to both him and his shoe factory. Both characters learn new things about themselves and each other and celebrate their newfound ability to express who they truly are.

The themes present in "Kinky Boots," including compassion, acceptance, gender identity and expression, challenging society's expectations and the expectations of one's parents, are still relevant today according to Loprieno.

Lola the drag queen is played by Christopher J. Thume, who commented on the musical's continued relevance in today's world.

"Lola to me is a triumph over my own insecurities, my own doubts. Sometimes I forget to take my heels off after rehearsal, and even I was subject to hatred in my direction at a gas station once," Thume said. "That really was convincing to me that even in this day and age ... this work is still very important and relevant."





Dylan Woodford (Left), Celina Kott (Center), and Christopher J. Thume (Right) perform in “Kinky Boots” at the Performing Arts Center or

Certain elements of “Kinky Boots” provided a unique challenge to both Lola’s fellow drag performers, the Angels and the production’s choreographer Beth Megill. Many of the performers were asked to perform in drag for the very first time.

Care and attention was put into each little movement, gesture and attribute in order to convey the perceived differences between Lola and Simon, the drag queen’s initial birth name.

“In order to tell the story of Lola’s transformation from Simon, the gender roles had to get more rigid in order to be broken,” Megill explained. “We had to say, ‘for this purpose of this storytelling, we’re going to look at which movements identify us as masculine to a general public, and which movements identify us as feminine.’”

Loprieno celebrated the hard work of Moorpark’s students in a Director’s Note printed in the program for “Kinky Boots.”

“Of course, our students wanted to continue this production under any circumstances. Because they know that, even with masks on, in the theatre we can breathe freely,” Loprieno wrote. “We can live out loud. We can be profound. We can just be.”





Dylan Woodford (Left) and Christopher J. Thume (Right) perform in "Kinky Boots" at the Performing Arts Center on March 9, 2022 in Mo

"Kinky Boots" will play in the Performing Arts Center from March 10 to March 27. More information on "Kinky Boots" can be found [here](#).