

'Catch' the Player's newest musical romp

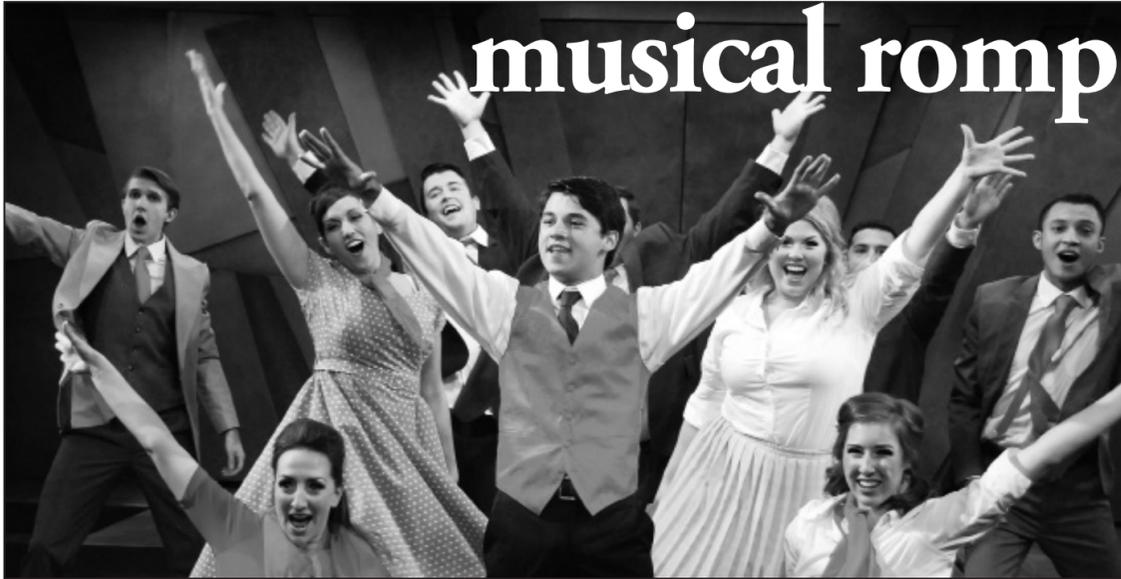


PHOTO BY TOM BROWN

A teenage con artist, Frank Abagnale Jr. (Michael Wheeler, center) proposes to tell his story with the opening rendition of "Live in Living Color," joined by members of the ensemble.

CANDICE BRUSUELAS
FEATURES EDITOR

Taking a step back from reality and postponing your problems another day just might be what you need; and while you do so, "catch" a showing of the Wimberley Player's latest, "Catch Me if You Can." The play is full of childlike play, song, dance and the spirit of escaping the crushing responsibilities of the real world.

Frank Abagnale Jr. (played by Michael Wheeler) grew up learning to avoid his problems, in part thanks to his father, Frank Abagnale Sr. (played by Danny Mosier) who encouraged Frank Jr.'s deceptive and wily nature, like when he pretended to be a substitute French teacher.

And then, when Frank Jr. is brought to court and told to choose which of his divorcing parents to live with, he runs away and starts making fake checks. Instead of finishing school or looking for an honest job, Frank Jr. forges a diploma and other paperwork to get himself where he wants.

We enter with the scene of FBI Agent Carl Hanratty (played by Derek Smootz) and his agents at the Miami airport, with Frank Jr. cornered. Frank pleads with them to let him tell his side of the story. And from there we see Frank's point of view, and where he went: From airline pilot to doctor to almost-lawyer and almost-husband.

Wheeler is perfect for the role and even channels Leonardo DiCaprio (who starred in the original film version of the story) in his slicked-back hair and utterly polite manner. Frank Jr. is brilliant and cunning, but also a gentleman. He has a boyish nature which effectively lends itself to the lighthearted musical.

The musical aspect of the play is well-suited to the story, and as Frank Jr.'s reality is a bit of a delusion, so is his song-and-dance telling of the story. It's the ultimate escape where he can tell his side, "in living color." Fleeing from the inevitable graduation to adulthood is something all can relate to in one

form or another, whether it be running from family troubles, lack of money, lack of education or being tied to one place.

At the same time, the viewer can't help but simultaneously root for Agent Hanratty, who stays in the office, even on Christmas, working tirelessly to catch Frank Jr. Hanratty is smart and also awkward in an endearing sort of way, and though his singing is not a beautiful performance, it suits him perfectly and makes for a unique musical moment.

The ensemble is large, but all seem to have quite a bit of time in the spotlight with song, dance and roles as various people Frank Jr. meets along the way. While the cast doesn't have the bold sound that came from "Young Frankenstein" the ensemble has an even more pleasant and irresistible harmony. Wheeler has a strong voice, as does Mosier, and the two have an incredibly

including moving spotlights to highlight the foreground or Frank Jr. when he addresses the audience directly. Not only this, but the set, like "Young Frankenstein," is mobile and diverse. Different backgrounds slide in and out, a sign for the bar swings in and out and a lot of furniture is wheeled in and out, including a ticket booth, the bar, hotel furniture and dining room tables. It's easy to forget this is a small-budget play, or even a play at all. The set and design is immersive in the best way possible.

By the time Frank Jr. realizes what he wants, to settle down, have a family and stop running, it's too late. We return to the opening scene and on to a conclusion. The final music and dance don't quite match up to what I consider the tone of the ending to be. While it's not my place to say what kind of ending that is, it is certainly conflicting.



PHOTO BY BILL PEELER

Frank Jr. (Wheeler) falls in love with nurse Brenda Strong (Alexandra Taylor) and convinces her to let him meet her parents.

endearing father-son duet in which their fun, loving relationship is palpable. Frank Jr.'s love interest Brenda Strong is played by Alexandra Taylor who also puts on an impressive vocal performance.

The lighting design by Bill Peeler was well-designed for this production,

The viewer will be delighted to escape into Frank Jr.'s world and seemingly cheat responsibility. "Catch Me if You Can" is lively and full of joy, despite hardships, tragedy and harsh reality. Frank Jr. learns all of these on the move, and learns that real life follows you, no matter how fast you run.

Willow Creek Project appears at the Park

CANDICE BRUSUELAS
FEATURES EDITOR

If you enjoyed last year's Willow Creek Project performance, the gang is back together again for another Summer in the Park. Willow Creek Project is a collaboration of local musicians like Grant Mazak, Wilbon Davis and Ponty Bone in a mash of blues, Tejano, country, zydeco grooves.

Summer in the Park host Barry Brittain is also a part of this group, performing on vocals and rhythm guitar. Brittain says the group gets together a couple times a year. The members mostly have their own projects and music to work on, but as friends (some for more than 25 years), they enjoy jamming together for special occasions like Terri Hendrix's Own Your Own Universe fundraiser at Cheatham Street.

"The name Willow Creek Project... it sort of sounds industrial, but our goal originally was just to record some of our original songs," said Brittain. "There wasn't any intention of being a performing group, but occasionally it's fun to get these songs out there."

Willow Creek Project has recorded two studio albums of all-original music. Brittain says the group passes



PHOTO COURTESY WILLOW CREEK PROJECT

Willow Creek Project. From left, in back, is Winston Haun, Greg Glowka; in middle row, Lauren Lind, Scott Wade, Wilbon Davis; and in front, Ponty Bone and Barry Brittain. Not pictured is Richard Bowden.

the songs around and lets all the artists have a bit of the spotlight.

"We let everyone have their moment on the microphone," he said. "We're a group of people who enjoy each other and enjoy performing original songs."

Though most of the performers have written some of the songs, Davis has written a majority of them.

"I think (Summer in the Park attendees) can expect a very energetic show performed, by people most in town know. They can expect to hear all original songs that most people haven't heard."

The show starts at 7:30 p.m. tonight at San Marcos Plaza Park.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

CFPO-PAL Fall Football/Cheerleading Registration

WHEN: Now through Aug. 15
WHERE: Camps and fall programs at CFPO fields, 333 Riemer Rd.
WHO: Ages 5-6 flag football, \$50; ages 7-12 tackle football, \$120; and summer football camp (July 21-23, 6-8 p.m.), \$25.
INFO: For more information visit <http://www.cfpo-palyouth-sports.com/> or call (512) 618-3081

Centro Summer Camp Classes

WHEN: Now through Aug. 14, Tuesdays through Fridays
WHERE: Centro Cultural Hispano de San Marcos, 211 Lee Street
WHO: Art classes for ages 3-13 years. Also offering "My Little Engineers Camp" (grades 4-5) which encourages children to be motivated by math and science at a young age. Fourth grade July 7-10, and fifth grade July 14-17.
INFO: Call Gloria Salazar at (512) 878-0640. Times vary by age range; call for more details.

San Marcos, Wimberley Area Youth Soccer Registration

WHEN: Now through July 31
WHERE: Register online at www.smsoccer.org
WHO: Boys and girls, ages 5-18. Prices vary per group. Financial/installment plans available.
INFO: For more information visit www.smsoccer.org or call (512) 392-0972

VFW Post 3413 and Ladies Auxiliary Monthly Meeting

WHEN: July 16 at 7 p.m., potluck at 6:30
WHERE: 1701 Hunter Road
WHO: All VFW/Ladies Auxiliary members and anyone interested in joining.
INFO: (512) 665-5668

Storytime For Toddlers

WHEN: July 16
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: For babies 0 to 2 at 10 and 11 a.m.
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

Art Experiments - Recycled Art with Beverly Mangham

WHEN: July 16 at 2 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Ages 6-16. No registration required.
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

VFW Post 3413 Friday Morning Breakfast

WHEN: Every Friday morning at 8 a.m.
WHERE: 1701 Hunter Road
WHO: All war veterans and their spouse
INFO: (512) 665-5668

Superhero Mask Craft

WHEN: July 17 at 2 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: All ages. Under 5 should bring adult help. Craft takes 20 minutes to complete.
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

Maker Play

WHEN: July 17 at 2 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: Join Texas State Maker Lab in exploring technology with hands-on projects, for ages 7 to 12. Registration required.
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200

Cruise in at Dick's Classic Car Garage

WHEN: July 18, 5-8 p.m.
WHERE: Dick's Classic Garage
WHO: Live music, food by Henry's Restaurant. Free to the public
INFO: Call (512) 878-2406

PALS Adoption Day

WHEN: July 18 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
WHERE: Petco in Kyle
WHO: PALS will have their cats which are rescued from the streets, fostered, and vetted out and about and looking for their forever home. Adoption fee is only \$55, and donations for our cats' care is always welcome. Free kitten scratching pad with every adoption while supplies last.

"Lotsa Raptors" in the Park

WHEN: July 18, 10 a.m.
WHERE: Community Pavilion at Blue Hole Regional Park
WHO: Starring live owls, hawks, an eagle and more. A free family learning event featuring "Last Chance Forever — The Bird of Prey Conservancy."

Fundraiser for St. John's Catholic Church Queen Candidate Allison Marinez

WHEN: July 19 from 3-5 p.m.
WHERE: Claretian Hall at St. John's Catholic Church
WHO: Zumbathon. \$10. Lots of door prizes.
INFO: Contact Letty Montemayor at (512) 644-0766

50+ Game Day

WHEN: Every Monday except holidays. From 12:30-4 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Activity Center
WHO: Light refreshments and game materials provided. Bring a potluck lunch item or snack to share.
INFO: Call (512) 393-8400

Teen AniManga Club

WHEN: July 20 at 1:30 p.m.
WHERE: San Marcos Public Library
WHO: For ages 12 to 17 interested in Japanese culture
INFO: Contact (512) 393-8200 to register