

anything can happen IF YOU LET IT

By: Milo Moggan '26

If you've stepped into Jesuit's Black Box theater this year, then maybe you've sensed the spirit pulsing through it. Perhaps you've felt the dedication of the cast and crew that transformed the building. It's not often you find a group of people like this – a production that absorbs you through infectious passion, a team so committed that their energy becomes tangible and transcendent.

By the numbers alone, Jesuit Drama's musical production of "Mary Poppins Jr." is the stuff of folk legend: the show sold-out eight days before opening night, a mark the Black Box hasn't hit since "Sweeney Todd" in 2008.

The show became even more than a box office success, though: it was a testament to connection.

"[There was] a sense that we were all working on something that is bigger than us," said Mr. Ed Trafton '84, the director of this year's show. "[The cast and crew] came together meaningfully in work, in service, in companionship – and look what happens."

That shared feeling of purpose and that connection through a common mindset was the heartbeat of the show. It's what drove the cast and crew to work so selflessly.

"Because of that passion that everyone had, there was that sense of community where everybody was supporting each other and sacrificing for each

other," said Ali Zaidi '25, who played Mr. George Banks. "Because we all felt so connected, we felt like one big family. [The] sacrifices we made didn't feel like burdens or difficulties; more so an opportunity to give back to [Jesuit] Drama and to give back to the family that we've formed."

In turn, this dedication to one another created a better show.

"Everyone was so helpful to each other, backstage and onstage," said Livi Eichman '25, who played Mrs. Winifred Banks. "Because everyone connected meaningfully, it was so easy for us to help each other and give ourselves to the other people in the cast and crew so that we could work together effectively."

The joy this cast found with each other showed in the little things, elevating their performances.

"There were some really special moments backstage where people would be huddled up in front of the big projector screen watching what was onstage, and sometimes they would be doing the dance backstage, supporting our castmates that were on there," Ali said. "That energy just brought so much more joy in the show, and when everybody's happy, it makes everybody more excited to be onstage and more focused. It definitely contributed to the quality of the production."

Those bonds helped create a fantastic show, but even more, it created something unique for the cast.

"There's a different feeling when you're in [drama]," said Brady McMains '26, who played Bert. "There's nothing like it, really, truly. You're not going to find an experience like the one that the cast had anywhere else, ever."

The fruit of the cast's sacrifice, joy, and connection was the wonder they inspired in the audience.

"[The show] had meaning," Brady said. "People found hope in it, people found magic in it. Kids who have never seen the original Mary Poppins found a new story to fall in love with. We gave the show meaning because we were able to have meaning as a cast."

We tend to say "men and women for others" to describe

the culture of everything our school touches, whether in our choirs, bands, basketball, cross country, Drama – every program here. It's an idea that we've woven into the fabric of our campus, and it's who we've become.

And this cast captured it better than most, so much so that this show was more than just a story, more than just a box-office hit, more than even a reminder of the power of connection; it was an ode to the spirit of Jesuit: They made sacrifices and gave everything for the good of others, expecting nothing in return.

Remember this production and treasure this cast. They showed us some magic: what living for others looks like.



"Mary Poppins Jr." sold-out eight days before opening night, making it Drama's fastest-selling production of the past 17 years.



This show saw the most auditions for Drama since 2019.

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Rooted in Purpose, Rising in Excellence

By: The Plank Chiefs

Two state championships. A sold out play. Multiple outstanding performances by the choir and band programs. Taking everything into account, it's safe to say that Jesuit has had a very successful year.

But why? Are all of these accomplishments merely a result of luck and coincidence? Is this just a fluke, a peak year for Jesuit? Or is there something bigger at play, a newfound key to consistent success?

The answer lies within Jesuit's culture. Of course, each program at Jesuit has its own unique culture, shaped by its staff and student leaders; however, despite their unique qualities, these programs are united by a few notable traits. And it's these traits that are the key to Jesuit's year of success.

First and foremost, individuals need to care about their respective programs, so they act with purpose. For that to happen, leaders must establish trust through strong planning and communication.

"Buying in is always a question of trust," said Principal Dr. Michael Wood '99. "That trust is built with time, good communication, good modeling

of behavior, and past successes. When that happens, success tends to be a natural outcome."

Furthermore, that purpose must be a shared purpose. With people working towards the same goal, the second component of consistent success, teamwork, is inevitable.

"I was talking to Coach Kelly about the basketball team this year," said Mr. Ed Trafton '84. "He was saying the same thing: there was a great team of guys that decided that their individual egos weren't the most important thing, that it was about the group. It was about supporting each other and because of that, look at what our awesome team did. And I feel that in a similar way, we had the same thing happen in the [Black Box] theater."

The third component of a culture of success is placing the emphasis on others. When team members shift their focus from individual accomplishment to shared success, the team becomes greater than just a collection of talented individuals.

"The [cross country team] was successful because they put the team's success above their individual success," said Assistant Cross Country Coach Tom Witzgall '98. "We had four different [first place] runners this

year and it didn't really matter who led the team on a particular day. They were all happy for each other and encouraging towards each other. They like each other and worked together at practice to make everyone better."

So, back to the question of "why now?"

This year's accomplishments, which are chronicled in the following pages, aren't flukes. Rather, they're the concrete evidence of something intrinsic and internal that is encapsulated in our mottos "Men for Others" and "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" (AMDG).

For 62 years, Jesuit has nurtured a selfless schoolwide culture, inviting students to sacrifice personal accolades for communal success. We say "Men for Others" and "AMDG" so often that they feel cliché. But there's no denying that the following programs have embodied these words and soared to new heights because of them.

"Men for Others" and "AMDG" are more than just overused catchphrases. When taken to heart, they become formulas to success, keys to excellence. And the roots of this tree can produce a school year like 2024-2025.

+elevate+

By: Luke Pryor '25

The Jesuit cross country team has a long history of excellence. This school year, they added yet another chapter to that storied legacy, taking home the 10th State Championship title in program history – more than any other high school in California.

The team began the year with a roaring start, winning their first five meets, including the prestigious Nike Portland Invitational. They cruised through the Sierra Foothill league, taking home the league title. Moving on to subsections and sections, the team would continue to dominate, grabbing first place in both meets.

The State Championship on Nov. 30 was another chance for Jesuit to win big – and win they did, finishing in first place over the best programs in the state. The win elevated Jesuit's State Championship tally to 10, beating out McFarland High School at 9 for the most in the state.

Isaac Abbott '26 attributes the success to a year of

of hard work fueled by last year's disappointing fourth place finish.

"We put a lot of work into it ever since last season when we came up short of the podium and got fourth place," Isaac said. "It was on our minds that we didn't want that feeling again, coming up short, and [that] for 365 days we were gonna be working towards that 10th state championship and holding each other accountable. When all that hard work paid off and we were able to hold that trophy in our arms and celebrate together, it was an amazing moment and something I'll remember for the rest of my life."



This year's Cross Country team added a 10th State Championship title to the program's history.

The accomplishment gives Jesuit the most Cross Country State Championships out of any high school in California.

Placing well at the state championship is the goal for many programs, but Jesuit's aspirations didn't end there, as they had earned a spot at the Nike Cross National Championships in Portland, Oregon. There, the team finished off the already historic season by clinching 11th place nationally, with Isaac, Matthew Ogilvie '27, Kyle Jackary '26, and Drake Hoferer '26 all reaching a spot among the top 100 runners in the meet, coming in at 53rd, 76th, 80th, and 95th place respectively.

Head Cross Country Coach Walt Lange, the architect behind

Jesuit's decades of cross country dominance, believes that what separated this team from the rest was their cohesiveness as a unit.

"The guys have really bonded and treated each other well, [and] encouraged each other," Coach Lange said. "So they've got a real team cohesiveness that not all teams necessarily have. Most of the time they're just stuck together like glue; training and racing, and they bring confidence and they're very thoughtful of their teammates, whether it's the top guy on the team or the last guy on the team."

The team looks to do even better in the next season. With six of their seven starting varsity runners returning, runner Drake Hoferer '26 has high hopes for the future.

"It would be really cool to repeat," Drake said. "They say it's harder to repeat, so being able to do that and follow in the footsteps of the team in the '90s – that'd be really cool. And then if we're able to also complete that goal, I'd say now that [since] we have that experience under our belt from this year, we'd definitely be looking for a higher placement [in nationals]. Top five would be really cool for all of us."

By: Nick Ryan '26 & Baron Smith '27

The Jesuit basketball team took home a historic title this winter: the school's very first basketball State Championship.

For the first time since 1994, the Marauders made it to the state final, and they won in dominant fashion. The hard work that the athletes and coaching staff put forth directly led to the banner that now hangs in the Barry Gymnasium.

At the beginning of the season, one of the areas of concern was that the roster was incredibly green. However, Amaury McKinney '25 believes the team succeeded precisely because of this inexperience.

"Because the team was young and new, we focused more on our roles than worrying about all the problems established teams have," Amaury said. "We weren't concerned with normal distractions; we just wanted to get better."

This team lacked what often ruins potentially great teams: ego.

"A big part of our success this year was each player's willingness to fill a role," said Luke Browne '25. "Many times people's ego gets in the way of the team causing rifts within the team. This year we had none of that – each player was 100% focused on winning and that led

to each practice being as productive as possible."

This idea that players weren't playing selfishly was echoed by Head Varsity Basketball Coach Tim Kelly.

"This team is full of guys that work really hard and want each other to succeed," Coach Kelly said. "It was all about winning. Individual agendas did not matter. It is amazing what can happen when no one cares who gets the credit."

The team started the season 3-3, but won eight of their next nine games to skyrocket into the top rankings in the league. After finishing third in the Sierra Foothill League and second in the San Joaquin Section, they made qualified for the NorCal tournament, where they made it to the finals, and won in strong fashion. In the state championship game, they found themselves at Golden 1 Center for the second time in the season, where they defeated the Aljiah Arenas-led Chatsworth Chancellors, 66-53.

This win was not just historic for the school, but was a personal triumph for the players themselves.

"It feels great to be the team that gave this program something it's never achieved before," Amaury said. "I have been a part of the Jesuit program since I attended a basketball camp

Forward Asher Schroeder '25 (pictured) was named the Sac Bee Large School Player of the Year, averaging a team-high 17.0 points per game to go along with 7.6 rebounds.

Asher is the first Jesuit athlete to win the honor in 14 years.

Coach Tim Kelly was named the Sac Bee's Coach of the Year, the second time he's received the honor at Jesuit.

camp in first grade. I started playing with Red Raiders in the third grade and

now finish my time here with a State Championship. It's a storybook ending."

Looking back on the start of the season, the team looked strong, but no one could predict the successful season they would achieve. Throughout the season, they worked as one unit, on and off the court, developing into an unstoppable force.

"We were able to spend quality time together, see the true character of each other," Luke said. "I realized just how serious everybody took it from their prep to their recovery and through that I realized there was something special about this group."

The time that the team spent together proved to be valuable, and it showed on the court. Every player knew their role and found excellence in it, leading to the masterful performance in the championship game.

In pursuing the good of the team over the good of the individual, this team embodied the objective of Jesuit Athletics: to move beyond self-interest and self-centeredness in the pursuit of excellence in mind, body, and spirit – all for the Greater Glory of God.

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Photography: Brandon Curry '25 | PLANK

The Jesuit Basketball team finished 27-9 and delivered the first-ever basketball State Championship to the school.

Photography: Jesuit Marketing & Communications