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Mark Almy, music and voice instructor, has been teaching at COD for ten years. Photo by Anna Altheide.

Vocal Professor Almy is an All Around Performer

By: Anna Altheide

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Mark Almy, music and voice professor at College of the Desert, signed up for acting classes in his sophomore year of high school, because he thought, "if you took drama, what you did is talk about movies for an hour."

From that point on, Almy was handed scripts and struck with the acting bug. However, in the beginning, Almy admits that he absolutely loathed opera, but his opinion turned around when his uncle gave him an old recording of Puccini's Tosca.

"I began to hear the melodies and it captured me. I got it in my head that I wanted to be an opera performer."

Over the next few years, Almy left for San Francisco and began to take voice lessons. Almy's very first leading opera role was Sharpless in Madame Butterfly through a small company. He said that he was known in circles "as not a very good singer, but a pretty good actor for opera."

"I can remember someone coming up to me and saying 'you're not a very good singer, but boy, I can't take my eyes off of you.'"

His singing career began to materialize once he found a vocal instructor that made everything click in place. The comical role of Dandini in Cinderella, which led to many rave reviews, also ignited a change in his career.

He said, "I started getting work and people wanted to hire me."

Almy has had the opportunity of performing all over the country through companies such as the Orlando Opera and Des Moines Metro Opera. He also received a scholarship to study in Gratz, Austria, and has even performed in Toulon, France.

Despite his world travels, he says that the production of Man of La Mancha at The McCallum Theatre, in which he was the lead Don Quixote, was his favorite production to have done.

"It was an incredible production. You entered into a different world. When you talk about favorite places to sing, it was like they [directors Michele Gaines and Dr. Darlene Romano] created a special place in which to sing. I can't watch most things I've done, but I can watch that and be really pleased."

His teaching career at COD took off approximately 10 years ago, when he was asked by fellow professor Dr. Darlene Romano to instruct at the college. He had been in many previous local productions and his teaching experience included the University of Redlands and Riverside City College.

Despite a full teaching schedule, Almy said that he still performs as often as he can. He also stated that he is "still keen" on doing the fully staged version of Javert in Les Miserable.

He hinted at a possible production of the famous opera La Boheme for the fall semester. Almy recently directed the Victorian musical comedy The Grand Duke by Gilbert and Sullivan, which ran from May 9-11 at the Pollock Theatre.

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