

Girltalk

Ella Santos, 20, plays one of nine high school soccer players in *The Wolves*, a play by Sarah DeLappe, who grew up in Reno. It opened in New York in 2016 and earned DeLappe an American Playwriting Foundation award, an Obie Award, a Pulitzer Prize nomination and countless reviews praising her sharp, realistic portrayal of female adolescence. Santos is working on an associate's degree and plans to go into social work and creative writing. She's performed locally in *Bare: A Pop Opera*, staged in a former Gap store, and Sierra School for Performing Arts productions, including *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Cinderella*. *The Wolves* is her first non-musical. The play made its Reno debut at Goodluck Macbeth on March 15, and it runs through March 30. For tickets, visit www.goodluckmacbeth.org.

How did you learn about this play?

I just season-auditioned for GLM. I didn't really go in with any expectation of what the plays were going to be. But then I got a callback for this play and immediately ordered the script, because I was like, "Oh, my gosh, it's a recent play. It's about women. I'm interested."

Which character do you play?

I play #13. She's, like, the stoner, wacky, weird, try-to-be-funny-but-isn't-really-that-funny one.



PHOTO: KRIS VAGNER

This play looks physically demanding to perform, with all those soccer drills. How did you and the other actors prepare for your roles? Were you already soccer players?

It's kind of funny, because none of us are soccer players. I think all of us are in the situation where we played in elementary school and that was about it. Actually, the very first rehearsals that we had, we met at the Reno Sportsdome and played soccer together. ... That was our first time meeting each other. ... We're all a bunch of theater kids trying to kick a ball around. It was really entertaining.

How did you learn the drills?

We had two sports coaches. They both came in when we were at the Sportsdome and then a couple of times when we were at GLM and just taught

us how soccer players warm up, certain stretches that they do, certain warm ups, just all of the techniques, how to run with the ball, stuff like that, taught us to at least look like we know what we're doing.

So, you've been a teenager pretty recently. How well do you think this play represents teenage life?

Oh, my god! It's ridiculous. Every single girl in this play is a stereotype. Every single girl is a girl that I knew. It's really weird—#13 is like 14-year-old me. It's crazy the parallels. It's all of those moody emotions, but also the reality. ... They all have backstories. They have siblings or whatever. My brother's a pot dealer in the play. Those are things that normal teenagers deal with. It's not normally shown in theater, but it's very real. ... In the very first scene ... two or three girls are having a conversation about a tampon, and the rest of us are talking about the Khmer Rouge. So, we just start off like, OK, genocide—period. I don't think it gets more teenage girl than that.

Do you remember how you reacted when you first read that scene?

Honestly, I was like, "What the heck?" ... In the dressing room, all the time when we're talking, it sounds like the conversations we're having on stage. It's the same thing. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

Out of control sentencing

So the case of Tennille Whitaker is a bit of a horror, but not for her crime. You may have read about her case. She was the teacher in Wells who had sex with a couple of 17-year-old boys who were students in the school, and she got busted. The charge was sexual misconduct with a student. Not sexual assault, mind you, but sexual misconduct. And Judge Nancy Porter in Elko just gave her 20 years in The Joint.

Excuse me? Did you say 20 years? As in *20 bleeping years*? Excuse the spray of coffee I just spit out all over my eggs.

Look, I'm not insensitive to the reality that it must have been a complex and emotionally turbo-charged case. After all, we are talking about big bad sex. And I realize that a crime was indeed committed, and that shouldn't be ignored (but then again, it's interesting that Nevada

is one of the few states where the age of sexual consent is 16). But I just want to tap into my ancient, well-entrenched, liberal boomer mindset here to put forth the proposition that if Whitaker had been shamed in her community (which she was, totally and thoroughly) and then lost her precious teaching job (I mean, all those bennies and perks just flew away forever), and then maybe sentenced to a token stretch of 4-6 months at the county prison farm, OK, fine. That would seem to me to be a perfectly adequate punishment while sending a clear message to the rest of the faculty that such a crime is absolutely not acceptable.

But 20 years? Twenty years in some hellhole prison? And, yes, of course I'm bringing this up because the Manafort Comparison dangles obscenely in space for all to acknowledge, ponder and com-

pare. Twenty years? You've got to be kidding. I'm going to dare to assume that every woman who's ever had a man rape her at knifepoint only to see him get off with a six-month slap on the wrist, isn't gonna be particularly impressed. And how about every girl who's ever been molested by some "pillar of the community," only to see Mr. Pillar get off with some bullshit community service as "punishment?" Impressed by Whitaker's extreme sentence? Again, I'm guessing no.

So, OK. We're doing lots of investigating. We're doing lots of document collecting. We're doing lots of researching. All well and good, all very necessary. But goddammit, when are we gonna start doing some *busting*? And I mean busting of people whose last name begins with T? Come on, already! □



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