

NEW UPPER SCHOOL DRAMA DIRECTOR

Behind the spotlight

Upper School Drama Director Marion Glorioso talks about her experiences from the past 11 years and the play opening today at 7:30 p.m., *The Physicists*.



FRESH PERSPECTIVE

After working with the Lower School for 11 years, Glorioso is now in charge of the Upper School drama program, taking over from Rod Blaydes, who retired in May.

She sits in the green room, preparing to go on stage at any moment for one of her final college productions.

Perfecting the makeup and the nuances of the costume, the actress is cool and composed, considering she is a seasoned veteran of the theatre.

After all, she has everything figured out.

She decided to become an actress when she was a child and spent the last four years studying musical theatre in college. With years of theatrical experience and knowledge, the 22-year-old is prepared to take her talents to New York City and see if she could make it big.

But that was when Upper School Drama Director Marion Glorioso received a life-changing call from Byron Lawson, Assistant to the Headmaster.

"I told [Lawson], 'I'm going to have to call you back. I can't talk right now, I'm about to go on stage,'" Glorioso said. "I called him back the next day, and he offered me the job. I talked to my mother about it, and she told me to do it for one year, because one year wasn't going to make or break it."

Apprehensively, Glorioso came to 10600 Preston Road the following August as a Lower School teacher.

"I fell in love with all the boys," Glorioso said. "It was just an unbelievable amount of energy. I went through that first year and it rocked me. I didn't know if I was being as effective as a human being and as effective as an artist as I could be. So I decided to stay another year to try and figure it out."

Eleven years later, she's still here.

When she first joined, the Class of 2016 was in first grade. For more than a decade, they've become embedded into the life of the school and into the community.

In a sense, as the seniors have grown into their new positions as the leaders of the student body, so has Glorioso.

As of this year, she's the leader of the Upper School drama program, taking over for former director Rod Blaydes, who held the position for almost 30 years.

"We looked at people outside St. Mark's, and we did a whole hiring process," Fine Arts Department Chair Jacques Gavin said. "We looked at four people all together, including Ms. Glorioso. [She stood out because of] her enthusiasm and her knowledge of the school. She also has already directed the Upper School play once or twice because she wanted to. So she had the experience."

Given the unique qualities that she brings to the school, Glorioso seemed like a natural fit for the job.

"She has directed a whole lot, with the Lower School plays," Gavin said. "And she has a lot of depth of interest and she has some interesting ideas about what she wants to do in the future."

According to lead actor Avery Powell—one of Glorioso's first students 11 years ago—Glorioso is in the process of understanding the nuances that come with leading the Upper School Drama program.

"I think that hiring someone with that much experience at St. Mark's helps them work a lot better in the community," Powell said. "There's still an adjustment period. How she treated us in the beginning of the year has evolved throughout the year as she's adjusted to being with older kids

who have more of a mind of their own."

With her unique acting background and skills, Glorioso has brought a noticeably different mindset and approach toward the program.

"She's both an old teacher and a new teacher," Powell said. "In terms of how she deals with students, she's developing, but in a good way. She sets blocking, or stage direction, very early so that you can work with what you have. She'll tell you upfront that she's not very big on letting the actors run loose for a couple weeks and let them figure things out."

As a three-year member of the drama

The Physicists

When?

- Today, 7 p.m.
- Saturday and Sunday, 2 p.m.

Where?

- Eamonn Lacey Black Box

Who?

- Seniors Avery Powell, Will Clark, Brent Weisberg, Aidan Maurstad and junior Gray Wood

department, stage manager Matthew Dominguez has also noticed the changes that Glorioso has instituted with her directing style.

"She constantly has the actors think about what their motivations are at every point in the play and what that means to the characters and to the actors in real life," Dominguez said. "Glorioso also has a big focus on getting all the actors in the right mindset and making sure that they are warmed up everyday before rehearsing. She makes the actors want to rehearse by keeping them focused on what is happening in the moment at rehearsal."

It's the end of July, and Glorioso's chosen the perfect play for her audience and her actors: *Inherit the Wind*.

But then, the theater company tells Glorioso she can't run the play.

So three weeks before school starts, Glorioso and Gavin decide to mull over the possibilities during their trip to Canada for a Shakespeare festival.

When they get to the festival, they watched eight different plays, but one of them immediately clicked.

"One of the shows that we saw was *The Physicists*," Glorioso said. "I had never seen the play, I had never read the play, and ten or 15 minutes in, I said, 'Our boys are going to love this.' It just works. At intermission, we looked at each other, and I said, 'We need to be doing this at St. Mark's.' Then it was just getting a copy of the script and getting the rights. It all just fell into place."

The Physicists, a play abundant with "comedy and thoughtful concepts," will have its opening night tonight for the public. Because it involves such a great number of craftsmen, actors, technicians, and musicians, it is one of the integral performances for this year's fine arts program.

"If you haven't been to a play, come," Glorioso said. "If you're somebody who doesn't go to fine arts events, go. See what it's like. You just get to show up, sit back, and relax. If you haven't experienced those things at St. Mark's, that should be one of your goals this year."



BEHIND THE SCENES Glorioso works with actors Audrey Black, Evan Baker, Aidan Maurstad (right) and Gray Wood (left) to establish the blocking for the play, which consists of the movements and actions of the actors during the performance.