



HERBER LOVATO / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Vae and Lexi Marman rehearse a scene for the production of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*.

Alumna steps into Spotlight

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STAFF REPORTER

Inside a garage filled with neighborhood kids, Lexi Marman first expressed her desire to stand out from the crowd. This month, she will get an opportunity to express herself again when she performs in the production of *"The Adventures of Pinocchio"* at Deaf West Theatre in North Hollywood.

As a former Miss Deaf CSUN who went on to win the Miss Deaf California pageant, Marman has been in the spotlight before.

When she graduated from CSUN in 2006, she became the first deaf student to major in cinema and television arts (CTVA).

"Being a CTVA major was challenging but it was a defining task for me," Marman said. "I felt like I really had to prove to myself that I could do it."

Marman comes from a theatrical background; her grandmother owned a theater company and Marman began her performing career at 7-years-old in a Disney commercial.

"Acting is in my blood and I just knew I was meant to act," Marman said. "It was almost like breathing."

Growing up, Marman's mother referred to her as a diva because of her self-proclaimed stubborn and bossy behavior, yet it was at CSUN that Marman learned how to be a team player.

"CSUN helped me deal with responsibility, criticism and I learned how to use my tools in life to get what I wanted," she said.

Marman enjoys working in all aspects of the entertainment industry, but particularly aspires to have a career in casting. Her long-term career goal is to own her own casting company and name it "Open Door Casting."

"I want to create a place for people with disabilities that will open doors for them by putting them in roles that people wouldn't think to put them in," Marman said.

This production of *"Pinocchio"* marks a couple of firsts: it is Marman's first performance at Deaf West, as well as the first production in which Deaf West Theatre fully interweaves American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken English, said Stephen Rothman, the play's director.

The script of the play closely follows the adaptation written by Tony Award-winner Lee Hall (the original story was written by Carlo Collodi). However, Deaf West puts its unique spin on the

classic story by incorporating elements of deaf culture, Rothman said.

The *"Adventures of Pinocchio"* is Rothman's fourth production at Deaf West. In the past, the deaf actors 'signed' on stage, while the audience listened to voice actors through headphones, Rothman said that method separated the actors from the audience.

"We wanted to find a way to fully integrate both languages for both types of audiences and so far it's been really clean and smooth," he said.

"I remember when I was a little girl, I always wanted to be a part of Deaf West. I loved the combination of the two beautiful worlds of sign language and acting coming together," Marman said.

Marman plays the characters of the Blue Fairy and Figaro the cat. The fairy helps Pinocchio grow up and prove his bravery, while the cat is bad and mischievous, Marman said.

Although playing two roles demands versatility, Marman said she enjoys the challenge.

"It is interesting to have to turn the characters on and off throughout the play, it's like a muscle that you have to exercise," Marman said.

Putting on a deaf play brings its own set of obstacles, said Lindsay Evans, the actress who plays the voice of Marman's cat character. Evans must always match the tone of her voice to Marman's acting in order to create a coherent performance.

"I never take my eyes off of her," Evans said. "Sometimes what's on the written page doesn't match her emotions or sometimes her 'signed' line might be shorter than my spoken line."

This is Evans' second production at Deaf West, and she also voices the parts of Jimmy Cricket and Lampwick.

"Lexi is a wonderful person and we have a lot of fun together. Everyday there are different nuances and she really makes the job easier," Evans said.

The Adventures of Pinocchio

Deaf West Theatre

General admission \$23

Student tickets \$15*

*for the performance on March 3, 10 and 17

The play opens Feb. 25 and will run until March 27 with performances on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.



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CSUN alumni, Lexi Marman, 30, tries on a ticket seller hat for a production of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* which will debut Feb. 18 at the Deaf West Theatre.



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The cast of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* go over last minute scenes in the Deaf West Theatre to prepare for their debut performance Feb. 18. Each character will be accompanied by an interpreter who will cater to those with hearing disabilities.