

Reflections on Our Border Town
By Gail Frank

I recently attended “Our Border Town,” a new play by Amy Almquist, co-directed by Art Almquist & Julian Martinez at Tucson High Magnet School of Performing Arts. My one-word response is Wow!

It’s important to note that I am a previous director of stage plays, having directed probably 20 or more plays at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse in Cannon Beach, Oregon. So I am picky when it comes to viewing plays. But I could find absolutely nothing wrong with this beautiful production from the writing to the staging, direction, the set, sound effects, lighting, costumes and most of all the acting.

As co-director Art Almquist states in the program, he was interested in “giving real people a voice about an issue and presenting those voices to an audience within a dramatic throughline.” After discussing it with former student and current co-teacher Julian Martinez, and his wife Amy, the three of them decided to do it themselves. And what a production it became, with a cast of 45 students to bring it to life. It was educational beginning with the history of immigration; it encompassed a broad balanced look at all complex aspects of immigration; it incorporated the words of real people such as the Samaritans who work in this realm and Alvaro Encisco who makes and places crosses in the desert to honor those who have died. With multiple layers of humor and pathos, and stories of the characters, it was an engrossing, riveting production of over two hours.

As a former teacher of middle and high school students, I was especially pleased to see these talented youth on stage with the story that needed to be told, doing it with grace, honor and dignity. As many have said before me, “It gave me hope for the future.” Thank you to all for a job well done.