

Acclaimed teacher accused of abuse

Students sue Pacific Boychoir, saying sex allegations were ignored

By Matthias Gafni
STAFF WRITER

Seven former students at Oakland’s Pacific Boychoir Academy allege Grammy Award-winning director Kevin Fox sexually harassed and abused them as children while administrators ignored complaints, according to a new lawsuit.

The plaintiffs claim Fox groomed them through gifts and by sharing “secrets” over confidential messaging apps, steering conversations to sexually explicit topics. The suit alleged Fox provided alcohol and drugs to students, often at his San Fran-

cisco apartment, and masturbated in front of one boy and sexually assaulted him. In one alleged assault, a boy pulled a knife to get Fox to stop.

Plaintiffs Jeremy Davis, Zachary Salsburg-Frank, Peter Kenton and Gavin Beretvas, along with two men identifying themselves as “John Doe” and a woman identifying herself as “Jane Doe,” sued the school Monday in Alameda County Superior Court, alleging negligence and sexual harassment over a decade. Jane Doe was a boy at the time of the alleged abuse, and later transitioned. All of the plaintiffs are now adults and residing in Northern

California.

“I want accountability and justice for the people who perpetrated this and covered it up,” said Davis, one of four plaintiffs the Chronicle interviewed. Now 29, Davis said he still sleeps fully clothed and with his lights on due to his experience as a child. “The secret has been eating me alive for over a decade.”

Beretvas, now 30, said he no longer sings or plays music following his experience at the school.

“I spent a lot of time being very ashamed of what happened to us,” he said. “It made me spend a lot of time trying to hide

Lawsuit continues on A8



Anna Connors/S.F. Chronicle
Zachary Salsburg-Frank, from left, Gavin Beretvas, Peter Kenton and Jeremy Davis, along with three anonymous alumni of Pacific Boychoir Academy in Oakland, are suing the school.

Mourning theater’s past, pondering its future



Lynda Hornada, left, embraces costume shop supervisor Ashley Renee at the Aurora Theatre Company’s sale Monday in Berkeley.

Photos by Gabrielle Lurie/S.F. Chronicle

Aurora’s garage sale in Berkeley is a sign of the times

By Lily Janiak
THEATER CRITIC

The hatboxes and amber-tinted glassware could have come from any thrift store. But then there was the box of fake food, including a plastic loaf of bread with faux bite marks, plus the chafing dish straight out of czarist Russia. And a giant fabric lizard headpiece.

Out on display on Monday, these weren’t just oddities at a garage sale — they were pieces of Aurora Theatre Company’s 32 years of history, up for grabs as it prepares to vacate its downtown Berkeley venue, citing an operating deficit it blamed on a host of factors, including the long tail of the pandemic.

Aurora is just one of a slew



A chicken was for sale at the Aurora Theatre Company’s general open house sale Monday in Berkeley.

Aurora’s General Open House Sale: Noon-5 p.m. Thursday. Aurora Theatre Company, 2081 Addison St., Berkeley. 510-843-4042. <https://auroratheatre.org>

of performing arts companies, from behemoths like California Shakespeare Theater to new talent incubators such as PianoFight, that have shuttered in recent years. Others such as Killing My Lobster have “paused” performances, devastating a once-thriving scene.

“It’s odd,” said longtime Aurora actor Nancy Carlin during the event’s first day. “It’s like going in someone’s home after they’ve passed.”

The open house sale, which runs through Thursday, isn’t just an effort to help Aurora clear out its costumes, props, set pieces and office supplies, among other items. It’s also a time for artists, staffers, volunteers and neighbors to grieve together

Aurora continues on A9

Counties settle lawsuit with Wag Hotels

By Jessica Flores
STAFF WRITER

San Francisco officials and Wag Hotels settled a civil lawsuit alleging that the pet boarding and day care business failed to report dog bites and neglected animals.

The complaint comes two years after a Chronicle story detailed allegations of animal mistreatment and neglect at the California-based chain. The lawsuit was filed Friday by San Francisco City Attorney David Chiu and District Attorney Brooke Jenkins, as well as the district attorneys of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

Wag Hotels has agreed to pay \$150,000 in penalties and fees, create an animal welfare department, and provide more employee training, among other operational changes, according to the settlement.

The lawsuit alleged Wag Hotels staff neglected pets “due to inadequate employee training and a failure to maintain sufficient staffing levels, especially during high-occupancy periods.” Officials also said the company did not report dog bites to the appropriate local health officers, despite there being a “significant” amount of dog bite incidents in 2018-2020 and 2022-2024.

A spokesperson for Wag Hotels said Tuesday that the company “admits no wrongdoing for isolated incidents

Wag continues on A8

Board rejects Mandarin charter school effort

By Jill Tucker
STAFF WRITER

The San Francisco school board Tuesday unanimously rejected a parent-led effort to open a Mandarin immersion charter school in the city, anger-

ing families tired of waiting for the district to meet the demand for Chinese language programs.

The petition for the Dragon Gate Academy, according to San Francisco Unified School District staff, failed to adhere to

legal standards outlined by federal and state laws relating to qualified teachers and raised questions about how the school would address the needs of English learners and students with special needs.

In addition, district officials

said the charter would have a negative financial and educational impact on city schools, siphoning students and state funding when the district is at risk of fiscal insolvency, which is a reason cited under state law

School continues on A9