

Aliso Niguel's "Big Fish" Blooms With Sincerity and Style!
written by Grayce Burke, a freshman at University High School

From locating the woman of his dreams to saving his town from a giant, Edward Bloom hasn't met a challenge he can't face — not until he is diagnosed with a cancerous tumor. Even as his body deteriorates, his mind still runs rampant with fantastical stories, much to the frustration of his cynical son Will. Aliso Niguel's "Big Fish" follows Will's attempts to uncover the reality behind his father's tall-tales before he loses him, and the truth, forever.

Nick Breen captivates the audience as the eccentric Edward Bloom. When he is portraying a young Edward, he sprightly gallivants across the stage, radiating youthful energy and vigor. Breen draws a haunting juxtaposition to this in his portrayal of an older Edward, hunched over in pain, every move executed with great difficulty. Though his physical demeanor changes, Breen's voice never loses its enthusiastic tone and jovial Alabaman twang, displaying Edward's constant optimism even as his life slowly drains away.

Edward Bloom isn't the only one with boundless creativity — constantly displaying their ingenuity are Carissa Kelly and the ANTC Projections Team. As they alternate backdrops between real-life photographs and cartoonish illustrations, all masterfully hand-drawn by Kelly herself, the team cleverly delineates between drab reality and Edward's whimsical fantasies.

Working in tandem with the projections crew is the show's ingenious lighting design by Grace Dimapilis, Keilani Meyer, and the ANTC Lights Crew. The crew masterfully tackled the challenge of a show with ever-changing moods and locations, and the end result is astounding. From dark woods bathed in swampy olive greens to the patriotic reds, whites, and blues of a USO show, the lighting team takes the audience for a wild ride across the vast plains of Edward's imagination.

Ace Etienne is a hoot as small-town bully Don Price. As he contemptuously barks insults at Edward, he scrunches his apoplectic face and wags a scornful finger at his nemesis. But when Edward shocks Don by agreeing with him, his grimace melts into a puzzled goggle and his arms sink to his sides. As his tense body language deflates into a slackened stance of bewilderment, Etienne cleverly utilizes his physicality to emphasize his character's hilarious confusion.

With a remarkably talented group of actors, technicians, and musicians, it is no exaggeration that Aliso Niguel's "Big Fish" is a truly sensational display of heart, heroism, and hope.