

## WES Gets Dressed Up and Goes to the Theater

By Helen Davaran, Women's Wear

Some months ago I attended the Altarena Playhouse production of "Pal Joey," a Rogers & Hart musical from the 1940s. During the play I recognized an alligator purse that looked very similar to one I had donated to WES. It was a purse my mother purchased in South America in the 1950s. Looking more closely at the actors, I recognized a fur that looked like one that had been donated to WES. (I am a Women's Wear co-chair and price the furs.)

Intrigued, during the intermission, I sought out the costume designer, Ava Byrd. She explained that she had discovered WES last year, through her involvement with Style Oakland and, yes, she had indeed purchased the purse, the fur, some gowns, some accessories and menswear for this play all from WES! She was so thankful to have discovered us and said that with her budget she could never have been able to afford that wardrobe had she not found us.

I told her the story of the purse, which indeed was the one I had donated and she was very touched to hear it. Shortly after our conversation, Ava sent me this most wonderful letter, lauding all of us WES volunteers:

*I wanted to express my heartfelt gratitude for your support and the invaluable resources provided by White Elephant during my time as the Costume Designer for "Pal Joey" at Altarena Theater.*

*Your willingness to share the story of your mother's purse with me touched my heart deeply. It was a beautiful moment of connection, and I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to hear such a meaningful story. That purse, along with the brown fur collar for our actress Vera, were among my first finds at White Elephant, and they played an integral role in bringing the characters to life on stage.*

*Here are some pictures of special moments featuring Vera, the Socialite, on stage. Your parents' gift, along with the hard work of you and all the volunteers at White Elephant, helped me to create a wardrobe that not only looked stunning but also helped to tell a beautiful story on stage. Each cast member felt empowered and confident, and that is truly thanks to your generosity and dedication.*

*Thank you once again for everything. Your support has made a lasting impact on our production, and I am deeply grateful.*

*With warmest regards,*

*Ava Byrd*



*Scenes from the play, featuring the purse, the fur, the man's suit, and hat, all purchased at the White Elephant Sale*



*Helen Davaran and Ava Byrd with the purse*