

Take an exciting trip three years into the future, where humans are... still stuck in quarantine! Join Emma, Nancy, and Ava on a night out - or rather a night in - as they hop between virtual parties, and attempt to get Ava her first kiss. Langley High School makes this experience just as unexpected, awkward, and hilarious as it sounds.

In *The Party Hop's* version of our future, college parties as we have known them are now a thing of history. Instead, Emma and Ava jump from hometown reunions to a surprise birthday, to a raging party with their college buddies. Tonight, however, they are being joined by Nancy, a transfer student eager to socialize and whose outgoing personality tests Emma's and Ava's friendship as they try to bring a new person into their group. Add the challenge of trying to land Ava her first kiss and you get a night of college kids navigating their new normal through awkward breakout rooms, changing backgrounds, and of course, Tik-Tok dances.

*The Party Hop*, written by Natalie Margolin, is unique as it is written to be performed in a virtual setting, which Langley High School takes full advantage of.

Emma's (Abhaya Tyrka) and Ava's (Tess Jannery-Barney) conversation instantly draws the audience into their world with the authenticity and familiarity of their performances. This realism can also be attributed to Ava's struggles with her insecurities and her journey through the play. Nancy (Talia-Rose Diorio) is the perfect supplement to Emma and Ava. Her awkward and aggressive nature shines, and behind her annoying behaviors, Diorio creates a character with vast emotional depth. Other character's interactions with Nancy amuse the audience, such as her moments with Nora (Gabriella Sanchez). Sanchez did an excellent job portraying Nora's sarcastic moments, and her physicalities in wildly chaotic muted Zoom arguments with her husband, Nathan (Gunnar Peacock). Finally, it would be impossible not to mention Jackson (Nicolas Kristensen), Ava's chosen target to kiss. Kristensen's excruciatingly dry performance is incredibly convincing, and the lack of chemistry between Jackson and Ava's character is painfully obvious and all too similar to students forced together in breakout rooms during a modern school day.

The technical elements of this show are just as natural as the acting. The video editing, done by Phia Colabatistto, is clean and effective. She allows the story to flow, and the cuts are never awkward or out of place. The music during the party scenes was a nice touch as well, and it helped set the atmosphere and never overpowered the actors. Elizabeth Tippen's outstanding directorial choices push the show to a new level. Subtle touches, such as the drawn-out beats in the conversations, and the staggered entrances and exits into the various virtual meetings, felt very natural and help ground the show in reality. Other touches, like the well-thought-out background sets, add more depth to the characters. Notable settings include Jackson's room, donning a gigantic flag that proclaims "Saturdays are for the boys," and Mary's room filled with musical theater memorabilia. Even details as subtle as the character's usernames are carefully chosen to contribute to the telling of the story.

Langley High School's *The Party Hop* truly makes the best of our undesirable situation and gives us a more hopeful glimpse into the future with familiarity and authenticity.

