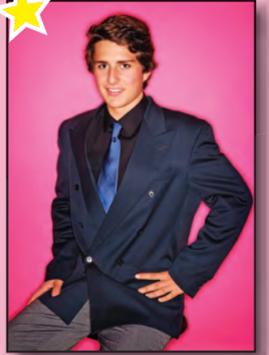




# LEGALLY BLONDE

THE MUSICAL



Noah Tauscher  
as Warner



Duncan Krummel  
as Emmett



Claire Rawson  
as Brooke



Susan Raulston  
as Paulette



Maddy McLean  
as Paulette



Murphy Jackson  
as Callahan

## Musical sails into HRV stage on a woof and a prayer

By JULIE RAEFIELD-GOBBO  
News staff writer

The prayer that opens this raucous, fairytale musical offers a decidedly modern twist to praising God. Not to give too much away, but think “OMG” sung in the highest, most endearing Valley-Girl-Speak ever — like, for sure!

The Hood River Valley High School Music Department is about to open “Legally Blonde: The Musical” this Friday in a torrent of pink-colored, high-energy antics and rollicking dance numbers. Oh, and there are special cameo appearances by three local canines — playing the parts of Bruiser and Rufus, the beloved pets of lead character Elle Woods and her hairdresser-friend Paulette.

“When I saw the Broadway version of ‘Legally Blonde’ on YouTube, I was impressed with the high-spirits and gale-force energy that really came across,” said Mark Steighner, director and music teacher at HRVHS. “Additionally, the musical plays to the strengths of our many talented girls — so many, in fact, that we double-cast two of the leads.”

Like all fairytales, “Legally Blonde” takes some liberties with realism: This is not a documentary about either the legal profession or law students, according to Steighner.

But the enjoyable story, wherein a “dumb” blonde sorority girl finds out that she overlooked her own potential while focusing on a guy,

leads the audience through a fun landscape of great music and exciting dancing — from the Delta Nu house at UCLA to the halls of Harvard Law School. Each scene builds toward the main characters’ choices to live up to their true potential while battling the obstacles in their path.

For lead character Elle Woods, that obstacle is the “curse” of her own blonde beauty, her limited beliefs about herself, and the low expectations our own culture has for cute, young women.

“Because it is essentially a fairytale, it has a very strong moral: Don’t judge someone by appearances. Or, alternatively, don’t be typecast by your appearance,” said Steighner. “In any case, there is little doubt

than 50 students from freshmen to seniors. Leads are played by sophomore Delaney Barbour and se-

and beyond). Still, Steighner thinks it is entirely suitable for older children and families.

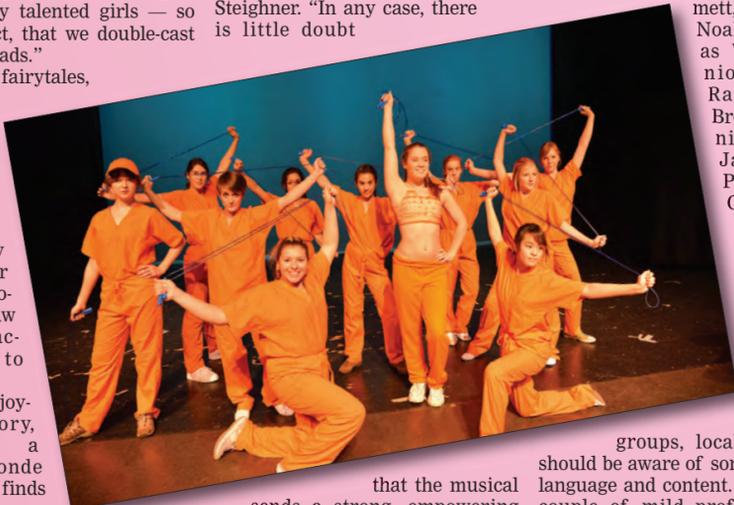
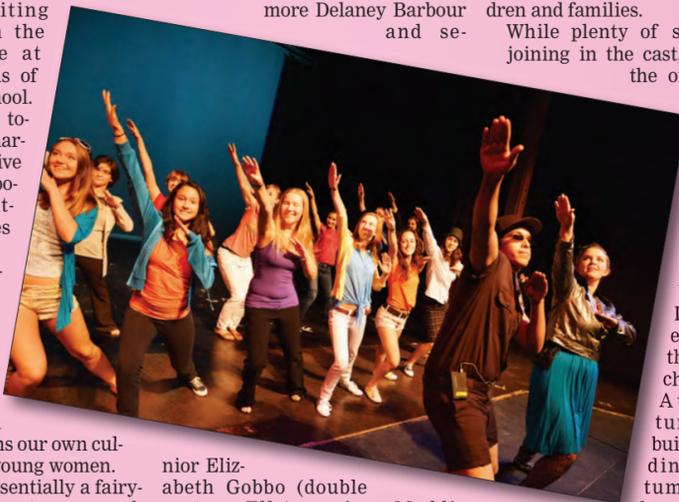
While plenty of students are joining in the cast, they aren’t the only ones involved in creating the production, notes Steighner.

Susan Sorensen of the Columbia Gorge Dance Academy created the musical’s choreography. A team of “costume moms” built and coordinated costumes for the large cast behind the scenes and the Gorge.

“Although the music is immediately accessible and infectiously tuneful, it is incredibly sophisticated in its writing, and extremely challenging for the orchestra to play,” Steighner said. “We will also be using computer-generated samples to fill in some missing instruments — which adds another layer of complexity to the performance and sound mixing.”

“Legally Blonde” is also a technically demanding show, with more than 30 scene changes and dozens of quick costume changes,” he said. “As a result we have kept our set design very simple and minimalist.”

The pace of the musical, however, will provide plenty of human scenery as ensemble numbers bring the audience to a famous ex-



that the musical sends a strong, empowering message to women.”

The HRV cast includes more

nior Elizabeth Gobbo (double cast as Elle); seniors Maddie McLean and Susan Raulston (double cast as Paulette); senior Duncan Krummel as Emmett, sophomore Noah Tauscher as Warner, senior Claire Rawson as Brooke, and senior Murphy Jackson as Professor Callahan.

Although “Legally Blonde” is done by hundreds of high schools and youth theater groups, local audiences should be aware of some “mature” language and content. There are a couple of mild profanities and some language that is appropriate to the age of the characters (college



Photos by Adam Lapierre and Julie Raefield-Gobbo; Portrait photos by Denise Rehse Watson.

**BLONDE AND BRAINY** Elle Woods is played by Elizabeth Gobbo (top left) and Delaney Barbour. Wild dance numbers (center) include a workout scene inside prison and a romantic Irish dance. Below, a crew of workmen admire the “Bend and Snap” moves of hairdresser Paulette, and courtroom drama offers challenges to the Harvard legal team. **Turn to page B12 for ticket and showtime details.**

# BLONDE

Continued from Page B1

ercise diva's workout studio, a state penitentiary, a courtroom, a sorority house and Harvard.

While the audience may be there for the engaging production, a larger mission underlies Steighner's annual musical endeavors.

"Students who engage in any creative or collaborative process are constantly making both artistic and personal choices: How does this character behave? How do I sing this phrase more in tune? What do I do here to express something? At what level am I willing to commit?"

"I believe very strongly in teaching students that they need to own their choices and that their choices matter," Steighner said. "A series of small choices result in a complex result."

That "result" is a fully engaging, musically challenging, highly demanding series of 10 performances that are sure to please audiences at a reasonable ticket price of \$8 for adults and \$6 for seniors and youth.

The funds raised from the performances will be used to pay for additional music education opportunities for the students involved.

Each member of the cast who plans to attend the HRV Chamber Singers' upcoming choral tour of Ireland, scheduled for spring break this year, will have their tour cost reduced as a result of total ticket sale revenues. (See end of article for more details.)

While Steighner now counts more than 40 musical productions to his credit, creating live theater remains an important mission of his career and his calling as a musical storyteller.

"Theater, of course, is unique because it depends on the energy of a live audience; but musical theater (and opera) adds another element — music — that increases the intensity of the experience," he said. "Music and lyrics add texture and meaning."

For those teens whom Steighner entrusts with the leads in the show, an added bonus comes with the hard work.

"I'm not fond of the con-

cept of a 'lead.' Every actor onstage should create a version of the story in which he or she is the 'lead,'" he said.

"Having said that, some parts definitely require a larger commitment of time, preparation, research, and thought. I would hope that the 'leads' would take it upon themselves to learn their music, and think about their characters and how best to bring them to life. The more they can bring to the process, the better," said Steighner.

While many regular audience attendees are anticipating this production, many are pondering what Steighner has in store in the near future.

His response?

"'West Side Story,' 'Wicked' (if it ever becomes available), 'Phantom of the Opera,' plus dozens of others that would be more suitable for community, adult theater. Who knows, maybe I'll write another one before too long."

Luckily, no one has to wait to sample the work of Steighner and his talented students.

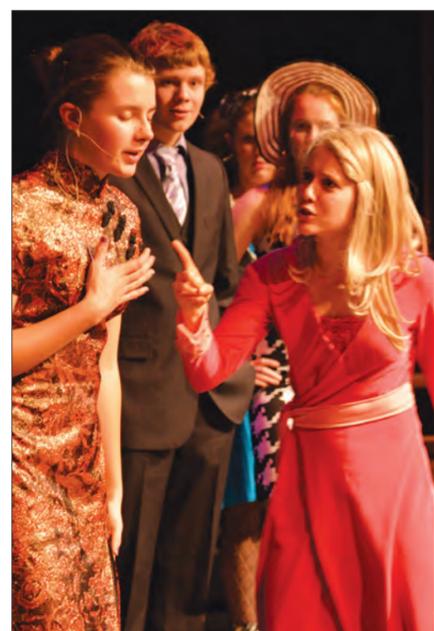
Performances including matinees and evening shows are: Nov. 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 3, 10, 11 and 17 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the door, at Waucoma Bookstore or online at [showtix4u.com](http://showtix4u.com) (type in HRVHS to search).

Performances of "Legally Blonde" are the only significant fundraiser for the Chamber Singer tour to Ireland in March 2013. All the profits from the show will go directly to the participating students.

Steighner's goals in undertaking his biennial choir tour are both musical and philosophical.

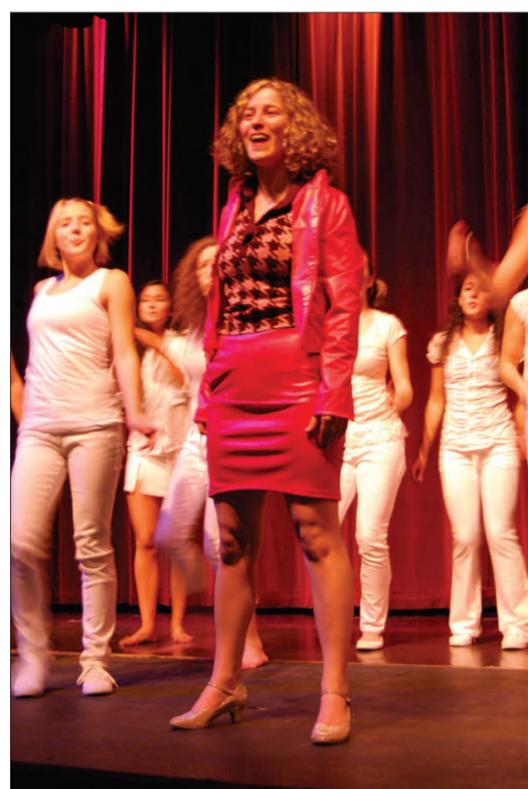
"Choral music should be performed in the spaces that resonate musically, historically and even spiritually with the music itself. There is simply no other way to truly 'get' how the music should feel and sound than to sing in the original venues," he said.

"Once students experience that, they can carry that back with them and it will inform forever the way they experience and perform the music. This is our eighth trip and we have taken well over 400 students to the UK since 1998."



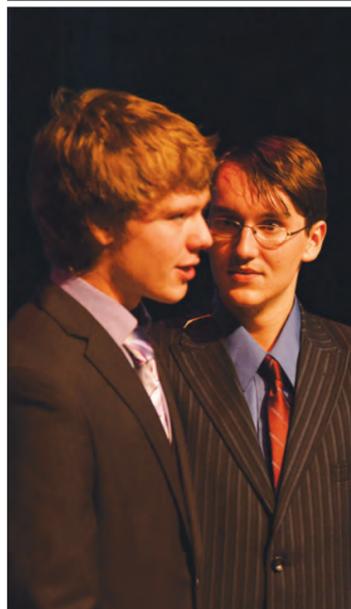
*'It has a very strong moral: Don't judge someone by appearances.'*

*Mark Steighner, HRVHS musical director*



Photos by Adam Lapierre and Julie Raefield-Gobbo

**SORORITY SISTERS** from Delta Nu support their legally blonde 'sister' as she tackles Harvard law school (above left) and (clockwise) as she (Delaney Barbour) accuses a suspect (Gabriella Whitehead) at trial. Elizabeth Gobbo as Elle addresses her fantasy 'Greek' chorus. Delaney Barbour as Elle takes a swipe at Professor Callahan (Murphy Jackson). Below (clockwise) Rufus as played by Porkchop, Caitlyn Fick as Whitney brings on the books for Elle. August Beard as Nikos (left) tries to hide secrets while Lucas Delano Campos as Carlos tries to wring out the truth. Duncan Krummel and Murphy Jackson face off as law student Emmett and Professor Callahan.



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