



“This is a community”



DANCERS, left, smile and gesture moments before an entrance; costume leads Karin Tauscher and Kathy Peldyak share a joke in the green room as Peldyak holds a bag of the telltale cough drops; Ashlee Lawless (Miranda Starr) gives a thumbs-up backstage; Sophie Whitehead replaces microphone batteries.

Adults and students team up to help ‘Reach 4 It’ achieve ambitious grasp

The drama begins in the lobby in “Reach4It!” the new musical at Hood River Valley High School, running the next two weekends (see page B10 for details).

Ticket buyers might be approached by a nervous youngster asking “Where’s the audition?” or “Do I get my number here?” or see them going up to another table and registering with two production assistants (Delia Dolan and Annmarie Goodman).

Let the show begin as “Reach4It!” literally draws in the audience.

As with any high school production, the community is directly, and heavily, involved with backstage preparations.

But with “R4I,” the production starts as hopeful young talents buzz with excitement or come to near-tears anxiety while they enter the auditorium, along with audience members, and make their way to the stage.

There, a televised talent show — “Reach 4 It” — is about to go through audition stage, with the prospect of going on national TV, and those attending the HRVHS show get to see its makeup — warts and all.

Ego, greed and dreams begin to steep into a stringent and inspiring multi-media drama, complete with music, dance, laughter and tears.

Writer-director Mark Steighner has assembled 60 performers, an eight-piece band and dozens of backstage and off-stage volunteers to mount his original production that peeks inside a cynical sphere where young talent, media ratings and high pressure all come together.

On day two of “R4I,” Editor Kirby Neumann-Rea talked to actors, musicians, parent volunteers and stage, lighting and sound crews to gain as wide a picture as possible about everything that goes into putting on a musical.

Photos are taken from Saturday’s matinee (with the exception of “moving on,” this page) and all interviews were done Saturday afternoon and before and after the Saturday night performance.

Two things underscore the entire endeavor: Everyone was having a great time, and all strive to present a high-quality show that carries a distinct message.

Steighner and crew granted Neumann-Rea full access, even to the point of the writer going on stage during press conference scene, in keeping with the *vérité* quality of the production.

Here, then, are comments and reporter’s descriptions, compiled in “script and stage direction” format:



JASPER KREHBIEL, in character as new auditioner, asks “Where’s the audition?” to an audience member, who answered, “Oh, maybe I’m in the wrong place!”

ENJOYING their duties, from left: “techie” Alex Chadney; sound crew Cooper Holzman (standing), Guy Tauscher and Rod Krehbiel; stage crew members Michael Furrow, left, and Josh Breedlove dance silently to the music from on stage.



Sophie Whitehead (microphone coordinator, and parent of cast member Gabriella, a senior):

“Theater kids are loud ...” she says with a smile as a group screams while running through the lobby, an hour before curtain.

“We check the batteries on all stage microphones, and change them before every show. We save the batteries; someone will get a lifetime supply of used ones.”

Kane Hite (Tom Wilson), a freshman, in the boys’ dressing room:

“I love this show; it’s comedic, and fun. I love the theme, the talent show and all of that. I think it’s fun to do.

“It connects to Hood River Valley High School itself as drama, actual drama, and uh, actual rumors, when it comes to high school, of course. I connect to it in my life. I’ve had a lot of rumors in my life and heard a lot and I understand it and that’s why it’s fun to me. It says no matter what anyone else says about you, keep trying; don’t stop trying to do what you love.”

Sophie Finstad, senior (producer Jodi Hardwicke): “I love it; it’s been really fun, I play a really mean character which is always exciting. The people are like second family; everyone is so fun and supportive.”

Rod Krehbiel, sound guy, and father of cast members Rory, a junior (dancer) and Jasper, a freshman (ensemble):

“It’s great. It’s a family affair. My wife (Teresa North) is backstage doing costumes.”



Larry Wyatt, guitarist — and elementary music teacher (in a big change for HRV musicals, the band is on stage rather than playing from the seats):

“I just love it. It’s so nice to see the kids performing. Many of them are my former students, so nice to see them grown up and singing lead and doing their solos. Many of them, like Sophie Finstad, were singing the solos in the fourth or fifth, and here they are now.”

Stage manager Michael Furrow, a senior, who works with assistants **Emmalyse Brownlee** (junior) and **Joshua Breedlove** (sophomore):

“We give cues for these two to move sets on and off, runner August Beard to actors and dancers, and then also cues to people in light booth who are controlling the lights.”

They communicate via headsets, direct verbal, and many hand motions, and are constantly scrambling to remove or add props and set pieces, or getting others to do so.

Brownlee: “We practice quite a bit, and

after awhile, you can tell from when Michael goes like this” — indicating a couple arm-and-hand signals — “and you know exactly what he wants. You get to know the non-verbal cues.

Breedlove: “This is our second show, all three together. We did ‘Hamlet’ last year.”

Furrow: “It’s a lot of responsibility.”

Brownlee: “And certainly a lot of fun.”

Breedlove: “It’s a really fun group of people to hang around with.”

Opening nights had “a few iffy spots but we pulled through,” Furrow said. These included a shall-be-kept-nameless actor who missed a key cue, and a rocking chair that fell off one of the rolling platforms.

Brownlee: “It’s an adrenalin thing.”



DANCERS show a moment of anxiety as they await a missing troupe member; she arrived just in time for their entrance.

Light crew chief Alex Chadney: “I designed the lights; I got what Steighner wanted, a general idea, and then picked out the lights and put them up on the catwalk and electrics (over the audience and stage), aimed them and chose the colors from Hollywood Lights (supply store).

“This is my first time. I’d worked the board but I had never designed the lights.

“My job is light board operator and I give my other two tech crew directions on where they need to aim follow spots.

“Dany (Hildreth) is dedicated to a follow spot, and she’s really good at it, and Maui Glass operates a follow spot but also reads light crews to me — that’s why we have two laptops; when a scene comes up she’ll read numbers and what levels need to come up.”

Furrow: “The thing I like is that you can change the mood of the show just by changing the color and dimming the lights. You have so much control.”

Cast members are gathered in the auditorium, an hour before curtain, awaiting “notes” from Steighner.

Delaney Barbour (junior, contestant Tornado) to **Caitlyn Fick** (junior, assistant producer Felicia Williams): “You said ‘when I call your name,’ instead of ‘call your number,’” Barbour tells her.

Caitlyn: “Did I say ‘call your name?’ I don’t believe that! I’ll remember today!”

Eva Kahn, a junior, fixes a cup of chamomile tea, in the music department hallway.

“Everyone else is sick so I’m nervous I’m going to get sick, too.”

Costume coordinator Kathy Peldyak holds a bag of cough drops, one of about 10 they’ll go through in the run of the show.



“ARE WE MOVING ON?” Contestants Hannah Simons, left, Emmy McPherson, Lani Euwer and Connor Moon await results in Act 1.

“We have to keep kids’ voices ready to sing; half of them are sick or fighting sore throats. We have plenty of tea and cough drops.”

She’s been involved in HRVHS drama for 10 years, through two kids, Paige and Brett.

“It’s a great creative outlet for me. I think it’s a way to give back because I spent a lot of time in theater in high school and I love to see the kids in their new costumes. It’s really a great experience.”

Karin Tauscher, mother of Noah Tauscher (junior, contestant Chris Ranier) has a similar experience. (And it’s a Tauscher family affair; too; husband Guy helps with sound.)

“I’ve been involved since Noah’s eighth-grade year. I don’t have the big artistic vision of Kathy or Julie Raefield-Gobbo (who did costumes for many years) or sewing ability, so I’ve been the worker bee and I am still Kathy’s worker bee.

August Beard, a senior, serves as “runner” between dressing room areas and stage wings.

“It’s a lot of fun. More fun than pressure,” Beard said. “I try to keep it quiet back (stage) and make sure everyone gets onstage at the right time. We’ve had a few cues happen later than they should be, but nothing major.”

Guy Tauscher, sound: “We have 60 actors, and 30 of them have mics, and only 20 channels, so there is lots of mic swaps. It’s amazing that we get it all in at the right time, I was thinking of the question, ‘Why did I end up doing this?’ I was sitting in the audience for ‘Les Miserables’ (2010) and my kid had two lines and they were missed. Whoever was doing it missed it, and I thought, ‘What the heck, my kid has only two lines,’ and now I’m doing it, and I realize how difficult it is to get one (mic) to someone with two lines.”

(Whitehead interjected that for “Les Miz,” the sound board had only one person, who also had to run sound effects.)

Lucas Campos-Davis (senior, contestant Antonio Valour) is preparing to put on make-up a half-hour before curtain.

“Just making sure I have all my stuff set up so I can make backstage as quickly as possible, and mic checks. It’s a different process when, I was in ‘Avalon’ (Steighner’s 2011 musical) so it’s not my first original show, but it is very different because you’re not in the same steps in the process; we have a lot more freedom of character because he didn’t write out every single thing. We have to create our own. I like it.”

Director Mark Steighner: “You should always be reacting,” he reminds the actors,

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REACH

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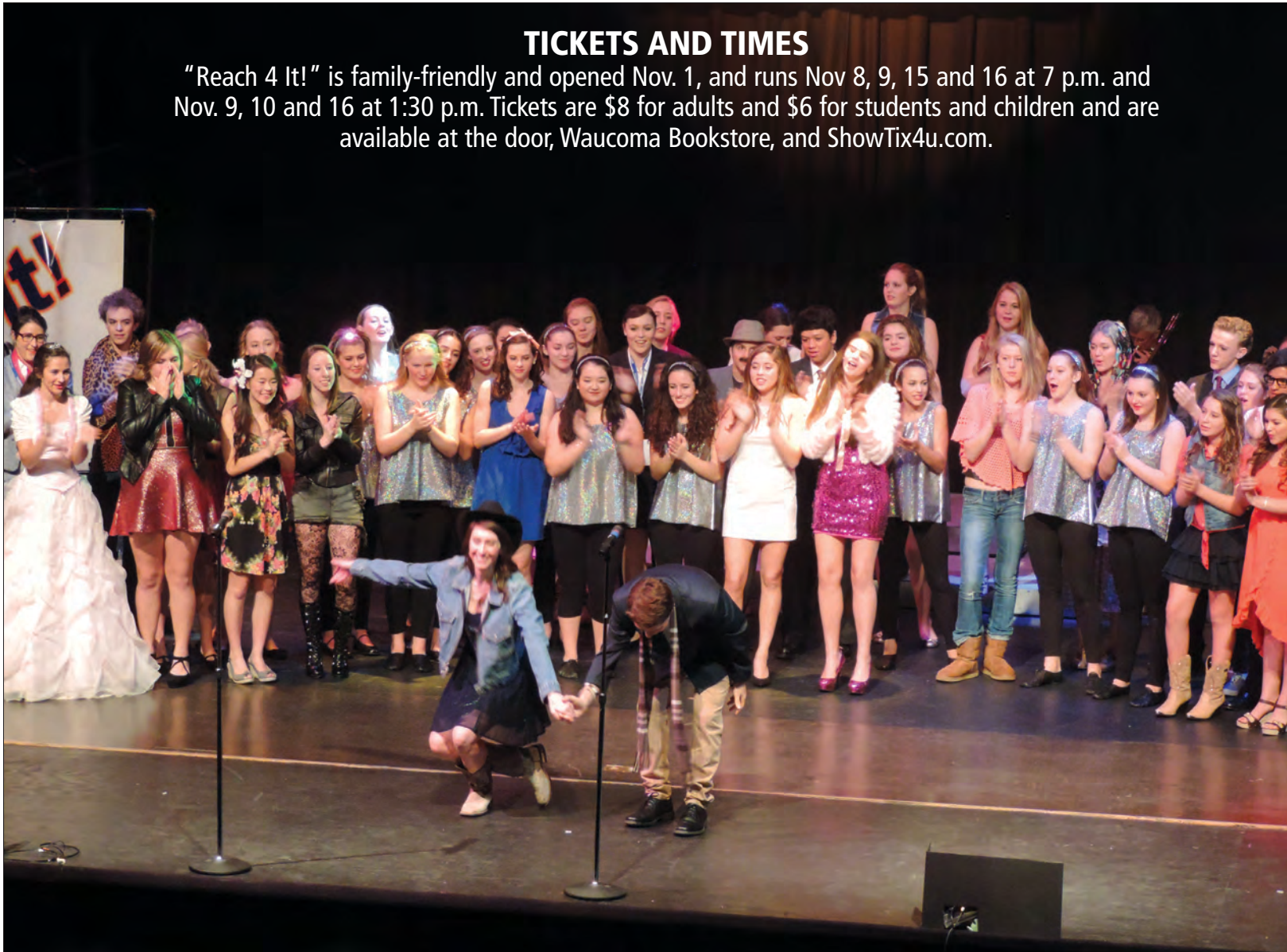
during “notes,” when he and other crew members give actors and crew reminders on projecting, making cues, moving props, and much more.

Steighner reminds the actors that the Saturday matinee might be small (fewer than 100 showed up) but to perform as if it is a full house.

“We do this for our audiences, but we also do this for ourselves. You do this because you get something out of it yourself, whether it’s 10 people or 200; you’re still getting the same connection.”

He tells them something he heard actor Harrison Ford say about why he does not engage in social media.

“People are so engaged in virtual communities that they forget what real community is like, and you can’t make someone like you by pressing a button. That for someone to actually like you, you have to actually participate in the community in real time in the real world, and I thought that was a really good comment. It’s how you deal with people and connect with people in real communities that’s important. This is a community. Support each other on stage, and the people back stage, it’s all part of the same thing.”



PERFORMANCE COMPLETE, Lani Euwer (Amanda Green) and Noah Tauscher (Chris Ranier) take their bows during Saturday afternoon’s curtain call.

TICKETS AND TIMES

“Reach 4 It!” is family-friendly and opened Nov. 1, and runs Nov 8, 9, 15 and 16 at 7 p.m. and Nov. 9, 10 and 16 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for students and children and are available at the door, Waucoma Bookstore, and ShowTix4u.com.

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