

'Oh my god, you guys', Cho-Op's putting on Legally Blonde

Choir Opera pushes the envelope with their latest musical

by Lindsey Burns

"Legally Blonde" was released in 2001 starring Reese Witherspoon. It was received extremely well and became a musical in 2007.

In its latest production of the movie's theatrical version, New Trier Choir Opera diversifies the show to make it more gender neutral and friendly to all audiences.

Performers say that this year's show was more challenging. Usually the Cho-Op class picks a more traditional play with conventional roles for each gender, such as "Les Miserables," "West Side Story" or "Beauty and the Beast." This year, it's different, with boys playing parts normally played by girls. "We have incorporated the male cast members into numbers that were originally dominated by females," said Caywood.

"There's quite a few more girl parts than guys which is unique to the



The Legally Blonde cast is rehearsing for their March 3 opening | Blickstein

show," Landes said. "That's another thing that's hard about finding shows. There's usually more guys parts than girls, but I think there were lots of opportunities in this one to feature a lot of our girls which has been nice."

The class has about a 2:1 ratio of girls to boys. Josh Bretthauer, a junior in Cho-Op, said he doesn't notice the

difference that much in the play.

"Almost every major song features the guys," Bretthauer said. "And even though the show itself is kind of girl-oriented, there are a lot of funny guy ensemble parts. It definitely won't be as girl-centric as a lot of people are probably expecting it to be."

Andrew Phillips, a junior in Cho-Op, said he thinks boys in the audience will enjoy the play as much as girls. "While I suppose girls will identify with the storyline more than guys, it is still incredibly fun and entertaining for people of all genders and ages," Phillip said. "I wouldn't say the show is too female dominated, it's just that it's based off of a chick-flick/rom-com."

"Legally Blonde" is also slightly more risky than plays in the past. Ali Malehorn, a junior in Cho-Op said, "Certain lines of the show have been cut or altered to downplay the provocative language but there are still some hilarious, inappropriate aspects."

Each year, teachers Nathan Landes, Nina Lynn and David Ladd pick a show for the Choir Opera, or commonly referred to as Cho-Op, class to perform in the spring.

"The decision is a collaborative effort with all the staff involved, we have all these considerations," Nathan Landes, the music director, said.

"We have to figure out what's good for the orchestra, what's good for the vocals, and we have to find

shows that give lots of students opportunities as opposed to shows where maybe there's just a couple solos."

The class works to put on professional former Broadway plays.

"We have practices after school normally lasting from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., as well as all-day practices on Saturdays and an additional 40 minutes of in-class time everyday spent on reviewing the music." Sarah Caywood, a junior in Cho-Op said. "It is very close to the type of time commitment expected from athletes."

With the show's opening night around the corner the pressure is on for the crew, musicians, teachers and the cast. Malehorn said, "When the show approaches, rehearsal becomes longer. It's a mix of dance rehearsal, blocking scenes and singing."

Overall Landes said the show has "been really fun for the students. I think they really have just had a blast putting it together because of the humor and there's lots of cool dancing."

"Legally Blonde" will be in the Gaffney Theatre on March 3-6. For more information and to buy tickets go to www.greateventseats.com/nths.

Wilderness Retreat offers unique learning opportunity

Students learn more than just survival skills on the annual Wilderness Retreat

by Mac Hanslip

Imagine being in the desert, canoeing in a river in Utah, after a hearty meal.

If this appeals to anyone in any way, then consider going on the annual Wilderness Retreat.

The Wilderness Retreat runs from July 6-18. The trip is a canoeing and hiking based adventure in Utah's Canyonlands National Park.

The retreat does require prior completion of Biology or Environmental Geoscience and includes a studying component. According to leaders and social studies teacher Elizabeth Plank, the amount of time spent studying on the trip is done in a "practical" manner. Ecology, Human History, Environmental Ethics, and Team Building are the focus of the trip.

The educational aspects were enough to make the course count for .25 credits, but it is by no means a typical class. "We read some short articles on the bus ride, we bring a small set of books, and we read excerpts," Plank said.

"It's not heavy curricular studies. We'll say 'hey read this chapter of this book and then we'll have a short discussion after dinner,'" said Plank.

If any potential trip taker was worried about experience, the trip's participants have a "variety of experience levels," according to Plank. "You don't have to have any camping experience to go on this trip," Plank added.

This trip creates long lasting friendships. Participants don't fly down to Utah, but instead take a bus or van from New Trier. It is on this road trip that the trippers "really get to know each other," Plank said.

On the actual wilderness adventure, campers bond even more. They live in tents together to the point where "three days into the trip, all the kids are like cramming into one tent playing card games." The trip is a bonding experience no doubt.

Unfortunately, the trip does not include campfires. It is a "desert rule" that there are no fires, but the

traditional campfire activity of storytelling is still a big part of the trip.

If one has already been on this trip, it is not too late to go again either. "We do have thoughts of adding another location so that a kid can go on this trip multiple times while at New Trier," said Plank. "We have a kid who wants to go on the same trip he did sophomore year as a senior," added Plank.

A typical day on this trip starts off early. "We are canoeing in the desert. As much as Mr. Goodspeed and I would like to sleep late, you do have to get up early to beat the heat. You get up with the sun," said Plank.

After cooking a hot breakfast, the group canoes "leisurely" down the river according to Plank. Plank added that the river has a current to it, so there is little need to paddle. "It's a peaceful river."

The group canoes for a few hours before stopping for a snack break, then they continue canoeing until a site is found. At the site, the group can hike through rugged sites of nature, and Native American ruins. They eat lunch at the site, and even go swimming. "That's a typical morning," said Plank.

Then they canoe for another few hours before the camp site is found, they set up the camp, and they make "a huge group dinner," according to Plank. "We do eat nicely on this trip with fresh vegetables, and meat, and all that good stuff." Then they take a night hike before coming back to the camp to do the previously mentioned activities.

"That's a typical day. There is plenty of jumping in the river to stay cool because it's hot," said Plank. A desert in the summer is bound to be hot, but Plank also said that because the trip stays on the river the whole time, the heat is never at a dangerous level.

Plank also stressed the relative cost of the trip. "This trip is very affordable compared to any commercial trips of a similar sort," said Plank. "The cost of the trip includes everything except someone's clothing necessary for this trip."

If anyone wants more information about the trip, contact Ms. Elizabeth Plank at planke@newtrier.k12.il.us. She can also be found in room 300 (the Social Studies Department.)

Music Day fights for student attendance



Various ensembles performed for students, faculty on Music Day, pictured is symphony orchestra | Stuart-Rodgers

Some students uninterested, but performers see the merit

by Emily Wong

On Feb. 11, the New Trier Music Department highlighted their capstone ensembles in a series of short performances during periods 4-6 in their annual Music Day.

Music Day featured performances from Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Symphony Orchestra, Jazz band, Choir Opera, Concert Choir, and Swing Choir. Lower ensembles were unable to take part in the show due to the time constraint. The participating groups were limited to five minutes to perform.

Matthew Temple, conductor of Symphonic Wind Ensemble, directed his band in a five-minute excerpt of "Give Us This Day," a fifteen-minute piece they've been working on for their spring concert in March.

"We usually try to do something that's a little flashy and fast," said Temple, "something that's entertaining for any person, whether they're a musician or not."

Other ensembles strived to appeal to non-musicians, too. Nicholas Meyer, director of Jazz Band, saw Music Day as a chance for the music department to showcase their students' achievement.

"I think most students have an understanding of the fact that New Trier has a strong music program," Meyer said.

"But I think for a lot of students

who aren't in the music program, they don't actually get to hear the proof of that."

Many students have compared Music Day to the older and more established Dance Day because of the similarities between their concepts. However, Music Day seems to have a much lower attendance rate in comparison.

Several musicians say that the low attendance may be caused by lack of awareness. While Temple pointed out that the day was advertised on monitors and posters around the school, it hasn't yet gained much attention from students and teachers.

According to Nina Chatrath, a junior in Symphony Orchestra, the attendance may be a result of the limited amount of people who know about the event. "Since it's not an all-day thing, and not so many people are involved, not a lot of people know about it," Chatrath said.

The most evident reason for the differences in attendance between these shows seems to be the amount of time each show has been running. Starting in 2012, Music Day has been running for only four years so far.

"New Trier is an institution that relies heavily on tradition," said Meyer. "Dance Day has been a tradition for a long time."

"When Dance Day was created countless years ago, they actually went through the same period, too, where initially it wasn't as popular. It took several years for people to really clue into it. Music Day is sort of evolving the same way," Temple said.

Peter Rosheger, conductor of Symphony Orchestra, confirmed

that "attendance has grown over the years." Temple has already seen this growth and said, "Fourth period, which was the first performance [of the day], was the largest audience we've had yet. The main floor of the auditorium was almost full."

Participating students see the benefits of Music Day as well. Rohan Daruwala, a senior in Symphony Orchestra, Symphonic Wind Ensemble, and Jazz, said, "It gives us an opportunity to perform for people who would never normally come to our concerts."

Emiel De Jaegher, a senior in the same three ensembles, also thought it was important that non-music students could see the show. "We have such a strong music program, and not as many people know about it as they know about our sports teams," De Jaegher said.

"It is especially important to note that musicians are just like athletes. We work hard to do the best we can do on our instruments and we do it all year round."

Meyer pointed out the similarities between music and athletics as well. Although musical ensembles do get the chance to perform in concerts after school, those shows are mostly attended by family and community members.

"There are other activities or disciplines within the school where those students get to present their work in sort of a natural way," Meyer said. "We feel strongly that our music students should have the opportunity to present their work to their school community."