



Chippewa Valley High School students rehearse “Little Women.” Chippewa Valley’s first-ever spring musical will run from Thursday, March 21, through Saturday, March 23.
Photo by Erin Sanchez

CVHS spring musical brings smaller cast, bigger challenges

By: Dean Vaglia | C&G Newspapers | Published March 4, 2024

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — If testing one’s abilities is the path to improving one’s craft, Chippewa Valley Musical Productions is preparing itself for Broadway.

Taking on an adaptation of Louisa May Alcott’s seminal novel “Little Women,” the Clinton Township high school is setting a new bar for itself in its first-ever spring production.

“This is something new that we’re trying this year,” said Braeden Haggarty, director. “We were very lucky to have such a rich amount of talent at the school that we were able to put this together. (Without) that talent, we wouldn’t be able to do a production like this, so we’re very grateful to the students who are putting in the hard work to do a production like this, to do yet another musical this year.”

The story focusing on the March sisters and their growth from adolescence to adulthood was selected due to its deeper themes and greater technical demands than prior productions. Alcott’s novel serves as a showcase of the best acting talent Chippewa Valley High School has to offer. Where most shows feature casts reaching 100 students, only 30 were chosen for “Little Women.”

“In the past, we’ve had that everybody that auditions automatically gets in,” Haggarty said. “With ‘Little Women,’ we unfortunately were not able to do that just because the ensemble roles are much smaller (and) a larger cast would take away from the intimate storytelling of the show and how we’re able to convey that to the audience.”

Scenes in “Little Women” require much fewer actors on stage than in prior productions, but this puts more demand from those actors to make those scenes shine — especially in the vocals.

“I actually am very excited about the vocalism of this show because there are many different types of singing involved,” said Olivia Ferguson, vocal coach. “There is your traditional musical theater ‘belting’ you would expect to hear from Jo March, but there’s also some very classical style you’re going to hear from her older sister, from Aunt March. ... There’s a lot of interesting different types of techniques that get to be used in the vocalism for this show. It is quite demanding, but the students that are cast have all been very good about working independently.”

Taylor Pozzi’s role of Jo March is one of the most vocally demanding according to Ferguson, requiring her to be in almost every number and shift between belting to light signing, tackling shifts between serious and playful tones throughout the show.

“It is very hard for a young singer to stay in tune and have the stamina to sing all those things and to change gears when she needs to,” Ferguson said. “That’s an extremely demanding role and Taylor Pozzi, who is a senior, is doing an excellent job.”

Another role Ferguson cites as putting unique demands on its actor is Meg March, played by senior Julia Clark.

“This is probably the most different role vocally from any others in the show because she is singing really high as a soprano and she has to sing a really romantic and gushy love duet,” Ferguson said. “The reason I love this show is the variety and she really provides in the quartets that the sisters sing.”

For her part, Clark has managed well with the smaller cast and other challenges of the show.

“It’s definitely a different experience because I’m used to a bigger cast of like 80 people, so being in a cast of 30 is definitely a different environment,” Clark said. “I think I’ve really enjoyed the smaller cast because it seems like it’s more fast paced. A lot gets done. I’ve been able to connect to my castmates at an even deeper level than I have in the other (shows.) It’s just been a really great experience.”

While a number of the lead actors are seniors, the cast of 30 and the crew are made up of students across all CVHS grade levels. A few major roles are held by freshmen and two juniors are choreographing the show.

“It’s really good to see the camaraderie between the students and that students at every grade level are able to participate and grow and bring excellence to the production,” Ferguson said.

With cast, crew and supporting staff doing their best to meet the challenges and demands of the show, Haggarty believes audiences will be impressed and surprised by “Little Women” compared to everything the school’s put on before.

“We just did ‘SpongeBob,’ and that’s a very campy and very ridiculous musical; ridiculous in the best sense,” Haggarty said. “With ‘Little Women,’ I think people will find the story a little bit more meaningful, a little bit more relatable. You can see some real-world obstacles that people are overcoming or have to go through each day, so I think they’ll be able to relate to that on a personal level.”

“Little Women” will run at Chippewa Valley High School from Thursday, March 21, through Saturday, March 23, with 7 p.m. shows every night and a 1 p.m. matinee on March 23. Tickets are available through cvhsmusicals.org.