

CLINTON TOWNSHIP

CVHS ready to host ‘Shrek the Musical’

C and G Newspapers

By Thomas Franz✉



Chippewa Valley students rehearse a scene in “Shrek the Musical” in which the exiled fairy tale characters encounter Shrek and ask for his help against Lord Farquaad. Showings of Shrek begin Jan. 28 at Chippewa Valley High School. (Photo by Patricia O’Blenes)

Posted January 27, 2016



Sophomore Phil Moore acts as the Donkey while meeting Shrek during a rehearsal Jan. 8. (Photo by Patricia O’Blenes)

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Brendan LaRose was simply walking through the halls of Chippewa Valley High School when choir director James Pecar recognized the student wasn’t utilizing what was then an unknown gift, his voice.

Pecar convinced LaRose, now a senior, to join his choir shortly thereafter, and despite only having one short experience in drama prior to this year, LaRose is playing one of the key roles in Chippewa’s production of “Shrek the Musical.”

“I didn’t know if I would like it or not without trying, and I don’t regret it. It’s actually been really a good choice,” LaRose said. “It’s fun.”

LaRose is the bass section leader of Pecar’s choir, and he will soon be playing the character of Donkey in Chippewa’s adaptation of the 2001 Dreamworks film.

LaRose said that his only prior experience in drama or theatre came last year when he joined a group of friends in the school's drama showcase.

"Anything that you do, at first you're kind of uneasy about it, but the more you do it, the more you do with your character to be creative and funny. You kind of mold into the persona you're trying to create," LaRose said of embracing his role.

"I enjoy it mainly because it's a fun challenge that you want to push yourself to reach a certain point with a character where you love it, and everyone loves it, and I'm comfortable now, not only in my skin, but in this character's skin."

Chippewa will be hosting five public showings of the production. Those shows will be at 7 p.m. Jan. 28-30 and Feb. 5-6, and at 1 p.m. Feb. 6. There will also be two shows for elementary and middle school students.

Pecar and Chippewa drama director Nick Marinello have been preparing for the show since announcing it to students last spring. Auditions were held for the musical shortly after classes started this fall.

"We've been living and breathing Shrek for nearly a year now," Marinello said.

More than 200 Chippewa students have been involved in the production, from lead characters and musicians, to advertising or robotics students. With that many students contributing, Marinello said this will be the biggest show they've ever put on.

To feature those students as much as possible, Marinello and Pecar decided to make two casts, the "Swamp Cast" and "Castle Cast." The casts will alternate showtimes as a way to preserve their voices throughout the eight shows.

"As educators and technicians, it's very important for James (Pecar) and I that these kids take care of their voices. Some of these kids will be famous one day. We believe that, and we don't want them to do damage to themselves for the sake of this show," Marinello said.

Although many students will appear in both casts, lead characters like Shrek, Fiona, Donkey, Dragon and Gingie will alternate shows.

Olivia Ferguson, the production's vocal coach, said the casts produce similar, but very different, characters and dynamics.

"You can really see the individuality and the work each student puts into their own role. Donkey and Shrek will kind of have a different relationship between the two casts, and it's very moving," Ferguson said. "When they start to make their roles their own, and start to communicate through theater, that's exciting."

The musical is based off of the first Shrek film, which featured Mike Myers, Cameron Diaz and Eddie Murphy. Marinello said they like to think of their production as a modern-day fairy tale.

"It's about learning to understand that you are beautiful just the way you are, and to maybe not hold yourself to expectations that are not achievable," Marinello said. "That's what I and a lot of people loved about the movie, and the musical takes that same spirit. It's funny and irreverent, and it's self-referential, which we like very much."

Key roles for the production belong to seniors Bill Bailey (Shrek), Christian Boni (Lord Farquaad), Hayley Trombley (Gingie) and Amber Galvano (teen Fiona, the tap-dancing rat and bird). Junior Jay Callahan also plays Shrek. Sophomores Hunnah Joseph and Nina Lograsso also play Fiona characters, and sophomore Phil Moore plays Donkey along with LaRose.

"Our leads span over many years, so we're excited to be able to have many years with them as they come up through the system," Marinello said. "We wanted to show the kids this isn't a musical where seniors get the leads and you have to wait your turn. We value talent, dedication and hard work, and if you're going to put in the work, you're going to get the part, regardless of where you rank."

Tickets for the show cost \$10 and are available online at cvchoirs.seatyourself.biz.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staff Writer Thomas Franz covers Macomb Township, Chippewa Valley Schools and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for the Macomb Township Chronicle. He also covers sports primarily for the Shelby-Utica News. He has worked for C & G Newspapers since 2013 and attended Michigan State University.
