

KENOSHA NEWS

Entertainment

Bradford High School debuts new ‘Little Mermaid’ musical

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With neon lights, puppets and silk acrobatics, Bradford High School’s production of “Disney’s the Little Mermaid” isn’t your average high school play.

“This is a lot different than anything we’ve done before,” Bradford senior Sydney Tisch said. “People will have a new appreciation for the ‘Little Mermaid’ and the story. They’ll have a really good time.”

This weekend’s production will have officials from Disney in the audience. While the adaptation of “The Little Mermaid Junior” has been out for a while, including playing in Kenosha at Armitage Academy last November, Unified’s production is one of only six schools in the country participating in a pilot program.

“Disney will be here Saturday night,” show director Holly Stanfield said. “They will come and watch everyone’s expression of the piece and see how it works.”

To many in the cast, like Ben Aiello, who plays Sebastian, Eric Danyus, who plays King Triton, and Sam Hailer, who plays Prince Eric, the story from the 1989 Disney animated feature is well known.

“‘The Little Mermaid’ was my most favorite Disney movie for the longest time,” Tisch said. “I watched it a million times when I was younger and I’m so excited to be in it.”

Tisch, a senior at Bradford, plays the evil sea witch, Ursula.

“It’s cool how we’re doing it. Ursula is essentially a puppet. All of my arms are being moved by other people. I’m constantly working with them. It’s a lot of fun,” Tisch said.

Her best friend and fellow Bradford senior, Mialee St. Peter, plays the lead character Ariel, the Little Mermaid with the bright red hair and the fascination with all things from the surface.

St. Peter appreciates the fact that the musical has female leads and a princess who saves her prince instead of the other way around.

“I really love that. It’s women power. It’s cool,” St. Peter said.

Audiences will recognize songs like “Part of Your World,” “Kiss the Girl” and the Oscar winning “Under the Sea,” but will get to hear new songs, too.

“There are a few new songs: a quartet between Sebastian, King Triton, the prince and the Little Mermaid called “If only.” We’re all singing about what we want. It’s really powerful. It’s not in the movie,” St. Peter said.

Audiences may also be surprised when Ariel saves Prince Eric from drowning. The actress will use a Spanish web, basically a rope from gym class, to simulate swimming under the sea. There are other acrobats simulating sea life by climbing silk drapes and performing aerial gymnastics above the stage.

“I don’t use my hands very often,” Bradford senior Alex Geitner-Kilby said. “I use my feet. So I have to know how to maneuver the silk to wrap my foot in it, so that I am able to hold my weight with just my foot. And then just let go.”

With spotters on stage, safety is paramount. The group was trained at the Actors Gymnasium in Evanston, Ill., to pull it off on stage.

“It’s a very physical piece,” Stanfield said. “It’s a fun challenge. The thing that is difficult about this is the swimming (under the sea). We have waves that move up and down and swim around.”

The production fills the stage with 28 cast members and 12 crew members behind the scenes.

“I love doing silks. I can’t wait to see the audience’s reaction,” Lexie Olivares, an acrobat from Tremper High School, said.

“There is a message in this musical. You need to pursue your dreams and have the courage to stay the course,” Stanfield said.

Right now it seems some of the players are living the dream, too.

Performances are Fridays-Sundays (Feb. 27-March 8) in the Bradford auditorium, 3700 Washington Road. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$8 for senior citizens and \$5 for students and staff and can be purchased at the door.
