

# Students put a twist on classic tales

*Senior directed children's shows showcase at Bowie and local elementary schools*

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Pinocchio, Winnie the Pooh, and The Wizard of Oz are all stories that any high school kid can reminisce on. Bowie's Starlight Theatre Company uses these classic tales to create a tradition of senior-directed children's shows.

The children's shows ran from Nov. 2-6 featuring four different shows each night where seniors got the chance to showcase their work twice throughout this running time. Senior director Lucy Evans describes what directing a children's show means to her.

"Directing a children's show is very exciting for me because I have watched all my directors do it since freshman year," Evans said. "Finally being in that position is really special for me and all the other directors."

This year, 14 seniors were chosen to direct the children's shows with each director being accompanied by an assistant director and five to ten additional cast members. Several of the senior directors have been a part of the company since freshman year and have been waiting to finally direct a show of their own. For senior director Caroline Cullinane, directing a show is a special opportunity that company members look forward to.

"Personally, [directing a show] feels like a really big accomplishment just because I've been working in the company for all four years," Cullinane said. "Last year I got to be assistant director for a couple of shows and it was a lot of fun. With that being said it feels like a big responsibility and accomplishment for me and I'm really proud of my show."

The senior directors had to ensure that their shows were ready in time as they performed at elementary schools such as Mills, Cowan, and Baldwin as well as Bowie. Leading up to the shows, seniors were responsible for calling rehearsals and making sure their shows were on track for the performance. Almost all of the rehearsals were outside of school hours so the seniors had to put in extra time and work. Evans notes the challenges that came up in

preparation for the performance.

"There were a lot of things that came up," Evans said. "Mostly dealing with time crunches but I had to remind myself that I have people to help me. Just by talking to my cast or asking my assistant director for help, we worked everything out together."

Although the seniors all did shows in similar genres, the production and stylistic choices were left up to their directing styles. According to Cullinane, the shows were all diverse because no two people have the same approach when directing.

"I would say the biggest differences in the shows are based on the personality of the director," Cullinane said. "A lot of the shows are really sweet and classic but it's mostly based on the director's preference. I really enjoy over-the-top dramatic silly shows and because of this I tried to implement those elements into my show."

The different styles of the directors are an effect of how they work with their cast members. Evans knows it is crucial to communicate well and take into account the cast members' feelings.

"With my cast, I always like to explain what I want and let them try it for themselves," Evans said. "Most of the time their visions will mix with mine and make something even

better. For a director, the most important job is making sure your cast is doing well. Keeping them in check but also making sure they are feeling good about the show is super important."

After cast members auditioned, the directors chose

who they wanted in their shows and placed them in the roles that they saw were the best fit. According to Cullinane, a team that has bonded and communicates well is essential for any production.

"I worked one-on-one and in a group with my cast members to show them what I wanted," Cullinane said. "I got really lucky with a good cast that had a lot of good comedic instincts and they are great at listening to what I've advised them to do but also putting their own spin on it."



**SHARING THE MOMENT:** The cast of Stuart Little interlocks during their performance on Tuesday night. Stuart Little was directed by Ella Kulczar and assistant directed by Lola Dobies. **PHOTO BY** Natalie Cullen

The senior directors were also responsible for staging and producing the entire show with little to no help from the theatre teachers. According to Evans, previous children shows were a source of inspiration for a lot of the directors.

"I have learned from my past three directors on how to communicate with the cast in a way that's not so demanding and treat them equal to me and my assistant director," Evans said. "It makes the show move along much better if we are all equal."

Throughout the year, the Starlight Theatre Company performs many different types of shows with some being student-directed and others being teacher directed. According to Cullinane, these two are very different from each other in the way that student-directed shows create closer bonds.

"[Student-directed shows] are a lot different just because the casts are a lot smaller," Cullinane said. "Everyone is really close and you make a lot of good friendships. In a bigger show, it's a lot harder to ask for help and you're not really friends with your teachers."

Most seniors will not have a chance to direct again until senior one-acts in the spring, as the company heads into rehearsing for the teacher-directed musical.

"The most rewarding part of directing a show is seeing



**LOOKING CURIOUSLY:** Amelia Cook and AJ Lee perform together in A Lonely Boys Guide to Survival. This show was directed by Lucas Wilcox and tells the tale of a Badger scout and his friends going on adventures. **PHOTO BY** Natalie Cullen

my cast have fun," Evans said. "There are a lot of stressful elements about putting on shows that sometimes overpower the fun ones, so seeing my cast enjoy the process is very exciting because I want them to remember this show as something really fun for them. I've learned about being in a big leadership position by putting on a show myself for the first time. There

is so much work that goes into that so there is a lot to handle but it's very helpful for life lessons."

Although the theatre company has many new and different projects during the year, children's shows are a tradition that has stayed a constant for the organization. According to Cullinane, even through the challenges, directing a children's

show was a rewarding experience.

"I hope that people continue to want to be senior directors even though it is a very time-consuming process, especially for seniors who are applying to college," Cullinane said. "It can be a challenge to take on but I would really hope that people continue to put effort into it." ■

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**Lucy Evans**  
Senior