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NDA's *Matilda*--a First For Green Bay!

by Skylar Schultz

Roald (not Ronald) Dahl has found his way into the hearts and bookshelves of readers around the world. Roald garnered fame and acclaim with his children's books like *James and the Giant Peach*, *The BFG*, *The Witches* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

While these stories have made deep and personal marks on their readers, few have reached as much widespread acclaim as Dahl's *Matilda*. From book to movie to musical, the tale of a clever little girl has touched all those who heard it, making its mark on the culture and conscience of the world.

The story of *Matilda* began as just that: a story. However, getting the story and the titular character right was not an easy task

"I got it wrong," said Dahl in a 1988 interview. "I spent six or eight or nine months writing it, and when I finished, it wasn't right." So, Dahl decided, instead of revising his piece, he would rewrite it entirely.

"It was a very interesting experience, which I've never had to do before. But maybe, in my old age, I'm getting not so good at it and it takes longer."

"Now I'm fairly happy with it," the then 72-year-old author said. "I think it's ok, but it certainly wasn't before."

Since its publication, *Matilda* has sold more than 17 million copies, making their way into homes all around the globe. One such home was that of Mr. Danny DeVito, a

recognizable name then and now.

"My kids were starting to read regular books, rather than picture books, and one day the girls brought this book in, *Matilda* by Roald Dahl. I had never heard of it, I didn't know anything about it, and we started reading," recalled the actor. "They loved it so much."

DeVito then went after the rights for the project, looking to direct and produce the movie. Ultimately, he ended up wearing several different hats, including the one glued to his head for his part as Mr. Wormwood, *Matilda's* father, alongside his then-wife, Rhea Perlman.

"I had so much fun on this movie," said DeVito, and so did audiences, with a 90% critical rating and 73% audience rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

The next stage in *Matilda's* development was its stage musical. First shown in 2010 at The Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, *Matilda the Musical*, has made its way to London's West End, Broadway, and now Notre Dame Academy. Throughout its various runs, the musical has snagged many an accolade, including a Guinness World Record for most wins at the Laurence Olivier Awards, London's premier theater prize.

'Quiet,' a song from the score, was also presented to Chinese President, Xi Jinping, at a state visit with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. The musical itself is more faithful to the original source material than the movie, showing the tale in a whole new light



Cast members practice one of the opening numbers for *Matilda, the Musical*, which opens on the NDA stage on Thursday, January 23rd and runs through Sunday afternoon.

with a script by Dennis Kelly, set to a beautiful score by "the anarchic Australian comedian" Tim Minchin.

Andrea Gilson, English teacher and NDA musical director, first heard of the musical, not from its acclaim, but from her daughter.

"I read the book *Matilda* in the past, but it was actually my daughter that introduced the musical *Matilda* to me," recalled Gilson. "She was watching a video on YouTube and fell in love with the 'School Song.' Then I realized the rights were available and I got excited for it."

Despite its presence online, the teacher had a hard time finding a live performance of the show.

"There are not many productions in Wisconsin," she said. "We're actually, I think, one of the first high schools to be doing it in Wisconsin."

Perhaps the reason for this is the sheer difficulty of the musical.

"I think I chose it because it is challenging and we have the talent for it," said Gilson. "This, technically, is more of a difficult musical to do. Last year was a classic musical, so the

songs were more melodic. This one is definitely more Broadway in its song structure. It's completely different."

"I really like that it tells a story," the English teacher said. "I like that it's dark and humorous at the same time, and I really like the character development in the show."

"I'm really excited to see the audience experience it because they're really involved in the show, and I'm also excited to see them witness the special effects," she said. "It's definitely been a lot of work, but it's been really rewarding, seeing it get put together."

Long Hours, Many Hands Make It Happen



Band director Steve Johnson, choir director Chris Salerno, English/drama teacher Andrea Gilson and science teacher Kim Flinchum worked together to make the show a hit.

by Lauren Van Gheem

"The musical was selected for the students. It honestly has the best storyline of any musical I have directed. The cast is incredibly talented. Individuals of all ages will find it funny, entertaining and magical," said English teacher Andrea Gilson, one of the directors of the musical *Matilda*.

The other directors are choir teacher Christine Salerno, band teacher Steve Johnson and science teacher Kim Flinchum.

These four hard-working staff members spend an average of 130 hours on the musical each year.

"The best part about directing musicals is the family-like atmosphere that develops throughout the rehearsals," said Salerno.

Each year a different musical is chosen based on the size of the pit orchestra, the budget and the type of audience.

Matilda was chosen for the student

body because of the love of the movie and the book," said Gilson. "*Matilda* is fresh, different, and we are one of the first high schools in Wisconsin to perform it."

Flinchum choreographs the dance numbers in the musicals. She has a very diverse dance background.

"It's so rewarding to see the final product at the performances," said Flinchum. "I love performing and being on stage, and getting to share that love with students and give them that opportunity is totally worth every minute."

Johnson meets twice a week after school with the 20 members of the pit band to rehearse for the musical.

"We learn the instrumental parts for the show to provide the musical accompaniment for the actors and singers," said Johnson.

During the musical each teacher manages his time in different ways to stay on track.

Gilson said, "I write endless to-do lists and make the most of every minute of my weekend when I am

not at school or at the musical."

Each teacher brings a certain set of gifts and talents to the musical.

Concerning her dance schemes, Flinchum said, "I never really know how things are actually going to work in real life. What may look fabulous in my head may look terrible on stage in real life."

Salerno has played for many musicals and has a lot of experience over 38 years of directing.

"I know what sounds good," she said, "I know what looks good. I know how to communicate productively with students and faculty."

Johnson said, "I have a lot of experience playing in pit orchestras which really helps. I also have good attention to detail, and I am able to be clear in my conducting."

Gilson, an alum who performed in NDA musicals herself, loves to encourage and

motivate others and plan things out.

"Visualizing the musical comes easy to me. I am always growing and learning as a director, and it has been a challenging, rewarding and humbling experience," Gilson said.

Salerno teaches the students the music and records individual parts for students to work on.

"I look forward to putting it all together and getting the jokes," said the choir teacher.

Coordinating the pit orchestra with what is going on onstage is the most challenging part for Johnson, who said, "The best part for me is getting to work with a great group of talented and motivated students."

"I love the energy of the rehearsals and the creative process," said Gilson. "The lighting is the coolest and most elaborate yet. There are many special effects and creative set pieces. We need everyone to come and see *Matilda*."

See the ONLINE TRITONIAN for more articles on the upcoming show, including a feature story by Gioia Cumicek on Jake Gerlikovski, the NDA alum who has become the school's guru for lights and sound. The technical aspect of *Matilda* is "magical," according to directors and cast members.

Another online story by Adison Karbon highlights "newbies" or first-timers to the NDA stage. These youngsters are actually "veterans," thanks to Birder Studio and Evergreen Productions.

Make it a habit to check out www.ndatritonian.com at least once a week for new stories by NDA's student journalists. We appreciate your support!



Maddy Burgess

Maddy, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

My friend Tommy pushed me to audition sophomore year, and I have auditioned ever since.

Favorite musical memory?

When the senior girls write notes for all the other cast members and put them up in the girls' dressing room.

NDA role model?

Mr. Kriegl

Three words to describe the musical?

Exciting, loud, fun

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

I have learned that without every single person participating (cast, stage crew, pit band, tech) there can not be a show.

What was the toughest part of the musical?

Memorizing my monologues



Sonja Gapinski

Sonja, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

It provides so many great memories and experiences and allows you to meet new people.

NDA role model?

Mrs. Rickards. She is one of the nicest people I have ever met and cares for everyone at all times.

Three words to describe the musical?

Energetic, chaotic, and fun.

What was the toughest part of the musical?

The toughest part of the musical is probably going to be attempting to do a handstand while on stage.



Bella Brabazon

Bella, what's your favorite tik tok?

The weighted blanket challenge, especially the one where the kid falls down the stairs.

Favorite musical memory?

When Mrs. Gilson jumped into Tommy Tressler's arms.

NDA role model?

Max Timmer because he can do a perfect performance of "Take a Hint" by memory, and he only has half a heart so it's even more impressive.

Three words to describe the musical?

Entertaining, Funny, Loud

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

Some of your best friends will be the people you never expect.

Kate, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

My friends, family and love for theatre encouraged me to give an audition a shot.

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

When I grow up I want to be like Mrs. Gilson because she always looks for the positive in any situation and is kind to everyone.

Three words to describe the musical?

Fun, touching and amazing

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

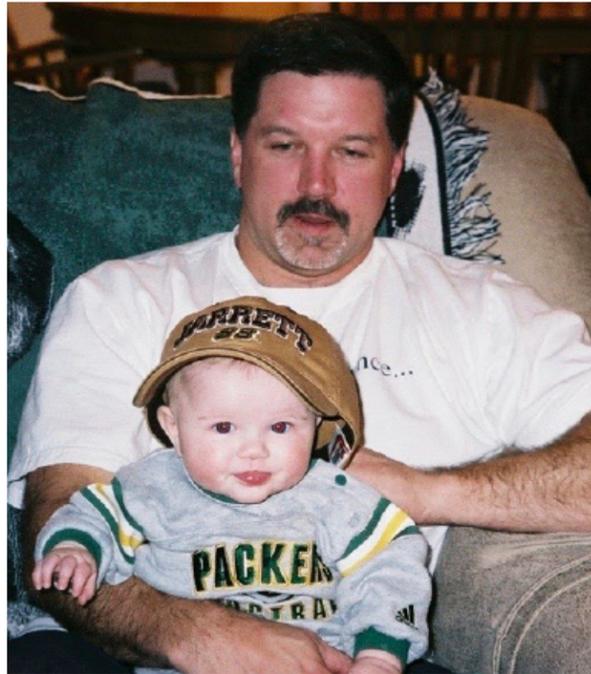
I have learned to not be afraid to let your talent shine and to be open to making new friends.

One app on your phone you can't live without?

Snapchat

What has been the toughest part of the musical?

For me the toughest part of the musical is learning the choreography.



Kate Treankler

Joey, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

Coming into high school, I knew musical was something I wanted to participate in and hopefully I'll be able to participate in it all four years.

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

Definitely Mr. Konshak.

Favorite musical memory?

Trying to get through the final scene in rehearsal without laughing.

Three words to describe the musical?

Funny, different, outrageous

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

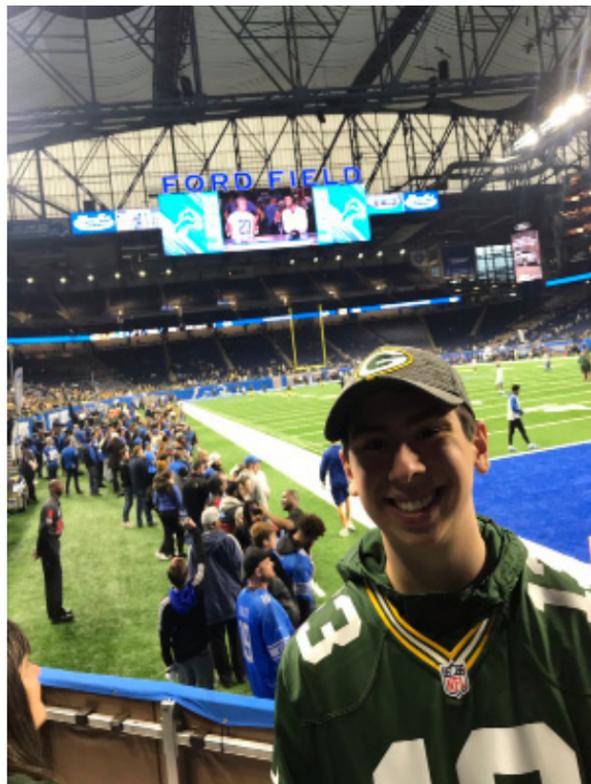
I've learned that I won't make better memories anywhere else than being in the musical.

One app on your phone you can't live without?

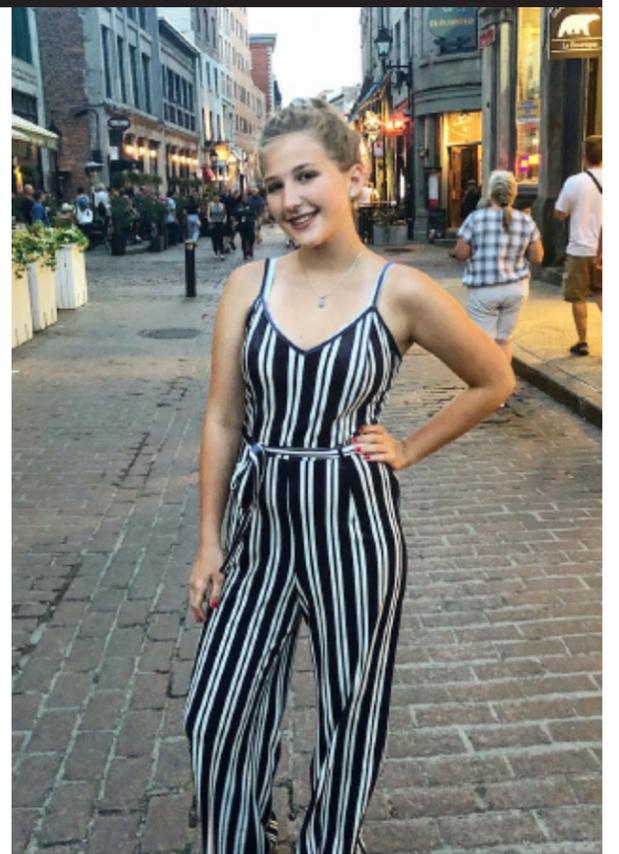
It's a tie between Instagram and Twitter.

What was the toughest part of the musical?

The character changes, having to play three different roles throughout the production.



Joey Bonadonna



Lizzy Parish

Lizzy, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

Last year I auditioned and absolutely loved it, so I thought, "Let's do it again!"

Favorite musical memory?

Before performances we would do a group chant that brought us all together even more.

NDA role model?

Probably Mrs Kirschling...she's so nice!

Three words to describe the musical?

Family, Friends, Fun

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

That we can always improve ourselves by building each other up.

One app on your phone you can't live without?

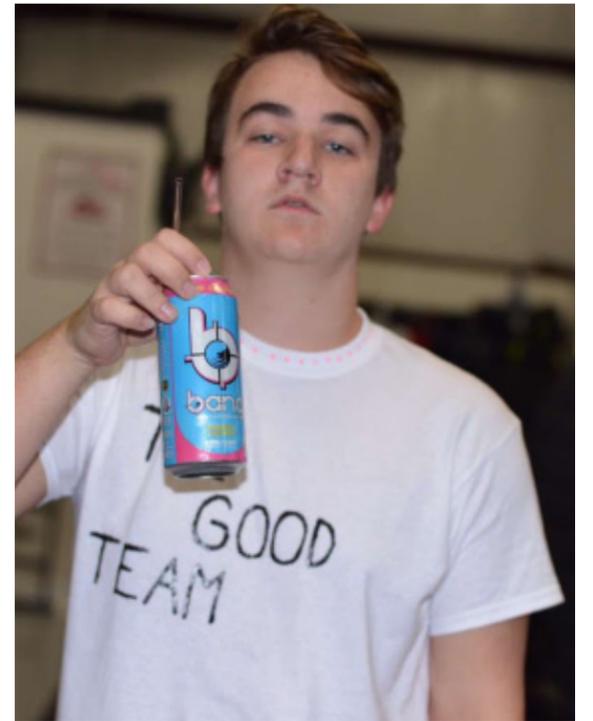
Candy Crush for sure! I go on it any time I can.

Which character is most like you?

Probably Bruce because I love chocolate cake!

What was the toughest part of the musical?

Not laughing while on stage, it's such a funny show!



Max Timmer

Max, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

I did it last year, had a lot of fun and wanted to finish strong with an incredible musical program.

Favorite musical memory?

When I auditioned for the first time junior year and forgot my entire song so decided to just snap and smile.

NDA role model?

Tracy from Konop

Three words to describe the musical?

Fun, hard and rewarding

One app on your phone you can't live without?

Mcdonald's because of the deals and rewards I always get as a frequent customer.

What was the toughest part of the musical?

Figuring out how to portray my character and making sure I always give my undivided attention to the musical even on long days.



Libby Rickards

Libby, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

I love musicals and have grown up around musicals my whole life.

What's your favorite tik tok?

The Perfect Crime by Dwight Schrute.

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

Crossover between Mrs. Stanczak, Ms. Robbins, and Mr. Dory

Favorite musical memory?

During *The Addams Family*, a fake bird was thrown into the pit. Jack Flis picked it up and stuck it between his neck and jacket throughout the entire production, having it stare at everyone on stage!

NDA role model?

My mom, no questions asked.

What was the toughest part of the musical for you?

Having to work with my brother. He doesn't appreciate me or my talents enough.



Sam Ruffell

Sam, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

I had such a good time last year that I had to do it again.

What's your favorite tik tok?

My mom says I'm not old enough to have it.

Favorite musical memory?

Arguing with my family.

NDA role model?

Mattea Vecera

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

It's just like football.

What was the toughest part of the musical?

Getting into the mindset of Danny Devito.



Jacob Massart

Jacob, what's your favorite tik tok?

My favorite TikTok is obviously my own: @jakeyb0i, (it's a zero). Follow it. Please.

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

When I grow up, I'd like to be like Mr. Geiser (the Wiser).

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

I have learned that in order to be good at something, you must put in an amount of hard work and to take the opportunities given to you.

One app on your phone you can't live without?

TikTok. Follow me @jakeyb0i (it's a zero). Please.

What was the toughest part of the musical for you?

Putting in the time to know your own lines, music and dances all while balancing with school work and Honors Biology tests.

Noah, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

It is a great friendly environment with many people striving to put on an amazing show for their peers.

What's your favorite tik tok?

Evan Skaletski's turkey video.

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

Mrs. Percival. She is always grinding, turning in test grades within 24 hours, and has some graphic design side-hustles I can respect.

Favorite musical memory?

When Mrs. Salerno gives me candy for moving the piano.

Three words to describe the musical?

Super duper good

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

Teamwork, cooperation, and time management.

Which character is most like you?

Matilda, super smart and underrated

What was the toughest part of the musical?

The time commitment is sometimes difficult to handle, but the end result always renders the time worthwhile.



Noah Sternig

Elizabeth, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

I grew up on the stage, and now I can't imagine life without my musical family. I really enjoy learning and working with my friends as we create our characters and tell their stories.

Favorite musical memory?

It has got to be when I had to do "undead flapper" makeup for *The Addams Family*. Being a ghost was really fun!

NDA role model?

Mrs. Hearden, as she has found a way to balance both science and music in her life. That is something I really aspire to achieve as an adult in the world.

Three words to describe the musical?

Emotional rollercoaster ride.

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

I've learned that being a part of such a talented team of people is a gift that I cannot take for granted, and that the relationships built on a stage will last forever.

One app on your phone you can't live without?

Photos. All of the memories I've made since 8th grade graduation are stored there. Losing them would be quite the crisis.

What was the toughest part of the musical?

Styling my very big hair and learning to belt while dancing.



Elizabeth Hoepfner



Maggie Otradovec

Maggie, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

I've always loved the idea of acting and being in shows

What's your favorite tik tok?

"Shot on iPhone"

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

Either Dory...I really want to travel.

Favorite musical memory?

Going out in front of the curtain at the very beginning of *Bye Bye Birdie* last year...it was magical.

Three words to describe the musical?

Fun, Quirky, Magical

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

How to not laugh on stage.

One app on your phone you can't live without?

The Fox News App

Which character is most like you?

Bruce...I would love to eat a whole cake.

What was the toughest part of the musical for you?

Playing a character that is really really nice all the time.



Emilie Chamberlain

Emilie, what prompted you to audition for the musical?

I have always loved performing, and I've been in multiple shows and taken classes since I was 7 years old. I wanted to get more involved with the school and meet new people through doing what I love.

What NDA teacher would you want to be like when you grow up?

If I had to pick to be like an NDA teacher, I would want to be like Mr. Rudar. He seems chill.

Favorite musical memory?

When Charles shouted "MY WIFE IS PREGNANT!" (it was his line), and no one could stop laughing for like ten minutes.

NDA role model?

My NDA role models are my friends. It's cheesy, but I learn new things from them every day, and it feels like I've known a lot of them for so much longer than four months.

Three words to describe the musical?

Big, dramatic and funny

What have you learned by being in the NDA musical program?

I've learned that your cast can become like your family. You gain connections with people you didn't predict you would.

Which character is most like you?

I'm probably the most like Nigel because he is annoyingly overconfident, but he also helps out his friends.

Stage Crew Makes Show Happen

by Monica Sosa-Hernandez

“Decisions, paint, and time,” said stage manager Olivia Berndt to describe her role in the musical.

Notre Dame Academy has many things to be excited about, but *Matilda* is the talk of the town. Those who have seen the movie or the people who know the plot understand the trickiness of the production.

Stage managers for the musical are Berndt and fellow junior Ella Jensen. Both have high expectations for the musical and are excited to make it a magical show.

“I think this is going to be a fantastic show. A multitude of people are working on it, and it is a big production,” said Berndt.

“I have very high expectations. This year we have such a strong group of people that work so hard. The cast members all have incredible voices, and they are so talented. The crew and the pit really make this show come to life with the music and all of the special effects,” said Jensen.

Critical to the show is replicating the magic seen in the movie. For the stage production, the crew must rely on real-life illusion.

Despite the challenge, Jensen is nothing but positive: “As of now,

I have no concerns. I am really excited to see exactly how magical this show is really going to be.”

Both Berndt and Jensen worked stage crew under alums Maddie Laaksonen and Courtney Ledvina for the musical *Bye Bye Birdie* and the play *Clue*.

The role of a stage manager is to help decide the props and settings of each scene in the play or musical. It also entails managing other crew members backstage, making sure that people are in their spots at certain times, and making sure everyone stays on task.

Jensen’s favorite part of the production is creating the props and working throughout the show. “It is so fun to watch the whole thing in action, even if I can’t see it like the audience can.”

Berndt’s favorite part of her role is being able to see their ideas “come to life” with the help of the rest of the stage crew.

To anyone interested in becoming a stage crew manager Berndt suggests helping out with at least two productions to learn how things are run backstage. She also emphasized that it is a stressful and time-consuming job that requires a lot from someone.

“Be open-minded and be creative” were additional words of advice from Jensen, who couldn’t help but add a final push for *Matilda*: “It is going to be such a cool production.”



A stage crew of newbies and veterans work under the direction of stage managers Olivia Berndt and Ella Jensen.

The Music Makers Behind *Matilda*

by Ellen Meeuwesen

Notre Dame Academy’s pit orchestra is hard at work preparing to accompany the cast of the musical *Matilda* when the show opens in January.

Members of the pit are chosen from a selection process after pit director Steve Johnson “determines the instrumental needs of the show.”

Johnson selects his members based on his knowledge of the students and their “musical ability, discipline, and work ethic necessary to be successful as a part of pit orchestra.”

The pit started rehearsing the musical score twice a week in late October. In addition to group rehearsals, pit members are expected to put some of their own time into practice.

The music in *Matilda* is challenging and different from past NDA musicals. French horn player Josie Bieker describes the music as “a

sort of a mix of pop, rock and a bit of Danny Elfman in a musical.”

Bieker’s biggest challenge is “many times in a pit, you are the only one who is playing your part so you have to know what’s going on in the other parts, on stage, as well as your own at the same time.”

Despite its challenges, Bieker loves being a member of the pit because “although we are not as visible or known as the cast, we are a close group who all love music and are a part of making the musical what it is.”

Flute and piccolo player Abby Heyroth notices that the *Matilda* music is different from the past musicals “because it has a childlike quality that makes it interesting.”

Flute and saxophone player Rio O’Toole says “musical music is challenging in its own way because most musicals change tempos and key signatures

often and at the drop of a hat.” Clarinet player Ian Ernst loves being a part of the musical because “I can’t sing or dance, but I can play an instrument very well, and this is my way of contributing to the show.”

Ernst added, “Every musical has a different style. While some aspects may not be technically difficult, the sudden changes between songs and changes in the music and key can be tricky to learn.”

Trumpet player Cathy Baeten cites being in the pit as a challenge to grow musically.

“With all of the difficult keys and time signatures, it provides a challenge which I can use to further develop my skill,” said Baeten. Due to the long and challenging rehearsals, the members of the pit grow to be very supportive of each other, and by the end of the show they are a tight-knit family with many memories and lots of inside jokes.

Come to the Musical!
It’s a bargain, a great deal!!
Show Times:
Thursday, January 23, 7:00 PM
Friday, January 24, 7:00 PM
Saturday, January 25, 7:00 PM
Sunday, January 26, 7:00 PM
Ticket Prices: Students- \$8.00
Adults-\$14.00 Seniors- \$12.00

Skylar Schultz Plays the Notorious Trunchbull

by Rylei Anders

Skylar Schultz, sophomore, will perform as Ms. Trunchbull, a role traditionally played by a male, in *Matilda*, her first Notre Dame production.

She has been involved in music, specifically musical theater since third grade. Taking classes at Birder Studio, she has performed in over 20 productions and recitals for dance and voice.

Just wanting to be a part of the show, she nervously auditioned, and when she did, she said, “I didn’t even consider Trunchbull to be a possibility until they asked me to read for her at callbacks. Even then, I was still pretty doubtful, since they told me I was the only girl they were looking at.”

Schultz was happy being cast in such a big role but panicked afterwards. She was afraid that people might not like that she had taken such a big part of the musical her first time as a sophomore, but she added that everyone has been so nice and welcoming.

The hardest part for her is the acting because of the irrational actions

that her character does. However, being familiar with the character helped her figure out the way she needed to act, *Matilda* being one of her favorite books growing up.

Her favorite part of the show is the music, specifically the song “When I Grow Up” and her own song “The Smell of Rebellion.” She finds it fun to be playing a character so different from herself and be able to perform with others.

Her favorite part playing Ms. Trunchbull was “getting to bully all those people on stage. I get to just abuse these people on stage and then walk off and eat pizza with them after.”

Schultz said, “My favorite thing is watching the show progress. Every rehearsal we get better and better, whether it’s with music or memorization or choreography. Just watching the whole thing come together is magical.”

She would like to thank her Birder teachers, her parents, the directors and her friends and said that “there is no way I would be on this stage, playing this part, without them.”



Members of the pit orchestra rehearse under the direction of band director Steve Johnson and pianist Mrs. Nancy Gapinski.

Actors Challenged by Multiple Roles

by Max Timmer

“It’s obviously challenging playing multiple characters in one show, but it poses a great opportunity to explore different acting styles,” explained Bella Brabazon, NDA senior and cast member of *Matilda*.

This year, seven students, including myself, play multiple roles in the musical. I play Rudolpho, which is a supporting role, an adult, and a member of the Big Kid Chorus. While playing three roles is great, it takes work to differentiate each character.

For instance, in one of the first run-throughs of *Matilda*, se-

nior Tommy Tressler, accidentally started singing lines for one character while acting a different one.

“It was definitely a funny but important reminder to how much attention you have to have to perform multiple roles,” said Tressler. One of the most interesting factors of playing multiple roles is the quick costume changes.

Many of these actors have quick changes and turnaround on characters. One example of this is when Brabazon plays two characters in the same scene. “When I first heard that I’d be playing two characters in one scene, I was very curious to see how it

would look logistically, but now it works perfectly, and I’m so excited to perform it,” explained Brabazon.

Another instance is when I play a big kid in one scene and the next scene I quickly change to Rudolpho, an Italian dancer. The opportunity to play multiple roles is very intimidating with quick changes and lines to memorize, but I think it’s the best way to leave NDA with a “bang.”

“Being multiple roles poses a challenge, but I’m so excited to be tested as an actor and continue to grow during the rehearsals,” said senior Charles Peterson.