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February 21, 2017

Vol. VII, No. 3

Musical Brings Comic Book to Life

When **Jeremy Stoll** says Westside’s March 16 – 19 musical *Zombie Prom* has something for everyone to enjoy, he isn’t kidding.

The 1996 Off-Broadway musical *Zombie Prom* is a comedy rock opera packed with 22 songs, tons of dancing and a goofy, romantic story line. Oh, and don’t forget the special stage makeup and sets designed to look like a 1950s comic book.

That’s right—a comic book.

Zombie Prom is a 1950s horror comic book come to life. What does that mean? Well if you weren’t around in the 1950s, you might not know that the days of poodle skirts, teeny-boppers and Elvis swagger were also the golden age of comic books—specifically comic book stories about the Cold War ramp-up and the birth of nuclear energy. So...might as well put a nuclear power plant in the story line and—to polish it off—a zombie.



Cast members **Emma Chvala**, **Audrey McCann** and **Hannah Fay Johnson** rehearse a scene from *Zombie Prom*.

All of this will be performed by an incredibly talented Westside High School cast and crew, said Stoll, Westside’s theater director.

“We saw so much good stuff in the



Tyler Banark, **Audrey McCann** and **Emma Chvala** practice a song.

audition room that we had to inflate the cast. The show calls for only 12 main roles, but we made it into 20,” Stoll said. “This also helps us get the big sounds on stage that we wanted to create.”

Zombie Prom starts out as the usual story of a bad-boy named Jonny, played by senior **Josh Wonder**, who romances good-girl Toffee, played by senior **Audrey McCann**. The really cheesy part is that they fall in love while hiding under their desks during an air raid drill. When the romance goes wrong, Jonny hurls himself into a nuclear power plant. Naturally, he returns as a green zombie.

If this all sounds a little silly, that’s because it is. “There is absolutely nothing serious in this show at all and we play that up. It is very campy,” Stoll said. The show’s style is described as *Grease* meets *Little Shop of Horrors* with a touch of *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

A parallel story follows teacher Ms. Strict, played by junior **Hannah Fay Johnson**, and news reporter Eddie Flagrante played by senior **Nathan Wallace**, whose special relationship is revealed during the show-ending zombie prom.

Contour makeup will give all the

actors a comic book look, Stoll said. Wonder’s transformation into a comic-book style zombie involves eyebrow and chin facial prosthetics made from latex. A mold of his face was used to make the latex pieces.

Stoll picked *Zombie Prom* a year ago knowing he would have to break in a new musical director because Kyle Avery was leaving and his replacement hadn’t been picked. The music director helps audition and train singers, and conducts the orchestra. Stoll thought students would be excited about the



Director **Jeremy Stoll** gives instructions to cast members.

show’s story and it wouldn’t overload the plate of a new music director.

But *Zombie Prom* has turned out to be a bigger musical than he bargained for, says Stoll, and he’s grateful for the energy and experience Westside’s new vocal music teacher, **Greg Woodin**, brings to the show as music director.

“As it turns out, this is a pretty intense musical. There is very little dialogue and the songs have complicated harmonies,” Stoll said. “It’s a

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Competition of Excellence a Huge Success

Westside hosted the 17th annual Competition of Excellence on Saturday, January 28th. The weather was welcoming this year, allowing the 25 choirs from five states and 13 schools to compete in this one-day event. The day started very early for many of the 250+ volunteers who helped make this event a huge success. With so much going on behind the scenes, everyone played a key role to keep this very busy day running smoothly. Whether they baked brownies, prepared food in the cafeteria, worked backstage setting up risers and coordinating performers, or organizing parking, everyone helped the day proceed seamlessly.



Riverside Company from Hastings High School in Hastings, Minnesota was crowned Grand Champion of Competition of Excellence for the third year in a row.



Westside's show choir members "hard at work" getting the homerooms ready for our guests...

After school on Friday, Westside show choir students decorated classrooms that served as each choir's "homeroom" during the competition. Meanwhile, their parents set up the rest of the school in preparation for the

following day's event. Many returned as early as 4:30 a.m. on Saturday to prepare breakfast items and greet the first bus, which arrived around 6:15 a.m. Exc!amation, Elkhorn High School's Prep Division choir was the first to perform at 7:20 a.m. Show choir competitions usually include



...while parents prepare the rest of the school for the big day.

three divisions: Preparatory (JV choirs), Unisex (all male or all female choirs) and Open (varsity choirs).

Brandi Petersen, Director of Communications and Engagement with Westside Community Schools, served as Master of Ceremonies for the Saturday night finals. Special guest **Bathtub Dogs** entertained the audience while judges tallied their scores at the end of finals. Bathtub Dogs is a thriving men's a cappella ensemble from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. They represent the University by performing at various events across the state and region. The



Fixing enough food to feed an army, or a hungry horde of show choir fans.

Bathtub Dogs recently released their sixth studio album titled *Recess*.

The evening culminated with Riverside Company from Hastings High School in Hastings, Minnesota being crowned Grand Champions for the third year in a row. Thank you to everyone who helped make this event such a tremendous success!

A Message from the COE Chair

Thank you to this parent community for your time, energy and enthusiasm at our COE event on Saturday, January 28th! We could not have pulled off such an amazing event without the help of many parents, friends and alumni.

Most importantly, we gave the performers a fantastic experience on-stage and off. These kids were able to shine on stage for their families, friends and other show choir fans. It was a pleasure to hear the cheering and see the

joy on the kids' faces (especially as they exited the auditorium through the "cheer line").

We also raised additional funds to continue the amazing work of our show choir programs. Our kids will have many opportunities to shine—on stage and off.

Enjoy the rest of the show choir season—**GO WESTSIDE!**

Nina Swanson,
2017 COE Chair

Zombie Prom from page 1

good thing it turned out to be Greg Woodin in that job. He's a rock star. He always comes in fired up and gets the kids excited to work."

Tickets for *Zombie Prom* will go on sale March 6 for Warrior Theatre Patrons and March 11 for the general public. General public tickets can be



Musical Director Greg Woodin works with the cast in perfecting the songs.

purchased online at www.warriortheatre.org. Tickets also will be sold at the door starting one hour before the 7:00 p.m. shows March 16 – 18 and the 2:00 p.m. matinee March 19.

To become a theater patron so you can buy tickets early and reserve seats before the general public, register a donation by clicking on the patron tab on the Warrior Theater website. WHS theater is part of Westside's Performing Arts Department, headed by **Doran Johnson**. It is funded by the school, Stoll said, but fundraising by parents and ticket sales pay for well over half of the theater department's operating costs.

Stoll chooses a musical with a smaller budget and smaller production every other year. *Zombie Prom* is supposed to be the smaller production, but you won't know it by the sets, choreography, and costumes and a student crew of 23 organizing everything off-stage. For the sets, artists are creating the pages of comic books on flats borrowed from the Papillion-La Vista Community Theatre. The flats will turn to simulate turning comic book pages. Costumes will be provided by Creighton University. The show's dancing will feature some keen 1950s swing and jive dance moves choreographed by Omaha professional **Courtney Jo Stein**. Professional lighting will be done by **Carol Wisner**.

Other fun facts about the show:

Reprisal of Spring show: Because show choirs kids usually dominate the cast

ZOMBIE PROM
THE MUSICAL

March 16th, 17th, 18th @ 7 PM
March 19th @ 2 PM

For ticket information:
www.warriortheatre.org

Zombie Prom Cast:

Ms. Strict – Hannah Fay Johnson
Toffee – Audrey McCann
Candy – Kelly Kroeger
Coco – Emma Chvala
Ginger – Maddie Stark
Jonny – Josh Wonder
Joey – Tyler Banark
Josh – Sam Vazzano
Jake – Ben Brodkey
Eddie Flagrante – Nathan Wallace
Ramona – Alexis Rose
Jockstraps – Brandon McMiller,
Ian Wear, Luke Esola
Father – Ryne Siler
Pompoms – Sarah Carpenter,
Tierney Schirmer, Hannah-Kate
Kinney, Paige Hakari
Mother – Chase Piper

of each musical, Stoll works closely with Vocal Music Director Doran Johnson to schedule them around show choir competitions. Last year, he tried moving the musical to the fall but found it conflicted even more with boot camps and evening practices preparing for the competition season. Stoll said he thinks musicals will be in the spring from now on.

Awards: *Zombie Prom* will be eligible for the *Nebraska High School Theatre Awards*. Awards are announced in May and include categories of best musical, outstanding lead and supporting actors, as well as outstanding ensemble and stage management.

Run Time: One hour and 40 minutes. And Stoll gives it a PG-13 rating so it's pretty kid friendly.

Movie version: *Zombie Prom* was made into a movie—not a box office hit, but it has become a cult classic.

Historical references: The high school in the musical is named Enrico Fermi High School. He was a real guy—an Italian physicist who created the first nuclear reactor. The Power Plant in *Zombie Prom* is named after Francis Gary Powers, an American pilot whose CIA spy plane was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960. It sparked the controversial U-2 incident depicted in the 2015 movie *Bridge of Spies*, starring Tom Hanks. So, kids, if you don't see your history teacher at the show, see if you know more than they do...just this once.

Stolls on Stage: If you aren't doing the work, but teaching it, you are missing



Hannah Fay Johnson rehearses her role as Ms. Strict.

part of the story, says Stoll. He and his wife, Erin, are very involved in community theater. Stoll just finished a stint in *A War of Roses*, a retelling of Shakespeare's *Henry 6 Trilogy* put on by UNO, Creighton and Nebraska Shakespeare. His roles included King Henry V and Lord Talbot. Erin is finishing up a role in *Motherhood Almanac*, an original script performed at Omaha's Shelterbelt Theatre. When Westside's musical wraps up, Erin will take to the stage again for Omaha Blue Barn's performance of *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* May 18 – July 1.

On Stage with Westside's Show Choirs



ATSC

Simply Irresistible

Warrior Express



The Future Rising Stars

The Rising Stars camp is always a win-win for the Westside vocal music program. Over 65 students from fourth grade through sixth grade participated in the camp on December 10, 2016. The camp is hosted by ATSC, and allows the participants to get a sampling of what Westside's show choir program entails.

Members of ATSC seek to get students directly involved in the show choir process. They emphasize building dance skills, vocal knowledge, and the opportunity to apply these skills in a fun, experience-driven environment. This kind of enthusiasm and creative intensity is why this camp is so much fun.

Nathan Wallace and *Katya Ward*, dance captains for ATSC, developed choreography for three numbers, then around 15 ATSC students volunteered to help teach the younger performers. Nathan enjoyed working with this group of students, "It was great to see all their energy and enthusiasm. I think it was a good experience for all who participated."

The camp is one of the fundraisers used to support show choirs at Westside High School. It also encourages future generations to explore this opportunity while giving current ATSC members a chance to pay it forward. One of the reasons Westside continues to maintain its outstanding competitive edge is by bringing up the next generation of performers.

Baxter Arena Volunteering

Great way to give of your time,
meet people and support
Westside Vocal Music!

Parent volunteers needed to work
concessions at various events starting
this month. Tips and percent of total sales
go to Westside's vocal music program.

Contact Cathy Haney for details:
shaney1@cox.net

VMPA Board Members

President Wendie & Scott Grogan
Vice President Sue & Marty Barnhart
Secretary Cathy & Steve Haney
Treasurer Kim Wear
Advisor Ann & Scott Hofmann

VMPA Committee Chairs

Hospitality Tiffany Pedersen
Voices Newsletter Jackie Kroeger
Julie & Paul Trivilino
Hall of F.A.M.E. Maria Akers
Bulletin Boards Barb Fulbright
ATSC Retreat (2017) Angie Bergman
ATSC Picnic (2017) Shannon Hoy
Senior Posters Angelia Kerst & Katee Upton
Cabaret Shannon Hoy & Stephanie Cota
COE Nina Swanson & Leneé Petri
Backstage Mike Wilson
Scholarships Sue Barnhart
Equipment Transport Brett Thomas

Acknowledgments

The editors of Westside's *Voices* newsletter, Julie & Paul Trivilino, thank:

- Jackie Kroeger for contributing the feature story on the Musical.
- Tom and Elizabeth Tape for their many excellent photos.
- Maria Akers for the Hall of F.A.M.E. donor tracking list.
- Nina Swanson for the COE Chair thank you letter.
- Paul Trivilino Design for the generously providing professional design and layout services.

And our sincerest gratitude to Doran Johnson, Greg Woodin, and Denise Millard for their neverending dedication to the ongoing growth of our students as vocalists, team members and upstanding representatives of Westside High School.

Visit WestsideChoirs.com for up-to-date
program dates and information.

Thank You to the 2016 - 2017 Hall of F.A.M.E.* Members (as of 2/6/2017)

Underwriter \$1,500 or more

Leslie Andersen	Scott & Ann Hofmann	Terry & Jackie Kroeger	The Volberding Family –
Angie & John Bekins	John & Chrisi Hughes	The Seline Family	In Memory of Greek Liakos
Steve & Cathy Haney			

Benefactor \$1,000 - \$1,499

Jason & Courtney Hellman	Mike & Julie McMullen	Kay Owen
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Sponsor \$500 - \$999

Jeff & Danielle Gordman	David & Shannon Hoy	Marie & Blane McCann	Teri Mauch & David Sweeney
Brad & Cindy Hammitt	Andy & Lilian Jacobitz	Kim & Jim Simon	Mary & Michael Wallace
Christine & Bob Harry	Wendi & Scott Kroeger	Patrick & Nina Swanson	

Platinum Record Member \$250 - \$499

Sean & Maria Akers	David & Stephanie Cota	Joanie Lehr	John & Sara Young – In Honor of
Dave & Theresa Banark	Louie & Mary Dirks	Eric & Natalie Petersen	Joanna Young Shubart
Marty & Sue Barnhart	Cindy & Bruce Goldberg	Paul & Julie Trivilino	& Andrew Young
Deb & Sam Brower	Dan & Julie Hershiser	Joy & Gordon Watanabe	

Gold Record Member \$75 - \$249

Michael Alston	Chris & Beth Forcade	R.K. Piper & Sandy Heather	Lynn Svoboda
Justene Bunting	Grant & Shawna Forsberg	Tom & Jennie Rands	Patrick & Grace Tantillo
Rhonda & Cicero Calderon	Jack & Deb Gifford	Jim & Jana Rose	Tom & Elizabeth Tape
Andrew & Stacey Carnazzo	Jim & Lori Gigantelli	Kari Kratky Salem	Bob & Maureen Toy
Linda Cheatham	Sydney & Adam Goodwin	Adam & Sandi Sawyer	The Trimble Family
Ron & Sharon Chvala	Wes & Deb Hakari	Eric & Sara Sayre	The Vazzano Family
The DeVries Family	Brian & Angelia Kerst	Bert & Alona Scott	Kim Wear
Tom & Donna Dobson	Cory & Jane Kruger	Steve & Sue Seline	Scott & Belinda Weidner
John & Linda Donaldson	Bret & Kathy Nellor	in honor of Charlie Liakos	The Wilson Family
Matt & Heather Egbert	David & Jennifer Paul	Mike & Lisa Smith	Brent & Tricia Wonder
Lori & Shawn Farwell	David & Leneé Petri	Ellen & Bill Sonnleitner	Brian & Christine Yuell

Top-Ten Hits Member \$1 - \$74

Deb & Sam Brower	Gail Seaman Dolan	Amy & John Hruska	The Shields Family
in memory of Helen Nabity	Carrie Feingold	Gary Newsham	Larry & Judy Webster
Kathy & Kevin Dinkel			

*Fund for Attaining Musical Excellence.

The names listed above are current as of February 6, 2017. We apologize for the omission of any donor names due to publication deadlines. An updated list will be included in the next issue of this newsletter.

SAVE THE DATE!

2017 "Seed to Sow" Choral Festival

Featuring the voices of All District Sixth-Grade Chorus, Eighth-Grade Chorus,
Westside Connection, Warrior Choir and ATSC.

Tuesday, March 28, 2017

7:00 p.m.

Westside High School Gymnasium

2016 – 2017 Vocal Music Calendar

Date	Event	Choirs
February 24 – 26 (Fri – Sun)	<i>Swingin' on the River Invitational</i> (Hastings, MN) Depart at 2:00 p.m. on Fri/Return 9:00 p.m. on Sun	ATSC/SI
March 4 (Sat)	Lewis Central <i>Clash of the Titans</i>	ATSC/SI/WE
March 11 (Sat)	Millard North Invitational	SI/WE
March 23 – 26 (Thur – Sun)	<i>Heart of America</i> (Atlanta, GA)	ATSC
March 28 (Tues)	Westside Choral Festival 7:00 p.m. (Main Gym)	Warrior/ATSC
April 6 (Thur)	Show Choir Auditions 3:30 p.m. – 10:00 p.m. (Vocal Room)	
April 18 (Tues)	Pre-Contest Concert 7:30 p.m. (Main Gym)	Warrior/Band/Orchestra
April 21 – 22 (Fri – Sat)	District Music Contest (at Gretna High School)	Warrior/Soloists
April 30 (Sun)	ATSC Picnic 6:00 p.m. (Courtyard/Little Theater)	ATSC
May 3 (Wed)	Spring Choral Concert 7:30 p.m. (WHS Auditorium)	Warrior/Concert/Freshman
May 5 (Fri)	An Evening of Show Choirs 7:00 p.m. (WHS Auditorium)	ATSC/SI/WE

For up-to-date information, event schedules and photos, visit westsidechoirs.com.


JOIN! **Westside VMPA Facebook Group for Parents**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1618102114973041/?fref=nf>

Why join the VMPA Facebook Group?

- Stay up to date on all things Westside Choirs.
- Connect with other VMPA parents
- Show your support for your favorite choirs.

Questions/suggestions? Contact
Leneé Petri: leneepetri@cox.net



Fill Your Tummy And Support Westside Choirs!

Don & Millie's Nights
4:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
First Wednesday of every month
Don & Millie's at 10727 West Center Road

Drop your receipt in the special container and a portion of your meal cost will be donated to Westside choirs.

It's an easy way to support the vocal music program and treat the family to a night out.

