

## Newsies

As the house lights faded and audience members settled into their seats, the stage lights illuminated the opening scene of the heartfelt duet about hopes and dreams performed by sophomores Corey Johnson and Andrew Madden.

From Oct. 25-27, the theater department brought the Disney musical *Newsies* to life with six dance numbers and an industrially-themed stage transporting the audience into the world at the turn of the twentieth century New York.

“It’s such an amazing storyline,” senior Brooke Howard said. “We’ve never done a musical like *Newsies* before and I’m really excited to see how it plays out because it has a whole different dimension.”

The story of *Newsies* surrounded a group of young boys who barely scraped by while selling newspapers. They decided to go on a strike when the antagonist and owner of The World newspaper, Joseph Pulitzer, raised the prices for the *Newsies*, making it even harder for them to profit and make a living.

“Although this is Disney and there’s a Disney amount of cheese in the story,” drama teacher and director Ben Bartlett said, “it does center on relevant issues people still deal with today, such as unfair business practices of the people in power, the rich, taking advantage of the people without power, the poor.”

The *Newsies* cast consisted of 33 SM North students and 18 elementary school students.

“I have a sense of who may be auditioning for the musical based off of who tried out previously, but I go into every audition with an open mind regarding casting,” Bartlett said about the process. “Each year I am surprised by students’ growth.”

*Newsies* was the first production since the 2015 musical *Oliver* that North's theater included elementary students in a production.

"It is a lot of fun to have them be a part of the show and their energy and enthusiasm are entertaining and contagious," Bartlett said. "They have done a very good job learning their music and blocking."

Although they were more of a challenge to manage, the younger students brought a lot of passion to the stage.

"Part of the difference in working with them as opposed to the high schoolers is their attention span," Bartlett said. "We only bring them in for an hour and a half two days a week, opposed to the high schoolers who meet two and a half to three hours six days a week. Any more than that would be a bit much at this age."

Some high schoolers even participated in a North production when they were in elementary school and had a different perspective because of that.

"When you're a little kid you look up to high schoolers and you think that they think you're not cool, but being a high schooler really, we are trying to get them to like us," sophomore Olivia Morris said.

Morris, as well as many other of the high school students, were eager to work with the younger kids and hoped the kids enjoyed it.

"It's really exciting to get the chance to work with them because I had a really good experience when I was an elementary student in *Oliver*," Morris said. "I just really want the same for them and for them to look back on this when they're in high school and have happy memories about being part of *Newsies*."