

SPRING MUSICAL REVIEW

Belleville East Student Newspaper

By: Abby Koester



This year's spring musical was *Chicago*, directed by Dr. Rogers. There were four performances of the show this year, starting with the matinee swap with Belleville West on Wednesday April 24th and the 3 public performances Friday April 26th through Sunday April 28th. The show consisted of Trixie Kohlenberger as Velma Kelly, Jillian Ritter as Roxie Hart, Eugene Williams as Billy Flynn, Jack Seelman as Amos Hart, Hannah Joyner as Mama Morton, JJ Hennon as Mary Sunshine, Skye Rhoden as Liz, Shelby Frazure as Annie, Essence Rucker as June, Abby Koester as Hunyak, and Carissa Mackin as Mona. *Chicago* is an ensemble focused show. This year's cast was extremely talented and worked incredibly hard to make the show as amazing as it was.

In addition to the outstanding performances by the cast, Milana Thouvenot was the student choreographer this year along with Carleigh Tesseract as a guest choreographer. They were a

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huge factor in the show's success. Some of the big numbers include All That Jazz, Cell Block Tango, and Razzle Dazzle. But this entire show is very dance heavy!

Another important part of the show is the tech crew which is directed by Dr. Cowell. This year's show had one set that included a cat walk coming off of the stage, and a walkway about 8 feet above the group in the back. The set also included two sets of moving stairs. The tech built the set, programmed the lights, moved the stairs and so much more! Emalee Peters and Jaiyla Owens were this year's stage managers, Ash Tessereau was in charge of all the sound, and Sonia Mentzer was the costume designer. Without all of these important people there would not have been a spring musical!

Last but not least is the orchestra. This year was different because the orchestra was on stage. This led to many different challenges that the cast and band had to figure out, but this added another level of professionalism. The band was nominated by the St. Louis High School Musical Theater Awards (SLHSMTA) for best orchestra. Our orchestra has won this award two years in a row, and everyone hopes they will be able to do it again!

Overall, this year's spring musical was a huge success and was a show that will go down in history as one of the best musicals ever performed at Belleville East. Although the show itself did not get nominated as many people hoped for, that doesn't take away the fact that this show was still amazing. In case you didn't get to see this show, here are some pictures thanks to the Belleville East Theater Booster Club from during the show! Also below is an interview with some of the cast and crew.

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Q: What is your favorite song/scene from the show?

A: Jillian Ritter: “My favorite song from the show would be We Both Reached For The Gun. In this scene, Roxie acts as a puppet and Billy Flynn acts as the ventriloquist, showing how lawyers often control the perception of the public through their clients. For me, this was a challenge to get my whole body engaged in acting as a puppet, but the result of the whole number was fantastic and such a blast to perform with everyone!”

A: Trixie Kohlenberger: “My favorite number of the show is definitely All That Jazz! The energy in that number from both the cast and the audience is just palpable. Everyone’s focus and precision is just unmatched, and being able to open the show for our audience with this is just so magical.”

A: Jaiyla Owens: : “My favorite song is Nowadays because Jillian and Trixie’s voices sound so beautiful together and they sounded like one person. Also Hot Honey Rag because their dance is so cute!”

Q: What is your best memory from the production?

A: Sonia Mentzer: “Helping the actors with their quick changes!”

A: JJ Hennon: “Getting ready for the show with everyone backstage every night was so much fun!”

A: Jaiyla Owens: “Whenever Taron decided to barrel roll onto stage on closing night!”

Q: What was the hardest part of this show to perform?

A: Jillian Ritter: “Learning how to accurately portray the character of Roxie Hart. She is very different from my own personality in that she is manipulative, conniving but all because she has

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aspirations of being a star and is steadfast in achieving her dreams. I had an amazing experience in this journey to becoming Roxie and grew so much through it. It was one of my favorite roles to perform!”

A: Trixie Kohlenberger: “This show overall is a wonderful challenge, but the most challenging aspect for me was understanding Velma’s journey throughout the show and how to effectively move through the world as she does. Velma is such a beloved and iconic character to many, so her presence and motivations definitely require a lot of care to portray!”

A: Sonia Mentzer: “The hardest part for me was designing a unique black base outfit for each ensemble member.”

Q: How would you describe the show for people who didn’t see it?

A: Jaiyla Owens: “You missed out. This was definitely one of the greatest shows I’ve seen in my time here at East and I’m so glad I got to be a part of it. There was so much dedication and talent on stage and we really put on an amazing show.”

A: Sonia Mentzer: “Dazzling.”

A: Jillian Ritter: “The musical is the thrilling story of two girls that just want to make it into the performance industry, but let their emotions and passion lead the way, which causes many conflicts. Their journeys from jail to court to the stage are so dynamic and entertaining!”

Q: If you could play any role in the show, what would it be?

A: Trixie Kohlenberger: “Velma is my absolute favorite, but I would love to be Mary Sunshine. My personality is typically more suited to playing the ‘sweet ingenue’ roles!”

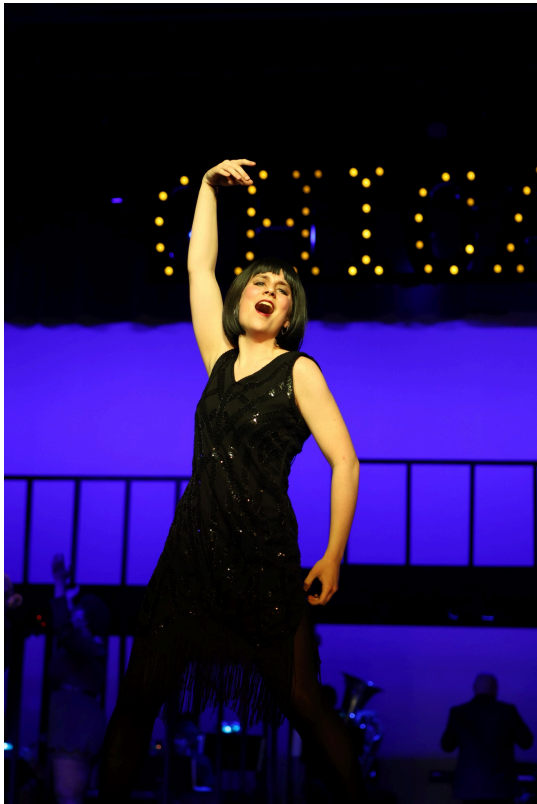
A: Sonia Mentzer: “If I were to be in the show, I think it would be really fun to be a murderess!”

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A: JJ Hennon: "I would play Billy Flynn of course!"



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