

High schools team up for slick production

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Mike Petrantonni wants to end his years at McQuaid Jesuit High School with a bang.

The lead singer for local rock band Exploding Boy, Petrantonni is living up to his band's name by playing tough-guy Danny, one of the lead roles in the '50s rock 'n' roll musical *Grease*.

Jointly produced by Our Lady of Mercy and McQuaid High Schools, *Grease* centers on the romance of Danny and Sandy, two high school students surrounded by an exuberant group of friends who dance and sing their way through a senior year filled with stereotypical adolescent failures and triumphs.

Petrantonni was surprised to be chosen for a starring role. "I've been in all the plays up to senior year, (but) I never had a lead role," he said. Yet he had hoped to land the part of Danny because this will be his last high school drama production. "I wanted it really bad," he commented.

Shannon Mattaro had similar feelings regarding the part in which she is cast. Mattaro portrays Rizzo, leader of the Pink Ladies — feminine counterparts to the T-Birds, the gang to which Danny and his buddies belong. The Mercy junior saw a little bit of herself in the tough girl who badgers and then befriends the sweet and gentle Sandy.

"She's kind of a leader," Mattaro said of Rizzo. "I like being in charge. I'm kind of bossy." She also related to her charac-



Linda Dow Hayes/Catholic Courier

Mercy and McQuaid drama students rehearse for this weekend's production of *Grease* at Mercy Auditorium.

ter's volatile temper. "I don't like things to be all out of shape," she said.

But beneath Rizzo's tough exterior is a warm heart, Mattaro noted, a paradox that many teenagers live. "I think everyone puts up a front," she remarked.

Danny has the same problem, but Petrantonni didn't find much else to relate to in his character. "He's really the opposite of what I'm really like," Petrantonni said, but

he noted that to portray Danny, "I draw from any feelings of insecurity that I've ever had."

The play's director, Kathy Perconti, suffered her own doubts about managing a cast from two schools, particularly since this is the first theatrical production on which Mercy, an all-girls school, and McQuaid, an all-boys school, have officially collaborated.

"I was afraid that they might have problems because they don't see the opposite sex, but there haven't been any," Perconti said.

Mercy and McQuaid have traded student performers for previous years' school

plays, but on an informal basis.

The two schools also teamed up for the first time last fall to produce song-and-dance productions in the Mercy/McQuaid Show Choir, where Rich Buck, a McQuaid senior, met several Mercy students. Buck is now the director of the pit band for *Grease*, a position that he relishes.

"The music's great," Buck said. "There's just endless stuff you can do with it. We don't have to play it exactly as it's written. We do a lot of improvising." Buck commented that the pit band will throw in an occasional extra song while sets are being changed between scenes.

Changes in the adolescent scene over decades are apparent to Ali Kievitt, a sophomore, who plays Sandy opposite Petrantonni's Danny. Although the girls in the musical are listed as being seniors, their characteristic giddiness, especially when the T-Birds are around, reminds her more of high school freshmen.

"Kids are pretty much ahead of their time today," Kievitt said, though she noted that she thought the macho posturing of the T-Birds reflects the way boys of today act. In particular, she pointed out the play's second scene, when Danny greets Sandy in the school yard after dating her all summer, only to treat her with indifference as his friends gather around him. "Even if (guys) are really happy, they'd probably change if their friends thought they weren't cool," she said.

Despite teenage stereotypes, the cast has treated their director with anything but feigned indifference. "I never felt this nice closeness with a cast before," Perconti said. "It makes you feel like a teenager again."

SPEAKING OUT

By Anthony Wang
Notre Dame High School

During the Lenten season, reflection and piety are usually stressed. These two things seem a little hard to practice, for there are a lot of modern distractions. For a teenager, the true spirit of the season is especially hard to grasp.

It is easy to think of Lent as just a time of sacrifices, such as giving up candy. A reason why the meaning of Lent may not be understood is that this is a trying time of the year. The mad rush to final exams is approaching, and the academic world comes into play more. On the social side, the upcoming Easter break can foster thoughts of vacations and get-togethers. Also, for seniors, the future sans high school security looms, and the waiting game doesn't seem as exciting and fun as it used to. With all of these distractions, it seems hard for other things to get through to people.

I remember a simpler time in my life. In my elementary school days, Lent was a major thing. Religion teachers always stressed the value of giving up a part of yourself and being the impressionable kid I

was, I followed. Giving up french fries from McDonald's was a major deal for me then, yet I was willing to reject those tasty morsels for awhile. Now it's almost scary how my stomach screams, "I want french fries! I want french fries!" It seems almost futile to resist.

At Notre Dame, fortunately, the spirit of Lent is alive and well. On Ash Wednesday, the Religious Activities Committee set up a large cork board cross. After a person had made an intention for Lent, he or she tacked on a paper cross. The large cross was filled with many intentions, symbolizing a united effort. It still stands in the front hall to jar the memories of students. Also, Sister Carmella, a physics instructor, challenges the students to spend five minutes a day in thoughtful reflection.

This time of prayer and fasting — albeit, figuratively — is still held dear; its value is never in question. Still, the hardships that may detract from this period are not to be taken lightly. It is comforting to know that it is always possible to experience Lent in a fulfilling way.

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Cardinal Mooney

What motivates you to be the best that you can be?

ERIC DANIELS, Senior:

It is me who allows me to be the best I can be. After all, I have to decide the direction in which I am to go in the future. Competitiveness definitely keeps my interest in my work, yet it really is a satisfying feeling knowing that when I feel I have done my best, I have the ambition and motivation to continue working to the best of my ability and to become the best I can be.



ERIN HODGES, Senior:

I'm most motivated by challenge. I enjoy doing things which I know I haven't done before, or that go beyond what I'm used to. Also, I'm motivated by a desire to do all I can, and to get the most out of my life. I can do this by involving myself and giving of myself. This is when I'm at my best.



AS TEENS SEE IT

AMY DRY, Senior:

I have always tried to do the best I can. I would have to say, though, that my parents are my main source of motivation. They want to see me make the most of my life, and I don't want to let them down. I know that I have the potential to become something great, and if I don't use the knowledge God gave me, I would only be cheating myself.



DAVE HAUGH, Senior:

What motivates me is that if I do my best, I will build up a good reputation for myself and my school. I want people to recognize the good qualities of my school.



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