

Teens are key players in fantasy production

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Onstage this weekend at Nazareth Academy's Faestival Youth Theatre, 31 actors will attempt to take their audience through the imaginative doors opened by Jules Tasca's *Narnia*, a musical adaption of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Meanwhile, backstage, Mark Casey will shift nervously in his seat as Shannon Lynch applies makeup to his face, hastily transforming him between scenes from his dual roles as a human and as the mythical Lion.

Tina Crandall will bite her fingernails, hoping her fellow students don't mess up the dance steps she choreographed for them.

And Bridget Foran will play a game of "Pin the tail on the cast members," as they scurry about losing various pieces of their animal costumes.

If experience is the best teacher, then the youth theater's 38 students, ages 12-20, will be well-prepared to carry on in theater following the conclusion of this weekend's production. Casey, Lynch, Crandall and Foran have worked with the peers nightly over the last two months to prepare for this weekend's performances, at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Aug. 11 and 12, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 13.

Peer cooperation is the goal of The Faestival Youth Theatre, according to Maria Sanguedolce, the theater's director. Sanguedolce commented that her program emphasizes the students' role in all aspects of the play's production, not just in acting.

Casey has taken the experience he gained in directing fight scenes during the Nazareth Academy spring production of



Christopher Millette

Nuala Hetzler helps her sister, Brigid, apply makeup before Sunday's marathon rehearsal of the Faestival Youth Theatre production of "Narnia." Different makeup patterns have been designed for each character, and the actors must decide what looks best and duplicate it for each show.

Camelot and applied it to his work as assistant director of *Narnia*. The recent graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School commented that he had a few confrontations of his own with cast members before some would accept direction from one of their peers.

"We have a saying around here — 'You leave your ego at the door,'" Casey re-

marked, noting that some of his peers initially couldn't handle leaving their egos at the door when he directed them. "How could this person who is younger than me know more than me?," he asked rhetorically, noting that he's directed actors his own age and older. "Probably because that person does know more than you."

Convincing his peers of his directing ability meant a few chats with disgruntled performers, Casey remarked. "It's like I have this job, and you have this job," he told them. "We can put something together that'll work."

Crandall, who will be a senior at Nazareth this fall, encountered similar problems when she began choreographing her fellow students. "It's easy in that I understand how the kids feel because I'm the same age, but it's hard for them to take me seriously."

Crandall said she asked Sanguedolce to assist her during a rehearsal so the students would take her seriously. Crandall also credited her experience as an assistant teacher at the Marilyn Schneider School of Dance in Rochester with helping her direct her peers.

"I'm learning how to deal with all different levels of ages," she said. "I've think I've gained a lot of respect through this. I was always someone just in chorus.

Now I'm out her doing it for (the cast)."

Like Crandall, Bridget Foran, who will be a junior at Nazareth next fall, has also graduated into a more responsible role in theater production. The play's costume coordinator, Foran got the job after working as an assistant seamstress on the school's spring production of *Camelot*.

Foran noted that she must take the costume ideas of Sanguedolce and fellow student Matthew McGuire and bring them in line with the type of fabric available. "I have to get them back to reality," she commented, noting that sometimes what the designers want is unrealistic.

Dealing with the reality of time constraints convinced makeup artist Shannon Lynch not to lay it on too thick with Casey. The director plays two roles in the play — the human, Aslan, and the Lion. Since the Lion comes onstage shortly after Aslan's first exit, Lynch has little time to accomplish an extensive facial makeover.

To help her design the faces of other animals in the play, Lynch visited her former employer, the Rundel Central Library. "I took realistic pictures from the Rundel," she said. "I'd look at the features of each animal and which ones were most pronounced, and made them different from other animals."



Mark Casey prepares his costume for another scene in "Narnia." Students involved in the theater program at Nazareth Academy have been rehearsing for two months to present the play Aug. 11-13 at the school.

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