

# Students bring fairy tale to life at Nazareth

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Her theatrical charges don't know it, but Ami Salzman has reached the pinnacle of her earthly existence thus far.

The Nazareth Academy dance, choir and health instructor was wide-eyed and smiling as she spoke of directing the school's summer youth-theater production of Rogers' and Hammerstein's "Cinderella."

"I don't think I can remember ever having such a good time," she said of her work with the 21 students involved in the musical. "I wouldn't trade this experience for anything. I hope to do many, many more."

Salzman and her crew of youthful thespians took a break Friday afternoon, Aug. 3, to talk about the seven weeks of weekday rehearsals they had put into the musical, which opens this weekend.

Each participant paid \$100 to join the troupe, which consists of students from McQuaid Jesuit High School, Wilson Magnet School, Nazareth Academy and Nazareth College. From the students'

perspective, the money seems well-spent. Just ask Maureen Barth, a 1990 graduate of St. Lawrence School who will attend Nazareth Academy in the fall.

"I think it's fun and different than anything else," remarked Barth, who plays the town flirt. "The kids here are a lot more mature than the ones I know. They're in a class all of their own."

Becky Bidwell, a Nazareth Academy junior, was equally enthusiastic about her theater mates. "I love them," she said. "I don't know what I'm going to do when they're all gone."

Such sweet sentiments are far from the lips of Bidwell's character, Portia, one of Cinderella's two self-centered stepsisters. Portia aspires to be a lawyer, but can produce little evidence to sustain her contention that she is an intelligent potential wife for the kingdom's bachelor prince.

Bidwell said she has stretched her acting abilities to create a convincing Portia. "It's hard but its fun," she said of her role, adding that Portia "is really stupid, and it's not easy being stupid."

"It takes a lot of concentration to combine movements like singing and dancing

and blocking," she continued.

For advice on the above acting techniques, Bidwell can turn to Michael John Casey, a Nazareth College sophomore, 1989 McQuaid graduate and veteran of the Nazareth Academy theater program. Casey plays the unmarried prince who falls for Cinderella, and the actor doubles as the production's technical director.

In charge of designing the set and helping to coordinate the cast, Casey commented that his current work is "kind of a payback" for all he learned at Nazareth through the years. "It's kind of like being a teacher for a while," he said.

While Casey is enjoying his new role as enlightened mentor, Courtney-Lynn Malone gets to explore her darker side as Cinderella's other evil stepsister, Joy.

"I love it," the 1990 Nazareth Academy graduate said of playing her character. "I was telling everyone I get to be a witch all summer. I can be in any mood I want to, and no one can say anything."

Like Joy, Cinderella also would love to express all her moods, but the oppressed and fatherless girl is unable to do so in the company of her stepmother and sisters.



Dan Bachmann (left) and Scott Lancer rehearse for the Nazareth Academy's youth-theatre production of Rogers' and Hammerstein's "Cinderella."

Nonetheless, Cinderella's resilience in dreaming when alone is admirable, observed Cristin Cottrell, the Nazareth Academy junior who plays the lead role.

"I like the fact that even though her sisters and her mother treat her very badly, she's very patient ...," Cottrell said of Cinderella, adding that the character's serenity amid abuse can teach people how to deal with emotional pain. Unless people learn to cope with such pain, Cottrell said, "when you take in someone's anger, you tend to take it in too far ... (and) you yourself can get hurt."

Bidwell echoed Cottrell's insights into Cinderella's story. "I think 'Cinderella' is a play that every child should hear about," she said. "(The musical) says a lot about patience ... (and) how it's OK to dream once in awhile because dreams can come true."

To make theatrical dreams come true on stage, a cast relies on the stage crew, the technical fairy godmothers who help bring into reality the cast's dreams of the spotlight.

One such behind-the-scenes person is Rory Cottrell, Chris' sister, who will major in physics at the State University of New York at Geneseo next fall. An aspiring science-fiction writer, Rory also manages the stage for "Cinderella," and said her theatrical philosophy jives well with her work.

"I'm not a very outgoing person, so I'd rather work behind the scenes and help everyone else look good," she said.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Tickets for "Cinderella" are \$5 for adults; \$4 for senior citizens and children 12 and under. The show will be performed at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Aug. 10 and 11, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 12. A special performance is also planned for 10 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 9, at a cost of \$2 per person. For information, call Nazareth Academy at 716/458-8583.

Photos by  
Babette G. Augustin




Above, Prince Charming, played by Nazareth College sophomore Michael John Casey, serenades Cinderella, portrayed by Nazareth Academy junior Cristin Cottrell. Below, the Queen (Caren Barth) reads a banquet shopping list to her unamused King (Nathan Van Loon).

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