

# So you want to be a

by Mike Latona Photos by Greg Francis

The main focus for three Nazareth Academy students right now is the school's musical, "Oklahoma!," to be presented March 12-15.

But these performers also admit that they often dream of fame and glory that goes far beyond the world of high-school productions.

"I do all the time," remarked sophomore Kym Petralis, 16, who has the role of Ado Annie in "Oklahoma!" "Doesn't everybody have that little desire to be rich and famous?"

"Absolutely!" exclaimed Mariana Santiago, 17. The Nazareth senior said that when she watches opera performances, for instance, she imagines herself as the main singer.

"I say, 'I want to be doing that someday.' I want to sing at Carnegie Hall (in New York City) and be the *diva*!" Mariana emphasized. She, like Kym, has a major role in "Oklahoma!" She plays Laurey.

Jihan Cooper, 17, is an accomplished dancer who envisions herself becoming famous some day as well.

"I want to be somebody to look up to. But how can anybody look up to you if they don't know you?" said Jihan, a Nazareth senior. She is a dancer in "Oklahoma!" and also belongs to the Nazareth Academy Dance Company that placed first at the Tremaine Dance Convention and Competition in Washington, D.C., in January.

Although all three performers occasionally get stars in their eyes, they also said their vision isn't so clouded that they ignore reality. For instance, Mariana said she faced very tough competition when she auditioned last month for acceptance into the prestigious Eastman School of Music in

Rochester, where she hopes to enroll next fall.

"There were over 200 people, and that was just the first session of auditions. I couldn't believe the talent of these kids! It was so incredible. It was shocking," said Mariana, who has been on a high-school scholarship program that allowed her to study under Eastman School instructors over the past few years.

Gregory Nunn, a full-time professional actor from Rochester, said that he discovered the rigors of show business as he moved into young adulthood. One jarring reality he faced after graduating from Nazareth College, he noted, was the lack of career-launching roles. He quickly discovered that most professional actors must find other jobs in order to make ends meet.

"The percentages are just staggering. Ninety percent of them are out of work at any one time," said Nunn, 34, a 1982 McQuaid Jesuit High School graduate.

Nunn added that young performers should groom themselves for another career in case they can't earn a living in the entertainment field. For instance, he obtained dual degrees in theater and social sciences from Nazareth. And some of his jobs after college have been as diverse as coaching tennis and working on the 1990 census.

Kym is already taking precautions by getting involved in many areas of show business. She also dances, plays two instruments and is serving as co-producer for a Rochester-area musical revue.

"There's always something else you can do," Kym remarked.

Even so, the odds against making it to the top won't spur Mariana to throw in the towel any time soon.

"It makes me a little scared, but it makes me stronger," Mariana said. "It's very competitive — but for me, personally, it helps me as I go along."

Kym agreed, saying that performers should consider rejection for roles to be motivational tools.

"If you can't handle the criticism, get out now," Kym said.

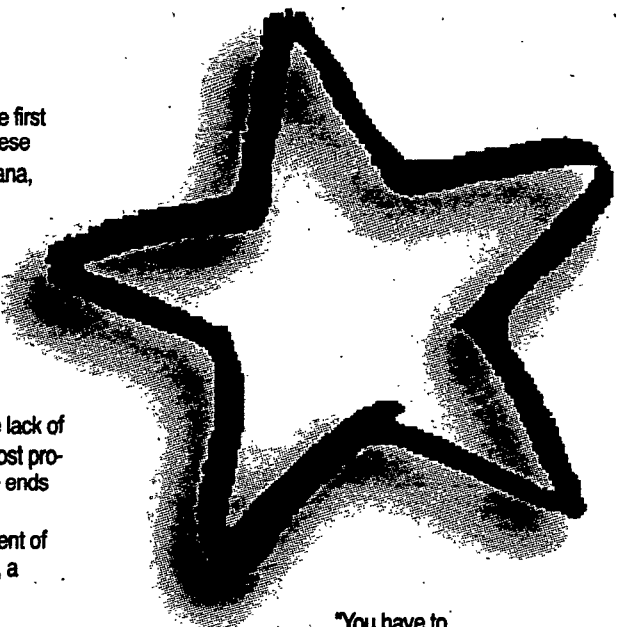
Nunn also observed that most performers cannot achieve a successful career on talent alone.

"Audition as much as possible," Nunn advised. "I know a lot of people who've hardly done anything, and then they say, 'I can do what you're doing.' I just get tired of that. There are a lot of dreamers out there."

Jihan agreed that there is no substitute for hard work. She said that she prepares diligently for every dance performance and audition, knowing that her big break could be just around the corner.

"There might be somebody who is going to be watching me, and maybe that person will 'discover' me," said Jihan, who plans to attend SUNY College at Brockport next year as a dance major.

On the other hand, Mariana insisted that you don't need to have a big Broadway or Hollywood career to be considered successful.



"You have to know you did well for yourself," she remarked.

Jihan cautioned that if you get into performing to earn the big bucks, you're likely to be disappointed.

"If that's all that matters, then it's the wrong reason to be in that career," Jihan said.

On the other hand, Nunn said he has been comfortable remaining in the Rochester area for most of his career.

"I didn't want to move to New York City (in the hopes of landing a Broadway role) and become a writer," Nunn said. Instead, he appears with acting troupes at several Rochester-area clubs and theaters; for instance, he recently

played the lead role in the Rochester Children's Theatre production of "The Hobbit." In addition, his schedule can include anything from making television commercials to "Learn It Live" — a group hired by corporations to act out different scenes that might arise in the workplace.

And although Nunn said he hasn't given up

hopes of becoming a nationally recognized actor, he emphasized that he is achieving the most important goal of all.

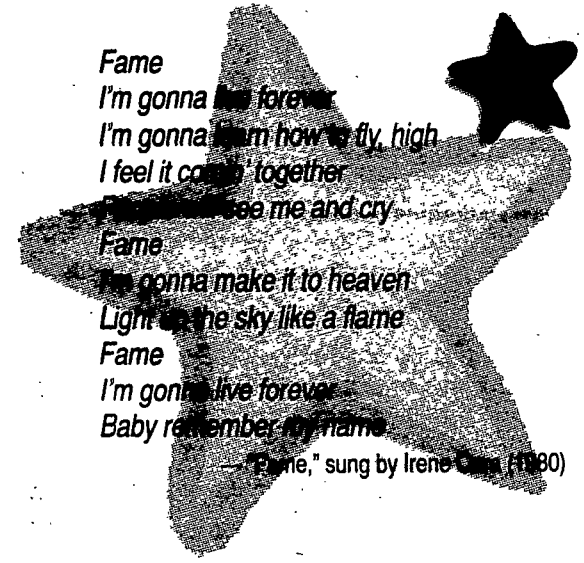
"I still love what I'm doing," he stated.

Kym echoed Nunn's set of priorities, saying, "It's the fact that you love what you do — and you're going to do it no matter what."

And in the end, the Nazareth performers noted that applause from an appreciative audience is music to their ears — regardless of the setting.

"It makes me really happy and overwhelmed," Jihan said. "It's so emotional for me," Mariana added.

"It's a natural, like, high," Kym agreed.



*Fame*  
 I'm gonna live forever  
 I'm gonna show how to fly, high  
 I feel it coming together  
 You'll see me and cry  
*Fame*  
 I'm gonna make it to heaven  
 Light up the sky like a flame  
*Fame*  
 I'm gonna live forever  
 Baby remember my name  
 — "Fame," sung by Irene Cara (1980)



Jihan Cooper, top photo, a senior at Nazareth Academy and student assistant dance teacher, will be dancing in Nazareth's production of "Oklahoma!" Kym Petralis, right, bottom photo, a sophomore, goes over a scene from the musical with sophomore Mary Logan.

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