

Magic of Disney returns to DC West with *Cinderella Kids*

Fifty students in fourth and fifth grade rehearsed approximately twice a week since October for the opportunity to perform in a Disney Musical. This year, Directors Sandy Perry, Dawn Beyl and Kaitlin Beck chose the Disney musical, *Cinderella KIDS*, for students to perform, as something extremely different than last year's *Jungle Book*. DC West Elementary School had two student body performances on January 16 and four community performances from January 17-20.

Many of the DC West students have stage experience from last year when they had their first Disney musical, *The Jungle Book*. DC West Elementary has a partnership with Omaha Performing Arts Program and is classified as a year two school in the program, Disney Musicals in Schools.

"It is great being a partner with them; we received support in the areas of training and personalized help as needed," Sandy Perry said. "As a year two school, we were also given our Disney license, scripts and musical CD's for the students."

Besides this scheduled support, we were informed by Omaha Performing Arts, Disney Theatrical Group, and Disney Social Responsibility Teams that Disney Musicals in Schools is celebrating their 10th anniversary this year. To celebrate a decade of arts in education, year two schools like DC West were offered an anniversary "surprise gift" of \$750 to support the school's production for sustainability.

"Students at DC West love the fine arts, and theatre gives strong skills to students that will equip them for success in today's world, including a strong sense of self-confidence," Perry said.

Teachers and students across the district offer support, along with many community members, to make the Disney magic come to life. For example, high school art teacher Sean Pralle engaged his Art Club by painting a life size cardboard cutout of Cinderella and also collaborated with construction woods management teacher John Brockhaus in making the carriage. His class constructed the frame and Pralle's class painted the pumpkin sides.

"It was exciting to watch Cinderella be carried off by the carriage pulled by the mice which had been transformed into horses by the fairy godmother," Perry said. "Our old school cafeteria was adorned with fabulous art masterpieces, thanks to DC West Elementary and Middle School Art teacher Amber Bradley. She had each elementary grade level create art projects which transformed the cafeteria into a ball room, castle and garden for the audience's setting. Kindergarten created 3-D friend-

ship sculptures first graders made the castle walls using line crayon resistance techniques, second graders adorned the hallway with royal pumpkin carriages, third graders created ballroom Chihuly chandeliers by using recycling water bottles, fourth graders painted cardboard turrets to outline the stage, while fifth graders made king and queen self-portraits for the ballroom. The entire school became a part of the production in this way, creating a sense of pride and ownership of the musical.

Besides the students, the community support was strong, too. Community members have offered donations of financial support and helping hands. A beautiful fountain greeted guests, which was borrowed from Studio DIY's Shelly Minette, and vintage gowns were hung on the wall for the ballroom theme. These gowns were borrowed from Nancy Case of Everything Happier.

A multitude of den parents assisted students prior to each show, which included both parents and community members. Costume Manager Georgene Gottsch made sure costumes were ready to go.

Gottsch said, "Being able to work with the kids, helping them select their costumes and watching them bring their own spin to their characters was pure joy. What an incredible experience for all of them."

The business Wall of Honor display was managed by April McGavren, and the platform risers were constructed by Glen McGavren. Advertising posters were made by Joseph Swierczek, and the cast party, scheduled for January 31, was organized by Misty Swierczek.

Throughout the season, DC West also had fundraisers managed by Tanners and Everything Happier.

"The list of gratitude goes on and on," Perry noted. "Our communities offer tremendous support, and it is wonderful."

Cinderella KIDS will be the last formal production on the old elementary stage, a stage that Perry says has so many wonderful memories and stories hidden within the woodwork. The new elementary school, set to open next year, will begin new traditions and build new memories.

"Having the opportunity to bring a Disney musical production to our school is rewarding," Perry said. "You see students make a commitment, become a part of a team, start to test the waters, grow in confidence and self-esteem, and blossom with new friendships, a sense of pride and leadership skills. Students experience a process that takes a tremendous amount of time and also see the rewards and joy it brings for each of them, their families and for our school."

- Submitted by Sandy Perry



DC West Elementary students worked hard to put on a production of the Disney musical, *Cinderella Kids*. Two sets of leading cast members each got a chance to perform for the school and for the public. Photos courtesy of Kiki Kane



Stepsister Anastasia (Abby Rayer) tries on the glass slipper to see if it fits as stepmother (Marley Glock) and Lucifer the cat (Tess Henrichs) watch. The Grand Duke (Nick Burr, Jr.) and



Cinderella (Bella Anderson) takes a carriage ride to the ball with Jaq, the mouse turned footman (Jaxon Swierczek) and and mouse Luke (Jalynn McCollum).

Community comments

Parent Brenda Thiessen: "I absolutely love that he stepped out of his typical 'sports kid' box and tried something new and did a good job at it!"

Parent Mel Sifers said, "I've never heard of any other elementary school that offers this amazing opportunity. Getting support from their instructors and eventually multiple audiences makes them realize they're capable of anything, even things that scare them."

Co-Music Director Dawn Beyl commented, "The greatest part of being involved in *Cinderella* is watching our students embrace their roles and blossom as performers."



Students' comments

Students were asked what their favorite part of being in the musical was, what did they learn about themselves and what did being in the musical mean to them.

Abigail Lemay: "My favorite part was being a villager and trying on the slipper. I always wanted to be in a musical and now I got to do it!"

Cade Thiessen: "I learned that if I try something new, I can be very good at it."

Lily Kosiske: "I learned to always believe in myself. I learned to be nice and kind. I learned to have fun!"

Barrett Hinrichs: "My favorite part is when I go on stage and make everyone laugh with my part, the Grand Duke. I learned that it's not about one actor; it's about the whole scene and everyone."

Jasmine West: "I learned that I have a good singing voice. It meant a lot to me to be in the Disney musicals. I might want to keep going in the arts for something bigger in the future."

Georgia Goff: "I've learned how to work with others really well and how to fix my own problems backstage."

Jetta Sattem: "I think that it is a great way for kids that aren't athletic to finally find something that they really love."

Cheyenne Kruse: "My favorite part about being in *Disney* was everything. I want everyone to know that I loved being in the musical. Thank you for teaching it to us!"

Neil Kotzian: "Even though I was really nervous, I did it! I learned to get over my nerves and just do my best."

Preston Williams: "I made a lot of friends and I got to be a king!"

Brayann Harpin: "I got to be how I am, and I got to express myself."

Jalynn McCollum: "It makes me happy! I loved being a mouse!"

Ella Wiese: "It doesn't matter what part you get because all the parts are important."

Faith Stenka: "My favorite part was performing in front of my parents. (I learned) it expresses my heart. It makes my mom smile."

Many of the students said that it meant the world to them, it was fun, they learned a lot and made new friends.

The Mice Brigade and Cinderella (Bella Anderson) are surprised by the fairy godmother (Isabella McGavren).

CAST of Cinderella Kids

- Narrators: Sara Edwards, Izzabella Zach, Jetta Sattem, Nylee Hayner
- Anastasia: Hannah Powell & Abby Rayer
- Drizella: Bailey Anderson & Lilly Kosiske
- Lucifer: Tess Henrichs
- Stepmother: Georgia Goff & Marley Glock
- Cinderella: Bella Anderson & Addison Sifers
- Perla: Anella Pralle & Lili Balus
- Jaq: Jaxon Swierczek & Emily Fletcher
- Luke: Jalynn McCollum & Brienna Sullivan
- Gus: Jasmine West & Ella Wiese
- Mice Brigade: Lakelyn Fincher, Ava Grimes, Lianna Harlow, Halaina Hunter, Cheyanne Kruse, Ava Schneider
- Fairy Godmother: Isabella McGavren & Molly Moehling
- Town Criers: Julian Gottsch, Prachi Patel, Eva Hert, Alex Phillips, Chloe Saathoff, Julia Williams
- King: Cade Thiessen & Preston Williams
- Grand Duke: Barrett Hinrichs & Nick Burr, Jr.
- Prince Charming: Neil Kotzian & Davis Witt
- Herald: Caiden Hoops & Hayden Gottsch
- Villagers: Brayann Harpin, A'Zyana Langford, Abigail Lemay, Johanna Luthy, Madelyn Phillips, Harper Roche, Faith Stenka, Bailey Anderson, Bella Anderson, Lili Balus, Nick Burr Jr., Emily Fletcher, Marley Glock, Georgia Goff, Hayden Gottsch, Barrett Hinrichs, Caiden Hoops, Lilly Kosiske, Neil Kotzian, Jalynn McCollum, Isabella McGavren, Molly Moehling, Hannah Powell, Anella Pralle, Abby Rayer, Addison Sifers, Jaxon Swierczek, Brienna Sullivan, Cade Thiessen, Jasmine West, Ella Wiese, Preston Williams and Davis Witt.



Cinderella is tormented by her step family, and the mice come to the rescue. Cast members are stepmother (Georgia Goff); stepsister Anastasia (Hannah Powell); stepsister Drizella (Bailey Anderson); Cinderella (Bella Anderson); and mice (Lianna Harlow, Jalynn McCollum and Jas-



Cinderella (Addison Sifers) dances with Prince Charming (Davis Witt) at the ball.



Cinderella (Bella Anderson) dances with Prince Charming (Neil Kotzian) at the ball.



The directors for the play are (l-r) Dawn Beyl, Sandy Perry and Kaitlin Beck.