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'THIS TRIAL... THE WHOLE WORLD... IT'S ALL... SHOW BUSINESS'



'Give 'em an act with lots of flash in it and the reaction will be passionate.'

Billy Flynn

IN BINGEN, IT'S CHICAGO THE MUSICAL



Photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea

VELMA (April Sampson) rebuffs a plea for advice from Roxie (Ashly Will) and, at top, Velma sings while the ensemble swirls around her in "All That Jazz," the show's big opening number. Below, Roxie listens as her husband, Amos (David Dye), is interrogated by a detective (Tom Burns) who is skeptical of Amos' taking the rap for a murder Roxie has committed.

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**
News editor

One of the biggest and most complex musicals to hit any mid-Columbia stage for years opens Friday.

"Chicago: The Musical" comes to an extensively refurbished Bingen Theater in the production by Stages, the Columbia Gorge Orchestra Association's theatre repertory company.

Set in the Roaring '20s, the story follows Roxie (Ashly Will), an aspiring starlet who will do anything to become famous. Landing in prison, she meets her idol Velma (April Sampson), an established star who is also trying to beat a murder rap. Roxie craves the celebrity and success Velma commands, but they both want their slick lawyer, Billy Flynn (Joe Garoutte) to manipulate the system and set them free. Mama (Rebecca Stryker), the prison matron, holds the keys in more ways than one.

ALL THAT JAZZ

See Saturday Hood River News for a "Chicago" update and interview with director Bruce Ludwig.

The cast, crew and band feature stage veterans as well as people with little or no stage experience, according to director Bruce Ludwig, who two years ago brought another dance-heavy musical, "The Full Monty," to Hood River.

For "Chicago," Ludwig credited the work of Music Director Mark Steighner and a 12-person band, designer Kim Robichaud for guiding creation of hand-made wallpaper and other "speakeasy" touches in the theater and on stage, Julie Hatfield for publicity, Kathy Pelydyak for costumes, and choreographer Susan Sorenson, who gave dancers a head start on "Chicago" via dance classes at Columbia Gorge Dance Academy starting in December, with 40-plus people showing up to learn dance basics and some of the moves Sorenson planned for the show.

"It was a huge success and they all learned, and when it came to auditions there were a lot of people really well prepared," Ludwig said.

"This is her interpretation of the Bob Fosse dance style. The dance is critical to this show, and not just that, we talk of singing being important, and what makes this show really different from a lot of musicals is that there is so much dance-and-sing, as opposed to stand-and-sing," Ludwig said.

"For example, in 'You Can't Do It Alone,' April (Sampson) does this extensive routine with all kind of kicks and moves and even a cartwheel, and she is so out of breath at the end of it. I get a kick out of tormenting her by suggesting, 'let's run the scene again.'

"Chicago is an ideal mix of high-energy entertainment and relevant social commentary," Ludwig said. "Dozens of actors, crew members and musicians have poured tremendous energy into creating a powerhouse show."

Their work also included painting the outside of Bingen Theater, in cooperation with owner Rod Krehbiel, and helping Douglas Hawskworth with constructing the set and a new band stand, and adding more seating, among other interior improvements.

"In addition to the main characters, our supporting characters pack a wallop, and our dynamite ensemble is in

BEHIND THE SCENES



Photo by Gary Fields

DANCER Ryan Maxwell catches some air during a Chicago rehearsal, while choreographer Susan Sorenson watches, at Columbia Gorge Dance Academy. Dance rehearsals spanned months as Sorenson staged dance lessons employing "Chicago" choreography; most of the show ensemble took the classes.



Photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea

SOUND ENGINEER David Harty works the board during rehearsal preparations while lighting operator, Yasmin Acosta-Myers watches.



CAST MEMBER Rebecca Stryker helps create custom Jazz-Age wallpaper for the theater interior, which adds night-club ambience to the auditorium, Kim Robichaud designed the wallpaper; cast and crew helped out in theater improvements, set construction, costumes, publicity, and more.



See CHICAGO, page B10

TICKETS AND TIMES

Performance dates are June 8-9, June 14-16, and June 21-23 at 7:30 p.m., with 2 p.m. matinees on June 10 and 17, at the Bingen Theater at 210 Oak St. in downtown Bingen, Wash.

Advance tickets are strongly recommended and available at www.gorgeorchestra.org, with a limited number available at the door. Tickets are \$15 for adults (18 and over) and \$10 for students. Due to the show's

mature themes, Chicago is not recommended for children under 12, and children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

Major sponsors for the show are Coddwimple Creative, DelCarpine Automotive, Marchesi Winery, Morgan Paint, Schuepbach Builders & Custom Concrete, SDS Lumber, and Tum-A-Lum Lumber.