

the ol' razzle DAZZLE

After months of preparation, the 46 person cast performed "Chicago" eight times over one week.

It took over four months, but the finished product was eight two-hour showings. The finished product was praised for the performances, but not the content. The finished product was the show Grace Newell '20 had been wanting to do for years but doubted she'd ever get to do. The finished product was "Chicago".

"For me, it's a dream show. 'Chicago' is my all-time favorite show and I never thought we would do it. It's a show that I don't feel like a lot of people would expect a high school to do. For me, it might have been my grandma's last time ever seeing me perform - or maybe even seeing a show ever. So it doesn't matter what's going on in our outside worlds or anything. You just have to be able to completely strip that off and walk on and tell the story the best you can," Newell said.

When the performers found out Mrs. Rochelle Walter had purchased the rights to "Chicago," they were surprised but prepared for the mature content the show portrayed. The audience, however, was not.

"We have innuendos, obviously. Because it's high school; everyone's so offended. Guys, put your pride aside. We're pretty professional with this. So it really just kind of pisses me off that that's the standard that we're held to. Because we're high schoolers..." Haven Johnson '21 said.

Logan Shreck '21 continued "...or that the fact that because the show starts off with two murders and with Roxie cheating on her husband. It starts off that way, but it's so much more than just all these women killing dudes."

Despite the controversial plot of the show, actors depended on the audience to look beyond the murder, liquor, and affairs featured to appreciate the musical at a deeper level.

"They have to not take it for face value based off the costumes, based off the murder, not take it for face value and look at all the underlying meanings - of the corruption in America, women's rights, and remembering, it's a piece of history. That's what the 1920s was. It was jazz," Aspen Parker '20 said.

For Hannah Cassese '20 and Kalei Fogg '20, the best part of the process that created "Chicago" was developing their characters. For Fogg, the creation of her character helped to understand herself better.

"I think I usually learn more about myself when the show starts versus the character. I realized that I needed to do what I'm doing because I love it but I also need to do it for myself and not for everybody else. I always did it to make people proud, or did it for other people," Fogg said.

For Cassese, playing a confident character like Matron Mama Morton was challenging, but helped her to be more open - especially after she interacted with the audience for the first time.

"My favorite part is when I got to put on the costume, put on the hair, the makeup and go out there and just let it go and do it for the audience and be Mama [Morton] and not Hannah," Cassese said. "For a long time, I was just a little shy about it but as soon as I got out there with all that on, it was dropped. If that's not how you are in everyday life, you have to drop it and then go out on stage and just be that character or else it's not going to end up well. It's a very vulnerable thing to do."

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Grace Newell '20

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1. A TALE OF MURDER AND ALL THAT JAZZ: In the opening number, Grace Newell '20 is arrested while playing the murderous Velma Kelly. "Chicago" was Newell's favorite musical and she felt honored to be performing in it. "The end result is getting to put on a show and tell a story, which is something I told the cast multiple times - like wow, we get to tell this amazing story," Newell said. **2. CAN'T DO IT ALONE:** For their final number, Grace Newell '20 and Kalei Fogg '20 perform the song "Hot Honey Rag" finishing their character arcs as friends, despite their hatred for one another throughout the show. The tone backstage was quite different. Cast members such as Fogg and Newell created memories backstage and consider themselves family. "I feel like in last year's show, what was on stage was very similar to what was off stage. But, I mean, in a show like this..." Kalei Fogg '20 started "...I don't think that can happen. Especially, like Kalei and I don't actually hate each other," Newell finished.



3. OH YES, OH YES, OH YES: Mary Sunshine, played by Aspen Parker '20, sings "Both Reached for the Gun." Many actors, including Parker, Kalei Fogg '20, and Hannah Cassese '20, agree that on any given night, the audience and their energy influenced the actors and their performance. "Every audience like takes the show differently. Although the show 100% of the time was well received, they all find something different about it. So naturally, the audience's reactions and how we feed off of their energy is going to be different," Parker said. **4. SHOTS FIRED:** As they reenact the murder of Haven Johnson '21's character, Fred Casely, he calls out "Roxie, please," as Kalei Fogg '20's character shoots him for the third and final time in the show. One of the biggest takeaways for Johnson was that he couldn't let his emotions off stage impact his on stage performance. "There were a few nights where I've been pissed off at people and you go out on stage, you have to be, I just have to let it go," Johnson said. **5. CREATING CELLOPHANE:** One of Logan Schreck '21's favorite parts about his role in "Chicago" was the connections he made with the audience each night. During his solo song, "Mr. Cellophane" Schreck was able to connect with the viewers so well due to the work he put into character development. "It's not where we just kind of wake up and we're like, all right, this is how we're going to develop our character. It took me up until the last couple of weeks. It's a long process and you make new discoveries every night," Schreck said.