



Over the past several years, the musical theater program at St. Ambrose has boomed, bringing high-quality productions to the stage that have garnered awards for both individual performers and the production as a whole.

Being a part of a musical production – from the stage crew, student managers, and actors – gives students the opportunity to form enduring friendships across different classes, dig deep into their God-given talents, and hone skills in time-management, work ethic, and creativity.

This year, more than ever before, students are also being introduced to the skills and mentorship of professionals in the Madison area to bring these stories to life. The results? Even greater production value for theater-goers and a witness to the professional habits and paths from which students can continue to learn as they find their own way in the world.

One special way this is being realized for the 2020 production of *Singin' in the Rain* is the partnership with local film and creative media firm Backflip, which has worked with organizations of all sizes including UW-Madison, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, and a host of other for- and non-profit organizations. Helping tell stories is at the heart of what they do and Lead Editor Jeff Bell is certainly helping tell this year's story to an amazing degree!

When SAA contacted Jeff, he was excited to participate because “in high school, I acted in theater and from there was this natural progression into more film work and media projects. I was exactly like these students and I understand how important it is for students to be exposed to these kinds of creative outlets regardless what they end up pursuing professionally.”

On a snowy Sunday, Jeff, musical director Angela Hineline and student actors arrived at the landmark Madison capitol for a day of on-site filming to produce three short films in a setting that suited the Art Deco feel of the period. According to Angela, “the musical is about the transition from silent films to talking films and the surprising and funny things that happen during this transition.”

To capture that transition, Jeff detailed some of the ways that these three short films will enhance the entertainment audiences will enjoy this March.

«Musical Dinner Theater»  
March 26

«Singin' in the Rain»  
March 27-29

[ambroseacademy.org/musical](http://ambroseacademy.org/musical)



“When silent films were first introduced, directors shot them as though they were stage productions – one camera on a tripod that didn’t move. Close-ups were rare and the whole story generally played out from a very wide angle. When sound was introduced, it was often low quality sound plus low quality video, a style that we will also be matching with the audio students recorded previously that won’t quite match up with the footage we shot. And finally, we’ll show the style of the big budget, clean, early 30s Hollywood style where they had more money and had perfected their craft. I’m a stickler for details and I’m really excited to bring some of these elements that will make for a more seamless experience for the audience to really enter into the story being told on the stage by the students.”

In addition to Backflip’s contributions to this year’s production, Angela mentioned being thrilled to have the talents of James Carrano, who has a Masters degree in Choral Conducting, returning choreographer Alyssa Dvorak, SAA faculty member Josh Vaughn contributing to the orchestration and Tim Heiney of Relevant Radio assisting with the vocal recordings for the short films, and a stage combat expert to challenge students, bringing about an even more realistic and engaging performance for audiences.

“For me, as a director, it’s an incredible gift working alongside people in the community who are great role models personally and professionally, to help students see other career options or ways to use their gifts outside of their jobs.”

For a behind-the-scenes look at this year’s show, you are warmly invited to attend the Musical Dinner Theater event, taking place Thursday, March 26 at St. Christopher’s Parish in Verona. Guests will enjoy wine and cheese, a catered dinner, and short program to set the scene for the evening’s full scale preview performance! Tickets are also on sale for the three regular performances at the Verona Area High School PAC from March 27-29.

Visit [www.ambroseacademy.org/musical](http://www.ambroseacademy.org/musical) for more details and we’ll see you there!



Long after the curtain falls on closing night, being a part of a high-intensity experience can impact a student in many ways.

For some, like Natalie Davies ('18), musicals are a stepping stone to a creative-based career. As a sophomore at Viterbo University, Natalie is pursuing a degree in Musical Theater. Long-time SAA theater-goers may remember Natalie as Dolly in 'Hello Dolly!', Liesl in 'Sound of Music' and 'Mrs. Banks' in Mary Poppins. Reflecting on her time at SAA, Natalie found that her first performance as a new transfer student in 8th grade 'helped me come out of my shell, to make friends, and to really build community among the school'. She emphasized the strong community and family feel in her stage experiences, and that "the arts teach you how to relate to others, to see another person's perspective, to be vulnerable with others as you're making artistic decisions in your character's development."

While Kate Krebs' ('18) plans aren't focused on the stage, her experiences with past SAA musical productions are impacting her studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she is pursuing a double major in Grazing Livestock Systems and Animal Sciences with a minor in the Engler Entrepreneurship Program. For Kate, "being in a musical teaches you so many things; you gain skills in memorization, organization, learning how to manage others and how to deal with stressful situations while being held to a really high standard."

But the "biggest thing" that has stayed with Kate, "is the way Mrs. Hineline empowered me to grow as a leader throughout three years of being the Stage Manager. I had total control over the crew and the areas for which I was responsible, but when I doubted myself or my abilities, she always made me feel like I could do whatever task was at hand. Because of my time at SAA, I've learned how to communicate with people,



to take direction from supervisors and then in turn lead those who I am responsible for."

Natalie and Kate's current paths are a reflection of not only their interests, but of their Catholic faith. Natalie sees her pursuit of a career in the arts as "a way to use the gifts God has given me and be a witness to parts of society that are often at odds with our faith."

Combining agriculture and business, Kate's hopes for the future include her own farm and consulting with farmers to integrate more sustainable operations, while maintaining high yields and balance in the lives of farmers: "as soon as sin entered the world, there's been division between God/man and man/creation. I hope that my work will, in my own small way, help repair some of those divisions and lead others to glorify God through their own work and lives."

These young alumnae credit SAA with helping form a strong foundation of faith, preparing them to discover God's call in their lives and pursue it with joy and determination and our community of benefactors is to thank for creating such opportunities for them and their SAA peers!



Every other year, SAA juniors and seniors have the opportunity to attend the March for Life in our nation's capitol. During the 'off' years, a contingent of our Guardians for Life pro-life club head to Chicago where they can prayerfully promote the sanctity of all life, preborn and born.

This year, we joined a bus with the Pro-Life Wisconsin group and everyone enjoyed the camaraderie on the bus rides, our prayerful and peaceful demonstration during the time spent listening to speakers and on the march in Chicago. What a sight to behold – one of the main arteries of Chicago, Michigan Avenue, blocked off and dedicated to the celebration of babies, moms, and families!

On the ride home our bus captain asked for volunteers to share their story of "why you're pro-life." Junior Luisa Schloesser didn't hesitate to go to the front to tell her story, stating that her former public school experiences all assumed abortion as a good and normal "right" – in which she found herself not challenging the status quo of thought. Later through good and compassionate education here and elsewhere she learned the reasons why death to the innocent is never the right choice and never "empowering" to women. She expressed how happy she is to be able to advocate for the beautiful gift of life from womb to tomb. We're very proud of students like Luisa who are working to help protect the lives and dignity of all humans through prayer as well as concrete actions of love and support!