

THE COMMUNITY NEWS **communitypub.com**

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PHOTOS BY ANDREA MILLER

Mount Sophia Academy sophomore Matsy Stinson tours Du Pont Theatre's back stage dressing rooms with students from around the region who will be performing together in the first ever All-State Theatre.

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Delaware's first All-State Theatre kicks off rehearsal season

By Andrea Miller
Staff Reporter

Posted Tuesday, April 8, 2008

The region's most musically talented youth and teens got a rare backstage tour of Wilmington's majestic Du Pont Theatre recently during a cast meeting of Les Misérables School Edition.

The students, part of the first Delaware All-State Theatre program, will perform Les Mis' challenging score with a cast of 85 members from 35 schools at the historic venue in June.

Whether experienced young actors or new to musical performance, Wardrobe Supervisor Eva Lynne Penn gave students a tour to remember. Rolling back a rough wooden door 25 feet above the stage, the 15-year Broadway musical veteran showed them where Grizabella descended in her famous "Cats" solo. Emerging from dimly lit catacomb-like hallways under the stage, she described how props are quickly and quietly maneuvered through the passages to be in place on cue. Facing walls of mirrors and Hollywood lights in the dressing rooms, she described how to handle a diva waiting for her wig or a temperamental director demanding seven things at once.

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Les Misérables School Edition Performance Schedule

8 p.m., June 20, 21, 27, 28
Du Pont Theatre
Market Street, Wilmington

Tickets: \$15 - \$35
www.duponttheatre.com
302-656-4401



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BETTER YEARS



Recognizing the students would soon be performers on the stage, Penn also interspersed bits of practical advice: don't use the downstairs showers...there are too few bathrooms for a cast this large so get to them early...go to the end of this hallway if you need cell phone reception.

The partnership between Du Pont Theatre and the All-State Theatre is a rare opportunity for students, said Jeff Santoro, co-founder of the program.

It is dream came true for Cab Calloway junior Cassidy Bonilla. During the cast meeting, she performed the signature solo of Fantine, the character she will be playing. The vocal and musical theatre major saw her first Broadway musical on that stage as a child, which fueled her passion for musical performance.

That is what All-State theatre is all about, Santoro said. "This will be one of the coolest rides you will ever have. I will be demanding, and you will become better performers than you ever thought possible," he said of the coming nine weeks of rehearsal leading to four evening performances.

Broadway musical rehearsals are usually closed to the public, and even close family members, but the Community News has been invited behind the scenes to follow the cast through its first season leading up to the June performances.

Du Pont Theatre Wardrobe Manager Eva Lynne Penn opens a stage door to give All State Theatre actors a view of the stage 25 feet below during a tour of the theater.



Jeff Santoro, co-founder of the Delaware All-State Theatre program

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