

Once upon a chocolate time. . .

It's the *Golden Age of Chocolate*, and the students in Ashby welcome visitors to a land of *Pure Imagination* with the Ashby Spring Musical production of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* Friday and Saturday, April 5-6. Performances will be held at 7:00 p.m. each evening, with tickets available at the door (\$6 for adults/\$4 for children).

In the title role, Maddie Bailey shines as Willy Wonka leading the kids through a factory filled with temptation and lessons to be learned. Katie Bailey stars as Charlie Bucket, the emotional heart and soul of the musical. Young Charlie always *Thinks Positive* with his never-ending supply of hope in his heart and can-do spirit. Along with Grandpa Joe, played by Miles Hoff, Charlie finds the last of five Golden Tickets for admittance to Wonka's mysterious factory.

Sam Heeter and Aanika Anderson deliver endearing performances as Mr. and Mrs. Bucket, always guiding Charlie to keep his head up and think positive despite their impoverished life. Along with Grandpa Joe, they take care of Charlie's grandparents who are quite comedic in their old age. Livy Johnson, Alyssa Johnson, and Sam Sorenson deliver an innately engaging family dynamic.

As Charlie and Grandpa Joe head to the factory, they are joined by four other kids who have problems of their own. Gluttonous Augustus Gloop and his mother, played by Bobby Anderson and Halle Dahlen respectively, are the first to find a Golden Ticket, followed by gum-chewing brat Violet Beauregarde, played by Maizy Spangler, who is accompanied by her mother, Mrs. Beauregarde, played by Sami Schlotfeld.

Of course, every group must have the spoiled rich kid. Veruca Salt, played by Cailey Schlosser, is the girl who always gets her way thanks to the over-indulgence of her daddy, played by Evan Paulson. Rounding out the crew of kids touring the factory is Mike Teavee, played by Max Gronwold. Mike is the quintessential technology kid with his eyes constantly glued to the TV, phone, computer, or anything else electronic. Ms. Teavee, played by Josey Ness, indulges her son abiding by the notion, *Who needs school when you've got the internet?*

With the multiple scene changes and effects, Stage Director Paula Wojcik noted the dedication and hard work this cast has put forth to date. "We held auditions early this year to allow for extra time to learn the many songs and choreography," she explained, "not to mention creating all the sets and props this production requires. I'm always wanting to make sure we pay attention to details."

Those details can make all the difference. Having an efficient and experienced crew behind the scenes is equally important to having great actors on stage. "We have 60 students involved with this year's production," said Wojcik. "There are 40 actors who will take the stage, and we have 20 kids who have been working hard learning their cues for lighting, sound, and set changes. I'm really proud of how well things are coming together. Having that many kids can be overwhelming, but they are finding ways to work together like a well-oiled machine."

Musical Director Ruth Umlauf has also been pleased with all the hard work the students are putting in. "There a lot of songs and solos, so we really have our work cut out for us," said Umlauf. "We definitely will make use of these last couple weeks of rehearsals to fine-tune the songs and presentation to really bring the audience into the magic of the story."

Ashby alumna Jacey Schlosser has graciously taken time from her collegiate career at Concordia to create whimsical, delightful choreography for the production, while her sister, sophomore Cailey Schlosser has been busy teaching the moves to her peers. "Jacey and Cailey are two truly remarkable young women," said Wojcik. "Their dancing experience and knowledge, combined

with their creativity and energy, have helped make our performances these past few years so successful. This production is no exception. We are truly blessed that Jacey is so willing to help us out even though she is extremely busy with her college studies and her role on the Concordia track team. She impresses the heck out of me. We are also so fortunate to have Cailey in the school for a couple more years as well, as she is an asset in teaching and modifying the choreography and working with the actors. She, with the help of Aanika Anderson, has been instrumental in making this production what it is. I'm so excited for the performances. I think people will really love it."

With 60 young men and women tapping into their thespian talents to participate in the production as either cast or crew, *Willy Wonka, Jr.* is truly going to bring alive the imaginations of all who see it.

Rounding out the cast are sophomores Jade Bjornson, Ashley Hill, Kate Jensen, Madeline Thompson, McKenna Williams; freshmen Lilly Evavold, Catherine Koefod, Celi Nelson, Raelynn Ripley, Mya Roley; and eighth graders John Anderson, Emma Erickson, Karlie Maack, Kennady Skougard; seventh graders Katie Anderson, Quynn Behrens, Haleigh Brendmoen, Brock Dewey, Candis Estrada, BrookeLinn Finkelson, Sadie Maack, and Ashley Paulson.

Crew members working diligently behind-the-scenes include seniors Dakota Ecker, Christian Norby; juniors Vince Finkelson; sophomores Maddie Bestul, Dakota Caraway, Ashton Ecker, Emily Johnson, Jaden Norby, Anna Thormodson; freshmen Kyra Aamot, Zach Fagre, Matson Hoff, Hunter Norby, Torin Olson, Cooper Peterson, Carson Spangler, Carter Spangler; eighth grader Hannah Johnson; and seventh grader Richie Johnson.

As an added bonus, the sophomore class will also be serving Wonka Pops at the evening performances while supplies last. This is a class fundraiser with proceeds going to the ALF Scholarship Fund.

Please join us for the Ashby Public School rendition of *Willy Wonka, Jr.* as it will whisk you away to a land of pure imagination.