

# Dakota students bring magical carnival to life on stage

By: Joshua Gordon | **Macomb Township Chronicle** | Published April 18, 2018



Dakota High School senior Nicole Hollinsky, far right, makes herself known as the Dust Witch during an April 13 rehearsal of "Something Wicked This Way Comes." The story about a dark carnival debuts April 19.

Photo by Patricia O'Blenes



Dakota High School sophomore Christiana Rosa, center, is distressed while trying to get help from junior Maddy Fairman, left, and freshman Kaiden Zmiga, right, during rehearsals of the upcoming production of "Something Wicked This Way Comes."

Photo by Patricia O'Blenes

MACOMB TOWNSHIP — The Dakota High School theater students have traded in the musical numbers of "Footloose" for the creepy vibes of an evil carnival as they put on "Something Wicked This Way Comes" this April.

Director Kelly Schmidt said she did something unusual in preparation for the school's spring production by letting the students vote on what show they wanted to put on. She gave the students a few options, and they decided on the classic Ray Bradbury novel about the mysterious traveling carnival.

The show will debut at 7 p.m. April 19 in the Dakota auditorium, 21051 21 Mile Road, with subsequent shows at 7 p.m. April 20 and 21.

Schmidt said the students had just done "Footloose," in which they played teenagers and wasn't sure which direction they wanted to go in terms of playing adults, playing kids, doing something more dramatic or doing a fantasy.

What sets "Something Wicked This Way Comes" apart from other shows, Schmidt said, is the magical nature to the show. The carnival, overseen by Mr. Dark, has magical and fantasy elements to it.

"There is a lot of imagination that comes into play with lighting, set pieces and costumes," Schmidt said. "And parts of the carnival are played by the kids because it is enchanted. So on the merry-go-round, instead of sturdy carousel animals, they are made of our students as the animals come to life, and it is quite neat for the kids to play."

Schmidt said the production began on March 5 for the students, giving them five weeks to put the show together. The cast is made of 50 high school students, as well as seven elementary students in the district, playing everything from carnival performers to townspeople.

There are also about 20 students who do hair, makeup, production and work on the technical crew, bringing the total number of students involved in the performance to around 80. Schmidt said that is a high number for a non-musical.

While the magical aspects are part of the fun of the show, Schmidt said it is also one of the biggest production hurdles as the students work with making the fixed stage work to their favor, as well as costume choices.

"We have some really neat things happening, such as a rotating stage, but we built everything you see on stage and didn't rent anything," Schmidt said. "And costuming has been fun, but a challenge, as we have a woman who casts spells that is supposed to be blind, and trying to use makeup to show that on stage has been a challenge."

The fixed stage is pretty common in non-musical productions, Schmidt said, as it allows for faster scene changes. But it also requires the audience to use their imagination more as the scenery doesn't change as much.

Junior Maddy Fairman is playing Jade Nightshade, a take on one of lead characters from the book, James Nightshade. Fairman said her character is a 12-year-old girl who wishes she was older and seeks magic at the carnival to make it happen.

Fairman said the fixed stage makes it easier on everyone as the scene changes are quicker, but it requires a bit more work in other areas.

"It really makes things more prop heavy as you have to bring everything with you that you use in each scene," Fairman said. "The audience doesn't have to wait around for things to change and we could pay more attention to the detail, as there are not as many set pieces to do."

"Something Wicked This Way Comes" is the sixth Dakota production for Fairman. While it may feel like a Halloween-type show, she said the production is more "edgy" than others shows of which she has been a part.

And getting a chance to play a character younger than her is fun, Fairman said, and allows her to pull from her own life.

"I think this is a lot more imaginative and the audience doesn't have everything in front of them, so they can relate to the characters more," she said. "I really enjoy playing younger people as I had a pretty good childhood and have four siblings who I watched grow up, so I have always been around people that age."

Tickets for “Something Wicked This Way Comes” cost \$15 and can be purchased online at [dakotamusical.seatyourself.biz](http://dakotamusical.seatyourself.biz), or at the door the day of the show.