

The Connection

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***Edit:Undo* Spotlights America's Talent**

Local students write musical to be performed at Kennedy Center.

by Leah Kiell, The Connection

Dreams can come true as 39 high school students from all over the U.S. and Canada, who are used to performing at a small high school theater, now have the rare opportunity to perform at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

The Cappies program, which high school students attend high school theater productions and write critiques of the shows for local newspapers, is having its fourth annual summer program, Cappies International Theater, at the Kennedy Center.

Bill Strauss, co-founder of the Cappies program and originator of CIT, said this program acts as a supplement to the theater experience students normally receive at their high schools.

"Cappies International Theater is a writing program and learning program as well as a program to celebrate high school theater," he said.

Only students who received Cappie awards were allowed to participate in this program, Strauss said, ensuring only the best of the best were involved with the program. This high caliber of talent was needed, since the duration of the program was a little less than four weeks, during which three shows are to be learned and performed.

THIS YEAR'S THEME celebrates student playwrights. Therefore the first two shows, "Starz!" and "Playz!", are a collection of student written songs, monologues, comedic sketches and short plays. However, the highlight of this program is the final show — "Edit:Undo," an original musical written by team of nine local writers, composers and lyricists.

According to Robert Rome, one of the three student members on the writing team, "Edit:Undo" is a comedic story about teenagers' experience in high school. It addresses

the idea of the technology gap, as the main conflict of the musical is between the adults and the students over the use of modern technology.

"It is perhaps the truest story that you can find in terms of story voice because it was written by high school students," Rome said.

Using their age and life experience to their advantage, Rome, who graduated from Robinson Secondary School this past spring, said the writing team was able to create a musical that reflects the ups and downs of high school most students face.

"I can think of several lines where there certainly subtle pokes and prods of the dichotomy of my relationship to my parents," he said. "We definitely drew from our own lives and our experiences."

Strauss said he recognized the originality of this musical and felt it touched on subjects not yet seen in modern theater written about teenagers. "Edit:Undo" discusses topics such as falling in like, not love, the difficulties of waking up early, and, of course, living with technology such as cell phones, videos games, Web sites and online chat rooms. "We think this might be the first play to have a DDR [Dance Dance Revolution video game] dance sequence," he said.

Chelsea Serocke, who is performing the play's lead role, Rory Conway, said she was impressed with the script and could easily relate to the various themes the play addresses. The jokes, in particular, are especially applicable to high schoolers and certainly reflect the youth of the playwrights.

Despite the adolescent age of the writing team, the overall play is very adult, she said. "I still can't believe 18-year-olds wrote this," she said. "It's just so beautiful, especially the music."

STRAUSS AGREED was also impressed with the musical and the way it turned out, especially since the team only had a limited amount of time to create a finished product. "It's a real challenge to write a musical in one year," Strauss said. "Even for the professionals it's a challenge."

Strauss said the process started by simply writing the musical as a play and then the songs were added in later. Although the musical was put together piece by piece, much time was spent ensuring the show was not only well structured, but an enjoyable show for all ages as well.

"We got it into shape," he said. "And of course, we edited and undid."