

Hello, Dolly!

Performers connect their lives to their characters

IF YOU GO

When: Nov. 2-4 | 7:30 p.m.
Where: McCrary Theatre
Cost: \$13 or Elon ID

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HELLO, DOLLY!" TELLS THE adventures of mischievous meddler Dolly Levi as she travels to Yonkers, New York, for the matchmaking scheme of a lifetime. The department of performing arts presents this turn of the century pick-me-up performance in a celebration of life's every moment.

Elon University brings the musical to the McCrary Theatre stage this year — the year it returns to Broadway — in a larger-than-life show emphasized by outbursts of mad giggles, blundering gentlemen and grandiose verbosity. The show's stars are portrayed by musical theater students who use their own experiences and strengths to give "Hello, Dolly!" its timeless, giddy essence.

Dolly Levi

“Wacky, smart and manipulative matchmaker!”

Chloe Robins
“Dolly”

There's a moment where Chloe Robins stops singing on stage. She's directed to move forward, but she can't simply walk. She's a meddling, middle-aged matchmaker who constantly reflects on memories of her late husband. She's been told by her choreographer to envision herself on her wedding day, to see herself gliding down the aisle, then the first dance. The happiest moments of her life were when her husband was living by her side.

Robins has never been married. Still, she has to find some way to connect to Dolly Levi, the leading lady of the show. In these minutes between the opening of the curtains and her run-through backstage, she takes the intentions of the staging and finds a connection in her own personal emotion. She's transformed.

The transformation isn't in the ruffles and ribbons. Robins' relationship with Dolly began weeks before opening night. On script, they didn't have much in common.

“I would steer away from someone with that big of a personality,” Robins said. “Dolly is very confident, outspoken and can manipulate people into giving her what she wants. I'm definitely introverted — and not so manipulative.”

As an actress, it's Robins' job to channel as much of herself into Dolly while onstage, despite how they would con-

nect in real life.

“Every day she became more the character,” said Michael Jablonski, “Hello, Dolly!” choreographer. “She's playing a role that's 40 years too old for her. One of the first days of rehearsals, she came up to me and asked how old she should play the role. And I said, ‘You should play it as yourself.’ And she's doing wonderfully at it.”

Jablonski choreographed each character purposefully to marry the personality of the role with the strengths of its actor. The choreography, as well as the music, artfully intertwine the two to tell a complete character story.

“We can make informed acting choices based on the clues given in the music and the intention set with the choreography,” Robins said.

Her character choices succeed in creating the dynamic Dolly as a result of hard work and continual experimentation.

“She's such a strong actor and has a great presence on stage,” Jablonski said. “Chloe works really hard every time, and she never says, ‘I can't do that.’ She says, ‘Alright, let me work on it.’”

Audiences will watch Dolly waltz, kick and turn through flared skirts and under heavy hat plumage. It's clear that the woman on stage is no introvert — and has a scheme up her sleeve. Here under the spotlight, they belong together as one, no matter their differences.

“It's fun to play someone completely opposite from myself,” Robins said.

“I don't think someone just turns the ignition and all of a sudden, they're that character. It's like when you see someone growing up. You don't notice when you're with them every day but after a time apart — from the first rehearsal to the last — it's like, ‘You're so different.’”

Michael Jablonski
“Hello, Dolly!” choreographer

