



« Cornelius Hackl »

A quirky shut-in — and wide-eyed romantic.

Jake Smith
"Cornelius"

Junior Jake Smith finds enough similarity in his character, Cornelius Hackl, to love portraying him each night. While Cornelius' inexperience has him scrambling to cover up his open honesty with a blurted phrase or dive into a closet. Smith identifies with his eagerness for adventure.

"I'm the type of person that would much rather skip school and go to New York for the day than sit all day," Smith said. "He's a little timid and shy at times, but I think we would get along."

Smith found the hard facts about Cornelius he could connect to in the script.

"At this stage in my life, I'm predominately playing goofy leading men, and so with most of my characters they're a pretty high level of connection between us," Smith said. "But be-

neath the surface level, it's the music and choreography that pull him in deeper."

Jablonski praises the way Smith carries himself on stage, but Smith wasn't always a strong dancer. Growing up, he spent time playing sports, not taking dance classes. He pulled from his own journey to perform as Cornelius, who is not supposed to be a good dancer.

"Dolly describes his dancing as athletic, which has been my struggle in the program," Smith said. "I'm very much a singer and an actor, so I've been working very hard on my dance. And when I finally get cast in a role where I'll be dancing a ton — it's not supposed to look polished."

« Spunky, feminist and unique.

Cassidy Wescott Hamilton
"Irene"

Senior Cassidy Wescott Hamilton plays a young widow looking for some flirty fun, but instead finds love.

"This isn't a character I would have ever seen myself playing," Hamilton said. When I started the rehearsal process I was thinking, 'I am nothing like this woman at all.'"

After months of rehearsal and encouragement from the artistic team, Hamilton finally made a connection.

"I realized that there are bits of Irene in anyone who is looking for fresh start," Hamilton said. "I realized I could be her."

Jablonski saw the newfound relationship between Hamilton and Irene reflected after months of encouragement from the artistic team.

"I kept pushing her to trust herself and find the joy in it," Jablonski said. "There was one specific day where we finished the number, and she told me she had never felt that beautiful on

stage before. It's those little tiny breakthroughs."

Her first scene comes midway through the performance, and while everyone is getting ready and running on stage, she's still sitting, her hair pinned back.

"Once everybody else goes on stage, I take my hair out, do my lipstick and put my full costume on," Hamilton said. "I go out into the other theater by myself and sing my song. It helps me get into Irene."

Hamilton connects her personal life to her character later in the show when Irene teaches Cornelius to dance. Hamilton was Smith's dance Teaching Assistant, and both similarly had to put in extra time to expand from accomplished actors and singers to versatile dancers.

"Watching Jake do that in real life and then actually doing that on stage, too, is fun for both of us," Hamilton said. "It's something Jake and I have in common that Irene and Cornelius have in common, too."

Irene Molloy »



« Barnaby Tucker »

Joyful and larger than life.

Andrew Purdy
"Barnaby"

Sophomore Andrew Purdy thinks he can learn a lot from the exuberant Barnaby Tucker.

"He's larger than life, but he still has real desires and emotions," Purdy said. "He's so joyful and has such an optimistic outlook."

Barnaby's naivety can cause trouble, but when getting himself into character, Purdy attempts to see everything about Barnaby as a strength.

"When you're living your life, you

want to see yourself in the most positive light you can," Purdy said. "I think that's important when you're playing a character, too — to not look at it like an outsider."

Barnaby's persona is also demonstrated to the audience in the way Purdy dances. Jablonski knew during casting that he needed an actor who could keep up with Barnaby's energy.

"If you can't tell the character's emotions, then you heighten them through music," Jablonski said. "And if you still can't, then you heighten with dance."

« A sweet and shy young girl.

Mara Wilson
"Minnie"

Minnie Fay »

As the musical number "Put On Your Sunday Clothes" closes, senior Mara Wilson is watching and waving to her castmates filing off stage. It's one of her favorite musical theater numbers of all time, and it's the one that places her in the world of "Hello, Dolly!" right before she steps into the spotlight for the first time.

"It puts me in the perfect mood to begin in the show," Walters said. "Seeing so many of my friends shine onstage makes me so happy and grateful — two qualities of Minnie's that help define who she is."

Genuinely feeling these emotions as she's entering the show set her up for an ideal entrance.

"Real, true acting is using your own experience — your own emotional connection, your sense

memory and your life to bring yourself to a character," Jablonski said. "And then a director and choreographer guide you on the journey."

Wilson has to prepare physically as well as emotionally in order to totally become her character. She runs through additional vocal warm-ups that she wouldn't normally because of Minnie's tendency to scare easy.

"Minnie screams quite often, and doing these multiple times in the show — multiple times per week — can be very draining," Wilson said. "I have to be properly warmed up, so it sits in a place that is healthy, comfortable and consistent. It sounds very abrupt and probably scary, but it's actually heavily calculated and rehearsed."

