



Who's Who, Really?

By: Adam James Lagosz - St. Paul Catholic High School, Bristol

"Who am I anyway? Am I my resume?" This is the question the cast of *A Chorus Line* sung on the Palace Theater Stage just a few short weeks ago. These questions are one's which ring true for every single theater production and its actors, who may take the stage anywhere. The short blurbs and resumes which fill the heart of the programs truly don't tell you who the person is, and once you see that given person on stage you connect with their charters not the real person. Luckily however, I had the chance to meet the new cast of NETWorks presents *Disney's Beauty and The Beast*. This rare glimpse into who the actors really are, not only helped me to understand who the actors were but better connect with their charters as well.

Liz Shivener who plays Belle told us of the hardships and her future aspiration as an actress; she stated one of the hardest parts of being in a business like this is the brutal honesty of producers, directors, and anyone and everyone who voices their opinion.

"Two days before I got cast as Belle I was told I was not pretty enough to have the part which I was auditioning for." Liz, a graduate of Otterbien College, did not truly get into acting until her second year in high school. "A teacher just said this is something I was good at so I did it." She said why *Beauty and the Beast* was so interesting for her, which was that she had the chance to work with the original creators of the Broadway production. She also had the chance to meet Linda Woolverton, who wrote the Disney film. Liz went on to say that she was excited to meet her because Woolverton wrote the charter of Belle as her own personal character and now she was carrying that character on. Her further aspiration after *Beauty and the Beast* is to one day take to the Great White Way and have a family.

A family is probably one of the hardest things to have while being on a national tour. After playing the Palace's packed house the tour embarked for a long trip to Canada where upon finishing they would turn around to come back to Fort Wayne, ID. This nomadic lifestyle all four actors said would make it hard to have a family at this time. Although their biological family was not with them it was quite evident that the cast was a family in itself. These actors eat, live, work, sleep, and travel together throughout the tour so I guess they could only form

a type of Beauty and the Beast family. Traveling they said is one of the hardest parts, traveling twelve to eight hours a day can be hard; but you get used to it, they all agreed.

An interesting insight that one might not think of is the size of the stage, the Palace Theater's stage, which I have stood on is huge and one of the biggest in New England. How does the production adjust its dance routines, lighting, sets, and actors to different size stages? The answers are quite interesting the actual stage is made larger or smaller on each stage by adjusting the curtains on the side of the stage called legs. The legs of this shows production are decorative as well as functional. Beauty and the Beast also brings its own floor from theater to theater. This is not only for decorative purposes but also helps the actors remember where they should be and when. Tony Howel said, "The floor is like a giant puzzle which snaps together. We remember where we are supposed to be by certain pieces of the puzzle. The production also sets 'spikes' for us." A spike, I learned, is a piece of glow tape or something which signals the actor where to stand exactly. This helps the actors be more precise when they are to be in a certain light or during a dance number. Not only are the floors specially built, but the entire sets bring this old French tale together. From the "poor provincial town" to the dining room set, all sparkle and say BROADWAY THEATER.

The sets are just part of the success equation. The special effects brought into this show were truly out of this world. From the prince transforming into the beast, the beast transforming back into the prince, as well as a thunder and lightning storm on stage, the special effects are truly second to none.

Another very memorable actor from the production was Reese Diaz whose plays the role of Chip the child "chipped" tea cup. Reese although young, says he's home schooled by his mother, who travels the road with him from show to show. His further aspiration included not only acting in the future, but he also said this "Oh, I know what I want to do, kiss a girl." Through this interview, I got the feel who was who really!

Beauty and the Beast: A Knockout!

By: Carissa-Lynn Argel - Naugatuck High School, Naugatuck

As an audience member at the Palace Theater in Waterbury March 14, I was astounded by the brilliant performance of *Beauty and the Beast*. The set was amazing. Its layered appearance depicted scenes of the countryside and the castle, but it also captured the layers of emotions and feelings depicted by the Beast through colors, shadows and light.

In a small French town we meet Belle a simple girl who wishes to be free to read her books. This makes her very odd but still intrigues Gaston. When looking for her father she comes upon the Beasts' castle and trades her freedom for her fathers. The Beast accepts this offer and allows her father to be free. Being stuck in this castle Belle realizes the Beast isn't as evil and mean as he wants others to believe. Beast was once a handsome prince who turned away an ugly old woman who happened to really be a beautiful sorceress. Being that he was so mean to turn her away, she put a spell on him and his servants in the castle that could only be broken if he found true love that was returned. While having Belle as his captive, he realizes what it means to love and be loved.

The whole production was captivating, yet also had a humorous appeal to it thanks to slapstick antics and well-delivered musical numbers from Nathaniel Hackmann (Gaston) and Mitcheal Fatica (Lefou). Hackmann received some laughs from beating up his poor sidekick Lefou and his ridiculous comments, such as "How can you read this book? It has no pictures." This is only one reason why this production was so astounding.

The attraction between Babette (Erin Coors) and Lumiere (Merritt David Janes) also stole the audience's heart. Babette, a maid-turned-feather-duster in the enchanted castle, fears Lumiere, a butler-turned-candlestick, no longer desires her since her hands have turned to dusters. The chemistry with them, as well as between Belle (Liz Shivener) and Beast (Justin Glaser) electrified the performance and brought this story to life for children and adults alike. The supporting cast of Mrs. Potts (Sabina Petra), Chip (Jeremiah Frank Burch III) and the ensemble cast were extremely complementary – no one actor upstaged or outshone any other, and it was their obvious dedication to the performance and each other that made this show spectacular. While the show is obviously based upon the Disney film and the old French story of "Beauty and the Beast," the actors were able to bring new life to their roles. The elaborate costumes seemed fairly easy to move in, and actors seamlessly danced and maneuvered on stage. The costumes also made characters easy to depict because of the incredible detail. Even Belle's simple blue and white dress was designed to make her stand out in any crowd. Lumieres' candlestick hands actually worked, which added realism to his character and the aura of enchantment.

This production is one I would recommend to anyone; the sense of being a child again is astounding. Not only do the actors and actresses deserve a big hand, but also the director and production people deserve a huge round of applause for their efforts. This play was very

moving; the sense of true love, humor, and fate glowed off the stage. This was one of the most amazing productions I've been to, if not the best. I was utterly mesmerized by the ability of these actors and actresses to make these childhood characters come to life.