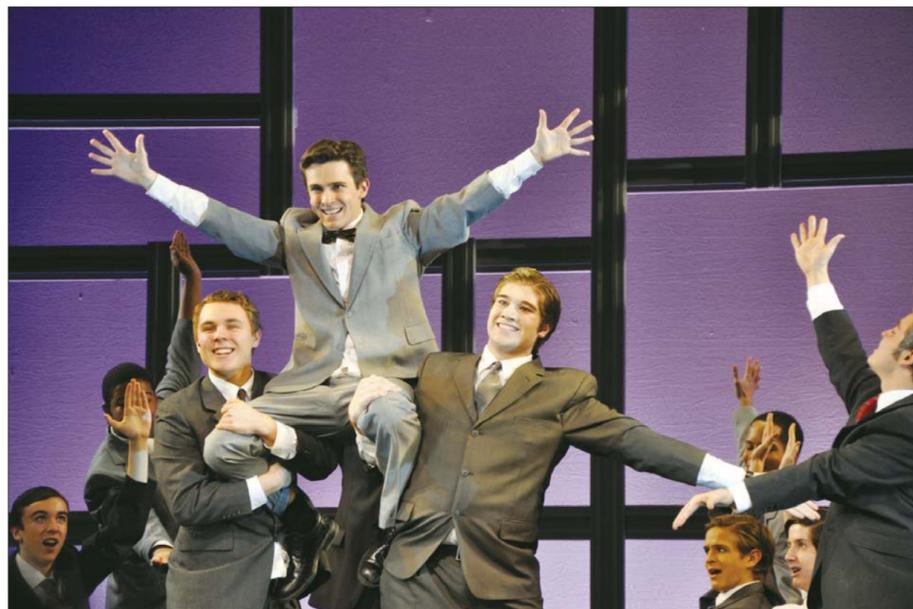




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Arts & Entertainment

SPFHS Shows *How to Succeed in Their Spring Musical*



WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER...In Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Repertory Theatre's production of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, Jonathan Dawson as J. Pierpont Finch leads the executives of the World Wide Wicket Company in a rousing rendition of "Brotherhood of Man." The Frank Loesser musical continues this weekend at the high school.

By SUSAN MYRILL DOUGHERTY
 Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

"Nothing succeeds like success" is an adage that can be applied to the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Repertory Theatre. Their 2014 production of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* is a continuation of outstanding spring musicals that they make look effortless.

If last weekend's audiences were giving out awards for outstanding performances, this production would merit quite a few thanks to talented and trained students, direction by Matt Capodicasa, music direction by Jan Allen, pit orchestra conducting by Durand Thomas and choreography by Jennifer DiGiuseppe.

The Frank Loesser, Abe Burrows, Jack Weinstock and Willie Gilbert show was a hit on Broadway in the '60s and won seven Tony Awards, as well as the 1962 Pulitzer Prize for drama. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School students bring back that era with award-winning energy.

J. Pierpont Finch (Jonathon Dawson), a window washer, learns how to climb the ladder of corporate success by reading a self-help book. Finch meets Rosemary Pilkington (Olivia Whitehouse) who takes an immediate liking to the ambitious, handsome young man whose rise in the company is meteoric. Bud Frump (Christopher Centinaro), the boss's nephew by marriage, however, is not a big fan of Finch, and eyes him as his biggest competition.

With some outrageously silly characters in the script, Director Capodicasa pushes the teens to go full out with their characterization in body language, dialects and voices. There are a dozen or more small character parts in which both young men and women steal the spotlight.

In the hilarious song, "Paris Original," a woman's greatest fear is realized when the gals all show up at a party wearing the same dress. There must have been some heavy duty sewing in the weeks prior to the show by the nine student costumers who made and assembled period reflective outfits designed by Joanne Sprague.

This show is definitely a portrayal of America just after the conservative '50s, displaying girls' yesteryear attitudes towards men and marriage. Rosemary sings, "Happy to Keep His Dinner Warm," dreaming about being the "little lady" at home. Beautiful bimbos as secretaries (such as Nicole Cusmano as Hedy LaRue) get ogled and used despite the lip service of "A Secretary is Not a Toy" by Bert Bratt (Philip Tice), Bud Frump, Miss Krumholtz (Casey Abramson) and ensemble members.

Finch's cleverly punctuated side glances to the audience are timed to split second perfection by the student lighting crew headed by lighting designer, Thomas Rowe.

The dancers are amazing. In "Coffee Break," the singers/dancers get to have great fun with inventively staged choreography that was originated by Bob Fosse. Choreographer DiGiuseppe utilizes her dancers' ability with impressive tap numbers throughout the show.

The audio at the Sunday matinee was cranked up a bit loud, but perhaps



THE JIG IS UP...Hedy LaRue (Nicole Cusmano), the boss's girlfriend (with some of her pirate dancers, the Wickettes) gets her big chance to be on TV as the World Wide Wicket Girl in the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Repertory Theatre production of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.

the crew did not want to have to keep adjusting the levels for when the actors needed to sing over the orchestra. Oh, and what a terrific orchestra it is. Every year Pit Orchestra Conductor Durand Thomas works his magic with the students and professionals. It is impossible to tell which is which except by looking at their ages.

So many noteworthy performances in supporting roles help to make this show a success. Each one on stage seems to be having a ball – from the mail handlers to the Wickettes to the board room tycoons in the final number of "Brotherhood of Man."

Jonathon Dawson as J. Pierpont Finch is a delight. A mighty triple threat, he is adorably charming. Christopher Centinaro as Bud Frump is a young Jim Carey with physical and vocal flexibility, ease on stage and comic timing. Almost too handsome for the role of the whining mama's boy, and wickedly devious Frump, Christopher carries off the role beautifully because of his superior acting ability.

Olivia Whitehouse's Rosemary is alternately irritated and enthralled by her dreamboat Finch. The teen's lovely voice has the requisite sweetness needed to be the heroine of "Cinderella, Darling," a great Act II opener.

Perfectly cast in the role of secretary Smitty, Lina Kikas shines with spunk and verve. Even with a faulty microphone at the matinee performance, she still belted out her song and lines like a professional. Another secretary – executive Miss Jones – is played commandingly by the versatile actress Lauren Kilcullen.

The comic role of J. B. Biggley, always a hoot with his secret hobby, is played by Eric Calvo. One of the biggest surprises of the night is his tenderly delivered song "Love from a Heart of Gold" by him and his character's mistress Hedy, Nicole

Cusmano, with their powerful and convincing voices blending well. Earlier in the night he belts out a number, "Grand Old Ivy" with Finch that sees a football team of fellow "groundhogs" singing and dancing along.

And one of the most famous pieces in the show, the "I Believe in You" number which is done with a dozen sinks and mirrors, is marvelous with Mr. Dawson's clear, strong voice and the equally strong male voices.

The most clever song of the show just might be, "Been a Long Day" done to perfection by Smitty, Finch, Rosemary, and Company with Bud, Biggley and Hedy doing the reprise justice. The handsome set is designed by Jeffrey Allen; it sports a Mondrian block of steel-like girders which suggest windows in a Wall Street skyscraper. All of the artfully crafted set pieces are streamlined for efficiency and are moved on and off amazingly fast.

With a two-weekend run, it is not too late to see these teens' success in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, which concludes this weekend.

For tickets visit sphinxreptix.brownpapertickets.com.

Last Chance to See *Butterfield are Free*

WESTFIELD – Only three more performances remain of the audience-pleasing production, *Butterflies are Free*, presented by the Westfield Community Players (WCP). The comedy, involving a young blind inspiring musician, his overprotective mother, and his kooky actress neighbor, goes into overdrive with hilarious and touching results.

Tickets for March 22, 28, and 29, are \$20 and can be reserved by calling (908) 232-1221. WCP is located at 1000 North Avenue, Westfield.



MIND READING...The Woman's Club of Westfield met for a general meeting recently at the Masonic Lodge in Westfield. Flavian, a professional in energy and information reading was the invited guest. A mind reading game show held the ladies spellbound and in suspense. There was much audience anticipation with accurate mind reading leaving all shocked at the spot-on program. Pictured, left to right, are: Jean Murphy, Flavian, Vivian O'Neill, Jane Walswever, Joan Kirner, Nancy Yingling and Julie Nardone.

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Westfield—For Sale \$1,125,000
 Welcome to this beautiful colonial expanded and remodeled in 2006. Charming front porch invites you to a gourmet kitchen with Subzero and Wolf appliances, built in wine refrigerator and two dishwashers. Kitchen opens into a spacious and sunny family room. In addition to the four bedrooms, third floor offers fifth bedroom option with two additional rooms. Finished rec room with high ceilings complete this lovely home.

122 Virginia Street

Westfield—Under Contract \$549,000
 Great colonial in mint condition. Updates include completely redone kitchen with new stainless steel appliances and granite counters, kitchen tile floor and new furnace 2012. Gleaming hardwood floors in living room/dining room and a powder room complete the first floor. Second floor offers 3 bedrooms with a private bath in master bedroom plus additional hall bath. Finished recreation room. This home is truly move in ready!

101 St. Marks Avenue

Westfield—For Sale \$699,000
 Welcome to this charming custom home in an unbeatable location! Walk to town and train! Endless possibilities encompass this home with an expansive previous doctor's office attached with separate entrances. Office consists of 5 plus rooms and a half bath. Great opportunity to utilize the living space of the previous dr. office as part of the home and add additional bedrooms/office/family room, etc!

147 St. Paul

Westfield—For Sale \$799,000
 Excellent opportunity to own a highly visible corner location professional/apartment building in Westfield. Unique property with eleven parking spaces in your own parking private lot. Amazing location within walking distance to downtown Westfield and to all transportation. Architectural concept plans available upon request.

Contact (908) 264-8843 or [info@davidrealtygroup.com](mailto:info@ davidrealtygroup.com)
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