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# Arts & Entertainment

## Scotch Plains-Fanwood HS Repertory Theatre Teases It Up In Production of *Hairspray*

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

SCOTCH PLAINS — Can an underdog beat a bully and win the title of “Miss Teen Hairspray”? That could be an episode of the mega hit TV show “Glee,” but it’s really a portion of the plot line of the popular Broadway musical *Hairspray*, with music and lyrics by former Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS) student Marc Shaiman.

The fast-paced, lively show ran through last weekend at the Manya Ungar Memorial Auditorium in SPFHS.

The setting is 1962, when hair was teased and teen TV shows like “American Bandstand” were popular. “Pleasantly plump” teenager Tracy Turnblad (Samantha Pearl Tropper) dreams of dancing on TV as she opens the musical with the song, “Good Morning, Baltimore.”

After school, Tracy watches the teenage dance show, “The Corny Collins Show” starring Corny Collins (Matt Zawodniak) with her best friend Penny (Maddie Dillon). She hears of open dance auditions for the show and wants to give it a try although her mother, Edna (Connor Cheney), a super plus-sized mom, doesn’t want her to go because Tracy might be mocked due to her weight.

Tracy’s father, Wilbur (Matt Kempner) gives his blessing, so the teen cuts school and auditions. While

there, she literally bumps into her TV heartthrob, Link Larkin (Nick Poullos) who is dating a girl named Amber Von Tussle, (Julie Busch) a spoiled brat who feels she’s entitled because she’s thin, blonde and a regular on the show.

Amber’s mom, Velma (Julia Babis) a former “Miss Baltimore Crabs” and racist producer of “The Corny Collins Show,” rejects Tracy from the audition because of her size, and sends Little Inez (Krystie Lyn Tomlinson) packing because she is black. The TV show only gives black teens a chance to be onscreen one day a month on what is called “Negro Day.”

At school the next day, Tracy gets detention for skipping class and there she meets Seaweed J. Stubbs (Charles Centinaro II), the son of the host of Negro Day, Motormouth Maybelle (Alyssa Christian). Seaweed teaches Tracy some fancy dance steps, which she uses at the Sophomore Hop where she impresses Corny Collins.

The show’s sponsor, Mr. Spritzer (Sam Zimmerman), talks to Velma about Tracy being a regular part on the show. In the hot number, “Velma’s Revenge,” Amber’s mom threatens to ruin Tracy and fire Corny. A true believer in equality, Tracy inspires everyone to march against the station on the following day, Mother-Daughter Day, to protest the show’s segregation. Before they march, Motormouth Maybelle, who tells us



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
BIG CONSOLATION...Penny Pingleton (Maddie Dillon) and Edna Turnblad (Connor Cheney) try to console Tracy (Samantha Pearl Tropper) in *Hairspray*.

she is “Big, Blonde and Beautiful,” rallies the group at her Record Shop. During the protest, Velma calls the police, fights break out and arrests follow.

A cleverly-staged song, “The Big Dollhouse” opens Act II with all of the gals behind bars. Even Velma is there, but gets sprung by the governor who releases both her and her daughter. Tracy’s dad Wilbur has mortgaged his joke store to bail out the remaining women, all except for Tracy who can’t be released and is in solitary confinement. Back home, in an adorable number where husband and wife sing and dance, “(You’re) Timeless to Me,” Edna and Wilbur reminisce about their past.

Later, Link sneaks into the jail to see Tracy. As those two reunite, Penny’s mother, Prudy (Kayla Spector), ties up her errand daughter but Seaweed rescues her. The four then devise a plan to help integrate the show, while Motormouth shares her remembrances of the struggle for equality in a blockbuster, the soulful number, “I Know Where I’ve Been.”

On the day of the Miss Teenage Hairspray competition, Corny Collins starts the show with a song “It’s Hairspray” that features lots of great dancing choreographed by Gisa Dilorio. The results of the contest are about to be announced, when Tracy takes over the stage, and is joined by her posse of friends. Lots of people get what they want by the end of the show and celebrate with the catchy tune, “You Can’t Stop the Beat.”

Heading the list of a stellar cast is

Samantha Pearl Tropper who belts out song after song and dances up a storm as Tracy. Her “mother” Connor Cheney and father Matt Kempner are superior playing zany characters without making them mere caricatures. Julia Babis’s Velma is a gorgeous mom we love to hate and her daughter, Amber, played by Julie Busch, plays the mean girl to a tee.

Standout Charles Centinaro II dances and sings his way into our hearts. Adorable as his new found girlfriend is Maddie Dillon who turns innocence into passion. When the Dynamites (Dominique Bray, Osazenoriuwa Ebose, and Varshini Narayanan) come out in their red sequined dresses, they look and sound supreme. The role of Motormouth Maybelle is handled well by Alyssa Christian who, on opening night, brought whistles and cheers because of the sincerity of her performance.

Co-directors Matthew Capodicasa and Christine Perrotta, along with veteran choreographer Gisa Dilorio and Jan Allen, music director, have collaborated to bring out a firecracker of a show that, just like the contagious song, “You Can’t Stop the Beat,” keeps toes tapping.

Under the baton of orchestra director Durand Thomas, the sixteen piece band has the audience rocking in their seats.

Thomas Wolfe was wrong when he wrote “you can’t go home again” as composer/lyricist Marc Shaiman proved he could come home through his music that was embraced so joyously in Scotch Plains.



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
COOL CAT...Corny Collins (Matt Zawodniak) and his cotton-candy colored gals are part of *Hairspray*, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School’s musical. Former SPFHS student Marc Shaiman wrote the music and lyrics with Scott Wittman.

## Dance the Night Away to “New Beats” at St. Bart’s

SCOTCH PLAINS — On Saturday, March 26, at 7 p.m. at St. Bartholomew the Apostle auditorium, the Lame Irish Owl Co. will present William Shore and Friends “New Beats” featuring Paul Milan, Hazy Jane, Rhythm of the Knights, and select students from Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Listen to Paul, Will Shore, and Bob Steinfeld of Westfield High School, along with young jazz pianist Nathan Graham of Fanwood and Nick Poullos, a junior at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School (SPFHS.) Nick will accompany Will, Shannon McGovern, and Maddie Dillon, vocalists of the Moonglowers.

Proceeds will benefit St.

Bartholomew’s “Charity Begins at Home” fund and the Greater Newark Youth Orchestra, a tuition-free music program.

William, a senior at SPFHS, started this concert series when he was an eighth-grade student at St. Bartholomew Interparochial School, as a way to give back to the school and the parish community. “I discovered great pleasure in bringing together people of all ages with interesting talents, while providing service to the community,” William said.

In order to continue the production of high-quality programs and to offer talented individuals of all ages the opportunity to showcase their musical abilities, your support would be greatly appreciated.

German author Berthold Auerbach once remarked, “Music washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

Come to the concert and let us wash away the dust. St. Bartholomew the Apostle auditorium is located at 2032 Westfield Avenue. Don’t forget your dancing shoes.

Tickets are \$20 before March 26; general admission at the door is \$25. (BYOB). Light refreshments and door prizes will also be provided.

For information, call (908) 754-7697 or (908) 338-8495.

### Jazz Pianist and Composer Fred Hersch at UC PAC

Sunday, April 3 at 6 p.m.  
Fazioli Piano Loft at  
Union County PAC  
1601 Irving Street – Rahway  
Tickets \$15; call the UC PAC  
box office at (732) 499-8226, or  
visit [ucpac.org](http://ucpac.org) for tickets.



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
CELESTIAL LIGHT...Anthony Hope (Christopher Morrissey) with his disguised love Johanna (Olivia Ryan) are bathed in light along with Tobias Ragg (Matt Lynn) in a recent WHS Theatre Department production of *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.



Susan M. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times  
TRACY WINS...In *Hairspray*, Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Repertory Theatre’s latest musical production, size doesn’t matter as Tracy Turnblad (Samantha Pearl Tropper) wins the “Miss Teen Hairspray” competition after leading a protest to integrate the Corny Collins TV Show in 1962.

## Arts and Craft Show at Armory

WESTFIELD — Once again transformed into a gallery featuring top fine artists and fine crafters, the Westfield Armory will host the 2nd annual Spring Fine Art and Crafts at the Westfield Armory Show on April 9-10. Presented by Rose Squared Productions, Inc., the show runs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Come to the Spring Fine Art and Crafts at the Westfield Armory show to see the creations of talented fine artists and the work of over 120 fine artists, photographers and fine crafters.

The Armory is located at 500 Rahway Ave in Westfield. Visit [rosesquared.com](http://rosesquared.com) for discount coupons, show details and directions.



This hand-colored etching by Karla Gudeon will be available at the Spring Fine Art and Crafts at the Westfield Armory Show.



EAT, DRINK, AND BE MERRY...On March 14, gentlemen gathered at the Kenilworth VFW for a sampling of fine wines, French gourmet cuisine and merriment at the Cranford Chapter of Les Marmitons’ monthly soirée, where a “bon moment” was had by all. Pictured, in foreground, left to right, are: Ric Hum, Bob Rial, Horace Corbin and “Chef de Cuisine” C.J. Reyecraft of Chez Catherine in Westfield.

## ‘The Way to a Man’s Heart Is Through His Stomach’

By HORACE CORBIN  
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

CRANFORD - Folklore has it that housewives in Montreal, in search of a few moments of relaxation, concocted a club for their husbands, where once a month the husbands could engage in wholesome fun – in a manner that keeps them out of mischief. And so it happened in 1977 in Montreal, Les Marmitons was formed in North America modeled after similar chapters in France and England. Today, one of the most vibrant chapters of the dozen or so in North America is right here in New Jersey – Les Marmitons of Cranford.

Les Marmitons hails as a “gastronomic and social club of gentlemen who share a common interest in fine food, wine and the culinary arts.” Guest professional chefs organize and direct the members in creating spectacular meals – which the group consumes on the spot, smoothed with several fine wines to complement each course.

Les Marmitons (chef helpers) may be skilled amateurs in the cuisine preparation, but be assured they are professional in their merriment and partaking – an evening of all smiles.

The March 14 dinner was held at the Kenilworth VFW, the Cranford club’s regular venue due to the fine kitchen and excellent dining hall. Approximately 40 members from 6 to 10 p.m. harkened to the call, mostly from Cranford, Westfield and Union, though several traveled from places such as Holmdel and Sparta. “Chef de Cuisine” C.J. Reyecraft of Chez Catherine in Westfield planned and guided the magnificent affair. Ric Hum of Westfield, as the club’s administrator of the night, recruited his friend, the “renowned Chef C.J.”

For one to really enjoy the evening, a person needs to savor the likes of: Quaffer: Domaine de Montcy Chevigny Red 2007.

Course 1 – “Moules,” Mussels with Tarragon and Pernod accompanied by Chateau La Touche Muscadet 2009.

Course 2 – “Noix de St-Jacques,” Seared Sea Scallops accompanied by Domaine Auvigues Macon Village 2009.

Course 3 – “Steak au Poivre,” Po-

tato Gratin, Caramelized Endive accompanied by Jean Luc Thunevin Presidial Bordeaux 2009.

Course 4 – “Plateau de Fromages,” Cheese Plate accompanied by Domaine de Mourchon Cotes du Rhone 2008.

Course 5 – “Fondant au Chocolat,” Warm Dark Chocolate Molten cake with Vanilla Crème Anglaise accompanied by Casalone Brachette Dolce Mariposa 2009.

Chef C.J. and his helpers explained the gourmet menu and preparations as servings unfolded. One may be tested with pronouncing half of the menu but are delighted consuming it in its entirety. Words can only induce hallucinations of scent, sight and smell, but only the palate can tell you the all – sensational!

In their generosity, ShopRite Liquors of Westfield donated splendid “fromage” and Breadsmith of Cranford donated superb breads. Cool Vines of Westfield purveyed the wines. For such a meal as that night, one can obtain all the ingredients at the above stores. The preparation instructions would include: “Mix with inspiration, sprinkle heavily with merriment and blend in a generous amount of talent.”

At the beginning of the evening, this guest was honored though befuddled by being presented with the Les Marmitons uniform jacket and hat (toque). The attire and behavior are a longstanding tradition. Shortly, the functionality would become apparent.

Bob Rial of Cranford, standing in for club president Richard Dreher, mercifully kept speeches short at the end of the evening. “Chef de Cuisine” C.J. Reyecraft was honored for his contribution to the evening – all glasses were full and held high in the air with praise.

One way you can tell if it was a good dinner, C.J. said, “Just look at the front of your frock.” Looking down, the practicality became evident – My virgin Les Marmitons jacket was no more. I was pleasantly covered with sauces and wine.

Grouped arm on shoulders and one hand free with the glass, we all had a good belly laugh.

## The Music Man Marches Into Scotch Plains April 9 - 10

SCOTCH PLAINS - One of America’s most beloved musicals, *The Music Man*, comes marching into Scotch Plains this April for four performances at the Academy for Performing Arts.

The cast of 34 talented high school performers represent 14 towns in Union County performing in the Academy’s first musical production.

The talented cast is led by Brendan Paternostro as Harold Hill, and Westfield resident Samantha Furst stars as Marian Paroo in the 2 p.m. Saturday, April 9, and 2 p.m. April 10, shows of the Academy for Performing Arts production of *The Music Man*.



The supporting cast includes Allison Gallo as Mrs. Paroo, John Patterson as Mayor Shinn, Jaelyn Weisser as Eulalie Shinn, Taylor Scott as Amaryllis, Claire Meehan as Gracie Shinn, Dan Stein as Winthrop, Camila Bermudez, Leah Killmer, Kyra Morling and Jasmine Taylor as the Pick-a-little Ladies, William Apicella as Charlie, Deanna Carlucci and Kelly Freeman as Zaneeta, Dan Cohen as Tommy Djilas, Aaron McCombs, Ryan Kiel, Andrea Moore, Giulia Viera as the School Board Quartet, and Bria Bacon, Cristina DeCristofaro, Joselyn Delgado, Rebecca English, Keani Esparra,

Kevin Grunder, Julia Hodczac, Katie Lafemina, Emory Munoz, Lorin Tompkins, Yahna Tullis and Christian Zeron as Iowa River Citizens.

The Music Man opens on Thursday, April 7, at 7:30 p.m. Other performances include 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 9, and 2 p.m. Sunday, April 10. The performances will be held at the Black Box Theatre, Academy for Performing Arts, Union County Vocational-Technical Schools at 1776 Raritan Road in Scotch Plains.

All seats are \$10 and tickets can be purchased by visiting the website [apamusican.eventbrite.com](http://apamusican.eventbrite.com).