



On-Campus

Tuesday, May 29, 2007 12:45

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"Chalk" the Musical

by [Sarah Gordon](#)

"Chalk" is a full-scale musical production written and composed primarily by Zach Snow and Todd Nocera. The idea initially came about due to the lack of attendance at the last "Blended" show two years ago. Adam Brown and some teachers got together to talk about the future of the production. They made the decision to hold off on a show for a year in order to change the face of the production into something bigger with much more publicity and more preparation. It was their last attempt at making a student-faculty production work. They decided that changing it to a full-scale musical, instead of a collection of smaller bits, would attract a larger audience because it was more concrete—"this is *the show*." During an incredibly exciting NEASC meeting, and after spending some time looking into some existing musicals, the idea came about to create something themselves. They tried to think of a plot that would incorporate faculty and student roles. What would be better than a play about high school?

Last spring, they decided to perform a pilot production of one musical number to see if it was worth pursuing and putting more work into. They needed to find out whether they actually had the skills and talents necessary to make something worthy of a full-scale production. They wanted to see how it would be received and whether people would be interested.

They first performed for a few theatre arts, math, and biology classes. The students gave feedback, both positive and negative, which helped them realize they had a long way to go, but that the musical definitely had potential. Snow and Nocera spent the majority of the summer working on the script and the musical composition. It was mostly a collaboration between Snow and Nocera, with Snow mainly writing the script and Nocera working on the music, however they each did a little of both. Jeff Lebovici, a student of Snow's and a part of the process since last spring, provided the "student perspective" and even wrote whole scenes.

The plot of the show focuses on the journey of the protagonist, Eric Stahl, a first year teacher, played by Denis Klem, a math teacher. He is excited and idealistic about his first year as a teacher, at least at first. Many teachers have "grand hopes of saving the world and reaching people" that never really follow through. The play follows his first full year of teaching, and addresses his frustration and disappointments when his expectations are not met not only by students but by faculty as well. The theme is the idea that many new teachers enter their first year with idealistic visions that don't exactly translate into actuality in the classroom. It is about the growing and adjusting of one's expectations that is necessary in order to be happy with the reality of high school classrooms. The play is based thematically on Snow's teaching experiences as well as other teachers, but not specifically. Klem and Matt Ford, a guidance counselor, are the two main faculty roles, with twenty roles in total of both student and faculty actors.

Snow said that one of the hardest parts of the whole process was convincing Adam Brown to produce it before he had finished the script. Brown was hesitant to give a slot in the year reserved only for "Chalk," but at the same time Snow was hesitant to write more without a guarantee that it would be produced. Snow also said that he found it very difficult to write a play that he is not embarrassed of, which he can now say he has now done.