



Camille Capers, Stephanie Dorcelly, Essence Cunningham, and Nick Disandro practice the choreography for "You Never Know" in Artistree's production of "Little Shop of Horrors" premiering at the Grange Theatre in South Pomfret on Oct. 19. Courtesy of Artistree

Artistree's 'Little Shop of Horrors' will delight and dismay

This is the premiere production of a new collaborative theatre project

By Sharon Groblicki
Standard Correspondent

Musical Theater just keeps getting better and better at Artistree's Grange Theatre. Their upcoming production of "Little Shop of Horrors" promises to be over the top with its amazing cast, brilliant creative team, and an utterly delightful script with great music just right for the season. And this show is part

new endeavor that mixes local talent with performers from all over the country. In their premier production of the Artistree Collaborative Theatre project, they have

broken ground with a new, exciting initiative that uses talented performers, both seasoned and aspiring.

The acting ensemble in this production come from New York, Chicago, the West Coast, Florida, Maryland, and Woodstock, among

with a polished vivacity that would suggest that they had been doing these roles for months, but they had been rehearsing for only five days.

There is no doubt about it — the audience is in for a Halloween treat of the best kind! This hilarious horror/comedy/rock musical is utterly delightful, even though the plot is gruesome and the leading man and the leading lady meet horrifying ends. In fact,

other places. Individually, they are extraordinary, but collectively, they are absolutely stunning. At a recent rehearsal, they performed the show's beginning scenes

nearly everyone meets a horrifying end. (No, that is not a spoiler! Everyone knows that!) This show is one that people go to see over and over because of its huge ap-

peal. And even though you may have seen it a dozen times, you have never seen a cast as good as this.

The story centers around our hero, Seymour Krelborn (played magnificently by Nick Disandro), a poor young man, an orphan who works in a failing flower shop on Skid Row. After a recent eclipse, Seymour has discovered a strange plant resembling a Venus flytrap and has named it "Audrey II" after his co-worker, Audrey (Talitha McDougall Jones), with whom he is shyly and secretly in love.

The plant does not seem to be thriving, despite Seymour's efforts, but then Seymour is pricked by a rose thorn and the prick draws blood. Suddenly, Audrey II becomes alert and interested and Seymour, ever the nurturer, figures out what Audrey II needs and donates a few drops of blood to the cause.

Audrey II begins to flourish, but the flower shop does not, and Mushnik, the owner of the shop (played quite competently by our own Abbie Levison), decides to close it down until Audrey II, now perky and pretty, begins luring in customers who spend lots of money.

Meanwhile, Audrey I is in an abusive relationship with her boyfriend, Orin (Alex Gossard), who is a dentist. If there is a villain, it is Orin. Soon enough, Audrey falls in love with Seymour.

Primary to the success of this musical is a trio of street



Talitha McDougall Jones (Audrey) waits to rehearse the opening number, "Little Shop of Horrors." Courtesy of Artistree

urchins that act as a Motown Greek Chorus and narrate in an incredible three-part harmony and dance moves that are exotic and enticing as well as familiar. They are Crystal (Stephanie Dorcelly), Chiffon (Camille Capers), and Ronnette (Essence Cunningham). They are the stars of the show! They are in every scene, keeping the action going, and entirely enticing and entertaining with their doo-wop, 60s style rock and roll, and their smooth harmonies and movements associated with Motown sound. Every voice is strong and expressive, each of the three is incredible in the ease of movement, but the three move as one entity looking and sounding as though they have been together for years.

Once again, it has been five days. Credit also goes to Choreographer Idan Bar, who grabs them any time she can, for any moments she can find in the day to choreograph smart, classic moves that both look good and are easy to remember, if not easy to do. Musical director Donna Peeler is right there with Bar to make these girls great!

And then there is the voice of Audrey II, played by Jermaine L. Pearson, also known as Jermaine from Chicago. His is a persona of the type on whom legends are based. He is Associate Pastor at Beneficent Congregational Church where he preaches on Sundays.

See LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS - Page 2C



The leaves of the third Audrey II puppet, created in part by the Puppeting Team: Matthew Robert, Brian Kerrigan, Kylee Ivany, and Jodi Turner. Courtesy of Artistree