



# The High School View

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## Rock opera opens tonight

By Anna Yukevich

Tonight at 7 the high school's Performing Arts Center will explode with music, dance, song and more as students perform a rock opera called Chess in the first of three performances.

The musical is about United States vs. Soviet Union, a clash of two nations in fierce battle on a chess board.

Chess tells the story of two top chess players, an American and Russian, competing in the world championship tournament during the Cold War. Passions and tempers ignite as the Freddie's manager, Florence, falls for the married Anatoly.

With music by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus of ABBA and lyrics by Sir Tim Rice (Evita, The Lion King), Chess is an unusual and ambitious choice for high school students.

"Chess is one of my all-time favorite musicals," said director and theater teacher Kate Murray. "The

music is extraordinary and highly challenging."

There was a consensus among cast members that the score was hard to master, but the reward is well worth the struggle.

Senior Haley Hewson, who plays Florence, described her experience as "extremely time-consuming and difficult in terms of the music. But in the end, I know it's going to be worth it because it always is."

Junior Gage Rancich, who plays Anatoly,



PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE HALL

Junior Gage Rancich, who plays Anatoly, sings his characters' thoughts on the next move in the pivotal chess match.

said, "When the material is harder, everyone puts their utmost effort into making sure they're on top of things."

The set is sparse, but accented with occasional glowing lights and working elevators. A chess board sits upstage in between two large chess pieces. The actors are clad in only black and white.

Both sophomores Stowe Counsell, a member of the run-crew, and Emelia Cappelli, who plays one of the arbiters, agreed that the process is going smoothly. Stowe said, "Working on the play opened my eyes to how smooth a group can work together when they all get along."

"When something funny happens, we have a hard time keeping straight

faces," said Emelia. "We're all so close."

Although it has been hard work, the show has had a positive effect on cast and crew. Haley said, "So much time and energy has been put into this production by so many different people and I'm so grateful for that. Everyone is passionate about this."

"The story is deep and brings to life historical events that impacted our world profoundly," said Ms. Murray. "The material challenges actors and singers with much inner and external conflict, powerful relationships and tumultuous character development. We thought it would be an exceptional learning experience for our students, and the community at large."

Chess, directed by Kate Murray, with musical direction by Janis Wightman, and choreography by Lianna Loughman plays Thursday and Friday, November 17 & 18 at 7 PM with a Sunday, November 20, 4 PM matinee. [Theater is dark Saturday Nov. 19.] Tickets \$10; \$7 students and seniors. PG-13: Some material may not be suitable for all ages.

## Hydroponics course begins

By Eva Faber

For the first time ever, high school students will be able to take a new class called "Hydroponics and Aquaculture," an elective offered by the vocational department. The class, taught by horticulture teacher John Wojtkiello, has been growing tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and greens, which will be used in school lunches later this year.

"We're very excited," said Director of Dining Services Leslie Floyd. One of Ms. Floyd's goals has been to incorporate locally grown food into the school lunch menu and to make meals more visually appealing. "The food from the new program will add flavor, color, and freshness to our lunches," she said.

Hydroponics is a method of agriculture that involves growing plants in liquid nutrient rather than soil. It has become increasingly popular in climates incapable of supporting outdoor food production.

"You can grow food twice as fast as conventional methods and it utilizes less space," said Mr. Wojtkiello of the hydroponic method.

The curriculum this year includes the history of hydroponics,

how to operate and maintain various types of systems, the 16 core fertilizer elements, nutrient deficiencies, and water quality testing. With 17 students currently enrolled, the class has generated a positive student response.

"Hydroponics has helped me grow as a horticulture student by learning something new and progressive," said senior Hunter Thomas.

"A lot of what we do is wait for the plants to grow," said senior Tonya Sequeira.

But soon, students won't have to wait. The new MicroGreen sys-

tem is expected to arrive later this month. In addition to having a growing efficiency 15 times greater than that of soil methods, food from the system can be harvested almost daily. The horticulture program received a federally funded \$5,000 Perkins Grant, made available for vocational and technical schools, to cover the cost of the new system and expand both existing hydroponics systems.

"Hydroponics is one of the growing areas in agriculture production and the sustainable movement," said Jeff Rothwell, director of the vocational department. "If students want to learn about it, we'll continue to make it available to them."



PHOTO BY EVA FABER

Horticulture teacher John Wojtkiello tends to the hydroponics system currently being utilized at regional high school.

## Student interviews for political post

By Katherine Donegan

Regional high junior and class representative Maddie Webster is seeing stars and stripes. On November 8 she participated in a key interview about educational and political dilemmas with two members of the Massachusetts Department of Secondary Education and a past Massachusetts state delegate. This interview was the second step to being accepted to the 2012 United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP), for which Maddie is a semifinalist.

The USSYP was established in 1962, designed to be a yearly opportunity for talented young people who demonstrate leadership abilities to deepen their understanding of America's political processes. Two juniors or seniors who are members of their high school's student government are selected from each state to spend a week in Washington D.C. in March. During this week, students listen to major policy addresses by Senators, Cabinet members, officials of the Departments of State and Defense, and directors of federal agencies. They also participate in a meeting with a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Participants will not only

spend a week immersed in politics, but also receive a \$5,000 undergraduate college scholarship.

This is the first time MVRHS students have applied for the highly competitive, merit-based program. Two weeks ago, Maddie traveled off-Island to take a test to determine whether or not she would be considered further as a semifinalist. This test required knowledge of the structure of the U.S. government, presidential trivia, nationwide politics and the history of Massachusetts.

Maddie's love for politics and history fueled the decision to apply to this program.

"I enjoy making decisions and affecting the lives of the people around me, whether it's my nation, community, or my classmates," she said.

Olsen Houghton, history teacher and Student Government Association faculty advisor said, "It's a marvelous opportunity for both Maddie and our high school. It gives Maddie a chance to experience nationwide politics firsthand and to be around motivated individuals. This also gives the high school a chance to become connected with other schools and to be recognized in our state."

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