



TY TIMES

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The Davitt College official Transition Year newsletter



Davitt College Presents: Grease the Musical

Davitt College Transition Year made it back to the stage after a couple of interrupted years with their interpretation of a musical classic. The TYs of 2022/23 set out to make a statement by taking on Jim Jacobs' and Warren Casey's 1950s classic 'Grease'.

With over 140 potential cast and stage crew to contend with, Grease offered the entire class the opportunity to showcase their talents, no matter their part. From the lead roles of Danny Zuko and Sandy Olsson to the backup Teen Angel singers who shone from on high, every single Transition Year student gave their all to ensure that a sell-out show was put on each night.

Other great reads in this issue:

**GREASE THE MUSICAL
EDITORIAL** 2

**SANDY'S
INTERVIEW** 9

**DANNY'S
INTERVIEW** 12

**BEHIND THE
SCENES** 20

MEDIA SHOTS 21-31



Davitt College Presents: Grease the Musical

BY DAMIEN GALLAGHER (TY TIMES CO-EDITOR)



Hazardous heat waves, historic rainfall, devastating flash floods, wildfires, and persistent drought. Summer of 2022 was a season of extremes. None more extreme than the thought-process behind our TY musical, which swung from Elf to Dirty Dancing to The Greatest Showman! When September finally rolled around and the decision to put Grease on was announced, I was over the moon personally, given that it's one of my favourite musicals of all time (coming a very close second to The Greatest Showman!). The next hurdle to cross was the auditions.

I can still taste the coffee and donuts from that fateful Monday morning in An Sportlann back in early September. Having Cora Duffy on board as our choreographer was a godsend - she had the entire class dancing almost immediately. Watching the group attempt the infamous Hand Jive for the first time was a sight to behold, yet some students impressed straight away (Adam Blake, Sarah Murrihy, Luke Daly-Cusack, Eimear O'Donnell, Alexandro Sheshi, Sorchá Munnelly, Aoibheann O'Donnell, Laura Talberga and Joseph Mandel to name a few).



The production team (Mr. MacDonnacha, Ms. Kearns, Mrs. Kennedy and Mr. Gallagher) made our way to the back room to host the auditions beginning first with the singing auditions - every student had to sing in order to take part in the musical regardless of any preferred role. What followed was probably the most interesting five hours of listening to either Happy Birthday or the Alphabet being sung with varying levels of enthusiasm ranging from the razzmatazz of Rachel Berry from Glee fame to people who would be more at home singing by themselves, in a shed, in the middle of Achill, in the dark. The one audition that has stuck with me since that day was from Ava McMorrow, who eventually landed the role of Betty Rizzo. She performed a Queen song, and the steely nerve to take on such a big song resonated with me. It took us about a day to get through everyone before we moved on to the acting auditions, which gave us an entire new set of "good" problems.

Our first task was figuring out who would take on the T-Bird and Pink Ladies roles (we would be able to select our Danny and Sandy from those). We organised students into groups of five T-Birds and five Pink Ladies and ran the same ten or so lines from Act One, Scene 3 (the beginning of the Summer Nights number), alternating parts each time – it meant that all students had an opportunity to audition for the main roles. Needless to say, our brains were fried by day one but we discovered a group of T-Birds and Pink Ladies that held promise.



Without any prior direction, those who auditioned read their lines in American accents, a contentious matter between both directors, (Ms. Kearns and I) and our producer, Mr. MacDonnacha. Truth be told, the accents weren't working from the get-go, however, after plenty of coaching and practice, the cast nailed their accents and a potential crisis was averted! Having two directors who were able to coach the students in both male and female accents was beneficial, and I'm sure the students can agree that Ms. Kearns' and Mr. Gallagher's American accents were top tier, in fact some may have argued that we should have gone on stage at some point!

We found our Sandy immediately – Alison Carey, who auditioned with such innocence and wholesomeness that we had to give her the role. Betty Rizzo was up for grabs for a week or so as we found it tough to find that one, sarcastic, mean, yet deep-down, caring individual. Ava McMorrow eventually took the role and made it her own. I had initially pinned Laura Talberga as Rizzo, given that she sung Rizzo’s main number ‘There are Worse Things I Could Do’ so well during her audition (a very clever move). Laura’s audition as Frenchy was so good that it seemed as though she were born to play the role (her rendition of All I Need is an Angel actually gave me goosebumps) .



We were left with about six potential Pink Ladies and found it very difficult to assign the roles – their acting and singing was incredible. A spanner was thrown firmly into the works (in a good way!) when Elabeth Delaney showed up to school and, on her first day, politely requested to audition. The role of Marty was awarded to her soon after. We requested that the parts of the remaining Pink Ladies, Jan and Mary-Jo be played in a slightly silly manner, a challenge that Ellen O’Donnell and Emily Jackson took on with gusto. Abi Gillespie, Alisha Vanderkamp, Aoibheann O’Donnell, Sarah Bright, Marissa Keane, and Eimear O’Donnell were nominated as our Pink Ladies understudies. Abi sung the opening number, Grease is the Word, and pulled it off looking like a rock star. Our other understudies acted in various roles on-stage every night, and to be honest, any one of them could have gone on at any time and delivered a professional performance.

The T-Birds' roles were the most time-consuming of the lot. We initially thought we had a Danny Zuko in Alan Nolan following his audition (admittedly, Alan's hair played a large part in this decision) but then had to change our minds when our first Danny tried out Kenickie's role, and then our first Sonny (Luke Cusack) tried out Danny's role during a rehearsal in Ms. Kearns' classroom one Tuesday morning (speaking of Tuesday, all the leads remained back after school every Tuesday for two hours with Ms Kearns and myself, sacrificing their precious free time to rehearse!). Both excelled and we had to make the change, much to Luke's surprise. Alan felt more at ease playing Kenickie, which showed during the live performances. When we asked Bríon Harrigan to take off his hat and he moved his hair off his face, we knew we had found Doody (Jack Ginnelly was selected as Doody's understudy - you may remember him as the coolest guitar player on stage during the Hand Jive). Bríon shone as Doody, however it is important to note that he almost lost his voice during the dress rehearsals and was on strict voice rest until the matinee.



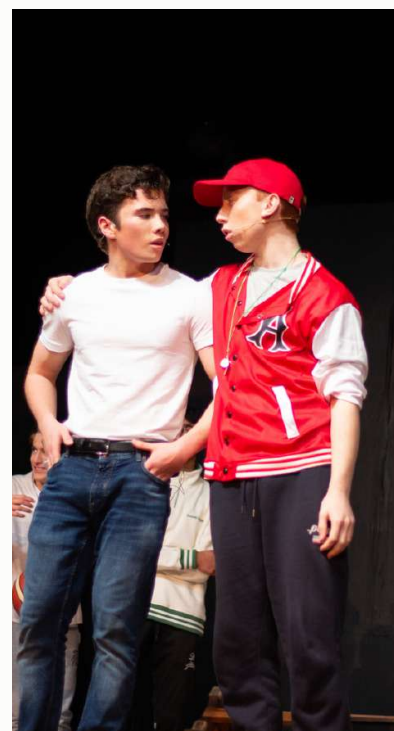
Sinteyahu Killeen was chosen as Sonny after initially being selected as Roger, and played his role to perfection (his understudy was Adam Gaffney, or GAFFNEEEY for those in the know). Another singing audition that has stuck in the memory was from Cian Reddington, who was selected as Roger for his vocal talents. The decision paid off well as he came into his own during rehearsals when his acting ability matched his singing ability. Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the on-stage chemistry that existed between the characters of Roger and Jan! Darragh O'Connor was chosen as his understudy, but you probably remember him as the talented Radio Voice throughout the show.

‘Put on Joe’s glasses for a second’, I said to Diarmuid Swift one Monday morning during dance rehearsals. Diarmuid gave me a funny look and replied ‘Sir, you are NOT making me a nerd, I won’t do it!’. He put on Joseph Mandel’s glasses and, as the sunlight beamed in through the windows of An Sportlann, I knew we had our Eugene. Even though he resisted at first, the second he adopted his ‘Eugene’ accent, we knew he had nailed the part, and we were not disappointed given the howls of laughter his character received each night! Thin Min Type was his understudy and filled in dutifully for Diarmuid during rehearsals at various stages.



Anna Prendergast took on the role of Pattie Simcox, head cheerleader who had an eye for Danny Zuko. She performed her role with excellence despite falling ill on the second night – she soldiered on and had she not informed us that she wasn’t feeling one hundred percent, we would have never noticed! Johnny Casino was played by Christopher Lennon, who was given the freedom to come up with his own lines each night. The majority of Johnny Casino’s lines were delivered ad lib during each performance! His band was made up of musical pros Jack Ginnelly and Aaron Lunn. Joseph Blowick flawlessly played Vince Fontaine, his understudy was Mark McVann, who also played one of the nerds in the background. Tianha Johnson played the role of Vi, the waitress from the Teen Angel scene, and had a very caring exchange with Frenchy – she also played a schoolgirl in other scenes!

The Coach of Rydel High (name changed to Coach MacFlynn) was a very important role as it added to the comedic value of the entire play. Oran McDonald slotted into the role perfectly and took on every single piece of advice and direction we gave him, at one point on closing night when we changed some lines during Danny Zuko’s ‘Try-Out’ scene, he carried on like a trooper and delivered an outstanding performance. His understudy was Conor Loftus, who also played a tough Scorpion, and was a member of the backstage crew – Conor has to be commended for the work he put in backstage and onstage. Sebastian Gregorczyk played the part of Ernie, the crazy wrestler who terrified Danny Zuko. Seb even scared some members of the audience when he turned to them and growled fiercely.





The rest of Rydell High's faculty was made up of Principal McGee, played by Mary McTigue, who performed so well that she could land a starring role as a school principal in the years to come. There were several moments backstage during live performances where I flinched or jumped when she yelled at students onstage, and in the audience! Her number two, Blanche, played by Maeve Kelly, was so funny that Ms. Hughes had to give out to me backstage as I was laughing too much ... every night of the show!

Sean Cosgrove was another member of the cast whose part was at stake due to illness. He performed the iconic Teen Angel song superbly each night, despite having a sore throat! His backup singers who flew in from on high were Dominick Dunne (understudy to Kenickie) and Aaron Flannery (also played the part of the tough basketball Jock who took it to Danny Zuko).



Joseph Mandel almost became a T-Bird but his bad side got the better of the him in the end and he adjusted himself to the role of Leo, the leader of the Scorpions, flanked by Conor Loftus, Han Lin Xu, and Keelan O'Donnell. Even though Joe played a bad guy, his dancing ability was incredible, matched by Sarah Murrihy, who played Cha-Cha DeGregorio. Sarah was also the victim of bad luck as she feared she had broken one of her toes the week before opening night! Sarah is a warrior and prevailed despite being in some pain, she got better and better each night. Sarah's understudy was Sorchia Munnelly, who filled in for Sarah when she was unable to dance during rehearsals.

When we began our rehearsals back in September, we were justifiably concerned (the students were afraid to hold hands at the first dance audition!), and faced some strong obstacles that set us back a number of weeks. We had issues with the script (which had be rewritten with scenes added, and bound by our production team), props (our fantastic Woodwork and Art departments had to make the Greased Lightning car from scratch the weekend before opening night), and costumes (some simply did not arrive on time). In fact, the dress rehearsal on the Sunday before the show was a complete disaster! In the face of adversity, this class of Transition Year students stood up and were counted. They remained back after school, rehearsed at home, they even came in over midterm with the production team to run scenes! The students were so convincing in their roles that both Ms. Kearns and I referred to them as their character names instead of their actual names!

The first matinee performance was incredible. One may be forgiven for thinking it was a once-off, however they repeated their high standards during the second matinee. We then had a new fear - had they peaked too soon? That question was answered on Wednesday night, Thursday night, and Friday night as the entire ensemble worked together to deliver award-winning performances every single night, from the stars of the show to the crew working tirelessly backstage, every student gave their all and ensured that Grease 2022 was up there with the best musicals that Davitt College has ever put on.



TY Insight Series

Interviewing

SANDRA D

By Sorchia Murphy & Rebecca Moran

Our team of interviewers caught up with Alison Carey, AKA Sandy.



Alison steps into the room and flings her scarf around her neck, before taking a seat next to the interview panel.

I've never been so excited in my life, I'm ecstatic. So how are you all doing?

Alison snuffles before allowing us to ask our first question.

Amazing, thank you. Please state your name and your character.

Oh, not occupation? No, no? That's okay. So my name is Alison Rose Leah Carey and I played Sandra D, also known as Sandy.

(Snuffles again with mock sadness).

Do you like your character?

I really enjoyed my character, I thought I related to her quite a bit, especially when she turned bad because I'm a rebel so, yeah I really related to her in that way. And I think that blondes have more fun so I really enjoyed playing her.

Did you find it difficult to play Sandy?

I was quite scared at first, when I saw my name, I did kind of poop a brick but like I did read the list from the bottom up because I thought I'd just be a cheerleader, but it was a bit of a jump scare. I was in shock when I found out, I remember coming back to this classroom actually afterwards and Henry told me I was going to have to shift Alan, I didn't really appreciate that, not going to lie, but I got over it and then as the weeks went on I just really got into it and really started to enjoy it.

Thank you for that information.

No problem.

Did you have a favourite scene in the musical, if so which one?

God, so many to choose from. I did enjoy the last scene, 'You're the One that I Want', I thought that was quite a fun scene, we had a dance, a song. What other scenes? I did enjoy..... I feel under pressure. I did enjoy the 'Summer Lovin' scene, but ya I would say 'You're the One that I Want' was my favourite.

What was your reaction when you got the part?

I did go into a bit of shock, but as I said after the weeks went on I got used to the idea of it and started to really enjoy it and really get into the character. *(snuffles)*

Did you think you would get the part of Sandy?

Actually I was thinking if I did get a character to play it would have been Rizzo because she's such a rebel like I wouldn't have minded Rizzo because her songs in it are fun. But I wasn't really hoping for any particular character but I was hoping for a character.

Humble.

Thank you.

Do you have a favourite song?

I think 'You're the One that I Want' that was fun. Actually, the key was quite high so I did struggle a bit. Maybe..... does it have to be a song that I sang?

Well your favourite one to perform.

Oooo to perform. Yeah 'You're the One that I Want.'

Do you have a favourite quote?

Favourite quote? That I said? Oh, 'Tell me about it, stud' I like that one.

Would you have liked to change anything?

Maybe like more time on stage beforehand but nothing really.

Mr. Gallagher enters the room to make a short announcement: 'Mr Gallagher is the best', before exiting promptly.

Alison continues

He's my hero!

Did you find it hard to come down from the high after the musical?

Yes, I am actually quite sick at the moment (*coughs*). It's because you know coming down from the high and a stress filled week, I think we're all just on a high and now it's just downhill. We're getting through it though, we're trying to keep the magic of Grease alive, we're getting a prom at the end of the year. Mr Gallagher, if you see this, make it happen! And we're going to the cinema to watch it too.

Have you gained more confidence since doing the musical?

I think so, I think we had to talk to a lot of different people when we were doing the musical so I think, we made a lot of new friends, I think going on stage, singing my songs and doing the dances in front of the 700 people each night was a great boost to my confidence.

Do you feel you've made new friendships/relationships with people you didn't think you would?

(*Starts to smile*) Yes as I have said I made new friends, talked to more people like I didn't even know Luke existed until the musical so make sure you put that in.

Lastly, but certainly not least, what was your favourite memory from doing the musical?

I think like the first musical night, on the Wednesday night. It was so much fun, I really enjoyed going to Lana that day too I thought it was lush, really enjoyed the food in Lana. I enjoyed doing everyone's makeup (*Alison winks and giggles at this point implying an inside joke of some manner*). I enjoyed dapping up everyone, that was really fun. No I think my favourite memory was, to be honest, the first few weeks just reading through the script, that was not really a vibe but we needed to go through that process.

I just want to say thank you so much for giving us your time and honest opinions.

Thank you for having me.

Well folks wasn't that eventful? Thanks again to Alison for the great insight into everything about 'Grease The Musical'.

Tell me about it,
STUD



TY Insight Series

Zuker

By SORCHA MURPHY &
REBECCA MORAN

We chatted with Luke Cusack also known as 'Danny Zuko'. We had a few questions regarding the instant success hit, 'Grease the Musical' for one of the leading men.



What is your name?

Luke Cusack.

Tell us about the experience of bringing the musical to life.

It was a good experience. It was entertaining to do. I talked to people I wouldn't talk to and made new friends. It was good craic.

What was the audition process like?

(Long yawn) It was fun to do but nerve-wracking.

What did the process entail?

We got given a script with a scene with all the T-birds and acted as all the characters.

Were you happy with your role?

I was happy with the part I first had, which was Sonny, so I didn't have to sing but was also happy when I got Danny.

What was your favourite song?

Probably 'You're the One that I Want' or 'Summer Lovin' because they were fun to do.

Favourite dance?

Hand Jive, because it was the best one to do, most enjoyable.

Did the leads work well together?

(Joking) Ya I thought so, although Alison was a bit moody sometimes.

What was the biggest challenge you had to face?

Probably when we first started singing in front of everyone.

Do you feel like you have changed since doing the musical?

Yes, I am a lot more confident.

What was the director like to work with?

Which one? All of them? Mr. G and Ms. Kearns were good. Mr. MacD tried to change a lot of things so Cora, our choreographer, had to protect her dances.

What do you think your character would have done after graduation?

Emm... get hitched with Sandy. (Starts whistling 'we go together')

And finally, what is your favourite memory from the musical?

When me and Joseph spent an hour trying to do our scene but kept laughing to the point where Mr. G nearly cried.





TY Insight Series

SONNY O'Toole

By SORCHA MURPHY &
REBECCA MORAN

Our team of interviewers caught up with Sintayehu Kileen, otherwise known as Mr. O'Toole.



Full name and name of character?

My name is Sintayehu Kileen and I played the character Sonny.

Did you like your character?

Yes I did like my character Sonny because he is very full of himself and always very flashy and looking good.

What was your reaction when you found out you got the part?

I was Roger at first but I changed to Sonny. I was very shocked and didn't think I would get the part.

What was your favourite song?

Greased lighting.

How was the auditioning process?

It was good fun you were with your friends, you know, messing around.

Did all the leads work well together?

Yes.

Have you gained confidence within yourself since doing the musical?

A lot yes.

What was your favourite memory from the musical?

Doing the flash mob in Supervalu.





TY Insight Series

Jan

By Sorcha Murphy & Rebecca Moran

We managed to snag Jan (or Janelle, or Janice, or January) for five minutes to discuss her part in the musical.



What is your name and who did you play in the musical?

Ellen O'Donnell and I played Jan. Her full name is unknown, but you can take her as a Janelle, a Janice, or a January. We don't discriminate any name on this.

Can you please tell us a small bit about your character?

Emm, she loves food. She's just a stunning, silly girl all together. She's a little goofy. She contributed so much to the musical and I believe she added so much joy.

Did you do anything to make this character your own?

I bought lollipops with my own money. I got a €3 skirt in the charity shop, shoutout to Irish Cancer Society.

Did you have a favorite scene to perform?

Yes, I do, I love the pajama scene. I love doing that, I love doing Sandra D. (*starts singing*) Elvis, Elvis, let me be. Keep that pelvis far from me.

Did you have a favourite song?

I liked listening to 'Hopelessly Devoted,' 'Sandy,' 'Sandra D' and 'There Are Worse Things I Could Do'. So, I liked a few of them.

What was your reaction when you got the role of Jan?

I actually didn't think I was going to get anything. I thought I was going to be a dancer and I actually would have preferred that, but it was a huge jump scare.

How did it feel to be one of the pink ladies?

It felt good. It was amazing and such a lovely family group. Overall, a great experience.

Have you made any new friendships with the rest of the cast?

I made friendships because I was talking to loads of new people, but I did also have friendships beforehand because I am actually a sociable person.

Do you have a favourite memory from the musical?

I just liked it all to be honest, I liked the nights, especially Wednesday and Friday. I didn't like Thursday because there was a lot of pressure because they were filming me.





TY Insight Series

Roger

By SORCHA MURPHY &
REBECCA MORAN

We caught up with Butts (Roger) to uncover his deepest and darkest secrets about Grease: The Musical



Name & Character

Cian Kevin Luke Reddington, Roger/Butts.

Can you describe your experience of making the musical?

Life changing, just fun!

What was the audition process like?

That was the intimidating part. Mr McDonnacha staring you down, that was scary.

A: Do you like your character?

Yeah. I don't know, I couldn't imagine anyone else doing it. Sintayehu was my character first.

A: Did you find it difficult to embody the character of Roger?

No.

What was your favourite song from the musical?

Grease Lightning.

Do you think you have made new friendships and bonds from the musical?

Yeah. Relationships.

Have you gained confidence since doing the musical?

Yeah, a lot.

Did all the leads work well together?

Yeah. I wasn't expecting it to but it actually did.

What was the directing crew like to work with?

Mr Gallagher, he was very good. Ms. Kearns was very good too. Mr Gallagher had very good ideas. I didn't always agree with Mr McDonnacha because I didn't like some of his ideas. He didn't have much faith in our American accents.

Do you have a favourite quote?

'I'm King of the Mooners'.

Was it difficult to come down off the high after the musical?

I still want to do it. I'd do it tomorrow if we were told to.

What was the biggest challenge you had to face?

The chicken dance. I hated doing that so much.

What do you think your character would have done after he graduated from high school?

He's a bit of an idiot. I don't think he would have graduated. He's a bit stupid.

What is your favourite memory from the musical?

There's so many. Afterwards on the final night when everyone was in there singing Can't Take My Eyes Off of You. And then Brion looks at me and points and I was like aww. So heart-warming. Runner-up memory was getting my makeup done. The whole thing in general.



TY Insight Series

Behind the Scenes

By Sorchá Murphy & Rebecca Moran

We persuaded Iona Concannon O'Donnell and Darragh Kilcoyne to give us some brief words on their experiences backstage.



Iona was part of the set design crew led by Ms. Hughes, which also included Daniel Adamus, Einín Casby Noonan, Anoushka Dias, Sarah Dunne, Dara Griffiths, Grace McHugh, and Joshua McGuinness-Howley.

What was your name and what role did you play?

My name is Iona Concannon McDonnell, and my role was a set painter and so I helped the art team and Ms. Hughes paint all the sets for the musical to make it look stunning.

Did you feel pressure?

For some of the things, yes.

Did you have any injuries or accidents?

The boards fell on Dara's head, and... I think that's about it.

Do you see this as a future career?

No. Actually, it would be cool-making sets, but I don't think I would.

Did you get along with the other painters?

Yes, I did. That was the only good part.

Did you enjoy the experience?

It was so life changing. It was so much fun, and I will cherish this memory of the musical forever (*slightly sarcastic*).

Darragh was part of the backstage crew, led by Mr. Cunningham, which also included Jason Mullen, Dylan Carroll, Colm Lynch, Michael Reilly, Conor Loftus, Rory Lowe-Walsh, Ryan Fadden, Kyle Walsh McManamon, Martin Graven, Thomas Lynch, Adam Gaffney, & Darragh Needham

Please state your name and your role.

Darragh Kilcoyne and backstage.

Did you feel any pressure when moving the stage or making it?

Ah, not really. A bit on the night but that's it.

Were there any injuries within the crew?

Don't think so.

Do you see this as a future career?

Not really.

Did you get along with everyone in the crew?

Ah, ya. They were sound.

Finally, did you enjoy the experience?

Ya.

Special thanks to our outstanding interviewers, Sorchá Murphy and Rebecca Moran, who undertook the tough task of asking the hard-hitting questions and getting the most out of our interviewees!



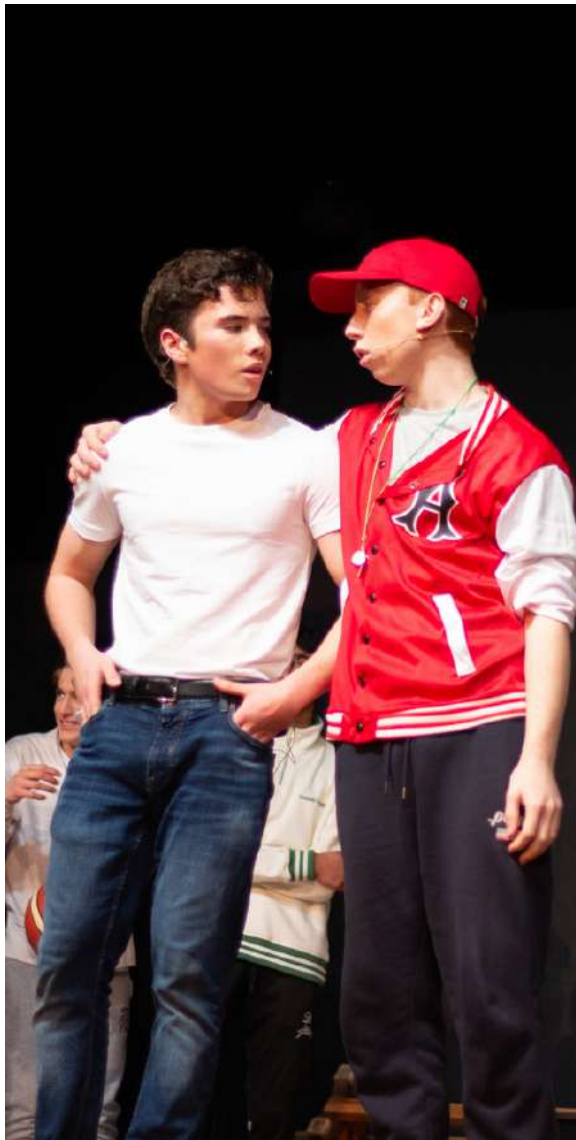
























CHRISTMAS AT DAVITT

**BY GRACE, SORCHA, IONA, ANNA, ANOUSHKA,
TREASA, SARAH, MARISSA, MARY, CONOR, EÍNIN, JOSHUA & NICOLE
FROM 4A**

'Twas the week before Christmas and all through the
school,
Not a student was frowning, not even a fool.

The lights were strung by Anna with cheer,
In the hope That Anoushka had brought the reindeer.

The children were snuggled in their warm winter threads,
While visions of the 21st danced in their heads.

The halls were adorned with Christmas glee,
As the lights shone bright from the fine festive tree.

We transformed the school into a beautiful sight,
Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

**Merry
Christmas!**

THANK YOU FOR READING