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TY TIMES: MUSICAL EDITION

The Davitt College Official Transition Year Newspaper



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I Wanna Rock!

The Transition Year students of 2025 turned up the volume at Davitt College with their electrifying production of Rock of Ages!

With over 120 students involved both on stage and behind the scenes, the production was a true whole-school effort. Audiences were transported to the iconic Bourbon Room on the Sunset Strip, where unforgettable characters such as the larger-than-life Lonny, dreamers Drew and Sherrie, and the outrageous Stacey Jaxx brought the story roaring to life. From lighting and sound to costumes, set design, and band, every student played a vital role in making the production a standout success. With its infectious energy, humour, and heart, Rock of Ages proved to be a show to remember — loud, proud, and unapologetically brilliant.

Bringing the Sunset Strip to Life

BY VICTORIA DENST & NATASHA CONNOLLY

As members of Ms. Hughes' art crew, we played a key role in shaping the visual world of this year's Davitt College musical, *Rock of Ages*. From bold colours and detailed textures to recycled props and graffiti-style finishes, we were excited to bring the 1980s Sunset Strip to life on stage. The theme of the show made the experience especially enjoyable, as it allowed us to be creative, experiment with new materials, and see our work showcased in a live production.

Victoria

I was really excited to paint the set for this year's musical, as art is one of my main interests. I began by creating protest signs for the show, decorating them with rock-themed designs and slogans such as 'Save the Strip'. This was one of the easier tasks and gave me a good starting point before moving on to the main set.

I then worked on painting the bricks in the bathroom area, which was quite challenging as each brick had to be painted individually and in detail. Thankfully, I had help from other members of the art crew. I also painted wooden panels around much of the set to suit the overall theme – a job that took several days due to the level of detail required. The Mayor's office was more straightforward, involving painting a window view and a few upper panels, and was one of the most enjoyable parts of the process.

One of my favourite projects was recycling an old car from a previous musical, *Grease*, and transforming it into a bright red 80s-style Mustang. Working alongside Surnai, I repainted the wheels, created a 'Rock of Ages' number plate, and added detailed finishes to the car. I also added smaller details around the set, such as spray-painted graffiti on the bathroom door and painted arches. Being part of the art crew was a great experience – I met new people, tried new techniques, and felt proud seeing how successful the finished set was. I would definitely do it again.





Natasha

I was very excited to work on the set for this year's musical, as I really enjoy all aspects of art. I began by helping to recycle the jukebox from a previous musical. This was challenging at first, as Elizabeth and I used a plaster material normally used for casts — something we had never worked with before. Once we got the hang of it, we found it worked like clay, although it was quite messy and dried quickly when water was added. We also used paper mâché to create 3D details, making the jukebox look more realistic, before painting it in an 80s style using browns and bright colours such as green, yellow, and pink.

After finishing the jukebox, I worked on the Bourbon Room sign that hung above the stage. This involved painting it blank, spray-painting it red, and adding a white outline to give the effect of a neon light. I was really happy with how it turned out. I also helped paint graffiti onto the bathroom wall, aiming for a dingy, gritty 80s look. When Mr. Cunningham built the bathroom stall, we painted it grey, although it had to be repainted in a darker shade after the stage lights made it appear too bright.

Overall, I think the stage looked fantastic, especially because of the attention to detail throughout. Being part of the art crew was great fun, allowed me to do what I love, and helped me discover new skills while working as part of a team.



Turning Up the Volume on the Sunset Strip

BY DAMIEN GALLAGHER (TY TIMES CO-EDITOR)



Lights, curtain, action! This edition of the TY Times is dedicated to the electrifying journey of our recent production of Rock of Ages. From the first auditions where students dared to chase big dreams on the Sunset Strip, to the high-octane rehearsals that often felt louder than the Bourbon Room itself, this musical has been a rock-out experience from start to finish.

Our cast and crew worked relentlessly to prove that this show was more than just an 80s throwback – it was a full-scale celebration of talent, teamwork, and courage. Whether it was nailing demanding choreography, belting out iconic anthems, transforming into bold, unforgettable characters, or mastering the technical magic behind the scenes, everyone played their part. By the time the lights went down on the final night, the energy in the room said it all – this was our moment, and we owned it.

In this issue, we'll take you behind the scenes of every power chord and plot twist, from the early rehearsal nerves to the show-stopping performances that had audiences on their feet. We hope you enjoy reliving the journey as much as we did – because some nights, some shows, and some memories are simply rock solid.



THE AUDITIONS

We began the auditions back in April 2025. The task was very much one of divide and conquer: the production team split the current Third Years into three groups so that Mr. Mac Donnacha, Ms. Kennedy, and Mr. Gallagher (yours truly) could get through the entire year group in a single day. We were also keen to keep disruption to their Junior Cycle studies to an absolute minimum.

We continued our long and proud tradition of asking students to sing Happy Birthday. As happens every year, some students struggled with the lyrics, but we got there in the end. Students were also given the option to sing their own song, and, interestingly, those who took this route all landed roles in the show – something for next year's auditionees to chew on!

Before we head into auditions, the production team usually draws up a shortlist of potential musicals. I was toying with the idea of Frozen, while others – namely Mr. Mac D – were hoping for a production of Elf! There was clearly a Christmas theme emerging. That was until the students began to influence our thinking. A definite rock vibe was in the air, judging by some of the auditionees. Honestly, when I spotted Myles Girling-Moore's hair, Rock of Ages moved swiftly from the 'maybe' pile to the 'hell yes, we're doing this show' pile.

Two auditions stood out for me. First was Jennis Sarish (who would later go on to play Justice Charlier), who belted out a rendition of Happy Birthday that genuinely gave me goosebumps – this girl could sing the phonebook. The second audition that stuck with me was Oisín Toland (pictured below).



Oisín's might be my favourite audition of all time because I was able to see his potential before he did. He began with a fairly average Happy Birthday until I asked him if he had any singing experience. 'I sang at a Foróige night, country-style', was his response. At this point my ears perked up, coming from a family of country & western singers, and having had my own pub debut at the age of 8 singing a country song from an old Clint Eastwood movie. 'Oisín', I said, 'sing me a country song'. When he next opened his mouth, his persona completely changed. There was a tangible confidence in the air and I knew we had found a diamond. It wasn't until the callbacks when we realised we had a slightly different version of Stacey Jaxx!

CALLBACKS

August began with the chosen 79 – callbacks had officially begun. We scheduled a full day of auditions across various rooms around the school and, this time, students arrived prepared. Before the summer break, we had informed them that the musical would be *Rock of Ages* (some students were visibly concerned by this choice – a reaction we won't hold against them, given that they had not yet been properly exposed to the incredible music of the 80s). We also gave them a song to learn: *More Than Words*. An easy task, some might say – until it became clear that the majority of the boys had not learned the song and had no real intention of being on stage. (This, of course, changed midway through rehearsals, as it so often does.)



A minor crisis quickly emerged: we had only about four potential male leads. This led to some creative problem-solving, including changing the gender of several roles – Hertz became Hilda, Dennis became Denise, and so on. Crisis averted ... briefly.

Our next challenge was an entirely different one – the girls were outstanding. We had 38 girls who scored exceptionally high in both singing and acting, yet the show only required around eight female leads. Suffice it to say, we were not short of understudies for this production!

By the end of the first round of callbacks, we had settled on our Sherrie (Daisy Finnerty), Lonny (Myles Girling-Moore), Denise (Isabella Kearney), and Franz (Conor McDonagh). Several roles were still up for grabs and, in true Davitt College tradition, we held a full sing-and-act-off in the school canteen. The standard was so high that at one point Hertz became Hilda, then Hertz again ... and then Hilda once more.

Students were placed into groups to act out scenes before singing the key song for their character. Eventually, we finalised our cast: Kayla Gibbons secured the role of Hilda after strong competition from Grace Needham; Isabelle McHugh was cast as Regina; Ava Cunningham became the Mayor; Iosac Butler took on the role of Ja'Keith Gill; Conn Fitzgerald was Joey Primo; Abigail Lane, Rebeka Venclovaite, and Lilianna Nowacka became the Waitresses; Rhiannon Brosnan was cast as Constance Sack; Brian Mahlangu became the Sleazy Record Producer (and approximately four other roles); Sophia Birdthistle took on the Robber and Number One Protester; and Mom and Dad were played by Clodagh Keane and Brady Girling-Moore.

We had a show.



THE STAGE

This year's stage was quite different to last year's more complex creation. With only two minor scene changes – the Mayor's office and the bathroom – we were able to make full use of lighting to define each setting. This approach gave the Art and Woodwork Departments, led by Ms. Hughes and Mr. Cunningham, the time and space to focus on one main set piece, and the results were outstanding. At times, it genuinely felt as though we had stepped back in time into a 1980s bar on the Los Angeles Strip.

REHEARSALS

Room 48U (my classroom) took centre stage once again as we gathered to rehearse with a cast of 28 students, including understudies, for between four and six hours each week. Thanks to the new government book scheme initiative, our library was in full use as a distribution centre, which meant we had no option to rehearse elsewhere. We did attempt the canteen on a couple of occasions; however, the hourly bell ensured that hundreds of

eager students regularly walked past our temporary stage. Is it too much to ask for a dedicated auditorium?!

Nonetheless, we pressed on and, for the second year running, staged a performance for the school's official Open Night – this time transporting prospective Davitt College students back to the 1980s as our cast performed two scenes. What was wonderful to witness was how noticeably the cast improved and grew in confidence with every passing rehearsal.

We showcased Sherrie's introduction, complete with Mum and Dad singing Sister Christian (with Mr. Gallagher 'playing the piano' on his iPad), followed by the introduction of Hilda and Franz. We also encouraged Myles to fully embrace Lonny's fourth-wall-breaking role, complete with improvised humour and some brilliant interactions with the audience. By the following week, we were finally able to make full use of the library and its larger rehearsal space. Roll on November!



OPENING NIGHT

We always say that the better the dress rehearsal, the worse the show. This year's dress rehearsal may well have been the worst of all time. We stayed until close to 9.00 pm and still hadn't finished Act One. It was around this point that I genuinely began to wonder whether we might have been better off staging a puppet show.

Each year, we tell students that a bad dress rehearsal is nothing to worry about – usually as a motivational tactic – but this year it was truly, truly bad. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong. Lines were forgotten, songs went astray, entrances were missed, and even the lighting engineer was having a nightmare. The matinees on Tuesday and Wednesday did little to calm our nerves; in fact, we had to cut Tuesday's performance short, although that was more to do with school bus timings than the show itself. Suddenly, Wednesday had arrived – Opening Night.



There comes a time when working with a group of young people where things simply click. It's a shift in the atmosphere, a changing of the winds, when effort turns into momentum and belief replaces doubt. From the moment the lights went up on Opening Night, I could feel it. Stage managers Ms. Hughes and Mr. Cunningham could feel it side stage. Mr. Mac Donnacha could feel it from the audience. Even two of Lonny's scarves could feel it backstage.

Everything clicked.

Truth be told, it was probably the best Opening Night I have witnessed - a standing ovation from the crowd proved that! Until now, that honour belonged to Mamma Mia two years ago – but this cast topped it. Every line landed, every note rang true, and every dance move found its place. I was visibly delighted backstage as I conducted the chorus, and it wasn't just the cast on stage who were on fire – the choir, led by Ms. Kennedy, absolutely soared.

Our only issue was keeping on eye on our Drew, who had a habit of wandering around backstage, liable to turn up anywhere at any moment. In fact, the main question being asked on the production team's headset was 'does anyone have eyes on Ben?'



TOM CRUISE

Yes – we managed to write Tom Cruise into our musical. Towards the end of the show, Lonny references the film version and casually name-drops Tom Cruise, among others. (If you look closely, you'll spot Lonny partying with various rock stars in the programme – and perhaps even in this very issue!)

The film version of *Rock of Ages* differs significantly from the stage production – the former was staged by Davitt College over ten years ago, produced by Mr. Nevin. In the film, the Mayor plays a far more prominent role and his wife becomes the main villain. In contrast, the stage version centres on German developers attempting to buy up the Los Angeles Strip, including the iconic Bourbon Room.

One of the great strengths of the stage version is the freedom it gives its characters to take creative liberties. Lonny, in particular, is encouraged to break the fourth wall and interact directly with the audience – hence his brief Tom Cruise moment. We also wrote in additional lines that allowed other cast members the same freedom, many of which were cleverly devised by the students themselves. One of my favourite additions was Drew's literal lightbulb moment, with Lonny holding up a battery-operated lightbulb – a prop that took me far longer to find on Amazon than I care to admit.

CLOSING NIGHT

With such an incredible Opening Night, it was only natural that Thursday night dipped slightly – a solid 90% show. That didn't stop the buzz, however. Word spread quickly after Wednesday's performance with audiences buying tickets for both nights, and we ultimately had to turn people away. We threw down the gauntlet to the Transition Year group of 2025: could they raise the bar and bring the house down? Their response was a ridiculous display of talent.

This year's Closing Night was the best performance of any show I have been involved in. Everything clicked – even Franz's trousers came off on time to reveal his 80s workout gear and kick-start the song. No small victory.

Stacee Jaxx became a rock god before our very eyes, and I genuinely don't think Oisín Toland will ever come down from that high – nor should he. Daisy Finnerty sang like an angel as Sherrie; we added *Alone by Heart* and *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now* purely because we knew she could absolutely belt them out, and she delivered every single night. Her acting showed a level of maturity far beyond her years. Our Drew, played by Ben O'Brien, improved with every performance – by Closing Night, he was nothing short of majestic.

Jennis Sarish, Isabella Kearney, and Myles Girling-Moore were magnificent throughout; not once did I worry about a line, a note, or a moment when they were on stage. Our Germans, Conor McDonagh and Kayla Gibbons, were simply wunderbar, with Conor stealing the show night after night. Regina went from strength to strength and was effortlessly commanding, owning every moment she was on stage. Even the so-called “minor” roles were exceptional, with many students stepping seamlessly into additional parts and proving the depth of talent within this cast.

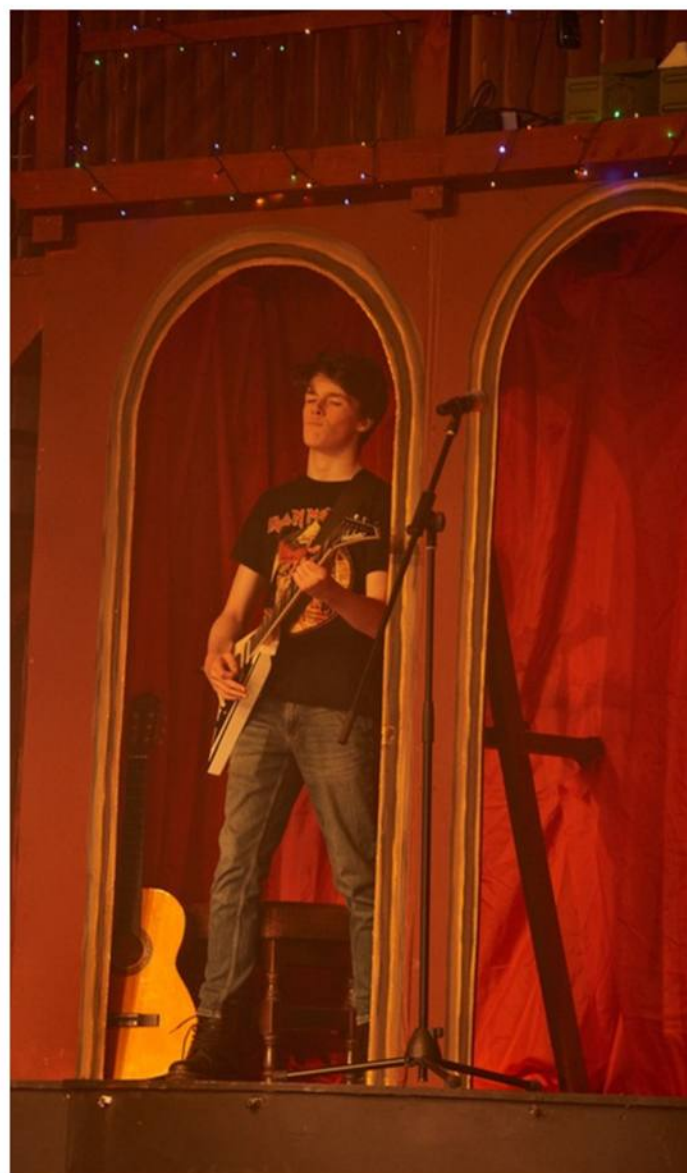
The range of talent across the ensemble was remarkable, with students stepping into multiple roles, embracing every opportunity, and proving that there were no small parts in this production.

We were incredibly fortunate to have such a strong support system behind the scenes with management, teachers and other staff generously giving their time to manage backstage operations, while students across Davitt College brought their talents in makeup, face painting, and hairdressing. Special thanks must go to Ellen Shaw, Alisha Gibbons, Chloe McDonnell, Gabrielle Kilcourse, Zara Cunningham, and Sarah Gannon for their invaluable work in the dressing room. The pit singers – made up of students from across all year groups in Davitt College – were outstanding, under the expert leadership of Ms. Kennedy, whose brilliance shone throughout.

This production thrived because of the unwavering support of the Davitt College student body. I could end with a cheesy pun such as Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now, but instead I'll say this: Every thorn has its rose, [obligatory inside joke], hold on to that feeling, and – of course – don't stop believing, because Davitt College don't put on **good** shows, we put on **great** shows!







TY Insight Series

Oh Sherrie, I'm in love!

SHERRIE

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

Somewhere between Small Town Girl and full-blown rock star, Daisy took a moment to reflect on her Rock of Ages journey.



Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your background in musical theatre?

I'm Daisy and I'm sixteen years old. When I was six, my mum started me in a drama club in Galway and, ever since, I've loved everything to do with musical theatre. I've grown up singing my whole life, as my mum is a trained singer. I was absolutely delighted to find out that I got the lead role of Sherrie — it was the most amazing experience of my life.

Did you expect to get a lead role in this production?

I was hoping to get some sort of role in the musical, but never in a million years did I think it would be the lead. I was completely over the moon when I found out.

What was it like to perform in front of a live audience?

With the nerves came the excitement, and by showtime I felt ready because of all the hard work we had put in during rehearsals. It was my first ever public performance, and my family were there as well — which, funnily enough, actually made me less nervous.

What did you find most challenging during your performance?

There were lots of challenges, like learning all my lines and performing the song *Harden My Heart*, which I heard was a fan favourite but definitely wasn't my favourite. I also found the dancing quite challenging, as I'd never taken dance lessons before — it was very full-on.

If you were to play another character, who would you have liked to be?

That's a really tough question, but if I had to

choose, I would have loved to be Hilda so I could show off my unbelievably good German accent. It would have been absolutely gas.

What was your favourite scene in the show?

I loved nearly all of them, but two really stood out. *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now* was a highlight of my experience — I think Ben and I absolutely nailed that song. And of course, *Don't Stop Believin'* was an obvious favourite. It was filled with emotion right up to the final word, and I couldn't get over the sense of friendship and camaraderie among the cast on stage. There was so much love and support.

What is your favourite memory from rehearsals?

There were so many, but probably the first time we practised on stage with microphones. It was such a fun experience and finally felt real — the excitement was definitely building that day. The radio interviews were great fun too, especially the one with Anne-Marie Gibbons at CRC FM. Myles and Isabella came with me, and we genuinely felt like celebrities being interviewed about our upcoming show.

Which outfit did you prefer most, and why?

Honestly, I loved the outfit I first entered the stage in — my small-town girl look with the cowboy boots. I felt really pretty in it. I was absolutely panicking during quick costume changes, though. If you'd seen me running around the sports hall trying to make it to the changing rooms in time, you would've laughed. But overall, it was so exciting to experience that level of intensity.

Do you feel you related to your role in any way?

Yes, definitely. Sherrie is bubbly and chatty, just like me, and she loves to sing – which suits me down to the ground.

Which character did you enjoy working with most on stage?

I really enjoyed working with everyone, but especially Ben (Drew). He was so lovely to work with and act opposite, and it was great getting to know him because, honestly, we probably wouldn't have spoken much before the musical. I also loved working with Oisín (Stacee Jaxx) – he frustrated me at times but always made me laugh. Jennis (Justice) was so sweet, supportive, and kind from the very beginning. Bella (Denise), Myles (Lonny), Isabelle (Regina), and Conor (Franz) were also so much fun and supportive to work with. I genuinely loved working with the entire cast.

Who was your favourite character in the musical?

That's another really difficult question, but if I

had to choose, it would be Conor's character, Franz. Whether he was on stage as Franz or just being himself, he never failed to make me belly laugh. I really admired how committed he was to the role and how much humour Franz brought to the show.

How did you prepare for the role of Sherrie?

Learning my lines inside out was my main focus, along with my singing. I took voice lessons in preparation for the show, and Anne-Marie Gibbons was absolutely brilliant and so supportive throughout the entire process. I also tried not to think too much about the fact that I'd be performing in front of around a thousand people.

Lastly, do you see theatre as a future career?

Of course it's wonderful to imagine a future in theatre. It's always been a far-fetched dream of mine to be a famous actor, but realistically, it probably won't happen – although I'll always love performing.





TY Insight Series

Just Friends

DREW BOLEY

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After finally being located backstage, Ben took a moment to reflect on his time as Drew.



What's your name, and what character were you in this year's TY musical?

My name is Ben and I played the role of Drew Boley, also known as Wolfgang Von Colt.

Did you want a role in this year's musical?

Yes. When I found out what musical we were doing, I was really eager to get a role, especially because of the songs — I enjoy that kind of music.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play?

At first, I wanted to go for Lonny, but later I felt more suited to Drew. I think I fit the character better, and I don't feel I would have played a good Lonny, especially compared to Myles.

What was your favourite memory from the show?

My favourite memory was probably after the final show. Everyone was happy because it went so well, but also sad that it was over. It was a really bittersweet moment.

Which characters did you enjoy working with most on stage?

I really enjoyed working with Lonny (Myles) and Sherrie (Daisy), as I shared a lot of scenes with them. They're genuinely sound people both on and off stage.

What was your favourite costume that Drew wore?

My basic rocker outfit was my favourite — mainly because I liked the jean vest joke.

Which song did you enjoy performing the most?

I'd probably say *Oh Sherrie*, because I felt it showed my voice the best and it's just a fun song to sing. I especially liked holding the last "hold onnnn".

Was there a scene you enjoyed the most?

It was either the *Too Much Time on My Hands* scene, where Bella (Denise) is on the phone to Oisín (Stacey Jaxx), or the scene where I sang *Heaven* — even though I forgot to come on for it about half the time!

How did it feel to finally nail your cues on the last night?

I felt very happy that I didn't miss any. I would have looked fairly stupid if I had, and I probably would have been murdered (figuratively) by Mr G if I hadn't remembered them.

What was the most challenging part of the production?

There were lots of challenges, but the biggest one was getting into Drew's character at the start. I didn't take it as seriously at first, but as the show went on, I became more confident and much more invested in the role.

What was it like performing in front of a live audience?

It was daunting on the first night, but I had performed in front of audiences before at concerts, which helped. I think that experience made it easier to adjust and feel more comfortable on stage.

Do you think the leads connected well during rehearsals and performances?

Yes, definitely. I found myself talking to people I probably wouldn't have spoken to if I hadn't been in the musical. I saw the same thing happening with others too — people connecting who might not usually have interacted.

Were you able to relate to Drew in any way?

In terms of music taste, definitely, and to an extent fashion as well — although not quite to that level. I also related to how Drew is a bit shy, which I think I am too.

Do you see yourself acting in the future?

I don't really see myself acting as a career, but I do see myself performing — playing lead guitar in a band and maybe doing backing vocals.

What was your favourite thing about the musical overall?

I really enjoyed the music and some of the characters, especially Stacey Jaxx and Joey Primo. Overall, I loved the whole experience — meeting new people, getting to know them, and performing in front of a crowd.





TY Insight Series

Yeahhhh nun-chucks LONNY

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After emerging from a cloud of scarves and fourth-wall breaks, Myles looked back on his role as Lonny.



What's your name and who did you play in this year's show?

My name is Myles and I played the character of Lonny Barnett.

Can you tell us about yourself and any background in theatre?

I've always loved theatre. My first show was *Matilda the Musical* in Australia when I was around ten years old, where I played Bruce Bogtrotter. I did this while I was in primary school, and we performed it for a high school audience. Our director, Courtney, made it a great show. It was a huge production, with around a thousand people attending each night, and it ran for ten nights. There were two actors playing Bruce, and I performed the role for five of those nights. Miss Trunchbull also reminded me a lot of Mr Gallagher...

Were you expecting a role in this year's musical?

Honestly, yes. Based on my previous experience in musical theatre, including pantomimes, I felt confident going into the auditions. Those experiences really helped me, especially from a confidence point of view.

What was your favourite song to perform?

My favourite song to perform was *Paradise*, because of the energy and the amount of dancing involved. It gave the show a strong opening and helped introduce several characters, including Lonny, Drew, Denise, Justice, and Joey Primo. My favourite songs to sing overall, though, were *Here I Go Again* and *I Can't Fight This Feeling*, as they were very outgoing and really showed Lonny's personality.

What were your favourite scenes from the show?

My favourite scenes were the ones where I got to speak directly to the audience and involve them in the show, especially when I went down into the crowd individually and made jokes — including calling my own father bald.

How did you prepare for the role of Lonny?

Watching performances of *Rock of Ages* by other schools helped me understand what the role of Lonny was really about. At some point, I realised that Lonny's personality matched mine more than I expected, and that helped a lot. For learning lines, I read about twenty minutes of the script every night before bed. I also read the script aloud to my dogs, who weirdly seemed to enjoy it. That really helped, and by the week before the show, I didn't need to touch the script at all.

What were your thoughts on Lonny's costume?

Honestly, I loved the costume. It was easy to recognise and very unique, as it was inspired by the original Broadway version. Originally, I was only meant to wear it for the opening scene, along with the scarves, but it felt so comfortable during rehearsals that I was given the go-ahead to wear it for the entire show. The scarves were a key part of the costume and were used a lot in different scenes and songs, such as *I Can't Fight This Feeling* and the 6-7-microphone scene. Thankfully, I didn't have to wear much make-up, although the black circles around my eyes did make me look like I'd just been punched — but they definitely added to the character.

Was the performance different on the final night compared to the first show?

From my perspective, there wasn't a huge difference between the matinees and Closing Night. The matinees really helped me build confidence on stage and fully settle into the character. Although I knew my lines, I still had to learn stage presence. The night shows felt more surreal because of the darker lighting and the more interactive audience. Seeing a standing ovation on Opening Night was incredible — the entire cast felt an overwhelming sense of relief and excitement.

Do you have any key moments from rehearsals?

One of my favourite rehearsal moments was the first time all the TYs were in the canteen and Mr Gallagher asked me to perform Lonny in front of everyone. At that point, I didn't even know if I had the role yet, but the reaction from the crowd made me feel confident. During rehearsals, Mr G often jokingly referred to Rock of Ages as 'The Lonny Show' — but maybe he was just jealous of my spectacular acting skills.

Did you ever feel worried that your understudy might take your role?

At the very start, when Iosac — the understudy for Lonny — performed the role before me, I did feel that we were fairly evenly matched. However, once I was cast and got fully into the role on stage, I never felt nervous about losing it. I was confident in my performance and wouldn't have missed a single show for anything.

Do you think the leads worked well together?

Yes, definitely. Most of the leads already had strong friendships, which really helped. This was especially clear during rehearsals in Mr Gallagher's room, where there was a mix of nerves, laughter, and excitement as we worked through scenes that eventually became really polished.

Are there any specific lines you enjoyed delivering?

I said one word a lot — 'Yeahhh'. I loved it because I used it in so many random moments, sometimes right in someone's face, and it became a big part of who Lonny was. I also enjoyed the lines where I spoke directly to the audience and made jokes. One of my favourites was at the end of Act One, when everyone was doing jazz hands and I had to tell them to shoo and remind them they had fifteen minutes.

Who do you think helped you the most during the musical?

If I had to choose, it would be Mr Gallagher, as we spent the most time rehearsing together. He gave me the most guidance and advice on developing Lonny as a character. If it hadn't been him, it probably would have been Ms Kennedy — but I already felt confident vocally, so I didn't need as much singing support.

If you were to play another role in the show, who would you choose and why?

Originally, I wanted to be Stacey Jaxx because he's such a big character in the film, and Lonny is more minor in the movie. Once I realised how important Lonny is in the stage version, though, I was delighted to have the role. I was surprised by how many lines Lonny had, but once I got into the character, they weren't too difficult to learn.

Which character did you enjoy working with most on stage?

That's a tough one, but it would probably be a tie between Ben (Drew) and Isabella (Denise). Off stage, they're very different personalities — Ben is more playful and laid-back, while Bella is more confident and driven — and I really enjoyed working with both of them.







TY Insight Series

Lonny, get the Fogmaster 5000

DENISE

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

Once the Bourbon Room had closed for the night, Isabella took time to reflect on her role as Denise.



Who are we here with today, and do you have a background in musical theatre?

My name is Isabella and I played Denise in this year's production of *Rock of Ages*. I have been enrolled in All Stars Academy in Ballyheane since the age of three. Over the years, I've been cast in multiple shows, including playing Babette in *Beauty and the Beast*, and the Genie in *Aladdin*.

Did the leads work well together during the process of the show?

Yes, definitely. Even though we all came from different friend groups throughout the year, we worked extremely well together as one unit. That really helped make the whole process more enjoyable and seamless for everyone involved.

Were you able to relate to your role?

I would hope not to relate to an alcoholic ... however, I did sometimes relate to how annoyed Denise got with her bar staff!

Which did you prefer — the rehearsal process or the performance?

The performance, one hundred per cent. There's a rush you get on stage that just doesn't compare to anything else. You think you've done your best during rehearsals, and then you step onto the stage and suddenly unlock a whole new level of performance.

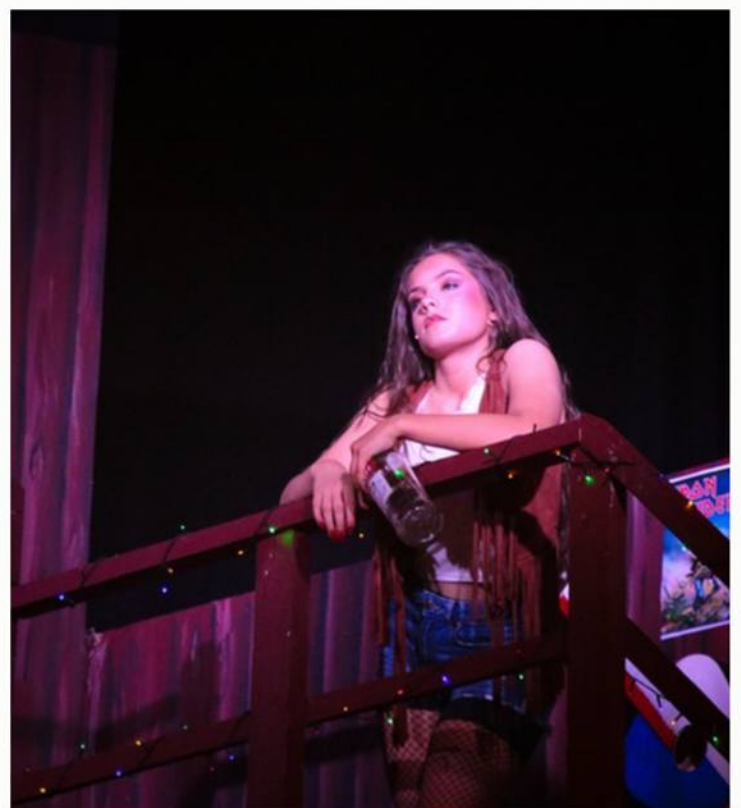
Do you see theatre as a future career?

Of course it has always been a dream, but realistically it's extremely difficult to make it professionally in an industry like this. A former producer and director of Davitt College once made me promise that wherever I go, I would always join a theatre

or acting group of some sort, no matter what.

Do you have a favourite moment or memory from working on *Rock of Ages*?

One moment that always comes to mind is Mr Gallagher being completely unable to remember *Every Rose Has Its Thorn*. From the very first time he said it, it became *Every Thorn Has Its Rose*, and we all just accepted that as the title. No matter how stressed he was during rehearsals, as soon as I mentioned that song was next, he would stop and smile — almost like he was proud of his own mistake.



Who made the decision about the kiss during the final show?

From early on, there had been talk about a kissing scene, but no other on-stage couple really wanted to do it. In the end, it was a bit of a spur-of-the-moment decision after Myles and I briefly discussed it.

What was your favourite song from the show?

I loved all of them, but the power of *Every Rose Has Its Thorn* left everyone in awe, and the electricity of *Thunderstruck* made the stage feel almost radioactive — the audience knew straight away they were in for something special. *I Can't Fight This Feeling* was also a clear favourite, as the acting and dancing in that scene were so enjoyable.

Which character did you enjoy working with the most?

Franz, without a doubt. I had several interactions with him, and Conor brought such humour to the stage that the audience was always engaged. Denise would deliver a line and Franz would interrupt — he constantly left her with nothing to say.

As we know, Denise was originally a male role. Do you think it worked better as a female part?

Yes, I do. Changing Denise to a female character helped balance out the male-dominated roles in the show. There were a lot of scenes featuring the trio of Denise, Drew, and Lonny, and visually it worked much better. And, to be fair, look who ye ended up with as Denise!

What were your thoughts on the Oscars scene?

I think the speech worked really well. We included famous quotes from classic films such as *Rocky*, *The Godfather*, and *Dirty Dancing*, which most of the audience recognised. It also showed a side of Denise that hadn't been seen earlier in the show — and we even managed to make our parents and teachers proud by learning about old movie classics.

Did you make any new friendships during the production?

Yes, definitely. People I would normally have walked past in the corridors are now people I talk to every day, and the musical helped turn familiar faces into real friendships.





Myles Girling-Moore
Lonny Barnett



Isabella Kearney
Denise Dupree



Oisín Toland
Stacey Jaxx



Jennis Ann Sarish
Justice Charlier



Daisy Finnerty
Sherrie Christian



Ben O'Brien
Drew Boley



Isabelle McHugh
Regina Bush



Conor McDonagh
Franz Klinemann



Kayla Gibbons
Hilda Klinemann



Ava Cunningham
Mayor



Iosac Butler
Ja'Keith Gill



Conn Fitzgerald
Joey Primo



Abigail Lane
Waitress #1



Rebeka Venclovaite
Waitress #2



Lilianna Nowacka
Waitress #3



Rhiannon Brosnan
Constance Sack



Clodagh Keane
Mom



Brady Girling-Moore
Dad



Sophia Birdthistle
Robber



Brian Mahlangu
Record Producer



Grace Needham
Understudy



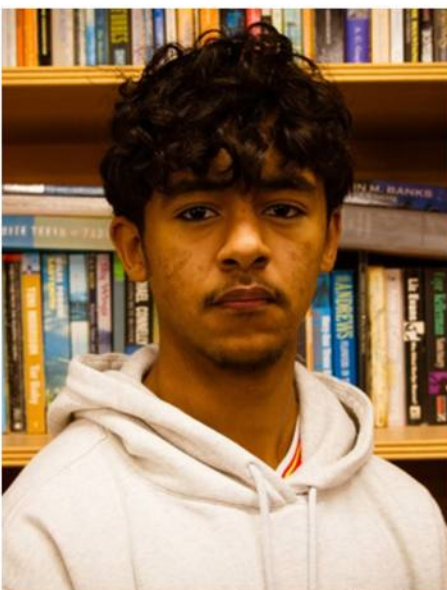
Grace Walsh
Understudy



Anna Lay
Understudy



Aisling Forkan
Understudy



Artur Narciso
Understudy



Kate McTigue
Understudy









TY Insight Series

It's all so ... confusing

STACEE JAXX

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

Having thoroughly fallen in love with Stacee Jaxx — and possibly himself — Oisín reflected on the role.



What's your name and what role did you play in this year's musical?

My name is Oisín and I played the role of Stacee Jaxx in this year's production of *Rock of Ages*.

Did you expect to get a role in the show?

No, not really. I didn't feel that I sang to my full ability in the audition back in May of Third Year. That said, I definitely hoped I would get a role.

What was your favourite scene in the musical?

Thunderstruck — obviously, because all the attention was on me. The energy was electric and I loved singing it. I also really enjoyed the Spanish section of *Don't Stop Believin'* because it was unexpected and the audience didn't see it coming.

What was your favourite memory from rehearsals?

Getting all the attention because of my arms, abs, and veins. But honestly, one of my favourite memories was having all my iced coffees delivered to Mr Gallagher's room while everyone else was busy doing the Barista course.

What did you think of Stacee's costume?

I was honestly astonished. I never expected to see myself in such exquisite clothing. My favourite part of the costume was definitely the chaps — it was the first time I'd worn them in years. I also loved the boots so much that I'd wear them through thick and thin.

Did you relate to the character of Stacee Jaxx?

Sí. We have the same taste in music, the

same beautiful long hair, a shared love for Joey Primo, and an overall passion for singing.

Did you make any new friendships during the musical process?

Not really, as I already spoke to most people beforehand. That said, there were definitely some people I got to know better throughout the process.

What was it like to perform in front of a large audience?

I personally loved it. I was somewhat used to performing, as I sing in the Key West sometimes. It made me feel important, although I barely noticed the audience because it was so dark in the hall.

What was the audition process like for you?

I didn't want to sing ABC or Happy Birthday because I felt they were very generic, so I chose to sing *Bad Look* by Zach Top, as it really suited my country-style voice. I made it to the second round and was first asked to audition for Lonny — which I didn't like — then Drew, which I dreaded, and finally Stacee. The moment I tried out for Stacee, I instantly knew that was the role I wanted.

What was your favourite line?

I loved the line 'The way you move, the way you sing, the way you... sparkle', because it really shows the self-love Stacee has. 'I'm ginger...' was also a favourite, mainly because I can relate to it.

Did you ever feel threatened that your understudy might take your role?

No — no one else could have been me. The only thing that really threatened me was learning my lines, which physically hurt at times.









TY Insight Series

Everybody calls me Mama JUSTICE

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After commanding the stage with both presence and voice, Jennis reflected on her role as Justice.



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

My name is Jennis and I played the role of Justice Charlier in this year's production.

What was your favourite thing about playing the role of Justice?

My favourite part of playing Justice was having several solo songs, wearing the costume, and getting the opportunity to share my singing talent with the year group.

What was your favourite song?

Definitely *Harden My Heart / Shadows of the Night*, because the duet and harmonies paired really well together. I also loved *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now* because the entire year group was involved and it felt very meaningful in the context of the scene.

How did you handle performing on stage?

I was nervous during rehearsals at first, but my confidence grew over time and by the time the shows arrived, I felt ready.

How did it feel to make it to the final audition?

I felt really happy that my talents were recognised. I was surprised but very grateful, as I really wanted a part in the musical. Once I got through the final audition, everything started to feel real.

Do you have a favourite memory from the TY musical experience?

My favourite memory was everyone singing *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now* backstage. The entire year group was involved, singing and dancing together behind the scenes. It's such an uplifting song and really brought everyone together.

Were you excited for your family to watch you perform on stage?

Yes, I was extremely proud to perform in front of my family and to let them see me accomplish something so important to me.

Would you have liked to play another role?

I would have liked to play Sherrie, but I was genuinely happy with the role I was given. Sherrie had a lot of lines, which would have been very challenging. I loved having so many scenes with her and, in the end, I realised that Justice really suited me.

How did you feel performing a solo in front of a live audience?

At first, I felt overwhelmed, but it became more natural each time I performed. I never thought I'd have the opportunity to do something like this in front of an audience. It genuinely felt like I was on top of the world, and I'm so grateful for the experience.

How did it feel getting your hair done professionally every night?

It took the pressure off having to do my own hair and made me feel very professional and put together for each performance.

Do you feel the musical changed you as a person?

Yes. I'm much more confident now and I've found myself socialising more with others thanks to performing every night.

Do you feel you formed new relationships during the production?

Absolutely. I've become friendly with people I never expected to be, and so many new friendships were formed throughout the musical. It was a really special opportunity to get to know others.





TY Insight Series

Power to ...

REGINA

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After leading the charge on the Sunset Strip, Isabelle reflected on her role as Regina.



What's your name, and what role did you play?

My name is Isabelle and I played the role of Regina Bush.

What was the audition process like for you?

The first audition was honestly nerve-racking. I was one of the first up and auditioned alongside Daisy, who went first and absolutely knocked it out of the park. I was very intimidated but knew I had an interest in the show, so I tried my best. When it was my turn, I froze and forgot all the lyrics. I genuinely thought I had made a complete mess of it, but I stayed composed. Thankfully, the production team had faith in my singing ability and asked me to try again — and the second time went much better.

Were you happy being paired with Conor for the show?

Yes, definitely. I had spoken to Conor once before and got the impression he was really sound, so when I found out we'd be acting together it put me at ease. As rehearsals went on, we all saw a different side to Conor — he didn't take himself too seriously but absolutely stepped up when it mattered. He put in a huge amount of effort, and his improvisation was genuinely impressive. You'd be surprised how much of it actually made it into the show.

If you were cast in another role, who would you have liked to play?

I was delighted to get the role of Regina, but I would have been just as happy playing Denise. Interestingly, Isabella — who played Denise — originally wanted to be Regina, so at the start we thought we might end up with each other's roles. In the end, though, we

were both really happy and felt we were perfectly suited to the parts we got.

What was your favourite outfit during the show?

My favourite outfit was the one I wore during *Hit Me with Your Best Shot*. It was completely different from Regina's usual look and was so much fun to wear. The costume changes were very intense — Regina had some of the quickest changes in the whole show — which was stressful at times, but it really added to the overall experience.

What was your favourite song, and why?

The Final Countdown. Even though the key was stressful at first, hitting those notes added so much to the song. It was such a powerful number to perform and really enjoyable to sing.

What was it like performing in front of a live audience?

I felt fine performing because we couldn't really see the audience, and we were so focused on the scenes. We had practised so much, and in front of so many people, that once I stepped on stage the audience didn't affect me at all.

What was your favourite night of the musical, and why?

Probably Wednesday night. It was the adrenaline rush of the first show after waiting so long for it to finally happen. I was just pure excited rather than sad that it would eventually come to an end.

What was your favourite memory from rehearsals?

There were so many. Conor's lollipops, his random meltdowns about stepping

stepping backwards, trying to hug him during one of the first rehearsals only for Mr Gallagher to ask if we were long-lost cousins. I also loved when Myles fell off the bar during the laughing scene, when he kept forgetting the word 'out' during the Open Night scene, and when Isabella and I made up a note for Jennis's name. Rehearsals were chaotic in the best way.

How did you feel walking through the audience during the show?

I really enjoyed it — it got me hyped for the scene — but it also made me nervous when

some audience members didn't take the flyers from me. Wednesday night was especially nerve-wracking because the crowd was smaller, but Thursday and Friday were amazing and created such a great atmosphere.

Did you relate to your character in any way?

Yes, I did. Regina is very much a 'take no nonsense' character — she's headstrong, confident, and gives off empowering activist energy. I liked how she had a tough exterior but softened as she developed throughout the show.









TY Insight Series

Look at me mama, I'm flying!

FRANZ

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After surviving Velcro, costume changes, and several wardrobe-related near misses, Conor talked us through his time as Franz.

Who are you, and who did you play in this year's production?

I'm Conor McDonagh and I played Franz in this year's musical.

Did you expect to get a main part in the show?

I mean, yeah. I always thought I'd enjoy being part of the musical, and it seemed like good craic.

How did it feel to perform in front of a live audience?

It was fine. I didn't really have any issues with it. By that point, it was more about having confidence in yourself and what you were doing. I think most people were comfortable performing in front of each other by then.

Which did you prefer — the rehearsal process or the performance?

Probably the process. The actual performances were stressful because everything happened so quickly. I enjoyed the acting side more, whereas during the live show you do a scene once and then move on, which leaves less time to enjoy it.

Did you ever feel that your understudy might take your role?

No — literally not once. I sincerely believe no one else could have done a better job playing a flamboyant, metrosexual, potentially not naturally blonde German.

Did you enjoy working with Isabelle in most of your scenes?

Yes, absolutely. She's a really strong actor and a better singer than she realises. I relied on her for most of my cues — honestly, I would have come on stage at the wrong time more than once if it wasn't for her. I was



definitely happy to work with her so closely.

Were you able to relate to your character?

Not really. I don't feel there's much common ground between me and the metrosexual German in question. We both look good in a suit, though.

What was your favourite scene in the musical?

Probably one of Stacey Jaxx's scenes. I remember sitting in on rehearsals for *Dead or Alive* and realising for the first time that the musical was actually very cool. I'm also a fan of some of my own scenes — *Hit Me with Your Best Shot* was definitely a scene ... that I performed.

Do you think the leads worked well together?

Yes, I think they did. Most people already got along before rehearsals began, and we quickly realised we were going to be spending a lot of time together — so we might as well make it as enjoyable as possible.



Did you ever mess up on stage?

Not me directly ... I think. Every night except the last, there was a slight struggle getting my trousers off, which is not a problem I ever expected to have in life. They did come off on the final night, though. I also had to improvise a few times when cues were missed, but I'd like to think I handled it fairly well.

Do you have any favourite memories from rehearsals?

Being hounded for lollipops. Me having lollipops at all times became a thing very quickly, whether I wanted it or not — my bank account definitely suffered, but the joy is in sharing. There was also a time I had to cover for Ben (Drew) and was told to run after Daisy (Sherrie), at which point I subconsciously started doing the 'Franz run'.

If you had another role in the musical, what would it be?

I wouldn't have minded playing Drew. I

wasn't completely set on Franz from the start. And, realistically, if you were in my position, which would you choose? Stacey Jaxx wouldn't have been a bad option either — he's universally cool, and that's not a bad reputation to have.

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

It was worse than I expected. I wasn't as emotionally attached as some people, but I still felt a bit lost afterwards and didn't really know what to do with myself. Realistically, none of us died and we all saw each other again the following week — but it still felt strange.

Any thoughts on your costume?

I was a fan. The suit was chef's kiss. The use of industrial-grade Velcro was questionable, but it did its job when it needed to. Special mention to my dad's Bugs Bunny tie — not sure why he owned it, but it came in handy and really completed the look.





TY Insight Series

Rottweilers — zey are so cute ... and dangerous.

HILDA

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

Once the shouting stopped and order was restored, Kayla had plenty to say about playing Hilda.



What's your name and what role did you play in this year's musical?

My name is Kayla Gibbons and I played the fabulous Hilda Kleinmann in this year's show.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play?

If I had to choose a different role, I would have liked to be Denise. I loved her cool, unshakeable demeanour, and her character was really funny throughout the musical.

Who was your favourite character to work with on stage?

Probably Franz, because we worked as a duo — and I got to shout at Conor a lot during the show.

Do you think the leads worked well together?

Yes, I think all the leads got along really well. We supported each other during rehearsals and got to know one another as the process went on.

What was your favourite memory from rehearsals?

My favourite memory was probably when we decided to include the lift and I had to carry Conor.

What was your favourite scene from the show?

The opening of Act Two. I got to scream at people a lot, and it was definitely the most vocally demanding part of the show.

Did you make any new friendships during the production?

Yes — I made lots of new friends and spoke to people I probably wouldn't have spoken to otherwise.

Rehearsals or performances?

I preferred the performances. The process took a lot out of me, so by the time we got to the shows, all the hard work had already been done.

Favourite song from the show?

Every Rose Has Its Thorn, because nearly everyone was involved and the vocals were beautiful. It was a really powerful song.

Do you relate to your character in any way?

In some ways, yes — Hilda is very loud and has a big personality. I'd like to think I'm not quite as mean as her, though... or German.

How did it feel getting your hair done professionally every night?

The hair stylists were very quick and really lovely to chat to. They made me look very business-like and professional every night.

Were you ever worried about your understudy?

I was out for two days, and when I came back everyone told me my role had been taken. I actually believed it because Grace is an amazing actress and no one corrected me. On top of that, I struggled with the German accent at the start, so I constantly felt the role might be taken away from me.

What was your favourite line from the show?

Probably: When I was a little girl, I wanted to breed Rottweilers — zey are so cute... and dangerous. It was definitely my funniest line in the musical, though not much to live up to, to be honest.





TY Insight Series

Let's burn this place to the ground!!

JOEY PRIMO

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After stealing the spotlight with a Thunderstruck solo in full AC/DC gear, Conn chatted to us about playing Joey Primo.



What's your name and what role did you have in the musical?

My name is Conn and I played Joey Primo, the bartender, in this year's musical.

Did you expect to get a role in the musical?

No, I didn't. I knew myself that I wasn't the strongest singer. Originally, I was cast in Brady's role as the Father, which meant I would have had to sing. Before rehearsals began, however, I was moved to the role of Joey Primo, which I preferred, as he didn't have a singing part. I liked that I had a few lines and was on and off stage quite a bit.

What was your favourite part of playing the role?

Honestly, running down the walkway in my underpants. I knew the crowd found it funny because I could hear them laughing. The only problem was that my microphone wasn't fully on until halfway through, so I just shouted louder to make sure the audience could hear me.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play?

I would have liked to be Franz, because he was hilarious and the audience really loved him. He had some very funny scenes and brought a lot of humour to the stage.

Did you enjoy wearing the wig?

No — I hated it. It was incredibly itchy and probably the most irritating thing I've ever worn.

Did you make new friends throughout the production?

Yes, I made loads of new friends, although I was already friendly with most people. The

musical gave me the chance to get to know others much better.

What was your favourite memory from the musical?

Performing during the night shows was especially enjoyable, and new memories were created every single night.

Did you ever imagine yourself being part of a production like this?

No, I never imagined performing in front of a live audience or being part of a production like this. I'm really glad I did it, though, because you never know if you'll get the chance to experience something like that again.







TY Insight Series

It's even got a tiny Mayor model!

THE MAYOR

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After presiding over a Lego city — complete with a tiny Mayor in a Mustang and a strawberry daiquiri — Ava spoke about playing the Mayor.



What's your name and what role did you play in this year's musical?

My name is Ava Cunningham and I played the role of the Mayor, as well as a Go-Go Girl, in *Rock of Ages*.

Did you expect to get a role in the musical?

Originally, no. I didn't receive a singing callback, but I always wanted to be involved in the show, even if it was a smaller role. Since singing isn't my strongest area, I focused on acting and gave it my best.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play?

I would have loved to play Regina, as I really liked the range of her character. I enjoyed the songs she sang, the scenes she was involved in, and her costumes were amazing too.

What was your favourite memory from rehearsals?

The first time the wigs were brought in and everyone tried them on — Franz's wig was definitely the best. I also loved watching Mr G teach Conor how to move and perform as Franz, especially the iconic German runs. Getting microphones for the first time was another highlight; it made everything feel real and important.

Did you prefer the rehearsal process or the performances?

Honestly, I loved both. I really enjoyed bonding with people I wouldn't normally talk to, seeing a different side to the teachers, and watching the show develop every day. When it came to performances, I loved dancing on stage, especially during *Thunderstruck*.

Which song did you enjoy the most?

Harden My Heart / Shadows of the Night was my favourite. Hearing Jennis and Daisy sing it so beautifully together sent shivers down my spine, and it was an honour to be dancing on stage while they performed.

Which character did you enjoy working with most on stage?

I really enjoyed working with Franz. Trying not to laugh during rehearsals while he did the German accent — and then staying professional on stage — was a real challenge, but it made it even more fun. He brought so much humour to the show, which made working with him a highlight.

What was your favourite costume from the show?

I had a few costume changes throughout the show, moving from rocker to Mayor and then from Mayor to Go-Go Girl. Overall, the Go-Go Girl costume was my favourite — I loved how the skirt shimmered and flowed under the lights. I also really liked the Mayor's costume, as it made me feel very professional, and it was funny how people around the school mistook me for a teacher when I wore it.

Which role did you prefer — the Go-Go Girl or the Mayor?

I enjoyed playing the Mayor because I got to see the acting side of the role develop with each rehearsal. That said, I loved the dancing aspect of being a Go-Go Girl and the bond we shared as a group, especially with Jennis as our 'mama'. I also loved working with Grace, Niamh, Dzennifer, and Anna.

TY Insight Series

He knocked Stacee out cold!

WAITRESS #1

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

From freeze-frames to fast exits, Abigail looked back on her time working the Bourbon Room floor.



What's your name and what role did you play in *Rock of Ages*?

My name is Abigail and I played one of the waitresses in this year's TY musical. I was also Sherrie's understudy.

Did you want a role in the musical?

I really wanted to play Sherrie, but in a way it was a good thing that I didn't, because Daisy played her so well. I was delighted to be her understudy and very grateful that I was given a role as well, rather than just being an understudy.

What was your favourite song from the musical?

I had a few favourites, but I'd probably say *Oh Sherrie* or *Harden My Heart*. I was a Go-Go Girl during *Harden My Heart*, so getting to experience that song on stage was really special.

Do you think the cast worked well together?

Yes, one hundred per cent. Even though many people wouldn't have spoken much beforehand, it was really nice to see everyone work through the process together, learning through trial and error as the show came together.

How did you find learning all of Sherrie's lines?

I learned them in sections, mainly focusing on everything up to Act One. I knew all the lines, but there was a moment when Daisy was out and we were rehearsing Act Two, which really snapped me into reality and reminded me how important it was to be fully prepared as an understudy.

What was your favourite line to say?

I didn't have many lines, but I loved saying

'He knocked Stacee out cold!' I came out of a freeze frame to say it, and for some reason it was just really fun to deliver.

Did you struggle with remembering all the dances?

I've been dancing with ECM for about three years, so it wasn't too hard to keep up. However, learning so many dances back-to-back was challenging, as I'm usually used to learning one routine and practising it repeatedly. This time, we had to move on very quickly.

Did you enjoy being on stage so often?

Yes. Even when I wasn't speaking, I loved being on stage as a waitress in the background of the Bourbon Room scenes. Watching the leads perform up close and seeing all their hard work come together was something I really enjoyed.

How did it feel performing in front of a live audience?

It wasn't my first time performing, as I've danced on stage before, but apart from nativities, I had never spoken or sung on stage. The matinee performances really helped bring the show together, and my confidence grew with every performance leading into the night shows.





TY Insight Series

You are so brave!

CONSTANCE

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

Once the story was written and the deadline met, Rhia spoke about stepping into the role of Constance.



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

My name is Rhia and I played Constance Sack in this year's TY musical.

Did you think the musical would turn out as well as it did?

Honestly, no. Rehearsals were tough at the start and it didn't feel like everything was coming together. However, as we got closer to show week, everything began to click, and in the end we managed to pull off three amazing performances.

What was your favourite song in the musical?

My favourite song was 'Don't Stop Believin'. It was the perfect way to finish the show, with

the entire year group on stage together, and it felt really special to be part of that moment.

Do you think you suited your role as a person?

Yes, I do. I've dreamed of being a journalist for years, so playing Constance Sack gave me a glimpse into what that could be like. I was really grateful to be cast in a role that suited me so well.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play?

I would have liked to play Regina, as I loved the songs she sang and her strong personality. She also had a lot of stage time. That said, Isabelle did an amazing job in the role.



TY Insight Series

Street Boyz ... with a Z

Ja'Keith

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After making his presence known every time he hit the stage, losac shared his Ja'Keith experience.



What's your name and what role did you play in this year's musical?

My name is losac Butler and I played the role of the sleazy record manager, Ja'Keith Gill.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play?

If I were given a different role, I would have liked to play Lonny. Seeing how my fellow cast member played him, I think it would have been an amazing role to take on.

What were your thoughts on wearing multiple pairs of glasses for Ja'Keith?

Personally, I loved the idea of having multiple pairs of glasses. It got a lot of laughs from the audience, and I really enjoyed being able to hold an exaggerated death stare towards the crowd for longer than necessary.

Did you find the wig uncomfortable, and do you think it added to the costume?

There were definitely times when the wig was uncomfortable, but it was a very necessary part of the costume. It really added to the character and helped bring Ja'Keith to life. Overall, it was a very cool part of the look.

What was your favourite memory from rehearsals?

My favourite rehearsal moment was when both Sherrie and her understudy were absent, and I stepped in to play the lead female role. It was a brilliant moment, and one I still think about even after the musical ended.

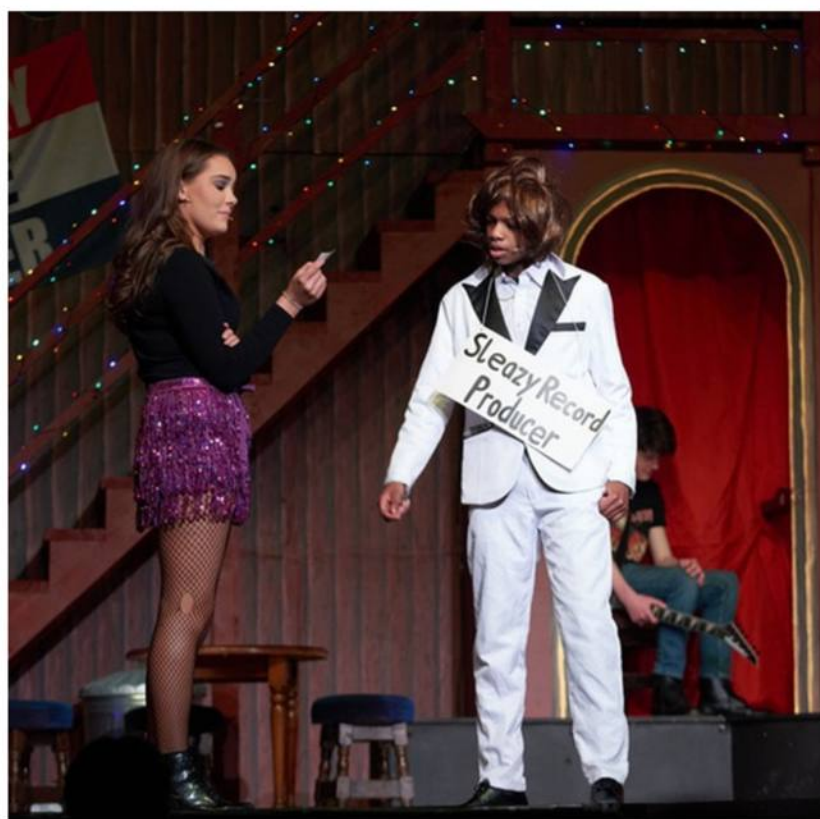
What was your favourite song from the show, and why?

My favourite song was *Come On Feel the Noize*. I loved it because my main scene took place during that number, and it was my very first scene in the show. I got to sing, act, and properly introduce my character, which made it my favourite to perform.

Tell us about being limited on questions by Mr G.

I was officially limited on questions by Mr G, which became a running joke during rehearsals. I was told I asked too many questions and was restricted to three per day, so I ended up getting my friends to ask questions for me instead. It was all great fun and added some humour to rehearsals, rather than everything being overly serious in the pursuit of a flawless show.





TY Insight Series

Sherrie you get back in this house Mom & Dad

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

After delivering one of the show's most heartfelt moments, Clodagh and Brady spoke about playing Mom and Dad.



What are your names, and what characters did you play in Rock of Ages?

We're Clodagh and Brady, and we played Sherrie's parents in this year's musical.

Did you want to get a role in this year's production?

Brady: Yes, I would have loved a role in this year's production, but there weren't many roles that appealed to me. When I first heard what the musical was, I would have preferred the role of Dennis, but due to the lack of boys, the character had to switch genders.

Clodagh: I always liked the idea of having a small role in the musical after seeing previous years perform, but I never expected to get one — especially because I had never sung before this.

If you were cast in a different role, who would you have liked to play, and why?

B: When I learned more about the musical, I started leaning towards the role of Franz because I discovered I actually have a very good German accent.

C: I would have liked to play Regina because her character had so many different sides and was very unique. She was very outgoing, which I loved — and Isabelle did an amazing job in the role.

What was your favourite memory from rehearsals?

B: My favourite memory was the first dress rehearsal, when the chorus and the leads were trying to piece everything together. It was fun seeing the show finally start to come alive.

C: I'd have to say the two of us spending over an hour trying to figure out the key for Sister Christian — only to realise it

was the first one we had tried. Another moment that stood out was when Mr Gallagher was not too impressed with the flat white Sophia made him.

Did the musical change you in any way?

B: This was one of many musicals I've been involved in, but it was the one that changed me the most because it was the first time I had a main role. It helped me gain more confidence and widened my friend group.

C: I definitely think it changed me. It made me more confident and showed everyone's true colours. It also helped me discover a hidden singing ability that I didn't even know I had — and I don't think anyone else did either. Even though we're a close year group, it allowed everyone to connect on a deeper level.



Do you think the show changed from the first performance to the last?

B: Yes, definitely. People became more comfortable with the audience and more confident on stage. There was a scene during *Hit Me with Your Best Shot* where Conor couldn't get his trousers off quickly enough — but thankfully, it all worked perfectly on the final night.

C: Absolutely. The matinees were terrifying because it was the first time we'd run the show properly. Friday night was the most enjoyable because we were confident, relaxed, and determined to make the most of the final performance — and we really did.

What was your favourite song from the show?

B: There were a few I really enjoyed, such as *Hit Me with Your Best Shot* and *I Can't Fight This Feeling*, but overall my favourite would have to be *Paradise*.

C: There were so many. I loved *Harden My Heart*, and Jennis and Daisy sang it so well

together. *Don't Stop Believin'* was brilliant because it closed the show with everyone on stage. But overall, I'd choose *Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now* because of the atmosphere backstage — everyone was having such a good time, and it really captured what the musical was all about.

Which actor or actress surprised you most with their talent?

C:: Conor surprised me the most. I hadn't spoken to him much before the show, but his improvisation was incredible every night. I also realised he wasn't nearly as serious as I had thought.

B: When I first auditioned, I thought I might get a main role straight away because I'd been in musicals before. But as rehearsals went on, I heard and saw so many people sing and act, and I realised how much hidden talent there was. The person who shocked me most was Jennis — her performance of *Harden My Heart/ Shadows of the Night* was outstanding.



TY Insight Series

Behind the Scenes I

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

We caught up with Brian O'Donnell and Ryan Reilly for a special behind-the-scenes interview.



Brian O'Donnell, Ryan Reilly, Olivier Krawczyk, Oisín Harte, Keelan Jennings, Reece Gray, Danann Mekitarian, Mo Tong, David Koren, Bobby Doyle, Mel Walsh-McManamon, Ian McHugh, Noah Lunn and Patrick Holmes were part of the backstage crew, led by Mr. Cunningham.

What are your names and what role did you have in this year's production?

We're Brian and Ryan, and we were part of this year's stage crew.

Did you both audition for the show?

Yes, we did audition. We sang Pink Pony Club because we hadn't learned the set song, but we already knew we'd prefer to help out backstage. Stage crew suited us better and we felt more useful supporting the show behind the scenes.

How long did it take to build the stage?

The stage took around a week and a half to build. After that, the entire set had to be painted burgundy before the art crew added the finer details, which added extra time to the process.

What was it like backstage during the performances?

It was very busy, but everyone worked well together. By the time the night shows came around, we were well tuned in and knew exactly when people were due on stage and which props needed to be brought out.

Brian, how did it feel bringing props on stage when the lights were down?

It was quite stressful because we didn't want to mess anything up for the cast. It's much harder than it looks — when the lights are down it's pitch black, and it can be difficult to see where you're going.

Did you take part in the dancing at the beginning of the year?

No, we didn't. After the auditions, we knew we were going to be part of the stage crew. Funnily enough, we were actually kicked out of the dancing for not really taking part. We also had a lot of football matches on Mondays, which meant we fell behind on the routines and eventually gave up.

What did you do as part of the stage crew?

We learned when to bring props on and off stage between scenes, when to open the side doors for people's cues, and we also helped build and construct the stage. It was challenging at times, but really interesting and rewarding.









TY Insight Series

Behind the Scenes II

By Clodagh Keane & Róisín O'Malley

We caught up with Natasha Connolly and Victoria Denst.



Ms. Hughes's fantastic art crew was made up of Ellen Joyce, Róisín O'Malley, Rada Kuzniatsova, Surnáí Ní Cheallaigh, name, Natasha Connolly, Victoria Denst, and Kayla Cummins Santa Domingo.

What are your names and how were you involved in this year's Rock of Ages?

We're Natasha and Victoria, and we were part of the art crew for this year's musical.

What was the most challenging thing to paint?

Honestly, everything we worked on was challenging. Hand-painting the wooden panels was particularly tough because it was very repetitive, but it was also the main design feature of the set, so it had to be done carefully and consistently.

How long did it take to paint the set and props?

It took almost two weeks to fully complete the set. There weren't many people on the art crew, so the work took longer, but we were proud of what we achieved in that time.

Did you participate in any dances, or did you focus solely on art?

We were still involved in a few dances, but it was difficult to balance rehearsing choreography while also making sure the set was finished on time.

Was there any pressure with painting the stage?

At the beginning, it didn't feel too stressful because the show still felt far away. However, as the performance dates got closer, the pressure definitely increased and things became stressful quite quickly.

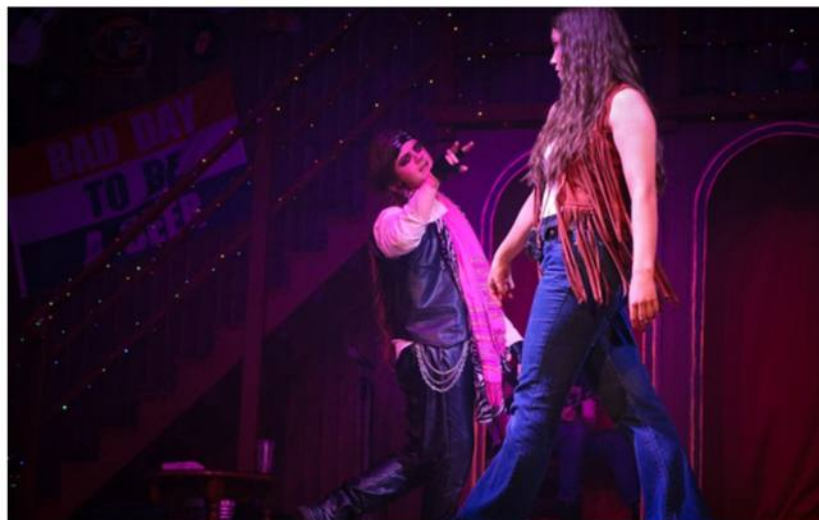
Did you enjoy the painting experience?

Yes, we really enjoyed it. Art is a hobby for both of us, so being part of the art crew felt like the right choice. The Davitt College musical sets are always talked about because of the effort that goes into them, and we wanted to be able to look at the stage afterwards and say, 'Wow — we painted that as a team.'

Do you have a favourite prop that you're particularly proud of?

Our favourite prop was transforming the Grease Lightning car from a previous musical into a worn, well-used car for Rock of Ages. It was especially rewarding to see it used on stage when Drew collected Sherrie while singing *I've Been Waiting for a Girl Like You*.













WORKING ON THE LA STRIP

BY KEELAN JENNINGS & DAVID KOREN

While the cast brought *Rock of Ages* to life on stage, an equally dedicated team worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the production possible. From the first pieces of timber to the final scene change, the stage crew played a crucial role in shaping the look, movement, and rhythm of the show. Their work demanded skill, teamwork, and long hours – often unseen, but absolutely essential.

Keelan

I was heavily involved in both the construction and running of the stage for this year's musical. During the build, I helped construct two sets of stairs and worked on assembling the Sunset Strip set, as well as painting the stage and assisting with the heavy lifting involved in putting the panels together. Over several weeks, I developed a range of practical carpentry skills and gained a real understanding of how much planning and effort goes into creating a stage set.

During performance week, I became part of the stage crew for the live shows. My responsibilities included turning the turnstile during key scenes and pushing the car on and off stage at precisely the right moments. Being involved from the early build stages right through to the final performance gave me a full behind-the-scenes view of the production, and seeing everything come together in front of a live audience made the experience both rewarding and enjoyable.

David

I was involved in building the stage for this year's musical and helped construct the railings on both the balcony and the stairs. I also worked on assembling the Sunset Strip set and helped paint the stage. During the build, I was involved in a lot of the heavy lifting and putting the panels in place, which gave me a real insight into how much work goes into creating a stage from scratch.

Over the weeks of construction, I learned a range of new carpentry skills and became more confident working as part of a team. During the performances, I was part of the stage crew and helped turn the turnstile during one of the scenes. Overall, being involved in the musical was a really enjoyable experience, and it was great fun to see everything come together during the live shows.



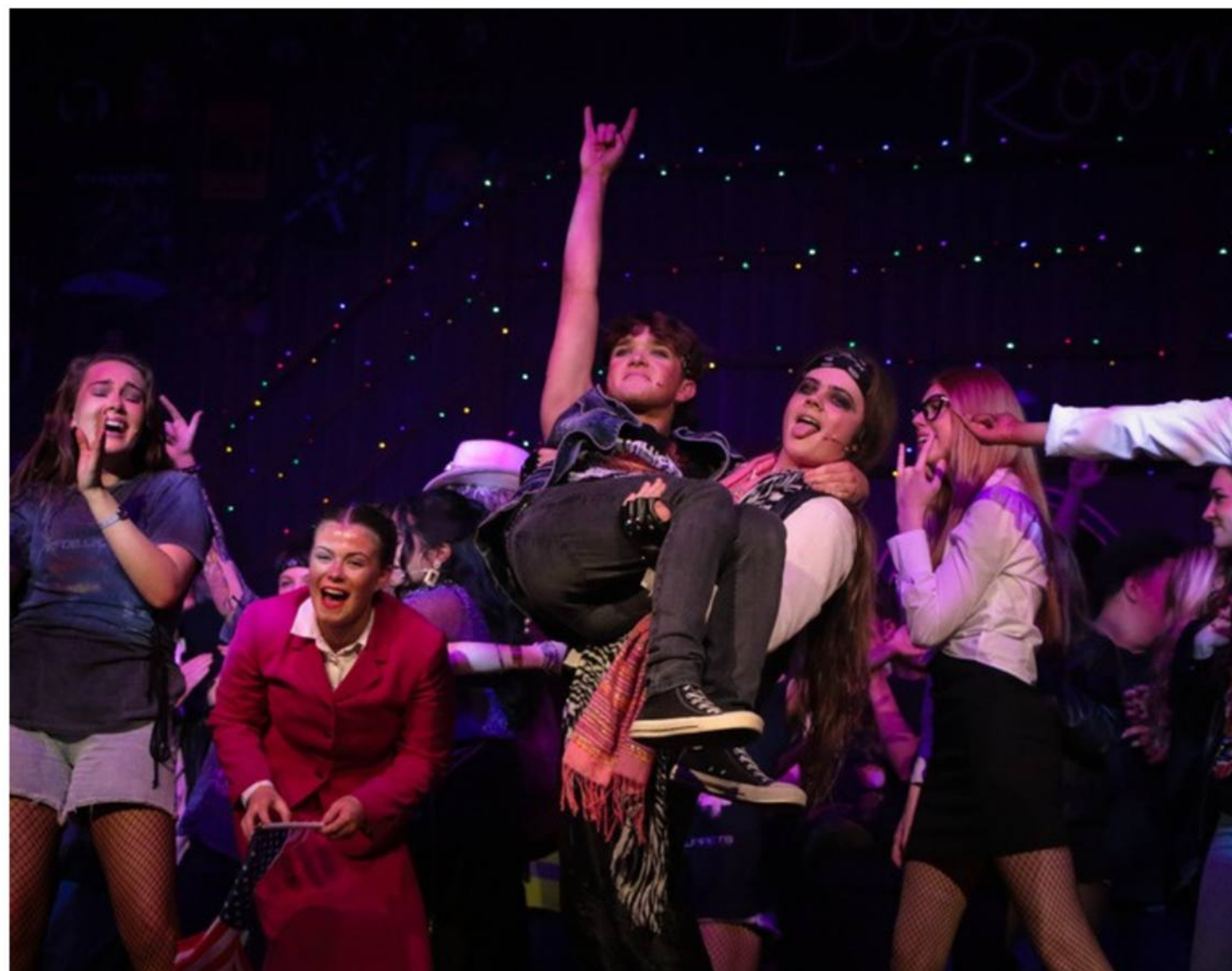
















UNTIL NEXT YEAR

BY OUR TALENTED TY STUDENTS

Christmas lights hum softly in the air,
Bells and laughter drift everywhere,
A carol rises – Rock of Ages, steady and bright,
Old notes warming the longest night.

Skates carve circles on the frozen ice,
Breath turns to clouds, the cold feels nice,
Hands held tight as we glide and spin,
Winter joy written on every grin.

We count our trips like stories told,
Pier jumping bold hearts brave in the cold,
Kayaks cutting paths through water and cheer
Christmas adventures we'll carry all year.

Lockers close softly halls row still,
Final bells echo over the hill,
Lessons wrapped up goodbyes held near,
Christmas at school rests now – until next year.





DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'

BY OUR TALENTED TY STUDENTS

It's time for Christmas,
Christmas lights and baubles,
Santa is coming to Davitt!

Don't stop believin'
Hold on to the feelin'
Hear the reindeer
In the night.

Don't stop believin'
Hold on to the feelin'
See you in two weeks' time.

Teachers dancing,
Up and down the corridors
Students running for the exit doors.
Don't stop!

