

# A sweet show

Sunderland Elementary performs 'Willy Wonka Jr.'

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Sunderland Elementary School students portray Oompa-Loompas when performing "Willy Wonka Jr."...



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SUNDERLAND — You might not think it is possible for an elementary school with only 49 students to pull off a full-length musical production. But at Sunderland Elementary School, despite the school's size, the spring musical has become a staple of the extracurricular offerings under the direction of second-year principal turned director, Paul Schreiber, who is leaving Sunderland at the end of the year.

Last year, it was, "Annie Junior," which sold out three shows and left Happy Days Playschool toddlers in Arlington singing the songs for weeks, according to Schreiber. This year, he picked, "Willy Wonka Junior," or to most, "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," which opens this weekend.

Rehearsal attracts hundreds

On Wednesday, the 26 student-actors, including a handful of Oompa-Loompas, put on a dress rehearsal in front of a sea of more than 200 youngsters from Fisher Elementary School and Happy Days in Arlington.

"I was really nervous because I used to go to Fisher and hadn't seen a lot of my old classmates in awhile," said fourth-grader Shelby Baker, who was Molly Teevee on stage.

This year's production includes two stage sets, including the inside of the Chocolate Factory, which left many of the young audience members in awe. It also includes some

colorful costumes: The Oompa-Loompas had on rainbow wigs, glittery tops and red-and-white striped tights, and even some special effects.

Baker gets zapped on television and then shrunk down to the size of a Barbie doll after fiddling around with Wonkavision, despite being told not to by Wonka, sixth-grader Hannah Phelps, who is also on stage at the Dorset Theatre Festival in its production of "Gypsy." Both Veruca Salt, fourth-grader Hannah Nicholson, and Augustus Gloop, fifth-grader Bjorn Boutin, vanish through the floorboards after disobeying Wonka's orders not to touch his inventions.

Violet Beauregarde, sixth-grader Katelyn Reilly, turns into a blueberry on stage, and in a moment that got the audience completely captivated Charlie Bucket, fifth-grader Adrian Chirtea, and Grandpa Joe, Chirtea's twin brother Julian Woodrow, sing while flying through the air after drinking Wonka's fizzy-lifting drink.

"It's really fun," Chirtea said. "You actually forget about the harness while you're up there and you feel like you're flying."

The animated, gray-haired grandpa, Woodrow, was a crowd favorite with his exaggerated mannerisms on stage.

The production even has its own stage crew, sixth-grader Ryan Delaney.

The students started working on the songs in November and the acting in January, according to the head Oompa-Loompa Connor Johnston, a fourth-grader. All the practice was done after school, as part of a club, Schreiber said.

Sixth-grader Nathan Brophy, who plays Mr. Bucket, said he put a lot of work into his part, but the payoff was worth it. "There is pressure on us," he said, "but once you do really well, it feels good."

The candy man Devon Jamieson, who sells Charlie the chocolate bar with the golden ticket, said the audience reaction makes it all worth it. "I like to hear the applause," he said, "and know the audience liked me."

Tickets for the shows can be reserved by calling the school at 375-6100. Tonight's show at 7 p.m. is already sold out, Schreiber said. There is a 7 p.m. show on Saturday and a 2 p.m. show on Sunday.