

# CHS presents Dracula

Coventry students practice the production of Dracula on Tuesday evening that will open tonight and continue through the weekend. (L-R) Jake Creta, sophomore, Brendan Lewis, junior, Matt Fusco, sophomore, Brad Tager, senior, Emily Gamage, junior.



Lauren Knight/Daily Times

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COVENTRY — Whether a guilty pleasure or burning obsession, the vampire craze seems to be taking over. And starting tonight, Coventry High School is tackling the fad with their latest theater production of Dracula.

Coventry High will be performing the newest adaptation of the show that portrays, according to Theater Director Myke Wilkinson, a more serious and less comedic plotline.

"It's much more true to the novel," he said. "Some [versions] are so silly and this one is very serious. It appealed to me immediately.

"I had not done a horror show and certainly a classic novel goes with public education," he added.

Khrysta Ryan, a senior, explained the adaptation is a more modern version: "It's based for a more younger audience, rather than Van Helsing being an old man, he is a young guy and it's more relatable. It's original Dracula and Twilight mixed together."

Dracula was originally published by Bram Stoker in 1897. The show begins with the death of a young woman and Abraham Van Helsing, a famous vampire hunter, is brought in to discover what happened. He knows immediately, explained Wilkinson, and on goes the hunt for Dracula. As the story unfolds, the characters

## DRACULA at CHS

- Opens tonight, 7 p.m.
- Continues tomorrow and Saturday night, 7 p.m.
- Tickets: \$10 at the door

face death, horror and lots of blood.

In fact, the production is so realistic that they are asking no guest under the age of 11 attend the show.

"We don't want them scared—it's violent to a degree. We had a fight choreographer from Trinity [Repertory Company]... come in and do all the fight choreography because there's a lot of that," he said.

They will use blood on stage, made of Woolite, food coloring and cornstarch, traditional Victorian-style props, costumes, two backdrop screens, videos and a cast of 23 students. The stage design plays on the vampire theme with two extensions, mirroring the shape of two fangs.

"We're doing a lot of new things," said Wilkinson. "When you have the sounds and lights, which are normal, but you add the videos, costumes and blood, it's a real challenge."

Of the 23 students on stage, only six have

been in previous productions, he added. During auditions, 90 students tried out and "they were all so impressive" that Wilkinson casted numerous students who had never participated in the drama department. He was so impressed that although the show typically features 14 performers, he added an additional nine characters as inmates to include more students.

Brad Tager, senior, is included amongst the first-time students on stage, and was cast as the lead: Dracula.

"I've always wanted to be a school production and since it was senior year, I thought why not. The day of auditions, my friend said, 'Why don't you just go for it?' She kind of pushed me and I didn't think I would get a major part but I did. It's kind of surreal," said Tager. "I'm nervous and excited."

The school's last production was Hair, a rock musical in the 1960s, telling the stories of a politically-minded hippies who struggle with the military draft into the Vietnam War. Ryan explained that the two productions are impossible to compare.

"They are totally opposite. In Dracula, there is fight choreography, blood, death—and Hair was nothing like that," she said.

Dracula will open tonight, March 29, at 7 p.m. It will continue through Friday and Saturday nights as well, both beginning at 7 p.m. Tickets will be \$10 at the door.