

# Matilda the Musical Jr. Coming to Hampstead June 4-7

By Lori Kirkpatrick  
Post & Voice Staff Writer

A little more than a year after opening its doors in Hampstead, Untitled Theatre Productions is continuing to grow — not only in size, but in the close-knit sense of community it has created for local families and young performers.

This June, the youth theater company will bring *Matilda the Musical Jr.* to the stage at the Hampstead Annex, with performances scheduled June 4-7 featuring a cast of 45 young performers.

Based on the beloved story by Roald Dahl, the Broadway Junior adaptation follows a brilliant and imaginative young girl who learns to stand up for herself and others while discovering her own strength along the way.

For founder Emily Graham, the organization's rapid growth has been exciting, but the relationships built through the theater program have become the most rewarding part.

"By far the coolest part of this is seeing the family that has been created here at Untitled," Graham said. "These kids hang out all the time outside of rehearsal, and the parents too. The community is beyond compare."

The upcoming production also represents an important



milestone for the company. While Graham and creative director Steve Campbell have previously directed productions themselves, *Matilda Jr.* marks the first show directed by another member of the expanding creative team.

"We have grown so fast and want to expand," Graham said. "Sara Nutt is the perfect choice to do this first."

Director Sara Nutt said she entered the production process with a strong creative vision while allowing the cast's energy and dedication to shape the final performance.

"I came in with a very clear vision for the storytelling, tone and structure of the production," Nutt said. "The cast

has approached the material with focus and maturity, and that shows in the clarity of the performance and the strength of the ensemble."

Nutt said audiences may be surprised not only by the show's humor and energy, but also by the professionalism demonstrated by the young cast members.

"I think audiences will be struck by the level of polish and commitment this youth cast brings to the stage," she said. "Many of the cast are also training weekly in dance, voice and acting classes in addition to rehearsals."

Behind the scenes, Campbell has been working to transform the Hampstead Annex stage into the whimsical world of *Matilda* while navigating the challenges of a smaller performance space.

"We LOVE the stage at the Annex and can't thank Pender County Parks and Recreation enough for our partnership," Campbell said. "That being said, the stage is very shallow with little wing space, especially with a cast this large."

To help maximize the space, the production team invested in new set pieces, including a large raised platform spanning much of the stage.

"I have been wanting levels for a long time," Campbell said. "Having this new platform will help create the big, whimsical world of *Matilda* while ensuring all of the cast can be seen."

Campbell also hinted at a lot of surprises awaiting audiences.

"There are definitely some creative — and dare I say magical — surprises in this show," he said. "But we can't give away our secrets."

The production's creative team includes music director Jaime Schumer, choreographer Katie Auletti-Smith and stage manager Maggie Proscia. Two local high school students are also serving in leadership roles, with Lily Chabus assisting with choreography and Simon Rosenblatt serving as assistant director.

Performances will be held Thursday, June 4, and Friday, June 5, at 7 p.m.; Saturday, June 6, at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, June 7, at 3 p.m. at the Hampstead Annex.

Tickets are \$17 and available through Untitled Theatre Productions. The production is presented in partnership with Pender County Parks and Recreation and supported by Mancini Orthodontics.

## Opinion

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five shutouts in her last seven starts. She has issued only eight walks in 86 innings while striking out 55 batters.

But she just ain't big enough.

As a hitter, she bats second in the lineup. She can hit, she can bunt and she will do whatever is asked of her.

In my opinion, Dava Bullard is the best pitcher in the East Central Conference and one

of the best players in the area regardless of classification.

But she just ain't big enough.

Folks, if you get the chance to watch Dava Bullard play, do it. She is the real deal.

And as far as Madalyn White goes, she is the best softball player to ever wear a Heide Trask uniform and one of the best athletes to ever come out of Pender County.

In fact, I'll say it right now.

Madalyn White is the best softball player to ever play in Pender County.

## Topsail

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capitalize offensively.

Heritage led 8-0 entering the bottom of the sixth inning before Ellis ended the game with a three-run home run.

Topsail sophomore Addison Ash started in the circle and allowed eight runs, though only two were earned.

The Lady Pirates finished the season 16-8 overall and won the Carolina Coast Conference championship with an 8-2 conference record.

Topsail graduates six seniors from this year's softball squad.

The Topsail baseball team also saw its postseason run come to an end in Greenville against top-seeded D.H. Conley.

The Pirates, seeded eighth in the East, pushed the Vikings to the final inning before falling 3-2 on a walk-off victory by Conley.

Topsail carried a 2-1 lead into the bottom of the seventh inning needing just three outs to pull off the upset. The Vikings scored two runs in the final frame to advance.

The Pirates finished the season 18-8 overall and placed second in the Carolina Coast Conference with an 8-4 record.

Topsail graduates 11 seniors from this year's baseball team.



