

Intriguing Play to Make People Think

Oakton High School presents "Fahrenheit 451."

BY BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

Featuring a cast and crew of 35, Oakton High presents the thought-provoking drama, "Fahrenheit 451." The curtain rises Thursday-Saturday, Nov. 20, 21 and 22, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 at the door only.

It's directed by juniors Emily Dhue and Dana Bachman and is set in a futuristic 1950 when society is repressed. The government closely regulates everyone and everything, and books and reading are illegal.

"The show centers around a fireman whose job it is to burn books; it shows his transformation as he discovers reading," said Dhue. "When he meets a young woman named Clarisse, she makes him wonder about what he doesn't know."

IN THIS SOCIETY, said Bachman, "People know how to read, but have never experienced the emotions books can bring them." As for directing, she said, "It's cool to project our own vision onto this play. I didn't realize how hard it would be communicating my ideas to the actors, but this helped me improve."

Dhue enjoyed directing more than she expected to; she initially worried about working with people older than her. "But I love the play and the whole concept; and I'm glad I've had a hand in making it all happen and bringing a script to life."

Senior Nic Hill portrays the main character, Montag, a fireman who burns books. "At first, he's devoted to his job and loves the beauty, warmth and freedom that fire provides," explained Hill. "But he also thinks for himself and is interesting because he still follows the rules. He's unhappy at home and loathes his wife Mildred, but he knows she's his responsibility. Yet he's intrigued by Clarisse because she's so different from Mildred and is high-energy and engaging."

Hill's enjoys his role because "I see qualities of myself in him – rebellious and wanting to know how and why things are the way they are. And he eventually transforms and wants to understand books." Hill said the audience will enjoy this show because "the characters are so well-developed. They believe they're free-thinking, but they're not. And I hope people will take a step back, see themselves and want to change, because that's what we're in danger of becoming. Despite the show's heavy topic, it's fast-paced, conversational and feels real – and that's what also makes it so terrifying."

Playing Clarisse is senior Savannah Hard. "She's 18 and lives with her uncle, father and grandfather," said Hard. "Unlike the other houses, hers isn't fireproof and doesn't have a wall of televisions. She doesn't like technology, but prefers nature and is obser-



Posing in costume are (from left) Mahea Kaloi, Jordan Loria and Sarah Woolf.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HUNTER CARRICO



Michael Williamson as Fire Chief Beatty.



Savannah Hard plays Clarisse in the Oakton High production of "Fahrenheit 451."



Stavros Voudouris, Michael Williamson, Nic Hill and Eric Petrides portray the firemen.

vant and curious. She thinks about things, but doesn't tell anyone what she's thinking about. She's odd and quirky, so the Citizens Committee – which watches everyone – makes her see an analyst every week."

Hard says Clarisse brings some light-hearted moments to the show. "It's an intriguing story with characters whose back story is really cool to watch come out," she said. "And the characters develop more as the show goes on."

Junior Michael Williamson portrays Fire Chief Beatty. "He's a complex character with a complicated past," said Williamson. "He once was an avid reader and loved books because they helped him escape from his troubles. But eventually, he grew to hate books because they ceased to provide him the comfort he'd grown to expect from them. He's intelligent and also understands the danger that can come from reading – not dealing with your own problems by getting involved in other people's lives."

"The show centers around a fireman whose job it is to burn books; it shows his transformation as he discovers reading."

— Oakton High junior Emily Dhue

Williamson describes Beatty as an authority figure, "always in command, but with a touch of crazy. He's obviously a tormented person because some part of him thinks he isn't doing the right thing. He thinks for himself, instead of blindly following others. It's a dark show, but it's relevant to now because people still ban books they think will offend one group or another."

PLAYING Mildred Montag is senior Jordan Loria. "She's empty and gives a sense of how everyone else is in this society – without original thoughts," said Loria. "Mildred's obsessed with a pre-recorded TV show that has no meaning; but to her, it's all that matters."

Loria loves her role because "I consider myself decently intelligent and she's the opposite of me, and so shallow. She wants things shiny and happy; but that's what makes it so fake – because it's not reality, so she forms her own."

Loria said this show is going to make the audience think. "It's really going to open their eyes to the fact that we're slowly dying as a culture," she explained. "What we think is technologically advancing just might be bringing us backwards. I think people are going to love it."