

## Press Clippings 9/27/2018

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### Larkin High academy students staging first original musical

By Madhu Krishnamurthy



*Larkin High School's Visual and Performing Arts Academy students will perform an original musical titled, "Ocean Born Mary" Thursday and Friday at the Elgin school. The production has been a year-and-a-half in the making and involves 150 students. The free performances begin at 7 p.m. in the school's auditorium. Courtesy of Elgin Area School District U-46*

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A production a year and a half in the making and involving 150 students is ready to take the stage at Larkin High School in Elgin.

Larkin's Visual and Performing Arts Academy students will put on an hourlong original musical titled "Ocean Born Mary" in a free, concert reading-style performance at 7 p.m. Thursday and Friday in the 700-seat auditorium at the school, 1475 Larkin Ave.

Last school year, drama and music students created the script from scratch, writing the dialogue, lyrics and musical scores. This year, the entire academy will have a hand in the production, with drama and vocal students directing and performing, music students playing orchestration, dance students doing choreography and art students assisting with set and prop design.

This is the first time the academy has mounted such an elaborate, almost entirely student-run production, and it's Larkin's first original musical, said Frank Rose, math and drama teacher.

"It's over the course of two years," Rose said. "The idea was that this would become a tradition so we would do this every two years."

"Ocean Born Mary" is based on a real myth about a ship of immigrants traveling from England to the United States who were threatened by pirates unless a pregnant passenger vowed to name her child "Mary" after the pirate leader's dead mother. The play depicts Mary's life, including meeting the pirate who demanded her naming rights.

"The story is not taking itself very seriously, but the project is very serious," Rose said.

Students have spent roughly 270 hours, mostly during the school day, on the production, including auditioning and casting, directing and rehearsing under the guidance of academy teachers.

"The performance itself is going to be a concert reading of everything that they have done," Rose said. "We are modeling it after the professional concerts of classic musicals. Except the tech crew and art students, almost everyone else will be on stage."

Senior and drama student Isabella "Bella" Cwik, who plays the title character, said the production has been fun and collaborative.

"I am so excited about the performance," she said. "It is super challenging figuring out what to expect. This was completely up to the person on how they wanted to originate the role. I actually wrote a lot of Mary's lines. It's cool to see how everyone sort of molded themselves to fit the role or how the role really fit who they are as a performer."