Trinity High School student pursues drama dream

By Debra Weston
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TRINITY — Fred Rogers, that guy in the neighborhood, is credited with telling a group of parents that a lot of serious learning is done when we play. Maddie Conti, a Trinity High School junior, can attest to the observation.

Conti just completed a three-week run as the female lead, Sandy Dumbrowski, in the Community theater of Greensboro’s presentation of the musical “Grease” at the Starr theater on South Elm Street. The show ran from March 17 to April 2: three nights a week plus a Sunday matinee, one more thing added to Conti’s schedule as a full-time student taking Advanced Placement classes.

“Honestly,” she confessed, “it is a little difficult to balance everything, but it is so worth it. It is all about prioritizing.”

Conversation with Conti leaves no doubt she loves the roles she plays and the theater, but the avocation comes at a price: a lot of hard work. Conti studied dance for several years, taking private lessons with the Greensboro Ballet, and is currently studying voice with a Greensboro instructor, Craig Richardson. She has a short lifetime of preparation for the fun she is having now.

“‘Grease’ is such a fun show; the audience really gets into it,” she said.

But what intrigued her about playing the role of Sandy, or any other role for that matter, is “It really makes you think. In order to be convincing you have to know what motivates your character. It is exhilarating to be someone else.”

However, what she feels is frequently misunderstood about the musical is “often people see the story as changing oneself for someone. I like to see it more as a fight for true love.”

Conti’s love of the theater is not limited to characters and scripts. In her eight years working in the community theater and in the numerous other productions she has worked on, she loves the collaboration. The community theater, whose mission is “bringing our diverse community together to learn about experience and celebrate the joys of the theater” gives Conti the opportunity to learn “from others in every walk of life. We are a family.”

Next year is a pivotal one for Conti. This month, she will audition at the N.C. School of the Arts for a place in its one-year intensive program in drama for high school seniors. She knows the competition is fierce, but everything about drama is “risky.” Conti is also looking at good theater programs at colleges and universities in the area where she can major in drama and musical theater.

In the interim, she plans on participating at the Thespian Festival in Greensboro, where she will work with original scripts. She has already been cast this summer in the production of “Anything Goes” at Twin City Stage in Winston-Salem. Regardless of the amount of work involved, Conti remains immersed in drama. “I cannot see myself doing anything else.”