'Chicago' ready to dazzle

By JEN BISCOFF
Scene Reporter

Don't simply slip into spring. Leap in with "All That Jazz" and come see the spring musical "Chicago." A trip to Broadway is no longer necessary to see this production.

For the next two weekends, the Department of Fine and Performing Arts will be performing "Chicago" in the Creighton Lied Performing Arts Building.

Many know "Chicago" as the musical and movie about young Roxie Hart's adventures from the night club to the jail cell. The play is based on factual events, originally written by Maurine Dallas Watkins.

Before Watkins became a playwright, she was a journalist.

While writing for The Chicago Tribune, Watkins was assigned to follow the trial of Velma Gaerner, a cabaret singer who was charged with the murder of her lover.

Throughout the investigation, Gaerner often changed her story, and her husband stood by her side during the whole trial. Out of this experience came the character Roxie and the play "Chicago."

But don't expect the performance to be anything like the movie, because it's based on the original play.

"A lot of people are familiar with the movie," play director Tammy Meneghini said. "The challenge was finding an interesting way to tell the story and make it unique, but keep it true to the original writers."

Creighton's production of the play has kept the original style of the play as it was performed for the first time on June 3, 1975 — as a tribute to vaudeville and the time period.

Vaudeville is an exaggerated style of theatrical entertainment consisting of a number of individual performances, acts or mixed numbers by comedians, singers, dancers, acrobats and magicians.

And the play is not mere entertainment, it has a lesson behind it.

"I think the play has so much meaning, with an undercurrent of what it means to be patriotic and how we glamorize criminals," Meneghini said.

The cast is made up of 23 performers, all who auditioned in October and have been rehearsing since Jan. 5.

Rehearsals have been running six days a week, four hours a day, except for Saturday, which is five hours.

"It's difficult juggling that with school work and other activities, but we've all brought our best forward," said Matt Denoncour, Arts & Sciences sophomore and chorus member.

Those who like dance will enjoy the play because it will be dance-oriented.

"I'm very fortunate," said Patrick Roddy, choreographer. "I get to work with the great students I have in dance class."

Anna Kurtz, Arts & Sciences senior, plays Roxie and has taken on a role that has the most required time and effort to develop her character.

Not only is acting required, but all cast members sing and dance, too.

"Everyone has risen to the challenge and given their 110 percent, so many little things have been put into it, and it's a really long process," Kurtz said.

Kurtz not only has the lead role, but she is also using this production for her bachelor of Fine Arts thesis.

As a theater performance major, she is required to perform in a play, document the process and write a final paper over it.

"[As a senior], I'm really going out with a bang, and I can't imagine a better experience." Kurtz said.