

'Guys and Dolls' show off acting skills at Marshall

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OLYMPIA — The stage at Marshall Middle School showed the beginnings of looking like a New York City street, as "guys" donned hats and sang about horse races and "dolls" sang songs about going straight.

Marshall Middle School students were rehearsing for "Guys and Dolls," part of Students on Stage, an after-school program run by the Capital Playhouse that brought the same musical to Griffin School earlier this school year.

The fee-based program brings a small crew to the school to produce the musicals, which are adapted for middle school, playhouse education director Ann King said. The month long program includes casting, rehearsal and the show, which takes place at the schools, she said.

Last week was dress rehearsals and two shows for the actors at Marshall, who were a combination of actors with stage experience outside of school, those who have been in school productions since elementary school and some who haven't been on stage very much.

"It's a real mixed experience," director Sara Flotree said. "There's a lot of talent in here." Marshall assistant principal John Hitchman said the Marshall Community Council (the school's parent-teacher-student organization) brought the program to the school last year, and it has brought unexpected benefits.

"The biggest difference I see is that it puts sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders together in one activity and that bond carries throughout the rest of the year," he said.

Eighth-grader Katie Sutterman, 14, who plays Adelaide, a showgirl who has waited for years to marry her gambler boyfriend, Nathan Detroit, said though she has been in eight other musicals and has performed with Creative Theater Experience, it can be nerve-racking to perform in front of her classmates.

"Sometimes when you perform for the school, you think, 'Will they say that I'm bad?' " she said. "But (in the last musical) everybody complimented me and said I did a good job."

"This is good because we don't have much drama in the schools," she said.

Seventh-grader Sam Lacey, 13, said he's having fun as one of the male leads, Sky Masterson, a big-time gambler who comes to New York and meets Miss Sarah, who runs a Salvation Army-like mission.

"He's a gambler and a gentleman at the same time," he said. "That's pretty different than me."

"It's pretty hard memorizing all those lines, but it's really fun."