

There are few school districts anywhere that can rival Fairfield when it comes to the performing arts. I'd like to tell you about three arts happenings that are coming up. Two of them are among the largest events in our district all year.

"Anne of Green Gables" opens tonight at the high school, at 7:30 p.m. The play dramatizes the story of a young orphan girl, Anne Shirley. Many readers will know her from the classic book by L.M. Montgomery. This wonderful family entertainment will be performed again on Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. There will also be a Saturday matinee at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$6 for students and senior citizens and \$8 for general admission.

On March 14 is the Crystal Classic. This incredible showchoir competition gets bigger every year. There are local schools competing, including Ross, Loveland, Middletown, Colerain and Hamilton. There are groups coming from across Ohio. And schools from as far away as Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia are sending their showchoirs.

The preliminary rounds run from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The finals begin at 8 p.m. Our own Choraliars, who as the host choir do not compete, will perform in exhibition at 11 p.m., and the award ceremony will start at 11:30 p.m. It is an incredibly long and fun day that follows months and months of planning. I have to commend Jeff Clark, the high school choral music teacher who heads it all up. Jeff has taken a program that was already very strong and brought it to even newer heights.

Three years ago the Crystal Classic outgrew the Performing Arts Center, which seats about 700, and moved to the Arena, which seats about 3,000. That move was made possible when a team of about 60 dads built a stage more than 60 feet wide and 40 feet deep for the Arena. Now each year our "dad team," as Jeff calls them, backs a truck up to the Arena, unloads and erects the stage, and then takes it all apart again and stores it away when the event is over. It's a huge amount of work and we are extremely grateful for what they do.

This year they will also install floor-to-ceiling curtains along the sides and back of the stage. Jeff tells me it will add both acoustically and aesthetically to the performing venue. There are also two large-screen televisions on either side of the stage so the audience can see close-ups of the performers without using binoculars. Once the lights go down, it doesn't feel anything like a gym.

While all that is going on the Performing Arts Center is also still busy, with a middle school showchoir competition. Our district's other two showchoirs, Pure Elegance and Rhythm Express, will also perform there, though they won't be competing.

And on May 3 it's the 47th annual Arts Fair, which spreads over all of Fairfield Senior High School. It's the largest event in our district every year. The theme this year is "Spotlight on the Arts," with a strong Hollywood focus. This is another all day event that we'll have more information on as the time draws nearer. It is always a wonderful day.

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