



This Week at the Complex

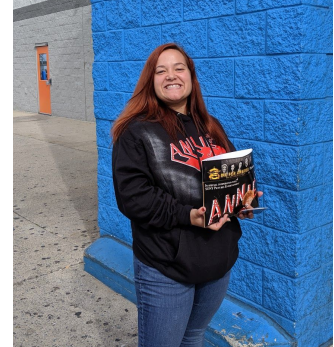
Nina Worsley

The Complex has been fired up recently due to being weeks into rehearsals for their upcoming Winter production of *Annie*. This Winter, Sing for America plans on capturing the magic of this film similar to the way they put *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* on stage last Winter. The excitement is steadily rising for this cast who can't wait to put on "the best *Annie*

that's ever been performed." I'm able to give you an exclusive on what goes on inside a rehearsal for a show with stakes so high. This is what a week at The Complex looks like when preparing for a show.



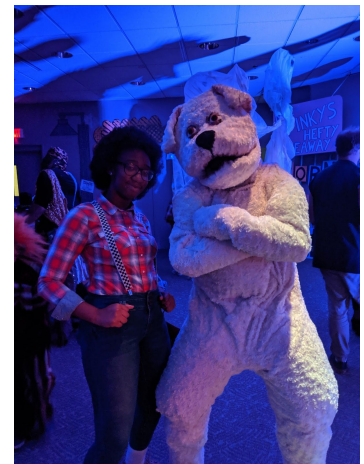
The company is coming off of a fundraiser at the Trexlertown Walmart where they sang songs, asked for donations, and gave out postcards for their upcoming show. Some of their younger cast members debuted songs from the show including one of the young girls playing the title role.



However, gears switched pretty fast as SFA prepared The Complex for its costume party the next day.

When Sunday rolled around we were in spooky spirits as fairies, clowns, and Maleficent herself made appearances at The Complex's Halloween party. Audry II told a scary story to the younger ones and we all enjoyed a night of fun and games. From bobbing for apples to the pitch black maze to the unforgettable "Pour Taste," a game full of surprises not for the faint of heart or stomach, it's safe to say Sunday night was definitely a highlight of this Halloween season.

Then it was back to work for this talented cast because *Annie* is approaching quickly. Their day to day focus has to increase in



order for them to remain distinguishable from all other theater programs. Sing for America takes pride in being different from other theater companies as far as how they operate. Because of that, their performers are asked more than they would be anywhere else and are expected to deliver more than just straight legs and strong vocals.

Most days, rehearsal is not just a rehearsal, it's also a dance class, a fitness bootcamp, a private voice lesson or even a shop class. Monday, while some of the cast was learning in one room, in the other, dancers were running up and down stairs, and working out together then moving straight into technical dance before joining *Annie* rehearsal to learn the dance of the day "Let's go to the movies." This is just a regular day for these dancers; I'm out of breath just thinking about it.

On top of this rehearsal process, the Sing for America **Company** and **Young Company** earlier that day got together to rehearse for yet another show. A collaboration of music to celebrate our Nation's history called SFA's *Chasing History Tour* was performed



for a school assembly Tuesday morning.

That night they were right back

at it with technique dance classes and learning numbers. However, another aspect that sets SFA apart is their methods of

maintaining an ordered and focused environment. The cast is given penalties when they don't adhere to the standards which means they are required to do what they call "chopping," a practice that originated in football that executive and former football player Jewel Gilbert thought best to use as a way to get the cast back on track and teach a level of respect and discipline. It's effectively working so far. That aside, the cast also got a chance to sit and discuss the show for awhile. The directors try to get out of the cast a level of understanding, not only of the meaning of

the show but why they're doing it. For the past couple of weeks, they have



been tasked with answering the question "what does it mean to be a true friend?"

They sat down once again to discuss it on Tuesday night.

The next day, the group talked again about the ongoing question. This is a question you wouldn't expect to be so difficult but it is challenging the minds of the cast more than anyone was prepared for. Rehearsal finished with the orphans working through their scenes together and the dancers finishing the energetic tap number they started learning on Monday, "Let's Go to the Movies."

This company is producing a lot of excitement as we approach the opening of what they're claiming will be "the best

Annie ever performed.” How true is that statement? Is this claim an advertising tactic or does the cast of this show actually believe it? From what I’ve seen over this week with SFA, the bold statements made are in the bones of the company, and as for the truth of the statement, *Annie* opens December 22nd at the Mauch Chunk Opera House, I suggest you take a trip up there to find out.