



An Interview with Joanna Rosen

Meredith Piela, Senior
Editor-in-Chief

Every December, Joanna Rosen, my good friend and Headlight's Editors' Assistant, performs in Hanover Theatre's production of *A Christmas Carol*. I was fortunate enough to sit down with Joanna when she wasn't occupied to ask about her experience acting in the classic Christmas musical.

Q: What role are you playing this year? How does this compare with previous years?

A: I've played the same role, Martha Cratchit, for the past five years. This year, however, I get to be an official member of the adult ensemble as well, which means I'm involved in more musical numbers than in previous years.

Q: How many years have you been in *A Christmas Carol*?

A: This will be my sixth year.

Q: What is your favorite part about the ACC experience, onstage or off?

A: I would have to say my favorite part about performing at Hanover Theatre in ACC each year is the cast. Every year a group of people comes together to tell Dickens' classic story, and although we have new actors join us each year, there are many ACC veterans who return annually. As one of them, I love getting to learn from the new cast members and reconnect with the returning ones. As cheesy as it sounds, the cast really is a family and Hanover has become a second home for me.

Q: Do you have a favorite memory from any of your old shows? If so, what is it?

A: I can't think of one favorite memory, but I can definitely think of a funny one! In one scene, my friend and I enter the stage from the wings. Set in the 1800s, ACC features period costumes, so the two of us were all dressed up in long gowns and cloaks. As we were skipping onto the stage, my friend brushed up against some scenery and her cloak got caught on it. She had no idea, and attempted to continue to walk onstage while delivering her line, but the cloak was now stuck and my friend was violently yanked backwards. The

look of pure astonishment on her face absolutely killed me and we both started to crack up...only then I couldn't stop. So for the rest of that scene (which, mercifully, was very short) I was desperately trying to keep myself together. I managed to gasp out my line and scurry offstage, but not without thoroughly embarrassing myself in front of an audience of 2,300! I'm certainly never going to forget that!

Q: What's your rehearsal process like?

A: The entire rehearsal/performance process lasts for four and a half weeks. We begin rehearsals the day after Thanksgiving, and for the first two weeks we practice in a rehearsal hall Tuesdays through Fridays for about five hours a day, and Saturdays and Sundays for around eight hours. We then move into the theatre for tech which lasts for two days. These tech rehearsals begin at 12:00 p.m. and end at 12:00 a.m. So that's 24 hours of rehearsals in which we combine all of the technical aspects of the show. After this we have one run-through of the entire show and begin performances the next day! During the week we have three private performances when schools come and watch the show, and then we open for the public on Friday, December 19th. The run lasts for a week, and we close on December 28th.

Q: What sets this adaption of ACC apart from others?

A: This adaption—written by our director and the executive director of the theatre—is very distinct due to its realism. In tons of versions I've seen, movies and stage productions, the script is less true to the original text than ours is. Also I've noticed that other adaptations make ACC into a full-out musical, with choreographed dance numbers that look like they're out of *Annie*. Hanover's version is more realistic and less showy. We strive to make the show more relatable and real; we aren't characters who suddenly break out into song, but real people who are believable and occasionally sing Christmas songs!

A Christmas Carol opens on December 19th and runs through December 28th, so you should definitely come check it out and support Joanna and the rest of the cast!

For more information about Hanover Theatre and ACC, visit <http://www.thehanovertheatre.org/>

GPA Struggles

Kat Veytsman, Sophomore
Reporter

Today, students are taught to be well-rounded individuals. A student should be good academically, athletically, intellectually, and emotionally; he or she should have good leadership skills and do community service. Yet when it comes time to apply to college, everyone knows that a high GPA, the result of academic prowess, is weighted more heavily than other character traits. This makes us question if this emphasis on academics is fair.

We are told from the second we graduate middle school that the rest of our high school career is a competition. We have to do as many clubs as possible, take and maintain as many honors classes as you can, and hold the highest GPA of all our classmates so that four years later we can get into the best college. This starts a vicious cycle of stress for students, because students often overload themselves with too many honors classes providing them with too much homework. If they attempt to actually finish all their homework on time, then they often end up sleep deprived, especially when the aforementioned clubs use up a lot of their after school time. This sleep deprived state causes students to lose focus during class, resulting in a harder time doing the homework at home, and an even more difficult time on tests, because they weren't fully focused during the original learning of the material.

When students' grades start to slip, they get very stressed out, creating an even more difficult time trying to focus. From this point, there are usually two options: one is that the student continues in the difficult class and the grades continue to decrease, or the student can drop down to an easier level. With the second option, the student gets scared about the tantalizing "dropped" that is now on their transcript. This makes the student want to try to stay.

People wonder why teenagers act like zombies, but it is because we are always stressed out and sleep deprived. When students Valeriia Niksdorf, Victoria Khrobostova, and Julia Broman were asked why they were stressed out about school, they answered unanimously that it was about getting into good schools, as well as being able to afford them. Khrobostova said, "A higher GPA means possible scholarships and college, which is supposed to result in better stability in one's adult life." Niksdorf added that along with that, our generation will also have to deal with a "screwed up economy," which will make student loans harder to pay off. This is also a problem when you don't know what career to choose and all these decisions become even worse when as a high schooler you are trying to maintain your grades, a normal sleep schedule, a social life, and work or volunteering, while knowing that the world is messed up and the older generations won't listen to you talk anyway. Broman added that school creates stress and anxiety, especially if you do not have a special skill such as a sport. All three of the surveyed students agreed that the main stress of school is the future. The grades you get now will be on your transcript, which will determine your acceptance to college, which will determine your entire adult life.

The main advice that I have for anyone in high school is to relax a little. If you are stressed-out, talk to your teacher and ask his or her opinion on your situation. Teachers usually know best about whether they think you can pull through and get your grade up, or if they genuinely think that you would have better success in a lower level class. Aside from that, I would also advise that you try to remember that one test or quiz isn't going to ruin your life, so try to bounce back quickly from low grades and attempt to do better on the next ones.

How to Make the Most of the Holiday Season

Becky Twaalfhoven, Sophomore
Reporter-in-the-Field

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the holiday season, whether you celebrate Christmas or not. Christmas music plays insistently on every station (and it's always the same songs, too); commercials become increasingly desperate and demanding; and this year, there is less than one month between Thanksgiving and Christmas in which to accomplish a laundry list (this is a weird way of putting it) of tasks. Some people – myself included – enjoy all of the hype, and have no problem watching Elf for the eleventh time. However, if you find yourself losing the "holiday spirit" before the season even begins, here are some tips for how to avoid the burnout.

1. Turn off the radio and switch to CDs or an iPod: If the music really gets to you, why listen to it? It's unavoidable in stores, but nobody has to listen to the radio in the car. Burn a CD or bring an iPod along in the car to enjoy music without the jingle bells.

2. Bake: Nothing revives the excitement for the holidays like the smell of gingerbread. You don't have to be a professional chef to make cut-out sugar cookies (even from a package) and ice them with festive colors. If you're feeling adventurous, tackle a new recipe, like gingerbread men or home-made hot

chocolate. Not enough time for baking? Visit Starbucks or a local coffee shop and try a seasonal drink or treat.

3. Relax: This year especially, time seems to slip away, and before you know it another week has passed and you still haven't gone out to buy those presents. It's not the end of the world if you missed the sales or have to reschedule your shopping trip – a few weeks is more than enough time to get everything done. There's nothing wrong with online shopping, either! If you're really struggling with time, write out a schedule for all of your errands and stick to it to avoid a last-minute panic ruining your holiday.

4. Hit the town: Our small town has a lot to offer for the holiday season! Take this opportunity to wander around Old Town and meet up with a friend for coffee, or stop in the local shops for gift inspiration and a friendly chat. The festive window displays are welcoming for a reason! If you haven't already, check out the "Things to Do" section of the Reporter for more ideas and upcoming events.

5. Live in the moment: Enjoy the happiness of December, because it will be over sooner than you think! As helpful as it can be to plan ahead, take some time to put aside the calendar and enjoy yourself. Sit down, have a drink, read a book, light a fire, or spend quality family time, because once break is over, there's no going back.

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