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Winthrop University

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They Got the Beat: Department of Theatre and Dance's Hairspray Opens in Johnson Theatre

Quick Facts

- The musical Hairspray is based on the 1988 John Waters film of the same name.
- Show times are 8 p.m. Feb. 20-23 and 2 p.m. Feb. 24 in Johnson Theatre.
- Tickets are \$10 with a Winthrop ID or \$15 general admission.



Charish Harvey, Jonathan Hoskins, Kate Meyers

ROCK HILL, S.C. — For weeks, Winthrop University theatre major **Charish Harvey's** favorite part of the day has been rehearsals for **Hairspray**, a new production from the **Department of Theatre and Dance** in collaboration with the Department of Music.

Beginning Feb. 20, everyone will get to see why, when the production opens at 8 p.m. in **Johnson Theatre**.

The 60s-era musical tells the story of the lovable plus-size **Tracy Turnblad**, whose passion for dancing leads her and best friend Penny to try out for a spot on a local TV dance program. She becomes a teen sensation, encouraged by her mother Edna—played by **Philip**

Calabro—and father Wilbur, played by **Allyn Hunt**, and falls for handsome Link Larkin, played by **Jonathan Hoskins**. But underneath the upbeat song-and-dance numbers like “You Can’t Stop the Beat” and “Good Morning, Baltimore” lay important messages.

“What we try to do is give the audience what they expect, but also try to do things a little differently,” said **Stephen Gundersheim**, director and associate professor of theatre and dance. “It is silly, fluffy and fun. But in the midst of it, there are some deeper, larger issues.”

These issues focus on the racially charged tension of the time through prejudice and interracial romance and the main character coming to terms with her size.

Tracy is a character Harvey has related to since she watched the 1988 film version of Hairspray, upon which the Broadway musical is based, calling it her “dream role.”

“That was the first musical that I really engaged in,” she said. “I just loved Tracy’s story. She’s different, and that’s OK. ... Every time I perform, I have just a little side of Tracy in me. I think, ‘I may be different, but I can still do this.’”

Bringing such a popular film to the big stage is “deceptively easy,” Gundersheim explained, because

you're "fighting against another medium." The crew has worked hard to give the vibe of different locations on one stage, create exciting choreography through Charlotte choreographer Linda Booth and ensure movements and dialogue are befitting of the era. Cast and crew have worked afternoons and weekends putting everything together.

"The mood of students involved in the show is exciting," he said. "Their work level is very high."

Additional cast members include **Kate Meyers** as Penny Pingleton; **Mona Bailey** as her mother Prudy Pingleton; **Patricia Blair** and **Emily Cupit** as Velma and Amber Von Tussle; **Kyle Bleau** as Corny Collins; **Jennifer Sainyo** as Motormouth Maybelle and **Chandler Robinson** as Seaweed J. Stubbs, Penny's boyfriend.

Show times are 8 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20-Saturday, Feb. 23 and 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 24. Tickets are \$10 with a Winthrop ID or \$15 general admission. Reserved seating is available. Call 803/323-4014 or e-mail boxoffice@winthrop.edu for tickets. It is a cultural event.

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