



'Glee' season finale airs tonight, 4C

WITH TV / COMICS



DRAMA UNFOLDS

In York's abandoned buildings

A Newberry Twp. native recently shot a film in York featuring local acting students.

By ERIN McCracken
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Felicia Williams walked into the room. She saw Joell Cora sitting next to Sovi Lay. "Who is this?" Williams asked with her hands on her hips. Joell's arm went from Sovi's back to his side in one swift movement. He shifted uncomfortably.

"A friend from work," he answered slowly.

"A friend?" Sovi shot out, crossing her arms across her chest. "I thought I was your girlfriend."

"Girlfriend?" Felicia said, showing her hand in Sovi's face. "I'm his fiancée."

Joell's head sank into his hands. His classmates snickered as they watched the drama unfold on a recent Monday.

Ten minutes earlier, acting instructor Jonathan VanDyke split the William Penn Senior High School students into groups and told them to act out an impromptu relationship drama. Joell was chosen as a director of his group.

"Have you seen this in person before?" he asked Felicia and Sovi as they rehearsed.

"No," Sovi said. "I have," Joell said with a grin. "I was the witness."

In the next room, Bria Harcum, aka Bria Tashaé, was preparing her scene. She was running a family meeting with "her kids" Ikea Bristol, Siya Brown and Brittany Smith. VanDyke, who had visited the acting class



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Ikea Bristol, far left, rehearses a scene with Bria Tashaé, second from right, and Brittany Smith, far right, during a workshop at William Penn Senior High School while instructor Jonathan VanDyke, second from left, watches. VanDyke, A New York City artist, shot a film in York featuring some William Penn acting students.

for workshops since October, interjected questions as they inter-acted.

"Do you have a good resolution?" he asked. "How is your blocking?"

VanDyke, a Red Land Senior High School graduate, now works as a visual artist in New York City. In 2007, he learned about downtown York revitalization efforts and became interested in the process.

"It was sad to see how much vacant space there was in the downtown," he said.

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Acting students visit New York City

On May 25, a group of 11 William Penn Performing Arts Institute students visited The American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York City.

Performing Arts Institute head Cal Weary accompanied them. He said that he brings a few students to AMDA to audition every year, but this year they got to spend a whole day on campus.

Several students including seniors Joell Cora and Zackery Haynes were also going to audition for a chance to

attend the academy.

The American Musical and Dramatic Academy, which is 45 years old, is an accredited institution of the National Association of Schools of Theatre. It recently began to offer degree programs including Bachelor of Fine Arts in acting, musical theater, dance theater and performing arts at its two campuses in New York City and Los Angeles.

For details, visit www.amda.edu.

Act

Continued from 1C

But after he met the energetic teens in Cal Weary's William Penn Performing Arts Institute, VanDyke hatched a plan: He would shoot a movie, something he never tried before. As part of the process, he would use York's untapped resources: Young talent and abandoned buildings.

He held workshops throughout the past year to introduce students to old movies. They connected to the 1962 Italian film "L'eclisse" ("The Eclipse"), especially the break-up scene, VanDyke said. He decided to have four pairs of students reenact the scene in vacant spaces around York. They used the same script, but each group's scene differed based on how they portrayed their emotions.

He chose the 1960s film because it was nothing like the loud, fast-paced drama the students were used to. The process forced them to reinterpret their own experiences into a slower, quieter scene. It took discipline and focus, VanDyke said.

It also took patience, said Joell, who is a senior and just started acting this year. His scene, which he acted out with Sovi, took about nine hours to shoot.

Bria, a senior, was paired with one of her best friends, Zackery Haynes.

"We are goofy," she said. "For us to bring seriousness and anger to (the scene) was hard."

Zackery said that there is a lot more to movie making than he realized. Parts were shot out of order. Directions were precise. Every movement mattered.

During their recent workshop, the William Penn students had to fall into character quickly and react to changes in a split second.

At the end of the session, VanDyke had a surprise. He handed out white packets that contained the first photos of the film.

"I love it," Sovi said, looking at a still of her scene. "I want to frame it."

All the students will be invited back to the film premiere, which VanDyke is planning for this fall in York. But the final workshop would probably be the last time he would see most of the graduating seniors.

"It's a little sad," VanDyke said.

Bria said being a part of the film helped her make goals for the future. She plans to attend community college before transferring to a four-year school to study music.

"The experience ... made me see that I can do this for the rest of my life," she said.

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