

Expect Nothing. Appreciate Everything.

Name: Nicole Bills

Grade: Senior

Musicals Involved In: “Annie Get Your Gun,”
“Once Upon a Mattress,” “Little Women”

Lesson: When things don't turn out as expected, make the most of them.

STORY BY WHITNEY MERRILL

PHOTO BY WHITNEY MERRILL

Nerves and adrenaline race through her as she stands on the stage. She is surrounded by other people, but she might as well have been alone. It will be her first solo. She can't mess this up. Finally she hears her cue and starts to sing. All the stress melts away and is replaced with absolute joy. In that moment, she knew she wanted to do this forever.

Senior Nicole Bills joined choir her freshman year. Her singing career up until this point was limited to singing in the shower. The realization that she had talent came with a solo at Gold Dust. Bills was also accepted into concert choir and Golden Silhouettes.

“I think I was one of the first [freshman] to get a solo at Gold Dust,” Bills said. “I just remember that it was a really big deal because choir teacher Schehera McKasson, came up to me and said, ‘There are going to be girls that are going to be talking about you and some are going to hate you.’ I guess it was a big deal.”

It was that solo where Bills realized that she had found what she loved.

“It sounds so stupid, but when in that moment when you're singing you think ‘Oh my gosh, I never want to leave this stage. This feels amazing,’” Bills said.

It didn't stop at that. After Gold Dust, theatre teacher Jeremy Goldson tried to get Bills to take theatre. Bills said Goldson told her, “When I see talent I latch on to it and I don't let that person get rid of that talent.”

As a result, Bills started to take theatre and was a chorus member of “Annie Get Your Gun” during her sophomore year.

Things took a turn for the worse during Bills' junior year. The main production was “Once Upon a Mattress,” a musical based off Hans Christian Andersen's story “The Princess and the Pea.” She didn't get a part.

“It was really hard,” Bills said. “Everyone knew that in the cast. It was mostly hard because it was all of my best friends in (the cast) and I was just the little assistant stage manager in the background. There were girls who dropped out since they didn't want to be in the musical. People would ask Mr. Goldson, ‘Why won't you put her in that spot?’ It was a really hard decision to stay and do tech.”

May of her junior year brought another

chance to be in another musical. Bills, along with other students, auditioned for the stage version of “Little Women.” Going into the audition, she wasn't as nervous even though she had not made it into the musical her junior year.

“This [was] my last time and I might as well go for it. I didn't have anything to lose, but I had everything to gain,” Bills said.

Bills had come home from callbacks. Sitting on the couch, she looked up the results online. Looking up results only brought disappointment. Although she had made it in, she was cast as the character Meg, who is one of the sisters which the story focuses, but not the part that Bills wanted. To her, Meg was stupid and had no point in being in the musical.

The beginning of the production was a grim time for Bills. She was angry at the girl who had gotten the part that she wanted. As a result of this sadness that she felt, she didn't even want to sing anymore. She couldn't even look at some of the cast members because she was so angry and jealous of them. She decided that she couldn't continue feeling like this. Prayer is what helped Bills get through this period.

“I just wasn't happy so I just had to kneel down and say, ‘Please help me to be happy. Please help me to be happy for her,’” Bills said.

Over time, her feelings of anger and jealousy began to disappear.

“I describe it as how the sun rises in the morning. It isn't instant,” Bills said. “I'm sure at some points I just wondered, ‘Why can't I just be happy and have fun,’” but it didn't happen that way. It was kind of a day by day thing. It's really incredible how changed I am from that time in May to where I was at closing night. I am now such good friends with the girl I was so angry at.”

As a senior looking back on her past experiences, Bills would give her younger self some advice.

“You don't know this yet but you're going to be involved in choir and theatre and you're not going to be number one all the time, but you're going to be good,” Bills said. You're going to have your time and you're going to have times that are really hard, but it's all worth it and even though certain things aren't how you want them to be it's how they need to be. Take every single moment because it only happens once.”