

# Monticello High School students spruce up historic theater

400-seat venue to host show



*Monticello High School students ready an old school theater on St. John Street for a performance. They are also researching the theater's history. Times Herald-Record/Dominick Fiorille*

By Leonard Sparks

Times Herald-Record

Published: 2:00 AM - 06/09/10

MONTICELLO — An old gem is getting a new look.

Performing arts students from Monticello High School have spent Thursday afternoons this spring liberating a 400-seat theater on St. John Street from years of dust.

The little-used theater, part of the original Monticello High School, is being readied for a performance inspired by a composition of sounds from the Mid-Hudson Bridge.

But the cleaning is just part of a larger research project that has students collecting old photographs and articles and interviewing residents who remember the theater. Their goal is to see the theater again become a regular setting for shows and community events.

"This is not just for a performance of Monticello High School music students," said Marina Lombardi, a Monticello senior. "Our goal is for the theater to be a part of the community again."

The theater sits in the building that once was the Monticello School District's high school and then its middle school. The district now leases the building to BOCES.

"It was very dusty," Nancy Wegrzyn, one of the Monticello music teachers leading the project, said of the theater. "The chandelier lights were missing. The paint was peeling all over."

The project has drawn unexpected help. A BOCES custodian put the students in touch with someone

who repaired tears in the stage's velvet curtains.

Those refurbished curtains will open on Monday, for a performance combining chamber music, dance, drama and a computer-generated composition built of sounds recorded in the theater.

The composition is inspired by Joseph Bertolozzi's "Bridge Music," composed of computer-altered sounds from the Mid-Hudson Bridge's surfaces, rails and ropes. The theater's acoustics are built for such a performance, said Ann Trombley, who also teaches music at Monticello.

"The acoustics, they are phenomenal acoustics," she said.

The students will also display the fruits of their research. Pictures, news articles and old posters, many donated by people who heard of the project, will decorate the theater's walls.

"We have such a wonderful network of people," said Lombardi, who begins studying opera this fall at the Manhattan School of Music. "Through word of mouth, people have been so interested in the concept of what we're doing."

lsparks@th-record.com