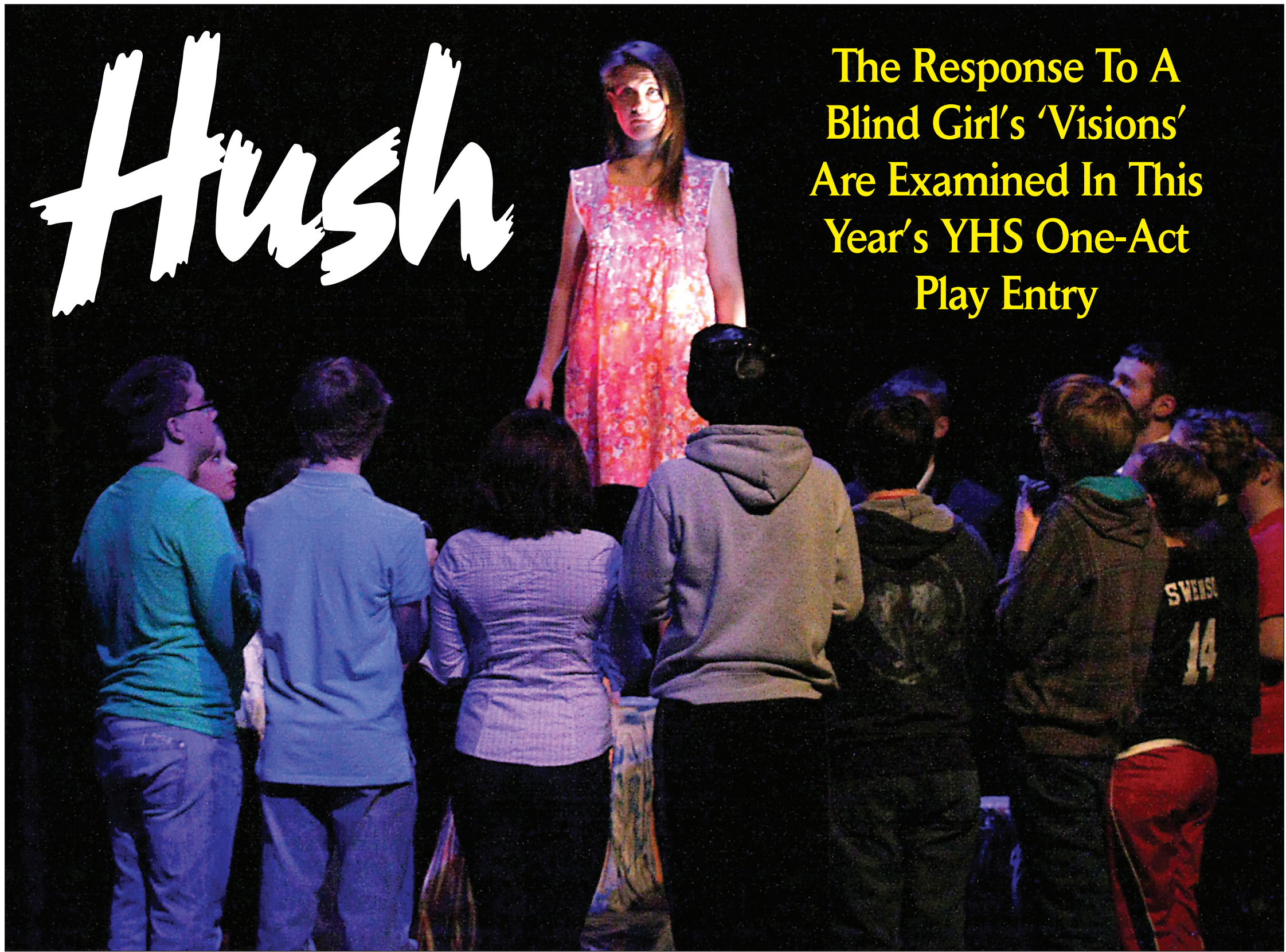




Photo: Lauren Schild
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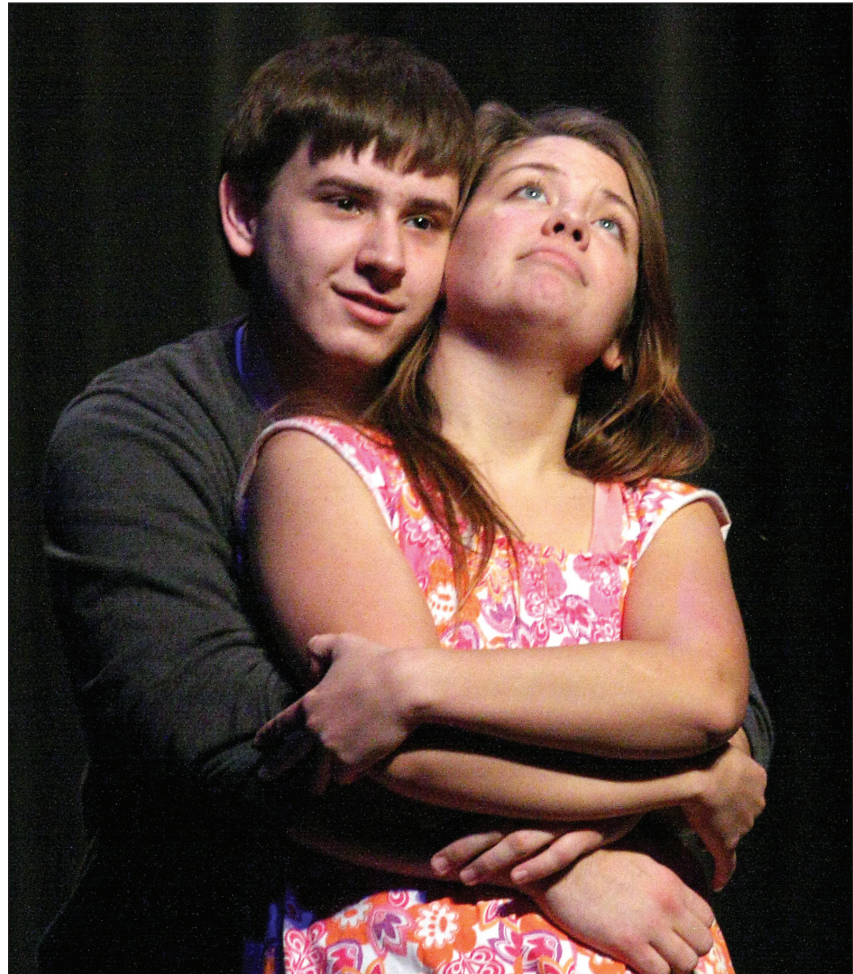
KELLY HERTZ/P&D

A crowd of townspeople confronts Maggie (Alex Berg), a blind girl who reportedly “sees” angels, in a scene from “Hush: An Interview With America,” Yankton High School’s entry in this year’s State One-Act Play Festival, which will be held in Brandon next week. A public performance is set for Yankton on Feb. 4. To see or purchase images from this rehearsal, visit spotted.yankton.net.



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

ABOVE: FBI agents (Cole Modregger, John Iverson and Garner Brandt) demand answers from Frank (Paden Schmidt) in a scene from “Hush: An Interview With America.” BELOW: Frank (Paden Schmidt) gives his daughter, Maggie (Alexa Berg), a reassuring hug in a scene from the play, which was written by James Still.



BY ANDREW ATWAL
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Yankton High School (YHS) students are set to compete in the annual one-act play festival next week at Brandon Valley. Students will be performing “Hush: An Interview With America” with Keith Goeden directing. It is a play about a girl who is not afraid to be herself.

“The girl is blind so she has created her own reality, and the news media gets a hold of her and think that she saw an angel,” Goeden said. “Because of that, they make a big deal about her and her story. The country goes crazy over her seeing an angel and people go from adoring her to turning their back on her.”

One of the themes of the play, Goeden added, is that you should be true to yourself and you can’t please others — you have to do what’s right in your own soul.

Their performance in the state festival will take place at 11:45 a.m. Friday Feb. 1 at Brandon Valley. They will hold a public performance in Yankton at 7 p.m. Feb. 4 at the YHS/Summit Activities Center theatre.

“Traditionally, Yankton has done very well in the festival,” Goeden said. “There are around 50 schools that go, but unlike Nebraska where it is a competition, here it’s a festival so there are no real winners and losers.”

Judges grade each performance as superior or not superior and judge each school primarily based on acting.

“The judges aren’t supposed to judge students’ costumes and the set, but they probably do. Acting magnifies whatever you’re doing — if you don’t give actors a good space to perform or good costumes they’ll struggle to be successful,” he said.

Goeden said one of the most difficult parts of his job is picking a show that reflects well for the students performing. He said he had another show picked out, but he switched to this one at the last minute.

“I always have about five plays in my head that I think I can do, or want to do,” he added. “A gut instinct I had made me decide to switch plays. The first show I had was male-heavy, while this one had more female roles.”

Goeden is no stranger to directing and acting in plays. He acted in several plays as a YHS student, and this is now his fourth year directing one-acts at the school.

“I like using established plays so I can cut out various parts,” he said. “This play, as originally written, is about one hour, 15 minutes, but I cut it down to a show that’s about 40 minutes long.”

Despite the show being so short, there are still a lot of challenges packed into that time frame.

“When you’re working with a longer show, you do the best you can, but you have to move on because the show is so long, and you have to wish you could do something better,” Goeden said. “Shorter plays are under more of a microscope. Everything seen on stage will have been practiced 20-30 times before the final show.”

He added this year he has a relatively young cast, but said they have been pleasant to work with and eager to learn.

“We really want to put on the best show we’re capable of but also have fun while doing it,” Goeden noted. “We hope the kids see the quality of the show they do and then compare and contrast it to the other performances at the festival.”

One thing he said he gets blown away by every year is seeing how hard students are performing the work to make the



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Reporter Jana Roberts (Sara Santos) tries to see the angel (Gabe Swenson) that Maggie (Alexa Berg) sees in the YHS production of “Hush: An Interview With America.”

show the best it can be.

“We have musicians in this play who write their own stuff that goes along with certain scenes in the show,” Goeden said. “I’ll tell them whether I like it or if they should tweak this. Theater at YHS really shows the diversity and strength of the students, and the music has added new elements to the shows.”

CAST LIST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

Alexa Berg — Maggie
Sarah Santos — Jana Roberts
Paden Schmidt — Frank
Tom Kellen — Lion
Jacob Bies — Lion statue
Alex Rehurek — Lion statue
Lexi Fokken — Lamb
Jack Tramp — American Gothic
Maddie Manning — American Gothic
John Iverson — FBI
Mitch Riibe — FBI
Cole Modregger — FBI
Susana Kinsley — Newscaster
Kayla Sylvester — Newscaster
Gabe Swenson — Eve
Chris Eldred — Moon
Kevin White — Voices of America (VOA)
Shane Wright — VOA
Garner Brandt — VOA
Levi Schaeffer — VOA
Evan Schade — VOA
Hannah Horn — VOA
Gabby Slowey — VOA
Jenna Deboer — VOA
Alanna Binder — VOA
Cody Geary — Musician
Haley Baugh — Musician
Matt Watt — Musician

STUDENT CREW MEMBERS

Abby Oien
Alex Crandall
Cameron Luken
Celena Olvera
Dusty Dvorak
Will Steward

You can follow Andrew Atwal on Twitter at twitter.com/andrewatwal