

BRASS AND BRIGHTS

Band senior **Ryan Brown** balances playing French horn with designing lights and working behind stage for dance, music, and theater shows

By Ben Seelig

The orchestra set was about to finish, and band senior **Ryan Brown**, performing on stage, prepared for the run up to the light booth for the upper band immediately after. Brown majored in both band and technical theatre to fill the vacancy in lighting after the previous theatre facilities manager left the school. This forced him to divide his time between being on stage, behind the ropes (flies), and up in the light booth.

"I've had some involvement with pretty much every single show Dreyfoos has put on within the last calendar year since the second semester of junior year," Brown said. "From February 1 to June 1, with the exception of spring break, I've had 2 to 7 shows a week."

Oftentimes, the two majors conflicted with each other. His junior year he needed to find a replacement to pull flies for the dance show, "Exhilaration," on Saturday and Sunday, the days he had to leave for a band trip. He built the cue sheet for the entire dance performance which he provided the substitute.

"I was at school Friday until 10 p.m. for the opening night of Exhilaration," Brown said. "Then I went home packed, went to sleep and got up at 5:30 a.m. to get on the bus taking us to a band competition in Orlando."

Even with the hours of preparation, technical theatre can still be unpredictable, Brown said. When things go wrong, someone has to be ready to fix it. For Brown, that mostly includes the flies, or the features that move vertically up and down on stage. Mistakes are often accounted for beforehand.

"When (a mistake in the show) happens and it's my fault, there's immediately a lot of imposter syndrome... In a rehearsal, you put it in the notes, you deal with it later," Brown said. "If it's during a show, then I devote all my focus towards it, all I can think is 'I need to fix this now.'"

Even with his band performances, technical work, and AP classes, he still finds time for himself and for tutoring others. Vocal senior **Cade Jette**, one of Brown's closest friends, says that they have a symbiotic relationship where they both help each other with work.

"We've connected with each other since elementary school," Jette said. "Even when he is busy, if I call him up he'll be at my house any moment, whether to help me or just hang out ... I've never known him to not be busy, but still, he finds the time."

In the years after the COVID-19 pandemic, music teacher **Evan Rogovin** was forced to set up the lighting after the previous lighting director, **Jerry Engstrom**, left. Mr. Rogovin wouldn't be able to dim the lights before concerts since he needed to conduct on stage. Having no background with lighting, Brown's friends and theatre teacher **Nathaniel Rayman** both taught him the basics of the equipment.

"After (Engstrom) retired, we went through a whole bunch of people, but no one could really handle it because it is a big commitment," Rogovin said. "Ryan stepped up to fill in the gap, though... Ryan takes great initiative to anticipate issues that might arise and helps solve them before things blow up."

Doing technical theatre introduced Brown to some of his closest friends, Brown said. Work such as lifting stage sets or creating cues were work that couldn't be done alone, according to him, and these partnerships to friendships.

"Picking up technical theatre really gave me way more people to be friends with, and I'm glad I did because I've loved every single person that I've been able to meet through this," Brown said. "Statistically, interacting with 200 people on a daily basis means that I'm going to meet some amazing people."