

molly erickson

THE DARKNESS IS WASHED OUT by a sudden flash of blinding light, leaving Molly Erickson on stage with nowhere to hide as she begins to perform for an audience she cannot see. Erickson has performed many times on this stage, embracing each opportunity. Rehearsing for her last Theatre West production, *West Side Story*, she says goodbye to where it all started.

"It's kind of scary," Erickson said. "Lots of times you're walking onto a dark stage [and] you can't see anything. You can hear people rustling papers in the audience and that's it, no one's speaking ... It's just you can't tell where anything is and it's scary. The bright [spotlight] is generally coming from above and above you it's just white and everything else is completely black."

Her passion for the arts began when her older sister got involved in the arts during high school.

"My sister [Kylie] graduated from West in 2013 and she was involved in all of the music stuff. I was in seventh grade when she graduated, so I grew up being really involved in that while I was still in elementary school because my mom was a crew mom and I came and went along with everything. So I just went 'I wanna do that' and I did. And it's been the best experience ever."

Although Erickson enjoys the spotlight, she also helps backstage on crew.

"You never really see the amount of work that every single crew puts in until, like, the shows ... all of the crews sort of have their own little thing, their own work that they've put together, and have something you don't get to associate with other crews," she said.

"I love being able to hang out with them and just kind of be silly," she said. "And not make fun of people on stage but imitate them and have a good time pretending to sing whatever is happening on stage."

Erickson also sings with the choir and is a part of the crew for show choir which is where she spends most of her afternoons.

"We had this competition in Lincoln, Nebraska," Erickson said. "[West is] one of the obnoxious schools that gets everyone pumped up ... the one that ... has a dance party in the middle of everything. So someone started singing *All Star*, and we got everyone in the gym to sing and dance along."

Besides her extracurricular activities and her classes, Erickson also makes time to work part-time at Molly's Cupcakes in North Liberty.

"When I started working there, we used to have this one called the Raspberry Beret, and it was vanilla cake with raspberries in the cake and it had a vanilla mousse filling, and it was my favorite," she said. "I took it home every single night, every single shift I worked, and now I won't even look at one."

Although working fulfills her sweet tooth, she described her busy schedule as "insanity," and credits her parents for helping her balance it all.

"I've grown up with them being able to help me, so I want to be able to make a difference and help other people," she said. "Education is important because then you know how to communicate and make a difference."

Preparing for college, Erickson plans to double major in art and political science, similar to her father's passion and profession.

"I know that's cliche, and everyone says their parents [inspire them], but my dad—like I said—he's a graphic artist, and that's something that I have been interested in for a long time," she said.

"I like being very politically aware," Erickson said. "Especially in today's society, people need to understand different aspects why people believe in certain things on the political spectrum. I feel that politically charged art can just really help with that."

—By Megan Haman



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