

## An Insider View from a Historic Theater Journey

By Lottie Kanter

In December of 2024, at the state level of the [Trumbauer](#) theater festival and competition, the Altamont theater group received an award for “Best in Show” for our performance of *Single Rider*. The following March, we were on our way to the [Southeastern Theater Conference](#) (SETC) in Maryland to perform our show in the largest theater in Baltimore. Eight months ago, when auditions were just beginning, nobody in the cast could have imagined that our hard work and commitment would land us at a national conference.

*Single Rider*, created by lyricist Sami Horneff and musical composer Amanda D’Archangelis, is a musical about three Amish girls who are given the opportunity to explore Lucky Land, an amusement park where the girls find love and discover a world they never knew existed. Before Altamont’s premiere of the show, *Single Rider* had been performed only in off-Broadway theaters, making Altamont the first high school to ever perform it.



Since *Single Rider* was a new piece, it came with unique challenges. The musical had been performed only off Broadway, so there were almost no musical tracks available on the Internet, making it difficult to learn the music. Additionally, since the characters were unfamiliar, the cast had no previous performances to base their own performances on. This meant that all aspects of a character’s identity relied on the actors’ individual interpretations of the script, which required even more creativity and originality than usual.

Auditions began in August, and the team rehearsed the show until November, when we spent the day at John Carroll High School to compete in the district-level Trumbauer Festival.

At Trumbauer, there are two categories in which teams can compete: One-Act and Studio. In One-Act competitions, teams perform a 45-minute version of their show and are allowed to use set pieces and microphones. In Studio competitions, teams perform a 30-minute version of the show and are not allowed to use set pieces or microphones. In each competition, teams are provided with a “tech time” in which they can set up sound equipment or anything else necessary for their performance. Teams can be disqualified if their performance exceeds the time limit or if any member steps on the stage before or after their allotted tech or performance time. In Studio performances, disqualification also occurs if any prop is left on stage when the performance officially ends.

At the district competition, Altamont won “Best in Show” in the Studio section and advanced to Alabama State Trumbauer at the University of North Alabama, where we performed the same 30-minute cut of *Single Rider*.

Not only did our performance win “Best in Show” at the state level, but it was chosen as the first Studio performance to ever represent Alabama at SETC, a national theater conference where students present shows to important members of the theater community, compete against theater programs across the country, and apply for theater-based scholarships.

In past years, One-Act performances were the only shows able to advance to SETC. Now, however, the board of SETC is considering opening up competitions for Studio performances as well. Altamont was invited to SETC to demonstrate what a Studio performance is and what it would look like to have one at SETC. You could say we were a prototype.

Although we were not competing, pressure and nerves were high for most of the cast. Since we were not allowed to use microphones, many were worried that the large size of the theater (the Lyric Baltimore, which seats almost 3,000 people,) would make it difficult for everyone in the audience to hear us. And many college recruiters and important people in the world of theater were at SETC, adding pressure for the performers.

Working on a new stage is challenging, especially one so large, but the cast handled this change professionally, allowing the show to run smoothly. After performing *Single Rider* for the last time, many cast members were happy to have finally reached our goal, but still sad to be done with the show.

During auditions in August, nobody would have expected the production to be such a success. The eight-month journey to SETC, while challenging, was an exhilarating experience that opened so many doors we never expected to walk through.