

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang *flies* to Perry Meridian stage

By Adam Crozier

Fancy cars get a bad rap. The stereotype is a mixed bag—daredevils, muscle heads, seasoned collectors—all infatuated with vintage vehicles. Add student performers, musicians, crew members, and an eccentric genius loverboy to the list.

A technical misnomer, the 'fancy car' in question is none other than that of the featured flying retro-racer in Ian Fleming's "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." The London-based musical is known throughout the entertainment industry, taking the title from the children's book and movie. Choir teacher **Melissa Walsh** directs the performance; English teacher **Natalie Friar** is assistant director. Her dog, Sophie, also stars in the show as "Edison."

The play is showing on Apr. 21, 22 and 23, with Saturday at 7 p.m., Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and Monday at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for students, \$10 for selected seating, and \$8 for general admission.

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—Melissa Walsh

The show's inaugural debut featured the most expensive musical prop in history at the time—a motorized car. It could tilt upward, downward, side-to-side, as well as move up and down.

"The car is on a lift system," Walsh added. "With something supporting it underneath, it's like going on an



Grandpa, played by sophomore Dominick Heyob, drives onto stage in "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," followed by sophomore Maria Miller and freshman Gabe Means, who play old and crotchety inventors (Photo by Alexis Lee).

amusement park ride." Fabric wings pop out when the driver deploys a hidden lever on the dashboard.

The student musical program is renting—"We would never buy"—a version of this car for an "undisclosed" amount, Walsh said.

"Because the musicals are self-funded, we fund them through the success of previous shows."

Rigging and training for Perry's presentation of the musical, "Peter Pan,"

were even more expensive, Walsh said.

On the surface, it seems the star of the show, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, can do anything. But it runs on a fuel system far more enlightened than kerosene, gasoline or electricity—teen humans. Students are required to push the behemoth around in between scene changes.

"The car is almost 400 pounds," said junior **Anna Sutt**, the stage manager.

"But once we get it moving, it's really not too big to handle."

Moving, in this case, dancing is sophomore **Maria Miller's** and junior **Abby Hoover's** favorite part of being in the musical.

"The choreography's been really fun," Miller said. "There's some fun ones like the bamboo dance and the samba which I'm excited about."

Because the musical stars actors of all ages, **Rocco Meo**, an eighth

grader at Perry Middle School, is in the musical as Boris the Spy.

"It's been really fun getting to know what it's going to be like being at the high school and just how big the musicals are," Meo said.

Among stars of the show are seniors **Max Sandefer**, as Goran, a spy; **Jessica Kidwell**, as Truly Scrumptious; junior **Jordan Robbins**, as Caractacus Potts; and sophomore **Dominick Heyob**, as Grandpa Potts.

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"However, I'm enthralled that I get to play someone who is not just solely comedic.

"Caractacus Potts has more of a fruitful relationship with the other characters in the cast, and that's very different for me."

After dozens of hours of practice, Miller said it's fun to join long-time friends that she usually just hangs out with in putting together a major play.

"On opening night we will all realize 'Oh yeah! We did this cool thing.'"



Sophomore Grace Nash, junior Spain exchange student Claudia Taboada, sophomore Eli Carnes and junior Sam Hoke run on stage to hunt for the outlawed children of Vulgaria (Photo by Alexis Lee).



Junior Abby Hoover dips sophomore Maria Miller during a tango-like dance, The Bombie Samba. This dance serves as the entertainment for the Baron of Vulgaria's birthday (Photo by Alexis Lee).