

# Hailey Kilgore Talks About Starring in ‘Our Town’

By Christen McCurdy  
Of *The Skanner News*

Portland Center Stage’s 2015-2016 season opened last weekend with Thornton Wilder’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *Our Town*, which runs through Oct. 11 on the U.S. Bank Main Stage.

The cast includes a mix of PCS debuts and returning artists, with the new-to-PCS cast members including Hailey Kilgore, who plays Rebecca Gibbs, the younger sister of lead character George Gibbs.

Kilgore is a junior at Clackamas High School. She’s starred in several high school and community productions, including *Hairspray* (Lil Inez), *Fiddler on the Roof* (Fruma Sarah), *Romeo and Juliet* (Prince, Friar John, Page and chorus), *Peter Pan* (Tiger Lily), *Crumbs from the Table of Joy* (Ermina Crump), *Perfect Works in Progress* (Donald) and Oregon Symphony’s *A Gospel Christmas* (Northwest Community Gospel Choir, Soloist). Kilgore recently represented Portland at the National August Wilson Monologue Competition in the August Wilson Theatre in New York City.

Kilgore took the time to answer a few questions from *The Skanner News* about the play, her love of performance and her hopes for the future.

**The Skanner News:** In addition to acting, you sing and perform monologues. Do you do other creative performance work?

**Hailey Kilgore:** About the same time I started singing publicly, I started getting in

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front of the camera. I have worked several years as an O’Pearl Brands model, and can be seen as one of their calendar models. This opened the door to doing some runway modeling. Also, just a year ago, I started my own YouTube channel recording several cover songs of the musical theater and pop genres.

Also, I have been trying to write a play of my own. But it’s hidden in a diary in my bedroom. I want to write something about finding one’s truth. I have little bits and pieces but really, that’s it.



Hailey Kilgore, a junior at Clackamas High School, plays Rebecca Gibbs in Portland Center Stage’s production of ‘Our Town,’ which opened last week and runs through Oct. 11.

**TSN:** What got you interested in performing?

**HK:** Honestly, having the opportunity to experience life through theatre, and making someone else’s story my own.

As a kid I remember frequently whining to my mother, “Well, if I were so-and-so, my life would be more interesting.” When I got into theater I realized that our lives have two halves. One half is the outer shell — the part that everyone gets to see. The other is the inner part that rarely anyone sees.

As an actor, it’s your responsibility to live the inner and outer parts of the character’s life you’re portraying thoroughly. Even if the character has a wonderful outside, the inside finds moments to peek out, and that’s the part that makes people more interesting. *That* is what got me interested in performing.

**TSN:** Our Town is Thornton Wilder’s best-known play, and a longtime favorite in high school and community theaters. What intrigues you about the play? What do you think may set Portland Center Stage’s production apart from other stagings?

**HK:** This is a very unique production. It opens the eyes of people who speed through

life. At the end of Act Three, Emily asks Mrs. Gibbs, “Live people just don’t understand do they?” We don’t. We always worry about what will come next and ignore the here and now.

**HK:** Our director, Rose Riordan, has a very creative mind. It’s fascinating how she has taken this timeless classic and has turned it into a “snow globe,” so to speak – a

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The theater space itself has a very intimate feel. Instead of watching the play, you, as the audience, catch moments of actually living the play. It makes the audience remember the first time they fell in love, the moment they lost someone they cared about deeply — or the daily routine of going about everyday life.

**TSN:** You play Rebecca, the younger sis-

ter of George, one of the play’s two major characters. Rebecca is one of the only living characters in the play to express a sense of wonder and contemplate aloud her place in the universe. Do you relate to Rebecca — and if not, how do you find your way into the character?

**HK:** Interestingly enough, I do. At the age of 12, Rebecca is preparing herself for the grown-up world. But she’s also hanging on to her sense of wonder that really shines at that age.

I know that children are still able to get excited and be in awe of how big the world is beyond themselves.

At the age of 12, I would find myself having these moments of innocent curiosity and excitement. One time, I remember being on a swing listening to music and feeling like at any moment in time I could touch the moon. I was so excited, and I started to feel so small and thought I could just float into space. I use moments like that to really connect with Rebecca and tap into how she’s feeling.

**TSN:** What are your plans for your future after high school?

**HK:** It’s a stereotypical answer, but I want to move out to New York, though not to live forever or to become a big Broadway star. I want to feel the rush of the city and explore the culture and diversity while studying all aspects of theater. I want to earn my bachelor’s of performing arts and book a role on a national tour of a Broadway show, so I can really travel the United States. And maybe, just maybe, finish that play hiding in my room.



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