Meghan Olson, as Audrey, reacts to Theo Linder, Seymour, as she tells him about her past during a rehearsal at Harvey Hall Theater for UW-Stout Theater's production of “Little Shop of Horrors.” The play runs April 7-9 and April 15-16. The theater group is back in Harvey Hall after a two year hiatus for renovation to the campus building. Linder is a freshman majoring in game design and development-computer science. Olson is majoring in early childhood education.

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UW-Stout brings ‘Little Shop’ to home stage

By Pamela Powers
Menomonie News Bureau

MENOMONIE — After two years away from the Harvey Hall Theater because of a building renovation project, UW-Stout Theater students are back on their home stage and what better way to return then with a cult classic complete with a man-eating plant.

“Little Shop of Horrors” will run at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and April 15-16.

“It worked out great using the Mabel Tainter Center for the Arts,” said director Paul Calenberg. “It’s wonderful to have everything under one roof again. It’s our place. A lot of the students haven’t been in the theater before.”

The theater was renovated in 2010 and reopened in 2011 but had to be closed again in 2014 during the full building renovation. Harvey Hall will reopen in the fall. Renovations are nearly
complete, allowing use of the theater, which is on the east end of the building, 721 3rd St. E.

Picking the show was easy because students were so excited to perform it, Calenberg said.

“They all just love the show,” he said. “It is just a fun ride. I wanted a show with a broad following to get people back into the Harvey Hall Theater and that would draw the students and community in.”

“Little Shop of Horrors” is set in a flower shop. A down-and-out employee, Seymour, names a plant after the love of his life, coworker Audrey, but it turns out to be a carnivorous plant. It’s from outer space and thrives on blood — first a few drops of Seymour’s blood, but then much more.

It was a low-budget 1960 film that became an off-Broadway hit — it had a five-year run of more than 2,200 performances from 1982 to 1987 — and was made into a film in 1986, according to a UW-Stout news release.

One of the unusual aspects of “Little Shop of Horrors” is the plant Audrey II is voiced by Samuel Kilgard without him able to see anything on stage. He sings and does his lines completely by hearing cues.

“It’s very interesting,” the junior majoring in professional communications and emerging media said. “I am used to standing on stage and delivering lines. I don’t get to see what is happening.”

Yet behind the scenes Kilgard is acting much like voice talent for animated movies, Calenberg said.

The carnivorous plant is a puppet on stage, Calenberg said.

Kilgard said he is excited to be in the Harvey Hall Theater because it is a modern, large theater with open seats and a larger stage.

He enjoys the show as well for its 50s and 60s doo whap music, Kilgard said.

Gus Johnson, a sophomore majoring in digital cinema, performs as Orin, the evil dentist.

“I love this show,” he said. “It’s so high energy and fun. It’s got some of the greatest music. My favorite is ‘Suddenly Seymour.’” He is excited about performing at the Harvey Hall Theater as well.

“It is like a brand new theater, but it has a classy vibe,” Johnson said. “It is such a big place, yet really warm.”