

A first: OMT producing two shows at once

By Constance Scrafield

If producing one show requires lots of time, hard work, volunteers, concentration and on-going enthusiasm over several months, are two shows simply twice the needs?

Really, yes. However, it seems that the longstanding community theatre group, Orangeville Music Theatre (OMT), is up to the challenge.

With Lucinda Silva, president, and a group of people for whom OMT has been like a second home for a number of years, they will stage Shrek, the Junior Musical and the full Mary Poppins, dividing the three weekends between them that OMT has reserved annually at the Opera House.

In order to take full advantage of those three weekends, they have decided to produce Junior Shrek June 10, 11 and 12, followed by Mary Poppins for the next two weekends ? June 17 to 19 and June 24 to 26.

We took a tour of the double everything with OMT rehearsals, which they hold at Westside Secondary School, to see the action and how it all comes together. We wanted to chat a bit with the performers as well to see what it is that keeps them coming back year after year.

Shrek was up first. Probably because there many more of them, they rehearse in the auditorium with the stage. According to the cast of 42 junior actors, they are a family that size. High school may be so bland, but acting takes them to deeper levels of emotion, of expressing themselves quite outside of normal life, putting their all into completely different characters.

Naturally, theatre is a lot of fun, but discipline is so important, blending the theatre work with school, maintaining both to good effect. After a while, the balance is struck and it begins to become easier than one would have believed.

For those who are a little shy, short of self confidence, this is the perfect place to start getting over all that. ?Breaking out of your shell,? they called it. ?Expressing yourself out of your comfort zone. Some of the characters in Shrek are out of that comfort zone.? Said one young man: ?My character makes everyone laugh but hardly anyone likes him. You have to stretch your comfort zone ? that's how a show comes together.?

The idea of portraying a character that is entirely diverse each from his or herself is both a challenge and a revelation.

They love the lights, the costumes, the audiences. ?I love to see them laughing and happy,? one girl told us. ?When they applaud, it's really awesome.?

Another added, ?Acting and singing makes you feel better if you've had a bad day at school or whatever.?

?And when you finally get out on stage, your hard work really works out ? it's nice to show everyone what you can do,? from one other.

The cast of Mary Poppins reflected the thoughts of the children in Shrek, but they had grownup concerns as well. One told us: ?I have a real and stressful life and this is my outlet ? I can just be me here. Without this, I would be a different person. I feel 15 or 20 years younger ? it's the magic of theatre.?

A newcomer to the cast saw their last production and ?was blown away.? Having done no theatre since high school, he nevertheless auditioned for a role in Mary Poppins and is so happy to be a part of it.

Many others have been with OMT for years and love the creative aspect of theatre work this association gives them.

Keeping in mind that regardless of the benefits participating in the theatre gives its actors, paying audiences can be critical and should want to come back to see other shows. So, the company is run as a theatre company must, with hard work, real rehearsals and good results.

For this, both Mark Gomes, directing Shrek, and Raeburn Ferguson, directing Mary Poppins, have to ask the best from their cast and the fact that there are several experienced actors, younger and older, to set the tone always helps. Enthusiasm, talent, training and experience all contribute to polished performances that keep audiences returning to see other shows.

Theatre is important on every level ? for the community and for the well being of those who participate and those who are entertained. The theatre attracts people to the centre of town where they patronize more businesses than the show itself.

This area is very blessed with the number and quality of the entertainments taking place here throughout the year. The best way to appreciate this is to attend as many productions as possible. Subscriptions are always a good option, as well as sponsorships and, for that matter, volunteers.

Shrek Junior is playing June 10, 11, 12 and Mary Poppins will run on the weekends from June 17 to 25, all at the Opera House.

For tickets to Shrek and/or Mary Poppins, go to the Opera House Box Office, 87 Broadway; telephone 519-942-3423 or online at www.orangevillemusictheatre.com