

Lucas Connelly, child actor spreading his wings

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

‘I did the adult version of Mary Poppins, [playing Michael Banks] with OMT [Orangeville Music Theatre] in 2016,’ said Lucas Connelly. ‘I really like to do a whole bunch of plays. I saw the Junior version of Mary Poppins by OMT and, moments after that, Mom’s friend saw an audition notice to do the show in Toronto and told us about it.’

It was this moment that introduced Lucas to doing theatre in Toronto.

He went on to tell the Citizen, ‘My agent, Pat [Jarosz], we went with her to audition at the Lower Ossington Theatre. I got the part and rehearsals were there but we’re doing the show at the Randolph Theatre.’

Randolph Theatre is connected to the well known Randolph College, the Randolph Centre for the Arts.

Rehearsals began in February this year, ‘five days a week in rehearsal and once on weekend,’ Jamie Connelly, Lucas’ mother, explained. ‘He’s been doing TV commercials since he was three years old.’

It was Pat Jarosz, an agent for young actors, who went to the auditions with Luca at that age.

Ms. Connelly said, ‘We went with her and checked it out. He was very shy at only three years old and I didn’t think he would do very well but it really brought his personality out.’

‘For the Mary Poppins rehearsals, his Dad and some of our friends did some of the driving to Toronto.’

Although it certainly sounds like and was a lot of driving, her remark was, ‘It’s no different than kids’ doing sports with parents who drive all over. I got into it. Now, I volunteer with OMT.’

The show, Mary Poppins, opened at the Randolph Theatre, in April and is still showing for two more weekends – Thursdays through Sundays - running until May 12.

‘They paid technically all the money for travel expenses,’ Ms. Connelly commented, ‘basically an honorarium.’

In answer to how it was, Lucas replied, ‘It’s really fun. At the start, I didn’t really know anybody but I knew everybody’s names in a month and I turned to be good friends with them. We rehearsed from the end of February and ended in April.’

His manager, Pat, and agent, Emily, set it up for him.

‘The schedules were different from what I thought they were going to be,’ Lucas commented, talking about what comes, for him, in the aftermath of the show: ‘I’m going to rest and then go back to OMT. Sometimes, I have to skip or leave school early and I don’t even get home until midnight. I sleep in the car on the way home and there so I have more energy for the play.’

He began singing at the theatre with OMT. ‘My friend interested me in starting. I did really like the songs and now, I’m taking singing lessons with Heather at Tritones. Fun – yeah, it’s really fun.’

‘We’re learning songs from musical theatre. We also do recitals; for Christmas that song has to be about Christmas and, for summer, any song I want – this year, for the summer one – I am choosing ‘Something Just Like This’ – just a song. I found it on YouTube. I watched it but [the band] changed some of the words but I found the real words and I actually like the song.’

Taking a view toward his near to distant future, ‘I think I’m going to continue theatre – maybe not as a professional. I have no idea what I want to be. Last year, I wanted to be a detective but, this year, I might want to be something else.’

In school, I'm in grade 4 at school. Sometimes, it can be fun and, then, it can be boring. Fun is you get together with your friends and you can turn out to be really fun. We have different clubs. I'm in drama club, also battle of the books. There are 25 books that we read and remember what happens. Then, we get asked questions and we have to remember what happened. It's a competition.

The boards game club is fun too. I go to Princess Elisabeth Public School. I'm in French Immersion, all along since kindergarten.

Elaborating on the book clubs, we were told, The clubs are supposed to be for the whole school so they are in English. The book clubs can compete with other schools in Orangeville about the books. You are together with your own club [to compete with the questions about them].

I like it sometimes we do really fun stuff but it's boring when we're sitting down writing papers and I do not find tests fun.

Theatre is certainly to be recommended for children, Jamie Connolly is definite: I would say to other parents, theatre and kids is a great thing that builds confidence. When they go for that interview [later in life] they won't be afraid.

In Lucas' opinion, for sure, Acting and singing are fun. I did dance lessons last year but I didn't really find it interesting. Hip hop, you do the exact same thing every week. This year, I might do tap.