

Robert F. Hall takes theatre by storm with another great musical

By Constance Scrafield

Coming to a theatre not far from you, namely, the Lester B. Pearson Theatre, in Brampton, is *Swinging at the Savoy* by Rob Ciccotelli and Frank Adriano, tonight and tomorrow (June 8 and 9).

Rob Ciccotelli and Frank Adriano have been writing extraordinary musicals for their high school drama students and taking them far and wide to perform the shows; Toronto (the Winter Garden Theatre), the U.S.A., Britain, Paris, Italy and off-Broadway have all been part of the amazing list of tours on which Ciccotelli and Adriano have escorted their young thespians. Fantastic adventures at such a young age.

So, this is the last one, as Ciccotelli is retiring at the end of this school year, after 32 years.

The drama and musical work have been extra-curricular for teachers and students. Ciccotelli teaches photography and Adriano is an English literature teacher. Timing is sometimes complicated and requires shuffling of priorities, sometimes for everyone to set aside the hours during four days a week for rehearsals amid exams, projects, sports and so on.

We sat in on their negotiations: 'I have a math test . . . ?

'I'm coaching the soccer team . . . ?

However, the show must go on and, when we had the opportunity to ask the student actors how they managed. Like busy people anywhere, they shrugged and said they managed.

'We have to sacrifice other things ? got to make the commitment ? we always do it ? it's always really successful and worth it,' they told us variously.

One remarked, 'We get on each others' nerves a lot, but we're a good cast. We're all family.'

For a brief synopsis, the musical is set in New York in 1940, when a group of young soldiers have that one weekend before being shipped over to the war in Europe. They meet up with a group of young girls ? the young men fall in love and the young women don't ? a comedy with a mixed up plot of who's who stirs the music and the laughs.

As one of the 'soldiers' explained: 'We're about to go to Europe but we've never been there ? this is going to be a blood bath so it's our last night ? all that hoochi-koochi ? we want to have a good time before we go.'

'Each of the characters is really different,' we were told. As this is the last of the Ciccotelli/Adrian collaborations, some of the alumni, including Ryan Hancock and Pamela Scott-Demetriou, are joining in the show.

Ciccotelli talked a bit about the premise: 'The problem was very wide of young men signing up to go overseas, sometimes lying about their age to sign up. What has kept me at it all these years, being able to teach it. I've put my passion into all the productions.'

'Come and see it,' the students urged us all, 'it's crazy but we love it.'

Said one student; 'I'm afraid of being on stage ? until I am. Then, it's the best.'

Swinging at the Savoy with the cast past and present, a 20 piece Jazz band of the Robert F. Hall Catholic Secondary School, plus guest musicians and singers as well as cameo appearances is on at the Lester B. Pearson Theatre in the Brampton Civic Centre, Main Floor, 150 Central Park Dr.

For details and tickets, call the Box Office 905-874-2800 or online www.rosetheatre.ca