

St. Michael student-written drama heads to provincials

By Mark Pavilons

Sparked by a compelling story and polished performances by the cast and crew, Bolton's St. Michael Catholic Secondary School will be heading to the provincials of the Sears Drama Festival.

This is a first in the school's history.

St. Michael, and their performance of *Dinner for Jews*, won them Outstanding Production Award and New Play Award at the York-Peel regional finals Saturday night at Meadowvale Theatre in Mississauga. They also earned an award of excellence for ensemble. St. Michael was one of two schools, out of a nine-school field, to advance to the gala Ontario Showcase.

The 69th annual provincial showcase will be held at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School in Hamilton, May 6 to 9. Twelve of Ontario's top productions will compete for the title.

At the district level, *Dinner for Jews* earned awards for Outstanding Production, Outstanding Original Play, Award of Merit, writing and directing.

Adjudicator Andrew Lamb praised the students for this compelling story, the poignant parallels and the polished cast performances. He was genuinely supportive of the young talent and offered some advice to the students continuing in the competition. Lamb is the artistic director of Roseneath Theatre and Theatre Awakening in Toronto and has a litany of directing credits.

Dinner for Jews is the brainchild of Alessia Urbani and chronicles the tragic story of Germans and Jews during the Second World War. The story centres on two neighborhood families, one German and one Jewish, and the similarities they share.

It's a story about love, hate and most of all, humanity.

From the set design, costumes and lighting, to the individual performances and lessons to be learned, *Dinner for Jews* is an amazing story.

During the production, you could hear a pin drop in the theatre, as audience members were glued to their seats, watching the drama unfold. The calibre of this production was way beyond the ages of the cast and crew to be sure.

We're led through the story by the narrative of the Old Man (performed admirably by Andrea Camarda). The love between the two leads Klaus Frindt (Daniel Groleau) and Elisabeth Eckersdorf (Urbani) sets the stage for this Romeo and Juliet-type saga.

The lines are delivered with precision and emotion. From the SS officers to the imprisoned Jewish girls, the cast works the stage well and this piece flows effortlessly from beginning to end. There are several chilling moments. The final poignant speeches delivered by both Urbani and Groleau will bring tears to your eyes.

Under the guidance of teacher Catherine Johnston, this group has come together to become a solid theatre group, telling a very important story.