

Theatre Orangeville holding auditions for Romeo and Juliet

Theatre Orangeville has been around for 20 years and has supported some of the best theatrical artists from across Canada, such as Michael Burgess, Michael Therriault, Rod Beattie and Ted Follows, to name a few.

In addition to its world-class main stage productions, Theatre Orangeville has had great success with their youth programs.

“Our main stage is adult focused, while our academy is 100 per cent youth based,” said Youth Program Coordinator Sharyn Woodbury.

The theatre has always had a commitment to youth, through the Youth Singers or Young Company groups, which provides drama and musical theatrical experiences geared to youth.

Theatre Orangeville also has a program called Exceptional Players, which is geared toward youth with disabilities or special needs.

The benefits of youth being involved in theatre are massive, but some of the obvious ones are:

? Youth involved in theatre naturally develop a clear sense of personal and group achievement.

? Develop a sense of belonging.

? Increases levels of confidence and self-esteem.

? Increases self discipline and commitment.

? Meet new friends and expands your comfort zone.

? Brings a general feeling of happiness through the fun of being part of a production.

? Improves the ability to express feelings, opinions and the means to articulate clearly and confidently.

? Provides a sense of empowerment.

? Provides a means of escape and relaxation.

The youth programs are available throughout the season, with after-school initiatives that start in the fall, and the summer program is a month-long experience where an audition is required to get in. There is a drama and a musical production and 25 budding actors are chosen for each. These programs are usually attended by youth who have serious intentions to the stage as their days are dedicated to rehearsing from 9 to 4 from Monday to Friday, with a final performance on the main stage for each production.

“All our youth programs are supported by professionals,” Woodbury said.

Colin Simmons is directing this year's Romeo and Juliet, the Young Company drama production. Simmons is familiar with Theatre Orangeville, as he too was involved in the youth programs in the past.

“The kids look at him and think, I could do this,” said Woodbury.

Simmons' existence inspires youth who participate in the program, as he has worked his way up through the ranks.

The audition for Romeo and Juliet is being held April 30, from 5 to 8 p.m. and is open to youth between the ages of 11 and 17. The rehearsals for the production will start July 2 through until July 24 with no rehearsals Sundays. The show dates for Romeo and Juliet are July 25 at 7 p.m., July 26 at 2 and 7 p.m., and July 27 at 2 p.m.

“There is a lot happening here,” Woodbury said. “It is wonderful to see the youth develop and grow.”