

Theatre Orangeville's Young Company musical takes stage at Opera House this weekend

By Constance Scrafield

This weekend is Theatre Orangeville's Young Company's musical, *Hadestown* ? Teen Edition, a powerful show that is completely different from everything they have ever done.

It's more challenging on every level, exciting and life-changing for the young actors. Four performances are on this weekend from Friday, July 25, through Sunday, July 27.

?'This cast of 18 young actors are exceeding expectations,?' declared Jennifer Stewart, Theatre Orangeville's new artistic director.

Stewart was speaking to the Citizen by telephone from the Orangeville Opera House, where she and the Young Company cast were doing their first tech rehearsal in the theatre.

?'They're experiencing a grand sweep with this blend of Greek mythology, *Romeo and Juliet*, mixed with a modern twist, to bring determination and hope. This is nothing like anything they've ever done- thoughtful, intelligent, really stretching their dancing, singing and acting. This is challenging and super rewarding,?' said Stewart.

For Stewart, in her first time directing for Theatre Orangeville, it has been weeks of seeing the young thespians grow. When asked why she went with such a challenging show, she noted that it was the Young Advisory Committee that proposed it for Young Company this year.

?'It's about teenagers,?' she said. ?It is very poignant to hear them speak these words, the *Romeo and Juliet* story fresh and new, these actors are really saying.?'

Stewart noted the impact this show is having on these teens is a life-changing experience for some who are really young.

She said two co-op students are working with the creative team involved in building the sets and learning about lighting. For this show, there is a revolve in the theatre as part of the stage setting, which is a large part of how their first day in the theatre has been spent: understanding how the revolve is going to work, for at first, it didn't. It was a day of working out the details.

They are up to the challenge, and when the Citizen was talking to Stewart, it was clear the process was fruitful.

?'They're all rising to the challenge,?' Stewart was excited to note. ?They can sense the team effort with the problem of the revolve. They were offering solutions, taking the initiative.?'

Already a winner of eight Tony awards and still playing in New York and London, U.K., where the actors in this show are adults playing teenagers, the Young Company participants are actually teenagers.

?'Different story lines all intertwined,?' she defined it. ?The impact on these teenagers for their own lives in the theatre.?'

It has been wonderful for Stewart, she was emphatic to say, directing this show and especially with the ?amazing support of the creative team, who do anything to make anything easier,?' and the networking with Theatre Orangeville's office team to promote the show, amid the restrictions of its licensing terms.

In brief, this story takes place in the Underworld, where Monster City has been created with a ?wasteful wall? to keep freedom in. The intricacies of the story are yours to discover when attending the show.

It is very engaging, Stewart assured. Some of the singing involves six-part harmony, and their singing of the music is beautiful.

All their skills are being tested by this performance.

'It's been hard work,' she said. 'There have been tears, laughing and frustrations.'

How she feels is, 'for any show, you go in with an open mind and heart. For me, this is special, and the day of the work is all about the work - how can I make it more clear?'

She felt it was great to be in the theatre for the first day, making the actors as good as they can be.

She teaches them to 'stay in the moment, trust the process, trust yourselves: we have to make you look good.'

They are having a good time, and they have the best team behind them. She praised very highly the fact of Young Company, a haven for teens to learn and experience professional theatre in a way rarely found in even much bigger theatre communities. Stewart observed that Young Company needs and deserves the support of the community by buying tickets to see their remarkable production of 'Hadestown - Teen Edition.'

They might ask, she suggested, 'Is this show scary - are we good enough?'

Her answer is definitely: 'Yes you are!'

For more information and to purchase tickets for this stupendous show, go to www.theatreorangeville.ca.