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Piaf at CITS

Piaf! The Show – a musical celebration of the life and music of the legendary French chanteuse Édith Piaf – makes its way to the Centre In The Square for the first time on Feb. 4 (8 p.m.) Starring Nathalie Lermitte, the show premiered in 2015 on Piaf's centennial birthday, drawing inspiration from the acclaimed film La vie en rose.

www.centreinthesquare.com

The films of David Lynch

The Princess Original commemorates the films of David Lynch, one of the greatest visionary filmmakers of our time, who died earlier this month. Upcoming shows include Mulholland Drive (Feb. 1 and 4), as well as Wild at Heart, Twin Peaks Fire Walk With me and Eraserhead.

www.princesscinemas.com



Woodland Christian High School is set to stage The Drowsy Chaperone Jr. on Feb. 28 and Mar. 1. Back row: Nikias Reddecopp, Elliot Wiersma, Claire Kalverda, Mairin Falle, Faith Marshall and director David Graham. Middle row: Alex Flatla, Seth Bruulsema, Willem Colyn, Jacob Vander Wal, Katrielle Beda. Front row: Madden Verstraete, Lanae Beda, Anakke Van Drunen. Andrea Eymann

Going back in time where music meets comedy

Woodland Christian High School students prepare to stage a production of The Drowsy Chaperone Jr.

Andrea Eymann

Observer Staff

A WOMAN IN A CHAIR, henceforth known as Woman in Chair, spins for the audience her favourite record, the 1928 musical The Drowsy Chaperone. Suddenly, the show comes to life in her apartment.

Enter a pair of lovebirds on the eve of their wedding, a bumbling best man, a desperate theatre producer, a not-so-bright hostess, gangsters posing as pastry chefs, a misguided Don Juan and a sleepy chaperone and you've got the recipe for The Drowsy Chaperone Jr., to be staged next month by students at Woodland Christian High School.

Through the Woman in Chair (Faith Marshall), the audience will be transported into the musical story of Broadway star Janet Van De Graaff, portrayed by Lanae Beda, having to decide if she's ready to leave the stage to marry Robert Martin (Jacob Vander Wal).

We're quickly introduced to a host of characters, some of them quite outlandish, as music and comedy meld together.

As Janet ponders her future, Mr. Feldzeig (Seth Bruulsema) is prepared to do anything to stop the wedding in order to keep his star performer, an effort in which he's aided by Aldolpho (Madden Verstraete).

Bruulsema says he's having fun as Feldzeig, as he is flashy character – literally, as he wears a silver suit – which is the opposite of the actor in real life.

Whereas, Verstraete, portraying Aldopho, loves acting in the role, as he is ecstatic and can steal the show even if he is not in the scene. Beda agrees Verstraete is the perfect person for Aldolpho.

For Anakke Van Drunen, the character of Kitty challenges her to be giggly, acting as a "dumb blond."

The students are part of a cast and crew of 40. Plus 10 teachers involved in bringing the story to life.

Grade 11 student Alex Flatla, who is part of the tech side, loves technology and thought this was a great way to expand his skills "and help bring the show to life... [as] its very entertaining, lots of quipping back and forth, and it's very good acting."

In the audition process, director David Graham knew of some teens who had been in other musical numbers, giving him some ideas on who might be a good fit, "but nothing's written in stone."

Yet, when Beda came out to audition, "she knocked it out of the park," he noted, adding, "she had the charisma.

"She's intuitive, that she just knows what to do without even needing a lot of directions, and she has dedication and strong experience on stage.

The young actress had no idea what role she would be chosen for and had no expectations going into the audition.

"I was very thankful that I got the role," the Grade 12 student said.

Beda loves how glamorous Janet is, making her fun to play.

"I feel that it just allows for her to take the stage, and I enjoy that," Beda added, noting that acting lets her come out of her own world for a second to step into a different life.

"And experiment with different feelings and emotions and be able to portray those in a unique way, and also be able to give the audience a chance to experience joy and enjoyment from it,"

Beda said she tends to be more reserved and does not always want to be the centre of attention.

Even though she loves acting, taking on this persona challenges her to make it all about her, making it a big deal while on stage.

As Janet's betrothed Robert, Vander Wal faced some challenges of his own, including roller skating while blindfolded, a first.

"It's pretty easy. I just go in circles and make sure I don't hit things, and the hardest part is making sure I don't get too close to the edge of the stage," the actor said, noting that the blindfold is thin enough to afford him some sight.

"He jumped right in," said Graham. "We've got a big commitment from all these folks.

"It speaks to the fact that it's great to be in this environment where it's community-driven, and parents are quite involved, and there's good relationships with staff and with students, and it's a good feeling," said Graham, who's taught at the school for 30 years.

With a strong group of actors and many good singers, putting on a musical was a natural choice for this year's production, he added.

After reading through several different scripts, they stumbled across this one,

The Drowsy Chaperone, with music and lyrics by Lisa Lambert and Greg Morrison, and a book by Bob Martin and Don McKellar, was first staged in Toronto in 1998, eventually opening on Broadway in 2006 and winning five Tony Awards.

"So, it's nice to do a show that the audience doesn't arrive knowing everything about the play. It's got some funny characters, some funny lines and some catchy songs," Graham said, noting that his favourite song is Love is Always Lovely, as he finds it hilarious every time.

"It's funny, there's good interpersonal dynamics between the two characters who sing it, and then the writing of the song has lots of humour built right into the song itself," he said.

"Every audience member will go home with their own song that they like," Graham noted.

While the full version of the musical comedy runs three hours, the junior version is family-friendly and an hour and a quarter long.

The Woodland Christian High School student production of The Drowsy Chaperone Jr. takes to the stage at the Breslau location on February 28 at 7 p.m. and then again on March 1.