



New troupe has focus on family

Whimsical Players present Beauty and the Beast as inaugural offering

The cast and crew of Whimsical Players' presentation of Beauty and the Beast pose for a photo while rehearsing at Paris Presbyterian Church on Sunday. Inset: Keith Chambers as the Beast and Ralph Tutin as Greedo rehearse a fight scene from Whimsical Players presentation of Beauty and the Beast.

PHOTO BY SEAN ALLEN, BRANT NEWS

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BRANT NEWS

A new theatre troupe on the scene in Brant believes a focus on family will set them apart.

"It's important to have all facets available," actor Jessica Crowley said. "You have a lot of theatre companies that focus on adults and some that focus on children, so it's fun to have something that is all ages – where everyone can

be involved."

True to form, cast and crew for Whimsical Players' inaugural presentation of Beauty and the Beast run the gamut from ages six to 69.

"That's what this whole company is about," director Meghan Graham said. "It's family entertainment for every person in the family, but they can also be in the productions as well."

The Whimsical Players was born by Graham, Crowley and Jody Anne Hyde in September when

they were looking for a creative outlet that fit their families' schedules.

Graham's parents are part of the cast and her partner Keith Chambers stars as the Beast.

The script, which is closer to the original French folktale than it is the Disney movie with dancing teapots, has special meaning to the couple.

"I did this script when I was 13 years old in summer camp and it's where I first met (Chambers)," Graham said.

Crowley, who performs the role of the Beauty, said it's a dream come true for her to play Belle.

The cast needed for a startup troupe doing this script was bold.

"It calls for 19 to 20 people, so my first thought was that I was crazy," Graham said.

But many of the troupe's core members have connections within the Brantford-Brant theatre

community and they found the response was there.

They've been rehearsing since November in preparation for three presentations at T.B. Costain/SC Johnson Community Centre next weekend.

The show goes on Friday,

Feb. 26, and Saturday

Feb. 27, at 7 p.m. and

a Sunday matinee on Feb. 28 at 3 p.m.

The script calls for some changes to the Beauty and the Beast story many are familiar with through Disney.

"You see more of the prince's background," Graham said. "How selfish and conceited he was."

Belle has a mother instead of a father and there are sisters that play significant roles.

But the troupe made a couple changes to give a hat tip to the Disney version.

"You'll see some enchanted objects," Graham said.

Audiences will also be surprised by the athleticism of the performance.

Fight scenes co-ordinated between Chambers' Beast and the villain Greedo, portrayed by Ralph Tutin, will call on the performers' amateur wres-



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