

Talent is on display in DIWC's Dear Edwina

BY DEVIN PACHOLIK, THE LEADER-POST OCTOBER 15, 2014



Luke Lumbard, Alice Willett, Lorenzo Salazar, Ronin Durey, Meika Sonntag, Declan Hewitt (top, from left) and Alexandra Baird (center bottom) pose during a photoshoot being held at Do It With Class Studio in Regina on Sunday Oct. 12, 2014. The group will appear in an upcoming production of Dear Edwina.

Photograph by: Michael Bell, Regina Leader-Post

Dear Edwina

Do It With Class Young People's Theatre

12:30 p.m., Oct. 22

12:30 p.m. & 7:30 p.m., Oct. 23

7:30 p.m., Oct. 24

Riddell Theatre, U of R

Do It With Class Young People's Theatre is busy fine tuning its season-opening musical, Dear Edwina, under the tutelage of Robert Ursan, its new artistic director.

Ursan, who took over the role of Andorlie Hillstrom in June, has been with the company for 18 years. The new director said he has a packed season ahead.

"This is the first time I'll be directing all of the shows," Ursan said, "I like to be involved in every aspect."

Dear Edwina features 26 young performers between the ages of nine and 16,

The musical, by Zina Goldrich and Marcy Heisler, is an off-Broadway production about 13-year-old Edwina Spoonapple. She wants to be the next Dear Abby or Miss Manners. Every summer, Edwina writes musicals performed by her friends. Her shows are based on letters neighbourhood kids send to her about different topics, like how to behave in difficult social situations.

"It's adorable and perfect for children," Ursan said, "And even though it's for children and performed by children, there's a lot in there for parents. It's a family show with a beautiful moral."

Audiences can expect mostly modern pop, Broadway-style music and a few pastiche numbers. As for this year's talent level, Ursan said he's impressed by the up-and-comers in the junior program.

"Do It With Class has always attracted incredibly talented young people," said Ursan. "They have so much energy."

For all the excitement, a major part of Ursan's enjoyment comes from watching kids "blossom" into "performing machines."

"We always have some kids who come in and you can see they have the ability to be professional performers," explained Ursan. "There are also the 'slow-boil' kids; they go from being the shy ones in the back, and then they throw themselves into it."

Building confidence in fledgling artists is part of the company's mission. Ursan called Do It With Class an "incredibly safe place for young people."

"It's a place where kids can explore their talents and not feel embarrassed to be insane."

The artistic director described the moment when new performers connect with their craft.

"Sometimes we get kids who, just for a split second, get this flicker in their eyes when they finally understand something. You have an 11-year-old who understands concepts that confound 20-year-olds. They realize they are part of something bigger."

Ursan said the poise that comes with those realizations "helps kids down the road."

"One of the greatest things in theatre is that there are no consequences. These young people learn that they don't have to be embarrassed."

Excited by the new season, Ursan said he can't wait to share the company's hard work.

"I'm always proud of the kids, and audiences are always invariably astounded by the talent level."

Tickets for Dear Edwina can be purchased at doitwithclass.com and conexusticket.com. The show

runs from October 22 to 24 at the University of Regina's Riddell Theatre.

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