

Walker students set to stage musical

By Duane Hicks

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J.W. Walker students have been working hard since early January to get ready for their one-night only performance of "A Year with Frog and Toad," which is slated for Thursday, March 1 at the Townshend Theatre.

The play is a Tony Award-nominated musical written by brothers Robert and Willie Reale, based on the "Frog and Toad" children's stories written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel.

"We chose this one because it was really geared to children," director Nicole Thomson told the Times.

"We have a cast of Grade 4-6 as a school from K-6 only, so we wanted something child-friendly," she explained.

"We went with the half-hour version, as well, because we were on a condensed timeline, and being this aged cast, we

think it works a little bit better," Thomson added.

"We can focus more on sets and costumes and production rather than taking on too much," she reasoned.

"It gives us a little more flexibility with what we can do with the production, I guess."

The production involves 20 students who either have roles or are working behind the scenes.

"It's very small. It's our smallest one yet," Thomson noted.

"But again, this is the first time we've ever done it only having Grades 4-6; usually we had Grades 4-8."

And make no mistake, Thomson and the students have been working non-stop to get ready for next week's performance.

"We've had seven weeks, from auditions to showtime," she remarked.

"We have pretty much practised every day. It was a huge commitment for them," added Thomson.

"I think that's why we have a smaller cast—because of the intense commitment.

"Every morning, every break, we've practised," she reiterated.

The lead roles of "Frog" and "Toad" are being played by Piper Lidkea and Sophia Black respectively.

"Frog is calm, collected and put together," Thomson said. "He knows how to respond to his best pal Toad's many crises.

"Toad is serious, self-conscious but oddly charismatic," she added. "They are a perfectly imperfect match for each other."

Being a musical, the half-hour performance consists of six songs.

"Each scene is basically a musical number, with just a little bit of dialogue in between," said Thomson, noting the show moves along quickly.

Thomson urged everyone to come out next Thursday for the performance.

"It's short and sweet. It's really child-friendly," she stressed.

"We tried to gear it to a good time—after dinner but before kids have to go to bed," Thomson added.

"It's cute, it's got a lot of humour in it, and it moves along quickly—people will be entertained, for sure.

"These kids have been working really hard so it would be nice to have a big crowd," she concluded.

And if you need any more convincing, heed the words of student Emma Bodnarchuk, who plays the role of "Turtle."

"This is going to be the cutest musical we've ever done," she promised.

The curtain rises at 6:30 p.m. on March 1, with the production only running for a half-hour.

Admission is \$5 for adults and \$2 for students, with children under five admitted free.

Everyone is welcome to attend.