

# 'Beauty and the Beast' on tap

By Duane Hicks

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The fairy tale, "Beauty and the Beast," has delighted readers, theatre-goers, and movie fans for many years.

And next week, the enchanting story of a monstrous-looking prince and a young woman who fall in love will come alive on the stage at Robert Moore School here.

The popular musical will take the stage next Wednesday and Thursday (Feb. 28-March 1) starting at 6 p.m. each night.

Jen Pagnotta, who has been co-producing the play along with fellow teachers Hue Eldridge and Michelle Cain, said it was the right time to do "Beauty and the Beast."

"We've been doing musicals every couple of years, and 'Beauty and the Beast' was always in the back of our minds,"



"Lumiere," played by Alex Kabel, far right, relayed information to "Chip" (Alexis Latter), far left, "Belle" (Emma Bone), and "Mrs. Potts" (Olivia Eldridge) during a scene from "Beauty and the Beast" at Saturday afternoon's rehearsal at Robert Moore School. The musical will be performed on Feb. 28-March 1.

—Duane Hicks photo

two different students—each ed by another 20 or so students into preparing for next week's

she remarked.

"So we decided to take on that challenge this year," added Pagnotta, noting the Disney live-action remake of its own 1991 animated hit had just come out in 2017.

"So the kids were really excited about it," she said. "We thought we would give it a shot this year."

The production has been in the works since November.

"We've been practising in school during recesses and after school on Mondays, and now we've started these weekend practices," Pagnotta said.

"Beauty and the Beast" sports a cast of about 40 students in Grades 4-8.

Because so many students were interested, some of the key roles are being played by

one playing their chosen role on one of the two nights of the performance, Pagnotta explained.

"Belle" is being played by Emma Bone and Maya Davis while "Beast" is being portrayed by Kaiden Kelly and Brayden Beazley.

Other major roles, and the actors playing them, include "Mrs. Potts" (Olivia Eldridge), "Chip" (Alexis Latter), "Cogsworth" (Ayiana Gagné and Timea Enge), "Lumiere" (Anna Gagné and Alex Kabel), "Gaston" (Zak Kellar), and "Le Fou" (Cohen Ossachuk).

But being a production with five main musical numbers, complete with dancing, the rest of the cast also get their share of time on stage.

The musical also is support-

behind the scenes, who, under the direction of teachers Deb Ross and Jen Rae, have been busy spending their recesses making the props and backdrops.

Pagnotta said "Beauty and the Beast" promises to be entertaining.

"It's a good comedy," she remarked.

"It's a storyline where everyone knows it, and they know some of the songs, so come out and sing along with us," she urged.

"Our kids are pretty entertaining," added Pagnotta. "They always blow me away with their acting and dancing and singing skills."

"It really comes out."

On top of that, everyone involved has put a lot of work

performances, and it would be wonderful to see a full audience out for the two shows, said Pagnotta.

"They've been working hard," she stressed.

"The time and the commitment they've put into it—missing their recesses and staying after school," she noted.

"A lot of them go to hockey and have these other commitments, and them putting the musical first has been their priority. That's great," Pagnotta enthused.

"And their parents' support has been great, too, because they're busy kids."

Tickets can be purchased at the door, with the cost being \$7 for adults and \$5 for students.

Children three and under are free.