

# Feat portrays life in small, rural community

by JOHN CAMPBELL

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'Feat' is a treat, for the eyes, ears and mind.

The first dance production ever mounted by Spirit of the Hills - The Northumberland Arts Association, 'Feat: Going Beyond Dance' employs everything from ballroom dancing to hip hop, from square dancing to rumba, to present a fanciful tale of conflict.

The protagonists are scarecrows, embodying order and control, and their adversaries, the crows, who represent the natural world. While 'Feat' tells how the two sides come to an understanding of their complementary roles, it also celebrates life in a rural community, specifically, Warkworth, where the production will take the stage later this month.

"It's a piece specially written for our community and I think people will just love the creativity of the dance moves and have a laugh at the local references, too," says executive producer Meirion Jones. The audiences will also be "bowled over by the talent that is on display."

The cast of 32 from across Northumberland County range in age from nine to 70. The technical crew is almost as large.

The script was written by 'Feat's' artistic director Barb Stocking. Another Warkworth resident, songwriter Dale Clark, composed the score and furnished the studio for the recording of the original music, with the help of other talented individuals in the community. Mara Brown and Tina Staplin assisted Ms. Stocking with

the choreography.

"The cast adores the show and I think audiences will, too," Mr. Jones says.

"It will blow their socks off," chimes in Ms. Stocking.

The initial response to 'Feat' has been so overwhelming that a fourth date has been added to its schedule of performances; it will now run from Oct. 20 to Oct. 23 at the Warkworth Town Hall Centre for the Arts.

"We were initially cautious about bringing dance to Warkworth (as) it's never been done before," Mr. Jones says of Spirit of the Hills, which has sponsored concerts, promoted the work of its members and held writers' workshops. However, at the urging of Ms. Staplin and Joe Erickson, Mr. Jones and his co-executive producer Bob Leahy threw their support behind having dance as the association's next public offering. What began as a "wee idea has mushroomed into this fantastic, unbelievable dance," Mr. Jones says.

"We're very excited. I don't think people will know what hit them."

Auditions were held in June and rehearsals began in July, twice a week, lasting one to three hours at a time, and up to six hours on occasion.

"It's a huge project," Ms. Keogh says. "So many of the people are not trained dancers, so it's really quite astonishing to see how it's coming together and how people are looking so good."

"This has really been an amazing example of community building," Mr. Jones says.

"Dance is a wonderful way to do it," Ms. Stocking adds. "It's very uplifting," and "a

real high" for all those taking part.

"It's taken over my life," says Mr. Clark, who was asked by Ms. Stocking to become involved after work on 'Feat' had begun. The two talked about the theme of the production and then he began "throwing paint down on the palette" to match musical styles with the dance numbers as they were taking

shape.

'Feat' will be staged so that performers will move among the audience, which will be seated in six different sections. Space is limited to 130 for each performance and few tickets remain on sale.

To find out if any are still available, for \$12, visit the Eclectic Mix in Warkworth or phone (705) 924-1230.



John Campbell photo

*Feat promises to be an exhilarating experience. Cast members include Jennifer Gibson as a scarecrow.*