

# ENTERTAINMENT

## Acton High School to present Shakespeare in the Pit



Matt LoTurco (left) and Andrew Ferley rehearse the fatal duel of Tybalt and Mercutio.

Photo submitted

**SARAH O'HEARN**  
Special to The IFF

*"Wisely and slow, they stumble that run fast!"*

The lines have been memorized, and the actions perfected. *Romeo and Juliet*, performed by Acton High School students, is a promising success as rehearsals have been on the go since February.

This audience-friendly version of the play is edited to remove long speeches and difficult language, but keep all the action and emotion. Of course, none of Shakespeare's language has been altered! With scenes true to the play, including perfected street brawls and a traditional ball, Shakespeare's Verona comes to life once again in Acton's very own community.

The play is guaranteed to bring laughter, tears and an amazing night to remember.

A few sneak peaks into the drama room show leads Jenny Gibson and Darren Atherton working hard to make their roles fluid and flawless with the help of Mrs. Jennifer Ross. Twenty-three students have practiced lines daily; many more stay late and come in weekends to help with costumes, hair, make-up and technical support.

The most challenging part of the play to prepare has

been the fight scenes. Director Jennifer Ross enlisted the aid of internationally-recognized Jennifer Parr, an expert in stage combat, to create these scenes. Parr conducted a workshop with the actors to make the fights realistic enough to have you on the edge of your seat. The actors have worked for weeks with Mr. Houghton and Mrs. Ross to be good enough to "move to metal".

As the actors work their magic for your entertainment, you will be not 10 feet away from the action unfolding in the bearpit (school lobby sitting area), in true Elizabethan tradition. Shakespeare performed in playhouses with an open pit directly in front of the stage; the audience would stand in the pit, unless they were wealthy enough to afford a stool.

In a decision she has referred to as "infectious folly," Mrs. Ross is staging this performance in the bearpit of Acton High School, with the audience sitting on the steps or in seats on the floor looking down on the action. The closeness will create an intimate evening of theatre—but it will also mean a very small audience each night.

The play will run on Thursday, April 27, Friday, April 28 and Saturday, April 29. All performances start at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8 to "sit in the pit" or \$10 for a seat on the floor; call the school, 519-853-2920.

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