

# Arts & Entertainment

## Drury drama troupe heads to Sears festival

By STEPHANIE THIESSEN

The Champion

When it comes to Stephen Ground's list of best birthday presents, this year's has to be at the top — a trip to Canada's capital and maybe, just maybe, an award or two.

The E.C. Drury High School student will head to Ottawa Sunday to attend the provincial level of the Sears Ontario Drama Festival with fellow members of the Drury at Drama troupe.

And while on the trip, he'll turn 18. The early birthday present is a result of the hours and hours of hard work the team of 14 has put into its production of *Bonjour, La Bonjour*, written by Canadian playwright Michel Tremblay.

"It's (the hours of work) been tough," Stephen said. "It takes a toll on other things. But the trade-off is worth it."

After competing and placing in the top three in the Halton-wide competition, the group advanced to the Northwestern Ontario Regional competition. Once again, it placed in the top three.

Actors and stage crew alike are keeping their fingers crossed that the third time will continue to be a charm, as they perform at the Ontario level — the highest level in the Sears festival, now in its 58th year.

E.C. Drury's production is one of just 15 plays that will be performed at the Ontario competition, whittled down from 410 plays and more than 8,000 student performers.

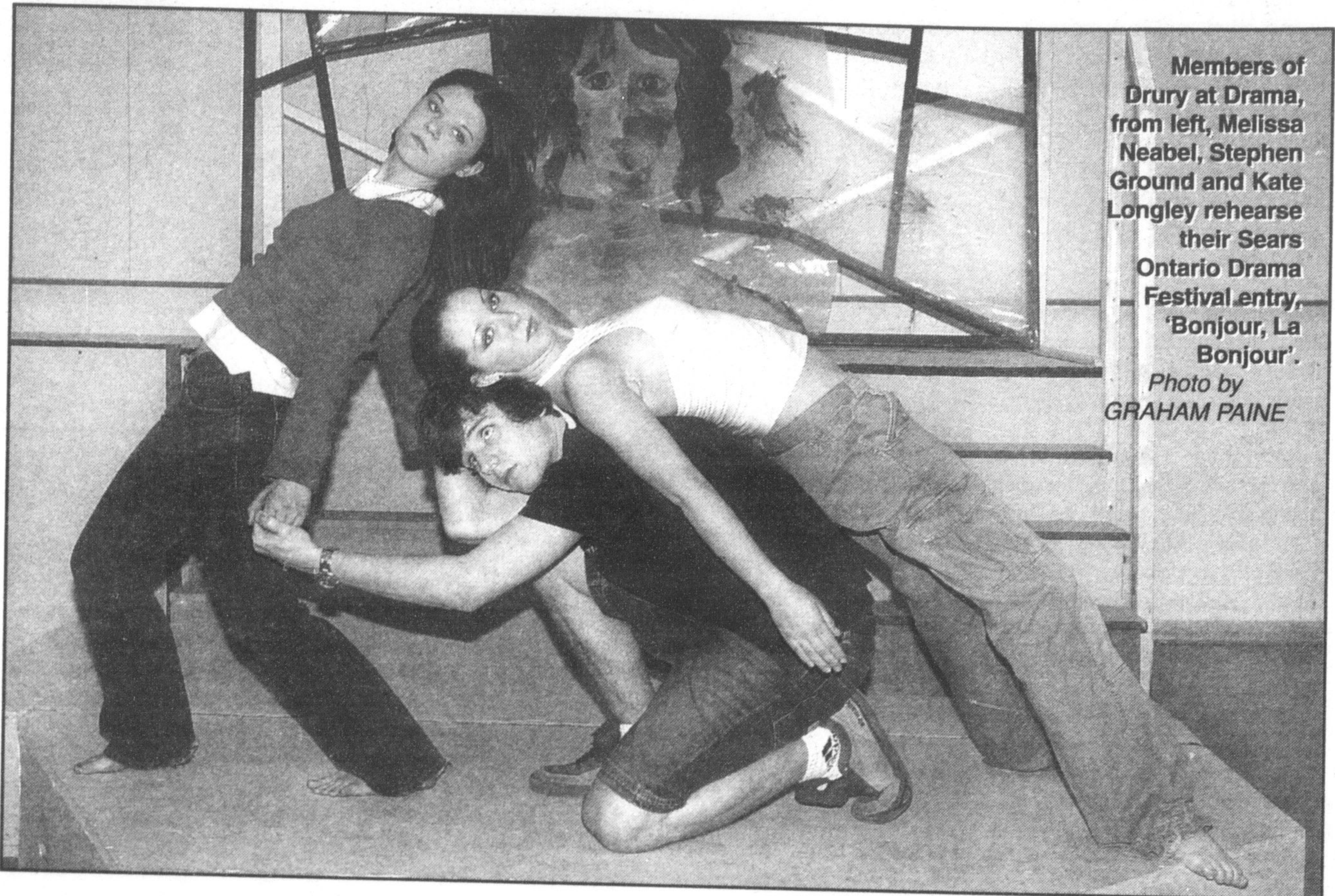
Stephen said he, along with the rest of the cast and crew, is incredibly excited.

"It's a good opportunity," said the grade 12 student. "We get to go and meet a lot of people and see different styles of theatre. You learn a lot about life, about yourself, and have a lot of fun."

Stephen, along with Melissa Neabel and Kate Longley, received an award for his acting in the production in addition to the play's overall Outstanding Production award.

Stephen's no new-comer to the Sears festival. He and many of the troupe members also made it to the Ontario level last year.

"We have high expectations of ourselves because of last year,"



Members of Drury at Drama, from left, Melissa Neabel, Stephen Ground and Kate Longley rehearse their Sears Ontario Drama Festival entry, 'Bonjour, La Bonjour'. Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

he said.

Many of the Drama at Drury troupe members have been acting together for the past three years.

"We're like a big family," he said, adding, "We've had some of the adjudicators comment on that."

Stephen plays the lead, a character named Ferge, in the group's

production.

"The show's about the relationships within a rather dysfunctional family," he explained, adding, "There are lots of tough issues addressed (in the production)."

Drama teacher Kate Roberts, who heads the group, said the Drama at Drury group is extra-curricular. Students are willing to devote time and effort to the group simply because they love theatre, she said.

And she couldn't be more proud of them.

The drama troupe was formed about five years ago, she said. Three years ago, they began competing at the Sears festival. And all three times they made it to the provincial level of competition.

On top of the rehearsal time has been a number of fund-raising ventures to help cover the costs of accommodation, entry fees and transportation for the Ottawa trip, Ms Roberts said.

"The kids are very dedicated," she said. "*Bonjour, La Bonjour* is a Canadian classic. It has mature content with difficult structure, language and concepts. The kids have done well handling the content."

The troupe will return next Friday.

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