

Local youth have a ball with Cinderella pantomime



Katie Scorrar as the Fairy Godmother waves her wand over, left to right, Caris Reid, Erik Patterson and Chris Pettitt as the youth group prepares for next week's production of Cinderella.

Photo by CHERYL JOHNSON

KATE GILDERDALE
Correspondent

The fifth annual pantomime presented by Christ Church Anglican's Youth Group features six young veterans who have performed in every production.

Chris Pettitt, 15, who plays Baron Marmaduke Hardup in this year's presentation of *Cinderella*, began his illustrious theatrical career in Kindergarten as the country mouse. "I had the lead role. I was a star in all grades," said the young man, with a modest grin.

He decided to try pantomime "because it sounded interesting — at least, that's the official version," he added enigmatically. What also attracted him was the opportunity to ad-lib, a prerequisite for all good pantomime characters and something at which he excels, both on stage and off.

The genre itself, which grew out of Britain's music hall tradition, relies strongly on actor/audience rapport and quickness of reaction on the part of the cast. Keeping

the actors to any semblance of the script is no mean feat, acknowledged Chris, who clearly relishes the artistic freedom offered by pantomime.

For 18-year-old Katie Scorrar, who plays the Fairy Godmother, acting in a pantomime is more interesting than performing in a serious play. "There's more life to it and in this role, I find my ballet (training) pays off," said Katie, who has been a student at Stouffville's Dance Centre for more than 14 years. "If we don't like something (in the script) we can change it."

Chris and Katie agree that group dynamics are an integral part of why they became involved. "You are in this little club. (Joining) is more of a group choice than a personal choice and you can't do it without the rest of the group," said Chris.

Unexpected twists in the dialogue can lead to a delayed audience reaction, another challenge for the cast. "Sometimes when you make a joke, no one gets it for a couple of minutes and then someone starts laughing really hard," Kate observed.

"I was just part of the church when it all

started and I thought it would be interesting to try," said Eric Patterson, 15, another original cast member who plays Buttons in this year's production. "I enjoy doing this more than a dramatic presentation."

"I was so embarrassed the first year," admitted Chris. And while it is tough to perform in front of his peers, he really enjoys the youngest members of the audience, who enter unselfconsciously into the spirit of the play. "They're the best — you tell them to jump and they say 'How high?'"

Also back for their fifth year are Amanda Parker, 15, Caris Reid, 16, and Jessica Franklin, 18. *Cinderella* has been adapted, with great poetic licence, by pantomime veteran and perennial 'dame' Charlie Parker.

Performances take place 7:30 p.m. Feb. 27 and 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Feb. 28 at Latham Hall.

Tickets are \$8 for adults and \$6 for children under 12, and are available from Boyd's Sports, Freckles and Stouffville Travel, or by calling the church office at 640-1641.

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