

Bat Boy wings its way to Ontario

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Former Stouffville resident Michael McGinn is the director of *Bat Boy*, a quirky musical which previews in Toronto Wednesday.

The *New Yorker* described the musical as having "the plot of a Hollywood B-movie, a rockin' musical score and wicked humour with a serious intellectual undercurrent..."

It is currently on run in London, England.

The story begins with the discovery of a small creature, half bat and half boy, by three teenagers exploring a cave in West Virginia.

The creature tries to make the transformation into a respectable citizen after being taken in by a family that both adores and despises him. However, things soon start to go wrong.

Jay T. Schramek is *Bat Boy* and Laura Caswell plays *Bat Boy's* love interest. Both are from Toronto.

"I have had a lot of success with musical theatre — fun, crazy kinds of shows," Mr. McGinn said.

He describes *Bat Boy* as a journey of self-discovery, with the main character representing Everyman.

Along the way, this homage to musical theatre manages to highlight styles from vaudeville to *Lez Miserables*, *Cats*, *Miss Saigon*, *Jesus Christ*

Superstar and other productions.

Mr. McGinn has been directing for 15 years, with a smattering of acting and producing thrown in. He's been fortunate, he said, in being able to work in his home country. Most of his work has been in the Toronto and southern Ontario area.

"I have had a lot of success with musical theatre — fun, crazy kinds of shows."

"Crafting together enough work to keep busy... it is a very lucky thing," he said. "I have been fortunate enough to be successful with it."

He was assistant director at the Stratford Festival for three seasons and director in residence for the York Region Catholic School board for four years.

At the Meaford Theatre, he was part of the team directing works such as *Cabaret*, *The Fantastic Voyage of Christopher Columbus* and *Cheatin' Hearts*.

He has been teaching acting and musical theatre at George Brown College, The Drama Workshop and at York University, all in Toronto, and for the musical theatre department at

the University of Windsor.

As the resident teacher for Etobicoke Creative Arts/Arts Express, he will be directing a children's version of *Macbeth* for Rhombus Media shortly.

He has also directed *Godspell 2000* at the Bathurst Street Theatre and *Forbidden Broadway*, *Almost Famous* and *The Sound of Music* at the Limelight Dinner Theatre in Toronto.

Mr. McGinn attended Stouffville District Secondary School before going on to studies in act-

ing at the University of Waterloo and musical theatre at Sheridan College in Oakville.

This summer, he'll be returning to the Toronto Zoo to direct another *Amazing Animal Show*, starring the keepers and animals of the zoo.

Bat Boy's regular run opens Feb. 22 and continues until April 16 at the Bathurst Street Theatre.

Tickets are available by calling Ticketmaster at 416-872-5555 or by logging on to www.ticketmaster.ca



MICHAEL MCGINN

Celebration of the Arts gala event Saturday

Some of the brightest performers in York Region will be showcased at a benefit performance Saturday.

The event will feature Celebration of the Arts winners from the dance, vocal and music categories.

The York Region Newspaper Group's Celebration of the Arts talent search, the brainchild of publisher Ian Proudfoot, rewards select participants with \$1,500 bursaries, studio recording time and other prizes.

Saturday's event will highlight last year's bursary winners.

The gala started as a customer appreciation event

but this event is open to the public.

"The public should have the opportunity to see the quality of talent in York Region," said Marsha Winton, vice-chairperson of the Celebration of the Arts talent search.

The intent of the talent search and bursary program is to broaden support for arts in the community.

"There's a lot spent on sports but not for the arts. That's what we're trying to encourage," Ms Winton said.

The event is at the Newmarket Theatre at 7:30 p.m. For tickets, call 905-953-5122. To contribute to this year's bursary program, contact Debra Weller, chairperson of Celebration of the Arts, York Region Newspaper Group at dweller@yrg.com or 905-294-2200, ext. 3304.

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