

Director making pro debut at fringe

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Julie believes she will only have 21 extraordinary days throughout her entire life.

But when she meets Ben, Julie must decide what is worth chasing before her numbered days are up.

That is the premise behind the musical 21 Days, which debuts at the Toronto Fringe Festival Thursday. Former Stouffville resident Jessica Kostuck is its director.

"The fringe festival is just this amazing opportunity to create and fail," the 24-year-old McGill University graduate and founder of Bad Dress Productions told The Sun-Tribune.

"If we're going to do it, fringe is the place to do something new and challenging for the audience," she said.

Ms Kostuck tried to get a production into last year's Montreal Fringe Festival, but ended up being 41st on the wait list. She decided to try the Toronto Fringe Festival but didn't have a production waiting in the wings. So when she was chosen last

November, it was a mad scramble to put on an original musical production.

"This year, luck was with us," she said.

Ms Kostuck, who attended Saint Brother Andre Catholic High School, has always loved musical theatre.

When she started at McGill there was no group dedicated to staging large-scale musicals. So she founded the Arts Undergraduate Theatre Society, which is now in its seventh season.

The genre has evolved to where musicals can be just as entertaining with a handful of cast members on smaller stages, which is where Ms Kostuck fits in.

"There's an audience for everything," she said.

21 Days, which runs until July 15 at the Robert Gill Theatre in Toronto, is Ms Kostuck's first semi-professional production.

"It's everything I could have asked for in an experience," she said. "Even if I'm the only person in the theatre that night, I'm so proud."

For show times and tickets, go to <http://fringetoronto.com>



Brothers Drew and Matthew Ferris bite into their roast beef sandwiches at the barbecue.



STAFF PHOTOS/NICK IWANYSHYN

LIONS SERVING

Club president Clare Palmer cuts up some of the 600 pounds of beef cooked for the annual Stouffville Lions barbecue in Memorial Park Thursday. The end-of-school event has been held for more than 50 years in Stouffville. The fun continues in the park all weekend at the 28th annual Strawberry Festival. Main Street is closed to vehicle traffic in the downtown core until 7 p.m. today.



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Saturday, July 21st, 7:30 pm
LEBOVIC CENTRE FOR ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT
19 Civic Avenue, Stouffville, ON
Tickets available at the door: \$ 25 / \$20 (students and seniors).
For more information: 905-640-2322 | www.wendyzhao.com | www.romansmirnov.com

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