



Aspiring thespians from York-Durham Academy of the Performing Arts presented their first public performance, 'A Cratchit Christmas', at Christ Church Anglican Dec. 9 and 11. Academy students are currently rehearsing for spring productions of *Oliver!* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Performing arts academy considers itself at home

By Kate Gilderdale
Stouffville This Month

When Wayne Hill came up with the idea of starting a performing arts academy for young people in the community, he thought he would be lucky to attract 40 potential students.

After distributing flyers at every house and school in town, outlining his plans to create a local version of

Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* he was astonished at the response. "We had 160 families come out to our first meeting at Orchard Park School on Sept. 9 and we had to put out extra chairs to accommodate them all."

Just three months later, students from the newly-minted York-Durham Academy of the Performing Arts participated in a memorable presentation of Christmas music, along with excerpts from *Oliver!* and *The Wizard of Oz*. Tickets for the first performance, which took place at Christ Church Anglican on Dec. 9, sold out almost at once, and a second performance was hastily arranged which also played to a capacity audience.

The two performances served as a showcase for the company's talented young cast, whose professionalism was most impressive, particularly given the short time in which they have been rehearsing together. For executive director Wayne Hill, who retired recently from Markville Secondary School, it was the culmination of a dream inspired by a 34-year career in music education in the Toronto area.

After producing MSS's annual Christmas in Song concert for many years, he was determined to give his own children and other young people in the community the opportunity to discover the magic of the performing arts. He was blessed, he said, to have a talented and highly qualified staff to help him put it all together. "I have some really wonderful people working with me and I am a great believer in the KISS theory (keep it simple, stupid). The more complicated you make something the

more chance for mistakes."

Mr. Hill holds music degrees from York University and Niagara University and has taught music at all levels from kindergarten to OAC. He has also directed countless musical performances and trained many accomplished young musicians throughout his long career.

The artistic team at YDAPA includes musical director Lyle Corrigan, choreographer Rachel Lepera and vocal coach Christie O'Reilly, all of whom have strong backgrounds in the performing and musical arts. In addition to *Oliver!* which will be presented April 3 to 6 at Vaughan City Playhouse and *The Wizard of Oz*, which runs May 8-11 at Uxbridge Music Hall, YDAPA is planning to offer two summer camp programs for students in July.

For more information on YDAPA, visit www.ydapa.com and check future issues of *Stouffville This Month* for updates.

Another opening, another show

If it's January, it must be sign-up time for Music Mania.

New and returning thespians, dancers, singers and comedians are warmly invited to come to the general sign-up meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8 at Stouffville United Church on Church St. North. All are welcome, talent is optional, only enthusiasm is required.

New male chorus members are especially welcome.

For more information call 905-640-6418.

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