

Centre Dufferin revives musical theatre with 80s-themed musical

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Centre Dufferin District High School is stepping back into the spotlight for the first time in more than a decade, as students and staff prepare to stage *The Wedding Singer Musical*, a full-scale production built around newly upgraded performance facilities and months of rehearsal.

The production was chosen for its upbeat tone, nostalgic appeal and broad audience reach.

Drama teacher and director Jessica Morris said that they were looking for a production that was fun and accessible to the wider community.

"We were just really looking for a production that really focused on something upbeat, positive, nostalgic," she said. "The *Wedding Singer Musical* is based on the film with Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore, so it just felt like a really good choice for our school. If you love a good romance story, if [you] love a great comedy, if [you're] looking for big hair and rock music and love triangles, this is for you."

Planning for the musical began last school year, with licensing finalized in September and auditions and rehearsals starting in October. The play will be performed from Thursday, June 4 to Saturday, June 6, with evening shows starting at 7 p.m. and matinee shows starting at 1 p.m.

Since then, students involved in both cast and crew have been meeting multiple times a week. However, a major renovation of the cafeteria, including an overhaul of the lighting and sound system, delayed the cast and crew's access to the stage.

"We actually didn't get on stage until two weeks ago," Morris said.

Despite that tight turnaround, the production has grown into a large collaborative effort.

The show features a cast of about 20 students, supported by a tech and stage crew of roughly 15, several senior music students performing alongside the tracks, and a team of 10 to 15 staff members handling direction, stage management, lighting, sound, costumes, set construction and front-of-house duties.

The musical also serves as an important entry point for many first-time performers, with the cast spanning multiple grades.

"We actually have quite a variety in our cast," Morris said. "We have a lot of younger students who've actually never done a show before, so that's been a really great opportunity for them. Our male lead? he's a Grade 12 student, and he's been involved in our music program all throughout high school. This year was his first year taking a drama class, and he really enjoyed it, and he's never been involved in drama before this, so he's super excited about that."

Beyond the immediate run, organizers see the musical as a statement about the role of the arts in a small-town school still recovering from pandemic disruptions and education cuts.

The hope is that a lively 80s romance, big hair, rock music and an enthusiastic student company will help rebuild momentum, spotlight local talent and remind the community that live theatre is very much alive.

With a dedicated staff, an excited cast, and a hardworking behind-the-scenes team, Centre Dufferin District High School's *The*

Wedding Singer promises to be a fun and endearing blast from the past.

For more info, and to get tickets, go to: ugdsb.ca/o/cddhs/article/14993