

LOCAL/REGION

CVCS to present 'James and the Giant Peach' musical

SINCLAIRVILLE — In 1996, Tim Burton and Denise Di Novi brought Roald Dahl's 1961 novel "James and the Giant Peach" to the big screen. Now the students at Cassadaga Valley Central School are bringing it to the stage.

"James and the Giant Peach" is a fantastical journey of a boy, his insect friends, and their amazing journey across the ocean on a giant piece of fruit.

It's a family favorite for Cassadaga Valley co-musical director Shawn Salim.

"My kids all watched it," said Salim, who has four children and watched it many times on DVD. "We all liked it."

In the fall when co-musical director J. Nicole Zenns suggested it as a possibility, Salim immediately agreed. "It's for kids of all ages and adults for sure," he said.

Although the musical has its differences from the film, Salim says "if you've seen the movie, you'll recognize the story."

Zenns says she, too, loves the storyline. "It's all about family," she said. "James faces many setbacks, but then his unlikely but wonderful new family that he chooses makes him very happy."

Zenns, who is CVCS' band director and co-directed last year's "Joseph and the Amazing Technical Dreamcoat," knew they had the student body that could pull this show off.

There's 42 students in the cast, 10 students in the stage crew, and another eight students who are part of the pit orchestra. Since so many of the music department students who would be in the pit auditioned for the show this year, Zenns, who is also the pit orchestra director, filled out the pit with some CVCS band alumni, SUNY Fredonia School of Music students, local freelancers, a grandparent of some students in the cast, and a member of the SUNY Faculty. She and Salim also utilized a number of alumni, parents, and even parents of alumni for stage crew, costuming, and many other tasks needed to produce a musical.

While this is the second year in a row Zenns and Salim have co-directed the school's annual musical, they have a new staff member with Brandon Di Tieri as the vocal director. He too, is excited about this year's production.

"It has been a pleasure working with the cast; the audience is in for a real treat," he said.

The musical features a wickedly tuneful score by the Tony-nominated team of Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, the two behind the recent "Greatest Showman" production.

"James and the Giant Peach" premiered as a musical in 2010. In 2015 it was available for youth and regional theaters.

Because it's so new, very few schools have done the show locally. This will be the first time Cassadaga Valley has done it. The only other school that has done it recently was Lancaster Middle School.

"James and the Giant Peach" will be performed over the next two Friday and Saturdays: March 8-9 and March 15-16.

Showtimes for March 8, 15 and 16 will be at 7:30 p.m. while the Saturday, March 9 performance will be a matinee only at 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$9 for adults and \$7 for students. To purchase tickets call 962-8581 ext. 601 or go on line to www.cvcougars.org. Tickets purchased on line will have a surcharge.

Whether you're familiar with the book, film, or neither, you're sure to have a "peachy" time!



Submitted Photos

Pictured is the full cast for "James and the Giant Peach." Performances are set for the next two Fridays and Saturdays. Showtimes for March 8, 15 and 16 are at 7:30 p.m. while March 9 is a matinee at 2 p.m.



The "insects" include (from left): Anna Wenger, Lucas Bouquin, Spencer Blake, Brooke Jasinski and Katrinah Bretl.



Pictured from left are Gavin Blake (James) and Nate Lawrie (Ladhalord.)



"Spiker and Sponge" played by Grace Zahm and Payton Alessi.



Pictured are some of the shows victims, reporters and garden ladies.



Alyzza Zuech, Grace Warsitz and Kennedy Pattison are all water dancers.



Above are more characters that will be seen in this year's production, including James' father, the nurse, Buzz the Hollywood agent, Karl Kreator, and Billy and Bobby cops.

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