

Inspired To Act

Girl Uses Acting Chops In I.F. Play

By John Markon

Post Register

Sunday, November 08, 2009

Just about every preteen girl who dreams of a career in music or theater covets the title role in "Annie."

When audiences see 11-year-old Shayla Babcock of Rexburg carrying the Idaho Falls Youth Arts Centre's production of "Annie" at the Colonial Theater, they may just assume they're watching a young girl with a long list of stage credits finally reaching her goal.

Except they'd be wrong.

The remarkable thing about this particular "Annie" is that Babcock, a sixth-grader at Madison Middle School, is playing her first role of any consequence. Until being cast as Annie, Babcock's theatrical experience consisted entirely of dance classes.

"There are days when I don't believe it myself," producer Joy Sorenson said. "From the first day she auditioned, she's done amazingly well with the singing, and she's shown incredible stage presence. I don't know how that happens."

"My wife and I don't, either," father Matt Babcock said. "Every time we see her run through it, we're kind of astounded."

Shayla was inspired to seek the role when her 6-year-old sister, Avery, landed a part in a youth theater production in Rexburg. Rather than audition for a lesser role in "Annie," Shayla determined there was no reason she shouldn't shoot for the lead.

"My mom told me about the show, and we just decided to try to do it ... all of us," Shayla said. "It's all been really exciting, and I know I'm going to be sad when it's over."

Shayla's one of four Babcocks on the bill. Avery's in the chorus, and her father plays both

a tough-talking New York City police officer and a cultivated English butler. Missy Babcock doesn't look too much like a mother of five as she negotiates the singing, strutting bimbo role of Lily St. Regis.

Stage family? One of Shayla's great-grandmothers, Clarice Anderson, sang on Broadway in the 1920s and 1930s.

"I've done some singing but not much acting," Missy Babcock said. "Matt's done some acting, but never much singing. It's not like we're always singing and dancing around the house, that's for sure."

Some of Shayla's best work is done when she's not in the spotlight. Unlike some Annies, she doesn't attempt to steal or overplay every scene.

"She helps direct attention to the other actors when she should," Sorenson said. "Where did she learn how to do that? Who knows?"

'Annie' lore

The role of Annie was originated on Broadway in 1977 by 13-year-old Andrea McArdle. Kristin Vigard, also 13, had the title role when the show opened on the road but was later demoted to being McArdle's understudy. Both women are still performing. Vigard has worked occasionally as a backup singer for the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

Aileen Quinn was 11 when she starred in the 1982 "Annie" film and Alicia Morton was 12 when she played Annie in the 1999 remake. Other girls who've been cast as Annie in major productions include Molly Ringwald and Sarah Jessica Parker.

Among those who've been cast as Miss Hannigan, the sour-apple supervisor of the orphanage, are Carol Burnett, Kathie Lee Gifford, Sally Struthers, Kathy Bates and British female impersonator Paul O'Grady, who played the role on the London stage.

Local Kids Sing, Dance In Classic Musical

By Felicia Muriel

Post Register

Tuesday, November 03, 2009

Approximately 90 children, between 5 and 16 years old auditioned this summer for the Idaho Falls Youth Arts Center's upcoming production of 'Annie.'

'We had a great turnout,' producer Joy Sorensen said.

The female-dominated cast was eventually narrowed down to 70 actors including a puppy named Charlie who plays Annie's pet dog, Sandy. The show will debut Friday at the Colonial Theater.

The musical tells the story of Little Orphan Annie, originally a character in newspaper comic strips. In the show, Annie and her friends escape from the Municipal Girls Orphanage into the home of the rich Daddy Warbucks.

Here's what the lead orphans had to say about their upcoming performances:

Shayla Babcock, 11

Madison Middle School

What character do you play?

Annie.

Who is your favorite character?

Molly, the youngest orphan.

Have you ever acted before?

No this is my first-ever public performance. My mom told me about it the day before auditions and I got the lead role.

Why should people come see 'Annie?'

They should come see all the amazing actors.

The play is funny and sad and lots of other things.

Maddie Hugues, 11

Longfellow Elementary School

What character do you play?

Pepper.

Who is your favorite character?

Tessie and Grace.

Have you ever acted before?

This isn't my first time.

Why should people come see 'Annie?'

You can't miss it. It's touching and funny and I advise everyone to see it.

Abby Freeman, 11

Hillview Elementary School

What character do you play?

Tessie.

Who is your favorite character?

(Daddy) Warbucks. He's a really good actor.

Have you ever acted before?

Yes, about the same amount of times as Maddie.

Why should people come see 'Annie?'

Everybody puts up a really great act.

Sharee Morse, 11

Calvary Chapel Christian School

What character do you play?

Kate.

Who is your favorite character?

Annie.

Have you ever acted before?

Yes, I started when I was 6.

Why should people come see 'Annie?'

It can be really funny and you'll be laughing.

Addy Kirkham, 10

Rimrock Elementary School

What character do you play?

July.

Who is your favorite character?

Pepper, because she's mean. The character is mean, not Maddie.

Have you ever acted before?

No, I found out about it the day before auditions, too.

Why should people come see 'Annie?'

It's stupendously stupendous in every way.

Danielle Jensen, 8

Bonneville Virtual Academy

What character do you play in Annie?

Molly.

Who is your favorite character?

The dog, Charlie. He plays Sandy.

Have you ever acted before?

This is my 12th performance and my third musical.

Why should people come see 'Annie?'

It's awesome.