

Stage North plays with swords, sisterhood in *She Kills Monsters*

MATT PREPROST

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Stage North's latest production promises to be a sword-swinging tale of sisterhood that will take audiences through tragedy and fantasy.

She Kills Monsters opened Feb. 22 in Fort St. John, a take on the popular role-playing board game *Dungeons and Dragons*, and which features a predominantly female cast.

The play follows "totally average" Agnes, who returns home after her family is killed in a terrible car crash. Sifting through the emotional wreckage, Agnes discovers a Dun-

geons and Dragons adventure her geeky little sister Tilly left behind. When Agnes recruits a "dungeon master" to walk her through the game, the audience is plunged into a world of elves, demons, and other monsters.

"It's really fun, it's really cheesy, and it's neat because it's a *Dungeons and Dragons* play but that's just a vessel," said director Ted Sloan. "It's really a story about two sisters who don't know each other, trying to get to know each other, thrown in with some 1990s pop music, through this board game."

Nineties pop aside, the production is also packed with action. Actors spent two weeks

with fight choreographer Darren Steele of Edmonton for this action-packed comedy that features up to 14 fight scenes.

"We learned a ton. It's been quite the learning curve," said Emry Mika, who plays Agnes.

The script was written by Qui Nguyen, who was tired of seeing weak female characters, Sloan said, and the production plays with themes of acceptance and family, discovery and courage.

"Agnes never knew her sister at all, but she discovers her sister is gay, that her sister is really cool, and that her sister was a wonderful human being but different than her older sis-

ter. So they get closer that way," Sloan said.

The cast and crew of 17 is made up predominantly of young North Peace Secondary graduates that have gone through the school's theatre programs. Among them is Amy Bazin, who plays young Tilly, who is brought to life through the board game.

"I learned a lot about myself playing this character and I've really enjoyed playing it," Bazin said. "Tilly is very confident in who she is and she knows what she likes ... that confidence is something I'd like to have more of in my real life."

Coming out to the theatre is

a big investment for audiences, one that comes with gratitude from the cast and crew, Sloan said. "The spine of this play is you have the courage to grow up to be who you want to be. It's all about honour," Sloan said.

"We want people to walk in here, we want to honour them with a good show, we want them to feel like they can honour themselves, and we want them to leave going, 'I'm a great person, I can do what I need to do.'"

She Kills Monsters plays at the North Peace Cultural Centre until March 2. For more details and ticket information, call the cultural centre.

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Stage North actors Emry Mika (playing Agnes) and Cody MacGillivray (playing Miles the Shapeshifter) rehearse a sword fight from the troupe's production of She Kills Monsters.



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Stage North actors Ariana Rae (playing Kaliope), Amy Bazin (playing Tilly Evans), and Robin McCraig (playing Lilith) in a scene from *She Kills Monsters*, Feb. 23, 2019.



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Stage North actress Kaymia Wheat (playing a monster) taunts Amy Bazin (playing Tilly Evans) during a fight scene from the troupe's production of *She Kills Monsters*.