

ARTS & CULTURE

Money, money, money... NPSS students hit right notes on Mamma Mia!

MATT PREPROST

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North Peace Secondary students are whisking audiences away to a Greek island and plunking them in the middle of family wedding drama this season for their rendition of Mamma Mia!

Musical theatre students have been hard at work preparing for their rendition of the Broadway musical hit based on the songs of ABBA.

Teacher and director Emry Mika was quick to pick up amateur rights for the musical when they were released in April, snagging them the very next day. Mika said she couldn't wait to take on the production for herself and her students.

"It offers them a new era of music that they might not have been previously exposed to," Mika said. "We haven't done a rock musical in some time, we usually stick to Disney and the classics, so it's been fun to bring in that edginess for them."

Mamma Mia! tells the story of Sophie Sheridan on the eve of her wedding and the search for her birth father. Sophie has invited three men from her mother's past to the wedding, and she has 24 hours to



ADE BRUSSOW PHOTOS

North Peace Secondary students Mia Zoerb, Elysia Cruz, and Katea Nelson perform a song during the debut of Mamma Mia! on Friday, December 7.

find out which is her dad and ask him to walk her down the aisle.

Whitney Troyer is playing Sophie, her first lead role. Troyer called the opportunity a dream come true, having grown up as a fan of the original production and film.

"This year, being able to sing in front of everyone is definitely a challenge," Troyer said.

"The standard that everyone has for the show, because ABBA is such a great band, the standards are skyrocketing. We have to do ABBA proud,

we got to make sure we do our best."

Elysia Cruz plays Sophie's mother, Donna Sheridan, who reunites at the wedding with her lifelong friends and former Donna and the Dynamos bandmates Tanya and Rosie.

Cruz grew up listening to ABBA, but her role as Donna goes beyond the music. There are lessons to be learned and challenges to be had playing a strong woman like Donna, Cruz said.

"She's doing her best trying to make a living for her daughter and does what she wants for her daughter," Cruz said.

"I'm used to a lot of not realistic characters, like the Little Mermaid or being Dorothy, so I think that was the challenge, being a real person."

Forty-three students are involved on stage in the production, supported by a large stage crew and a simple rock band set: electric guitar, bass, two drum kits, a piano and a clarinet.

"They sound big and awesome, and it's great," Mika said.

Mamma Mia! opened Friday, December 7, at the North Peace Cultural Centre, and runs through to Saturday, Dec. 15. Tickets are available at the box office, or online.

"This group is a powerhouse," Mika said.

"They are some of the strongest singers and dancers I've worked with in my career teaching theatre programs. They don't want to miss this one."



