

ARTS

PRN Festival of the Arts is coming

MARGARET CAVERS MAY
FOR THE FORT ST. JOHN
COMMUNITY ARTS COUNCIL

Although, these days, many of us are spending more time than we should sitting on the couch, watching the athletic endeavors of others, many of our young performing artists are keeping very busy with their own pursuits, preparing for the Peace River North Festival of the Arts which is coming up fast, in less than a month.

The 2010 festival is being held from March 14 to 21, winding up with our "Best of the Fest" showcase of the outstanding performances of the week scheduled for March 21 at 7 p.m.

The festival has provided opportunities for young performers for many years in this community. I myself get a little nostalgic when I see those certificates with their gold seals that I rarely got to touch in my days as a piano competitor and think fondly of my little collection of red sealed awards. It was always next year, I would promise myself, that I would put in that extra practice time and go home with one of those coveted gold prizes. Of course, in those days, the festival was held in the gym of the old high school, and alternated yearly between Fort St. John and Dawson Creek. But, no matter what the result, the experience of preparing and performing is one I have always valued.



Photo by See & Believe Photography.

Dancers Emily Howatt and Jayna Strembicke in the timeless roles of Tom and Jerry.

The festival in its current form has been held since 1984 and has grown to include a wide range of disciplines including dance, piano, band and instruments, strings, voice and choral and speech arts. And no more school gyms, as all festival classes are held at the Cultural Centre; a thrill for many young performers to perform on stage in a real theatre.

The festival association is delighted to welcome school bands from Fort Nelson to for the first time in several years. They will be joining our own local school bands which include students, grade six and up, from all schools in the district, on March 15 and it promises to be an exciting afternoon of music. Entries are still being accepted for many of the individual music classes.

Dance studios from Fort Nelson, Dawson Creek and Quesnel will be arriving in town on March 18 and, along with our local studios, will be dancing through a very full program of classes from the 18th until the afternoon of the 21st. This is an important competition for any dancers who aspire to attend the Provincial Festival in Duncan in May as this is where they qualify for that competition.

In addition to the regularly scheduled classes, the festival association will offer workshops in dance and musical theatre with one of our dance adjudicators, renowned Canadian dance and stage performer, Jeff Hyslop. These workshops will be held on March 22 and we are thrilled that he has agreed to stay on and share some of his experience with local performers. Priority will be given to festival participants, but the musical theatre workshop will be open to anyone interested in musical theatre and would like to take this opportunity to learn one of the best; a star of London and Broadway as well as Canada's "Phantom of the Opera".

For more information on the workshops or any other aspect of the festival, contact Margaret May at 785-2001 or by e-mail at mecaversmay@shaw.ca.

Come out and support the festival! All sessions are open to the public for a nominal charge and you will be amazed by the talent on display.



Kirstyn Kerr Photo

FIVE LADIES DANCING

Studio 2 Stage held its spring dance recital over the weekend. Here, the dancers donned their loveliest gowns and wigs and danced to No Reservations.

Former resident dances her way back to Fort St. John

KELLY LAPOINTE
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Former resident Tiffany Bilodeau turned 25 as she danced on the stage at the North Peace Cultural Centre in Ballet Kelowna's "Masters' Play" on Friday.

Bilodeau has been with the company for six years and said that performing in Masters' Play allows her to experience the different dance genres of Canadian choreography. The performance, which only had six dancers, melded old and new pieces of choreography in chronological order, starting with the 1950s.

"The first couple of pieces in the program are quite slow and simple, but they have such a great important in dance history and are really nice to perform and then we get into more contemporary pieces then finish with one the pieces that David (LaHay) choreographed a couple of years ago. It sort of builds on that and you sort of

see different styles," she said.

"It can also be very difficult to capture the mood and the dynamics of each piece separately."

She said she loves to perform "Double Quartet."

"It's a piece I did my first season with Ballet Kelowna and it's nice to be able to come back to it as a stronger dancer and more performing under my belt and being able to take it to the next level and to be able to improve on it," she said.

It's great to return to Fort St. John and perform in front of a hometown audience, she said.

"I love coming home, the theatre holds so many memories for me, dancing as a kid, the recitals we did, seeing various companies come in, Ballet B.C. came the odd time to Fort St. John and it's nice to be able to be on that stage and give back to the community that gave me so much when I wanted to leave."

• SEE DON'T ON A3



David Bell/AHN

MAR 29, 2010

Christina Cecchini of Kamloops, Tiffany Bilodeau of Fort St. John and Raelynn Heppell of Duncan performed in Ballet Kelowna's Masters' Play at the North Peace Cultural Centre Friday evening.