

Alton Little Theater announces production of Broadway musical FAME

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ALTON - Alton Little Theater will produce the Broadway Musical FAME for six shows July 22-24th and July 29th-31st.

"The Summer Showcase Production features a cast of twenty vocalists and dancers ages 14 to 26, so the show has A LOT of youthful energy," said Director, Kevin Frakes. "Six of the cast members are still in High School but long-time students of dance and the rest of the cast was drawn to perform during summer breaks from college and young adults who fondly remember the popular movie and TV show in the early 80's of the same name."

Frakes and his production team stress that the summer show is not a youth or “junior” production but the re-staging of the Broadway Musical that has been sparingly produced in our area.

Frakes was drawn to mounting a “dance” showcase production after running Technical support for the “Give Dance A Chance” ALT Fundraiser last year – and he thought that young adults and ALT audiences as a whole would enjoy the music and the high energy of the show. The production team that Frakes assembled: Sue Parton Stanard (Musical Direction), Kristina Bemis (Choreography), Lee Cox (Costumes), Barb McHugh (Asst. Musical Direction & Dueling piano) and Linda Patton (Stage Manager)

The team is having a “blast” working with the talented cast that hails from eight different surrounding communities as far away as Staunton and across the river in St. Louis.

The Broadway Musical of Fame picks up after the movie’s time to the last four years that the School for the Performing Arts existed in New York City (1980-83). Despite the acclaim that the movie and TV Show brought to the actual school, the urban decay and poverty of the surrounding area forced the school to close and left young performers with one last chance to “make it happen” before they graduated to the real world. Frakes stresses that FAME “teaches kids to work hard, dream big and listen to their more experienced teachers – a timely message particularly today with budget cuts for arts funding and a struggling economy even in our own community”.

ALT made the decision to stage FAME with no tuition requirement for the cast so that young people from all economic circles could participate. This decision was generously supported by a grant from the Boeing Employee Foundation and from the Gulovsen Swaab Charitable Fund, says Lee Cox (Marketing & Development Director).

"Staging a Musical is expensive but the grant money really helped underwrite the cost of dance shoes and costumes – and keeping a supply of food and water around for long rehearsals and energized performers. – and we were able to keep the Ticket prices at \$20 for Adults and just \$10 for students through High School so that FAME can become the perfect date night for teens and young families and couples.”

The “Acting” Students are portrayed by Curtis Leible, Samantha Stinson, and Sawyer Burton. The “Dancer” Students are portrayed by Eeyan Richardson, Mary Grace Brueggerman, Jordan Harper and Audra Ray. The “Musician” students are portrayed by Cody Johnson, Emma Sugent and Will Johnson. Their “Teachers” are played by ALT performers Steven Harders, Nick Trapp, Robyn Couch and newcomer Gospel singer,

Cathy Smith-Lytle. Cathy's daughter Kani also makes her stage debut in the Showcase Production along with Brianna Busse (featured dancer) Lexi Collman, Hannah Coughtry-Trapp, Kara Poirot and Emily Weller in the ensemble.

The Production is supported by ALT's two Scholarship candidates, Kate Costello and Nathan Beilsmith, who have both been accepted into the Theater program at SIUE and who will be assisting with Costumes, Staging, Lights and acting as Rehearsal Assistants. 2016 marks the inaugural year for ALT to award \$1,500 in scholarship money to students pursuing studies in Technical or Performance Theater.

Tickets for the production can be obtained by calling 462-3205 or online: altonlittletheater.org.