



*Tale as old as time enchants audiences  
at the  
Drayton Festival Theatre*

Wednesday, July 31, 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Experience “a tale as old as time” as Disney’s much-loved blockbuster musical *Beauty and the Beast* delights audiences of all generations with its memorable story of romance and redemption from **August 15 to August 31** at the **Drayton Festival Theatre**.

“*Beauty and the Beast* is a global sensation and Disney’s most popular musical,” says **Alex Mustakas**, Artistic Director of Drayton Entertainment. “Although the story remains true to the original animated movie, there are added songs and greater depth to the characters that make the live theatrical production extra special – it’s the perfect summer theatre experience for families.”

Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* tells the classic story of Belle, a spirited young woman in a provincial town, and a troubled Beast, who is really a prince trapped in a spell placed on him by an enchantress. The terrible hex also affects his castle staff, transforming them into talking candlesticks, clocks, tea pots, and more. If the Beast can learn to love and be loved in return before the final petal falls on an enchanted rose, the curse will end and he and his household will be transformed to their former selves. But time is running out. If the Beast does not learn his lesson soon, he and his household will be doomed for all eternity. Can Beauty tame the Beast and see the truth beneath his physical appearance before the last petal falls?

With stirring musical numbers like “Be Our Guest,” “Home,” and “Beauty and the Beast,” this lavish production is sure to entertain theatregoers who know and love the story and those who are experiencing the magic of *Beauty and the Beast* for the first time.

**Jayne Armstrong** takes the helm as the production’s director. She is no stranger to the Disney canon having appeared as Mary in *Mary Poppins* and Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* previously for Drayton Entertainment. She has also played the role of Belle three times, most recently for Theatre Aquarius in 2016.

Armstrong is joined by Choreographer **Robin Calvert**, Music Director **David Myers**, Set Designer **Christine Peters**, Costume Designer **Rachel Berchtold**, Lighting Designer **Kevin Fraser**, Stage

Manager **Paul Pembleton**, Assistant Stage Manager **Emily Maxwell**, and Apprentice Stage Manager **Alexandra Ramjass-Spicer**.

**Jessica Gallant** anchors the production as Belle, the feisty, bookish beauty who dreams of adventures beyond her provincial life. Gallant charmed audiences as Ariel in Disney's *The Little Mermaid* in St. Jacobs and Grand Bend last season. She has also appeared in numerous roles at the Charlottetown Festival including the title role in *Anne of Green Gables*.

New York actor **Tony Edgerton** is the fearsome yet misunderstood Beast, who is imprisoned in his enchanted castle as punishment for his selfish ways. The beast becomes increasingly tender as his desire to win Belle's affection grows, softening his rough exterior as he learns the value of kindness. Edgerton has appeared in several productions in the U.S. including the National Tour of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

**David Light** tackles the role of the handsome and haughty Gaston, who is determined to marry Belle at any cost, while **Eric Dahlinger** makes his Drayton Entertainment debut as his hapless assistant, LeFou. Light previously appeared in *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Chicago* for Drayton Entertainment. Dahlinger has appeared in numerous productions across the country including *Grease*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *In The Heights*, among others.

Veteran actor **Geoffrey Whynot**, who entertained audiences as Baron Notapenny in *Cinderella: The Panto* last season, is Belle's eccentric father, Maurice. In addition to appearing in *Cinderella: The Panto*, *Chicago*, *Dames at Sea* and other productions for Drayton Entertainment, Whynot has appeared on screen in a number of films and TV series.

The first-rate cast also features **Billy Lake** as the debonair French candelabra Lumière and **Aidan deSalaiz** as his uptight clock counterpart Cogsworth. Audiences may remember Lake from his hilarious portrayal of stepsister Atrocia in *Cinderella: The Panto*. He also spent 10 seasons with the Shaw Festival performing in *Sweeney Todd*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Ragtime*, among other productions. In addition to his previous work with Drayton Entertainment, deSalaiz has appeared in countless productions across Canada with notable companies including the Stratford Festival, The Grand Theatre, Neptune Theatre, and others.

The assortment of enchanted household objects also includes **Valerie Boyle** as the motherly teapot Mrs. Potts with **Lucas Way** as her teacup kid Chip. A veteran actress, Boyle has appeared on stages all over North America including as Mrs. Brill in the Broadway production of *Mary Poppins*. Way makes his professional debut in this production.

**Amanda Struthmann** is the flirtatious feather duster, Babette, with **Amanda Leigh** as the operatic wardrobe, Madame de la Grande Bouche. Struthmann previously appeared in *The Little Mermaid* for Drayton Entertainment and has had many roles with Theatre Aquarius and Port Hope Festival, among other companies. Leigh has appears in many musicals and farces for Drayton Entertainment include *Man of La Mancha*, *Out of Order*, *One for the Pot*, *Sister Act*, *It Runs in the Family*, and many others. She also played Cosette in the U.K. National Tour of *Les Misérables*.

**Darren Burkett**, **Devin Chin-Cheong**, **Josh Graetz**, **Kayla James**, **Shelley Kenney**, **Luke Opdahl**, **Jade Repeta**, **Reece Rowat**, and **Margaret Thompson** round out the terrific company.

After the success of the smash-hit 1991 animated film, Disney soon realized the potential for a stage show. **Alan Menken** and **Tim Rice**, who (with **Howard Ashman** before his death), collaborated to create the music and lyrics for the film, were brought in to write additional songs for the stage adaptation. Since its Broadway premiere in 1994, **Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*** has become one of the most successful screen-to-stage adaptations of all time, grossing over \$1.4 billion worldwide. The Broadway musical garnered nine Tony Award® nominations, boasting a win for Best Costume Design and becoming the tenth longest-running Broadway production in history with 5,461 performances between 1994 and 2007. A production in London's West End opened in 1997. A live action movie starring Emma Watson was released 20 years later in 2017.

**Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*** is proudly sponsored by **Gibson Sound & Vision**. The Media Sponsors are **Juice 107.1 FM**, **Magic 106.1**, **1460 CJOY**, and **Guelph Mercury Tribune**. The Design Sponsor is **Conway Furniture**. The 2019 Season Media Sponsor is **CTV**.

Tickets for **Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*** are \$48 for Adults and \$29 for Youth under 20 years of age. Tickets for groups of 20 or more and selected Discount Dates are \$39. HST is applicable to all ticket prices. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.draytonfestivaltheatre.com](http://www.draytonfestivaltheatre.com), in person at the Box Office, or by calling **519-638-5555** or toll free at **1-855-DRAYTON (372-9866)**.

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