

Duncan Lang: Profile of a young, rising star



By Constance Scrafield

Last weekend, playing five performances to packed houses (totally sold out), history was made in many ways when Theatre Orangeville's Young Company did *Les Misérables*.

Headlining this production was Duncan Lang, a young man coming into grade 11 but taking the audiences by the throat with his singing of *Bring Him Home*, as well, of course, with the rest of his repertoire in the opera.

On the Monday morning, following the historically added fifth performance, Duncan was once again at the rehearsal hall, ready to begin rehearsing *Peter Pan*, in which he is performing Mr. Darling and Captain Hook.

We sat down to have a chat with this remarkable young man at the rehearsal hall to get to know him better.

He began by explaining his entrance into the world of theatre.

‘I was a really shy little kid,’ he admitted. ‘So, my parents were concerned about this and they signed me up for acting classes in Spotlight Theatre School in Newmarket when I was six.’

‘The second I got in there and everyone was so friendly and welcoming, I knew I was in the right place. The first time I went on stage, in *The Aristocats Kids*, the adrenaline hit me but, once we were performing, I was fine and I knew this was what I wanted to do.’

When you know at six years old, the rest is easy, for, when asked if anything else as a career has appealed to him, Duncan had a ready reply: ‘Not really’ at high school, I am taking drama and history courses.’

What period in history interests him? ‘I guess because of my music attachments, the ‘60’s and ‘70’s. I studied the period after the French Revolution while we were doing *Les Mis*. It’s interesting that whole time of revolt we’re still doing it.’

And as for history in acting? ‘If I’m offered a role, I’ll do it whenever the story is.’

While he is at the moment, in September, still going to Huron Heights Secondary School in Newmarket, Duncan is already looking forward to his post-secondary education, seeking out his best option for theatre arts.

‘Ever since I saw the – albeit bad – movie and the live show when it came to Toronto, in 2013, I wanted to play Jean Valjean; I wanted to play him for ages and ages. Then someone told me that Theatre Orangeville was auditioning for *Les Mis* and I had to audition. For my first audition, I was sick with strep throat but I had to do that audition. I got a call back and had to sing *Stars and Bring Him Home*. David and Sharyn and Pam talked to me about the two roles – how they are different and complex.’

The waiting for results from auditioning is tough but soon the word came: ‘I got the news in the library at school. I opened my email and scrolled down and there I was given the role of Jean Valjean. I was in the quiet library but I was so excited’

He said, ‘Jean Valjean is such a complex character – loss – redemption – a man who wants to be accepted. He goes from being a convict to a respectable man and a father. He goes from being tough to softer, more compassionate.’

In doing *Hook* next, Duncan commented, ‘It’s fun to go from something gritty and dramatic to fun.’

Still, he offered, ‘It’s very hard almost for me to get out of the shoes of one character into another’s. It’s interesting to make the transition.’

For Duncan’s big picture, as it were, he defined his ambition: ‘Anything that gets me in front of people – if I’m entertaining people, it means I’m doing my job right. So long as they’re enjoying the story and the character – if they’re having a good time, I’m having a

good time.

?I felt good about my performance in Les Mis; I'm always looking for the littlest thing [to improve]. I try to keep the balance.?

Giving credit for his life as it is due, he remarked: ?My parents support me 100%. My mother was in that front seat for all five shows. My mother is incredibly enthusiastic. Without the support of my parents, this could never have happened.?

The Theatre Orangeville production of Peter Pan will take place at the new Island Lake amphitheater August 25-27. Tickets are available at the box office in the Orangeville town hall or online at theatreorangeville.ca .