

Puppet plant will star in Festival's first-ever musical

ST. CROIX FALLS - With opening day less than one month away, the creative juices are reaching a rolling boil at St. Croix Festival Theatre.

"Little Shop of Horrors," by Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, Festival Theatre's first-ever Broadway musical will kick off Festival Theatre's 15th season on May 20. If you are not familiar with this popular title from the hit movie or recent Broadway revival, you should know that the story revolves around a poor boy that discovers a "strange and interesting" plant. This plant, it turns out, sings and dances and is plotting to take over the world.

Festival Theatre is set to accomplish the Henson-esc task of putting an animated shrub onstage by combining local and regional artistic talents. To give the plant a vocal personality, Twin Cities Music Director Stephen Houtz (Illusion Theatre, Theatre In The Round) will join the Festival Theatre creative team. In addition to music direction, Houtz will play lead keyboard for performances and sing the role of Audrey II, as the plant is named.

Just as Houtz will lend his lungs to make this talking vegetable come to life, local artist David DeMattia is working to give the plant a body. DeMattia has the difficult task of creating the four puppets that will represent Audrey II in four different stages of growth throughout the play. Ranging from a handheld animatronic pod at the beginning of the play, to a huge man-powered Styrofoam flytrap in the



Local artist David DeMattia is working to give this plant a body. He has the difficult task of creating the four puppets that will represent Audrey II in four different stages of growth throughout the play, "Little Shop of Horrors," which opens at Festival Theatre in St. Croix Falls, May 20. - Photo submitted

end, DeMattia must combine his skills as a sculptor with his engineering prowess and love for puppets to make this character live. You can see pictures DeMattia's handiwork as it progresses at www.sleepingdragonstudios.com.

Birthday party

A sneak peek at the plant puppet family and a preview of music from "Little Shop of Horrors," will be on display at Festival Theatre's 15th Birthday Party, Saturday, May 8, beginning at 4:30 p.m. This very special fund-raising event will also include a catered dinner and tickets to the Bob DeFlores film presentation "The Vaudeville Legacy" that evening. Tickets to the Birthday Party are \$35 for individuals and \$60 per couple. Reservations are required and space is limited.

For tickets to the Birthday Party, to purchase your Festival Theatre season tickets, or for information about any of Festival Theatre's offerings call the Box Office at 888-887-6002 or locally at 715-483-3387. - from Festival Theatre