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Emma Lou and the Big Ragout opens Friday



By Elmo Len Holmes

The Young Rivertime Players will be presenting *Emma Lou and the Big Ragout* this Friday and Saturday, March 30 and 31, at 7 p.m. at the Parsons Municipal Building. *Emma Lou...* was written by Karen Boettcher-Tate of Pioneer Drama Service.

Directed by stage veteran Shane Bridges of the Rivertime Players, *Emma Lou and the Big Ragout* is a fairy tale set in a magic kingdom. In the story line King Shankpump will lose his kingdom unless his daughter, Emma Lou, can become engaged. Alas, Emma Lou, while attractive and bright, has no charm and is bereft of spit! Not only that, the only boy she likes, Prince Grodlebucket, runs from the room every time he sees her. Emma Lou's only recourse is to go on a quest to ask the fearsome Big Ragout (pronounced "Rag-oo") for advice. Miss Lavoone, a loud-mouthed charm school matron, escorts Emma Lou on her hilarious journey, encountering the Slimes, Ragbottoms, and the Barf Witches, all with their own ideas of what makes a charming personality. Emma Lou's final confrontation with the Big

Ragout and the resolution of conflict make this one of the freshest, funniest, most action-packed "fairy-tale" comedies around.

Miss Keisha Lyles, cast as Queen Toodles Shankpump, does a commendable job even though she plays a dingbat. Miss Lyles is a veteran of the stage in Parsons having previously appeared in *Aladdin*. She grasps the regal nature of a queen with poise and grace. When she enters the stage this charming queen shows great power of presence and really commands her role. She is the daughter of Mr. Wayne Lyles and Ms. Penny Scott of Parsons. Also, Jake and Amber Lyles are returning to the stage as Slimes from their earlier performances in *School Daze*. The Slimes are hysterical in the production and give it a great deal of depth. Director Bridges takes the art of blocking a play to new heights in this production allowing each character to interact well with each other and the audience. Director Bridges commented, "I have really enjoyed observing the maturing stage presence of these children after being in a few productions."

Not to be outdone, Mr. Wayne Lyles, Street Department Supervisor for the City of Parsons, has been an invaluable asset to Director Bridges in the construction of props. Assisting he and Director Bridges were Joe Singletary, David Alexander, Dennus Tolley, and George Pettigrew.

Emma Lou and the Big Ragout

**Showtimes:
Friday, March 30
Saturday, March 31
7:00 pm
Parsons
Municipal Center**

Riverside High School Junior, Brett Jordan is cast as a jolly and very happy King Hank Shankpump. Jordan's affable manner shows though keenly in his role as the healthy king, and he seems to relish his role with great satisfaction and maturity. His regal nature in character is portrayed well as his acting

skills are presented in a consistent theatrical manner. One of the highlights of the production is Jordan, participating in a song with other cast members.

Briley Lee of Parsons plays the namesake of the play Princess Emma Lou Shankpump. She captures the character quite well playing a young demure girl with little self-confidence. The audience will appreciate Miss Lee's portrayal as her character evolves to its pinnacle near the conclusion of the play. Miss Lee is to be commended for taking this part and making it hers. Miss Lee's parents are Mr. and Mrs. Adam Bates and Mr. Dusty Lovelace of Parsons. The audience and her family will be proud of her in this glowing performance.

Hunter Jordan, son of Mr. and Mrs. Mark Jordan of Parsons plays dual roles in the production, which is no easy task, but he conquers his roles very well. Jordan plays Mr. Parthelbump, an ancient law-yer, who in the words of young Mr. Jordan, "looks like Albert Einstein." Mr. Parthelbump has to deliver the bad news about the kingdom's fate to the King and Queen and Jordan handles it

with great aplomb. Jordan's other role is that of the Big Ragout. Jordan takes difficult costuming and masters it well technically and audibly. Mr. Jordan has a future in the theatre.

Andrew Lawlor portrays Prince Bucky Grodlebucket, a handsome young bachelor prince. Lawlor's has a real stage presence in the role. He seems a natural. His petite demeanor does not belay the giant that is inside him. Prince Bucky's role is a centerpiece of the show and he does a fantastic job in his performance. When asked about his performance Mr. Lawlor replied with style and confidence, "I have been in lots of plays." Lawlor's sister, Molly Lawlor, plays the Barf Witch and she really gets into the part, turning in an incredible performance. These two gifted young people are the children of Mr. and Mrs. John Lawlor of Parsons. Everyone who sees them will know that they are truly gifted.

The most uproariously funny character in the production is Miss Glorious Lavoone, head of the kingdom's charm school and a walking disaster area. The very talented Hannah Mills plays Miss Lavoone to the hilt. In her role she is very animated, a gifted comedienne with excellent timing in her lines. Her vocal delivery was also exceptional. She really keeps the show rolling setting the bar high for other players to come up to it without upstaging anyone.

Cole Powers plays the Slither Slime. The Slimes are one of the brighter spots in the production. He carries his role out with great seriousness focusing well on his part and delivery. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Powers of Darden. Jenni Turner, a stage veteran, having appeared in previous Young Rivertime Players productions, as well as last year's Toby Show, and most recently in *The Wizard of Oz* at the Dixie in Huntingdon, plays Slobbery Slime.

There are five Ragbottoms in this production and they are awesome to see on stage. These young people really get into their parts, and have taken advantage of the stage directions and line rehearsals to optimize these unique roles they play so well. Madison "Maddie" Davis

plays Pirth Ragbottom, a menacing fairyland creature with an unusual taste in clothing. Davis is the granddaughter of Mrs. Sarah Pusser of Decaturville. Natalie Brooks, daughter of Amanda Brooks and Timothy Raney, and Stetson Copous, daughter of Kevin and Peggy Copous, play Girth and Mirth, respectively. Two other Ragbottoms are played well by young Victor Evans and Jerry Evans, sons of Sam and Diane Evans of Bible Hill.

Mirth and madness consist of the characters of the witches Scarf, Marf, Barf and Minnie. These young ladies really got into their roles and seemed to stay in character on and off stage doing witch pranks on the other cast members. They danced, sang and portrayed their roles and added a tremendous amount of depth and meaning to the play. Young Haylee Duncan plays Minnie Witch. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jason Duncan of Parsons. Ryleigh Beecham, daughter of Bryan Beecham and Beth Wallace of Parsons played Marf. Molly Lawlor, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Lawlor of Parsons played Barf and Madison Cagle, daughter of Kevin and Kristie Cagle portrays Scarf Witch.

Elicia Spain and Sue Tubbs carefully crafted the brilliant costuming for this cast of characters. The costumes really helped these children with their characters. Shane Bridges designed the Big Ragout costume, which added so much to this timeless production. Mark Tubbs assisted in so many ways: painting backdrops, sets, applying makup and inspiring confidence in the young aspiring actors and actresses. Mr. Tubbs, President of the Rivertime Players also serves as Technical Director and Propmaster for this production. The City of Parsons prints tickets and promotes ticket sales, and an ABC Grant made it possible to produce *Emma Lou and the Big Ragout* for the Young Rivertime Players.

Take pride in Parsons! Come and see the most valuable asset Decatur County has to offer: its children in the arts. You won't be sorry you did. Production dates are March 30 and 31 at the Parsons Municipal Centre. Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$2 for children under twelve.