

# oconee youth playhouse

## Oconee Youth Playhouse presents *Annie* in January

Little girls playing the part of orphans in New York City in the early 1930s will overrun the stage of the Oconee County Civic Center when Oconee Youth Playhouse presents the ever-popular musical *Annie* in January.

Shows are Jan. 7-9 and 14-16, with Friday and Saturday performances at 7 p.m. and Sunday matinees at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$12-16 and are on sale at Oconee Youth School of Performance, 1050 Jamestown Blvd. in Watkinsville Monday-Thursday from 4-7 p.m. through Dec. 16 and the week before *Annie* opens. They also will be sold in the lobby of the Oconee County Civic Center an hour before each show, pending availability.

OYP previously presented *Annie* in 2000. “We had been trying to get the rights for the past three years and are so excited to finally be doing this show again,” says Shane Hannon, who will co-direct the production with his wife, Terra.

The current production features a cast of 170, ranging in age from kindergarteners to adults. “This is the largest cast we’ve ever worked with,” says Terra. “Actually, it’s six different casts of the youngest orphans – a different group for each show. We had so many kids audition and saw so much talent that we decided to try this. It’s a lot of work, but rehearsals have been going really well.”

Claire Vogel, a 5th grader at High Shoals Elementary School, landed the title role. This is her fourth OYP show, but first main part. Other featured orphans are Megan Hodgson (Pepper), a 7th grader at Athens Academy; Bailey Chastain (July), a 7th grader at Malcom Bridge Middle School; Antonia Bowen (Duffy), an 8th grader at Malcom Bridge Middle School; Gracin Wilkins (Tessie), a 4th grader at Westminster Christian Academy; and Sawyer Bradford (Kate), a 3rd grader at St Joseph’s. Malia Horst, a 1st grader at Athens Montessori, is the youngest orphan Molly.

Kelli Bull, a junior at the University of Georgia, will play Miss Hannigan, who runs the orphanage. Bull has been in three other OYP shows, most often playing comedic roles.

Daddy Warbucks will be played by Richard Hoard, the pastor at Oconee River Church, who was Grandpa Joe in *Willy Wonka* and has been in several other OYP shows.

Other adults in *Annie* include John Brantley as President Franklin Roosevelt, and Bob Googe, Jeff Dibling and Mark Vagle as cabinet members. All four are parents of OYP performers. Brantley, who is making his OYP debut, says he is excited to be sharing the stage with his son Chase, a senior at Athens Academy, who has been performing with OYP for the past 10 years and plays the role of Rooster in this show.

“Chase came to see our first production of *Annie* when he was seven years old and told his mother that he wanted to be on stage, too,” recalls Terra. “He has been doing shows with us ever since and recently received a Best Actor award in the Georgia High School Association one-act play competition. We’re really proud of him.”

Other cabinet members are Doug Ivey, who played Daddy Warbucks in OYP’s 2000 production of *Annie*, and Lynn Renna, who was seen in *Willy Wonka*.

Among other featured cast members are North Oconee High School students Collier Cobb as Grace Farrell, Jackie Raye as Lily St. Regis, and Dayne Joyner as Bert Healy.

Assisting the Hannons with directing duties is Amy Coenen, a former OYP performer herself. Rachel Townes serves as OYP’s musical director.

Oconee Youth Playhouse is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing high-quality musical theater for the local community and performing opportunities for young people. Since its founding in 1998, OYP has presented 36 shows. Terra and Shane Hannon, both graduates of the University of Georgia, also run Oconee Youth School of Performance. For more information, see <http://www.oypoysp.com/>.