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'Stuart Little' a big production for Connie Company

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by [Ann Fletcher](#)



Eight-year-old Dwayne Allgood, of Huntersville, will play the lead in the upcoming Connie Company production "Stuart Little," based on the popular children's book by E.B. White.

As the Connie Company prepared for its stage version of E.B. White's "Stuart Little," the cast of 33 youth have practiced their lines, rehearsed the scenes and learned to swing dance.

The show's director, Wrenn Goodrum, is known for transporting her casts back in time, and this time, they landed in 1945, when swing was king.

"I've always loved the '20s, '30s, '40s, and '50s," said Goodrum. "I often think I was born in the wrong decade."

Last spring, she directed the Connie Company's adaptation of "Charlotte's Web," setting it in the 1950s to reflect when it was originally published.

The first printing of "Stuart Little" came earlier in 1945. "The language in both the 'Stuart Little' book and play is very 1940s," she said, "which is one of the reasons I conceptualized it in that year."

As part of the first two weeks of preparation for the production, she challenged cast members to research and develop biographies of his or her character in the 1940s.

"Whether the cast member is 7 or 16 years old, whether the character has three lines or 103 lines, the kids do the research to make each character a fully developed one," she said. She engaged the cast in imaginative staging as well.

"I like the kids to feel they're fully involved in the theatrical experience," she said.

Thirteen year-old military buff Brendan O'Flaherty of Davidson plays Dr. Lynch and suggested the opening scene should take place May 8, 1945, Victory in Europe Day, the day the Allies claimed victory in WWII.

“The show’s going to start off with a ‘bang’ in the form of a street celebration,” Goodrum said, “and end with a full cast swing dance.”

The 1940s were also a time when women entered the work force, filling factory jobs vacated by men drafted to fight the war. Norman Rockwell’s redheaded “Rosie the Riveter” artwork became a national symbol of millions of wartime working women. This show reflects those realities with a female bus driver (Sydney Krisa of Huntersville) and telephone repairwoman (Ashton Eleazer of Mooresville.)

The lead of Stuart Little, the adventurous mouse set adrift in New York City, is 8-year-old Dwayne Allgood of Huntersville.

“He’s an amazing young fellow,” Goodrum said, “and cute as a button.”

Stuart braves many unknowns to find best friend Margalo, a bird played by Brooke Baldwin of Mooresville, who’s been scared away by the family cat, Snowbell (Aanand Shah of Davidson.)

“The diverse creatures in this play – mice, birds, cats, dogs, humans – are all treated as essential parts of one great universe,” Goodrum said, “which ideally, is how one would like everyone to view the world.”

Want to go?

The Connie Company will perform “Stuart Little” April 2, 3 and 8-10 at the Armour Street Theatre, 307 Armour St. The one-act, hour-long production is ideal for ages 6 and older. Tickets are \$7. To purchase tickets, call 704-892-7953 or visit www.davidsoncommunityplayers.org.