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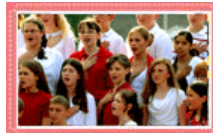
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## Group's 'Mulan Jr' musical highlights Chinese culture

Unique staging, dance part of Acting Up's show April 16-18 at high school.

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By Eric Schwartzberg, Staff Writer

2:05 PM Wednesday, April 14, 2010

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MASON — Disney movie-turned-musical "Mulan Jr." hits the stage here this weekend, infused with the love of a father for his adopted child's birthplace.

The show's director, Dan Docherty of Deerfield Twp., traveled to China with his wife, Amy, in 2008 to adopt their daughter, Kayla.

"It was then... that our family fell in love with the Chinese people and culture," Docherty said.

He described "Mulan Jr." as a heartwarming celebration of the importance of family, culture, honor and traditions.

It is a production of Acting Up, a Mason-based volunteer young performers community theater group,

"We wanted the kids to be able to walk away from this show more than just doing a Disney show and actually be able to connect a little bit to Chinese culture," Docherty said.

To help do that, Docherty recruited Chinese choreographer Bing Yang to create an authentic Chinese fan dance and a tai chi number. Cindy Wilmes provided the majority of the remaining choreography.

Laura Peebles, the musical's producer and vice president for Acting Up, said elaborate and ornate stage design helps transport audiences to the musical's setting. "We've tried to make it... when you come into the lobby, like you're in China, not a high school in Mason," she said.

Based on the 1998 Disney film "Mulan," the musical tells the centuries-old story of a girl in ancient China who tries to take her father's place in battle, so she dresses up as a man to go save the country, Peebles said.

"Mulan Jr." features students ages 5 to 18 belting out tunes from the movie, including "Reflection," "Honor to Us All"

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ABOVE: Mulan, played by Abby Docherty, tries to console General Shang, played by Caleb Redslob, after finding his village has been destroyed in a scene from Acting Up's production of Mulan Jr. BELOW: Yao, played by Ben Hoffman, boasts about his strength as he and other soldiers sing. The cast was rehearsing the show on Tuesday, April 13, in preparation for its weekend run this Friday through Sunday, April 16-18.

ENLARGE PHOTO

and "I'll Make a Man Out of You," plus several new songs exclusive to the live production.

"It's Disney, so it's family friendly and it's fun," Peebles said. "There's 80 kids up on stage singing and dancing so it brings a lot of energy to it. Even the little kids don't get bored."

Students have been rehearsing the show since the end of January about two hours a day, five days a week.

Mason High senior Ian Gregory Hill, who plays "nasty bureaucrat" Chi Fu, said the musical is like nothing he's ever performed before. "It's not just learning another role, it's learning a whole other culture," he said. "I feel like that's one of our strengths that we showcase."

Performances of "Mulan Jr." are scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, April 16; 2 p.m. and 7 p.m., Saturday, April 17; and at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 18, at the Mason High School theater, 6100 Mason-Montgomery Road. A sign language interpreter will be provided.

Tickets are \$10 each (\$8 for senior citizens) and are available online at [www.ActingUp.com](http://www.ActingUp.com), at (513) 494-6062 or at the box office before each show.

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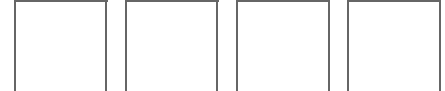
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