

MEDIA RELEASE

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YOUNG ARTISTS TAKE THE STAGE: GRAND THEATRE HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT PRESENTS DISNEY'S NEWSIES

September 10, 2025 – London ON – Each September, London audiences and Canada's theatre industry turn their eyes to the Grand Theatre's Spriet Stage. A new class of student artists has spent the summer immersed in the **Grand Theatre High School Project**, working alongside industry greats to hone their craft and ultimately mount a main-stage production showcasing the next generation of theatre talent.

This year, the power of youth will be on full display with the vibrant musical spectacular, **Disney's *Newsies***, famed for its imaginative and iconic dance sequences, inspired by a true story, and featuring a Tony Award-winning score that includes songs such as "Carrying the Banner," "Seize the Day," and "King of New York".

Newsies invites audiences to step into turn-of-the-century New York City, a time of skyscrapers and money makers. This year's Grand Theatre High School Project production tells the story of charismatic Jack Kelly and his gritty band of newsies, united in the fight against newspaper giants. When greedy publishers decide to raise distribution prices at the newsies' expense, it's up to Jack and his pals to be stronger together and fight for what's right.

More than sixty high school students from London and area – representing seventeen different schools – make up the student company of Disney's *Newsies*. Thirty-eight students make up the on-stage cast, two student musicians will be performing with the live orchestra, and twenty-one student artists are working behind the scenes in production roles including wardrobe, props, lighting, sound, stage management, carpentry, scenic art, and marketing/photography.

One of the most influential powers in Canadian musical theatre, Ray Hogg (*Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812; A Strange Loop*; Musical Stage Co.), has been in residency at the Grand Theatre to lead this year's High School Project production and direct the newest cohort of student artists through the Grand's one-of-a-kind theatrical incubator. In step with Hogg is an all-star creative team led by Music Director Matthew Atkins (London Gospel Collective), Choreographer Krista Leis (Stratford, Broadway), Set Design Consultant Joshua Quinlan (Stratford, Crow's, Mirvish), Costume Designer Lisa Wright, Lighting Designer Echo Zhou 周芷會, Sound Designer Emily Porter, Fight Director Mike Dufays, Disability Consultant Kristi Hansen, and Stage Manager Melissa Cameron.

Throughout rehearsals, Hogg has pointed to the story within the story and has prompted the company to do the same. "At first glance, *Newsies* is about a group of

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kids who go on strike after repeatedly being taken advantage of by rich and powerful people, but it's really about young people discovering what it means to be the future," Hogg explains. "It's about finding the bravery to speak truth to power, seek justice, and demand equality. It is about embracing fear and vulnerability and celebrating imagination and vision."

Grand Theatre High School Project

For over 25 years, the Grand Theatre High School Project has offered an exceptional opportunity for students to receive education and training in the working environment of a professional theatre, at **no cost to the participants**.

High school students from the London area are mentored by professional artists and coaches in all departments (**performance, stage management, props, wardrobe, scenic art, carpentry, orchestra, sound, lighting, stage, and marketing**), culminating in a production staged on the Grand's 839-seat theatre: the Spriet Stage.

"Year-after-year, the Grand Theatre High School project shows us just how much young people can do when given the space to grow into their potential. Whether onstage or behind-the-scenes, this huge group of young people have been challenged to the extreme on this show," shares Rachel Peake, Grand Theatre Artistic Director. "It calls on them to execute all elements of musical theatre to the highest level. This exceptional creative team has set the bar high, and day after day, those of us working with these students are deeply impacted by how they continually exceed our expectations."

The 2025 Grand Theatre High School Project, Disney's *Newsies*, plays on the **Spriet Stage** from **September 17 to 27**. Single tickets range from **\$26-\$55**, and are available at grandtheatre.com, by phone at 519.672.8800, or at the Box Office, 471 Richmond Street.

The Grand Theatre is grateful to offer **Canada Life Pay-What-You-Can** pricing for the 2:00 p.m. performance on Sunday, September 22.

The Grand Theatre gratefully acknowledges Season Sponsor **BMO**, Downtown Community Partner **Old Oak Properties**, Title Sponsor **Western Fair District**, and Youth Program Sponsors **Thames Valley District School Board**, **London District Catholic School Board**, **Libro Credit Union**, and **J.P. Bickell Foundation**. With thanks to **New Era Grafix** for the 2025 Grand Theatre High School Project Hoodies.

To learn more about the Grand Theatre High School Project, Disney's *Newsies*, please visit grandtheatre.com/event/newsies. Follow the production and peek behind the scenes by following @thegrandlondon and #GrandHSP on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Threads](#), [Bluesky](#), [YouTube](#), & [TikTok](#).

Subscriptions and single tickets can be purchased online at grandtheatre.com, by phoning the Box Office at 519.672.8800, or by visiting the Box Office in person at 471 Richmond Street (weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturdays from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.).

Subscriptions remain available and continue to offer the **best pricing** and **best theatre experience**.

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2025 Grand Theatre High School Project

DISNEY'S *NEWSIES*

Music by Alan Menken

Lyrics by Jack Feldman

Book by Harvey Fierstein

Based on the Disney Film written by Bob Tzudiker and Noni White

Originally produced on Broadway by Disney Theatrical Productions

Directed by Ray Hogg

September 17 to 27 on the Spriet Stage at the Grand Theatre

Title Sponsor: Western Fair District

Youth Program Sponsors: Thames Valley District School Board, London District Catholic School Board, Libro Credit Union, J.P. Bickell Foundation

With thanks to **New Era Grafix** for the 2025 Grand Theatre High School Project Hoodies.

PROFESSIONAL COMPANY

CREATIVE TEAM

Ray Hogg – Director

Matthew Atkins – Music Director

Krista Leis – Choreographer

Joshua Quinlan – Set Design Consultant

Lisa Wright – Costume Designer

Echo Zhou 周芷會 – Lighting Designer

Emily Porter – Sound Designer

Mike Dufays – Fight Director

Kristi Hansen – Disability Consultant

Melissa Cameron – Stage Manager

Kaitlyn Kaemingh – Apprentice Stage Manager

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MUSICIANS

Alexa Brown – Trumpet
Tony De Luca – Reeds
Marianna Grigg – Cello
Jeff Lupker – Guitar
Celine Murray – Violin
Mark Swan – Drums
Aidan Wasse – Bass Guitar

STUDENT COMPANY

CAST

Marissa Allen – Hannah/Ensemble
Abena Baah-Frimpong – Seitz/Ensemble
Hayden Baertsoen – Romeo/Ensemble
Sophia Belleth – Medda Larkin/Ensemble
Keirah Buckley – Katherine Plumber/Ensemble
Joshua Cassar – Morris Delancey/Ensemble
Leland Chafee – Crutchie/Ensemble
Marina Daminelli Kriek – Mother Abbess/Ensemble
Isaac De Melo – Henry/Ensemble
Evan Doerr – Elmer/Ensemble/Fight Captain
Shakotshanunyatha Doxtator – Oscar Delancey/Ensemble
Josephine Gajasan – Ms. Jacobi/Ensemble
Sam Harson – Darcy/Ensemble
Isabelle Hiltz – Jo Jo/Ensemble
Aya Holzberg – Albert/Ensemble
Alexis Khanna – Mush/Ensemble
Solange Kirkwood – Spot Conlon/Ensemble

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Eva Klimchuk – Mike/Ensemble
Rendall Lackenbauer – Bill/Ensemble
Jack Lindsay – Splasher/Ensemble/Co-Dance Captain
Lara Manocchi – Nun/Ensemble
Morgan McLenaghan – Roosevelt/Ensemble
Erica Mota – Extra Extra!/Ensemble
Paxton Nair – Davey/Ensemble
Tessa Pritchett-White – Les/Ensemble
Taylor Reaume-Cunning – Finch/Ensemble
Hannah Reid – Ike/Ensemble
Trent Robichaud – Jack Kelly/Ensemble
Sal Rogers – Sherlock/Ensemble
Santiago Rojas – Bunsen/Ensemble
Solarah Rose – Specs/Ensemble
Olivia Schiedel – Buttons/Ensemble/Co-Dance Captain
Alexandra Stockford – Joseph Pulitzer/Ensemble
Navya Vaillancourt – Snyder/Ensemble
Desi vanBeek-Paterson – Race/Ensemble
Chloe Webb – Wiesel/Ensemble
David Weber – Tommy Boy/Ensemble
Lyla Worrall – Watson/Ensemble

ORCHESTRA

Cloe Royer – Clarinet
Daniel Tennant – Keys 2, Music Assistant

PRODUCTION

Adelaide Alcantara – Lighting
Reagan Berdan – Wardrobe
Zane Donohue – Wardrobe
Olivia Lee – Wardrobe

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Meyer Liston – Wardrobe
Eris Marles – Wardrobe
Virginia McCallum – Wardrobe
Madelaine Prémont – Wardrobe
Jordan Porter – Photography & Marketing
Abby Cullaton – Scenic Art
Koda Greene Cavanagh – Scenic Art
Maks Garside – Props
Chloe Laporte – Props
Hazel Nicholson – Props
Caelin Smeenck – Props
Elliot Hull – Sound
Alyssa McCulloch – Sound
Mollie Jennings – Stage Management
Quentin Vieira – Stage Management
Joni Lau – Stage Crew
Ava Lewis – Carpentry

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The Grand Theatre is located on the traditional territories of the Original storytellers and caretakers of this land and the Nations, both settler and Indigenous, who continue to uphold the various treaties of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapéewak. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations, and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island (colonially known as North America), and acknowledge the traditional lands upon which we live, work, share, and tell stories together.

ABOUT THE GRAND THEATRE – WORLD CURIOUS. LONDON MADE.

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The Grand Theatre is known for **world-class theatre created and built in London, Ontario**. As **southwestern Ontario's premier producing theatre** and **one of the most beautiful theatre spaces in Canada**, the company has deep ties to the community and to its artists, artisans, and technicians.

As a vibrant cultural hub and not-for-profit professional theatre, the Grand serves to gather, inspire, and entertain audiences in London and beyond. At our home in downtown London, we create productions on two stages: the Spriet Stage (839 seats) and the Auburn Developments Stage (144 seats). The Grand season of theatrical offerings runs from September to May, and we collaborate with companies and artists across the country through our co-productions that see London-made artistic and creative work travel to audiences nation-wide. Through our successful **New Play Development Program**, the Grand is committed to developing and premiering new, original works and supporting the growth and reach of theatre writers and creators. Our recently renovated venue offers a contemporary and welcoming environment that is also home to several successful music series', community arts rentals, and cultural and special events.

A cornerstone of the organization is our place as a teaching theatre, exemplified in our many mentorship programs and highlighted in our annual **Grand Theatre High School Project**. As the first program of its kind in the country and currently in its twenty-seventh year, the High School Project involves as many as one hundred high school participants annually from schools across the region. These students participate at no cost and take on roles both on stage and off, in a fully realized mainstage production under the direction of a professional creative team.

For more information, visit: grandtheatre.com.

For more information please contact:

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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https://thegrandtheatre.sharepoint.com/:f:/s/MarketingDept/Ev_QtMU3Lo1IoPep9uB4HgABhdVj7XjrS_cFQCGnj8oB8Q?e=YYvLEr *

*Production photography will be available Tuesday, September 16, 2025.

MEDIA CALL

When: Wednesday, September 17 at 1:00 p.m. (Cameras, please arrive at 12:30 p.m. to set up)

Where: Spriet Stage, Grand Theatre, 471 Richmond Street, London, Ontario

What: Photo, video, and interview opportunities for media.