

Colin's "Gilbert" romances Anne of Green Gables



By Brock Weir

Aurora High School student Colin Campbell has been eagerly doing his homework.

The Grade 10 academic hasn't just been cracking the books for the school term, but also cracking open the Canadian classics to prepare for his upcoming role as Anne Shirley's eventual beau Gilbert Blythe in *Anne of Green Gables*.

The famed Canadian musical, based on the celebrated series of novels by Lucy Maud Montgomery, is the latest offering from Wavestage Theatre, formerly the Aurora Performing Arts Group. Joining Colin on the stage will be two Annes, Aurora's Rachel Sanderson and Holly Bryant.

The show runs at Newmarket Theatre from May 3 to 5 and the cast spent the weekend diligently breaking in their roles, roles which have become such a familiar and integrated part of Canadian culture.

"I read *Anne of Green Gables* first and then I watched the television series and the movie and I got a lot of the different character attributes from that," says Colin on going back to the source material to find his own take on Gilbert Blythe. "I think he's a really easy character to relate to, being a teenage boy and just kind of fooling around and having a crush on a girl. I watched the movies to see how he reacted in the time period and I wanted to see the moments when he was serious and the moments when he was joking around."

Colin is no stranger to Wavestage. He first got involved when the group was known as the Aurora Performing Arts Group several years ago. He said he was struck by the quality of the production and, being a guy who was always interested in drama, talked his mom into signing him up.

"It has been five years and it has been such an amazing opportunity," he says. "I have learned so much and it has just been a great experience to work with the team."

Since then, he has played a wide variety of familiar roles, including Rooster, the villainous brother of Miss Hannigan, in *Annie*, the revolutionary Perchik in *Fiddler on the Roof*, and even the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*.

"I think Rooster was one of the best roles I have ever done," he says. "It was a lot of fun and my two co-stars I was working with are really good friends. We got to learn a lot about each other working on stage and character development and it was just a really good time."

After Colin's Gilbert Blythe takes his final bow on May 5, he is not going to rest on his laurels, however briefly. In July, the theatre company is taking on the iconic 1960s musical *Hair*, in which he is playing Claude, then he is revisiting Perchik in a new production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and then taking on roles in *The Little Princess* and *Hello, Dolly!*

All this experience should stand him in good stead as he aims to make performing, including dramatics and singing, his future career.

‘Eventually being a professional stage actor would be the ultimate goal and I am very lucky to have someone like Sarah [Kyle, director of *Wavestage*],’ he says. ‘She is preparing me a lot and giving me a bunch of different roles to put on my resume and to give me more experience. She is helping me do a lot of the things to help me get to where I want to be and helping me look at different schools for musical theatre.’

School-wise, the goal is Sheridan College's performing Arts program. From there, he would like to take on the Great White Way with the ultimate dream of playing Marius in *Les Miserables* on Broadway. Helping him keep his eyes on the prize, one professional actor he looks to for inspiration is Aaron Tveit, who was recently seen as Enjolras in the film version of the same musical.

‘Tveit is able to portray a lot of different roles and I think his voice is amazing,’ says Colin. ‘When you watch him on stage he is very captivating, which I try to be. Just watching him on stage, I will look at him and think, ‘Okay, I can start doing that. That is a good thing to start doing.’’

For more information in *Anne of Green Gables* or *Wavestage*, visit www.wavestagetheatre.com. Tickets are available through the Newmarket Theatre at www.newtix.ca.