

## >>> FROM THE COVER

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arts and entertainment scene >>>

# Opera House presents 'Newsies'

■ Full-scale musical runs through Oct. 5

ELGIN — “Newsies,” the smash-hit musical, will play at the Elgin Opera House on Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 5. The musical features a score by eight-time Academy Award winner Alan Menken (“Beauty and the Beast,” “Aladdin,” “Sister Act”) and Jack Feldman and a book by four-time Tony Award winner Harvey Fierstein (“La Cage aux Folles,” “Torch Song Trilogy”).

“We’ve put together a phenomenal cast and a show loaded with spectacular choreography, a brilliant set and extraordinary music,” said director Terry Hale.

Set in New York City at the

turn of the century, “Newsies” is the rousing tale of Jack Kelly, a charismatic newsboy and leader of a ragged band of teenage “newsies,” who dreams only of a better life far from the hardship of the streets.

But when publishing titans Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst raise distribution prices at the newsboys’ expense, Jack finds a cause to fight for and rallies newsies from across the city to strike for what’s right.

“Newsies” was inspired by the real-life Newsboy Strike of 1899 when newsboy Kid Blink led a band of orphan and runaway



Courtesy of Elgin Opera House

Caitlin Marshall as Medda Larkin rehearses in front of a backdrop painted in the early 1900s when the Elgin Opera House was built. In storage for 14 years, it was carefully mounted for this production.

newsies on a two-week-long action against Pulitzer, Hearst and other powerful newspaper publishers.

“Newsies” showcases a cast of Opera House veteran actors, including Liam Bloodgood, Brixtin Walker, Madison Ribich, Caitlin Marshall and Brian Monger, and is rounded off with an ensemble of more than 30 talented and energetic young actors who fill the roles of the NYC newsies.

The stage version introduced eight brand-new songs by the original team of Menken and Feldman, including a song written specifically for the national tour called “Letter from the Refuge,” while keeping many of the beloved songs from the film, including “Carrying the Banner,” “Seize the Day,” “King of New York” and “Santa Fe.”

Since the film’s 1992 theatrical release and subsequent DVD releases, “Newsies” has grown into a cult phenomenon, and for years it was the single-most requested title of all the Disney musical films not yet adapted for the stage.

The Elgin Opera House’s production of “Newsies” runs Fridays

and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. plus a Saturday matinee at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$8-\$17. For tickets and information, visit [www.elginopera-house.com](http://www.elginopera-house.com) or call 541-663-6324.

The historic Opera House is located at 104 N. Eighth.

### ELGIN OPERA HOUSE HISTORIC BACKDROP

Hale said audience members will see a real piece of Elgin Opera House history during the “Newsies” performances.

The hand-painted backdrop that forms part of the set for Medda Larkin’s theater scenes likely dates to around the time of the Opera House’s opening in 1912. This original backdrop was found stored on top of the ceiling in the stage office during Opera House restoration work in the late 1980s, according to historical information at the Elgin Museum.

When the 30-foot backdrop was unrolled, handwritten names of actors, plays performed and touring theatre companies were discovered on the back. Among the earliest names are: Elgin Dramatic Club,

“Hickory Farm” on March 5, 1914; National Stock Co., “At Valley Forge” on Dec. 30, 1916; and Hoolie Hallgarth, “Stage Mgr.” on April 2, 1920.

Hale said historical information records that three hand-painted backdrops (depicting a street, a garden, and an interior scene) were part of the Opera House stage sets and equipment at or around the time of the Opera House’s dedication on July 4, 1912. These backdrops were commissioned from the Twin City Scenic Company for a cost of \$850 (including installation).

“The backdrop we are showcasing today is clearly a different scene. If any audience member can identify this landscape, we would love to know,” Hale said.

The Elgin Museum is located next door to the Opera House. Hale encourages everyone to stop by “for a fascinating look into Elgin’s past.”

“An extremely dedicated group of local volunteers and residents, many of whom have donated artifacts, stories and information, have made this museum a treasure not to be missed,” he said.

An advertisement for Howells Nursery. The background shows various potted plants, including a pumpkin-shaped planter with orange flowers. A large sign in the top left corner says "BIG SALE" with the Howells Nursery logo. In the center, it says "15% OFF Trees and Shrubs". In the bottom right, it says "10% OFF Perennials". At the bottom, there is a circular logo for Howells Nursery and the address: "10707 S Walton Rd, La Grande (541) 962-0641".