

Elgin Opera House opens 'Matilda' Oct. 1

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

ELGIN — It's a tale of two Matildas.

One actor was cast 18 months ago, right before the coronavirus pandemic shut down theater productions across the nation. She's been practicing her lines ever since.

The other actor began rehearsing three weeks ago, and is using tricks to memorize the script.

Dressed in matching gray jumpers, Abigale Roulet and Rebecca Austin are ready to bring Roald Dahl's *Matilda* to life on the Elgin Opera House stage.

They will not, however, both be Matilda at the same time. Terry Hale, artistic director of the Opera House, said doubling up on the main character seemed a good idea when faced with the uncertainty of COVID-19. If Roulet or Austin can't perform, the other can step right into the role. The current plan, though, is to



Lisa Britton/Go! Magazine
Matilda (played by Rebecca Austin, far right, and Abigale Roulet on different days), tries to win tug-of-war against Miss Trunchbull.

alternate who plays Matilda, while the other actor slips into the ensemble on her not-Matilda nights.

Opening night is Friday, Oct. 1, and shows continue on Fridays (7:30 p.m.) and Saturdays (12:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.) until Oct. 23. Tickets are \$18 for the orchestra level and lower balcony. Upper balcony tickets are \$8.

Roulet is a veteran of the Opera House stage with 17 productions behind her.

"This is one of my first main roles," she said.

She was cast as Matilda in early 2020. She, along with much of the original cast, grew a bit over the last 18 months.

"They all grew six inches to a

foot," said Grant Turner, Opera House assistant artistic director.

At almost 13, Roulet now stands more upstage from her other actors as she portrays the young Matilda. Also, she sits more than Austin, who is 9.

"It's two different shows, in a way," Turner said.

MATILDA

Oct. 1-23
Fridays: 7:30 p.m.
Saturdays: 12:30 p.m. and
4:30 p.m.
Elgin Opera House
104 N. Eighth Ave.
www.elginoperahouse.com
541-663-6324

Austin's first experience at the Opera House was this summer for the "James and the Giant Peach Jr." summer camp. This is her first regular season show.

When purchasing tickets, patrons can see which actor is featured as Matilda on a particular night.

The play was developed by the Royal Shakespeare Co., with lyrics by Tim Minchin.

"It became a big hit," Turner said. "(Minchin) is a comic genius and highly revered in the U.K."

Purchase tickets at www.elginoperahouse.com/box-office or call 541-663-6324.

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