

# Stage Right opens family show 'Cheaper by the Dozen'

By Tori Brock  
Contributing writer

If dogs and kids are "theater gold" as local director Jillian Nolan suggests, "Cheaper by the Dozen," will be a hit with audiences young and old alike.

"People love that combination," Nolan said of children and their canine cohorts. "It's definitely an all family show.

"It's about bringing a family together when you know they're going to need each other and also about teaching them family values they'll need later in life," she added. "It's a heartwarming, tender story with a lot of comedic moments."

"Cheaper by the Dozen," based on the book by Frank Gilbreth and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey and dramatized by Christopher Sergel, tells the story of Gilbreth, a father of 12 who also happens to be an efficiency expert.

With a cast of characters as far apart in age as a set of parents with 12 stair-stepped children, Nolan also had to become a little more efficient in directing.

"You kind of have to balance between breaking something down for the children, while reiterating it for the adults, so it doesn't seem like you're talking down to them," she explained. "You have to be careful what you say to who.

"I'm not as efficient as (Gilbreth) is, but it's always fun," she added. "I love working with mixed ages like this. You get to see a fun side of the adults and then you also get to see the interaction between the kids. The way the younger kids look up to the older kids is like a little mini-world. It's fun to watch those relationships build and form."

While the show features an ensemble cast who are all doing well, Nolan said a few of the cast members have ex-



Photo by Brad Meyer

Hayley Baxter, Connor Heaton (foreground), Russell Cadwallader (background) in "Cheaper by the Dozen."

ceeded her expectations.

"I think the role of the dad, played by Kat Gilcrease, is a really hard role," she said. "He has to balance being this efficiency manager, but he also has to make sure the audience likes him. The audience has to understand why he's pushing the kids so hard.

"Hayley Baxter has this soft quality, voice and look that

make her perfect for the role of Ann, plus she has this independence that Ann needs," she added. "She does a good job of showing that Ann just wants to have a life. She's not a bad girl; she's having a hard time understanding why dad is pushing her to focus on other things."

As for child actors, Nolan said it can sometimes be a

mixed bag. For the youngest member of the cast, though, she hit the jackpot.

"Ian Montez is 7-years-old, maybe 6, and has done a tremendous job," she said. "He has not let me down. He was the first one to know his lines.

"I've been really impressed with him and he's so adorable," she sighed. "He's



Photo by Brad Meyer

Michael Cadwallader (front), Hayley Baxter (front), Austine Lyons (back left), Russell Cadwallader (on couch left), Ian Montez (floor far left), Mac Johnson (floor left), Holly Winberg (behind couch right) and Cole Thompson (couch right) have a role in Stage Right's "Cheaper by the Dozen" which opens tonight at the Crighton Theatre.

## "CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN"

Performance dates for "Cheaper by the Dozen" are Friday and Saturday nights at 8 p.m. July 31 through Aug. 16 with 2 p.m. matinees on Sundays. Tickets are \$17 for adults, \$15 for senior citizens and \$12 for students and are available by calling (936) 441-SHOW (7469).



Photo by Brad Meyer

Pictured from left to right Kayley King, Mac Johnson, Ian Montez and the dog, Harley, star in "Cheaper by the Dozen."

going to kill the audience."

While a trip to the movies may be a summer staple for some families, Nolan urges anyone looking for a fun night out to reconsider a movie theater and attend a live theater performance instead.

"These days, theater is one of the last things people save money for," she said. "Enter-

tainment tends to be put on the back burner.

"In my opinion, I don't think there's anything that can compare to seeing a live show," she said. "The emotion is right there in front of you. It's so much more exciting than a movie. Plus, people need to support the amazing work of these children — you've worked so hard."