

Local woman behind Queen For A Day, The Musical

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ALLISTON - Long before the current onslaught of reality television, there was Queen For A Day.

Banting Memorial High School graduate Natalie Bartello is helping to bring that magic back with Queen For A Day, The Musical, which is being staged at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts this fall.

For the original television show, mothers took to the stage pleading their case, often for equipment to help a crippled child or money to provide for their family, to be Queen For A Day. After the contestants poured their hearts out, the audience applause would dictate the winner of the show who would win the items she asked for, and much more.

"At the time TV was such a new medium, the idea of actually being on TV was so foreign to these women and it was really about trying to get these things that they needed," she said.

To research the musical, Bartello spent time with the creator of the show, as well as people who worked on it.

"They all really felt like they were helping," she said.

With its live commercials, product placement, dramatic stories, and the generation it was filmed, it was only a matter of time before the show worked its way onto stage.

"It lends itself beautifully to a musical because it's so dramatic and it's so visual with everything going on on stage," she said.

Bartello's passion for the theatre began while she was living in Tottenham and going to Banting Memorial High School.

"I did tons and tons of theatre while I was there and had amazing teachers, I had Steve Thomas and Dale Phelps and people like that at Banting who were incredible with doing the after-school stuff. The sky was the limit with anything we wanted to do with drama club," she said.

With Queen For A Day, The Musical, her creativity that started budding in high school is flourishing, with Bartello getting credit for producer and the creative concept.

The production, which has a limited showing from Sept. 26 to Oct. 7 at the Richmond Hill Centre for the



Queen For A Day. Banting Memorial High School grad Natalie Bartello is the producer of the new Queen For a Day The Musical, which premieres this September in Richmond Hill. *Contributed*

Performing Arts, is inspired by a true story and follows the life of Claribel, a contestant on the show.

The story starts in the present day with an aging Claribel.

"She's faced with losing her independence and apartment and maybe being moved into a home and she meets this young woman who's sent there to help her clean up her apartment," Bartello said. "As they build a relationship together the story of her Queen For a Day comes out and it unravels and we go back and forth between 1953 and the present. By the end of the show we see how that day changed her life."

That life-changing moment is what echoed through all the interviews Bartello did while researching the production.

"I met one woman whose husband had been diagnosed with MS and had these physical issues and she wanted to go back to school and become a teacher so she could support her family. Queen For a Day gave her \$5,000 and that literally changed the entire path of her life, her family's life, and everything after that," recalled Bartello.

"Our story echoes all these women who have gone through this transformation of having a day where everything is turned upside down and how that changes them."

Queen For A Day, The Musical is a show for the whole family, with the musical numbers ranging from Broadway to rap, jazz and gospel.

"We wanted to come up with hero, and a story for the audience to follow and treat the audience to a day in 1953 Hollywood and the fun that comes with that," Bartello said.

Tickets for the performance start at \$35 and are available by calling 1-855-259-1625 or online at www.queenforadaythemusical.com.

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