

A STORY TO FLOAT YOUR BOAT

- 18 October 2007

The writers of a new biblically-inspired musical have travelled to see youngsters rehearse the play. Ian Gower and Rob Alderton, who penned Noah The Musical, travelled from their Hertfordshire homes to see the Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company in action ahead of the play's debut.



Actors aged between 10 and 21 will perform the musical at Mitchell Memorial Theatre, in Hanley.

Graham Hope, aged 20, of Basford, who is playing Noah, said meeting the writers had helped, but it would be daunting to perform in front of them.

He said: "It is very useful to meet the people who wrote the play and get their ideas.

"But they are going to come and see it on the last night and you can be certain if I get a line wrong they are going to know it."

The musical re-tells the story of Noah's Ark, but paying greater attention to the characters - Noah, Mrs Noah, their sons Ham, Shem and Japheth and their wives.

The songs include Sad Bad Days, which tells the story of when the earth was flooded, and Animals Forlorn, which mourns the millions of animals who must have died after missing out on the ark.

Ruth Davies, aged 16, of Madeley, who is playing Noah's wife, said it would be enjoyable for family groups.

She said: "It has got some really funny parts, but I think there is something for everyone. It is a story that everyone knows, but presented in a different way."

A group of 28 young people will perform six shows between October 30 and November 3.

It will be the first time the musical is performed with live music from a band since the pair wrote it in 2005.

Previous performances in Australia, Detroit and Scotland were done with backing tracks. Auditions for the musical started in April and rehearsals began in July.

Meanwhile, art students at Stoke-on-Trent College will be building the ark this week.

Director Ann McArdle said: "I would say it is a play with music more than a musical. There is quite a lot of dialogue which is very important.

"There is humour running through it and it has the sort of music that will have people singing it on their way out."

Mr Alderton, who last visited Stoke-on-Trent while playing piano for Freddie Starr, said: "It has our names on it, so we wanted to come down and support it."

Mr Gower said: "This is a brave musical to put on because when the curtain opens on this, nobody is going to know what to expect, and that is pure theatre."