

ANIMAL TALE IS MAGIC Date : 20.10.06

A New company makes its debut next week with an unfamiliar show based on a very familiar story. The **Stoke Youth Musical Theatre Company** has evolved from the Youth Section of the sadly defunct City Of Stoke-on-Trent Amateur Operatic Society. And its first presentation is the local premiere of the musical **Honk!**, based on Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairytale, The Ugly Duckling.



Written by George Stiles and Anthony Drewe and first performed in 1993, Honk! is a family show which reworks the popular story with laughter, song and spirited performances from a keen young cast.

"The show is full of charm, witty lyrics, catchy songs, really bad puns and a cast of ducks, geese, turkeys, bullfrogs and a cunning cat," says spokesman Robert Clarke.

"When Ugly, played by Michael Carthy, hatches under the adoring gaze of his proud mum, his musical adventure begins. 'Honk' rather than the traditional 'quack' is the noise made by the strange grey creature which emerges from the inordinately large egg hatched by the mother duck, Ida."

The Ugly Duckling/Honk soon becomes the subject of ridicule around the farmyard and sets off on a series of adventures with a cat whose intentions are more culinary than fraternal.

In a cast of nearly 40, Emma Salvo plays Ida, Danielle Slinn is Penny, the attractive young swan, and Lee Birkin plays the cat.

Director and choreographer Craig Armstrong is a veteran of the former Youth Section, appearing in shows from the age of 13.

Laura Bowler, a 20-year-old student at the Royal Northern College of Music, will make her debut as musical director.