

## Beauty and the Beast production includes talents of Clintonians

By Sherry Lucas

Andrew Fehrenbacher's face lights up when he talks about his upcoming New Stage Theatre debut. Bad pun, yes, since he has the role of a French candlestick, but his eyes really do dance, and his smile stretches wide. Lumiere in the Disney *Beauty and the Beast* taps into a whole new glow.

"It's awesome. I am having a blast!" said Fehrenbacher.

For the admissions counselor at Mississippi College, the principal role is a "very, very pleasant surprise, and I have just grown to love the character," he says, with a happy grin.

The musical, magical tale is New Stage Theatre's holiday special, with performances December 7 through 21. For tickets, \$35 adults and \$28 students/seniors/military, visit [newstagetheatre.com](http://newstagetheatre.com), or call 601-948-3533.

*Beauty and the Beast* is one of Fehrenbacher's favorites. He's watched the movie since he was little.

"I love the music. I love the story. I really just like how it's so family-friendly...You can just appreciate

it on so many different levels."

Fehrenbacher grew up Brandon, but has been in Clinton since first coming to MC for college in 2011. While at MC, he took part in *Les Miserables*, *Into the Woods*, *Showboat* and *Der Fledermaus*.

Of Lumiere, he imagines the man before a spell of enchantment turned him into a piece of home decor.

"I imagine that he was smooth, but he's not quite as smooth as he thinks he is," Fehrenbacher said. "At his core, at his root, he's really just a happy guy who wants other people to be happy, and he has a lot of joy. And I think you see that — when he becomes a candlestick, he's still, through the whole show, trying to hold onto that joy and that hope that he had as a human."

From his repartee with the grumpy Cogsworth to his warm welcome to Belle to his pep talk to the Beast, Lumiere's interactions are guided by that joy.

Fehrenbacher can relate.

"I am a very happy guy. I've got a wife, Mary Catherine, who is my world. And I've got all my family still in Brandon and a couple of



Photo by James Patterson

The ensemble cast for Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* at New Stage Theatre includes Danielle Bowen as Belle and Michael Spaziani as The Beast.

them, actually — my brother and sister — are at MC as students. I'm a believer. I've been saved since I was a little kid, so I love my Lord Jesus Christ. And I've got a lot of really great blessings."

"In some ways, I have to step out of my comfort zone, because I've never played a French candlestick

before; but I'm a happy person, and Lumiere's a happy person, so it kind of goes hand in hand," he said.

It's been fun to explore Lumiere's French accent, too, he says, as well as trying to get the physicality right (big, white Mickey Mouse-like gloves help get him accustomed to the role's nearly permanent hands-up stance).

"I was at work the other day, and somebody said something really funny; and, just without thinking about it, I was laughing really hard and I just went, 'Ha ha ha!...' his arms naturally flew into Lumiere's pose. "And I said, 'Oh no! What have I become?'... I really need to get this show on the road before I actually become a candlestick!"

The 6'2" singer has had a chance to play romantic love interest and villain parts, "and I don't often get the chance to play character roles...that make people laugh or kind of melt your heart, or are just kind of being silly—and that's what Lumiere is."

"How many people get to play a French candlestick?"

Fehrenbacher is among several

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# Christmas Spirit Tour

Nominations are being sought from the Clinton community for homes and business that are into the Christmas Spirit.



To nominate your home or business, a neighbor's home, or any yard you see that's in the Christmas spirit, please contact *The Clinton Courier* by emailing [office@theclintoncourier.net](mailto:office@theclintoncourier.net) or by calling 601-990-9511.

Judging will be December 8th – 12th. Signs will be placed at our Spirit of Christmas Tour homes, and the entire tour will be printed in the December 19th paper.