

PRESS RELEASE – 23RD MAY 2008

SOME very special cats will soon have a place they can call home in Invercargill, thanks in no small way to the ILT and the ILT Foundation.

That's the word from Craig Waddell, the executive officer of the Invercargill Musical Theatre Company, which is putting the finishing touches to what is probably the most extensive set the company has ever built for the staging of the international award-winning musical Cats, in July.

"The set is about 70 percent finished and it's just looking fantastic," Mr Waddell said.

"We've built it from scratch and we're making all the costumes for the show from here as well, so it has been a big commitment."

Mr Waddell said making the set and costumes to the level it has would not have been possible without a \$45,000 grant from the ILT Foundation.

He was also grateful to the ILT for an additional \$35,000 donation, which would assist with the production costs of Cats and ongoing expenses associated with running the Invercargill Musical Theatre Company.

"Without the help from the ILT Foundation and the ILT we would definitely have struggled to put on as a professional show that audiences have to come to expect in Invercargill," Mr Waddell said.

"Because this will be one of the best shows that Invercargill and Southland audiences will ever see, with a cast of over 100, including a lot of little kiddies as kittens. They've been working for three or four months rehearsing. And budget-wise, this show will be the biggest we have seen in Invercargill since Les Miserables in 1994."

ILT president Alan Dennis said it was important to support the Invercargill Musical Theatre Company, especially its drive to stage one of the greatest musicals of all time.

"The Invercargill Musical Theatre Company has always put on tremendous shows and all the indications are that this will be one of the best yet," Mr Dennis said.

"We felt it was important to offer financial assistance to help pay for the set and costumes, and other costs involved with putting on such a major show."

Importantly, Mr Waddell also said his company would be able to recoup some costs by hiring out its set and costumes to other amateur musical theatre groups staging Cats.

"Blenheim are going to be hiring the set and costumes from us afterwards. And there will probably be another few societies in the next couple of years that'll take it on board as well," he said.

The production of Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's hit show runs from July 4-12 at the Civic Theatre and ticket sales have been strong, which has not surprised Waddell.

"The set is fantastic. The music, obviously, with Andrew Lloyd Webber is memorable. We've got Suzanne Prentice as the lead role in the show and it's an all local cast," he explained.

"I just think it's going to be very special."