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The cast of SUDS at the Oh Canada,Eh? dinner theatre is bright, talented, high energy, fun and young—they have to be.

"They rehearsed choreography for 11 hours for the first three days," said musical director Debbie Rosen. "They needed it to get in shape."

As anyone who arrived in the Bow Valley from sea level knows, the first three days at altitude are the hardest, but the three Ontarions and one British Columbian in the cast had just ten, count em, 10 days to get the show up ready to open Friday.

"Your job is to memorize," said 21-year-old Kelly Holiff, the youngest. Thus the cast knew the lyrics for nearly 40 songs—all written before they were born—when they arrived.

"We all knew the tunes from our parents," said Erin Tancock, 24.

The dry mountain air played havoc with the singing voices, strained by nearly 10 hours of rehearsals.

Rosen advised them to sing in the shower.

Matthew Selby, the eldest at 29, favors slippery elm, golden seal and a humidifier.

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Tancock called the schedule "grilling and demanding," and said the hardest is to put all three—singing, dancing and acting—together in such a short time while "supporting your breath" and making it look easy.

The big number is the first, "Locomotion," and they went over it to perfection as it sets the tone for the rest of the play.

"We're not used to the tight harmonies of the songs," said Holiff. "They are difficult, but really pretty."

They all praised Rosen for making them "get it right the first time" because a mistake can quickly become difficult to unlearn.

Two of the four are waiters and Selby is a substitute teacher in Canmore for the duration of the show.

"It's a fun show. Bring the family," he said, "there's a bubble machine."

Rosen said working with such a talented cast was a privilage.

"The caliber of their talent is very high, we are fortunate to have them in Canmore."

Cramping the normal months of rehearsals into ten days has its advantages, said Selby.

"It's fresh so we remember each day to the next better," he said.

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Rosen added that muscle memory is enhanced by the repetition.

Nevertheless, creating hours of non-stop entertainment, constant action, singing, acting and dancing is demanding and only a few people are talented enough to do it.

"When they told us we should come here seven years ago," said founder JP Thibodeau, "they said the Bow Valley has tons of talent, we would have no trouble getting a cast. We haven't yet found one who can do what's required."

Having professional dinner theatre is a unique asset, especially in a small town.

"We do the summer for tourists and the fall for the locals," he said. "You can't go to Calgary and get a five course dinner and professional show for the price."

SUDS opens Friday and runs Thursdays through Sundays until New Year's Eve, when it moves to Ontario. Catch them by calling Oh Canada, Eh? at 609-0004.

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