

By Carolyn Lee

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Just about everyone school age and older has read either “The Adventures of Tom Sawyer” or “The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,” both written by Mark Twain. Now, residents will get to see friends in the Imperial Community Players’ production of “Big River.”

The musical, which faithfully follows the “Huck Finn” novel, will be produced Aug. 9-11 during the Chase County Fair. Jeremy Vlasin is directing the musical.

It features music in the bluegrass and country styles in keeping with the setting of the novel, the Mississippi River.

The Broadway production, beginning in 1985 with the book by William Hauptman and music and lyrics by Roger Miller, ran for over 1,000 performances.

The principal cast includes Huck, the slave Jim, Tom Sawyer, a couple of con artists, and the boys’ legal guardians.

The synopsis is set in pre-Civil War Missouri. Huck runs away from home, is kidnapped by his drunken father, escapes and heads down the river on a raft with slave Jim.

They encounter many adventures along the way, ending up with Jim’s capture, a visit by Tom and a happy ending.

Songs include “Do You Wanna Go to Heaven,” “Muddy Water,” “River in the Rain,” “When the Sun Goes Down,” and more.

Imperial Community Players President Christy Boggs said “Muddy Waters” is probably the most recognized song. “The music is fabulous, and very similar to a bluegrass feel,” she said.

Vlasin said he hopes to conduct tryouts the end of May or first of June. The cast includes six men, six women and a chorus.

Vlasin said there won’t be a children’s chorus, but he will incorporate youth ages fifth grade and older into the chorus.

He was also the director of “Oklahoma” several years ago.

“I think (Big River) is going to rejuvenate the Players,” Boggs said, “like ‘Annie’ did. It’s a feel-good play.”