

A six pack of stage shows

BALLARAT'S leading performing arts school is preparing to undertake an extraordinary feat as they plan to mount six stage shows within two months, after delays caused by the latest lockdown.

The Ballarat Centre of Music and the Arts normally presents a variety of productions staggered throughout the school year, but the June lockdown forced them to postpone two of their major junior musicals as restrictions saw them unable to get into the theatre.

Despite the interruptions caused by the lockdown, BCMA director Paula Heenan praised the school's students, teachers and parents for adjusting to changes in the lead up to their big production season.

"The kids have been brilliant in adapting and our teachers have been amazing in adapting to different ways of teaching," Ms Heenan said.



STUDENTS ON STAGE: The Ballarat Centre of Music and the Arts prepares for their six upcoming productions. PHOTO: Adam Trafford.

From July 31 to September 30, the productions from BCMA will include musicals 'Aladdin Junior', 'Shrek Junior' and '13', as well as a drama puppet show, a ballet and a contemporary choreography event.

Ms Heenan said putting

on the six productions with COVID-19 restrictions still in place had proved to be a "logistical nightmare" as the lockdown impacted bookings for technical crews, truck drivers, set crews and three separate theatres.

"We really have to be very

on our game to make it work, it has to run like clockwork," she said.

But Ms Heenan was concerned that the new format and COVID-19 restrictions could have an impact on audience numbers.

With the current density

limits and the state government pause on the easing of restrictions, she said the school may not be able to sell enough tickets to justify costs of the upcoming productions and that the back-to-back shows may not garner as much support as usual.

Ms Heenan said the shows need support "we really need the Ballarat community to be cheering for everything that is happening."

Tickets to the BCMA productions can be purchased from trybooking.com.au

- OLIVIA CONDOUS

Bail conditions reduce risk

Man allegedly found with array of weapons released from jail

BY ROCHELLE KIRKHAM

A MAN found driving around Ballarat with a large amount of weapons, including a garrote and a loaded gun, has been released on bail.

Laurie Kirby, 37, had previously been refused bail in March after a magistrate described the weapons as a 'frightening array' associated with the 'highest level of crime in the community'.

The Ballarat Magistrates'

Court heard on Tuesday Kirby was intercepted driving on Cedar Road in Ballarat and police searched his car after an officer saw a knife in the drivers' side door.

During the search they allegedly found a wire garrote, five knives, a machete, a tomahawk, a sharpened metal rod, a metal slingshot, a homemade taser and knuckle dusters in late February.

They also allegedly found a loaded sawn off 0.22 rifle,

ammunition, a silencer, a scope for a firearm, a black balaclava and gloves in the car.

Police also searched Kirby's home and found nine cannabis plants, a shotgun and a spear gun. The court heard Kirby was a prohibited person to possess a firearm and used cannabis.

Police prosecutor Leading Senior Constable Steve Kent said driving around Ballarat with that many weapons

posed a significant risk to members of the community.

Defence barrister Jacqui Hession said Kirby had been suffering mental ill-health which had improved with treatment while in prison.

Kirby's father gave evidence to the court his son could live with him if released on bail. The prosecution extensively questioned Kirby's father about guns legally stored at his property in the Golden Plains region

and shared concerns Kirby could access the firearms if released. The father said he would make an immediate report to police if Kirby did the wrong thing.

"The difficulty is if he does the wrong thing it could be anything from smoking a joint to shooting somebody," Leading Senior Constable Kent said.

Magistrate Ron Saines said he believed there was less likelihood of Kirby possess-

ing weapons if his mental health had improved. He said he was satisfied compelling reasons for bail were met and the risk could be reduced to an acceptable level with bail conditions.

"The risk of access to firearms and equipment is certainly there," he said.

Kirby will return to court in August.

He has spent four months in custody.

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