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BookLore, Theatre Orangeville to present Author?s Night

By Constance Scrafield

A favourite with Orangeville bookworms, an author's night is coming to the Opera House March 28, with three fine writers to read a little from their new novels and to indulge the audience in an always entertaining Q and A.

Welcome back to Eva Stachniak, with her latest: Chosen Maiden, which has been already well reviewed by Quill and Quirk. Chosen Maiden is an account of the true story of Bronia Nijinski, whose brother is the very famous ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinski. Bronia, although perhaps not as familiar a name, was equally famous as a ballet dancer and choreographer. Written as fiction, the story takes place between 1894 and 1939.

It is probably good news if Stephen King is referring an author as his ?new hero,? as he does Emily Schultz. She is bringing her latest, Men Walking on Water, a ?rollicking good read,? set in 1927, a story during Prohibition, when a gang of smugglers are ready to cross the Detroit River to Canada and a catastrophe takes place.

Schultz has been to Orangeville before to participate in a Headwaters Arts Authors Night. It will be great have her back with Men Walking on Water.

Born in the U.S.A. and raised in Canada, Schultz now lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Roberta Rich is here for the first time, but her books are not new to Orangeville. Hot off the press is her most recent offering, A Trial of Venice, the third in her trilogy of The Midwife of Venice and The Harem Midwife.

Also born in the States and, having lived some of her life there, Rich now divides her days between Vancouver and Colima, Mexico. A divorce lawyer, Rich ?burst onto the book scene? with her historical novel Midwife of Venice. Currently living a beautiful life, so it seems, Rich loves the two places in which she resides with her husband and family.

Although Schultz and Rich were in the U.S. and not available for a interview, we did have the opportunity to speak with Stachniak.

Born and raised in Poland, Stachniak came to Canada in 1981 as a post-graduate student to do her PhD in English literature at McGill University in Montreal. It was an exchange arrangement paid for by a scholarship awarded to her through the Canadian Embassy in Poland. While many such students return to their home countries, Stachniak opted to stay in Canada, where, after achieving her PhD, she took on a variety of jobs.

?I knew I wanted to write since I was a child,? she said. ?I was writing stories since I could read. I completed my PhD in '88 but I didn't want to be an academic. So, I was a journalist with the CBC, I taught English literature and writing; I was looking always for work that would give me time to write.?

Keeping in mind that Stachniak came from Poland in her 20s, a married woman with a son, who both came with her as well, in spite of her fluency in English and her profound knowledge of English writers from Britain and America, she still carried with her the stories of Eastern Europe and it was to these that she returned as a writer.

?I really found my voice as an immigrant to Canada with all these stories from my land, telling them to my friends,? she said. ?At the time, it was hard to know the marvellous stories that were not heard but I wanted to write them.?

Travelling back to Poland on a regular basis to promote her books, which are translated into Polish, and where she has family, friends and professional colleagues, Stachniak has seen Poland change beyond what it was when she lived there years ago. However, the change is not a burden to her.

?I have a vibrant life there,? she said. ?I speak Polish so the media uses me to discuss the book tours. They are so interested to receive my (literary) voice. It is refreshing to read not the Polish perspective but the broader view of being written about from the outside.?

The Stachniaks' son, raised and attending university here in Canada, was ?stolen by Microsoft,? she joked, and is living in Seattle with his Japanese wife and their children. The children are citizens of three nations: Canada, Japan and America ? the way of the world.

This evening of three authors, coming March 28 at the Opera House, is a partnership production between BookLore and Theatre Orangeville as a fundraiser for Theatre Orangeville's New Play Development Fund.

BookLore owner Nancy Frater said she's passionate about supporting this fund.

?We use the authors' nights, since books and theatre go hand in hand,? she said. ?The New Play Development fund is important because it provides opportunity for Canadian writers to get out there ? just look at Trevor Cole who wrote Norman Bray and the Performance of his Life. Of course, Theatre Orangeville benefits from premiering these plays when they are performed in other theatres.?

?Culture is alive and well in Orangeville,? she added.??Bringing in well known authors to promote their work and the theatre is

good for everybody.?

Of this evening, Frater wants everyone to know that the host of the evening is Bernadette Hardaker, general manager of Theatre Orangeville. After the main event on stage of reading and Q&A, there is a reception in the atrium, catered by Mill Creek Pub with libations, as Frater refers to them, by Grand Spirits distillery from Grand Valley. They have designed special cocktails to match the theme of each of the new books.

The authors will be there too, waiting to meet and greet us all, as well as to sign their books which will be for sale from BookLore at the reception.

?I am really looking to coming there on March 28,? Stachniak said. ?It was lovely (the last time she was here) and it was a wonderful audience.?

Tickets are available from BookLore, 121 First Street (519-942-3830), the Theatre Orangeville Box Office at 87 Broadway, or by telephone at 519-942-3423.