

Caledon Town Hall Players are back with ?A Christmas Tail?

By Constance Scrafield

Christmas is coming and theatres are warming up their stories, necessarily with magic; we would not have it otherwise ? villains, questions and twist endings. All well and good.

First up is Caledon Town Hal Players (CTHP) with their story about a cat named Gus, his butcher pal Ralph, and a host of other souls opening at the Old Town Hall theatre on Hurontario Street in Caledon Village.

There are both matinee and evening performances on all four days of the weekends of Nov. 12 and 13 and Nov. 18 and 19.

To hint at the plot, with Christmas at the doorstep, poor Ralph is in a financial crisis that he has to resolve by Christmas Eve. As he ponders and fusses over his dilemma, enter Amanda, a customer's nine-year-old daughter to whom Ralph confides that on Christmas Eve, his cat Gus can talk but Ralph can't understand him.

A child believes in magic and sure enough, young Amanda can hear and understand what Gus is saying.

Things are never easy for Ralph, and before too long, we meet Frankie, the ?neighbourhood loan shark? ever eager to add to Ralph's hard luck. From there, you will have to come and see the show to learn what happens. If even Gus and all the rest of the people you will meet cannot rescue Ralph, will Christmas bring its own miracle?

Written by American playwright Joe Simonelli, this is the Canadian Premier for A Christmas Tail and the cast and members are having a grand time putting it together.

The cast of eight also includes Sally and her son Tom, who both work in the shop; Carlos, the delivery man; Barbara who is an award-winning actress and Linda, Ralph's estranged teenage daughter, enough people to keep the humorous dialogue buoyant, but will they help or muddle Ralph's story?

Heidi Kachel is directing the play this time around and she told the Citizen, that things are going very well.

?Only the little girl, Amanda, understands the cat and the bell he always wears,? she said, telling us later that Elizabeth Reid comes to this role, having been part of the youth programs at Theatre Orangeville.

There is already praise for this young actor as ?talented and very bright.?

?Ralph is in a big financial crisis and the villain Frankie is really a bad guy,? she warned us. ?He wants to take over the shop.?

Like all community theatres, the emphasis is on both community and theatre, meaning that many people wear many hats and the actors mostly have day jobs but they are prepared to drive ? some quite a distance ? to be on time for rehearsals, which run over a few months.

Heidi Kachel has directed four plays, and acted in and produced others. She has been involved in every aspect of the group, including 10 years of various positions on the Board of Directors.

The play is ever the thing and the community of hobby thespians put their best feet forward, producing shows that are loved by audiences who laugh and weep as the actors tell the tails ? er -tales.

Not only is Ms. Kachel directing the play, she has also been constructing the set along with long-time CTHP members, Kim and

Chuck Blacklock. Kim Blacklock is on deck as stage manager for this production.

There are familiar faces on the stage. Mark Ladouceur stars as Ralph and Linda Smith joins the gang to portray the Tony award-winning actress, Barbara. Michel Maclay takes on the role of the villainous Frankie. New to this stage are Stuart Davidson as Carlos and Ashly Goldsmith as Beth, Ralph's estranged daughter.

Said Heidi Kachel, "I've been involved with CTHP for 38 years. I will always remember how open and welcoming everyone was. It quickly became my home away from home. The friendships I have made here are truly priceless. I maintain that there is something magical about this building that keeps me coming back. I was always active in school plays in high school. So, to see young people come in and learn a bit about theatre, see their enthusiasm grow - that's really nice. Involvement in theatre gives young people new confidence in themselves."

Ashly Goldsmith is one young person who is new to Orangeville. She did some theatre in Elora and in Guelph Little Theatre. Stuart Davidson went to Mayfield S.S. as a teenager, where he performed in plays and has come back to theatre now.

"Especially," Ms. Kachel said, "those who bite the bullet and stand up on the stage to perform. Then, they have the excitement of the laughs and applause from the audience and it is thrilling for them."

Generally speaking, others have observed those young people who learn a new skill because they were helping out with set construction or making props, they were included in projects that went on to help make the play a success.

The company would like to remind patrons that Friday is November 11 and a holiday, so they have moved the performances to Saturday and Sunday, November 12 and 13 for matinees and evening shows.

Saturday evenings are still dinner and the show. If you would like that and for tickets, you can call the box office at 519-827-5460 or go online to www.caledontownhallplayers.com/currentshows