

## Caledon Town Hall Players present their season finale, 'Grounded'?

**By Constance Scrafield**

Caledon Town Hall Players (CTHP) Director Chris Bailey is very pleased with how well the cast is getting ready for their upcoming production of *Grounded*, a comedy by John Spurway, opening May 2.

'We are in our tech rehearsals now,' he said in an interview with the Citizen this week, adding, 'we have two weeks of double rehearsals just to put everything in place.'

Such fastidiousness is worth the effort, for the Spurway play is demanding, thought-provoking and a fine comedy.

The plot, in brief, is five passengers stuck in an airport terminal, while their plane is grounded by bad weather. Strangers to begin, their confinement-inspired conversations reveal startling truths that make this play so intriguing.

Given the challenges the cast members have overcome so successfully, Bailey wanted to credit each of them first. He prefaced his remarks by noting that this play is very dialogue-driven, with quick back-and-forth exchanges, and that it takes time to perfect the timing and blocking.

Kevin Wrycraft, as Nathan, has performed before on the CTHP stage and is a ready volunteer backstage. He is a dedicated member and encourages newcomers.

Taking on the transition to a big role from her previously minor parts in other plays, Meri Chilelli as Elizabeth had Bailey commenting, 'It has been wonderful working with Meri's [decision] to go forward to such a challenge.'

Playing the part of Marion, Kim Blacklock is a favourite with CTHP audiences. She brings comic relief 'the fun in this show' into the moments of the sad, tender side of Marion. Brilliant.

Then, there is the eloping couple, Kate and Tony, played by Michelle Barnes as Kate and Stuart Davidson as Tony. Barnes is brand new to acting. Caledon-based but never having been on stage, she auditioned and was cast in the role. Barnes was 'off book' early.

Coming in as a new person can be hard, but Barnes has jumped in, Bailey reported, and even her husband has come to run the lights. The director loves seeing new people join the company, and the welcome makes them feel comfortable.

*Grounded* is a 'cool' play, as he defined it: a comedy for the audience but a drama for the actors.

'There is quite a lot of seriousness,' Bailey commented. 'The laughs come from the unravelling in the story.'

People will enjoy this play for its different types of comedy, and CTHP is well known for presenting comedy on its stage. Audiences have to feel full with the pleasure of the show.

'Word of mouth is the best publicity,' as Bailey remarked.

Now in its 62nd year, a community theatre with four plays a year is proof of audience enthusiasm for the productions CTHP offers.

As the director, he says he is delighted to see a group of people who all really embrace this show as a good time for the audience in a character-driven play.

To bring out the best in each character, he did the blocking differently to share that work with the audience, he explained. 'When

people come to this see this play, they will have a great feeling about this experience.?

Once all is ready, the audience is seated, and the play begins, the director's job is done, even this time for Chris Bailey, who usually has something to do backstage, but once *Grounded* opens, he can stand back and simply watch it.

From the point of view of the director, Bailey made the point that this particular play can be interpreted by the director in different ways. He told the story of how his wife, Stephanie Bailey, who is producing *Grounded*, discussed with him how differently she would have directed it. Yet both approaches are valid. Bailey's comment was that what is great about the theatre is the difference in how the play has been produced. Every playwright must be interested to see how your version of the play is presented. This story is about bad weather in New York, keeping these passengers in Toronto from flying out and leaving them stuck with nowhere to go.

With time on their hands and only each other as diversion, the conversation can stray as it will. Certain discoveries might come to light simply because they are there.

?The audience will be on the edge of their seats,? Bailey promised. ?New audience members are often surprised at the quality of the performances.

*Grounded* performance dates: May 2, 8 and 9 at 8:15 p.m. and May 2, 3 and 9 at 2:15 p.m.

Tickets are available online at [caledontownhallplayers.com](http://caledontownhallplayers.com) or by calling 519-927-5460.