

Caledon Town Hall Players tackle Love Letters in season bonus

By Constance Scrafield

The Caledon Town Hall Players will perform a drama with a very small cast of two early in September.

'Love Letters' by A.R. Gurney is coming to the Caledon-based theatre company on September 8, 9, 15 and 16.

Director Stephanie Bailey took time to talk to the Citizen about this upcoming show, which is an add-on to their regular season.

'Typically, we do three shows a season, in November, February and May. But this year, we added a fourth show in September,' she said.

In the drama, there are plenty of ways to communicate. At one time, pen pals were common, pen on paper, stamp on an envelope; sometimes, really close friendships grew - sometimes, even marriage or an affair. As it is with these two, Andrew Makepeace Ladd III and Melissa Gardner, who read the audience the stories of their own lives and the life of their friendship through 50 years of correspondence.

'You get to be yourself when it's on paper,' said Bailey. 'They explore their relationship across different times in their lives, from childhood on. This is a very powerful play, the two of them go through a lot of emotions.'

CTHP never produces a play with just two characters because the mantra of the company is to 'involve as many people as possible in all aspects of theatre.' With this in mind, these two characters and their director include three people per play. Three groups of two characters and the director take turns to perform the play. The casting was arranged by lottery, actually picking names out of a hat.

Love Letters will be produced six times over two weekends. This way, nine people are involved in the acting, with the tech and creative crew seeing to the rest.

The experiment has brought new people who have never acted together before and the individual directors, each approaching the show differently.

'We thought audiences might like to see it [more than once],' said Bailey, 'so that they can see how the play is re-interpreted.'

CTHP landed on Love Letters for a number of reasons. The two-person script doesn't need to be memorized as the artistry is in the reading, easy when people are travelling during the summer, and this gave a chance to meet more actors, for there were no auditions.

'There was a level of risk as to who would be in the show. People might work together but not knowing who you're going to work with is a challenge,' she said. 'This is our chance to explore something new.'

This year is CTHP's 65th anniversary. It is run entirely by volunteers with no paid employees and a 'fantastic membership whose hearts are all on theatre's survival. We try to get people as involved as they want to be; we adapt with life's changes,' she told us.

There is a good mix of demographics, a couple of high school students who go through shows that involve high school casting. People working backstage want to get involved without acting and directing. Teens get their volunteer hours.

Love Letters is something different, truly different from other shows. Two people and raw emotion by watching two people grow up.

Dates and times are Sept. 8, 9, 15 and 16 at 8:15 p.m. and September 9 and 16 at 2:15 p.m. Tickets are available online:
www.caledontownhallplayers.com.