

Caledon Townhall Players: Over the River and Through the Woods

By Constance Scrafield

The gates have opened and the community theatres in our area are too opening again.

First up is the Caledon Townhall Players (CTHP), now coming into its 58th season, with their opening production, *Over the River and Through the Woods*, by Joe DiPietro, on November 5.

A veteran member of CTHP of over 30 years, director Kim Blacklock said she is pleased with how the rehearsals are going and thrilled to be welcoming audiences back into the theatre, albeit with all the COVID protocols. Blacklock directed the show for the first time in 2002.

Producer Heidi Kachel had noted that there was such a good reaction to the show the first time around that it was decided to revive it in 2019, for production in May 2020.

"But we were all shut down before then," says Ms. Blacklock. "I had just started rehearsals [early 2020], when we were shut down. Then we got notice that we might be able to stage it in November this year. Four of the six actors [who were going to perform in it last year] came back. We cast the other two roles and we open on November 5."

Over the River and Through the Woods, is about a family in New Jersey: a young man, Nick who has Sunday dinner with his four grandparents every week, as their only relative living nearby. These Italian grandparents are portrayed with very humorous dialogue and the exchange amongst them and their grandson may well remind audience members of their own families.

At one point, Nick arrives with the news that he has been promoted to a bigger and better job in Seattle. In a rare mood of discord, they express reasons for him not to go, including an introduction to an attractive young nurse as a possible love interest to him keep close.

How that works out is for you to discover by coming to see the show.

"We have all seen different things in it for those of us who had grandparents," said Ms. Blacklock.

Originally written in 1994, Joe DiPietro did some re-writing on *Over the River and Through the Woods* and the final version was ready in 1998. The play ran in the off-Broadway John Houseman Theatre for 800 performances over two years.

The last show of the Caledon Townhall Players was their February production in 2020. They had had a good season thus far, with audience attendance at 70 per cent, Ms. Blacklock told *The Citizen*.

"Happily, between donors and all that, we've managed to keep the lights on," she said. "The Town helped with the hydro. Even though we shut down and everything was turned off, we still had to keep the building warm."

In December, 2020, they had an online auction, to which people donated items. They put it all online and got back just over \$2,000.

Even more to the point, as she added, "We wound up with people who didn't know about us but found out about us through the auction and now we have people wanting to buy tickets. So, that was good. Especially with COVID, people were home a lot more and online more. We got the word out through social media ? every little bit helps."

Two more plays are on track as the rest of the Theatre Company's season: Norm Foster's *Kiss the Sun, Kiss the Moon* and the *Farce of Nature* by the collective Jesse Jones, Nicolas Hope and Jamie Wooten.

Ms. Blacklock commented, ?It's still kind of surreal being back but it will be good to see our patrons again.?

For tickets for the show, which runs on select dates and times between November 5 and 13, call 905-927-5480 or simply email info@caledontownhallplayers.com.

Check out their website: www.caledontownhallplayers.com.