

David Nairn ? New season at Theatre Orangeville and what gives Headwaters top billing

By Constance Scrafield

This year's season at Theatre Orangeville, ?your theatre,? as Artistic Director David Nairn says, is filled with comedy ? for many reasons.

?This playbill this year is really about fun,? he explained. ?We need to have fun.?

?Comedy teaches us more about ourselves than tragedy does, to be honest,? he added.

The Ghost Island Light, on from Oct. 20 to Nov. 6, is a comedy-thriller about a married couple; he a lighthouse keeper and she a socialite. We find them in the lighthouse, isolated on a barren rock, far from anything like a city. The environs are peopled by spirits, ?ghoulish apparitions? and other hauntings. This thrilling and very humorous play by Peter Colley tells how just the two people, husband and wife, cope with their isolation and the apparent dangers of fright.

For the first time at Theatre Orangeville, for this year's Christmas show, comes Miracle on 34th Street. The adaptation of the film for stage was written by Caleb Marshall and Erin Keating, a well loved story of lost and found faith.

?The truth of faith,? Nairn said, talking about the premise of the play, ?that's profound ? there are truths about life in this play.?

Sweet and funny as it is, Miracle on 34th Street touches on the basics of human nature ? resisting the corruption of wealth, self sacrifice, restoring belief in goodness.

Miracle on 34th Street will be a treat for anyone who knows the story well, or who has never seen it or the movie. It opens Dec. 1 and plays right up to Dec. 23.

The New Year production begins Feb. 2 to 19 with the return of Walt Wingfield, stockbroker turned farmer, in Dan Needles' hilarious Wingfield's Progress, starring the great genius Rod Needles.

Nairn was clear about the ownership Dufferin County feels for the Wingfield series.

?Larkspur is Dufferin,? Nairn averred.

Needles and his family spent their childhood summers and more on their farm in this area.

Over the last many years, while the series was developed into a collection of seven related plays, the people of Dufferin County have filled the theatre to be enthralled by Mr. Beattie playing many of the very people this rural audience knows and identifies with.

Everyone else comes for the wildly funny writing and the wonder of his performance.

Additionally, as Nairn remarked, ?Wingfield addresses the bravery it takes to change.?

Taking a pause from the discussion of the shows, he began to say, ?We are looking for people to buy subscriptions to attend all five or any three of the season's productions ? 10 well spent hours a year not only to enjoy the shows, but as a commitment to the company and the art form.?

It is more than a couple of hours of entertainment that can make each occasion so delightful. The restaurants and shops that line the streets of Orangeville offer enticement too. There are 14 restaurants in and very near Orangeville that sponsor the theatre and many of these are independent establishments, unique to the area, serving fabulous food that is an experience as much as a meal. There are chain restaurants too, definitely serving the best of their brand.

?I would take all the restaurants on our sponsor list and match any of them to restaurants in Toronto,? Nairn declared. ?Patrons should mark their dates in stone on their calendars and be sure to reserve their tables at any of these restaurants because they get booked up ? people know what sort of quality they're going to be served.?

The Norm Foster play this season is The Gentleman Clothier. No doubting the humour of this production and the eccentricity of the plot, coming as it does from the pen of Foster. This production runs from March 23 to April 19.

Foolhardy for failing to appreciate his own world, Norman Davenport reckons he would be better off if he had been born 100 years ago. It often requires courage to deal with the challenges of one's own circumstances, but to wish that life away is not necessarily wisdom, as we may soon learn.

Written by Michele Riml, Sexy Laundry is making a come back to the main stage after its initial production 10 years ago, opening April 27 through to May 14.

?It's a reboot of a marriage ? to get away because they need that time (along with a copy of Sex For Dummies), to reinvigorate their relationship,? Nairn said of the show. ?It's hugely funny but it's also hugely true ? people watch and think ? that's us! That's me!?

?When he cuts loose ? throws off the uniform and remembers who he is . . . that's the power, the impact theatre has.?

?I believe that Dufferin County ? Headwaters ? is the most artistic community, more than anywhere else in this country,? he commented. ?And why? Because we chose to live here. The community excites us with the Alton Mill, the Dufferin County

Museum and Archives.

Within half an hour of this spot, there are six excellent amateur theatre companies, the studio tours, the Orangeville Art Group, Click Connect ? this to me is why Theatre Orangeville is still here ? Citrus Dance ? those kids come to the Young Company and the after school programs we have.?

How has this county attracted all this creativity? It's magic! Like Theatre Orangeville ? it's a bumblebee ? it shouldn't fly but it does.?

I would put any of our shows up against anybody's,? Nairn declared. ?We don't do Broadway, Shaw or Shakespeare, but those actors come here to perform! That's why I think the experience is tremendous. And it's in this community.?

Speaking about the arts generally, ?What keeps this community healthy and moving forward is the creativity here and those (young people) keep coming back to be part of it.?

Romance and beauty and truth will always win the day,? he added. ?Whether it be drama, comedy or a musical, we can see ourselves on the stage.?

For more information about the upcoming shows and subscriptions, the theatre website is theatreorangeville.ca

Call them at 519-942-3423. Drop into the Information Centre on Buena Vista Drive at Highway 10.