

Fringe North (519) set for repeat performance in Orangeville

Written By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD

"This is the second year for Fringe," said Lisa Lahue, Technical Director for Theatre Orangeville, in a telephone interview. "We have expanded; we hope to make Fringe bigger in years to come. This year, there are two adult shows and one kids show. The two Best of Fringe are playing three times each, over Friday, July 19 and Saturday, July 20 and the kids have two shows, both on Sunday, July 21."

Ms. Lahue is the Festival Coordinator this year, based on her experience on event managing over time.

"One of the venues is the Curling Club," she went on to say, "and the other is Revival, the new lounge downstairs at the BVR."

There are two shows, each playing three times over the two days.

Commandment is Thomas' story, beginning simply enough in a public restroom, becomes complicated when God speaks to him from the cubicle next to him to tell Thomas that God has chosen him to deliver a new commandment to humanity. That could be a real honour, except that Thomas is an atheist. How he struggles with his part as a "reluctant prophet" will be the tragic, gruesome, funny story, "a solo dramatic comedy." Written, created and played by Phil Rickaby.

An Atlas, A Necktie and Other Concerns begins with four ladies locked in a strange escape room. For anyone who doesn't know, this is an urban entertainment where a small group of people allow themselves to be locked in and stuck until they have solved a number of riddles, which solutions open the door.

In this case, four "30- something ladies" have delivered themselves into this situation but, perhaps, the close quarters and lack of distraction bring out the differences between them.

"The dynamic between the four women and the story is that in solving the riddles, you get into what their relationship is and how they end up escaping the escape room."

With a complement of four actors, each show runs about 60 minutes.

Here is how the timing works: on Friday, July 19, both will run once at the Curling Club, 76 5th Avenue. Commandment begins at 7:30 p.m. and Atlas is on at 9:00. This venue is licensed and can welcome everyone 14 years and up.

Presenting the Friday performances is a way of promoting the Curling Club and promote bringing the younger audience to the theatre.

Lisa Lahue explained how it will work when the two shows play at the Revival, 35 Armstrong, lower level, on Saturday, July 20, "Both shows will run twice at Revival: before dinner and later."

So, Commandment will be on at 5:30 and Atlas at 7:00 p.m. for their first showings.

"Then, the place should clear really naturally, people wanting to go up for dinner and the next audience will come down for the second performances. Pianist Nicolas Mustapha will be playing between the two sessions and the shift of the patrons upstairs and down. One pair of performances on before dinner and one later."

The second round timing: Commandment is on at 9:30 p.m. and Atlas at 11:00.

As Revival is a cocktail lounge, admission is limited to persons 19 years or over.

‘All are the same ticket price, which is very reasonable.’ Ms. Lahue outlined what happens with those funds, ‘The proceeds go back to the artists,’ she said. ‘The Fringe pays the proceeds back to the artists and we do very much the same. We cover our costs and the rest goes back to the artists.’

She went on to say, ‘All the venues have a capacity of 80 seats. Last year’s capacity was 60; so, we have enlarged on that. The small venues have worked partly because we want to bring theatre outside the Opera House, to change things up a bit. We hope that it will increase interest in Theatre Orangeville. We’re serving part of the town that wants to see theatre and hasn’t come to a production at the Opera House yet. It is part of the structure of Toronto, is Fringe and Fringe everywhere.’

‘Revival opened in June, 2019,’ she added. ‘Both venues are equally excited to host Fringe. It diversifies what they have to offer. Given the success, we may bring other events there too, although not as a super regular thing.’

This year, there is Kids Fringe, being performed, as she explained to the Citizen as ‘45 minutes to an hour, depending, it’s interactive with Dan Boyer, calling his shows, Stories by Dan. His first story is called Dungee Dragon and the Just okay Juggler.’

‘Dan takes us on a adventure through a jungle as the king tries to slay the dragon and the man who does it is the juggler. The dragon is a puppet.’

‘We ended up seeing only this one, as we identified this one as what worked because of other considerations with the other shows? stilts; needing too much space.’

‘The dragon story one is going to show on the Sunday morning at 11:00. Stories by Dan is going to bring another show: Incky the Octopus Takes Over the World in the afternoon at 2:00.’

‘Both are on at Jungle Oasis, [695 Riddell Road, unit #2]. Tickets for the kids shows are \$5, young or old, with seating of about 80. They are very interactive.’

Bringing Fringe to Orangeville is no small matter. Firstly, the list of producers with suitable shows are contacted to see if they would be prepared to bring their show to Orangeville.

Then begins the very intense process of seeing all the shows: ‘We were five jurors that went to Toronto and we saw 38 performances in four day days. We were all running over the city. We went to different shows, some as individual and some of it overlapped.’

‘We were commuting, going all different times of day: mid -afternoon and went to late shows. It was 11:30 at night when we finished.’

‘For the most part, the shows are within 60 minutes, with a few that ran as long as 80 minutes.’

She told us, ‘These two are both 60-minute shows. There is no element of improv. There were in ones we saw but not in these. They were ones on the short list and we feel, the strongest productions we saw are the ones we chose.’

When they sat down to discuss which to choose, ‘We all trust each other’s opinion so strongly, it is something that we can rely on.’

Ms. Lahue saw 11 shows. ‘I was very tired after the weekend,’ she admitted. ‘Some you know instantly won’t work; you see another and you think they may not fit our venues or subject matter. You could see something to bring up later in the season. Then, something you think, this could be perfect; some present themselves as perfect.’

For the future, ?We hope to expand ? there's also some incredible movement pieces that you see; there's musicals. They both have comedic moments but they both touch on some serious matters as well.?

This is the short story end of play writing.

The inspiration for Fringe to come to Orangeville was the result of, ?during the first year Jane Spence was working under David's [Nairn] mentorship, they thought why don't we bring Fringe to Orangeville? Fringe in Toronto is huge and she and David saw it as a great opportunity to bring this theatre to Orangeville.?

Tickets may purchased at the Box Office, 87 Broadway or the Information Centre on Buena Vista at Hwy 10, by telephone at 519-941-3423 or online www.theatreorangeville.ca