

Jake's Women ends Caledon Town Hall Players' 50th Season

By Constance Scrafield

Following on with the last of three productions for this year's 50th Season, the Caledon Town Hall Players (CTHP) are performing Jake's Women by Neil Simon.

Their first production, in the fall was The Odd Couple, female version and at the end of February they performed On Golden Pond. Both earlier plays are universal favourites and Jake's Women is another well-loved comedy-drama, a piece the group has staged before over the half-century of performances.

This play features Jake, a writer, who lives, to a large extent, in his own imagination, talking to the women who were or are a part of his life. They appear to him, as imaginings, in his office at home to converse, analyse and advise him in his minute-to-minute existence. For each of his moods and needs, he conjures another apparition or one comes to him of its own will.

All seven of the ladies featured in this dance appear as phantoms while only two of them are not part of his actual life: his first wife, Julie, who died and his daughter, Molly, as she was at 12 years old, although she is still very much alive and part of his conscious world.

Otherwise, there is his second wife, Maggie, who is fatigued with his always lounging around at home, presumably to work but, in fact, not producing much, while she supports a busy career. She has started to talk about breaking up their marriage.

Additionally, there are his now 21-year-old daughter, Molly, joining him both really and otherly, as it were; his crazy sister, Karen; his girlfriend Sheila; and, finally, his psychiatrist, Edith.

Holding the stage for the whole play as Jake is Doug Maund, whose role and dialogue is the mainstay of the show. It's a huge part, with steady flow of conversations and monologues. His wife in the play, Maggie, is also Maund's real life wife Laura.

It is an interesting piece. The ebb and flow of really-there and really-not characters interacting with Jake create no confusion, as Simon's skillful writing keeps everything straight. There is also the element of flashbacks during the encounters with the assorted ladies.

At all times of course, Jake is looking for solace and affirmation, the happy ending, an explanation for it all. Does he find any of it? You will have to see the play to find out and, for sure, have a good time waiting to discover the resolutions for which Jake is hoping. Working as producer for this presentation is Heidi Cachel, who is also playing the sister, Karen.

When asked why, of all the shows CTHP has produced, this was one of the plays chosen, along with The Odd Couple and On Golden Pond, Cachel told us, 'It's a hoot - a comedy-drama that is both hilarious and touching. There are good characters in it and, of course, we have more women than men in our casting, so this works well for us.'

Of the constant coming and going of real and imagined conversations between Jake and his women, if the process is a bit tricky, Cachel assured us, 'It's pretty clear. He says things like, 'I didn't send for you.' He's trying to muster up his imagination so he can write. Doug, as Jake, is on the stage for the entire play. Jake is a fabulous character and Doug handles it so well.'

'We are thrilled to be doing this play,' she added. 'It's a lot of fun.'

Jake's Women is playing at the Caledon Town Hall in Caledon village at Highway 10 and Charleston Sideroad May 2, with two performances May 3, a matinee and evening show, as well as May 9 and 10.

The roast beef dinner package at nearby Knox United Church is scheduled for this Saturday evening's performance. Tickets and information are available at 519-927-5460 and now online at www.caledontownhallplayers.com