

Local playwrights have audiences howling at CTHP

By Constance Scrafield

Picture this: Dr. Enbridge, well-known psychologist, due to arrive at any moment to her office, is late. Her patients, however, are showing up on time, one after the other, only to find they only have each other to speak to.

The upcoming production of Caledon Townhall Players (CTHP) is a comedy, so the collection of folk starting to crowd the waiting room ? and, no doubt, creating several big problems for the receptionist ? are pretty strange. Or, in the words of producer Marg Argall, ?The waiting room fills in with nuts.?

Literally, it seems at one point, when ? allergy alert ? walnuts hit the deck.

Short on plot, but big on laughs, Self Help is all about the exchanges between the tardy Dr. Enbridge's clients as they await her. The confrontations, excuses and revelations all combine to keep the audience laughing while they try to guess what is coming next.

Of the cast of seven, all but one have been in productions at CTHP in the past. It is the camaraderie and the fun of doing the shows that keep them returning. This affection within the group of working together and keeping the theatre alive account, in large part, for its longevity of more than 50 years now and the consistent return of a loyal audience base.

Heidi Kachel, one of the actors in Self-Help, and artistic director for the theatre group, referred to her long-term participation as feeling ?at home.?

As is the case for most community theatres, some of the actors and in this case, the directors, come from other community theatres. Co-directors, Gord Gardiner and T. Gregory Argall, are up from Peel Players in Brampton. The actors may have their own takes on the humour when one director comes to the weekend rehearsals while the other takes on the play during the week. That could have been hilarious in itself.

The penchant of the artistic directorship and the executive of the CTHP group have always been for comedy. One member once claimed that she prefers comedies.

?I just like a good laugh,? she declared, ?and I think most people do too.?

Self Help by Dummiez was written by T. Gregory Argall and Todd McGinnis. It has run many times in Ontario community theatres and the U.S. The reviews have raved about the laugh-out-loud virtues of the piece wherever it has been produced.

An amateur playwright, Argall enjoys penning comedies for the most part. His play A Year in the Life of Eddy Jasper won him the Canadian Playwright of the Year Award in 2002.

McGinnis owns a company through which theatres can take options to produce his works, Playing After Dark. He also performs the role of one of the Kings at the Medieval Times show and restaurant in Toronto.

Featured in this presentation are familiar faces: Heidi Kachel, Brian Molleux, Denise Erskine and David Draper; joining the fray from Brampton are Melinda Briel and Joe Rose; first timer ? and welcome ? is Teresa Duncan.

The show opens tonight (Thursday) and continues with evening performances April 24 and 25 and May 1, 2, 8 and 9.

Evening performances are April 23, 24, 25 and May 1, 2, 8 and 9. There will be a dinner theatre option May 2, and a matinee the same day.

The roast beef dinner May 2, to combine with the show, makes for a great evening out all round. The dinner is put on by Knox United Church, a short walk away in Caledon Village. This time, the meal will be served at 6:30 p.m. Book tickets early for this, as it is usually sold out.

Be sure to join them in this fun-filled spoof about analysing this and that. Tickets, dates and times are all available through the CTHP website www.caledontownhallplayers.com or by telephone at 519-927-5460.