

Royal Canadian Air Force 'takes to the airwaves' at live radio show this weekend

Show marks RCAF's centennial **By BROCK WEIR**

Since it hit the first airwave, the humble radio has been one of the most reliable and efficient ways to spread the news. But, in its heyday, much like today's podcasts, they also served to spark the imagination as comedies, dramas, crime thrillers and mysteries came out of the speakers, holding audiences enthralled.

This weekend, at Aurora Town Square, you're invited to come be enthralled once again as Pathway to the Stars: A Live Radio Experience takes over the Performance Hall on November 9 and 10, in a broadcast celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Pathway to the Stars, which is inspired by the bestselling book Pathways to the Stars: 100 Years of the Royal Canadian Air Force by Michael Hood and Tom Jenkins, is the brainchild of director Sara Moyle and Jeremy Diamond of the Royal Canadian Air Force Foundation.

'Our podcasts are based on the best-selling book Pathway to the Stars, which showcases 100 years of history of heroes in the Air Force,' explains Moyle. 'Myself, Jason and the team of actors wrote and produced podcasts for the Royal Canadian Air Force Foundation to dramatize and tell those stories. It's not that you're reading about someone; instead, their story is animated in your ear. It's live with sound. You're in the moment, you're experiencing it, you're feeling it. It brings a different sensitivity to the listener as well and a different experience. As we did that, we thought it would be wonderful to show what's going on behind the scenes.'

Moyle is a long-time fan of what has become known as Old Time Radio, regularly streamed episodes of radio shows from the 1930s, 40s and 50s 'both comedies and dramas' that have entertained generations.

These shows, such as The Jack Benny Show, a Moyle favourite, were broadcast live and audio recorded before a live studio audience. It wasn't just actors standing in front of a microphone reading from a script, however. It was a full-blown stage production, including men and women in the background using a variety of items to produce accurate, sound-alike effects in real-time.

This is exactly the spirit Moyle, Diamond and their team hope to recreate on stage this week, showcasing the real-life stories of Canadian heroes 'men and women alike.'

'Today, a family doesn't gather, but they watch a video on YouTube now; pre-that, they gathered in front of a television; pre-that, they gathered in front of the radio and stared at a little yellow light and listened to the audio dramas at the same night every week. What we're doing showing what's happening behind that glowing light.'

'We will tell three stories of heroes from the Royal Canadian Air Force and intermittent in that is a time period song, some ads as well because all that happened in the taping day. Almost all of our sound effects are being done on what is called a Live Foley Stage, where it is the most analogue sound possible.'

If, for example, you hear the sound of a horse's hooves along the ground, look out for the clip-clop of two coconut shells being thumped along a countertop.

As Diamond and the Foundation began their work collecting stories, he says they had more than 100 stories to choose from, one representing each year the Air Force has served Canadians.

They couldn't foresee at the time such stories becoming the basis of a podcast let alone a recreation of the 'Old Time Radio' experience, but they knew what they had captured adventure, exploration, and discovery.

?It all lent itself to different formats, and [we thought] what would lend itself to an immersive audio experience, as opposed to just two historians talking about the machine, the event or the person. What would lend itself to you being immersed as a listener in 20 minutes to get into that story a little bit and feel what it was like to jump out of a plane, what it would have been like to rescue someone,? says Diamond.

?Our mandate at the Foundation is Past, Present and Future. We tell the stories and recognize the current role of the Air Force. What we really want to do is inspire the next generation, that thru-line from the 20s to the 60s, to the 90s, to 2050. We're not talking in this iteration around Billy Bishop? but I think there is a thru-line from Billy Bishop to a 20-year-old who is going to Mars in the next 20 years.?

At the end of the day, Moyle says it's all about the human experience and ?these are essentially human stories.?

?We can look at a hero and know a cartoon understanding of what being a hero means, but when we take a moment to get into their skin, into their emotions, and into their urgency, we can discover a hero in a very different way,? she says. ?That is why this is a nice way to recognize Remembrance Day, in a different way. Yes, we have a moment of silence, but this is a moment of your ears opening to really hear and digest what these people went through. The three stories we're telling are stories that most people have never heard before and will be very surprised to hear ? and they're told very candidly, as well.

?I would love for audiences just to be surprised by what they're going to hear. We'll hear stories of women trailblazers, stories of extreme search and rescue, and we will hear stories of incredible bravery in the face of discrimination as well, too. We are going to take the listeners from 1929, pretty much right to the present in our journey.?

To listen for yourself, come out to Pathway to the Stars: A Live Radio Experience, with performances taking place November 9 and November 10, at 2 p.m. The show will be hosted by award-winning musician Jason Wilson.

Tickets are \$35 and available from the Aurora Town Square Box Office. 100 per cent of all proceeds, less costs, will go directly back to the Royal Canadian Air Force Foundation.

For more, visit boxoffice.auroratownsquare.ca/event/109:58.