

## Sugar Road a brilliant beginning to TO's new season

By Constance Scrafield

What a treat to be the first audience having the chance to see Sugar Road!

It is one of the many perks from access to Theatre Orangeville. Most years, a world premiere comes to the main stage, produced, staged and acted for the first professional production by the abundant talent that makes this theatre happen.

Having opened Oct. 19, the world premiere of Sugar Road by Kirsten Da Silva runs until Nov. 5.

Da Silva takes a story from an old Country song, That Ol' Wind, that she often played years ago and the story within which made her want to know more. Eventually, she turned it into this play to provide herself ? and her audiences ? with her version of the whole tale.

However tender, tortured and longing the love story is, Da Silva could not resist being funny with it too ? and weren't we glad?

Here, in brief, is an outline of the song's protracted tale.

Hannah Taylor is the love child of a one-night stand between her mother and a country singer star, who wrote a letter, but never returns. One night 12 years ago, Hannah herself was swept up in an night of passion with another country singer ? Jesse Emberley ? who is now returning to Sugar Road to perform; while Hannah's mother pined and eventually died, Hannah is cared for by the handyman, Ray, whom her mother hired off the tour bus many years ago; Caroline Dawn, who shares her brother's clothes and closet for convenience and economy and who looks on Hannah as her best friend, interrupts, misinterprets and lusts, as only she can, for Jesse Emberley, ? simply hilarious with it all.

So welcome, Sarah Quick, whose comic talent as Caroline had the opening night audience hooting with laughter. In her offstage life, Quick is Artistic Director of Globus Theatre at the LAB in Bobcaygeon.

Too tall and cool for words, welcome as well, to Jake Simons as Jesse Emberley. He deals with the confusion, maybe guilt, ready to confess all with sincerity, making it real. It has been five years since Simons' last stage performance. He and his wife own an acting school in Guelph which focusses largely on young actors around the ages of seven to 17 and on film making.

Said he about his return to the stage with this production, later at the opening night reception, ?With film, if you get it wrong, you can scrap it and do another take but, with live theatre, there is only that one chance ? you have to be right ? and that's a little terrifying and very thrilling.?

It's delightful to see Mairi Babb back, playing the role of Hannah. She carries Hannah's history and disillusionment to a fine point. There's no relaxing, no giving in to emotions that might lead to deadly heartache for Hannah. Twelve years ago ? as we see in the flashbacks ? she threw herself into the moment, only to awaken with fear and regret, but does Jesse's return change any of that?

It is great to have David Rosser, as Ray, back, as he has been in previously launched world premieres here and has, additionally, been doing his fair share of television and film work.

He plants Ray's feet firmly in the middle of the story, protective of Hannah as though he is all there is between her and a final heart-break. It will not happen with him to stand between her and an ill fate. The questions presented to him, however, as he discovers a lover's secrets, are the pivots of the plot.

Throughout the play, Hannah, Ray and Jesse play it more or less straight, albeit with good funny lines, but there are no such inhibitions with Caroline. At her most serious, she is Monty Python funny. In the second act, she does battle with a sleeping bag ? while raving out Da Silva's clever dialogue ? that is definitely one of the best comic moments in Theatre Orangeville's history.

Fantastic!

Thank you again, David Nairn, director of this delicious couple of hours at the theatre, for bringing together all the talents of writer, actors, fabulous set designer and builder, Beckie Morris, lights, sound ? all of it ?such a great first show for the season.

Sugar Road is on until Nov. 5. Do yourself, family, friends a favour ? everybody, come and see it.

For information and tickets, buy them at the Box Office at 87 Broadway or the Information Centre on Buena Vista at Highway 10; by telephone at 519-942-3423 or online at [www.theatreorangeville.ca](http://www.theatreorangeville.ca)

Don't forget, you can still buy your subscription for the whole season, for three or all five plays.

Also, tickets are available for Theatre Orangeville's largest fundraiser of the year, the Victorian Christmas Gala, Nov. 18. It will be the best first Christmas party of the year.