

Theatre Orangeville to stage 'Cinderella - If the Shoe Fits' through the holidays

By Constance Scrafield

For the first time ever, Theatre Orangeville (TOV) is filling the theatre with the fun of pantomime in a new show, 'Cinderella - If the Shoe Fits.'

Written collaboratively by Debbie Collins and David Nairn, this 'modern take' on the Cinderella fable brings all the spoof, the outrageous characters, the political teasing and, most of all, for audience itself, the interactive whirl and high comedy of traditional Panto.

'Cinderella - If the Shoe Fits' opens November 30 and runs until December 23, as the theatre's latest production for its 30th season.

The Citizen sat down with the cast to talk about the show and Panto. They were emphatic about one aspect of the art form - that the audience is all involved: where there are villains, the audience must boo, and when Cinderella comes on, they are all cheers.

As writers of the show, Debbie Collins, whose experience in Panto is extensive and TOV artistic director David Nairn, whose talent for massaging funny plays to even funnier is legendary within the trade, took delight in writing this locally specific story.

Debbie Collins had been talking about it to David Nairn for a while.

'I had been to see a few Pantos,' he commented. 'When I decided I wanted to do a Panto, she was my first call.'

To begin development, Ms. Collins presented a few scripts, but as they read them over, Mr. Nairn realized, 'We had to start from the ground up.'

'Writing this has been a joy and a thrill since the beginning,' said Ms. Collins.

In this story, Cinderella is an organic farmer living in Greensville. All the local references are there, for it is also Panto's job to make fun of local politicians and others.

As to the cast themselves, what a treat we are in for, with five of the six cast members coming to Orangeville for the first time. Each of them has come from Sheridan or Randolph College, and each comes with the triple threat of dance, voice and acting to perform.

Collins, who has graced the TOV main stage many times, is the one familiar face in her role as the evil stepmother.

Let us introduce Jillian Cooper, who plays the part of Cinderella.

Billy Lake is one of the evil stepsisters, Stella, while William Lincoln plays Blanch, the other evil stepsister. Good versus evil is the main theme of every Panto. The audience is positively another character in the show, singing along with the cast, assisting with the plot, and playing to ad-libs with the actors that make every show different from the others.

How can we stop the evil stepmother, who owns a large swath of land in Greensville, from selling it to the greedy developer, when the evil stepsisters are so much in favour of getting all that money? How can we help Cinderella keep her organic farm from going under, and what Dark Secret does the handsome William harbour?

Connor Meek plays the role of William, whom audiences must encourage to be the hero.

William is not the simple busker he wishes he were, playing and singing in the street one day when Cinderella meets him.

Yet, who is the mysterious Buttons, bringing magic to the tale? Ben Skipper plays Buttons. Buttons has a few roles to perform, one of which is to stir the audience to join in their own part.

This is a modern version of the ancient tale; this is a Panto written by two local comic writers about their home territory. Never before, for all its trailblazing, has a story about our own locale been created and performed at Theatre Orangeville.

Evil is their plot, but silly is the nature of the 'Silly Step Sisters,' as the cast made clear.

TOV staff are so enthused about putting on the show and their individual roles in it, that questions from the Citizen were answered before there was a chance to ask them, and the interview bubbled like any good champagne.

'The Sisters just want husbands!' we were told. 'And they hate Cinderella with a passion.'

Said another, 'There's something for everyone with all the twists and turns. Especially this time of year, when there's so much negativity, it's in the theatre are cheer and sunshine and fun. Encouraging people to come and be part of the family.'

'They'll experience the joy and sheer delight of the show!'

Into this moment came the praise for the creative team, with Beckie Morris' design for the set described as 'Fabulous!'

Wendi Speck is making the costumes. After her amazing 'Turkey' of last year, will come the ballgowns and wigs for this show. Chris Malkowski is back as the lighting designer.

From Mr. Nairn, 'There is nowhere else in the country that is as arts-centred as this community. It is rural but very open.'

It is always great to see Nicolas Mustapha back as music director and accompanist. Candace Jennings is on deck as the Choreographer.

Mr. Mustapha said, 'Songs everyone knows are sung in different ways and styles during this show, and people can sing along. There's a stretch of music that all audiences know.'

Mr. Nairn reminded us that children will be coming with their schools for free this year to see the show as the result of donations that fund this bill, another nod to Theatre Orangeville's 30th year.

'So, it doesn't cost the school anything,' he said. 'We're even able to give them \$100 toward bussing. Thousands of kids are coming.'

It is agreed amongst them that we will want to see the show more than once, considering how the interaction with the audience may greatly differ from show to show. Some fun!

Mr. Nairn told us, 'It's been a very joyful process putting this together.'

'Cinderella - If the Shoe Fits' opens November 30 and runs until December 23. For tickets, go to www.theatreorangeville.ca or call the Box Office at 519-942-3423 or drop in at 87 Broadway.