

Theatre Orangeville to stage new comedy, 'The Beaver Club'

By Constance Scrafield

'We're four women of a 'certain age,' driving together in one car ' from Toronto to Dildo, Newfoundland ' what could possibly go wrong?'

Those were the words of Mary Pitt as she opened the door to Theatre Orangeville's upcoming comedy, *The Beaver Club* by Barb Scheffler, and our interview with Pitt, Blythe Wilson, Melanie Janzen, Debbie Collins, plus Sheila McCarthy, the play's director.

The Beaver Club is on at Theatre Orangeville from February 6 to 23.

They were in high spirits, laughing and swapping ideas in response to our questions while we joined the ride. A virtual gathering, they were all in the Green Room next to the Nancy and Doc Gillies Rehearsal Hall.

The Beaver Club's plot begins as a combination of circumstances, for each of the ladies' lives has seen real change and left every one of them at loose ends.

As a result, Eunice, Radiance, Yvette and Karen decide to take a trip together ' just like that! They have very little in common to help them bond; it could be quite a trip.

'This trip idea is incredibly impulsive,' added Melanie Janzen as Radiance. 'They don't know what's going to happen.'

Within the play, they agreed: it is finally time for women of an age, backed by substance and history, 'you will recognize them,' said Debbie Collins as Eunice, 'while they make this wonderful journey.'

The men in their lives are discussed but never seen, adding to the dynamics. All four have different secrets but, as they confirmed, 'What happens in the *Beaver Club* stays in the *Beaver Club*.'

This is a universally funny comedy, they assured, where everyone can relate.

Blythe Wilson, playing Karen, said she read it to her husband who loved it for how it encompasses everything about relationships. Come to a play with all women? For sure!

There are others: Norm Foster's *The Ladies Foursome* and *Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling, to name a couple but as a growing trend, it might be seen as growth in an ancient art.

After years of cleaning the house or being involved in public service ' at a certain point, you realize, 'I just don't care anymore...' and become determined to have an adventure.

Rehearsing *The Beaver Club* has been provoking a lot of conversations.

'I feel as though my brain is on fire,' Collins said. 'We keep going and supporting each other.'

The actors are on stage all the time as their journey takes them to many different, amazing locations and celebrates Canada as an ongoing theme. One of the ladies suggested it is a great idea for a tour.

Throughout this impulsive decision to travel, it becomes a time to be free, a catalyst for self-discovery about each other and themselves. Much of the humour in the show arises from how diverse these characters are from each other, and how the ebb and

flow of honest perspectives will make us laugh. It goes too, as they explained, to the appeal of everyone to come and see the show.

A swap of ideas, a time for the gentlemen in the audience to have a peek into revealing conversations between women they might never otherwise hear; and for younger audiences to enjoy the vision from there, as one might say.

Yet, not all the comedy is about age and beauty. None of them are acting as though they are old. More than that, the status as to neither wealth nor power comes into play, for the trip is the thing and the fun is the motive. There is a mirror ? it portrays to share as art should do.

It's a good time out, they promised, and might inspire others to say, ?let's start!? If not the lengthy trip, at least a point of sharing experiences that make a difference.

You will be laughing so hard ? these are people you know.

As a performer and playwright, Scheffler became enthusiastic about script writing and had some success with mystery plays she wrote for a mystery dinner theatre. Her children's play *Pirates Don't Babysit!* won the Best of Fringekids Award at the Toronto Fringe.

The Beaver Club is Scheffler's first full-length play, which premiered at the Port Stanley Festival Theatre in 2023, selling a sold-out run to rapturous reviews.

As Mary Pitt, in the role of the French-Canadian Yvette, began, so she summed up, ?I couldn't think of a better cast ? we're all really happy to be in Orangeville.?

Be sure to catch this hilarious play. The Beaver Club opens February 6 and runs to February 23. For more details and tickets, go to www.theatreorangeville.ca or call the Box Office at 519-942-3423.

Pop in too, if you like, at 87 Broadway, the Orangeville Town Hall Opera House, for tickets.

As well, this is the last week to buy the new season subscriptions at a lower price.