

Theatre Orangeville's Summer Arts Fest marks five fabulous years of fun

Festival returns to Alton in coming month

By Constance Scrafield

This year, Theatre Orangeville's Summer Arts Fest (SAF) is running from Friday, August 16 to Sunday, August 18 on the beautiful property of Mount Alverno Luxury Resort.

The resort is located at 20706 Heart Lake Road, about six kilometres east of Orangeville, just off Highway 9.

For the fifth year, the Fringe Binge Team, as they like to call themselves, from Theatre Orangeville drove to Toronto to watch 50 plays over five days. These were selected among a total of 75 shows invited to participate in the Toronto Fringe. Of the 75 invitees, all were asked if they would take their shows to Orangeville and 50 said yes.

Individually, the Fringe Binge Team were seeing eight to 10 shows per day to choose just two North (519) Toronto Fringe shows to bring to the SAF.

Of the 36-year life of the Toronto Fringe, Theatre Orangeville is the only professional theatre to partner with them, to bring Toronto Fringe shows out of Toronto and for us, to Orangeville.

The Citizen was in a Zoom meeting with Theatre Orangeville's Artistic Director David Nairn and Technical Director Lisa Lahue, the 'guiding light,' as Mr. Nairn praises her, driving and directing this tremendous annual celebration of all things theatre and music.

He went on to lay down the foundation and purpose of the SAF to 'afford a fun time in the summer with programming we cannot necessarily produce on the Main Stage and to bring art outside in a beautiful setting.'

This festival developed over the early years when Fringe North (519) was two Toronto Fringe shows brought and performed in different venues around Orangeville, not in the theatre itself, getting them out of the theatre, and doing something different.

With the other festivals at similar times and partnering with Mount Alverno, it made sense to combine all into one.

'The summer of 2021 brought one man shows with Cassel Miles doing Joshua and Mark Crawford in Chase the Ace,' Nairn said. 'These were performed under a large tent - everyone wearing masks, keeping distance, at Mount Alverno for the first time.'

This year's festival is jam-packed with a terrific Kids Fest, magic, amazement and many laughs.

Drag queens Fay and Fluffy will read children wonderful stories in their own special way and there is so much more for youngsters to hear, see and do, all in or by the small Barn on the property.

This year, tickets for the entire kids fest part of the SAF are \$5.

Duffle Bag Theatre will perform Peter Pan. Candice Jeromkin, TOV Scenic Artist, will present Face Painting with the Painted Ladies.

Performers abound at the Patio Music, an hour and a half before the evening shows. Falcon Jane (Sara May and Andrew McArthur) perform on Friday. Saturday sees Cherry Chapstick featuring Emily Gilbert and Jessie Steinberg, getting you relaxed for the riotous entertainment to come.

Both the North (519) Fringe Best of Toronto Fringe picks are to be performed on Friday evening.

Stiff and Sons is a dark comedy about ?your average family running a funeral home...?

Additionally, and quite thrillingly, this play is directed by Daniel Reale, a Theatre Orangeville alumni of many years. The performance begins at 7 p.m.

Following a 30-minute break between shows, at 8:30 p.m. the second North Fringe (519) Best of Toronto Fringe show is ?Bol, Brown Boy, Bol? starring and created by Nawaaz Makhani.

Presented as ?a cheeky, heartfelt solo show,? it invites us to ?come for the unique blend of storytelling and classical tabla performance,? the tale is of a lost millennial GTA ?brown boy? who talks to us about the impact of Canadian racism on his identity. Still, he uses humour to deal with it. Stay for the ?post-show community dialogue.?

Nairn calls the two shows ?brilliant and 180 degrees from each other.?

Each of them runs 60 minutes, a Toronto Fringe protocol.

Last year introduced Drag Music Bingo to an exuberant response. This is for an adult, 19-plus audience, with the Drag element being produced by Troy Boy Entertainment's world-class Drag Queens. The reaction last year to the Drag Music Bingo was overwhelmingly enthusiastic, with host and producer Fluffy Soufl ; we were told tickets sold out fast. Book your tickets soon. They are \$40.

The SAF is a weekend of art from mainly local artists and performers, providing a broad palate, and a wide spectrum of art and entertainment, all set in the delightful setting that is the Mount Alverno property.

Sunday, August 18 will offer brunch at Mount Alverno with Stan Chang at the piano from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Call Mount Alverno for reservations: 365-200-2030.

David Nairn had one more thing to say: ?Lisa Lahue has been the guiding light. She has worked with Toronto Fringe and Mount Alverno. She has had the vision to expand the festival.?

He made the point, too, about ticket sales, that they are not a fundraiser for Theatre Orangeville but help to pay all the actors and musicians who participate in the festival, for all of whom their art form is their livelihood.

Be sure to join in this unique and wonderful Summer Arts Fest. Rain or shine, there is enough cover for everyone.

For details and to buy tickets, go to www.theatreorangeville.ca or call the folks at the Box Office at 519-942-3423. Pop in, if you like, to the Box Office in the Opera House, 87 Broadway.