

World premiere will open Theatre Orangeville season

By Constance Scrafield

Playwright Kristen Da Silva's leap of faith to give up a good job in the business world to follow her passion for play-writing has paid off.

'When you feel, 'this isn't how I want to live,' it's hard to continue,' she said, adding, 'My partner was on board.'

Da Silva's plays are receiving wide acclaim for their humour and solid story lines; Norm Foster himself has declared her the 'next Norm Foster!'

She has come to Theatre Orangeville with her play, Sugar Road, for its World Premiere, which opens next Thursday (Oct. 19).

It has a country music backdrop, this play about a night of romance and passion, followed by a 12-year absence and, then, a chance to rekindle the flames. With Jake Simmons playing the role of country singer Jesse Emberly, guitar in hand, dashing, tall and still handsome, coming back to Sugar Road for the Spurs and Hearts Music Festival, might set any girl a-flutter.

Hannah Taylor is the girl in the possible question and the kind of turmoil this reunion could cause will certainly bring in the laughs.

The background inspiration for the eventual writing of Sugar Road came from Da Silva's father, with whom she shared an enjoyment of country music 'when it wasn't popular,' she said.

'I liked the story-telling in the songs, and my father played and sang country music around the campfire,' she added. 'So it was part of my childhood.'

Coming to Theatre Orangeville for the first time is Simmons from Guelph, where he and his wife run their acting school, the Acting Centre. With Simmons' strong background in film and theatre, they are having good success in terms of the number of students and the positive results of the students' association with the Acting Centre.

'We have classes for all ages,' Simmons said.

Focussing on camera technique, musical theatre and actual script-writing, 'once the teen students have written their film scripts,'

Simmons continued, 'we film them, edit, add a score (music) and then put them on at the biggest theatre in town.'

'All our classes are full,' he was happy to add.

Audiences will be delighted to meet Sarah Quick, also at Theatre Orangeville for the first time, playing the role of Caroline.

Educated at the University of Wales, the London College of Music and Guildhall, Quick has travelled throughout the U.K., Ireland, Melbourne, Australia, and the U.S. with productions of other playwrights and her own plays over the last 20 years.

Artistic Director of the Globus Theatre in Bobcaygeon since 2006, primarily a summer theatre, Quick extends the season to include the Panto at Christmas. In fact, the Globus Theatre's youth program is centred on the Panto. 'I write in parts for all the kids that want to join in (the Panto),' she said.

And it's great to have Marni Babb back in the role of Hannah. Babb has been busy with theatres in Ontario. She was in Norm Foster's Ladies Foursome at Lighthouse Theatre in Port Dover, which did so well, it was extended for a week.

In the course of her busy career, Babb was part of the cast of Warhorse, travelling with that production here in Toronto, across North America and in Tokyo. This is her third production here.

Likewise, welcome back to David Rosser, playing the role of Ray Bishop. Rosser has recently returned from working on Saturday Night Fever. He has been very busy on stage, television and most recently, appeared in the feature film Miss Sloane.

He is always happy to be in Orangeville, appearing last in Ghost Island.

'David (Nairn) always works from the positive,' Rosser commented about Nairn's style of directing. 'He makes everything so easy.'

Quick observed that Da Silva is doing very well with her writing. She now has five plays which have been or are being in production, including Sugar Road, here this month for its World Premiere. Her play, Gibson and Sons, won the 2016 Stage West Pechet Family Comedy Award.

Talking about Sugar Road specifically, 'There are flashbacks to their first meeting (of Hannah and Jesse),' Nairn elucidated about the play. 'Ian Blackwood wrote the music for the show which has been incorporated on our local radio's playlist. So, people are hearing it beforehand; it's called Coming Home. This is not a musical ' it's a play with music.'

The thrill, responsibility and joy of performing and producing a World Premiere, as Nairn acknowledged, 'I'm really enjoying spending time with the characters. We have the opportunity to do a new work with the tweaking and minor re-writes.'

'To be entrusted with the play ' it's fun to be on the ground floor and Kirsten is open to that,' Rosser said. 'What we're doing is what the future of the play is.'

'This is the play that will go to other theatres,' Nairn confidently said. 'It has already been booked at another theatre.'

?It's a great honour to produce a World Premiere and audiences are going love this one,? he added.

Sugar Road opens next Thursday and runs until Nov. 5. Tickets, as usual, are at the Box Office on 87 Broadway (Town Hall) or at the Information Centre on Buena Vista Drive at Highway 10; or available by telephone 519-942-3423 or online at www.theatreorangeville.ca

Tickets for Theatre Orangeville's Victorian Gala ? its biggest fundraiser of the year ? are also on sale. The date for that event is Nov. 18.