

Century Church Theatre to present The Dixie Swim Club



By Constance Scrafield

Nick Forrow, Director of The Dixie Swim Club, is happy to announce, "Everything is going well." The play opens March 15 and runs until March 24, on the weekends.

Mr. Forrow went on to admitting, "Things got off to a bit of a rocky start. The furnace broke down and we froze to death."

The sort of trials any theatre company might suffer: "I tried something different this year," he told the Citizen. "We started with the blocking, everybody seen and heard. I scheduled two rehearsals in December. We had to block without one of the five ladies in the play, who was in Florida. She came back, only to learn that her mother, still in Florida, was ill and she had to return. So, we hunted around and replaced her, did the block again; lost a couple of rehearsals, due to weather - I am coming from Mississauga - and, then, took the weekend off for family day."

Quite a list but the magic of theatre works for all theatre companies and, now, "it's working out" he was confident to say. "The costumes presented a bit of a challenge. They range from the first scene and span 33 years [all in the mid to late 20th Century]. They have to look age appropriate, as the play moves along. All their action takes place on four of the same August weekend over those years."

Mr. Forrow said, "After all [those obstacles], it's coming together very well. There are a lot of scene changes since the hotel they stay in, changes over the years. An innovation I have made is, with the set changes, I choreographed the stage crew to change the sets with the lights up, rather than in semi darkness. I even had T-shirts done with Kitty Hawk Kleaners. We're maid for you," smiling at the joke.

"One thing about this play," he considered, "it is very much an ensemble piece. All the characters are on stage all the time. There is no star; they're all stars. They have equal responsibilities."

About the play, he explained, "These are five women that met in college and have stayed together through divorce, aging, career changes. It's all done with humour.

"When I first read the play, I thought, this is the Golden Girls meets Steel Magnolias."

The three authors of The Dixie Swim Club, Nicolas Hope, Jessie Jones and Jamie Wooten, are regular collaborators, having pooled their talents to also write Dearly Beloved, Christmas Belles, The Red Velvet Cake War and Always a Bridesmaid. Jamie Wooten worked as writer/producer for several seasons with Golden Girls.

?That brand of humour runs through this play,? Mr. Forrow commented.

He wanted to talk about the individual ladies, all of whom he finds admirable and funny.

?Sheree was the swim team captain and still sees herself in that role. She is highly organized. She takes care of the weekends, booking everything they're going to do, deciding the timing of swimming, meals, activities. She brings snacks: mung bean paste with goji berries and herring oil. She pops them into their mouths and they're disgusted..

Vernadette, a public school teacher with a bad marriage, with a teen age son always in trouble with the police; and a daughter who's forever running off with some cult ? always in trouble.?

Her life is grim but the others support her through it all.

?Lexie is glamorous,? Mr. Forrow continued. ?She tells them she has her plastic surgeon on speed dial. She loves to talk about her romantic adventures ? she's hilarious.

?Jeri Neal became a nun and she's a really fun ray of sunshine. She's lived a protected life but comes one weekend with a big surprise.?

Last but not least of the five, he told us.?Dinah is a lawyer, highly successful, with no time for men, marriage or children. She says, 'I'd rather have a Mercedes than have children.'?

What Mr. Forrow loves about this show, ?I love the camaraderie among the women. The play is written by two men and one woman authors. During the course of the play, they do have a big fight but, in the end, they come to their senses and realize they're risking a big friendship. This is early on in the play. In the second scene, there's a hurricane when they wonder - shall we stay? There is sea before and behind them because the place they're staying in is on a narrow strip of land going out into the water.?

He said, ?How they handle it all is very funny.?

The Dixie Swim Club runs on the weekends, from March 15 to 24, Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00pm and Sunday matinees at 2:30 pm, at the Century Church Theatre, 72 Trafalgar Road, Hillsburgh. For tickets and all the information, call 519-855-4586 or check out their website at www.centurychurchtheatre.com.