

What stirs the heart

By Constance Scrafield

Just wrote the feature with Theatre Orangeville about this new season of plays and there is a theme of family and, as we spoke about them, it seemed to me that there is a theme to stir the hearts and minds of the patrons as well.

The matter of different folk living together in harmony, but not avoiding comment, comes up more than once. There are plenty of ways for relationships and families to be built of different people, people noticeably different from each other.

This covers a lot of territory: different can be appearance, age ? levels of ability or education; cultural differences ? there's pot boiler: especially overseas where there are so many countries, with such diverse cultures, located immediately beside each other.

Who can tell, control, guess where the heart will lead?

Do you believe in love at first sight? Still something science hasn't quite nailed down, I am happy to report. It is the suddenness of instant attraction, the power of it, the indifference to the differences between the two ? fabulous, dangerous, exciting. The deep end.

One way or another, we are never alone for long, unless we make an unusual determination to remain alone, but this is extremely unhealthy on many levels, a real detriment to our health, cognitively, physically and passionately.

To be honest, supplementing or, indeed, attempting to replace real connection with online intercourse may very well lead to even worse health problems than a solitary existence. We don't know about that yet, although people commit suicide over their online communications.

It would be interesting to learn the statistics there: how often do people kill themselves over what is said to them ? however abusively ? in the physical world as opposed to those who end their lives as a result of virtual conversations with them or said about them?

We are herd animals, for the most part, and we are warm tactile beings who long for and need, if not the actual touch of others, at least their nearness. Watch how often people hug each other; strangers can even be very quick to hug and people one might not expect will give a hug. It's wonderful.

How we touch each other varies as much as anything else in the world. Probably our cultures dictate how we approach each other, meaning in a positive light, not with death or harm hiding behind our backs. Probably, our at-home culture influences us for life about our physicality later on. If parents hug and cuddle their children, not just when they are tiny, little, young, but also when they are teenagers, young adults, parents themselves, this probably matters on how those adult children are affectionate with others, including their own children.

The eyes tell a lot of intention or not about touching. Body language invites and warns off; it can hesitate, undecided, until the other decides for both.

If I recall correctly, there was a brief caveat against hugging and shaking hands in particular ? wasn't there a fashion of bumping elbows instead for a while? I see lots of people shaking hands but that short-term fashion crossed my mind recently in a situation and I looked to see if anyone else had thought of it, but they were all glad-handing, as the expression is, so, I guess it faded as it should have into the dank heap of paranoia that needs to be hosed down regularly.

The passion that binds us to each other disregards completely the circumstances: nor war, nor rebels, nor dictators, nor repressors, nor the dark, not even the lies can stop us loving, lusting too, admit it.

We are alive and the disasters are what they are, sometimes. Yet, whatever we do about the sins of our fathers and our own neglect of the world around us, we must still be what we are ? a species filled with thinking and talent at so much. We are not better at all than those fellow species with whom we should be sharing this planet with equity, with the same fierce love that we have for each other. We should caring about their well-being as much as for our own children, for our friends and lovers ? if those are well, so are we but ? for ourselves ? for if we are well, we can care for them.

It's a circle, do you see, a circle that must include everything. Scientists have clearly shown that all living things are connected ? at their DNA level. No getting out of that. It's politics, the fools, yabbering on, brainlessly, missing the whole point of existence.

You have a best friend. You tell that friend you will always have their back. You have summed it up. We have to have each other's backs not just people - we are only part of the whole. But the whole is being shattered and we have lost our way.

Love ? how well we love, how our hearts are stirred ? the answers lie there.