

Theatre Orangeville announces new lineup of shows for the 2022-2023 season

By Constance Scrafield

'We're working on casting for the plays in the new season - our hopes, dreams and aspirations, moving forward to the model of being in the theatre, according to Public Health. That's always moving and changing,' began Theatre Orangeville artistic director, David Nairn talking about the new 2022-2023 season.

He had recently announced it, standing on a chair as he has done for the last 22 years at the Starlight Gala last month.

'It is a big season in terms of actual numbers of actors,' he told the Citizen during an interview in the open air on a sunny afternoon.

Last year, with regard to both the very high level of excellence Theatre Orangeville maintains and fiscal responsibility, all the shows carried one or few actors. The scripts were written by world class playwrights and performed by actors that Theatre Orangeville audiences have come to love and respect. Those were a couple of one-person shows and others with two or three characters. This season's line up varies more than this. Audiences will be glad for the variety and the theatre is benefitting from an increase in ticket sales and online ticket sales.

'We're trying to create something based on the health of the world,' said Mr. Nairn. 'The community - to keep everyone safe within the scope of multi-characters and a musical, which we haven't staged for three years.'

What else have been on hold for three years are two of the upcoming productions, *The Bluff* by Kristen Da Silva and *The New Canadian Curling Club* by Mark Crawford, but more about them in a moment.

'We hope our audiences will have a good time,' Mr. Nairn commented. 'There are two world premieres. It has been five years since we premiered a Norm Foster play. His other new plays have been premiered at the Foster Festival.'

To begin the season is the 'add-on,' an annual opener over the first weekend of the season, as Mr. Nairn puts it, 'to help people get 'the cottage' out of their minds and turn their thoughts to September and going back to the theatre.'

First up is the weekend of September 15 to 18 (Thursday to Sunday) with Anne Marie Scheffler. Ms. Scheffler performed her *Suddenly Mommy* in Theatre Orangeville in 2016. This time around, she is *Suddenly Single*. Then she was married and a mommy - now she is divorced and wondering what's next - dating? Funny and thoughtful, Mr. Nairn is pretty sure this show will attract the ladies who understand what it takes to be *Suddenly Single*. Ms. Scheffler spent much her life in Hockley Valley.

The Foster Festival is the first festival in Canada to honour a living playwright - Norm Foster. It began in 2016, with Norm Foster writing a new play specifically to open at the festival, the venue for which is the new Arts Centre in St. Catharines, Ontario. However, during the two years of Covid lockdown, Canada's most prolific playwright has penned several plays and this season, Theatre Orangeville is premiering Mr. Foster's new play, *They're Found in Trees*.

David Nairn observed, 'We haven't done a Norm Foster play since 2019.'

They're Found in Trees refers to birds and this is a tale of two bird-watching buddies, William and Mitchell, going out for their weekly bird watching Saturday when they inadvertently meet Paula. She comes with a sad tale that she is trying to get over by a little 'birding' herself.

Norm Foster can be trusted to bring the laughs. *Found in Trees* runs October 12 to 30.

Christmas sees the return of *The Last Christmas Turkey* by Dan Needles and music by Clive Vanderburg. It was premiered here at

Theatre Orangeville in 2014. This is a very whimsical story of a brother and sister and a few talking/singing animals setting out to rescue a loveable turkey, slated to be the star dish at the church Christmas dinner.

It is grand to have a big production for Christmas again at Theatre Orangeville, a chance as Mr. Nairn pointed out, to give young actors an opportunity to star in the show. Auditions for these roles begin in September and Young Company's summer activities will bring talent to the fore as well. The Last Christmas Turkey is on from November 30 to December 23.

Last year, Rod Beattie brilliantly performed his one-man-plays, where he plays all the roles, in his version of A Christmas Carol to keep our theatre spirits bright.

The amazing story of an Afro-Canadian man who kept his fellow miners alive by courageous moral support, with singing and talking to them to stay strong and focused on surviving for nine days, is told in Beneath Springhill: the Maurice Ruddick Story.

Written by Beau Dixon and starring Jeremiah Sparks who performs the story as a one man show and his guitar.?

?I saw this performance in Barrie with 16 people in a person's back yard,? said Mr. Nairn. ?It is absolutely sensational.?

This remarkable show will run February 8 to 26, 2023.

Kristen Da Silva's play, The Bluff provides suspense and thriller entertainment, exercising the shades of Alfred Hitchcock, keeping the audience in tension, waiting for the break. Scientist, Edward Voss and his sweetie opt to take a break in a house he has inherited. What they get instead in this secluded location is very from what they expected. Ms. Da Silva is known for her comedy and there are bound to be elements of that as well. We will have to go and see it to find out. It is on from March 15 to April 2, 2023.

Wrapping up the season is the New Canadian Curling Club in which four new Canadians from different demographics are convinced that to be truly Canadian, they have to learn to curl. The old codger relegated to instruct and train them has his own points of view. Yet given the right circumstances, ideas can change. Lots of humour and food for thought from playwright, Mark Crawford. The play's on from April 26 to May 4, 2023.

Theatre Orangeville asks that attendees follow all COVID-19 restrictions, as it helps to keep the theatre open.

For information, tickets and subscriptions and access to their new ?StageTOScreen? a virtual library of former shows, please go to www.theatreorangeville.ca