

New season, new look for Theatre Aurora's 60th anniversary

By Brock Weir

The curtain has risen on a new season at Theatre Aurora and its opener, *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) [Revised]* will have surprise encore presentation this Friday.

It was the first production of their landmark 60th anniversary season, and the first in a series of commemorations which will take place throughout the 2018-2019 theatre run.

'Theatre Aurora is proud to have served Aurora and the surrounding area for 60 years,' said Linda Stott of Theatre Aurora, touting their milestone recently to Council. 'To achieve this milestone as a volunteer-run organization is commendable. To do so while continuing to win awards is thrilling. In fact, at this year's Association of Community Theatres Central Ontario Gala, Theatre Aurora was presented with awards in Best Musical Production, Best Musical Director, Best Lighting Design, Best Leading Man in Drama, Outstanding Newcomer (Directing) and more. Without exaggeration, it takes thousands of volunteer hours for each production to achieve what Theatre Aurora has been able to achieve.'

Awards might be an indication that what goes on behind the walls of their Henderson Drive performance space, formerly known as The Factory Theatre, a building which began life as part of a cement factory, is still fresh going into its seventh decade. But there's more. Theatre Aurora is looking to stay fresh by refreshing itself for its audiences.

'We're looking strong, we have a dedicated and engaged membership, we have a great season planned, and we look to the future with optimism,' said Ms. Stott. 'However, a not-for-profit charitable arts organization does face its own set of challenges. We're using our 60th anniversary as a springboard for various outreach and fundraising projects. We have many great plans to honour and celebrate our 60th anniversary.'

'It began two years ago when the 60th season was programmed. We decided to add an ambitious sixth show to our season, all of which relate to the season's theme of Theatre Life. We love being social. Every month of the upcoming season has a social event. Highlights include a celebration of the 60th anniversary to the day of our first performance, which is November 7. Our celebration gala is in June. Other events include a murder mystery holiday party, theatre games and karaoke nights.'

'We have also dedicated this hallmark year for raising funds for a complete lobby overhaul. The new design includes better accessibility accommodations, new washrooms and a new layout to maximize space. Our goal is to raise \$60,000 which will cover the material costs and some specialized work. Otherwise, all the labour will be done by volunteers.'

Sponsoring the sixtieth anniversary season this year is Meridian Credit Union.

Other sponsorship opportunities are currently available, she said, 'for organizations wishing to align themselves with an award-winning theatre that is heavily involved in the community.'

Over the past year, Theatre Aurora has had a presence in a number of community events, including the Aurora Street Festival, York Pride Fest, the Santa Under the Stars Parade, Canada Day, the Aurora Farmers' Market, Doors Open, the Aurora Multicultural Festival, play readings at the Aurora Public Library, and more.

'We are very invested in this community,' said Ms. Stott. 'In honour of our 60th anniversary, we invite Mayor, Councillors, Staff and the Community to attend at least one performance this season. Come and see what is being created in your backyard. You'll be amazed.'

While *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) (Revised)* closed at the end of September, it is coming back Friday night at 8 p.m. for an encore performance. It will be restaged to be in the running for the Association of Community Theatres ? Central Ontario (ACT-CO) Theatre Festival.

For more on opportunities to become amazed during Theatre Aurora's 60th Anniversary Season, including the October 12 special performance, visit www.theatreaurora.com.