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All are worthy in The Temple of Fame



By Brock Weir

All are worthy of claiming their place in history.
That was the message brought home to Aurora audiences by over two dozen remarkable women, representing millennia of remarkable achievements, and each brought to life by local actors, this past weekend as the Aurora Museum & Archives re-staged The Temple of Fame to mark its 100th anniversary.
The stage was set at Trinity Anglican Church as women ranging from Helen of Troy (Cerys Ford) to Elsie McGill (Sara Weiss), from Mary, Queen of Scots (Sonetta Duncan) to Mother Teresa (Najma Kausar) each came before the Goddess (Alison Collins-Mrakas) to state their case on why they should succeed her to the top job.
First staged by Aurora women in 1900 and again in 1918 as part of the war effort, the 2018 edition of The Temple of Fame was revised and updated by Aurora writer Corrie Clark based on original scripts uncovered from the 1918 production.
?I am absolutely amazed because I tried to generate interest in this about 20 years ago,? said historian John McIntyre, a native Auroran who came in from Nova Scotia for Friday's opening night.
Mr. McIntyre's grandmother was involved in the 1918 production. Her scripts and notes, lovingly preserved by her grandson, were instrumental sources in bringing the play back to life.
?I remember her talking about this when I was growing up,? Mr. McIntyre continued. ?I sensed this stuff was important and passed it along to Shawna White (Curator of the Aurora Museum and Archives) and never figured she would look at it and think it can be revived. My grandmother would be spinning with delight in her grave.?
The original scripts were stilted in tone, and Mr. McIntyre said he was particularly interested to see how Ms. Clark refreshed the script so it is relevant to twenty-first century audiences.
The Temple of Fame, directed by Sara Moyle, was staged over three days, each with a specific theme.
Saturday's evening performance was preceded by a reception hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce where Sheryl Thomas of Marquee Theatrical Productions was honoured with the Chamber's award for Outstanding Contribution to the Arts in Aurora.
Sunday's matinee on Mother's Day was held in conjunction with the Aurora Historical Society, which hosted a high tea for all attendees.
Friday's opening night, however, was hosted by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev, who delivered a powerful message on the themes within the Temple of Fame.
?The Temple of Fame play represents more than simply a re-enactment of a historical production in the community of Aurora,? she said. ?In essence, it asks us to reflect on the progress of women's rights over a century ago and challenges us to consider if we have

yet arrived at where we think we should, as a society be. If the answer is, ?we're not there yet,' then what should we be doing and how should we be getting there??

Ms. Alleslev said it is an issue particularly close to her heart because of her ?non-traditional? career path, which began as an air cadet at the age of 12. From there, she attended Royal Military College, served as an officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, before moving into the private aerospace sector with IBM and Bombardier.

?I did not know when I chose that career path that I was going to have a challenging time because I was a woman,? she said. ?I didn't know before I choose my career path that women couldn't do math! I didn't know that I wasn't worthy of a promotion because I was going to have children! I didn't know that wearing pants was going to send the wrong message in an executive meeting. I didn't know that my ability to serve my country and to be successful was going to be constrained because of my gender.

Now we stand today and I would like to see for our future a future where no one, male or female, is ever constrained from the contribution they want to make to society in the best way that they can, simply because of their gender. I think that should be perhaps the aim that we strive for as Canadians and as a nation.

?I would like to challenge everyone to remember that we have been entrusted with the sacred responsibility of furthering the contributions made by the women who came before us and to inspire the women who will come after us to vision a bold future and to stop at nothing to realise it and claim their place in history.?