

Shadowpath makes sure love is in the air this Valentine's at local gallery



Everybody has a story that can inspire.

This is a philosophy that drives York Region's Shadowpath Theatre Productions and has served to inspire a new immersive theatrical experience they're bringing to Aurora's Royal Rose Gallery on Saturday, February 10 – just in time for Valentine's Day.

'Aurora In Love' is a series of seven plays that will be staged in the gallery, penned by local playwrights that have been inspired by local stories. The plays will be staged throughout the multi-level gallery over the course of an hour as dynamic performers bring these stories of love and romance to life.

'We have always been interested in re-telling local stories,' says Shadowpath's Alex Karolyi. 'We go directly to the community to get inspiration for our material because everybody's got a story and sometimes you just have to ask – and people love sharing!'

This is an approach that Shadowpath has taken many times over their 21 years of production, but not always related to a theme.

Last fall, they staged a Halloween production at Hillary House National Historic Site, but now, in the thick of winter, they're shifting from the spooky to the seductive.

'It starts with a lot of research and exploration – we even went into wedding stores in Aurora and asked, 'Do you have any stories you want to share?'' says Alex. 'We received stories that way and we also talked to a local officiant about stories. We got this whole pot of possible stories and our writers [picked], saying, 'I'll give this one a try.''

Seven plays were ultimately selected and range from a story of romance from the Second World War, to the lighthearted, each showing off the many facets of love and romance.

Weaving together each of the plays will be the character of 'Dr. Love' who Alex describes as a 'boisterous, flamboyant woman who loves to be in love,' trailed by her sidekick Omar, 'shy and a little bitter with his love experience' whom the good doctor prefers to address as 'Amor.'

'Every community has stories to share and their stories could actually animate and activate everyday spaces within that community. It is kind of a celebration of identity and history and community all coming together at once. People will say, 'I don't have anything to share,' but everybody does. Everybody's voice, perspective and history is meaningful and important. Other people can relate to it or connect to it so people should open up and share their own selves, stories, more openly in general.

'This is about love and love has many different various forms and sometimes there's even negative love like obsession or madness that can be under the broad category of love. We wanted this project to not just be love in a traditional man and woman who fall in

love, that kind of typical story. Yes, we have that, but we also wanted to have different scenarios, perspectives, relationships. We have same sex love, and we're trying to look at love in a diverse lens, bringing more diversity into people's experiences with love.

Aurora in Love will feature "The Peacekeeper" by Alex Karolyi, "Mira" by Maissa Bessada, "In Transit" by Chantal Forde, "Love Languages" by Alex Karolyi, "Round Two" by Chantal Forde, "Dr. Love" by Alex Karolyi, and "The Kiss" by Karolyi, Jona Villa and Paige Madsen.

The show will run at the Royal Rose (15210 Yonge Street) on Saturday, February 10, from 2 - 3 p.m., from 4.30 - 5.30 p.m., and finally from 7 - 8 p.m.

Tickets range from \$26 - \$34 and can be secured at shadowpaththeatre.ca.

By Brock Weir
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