

Theatre Aurora tackles potent subjects in new season on the 'Mighty Heroine'?

When Theatre Aurora chose to include the dramatic adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* as a cornerstone of their new season based around the theme of 'The Mighty Heroine,' they knew even before the pandemic they had potent material to work with.

But time has only made the influential book more relevant.

Anne Frank's pivotal account of the Holocaust recently came under review by a Texas schoolboard, considering whether it was appropriate to be in a school library. The move, which ultimately saw the book returned to circulation, sparked renewed interest in Frank's indelible story and emphasized its continued relevance.

'We thought it would be a good time to resurrect these conversations and an interesting idea to revisit some of the ideas and learn from the mistakes in our past and try to prevent horrific things from happening in the future,' says Sergio Calderon, Artistic Director at Theatre Aurora.

The source material of 'A Diary of a Young Girl' is connected to Theatre Aurora's other offerings this season in that it looks at the idea of a female heroine through a younger lens.

'Typically when you see a strong female-led work, whether it is in film, television, or theatre, you're always considering someone who is middle-aged or has a long resume in their lives,' says Calderon. 'But what's interesting about *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the [musical] *Fun Home* and *Mother of the Maid* (which is a dramatic re-telling of the life of Joan of Arc's mother) is we're looking at younger female characters and how they're developing and becoming these icons that we know and think of them today.

'It also gave us the opportunity to look at a cross-section of not just time and circumstance but also of age when exploring their impact.'

Theatre Aurora's production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* runs from March 2 through March 11.

The age pendulum swings in the opposite direction to close out the season with the play *Glorious! The True Story of Florence Foster Jenkins, the Worst Singer in the World*.

Based on the life of Florence Foster Jenkins who, later in life, pursued a career in music despite not being able to carry a tune. But, what she lacked in talent, she made up with passion and enthusiasm - traits brought to life recently on the big screen by Meryl Streep in the film 'Florence Foster Jenkins.'

'We're finishing our season with what we hope is an uproarious comedy!' says Calderon. 'Everyone is familiar more recently thanks to the film of Florence Foster Jenkins and it was one of those lovely gems finding a comedy piece about a true to life historical figure that we can again take a look at. It encompasses a lot of passion, confidence and dreaming which, of course, all the characters possess throughout this season. From a standpoint that not everything has to be dark and fraught with angst, there is a lot of joy and exploring that side of being a human being existing among us. It was such a pleasure to find that script and really bring it to the table and have everyone agree that this is a perfect way to end a season where we're just celebrating women.'

Bringing these very different lives together, lives which are united by their fair share of common threads, is something Theatre Aurora takes pride in. Calderon counts theatre as 'one of the great initiators of discussion' and he hopes that each of this season's selections will spark dialogue on female heroes, particularly in an age where so many offerings on film and television are male-driven.

'My approach in creating a season is a wholesome journey from beginning to end of five shows for someone to see. While anyone is welcome to come and watch one singular show for enjoyment, I always urge anyone to get a subscription to a season that is based on

a theme because I think at the end of the day then you really have an understanding, an exploration of that one particular topic from many different points of view, which I think enrichen the experience overall. Each singular piece will be lovely, enjoyable and very entertaining and will likely initiate some discussion but, as a whole at the end of the year, wouldn't it be nice to feel seen? I think that is an important thing: to be seen, to be heard, to be a part of the landscape when sometimes it is not available in all forms of media.?

Theatre Aurora opens its current season on October 20 with *Mother of the Maid*, which runs through October 29. The season continues with *A Nice Family Christmas* from November 24 to December 3, *Fun Home* from January 26 to February 4, *The Diary of Anne Frank* from March 2 ? March 11, and *Glorious!* from April 20 to April 29.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter