

We can all laugh at the stupidity in our own families, says first time director



By Brock Weir

When Jamie Dafoe walked through the doors of Theatre Aurora seasons ago to audition for their production of *The Laramie Project*, it had been years since she had set foot on the stage.

She was just 10 years old when she made her stage debut in *A Christmas Carol*, produced by the Queensville Players, and it lit a spark for drama which she kept within her. Stepping through those Henderson Drive doors, however, she rekindled that spark into a full-blown flame.

Curtain rises at the Factory Theatre this Thursday, October 9, for *Maggie's Getting Married*, a play written by Norm Foster. With several productions behind her as an actress and producer, this time it is Jamie's directorial debut.

Foster's play focuses on the Duncan family, as they gather on the eve of Maggie's wedding. When her sister returns home, she discovers she has a past with her sister's intended, and mayhem ensues.

"It is about a family and it is totally relatable to all families," says Ms. Dafoe. "I just fell in love with the character. As it is my first time directing, I didn't want to get into anything too meaty like a drama and this was perfect. I was able to relate to the sister relationship that they have portrayed between Maggie and Wanda, and just the complete difference between the two of them.

"I have a sister that I am very close with, but we are exact opposites. It just spoke to me. They have differences but are still close, so I brought a lot of personal knowledge with me."

Jamie began her journey with Theatre Aurora 10 years ago at that initial open casting call. She has acted in numerous productions and has risen through the ranks, now sitting on their Board of Directors.

Directing, she says, is significantly different from producing or directing, bringing with it a lot more creative freedom.

"It is nice to be able to take something that is in my head and bring it to the stage, and have actors actually understand and comprehend what I was trying to do," she explains. "It is very rewarding and not even close to producing. So far, directing has been the most fulfilling role. It is like having a baby. You start with something very, very tiny and you're watching it grow. You have to

give it up to the world and let it walk. It is kind of scary and exciting, and you get that adrenaline rush of, 'Here we go!' and you're putting all your trust and faith into other people to get what you mean and put it on the stage.'

From those early days on stage in A Christmas Carol, Jamie found she had an affinity for drama. She got involved in school productions, did a stint with the children's chorus despite what she describes as a lack of any vocal talent whatsoever, time in the children's workshop at the Stephen Leacock Theatre in Keswick, but suddenly stopped at the age of 13.

Now, however, there is no going back.

She has risen to numerous challenges to realise her vision, including the idea the play should be set in a modern kitchen, a tall order for a theatre well-stocked in furniture and appliances left over from the 1970s. With some hard work, they made that vision a reality, and now the fun starts of getting people into the seats.

'I see the direction Theatre Aurora has started to head towards, and it is a good place,' she says. 'I want people who are living in and around Aurora to know [Theatre Aurora] is here and you don't have to drive downtown to watch good theatre. Arts isn't dead and I don't want people to think it is. It's not just retired old people, I want young people to bring their ideas and fresh thoughts. It is important and it is a passion.

'I hope people leave [Maggie's Getting Married] thinking it was a lot of fun, it was well done and they want to see more. I want people to keep coming back. I think it will resonate with audiences as they can relate to at least one of the characters and if you are going to relate to somebody that makes it much more funny and real. We can laugh at the stupidity in our own families!'

Maggie's Getting Married runs on select dates through October 18. For more information, including tickets, visit www.theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.