

Century-old themes remain relevant today, says Temple director



By Brock Weir

As a director, Sara Moyle has always been interested in bringing together history through the art of drama – or, as she calls it, ‘animating history.’

So, when the opportunity came up to animate history right here in Aurora, Ms. Moyle jumped at the chance.

Sara Moyle takes the helm of *The Temple of Fame*, a revamped, renewed and refreshed version of the classic play, which opens this week at Trinity Anglican Church.

Produced by the Aurora Museum & Archives and revised and written by local writer Corrie Clark, this weekend's production of *The Temple of Fame* marks the 100th anniversary of when it was last produced here in Aurora.

The text may have changed, the characters may have been tweaked, but its core message is the same and as relevant as it ever has been – and you needn't look any further than the banners hanging from light posts throughout Aurora with the simple question, ‘Are you worthy?’

‘The question, ‘Am I worthy?’ is a question that women ask themselves, maybe not out loud, but every day and multiple times a day,’ says Ms. Moyle. ‘If there is a way to answer that question, even in a moment, even in a snapshot in time, I think we may be able to do that with this play and have people walk away with the understanding that, ‘Yeah, I am worthy.’’

The Temple of Fame has a simple premise: women throughout history are descending on the Temple to plead their case to the Goddess. Their objective? Proving they're worthy enough to take their rightful place in the pantheon.

The play was first staged by Aurora women in 1900 and again in 1918 as part of the war effort.

In 2015, a cache of artefacts related to the last production made its way into the Museum archives, donated by historian John McIntyre, and curator Shawna White decided soon after it was time to remount it, led once again by local Aurora women.

‘In my perfect world as an artist, I am always marrying heritage with theatre, or animating history, so to speak,’ says Ms. Moyle.

‘The opportunity to be a part of an animating history project was very attractive to me, but trumping all of those is how timely this project is and the importance of sharing this story 100 years later about women's issues that are really still looking for resolution.’

Previously with the Humber River Shakespeare Company, which uses drama to tell the history of Ontario, not to mention keeping The Bard's words alive and well, Ms. Moyle approached the 2018 *Temple of Fame* right at the roots.

‘I am a career theatre artist, but the people that are involved in this project are not necessarily that; some of them do have training, they have a broad spectrum of experience, and I think what was very attractive about that is they are real women, with real stories, from all walks of life. Working with real human beings and bringing out the goddess, the god, or artist in all of these people, and having an audience come to see real people perform creates, I think, an inherent trust in the audience, the space, and the truth of what is being delivered.’

‘It is very honest and raw, just the idea that these are not professional artists, they are people who are engaging in the theatre sometimes for the first time ever; the audience roots for them and feels inherently connected to them because they are really one step away from the audience. That, to me, is exciting; it feels like a living, breathing organism and the performances that these women

are delivering are really beautiful and inspiring.

?Kim Wheatley, who is playing herself as an Ojibwe woman, [has] a story that would not have been included in the original script. Seeing what she has to offer and the story she has to tell is quite haunting and the music she brings to it as well will have the audience in goosebumps. Some of the characters are original to the play but have been slightly updated. There is one that is simply just called 'Mother', who is representative of the archetype of mother. Some of the words are new, some are old, but are timeless and stunning and will touch every woman, especially on a Mother's Day weekend, in the audience.?

The Temple of Fame opens Friday night at Trinity Anglican Church, with performances on Saturday and Sunday. For tickets and further information, visit auroramuseum.ca/temple.