

Director gets back to the heart of the matter at Theatre Aurora

By Brock Weir

In his professional career, Dale Sheldrake spends most of his time either behind the camera or in the darkness of the editing booth.

A few years ago, however, the Aurora resident started making inroads into the theatre world and now his neighbours can see the fruits of his labour.

Mr. Sheldrake directs Mitch Albom's 'Tuesday's With Morrie' at Theatre Aurora, a show which runs at select dates and times through Saturday.



Aurora's Dale Sheldrake directs Tuesdays With Morrie, which runs through Saturday at Theatre Aurora.

Prolific in the film industry, he is comfortable in a world where the story is put together in tiny pieces and then stitched together into some semblance of order through the magic of editing. Having a story unfold as it should, in the right order, with actors giving it their all in a live environment is a very different environment all together and Mr. Sheldrake was more than ready for the challenge.

'Live performance is always special,' he says. 'It is a very human connection in a live performance, whether you see a guy playing in a local bar or a busker. There is a real community and social aspect to it. With any social media today, any opportunity to be involved in something community-based or socially-based is a plus.'

'Having a real-time story with drama as an emotion is another key thing. The audience is experiencing the emotion immediately from what they are watching. The emotion is coming from the actors and the staging and all their choice. You can be effected by watching a movie, but it is different when you're up there and you see a real person who is eliciting that emotion from you.'

'Morrie' follows the story of Mitch, a 40-something who reconnects with his favourite college professor, Morrie, who is in the late stages of ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease. As the two men discuss life and death, they learn about themselves and each other in ways that tug on the heartstrings but can also make you laugh.

For a two-person show, there is no shortage of emotion coming from the actors, and that is part of what appealed to Mr. Sheldrake when he applied to direct the play. Storytelling was what attracted him into the media and entertainment industry in the first place although, he says, it took him some 20 years to realise that.

'Even in the film work I do, the post-production is often about the story and the characters and trying to have the arc of both of those make sense for the stories, the characters, and the audience,' he says. '[In this play], Morrie starts off as a very active and vivacious personality and by the end he is, of course, practically an invalid.'

'Mitch's evolution in the story is more towards those things that Morrie has already understood. In a subtle way, he is trying to pull Mitch along in the direction he knows he should go to become a better person, a real person, and a more authentic self.'

When people head home after seeing the play, Mr. Sheldrake says he hopes they leave with a sense they should do something in their lives that has meaning to do and is worth the effort to get there.

'I hope they walk out and say, 'I am going to do that thing I always wanted to do and I don't care how long it takes me and I don't care how much time I have left. I'm going to try it because it will give me some satisfaction in my life.'

For tickets and show times, visit www.theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.