

Don't Dress for Dinner brings Menage-a-Quatre to Theatre Aurora

By Brock Weir

Barb Jones simply laughs when asked what she wants audiences to take away from her latest directorial effort in which a man's grand plans for a weekend with his mistress and best friend while his wife's away.

Of course, when the best friend happens to be having an affair with the wife, who decides not to go away for the weekend after all, it goes without saying that complications arise, where you can do little more than laugh.

Ms. Jones, a five-year member of Theatre Aurora is at the helm of their latest production, 'Don't Dress For Dinner,' a French farce which opens this Thursday and running on select dates through October 22.

'I have been divorced for many years, so maybe that's why it appealed to me!' chuckles Ms. Jones. 'There has to be honesty in a marriage. As your mother probably told you, don't lie because you will get caught. This is all about honesty and sometimes the grass isn't always greener on the other side.'

Ms. Jones is no stranger to farce. She enjoys the physicality of the art and the fact comedy transcends cultures. So, when Don't Dress For Dinner came up as part of the theatre's 2016-2017 season, she threw her hat into the ring.

'This is my second time directing,' she says of her time at Theatre Aurora, which began in 2011 with production on The Laramie Project. 'As a director, you get to see what your vision is played out on stage. It is a really rewarding experience to have [that vision] played out by a lot of different characters who are willing to put trust in you. Producing is different and involves all areas of the show, which is extremely rewarding because you get to work very closely with the director, the tech people and the actors.'

'When I read the play I knew what we needed to do was start early enough in the summer so the cast could get used to their lines and really get them down. The lines are difficult in a farce because they don't necessarily flow as part of the conversation. There are an awful lot of asides, under-your-breaths and misdirection. It is harder for an actor to get their lines down and we had to do that before we could get into the physical part of blocking the show itself.'

Don't Dress For Dinner follows Bernard who is planning the weekend for his Parisian mistress while his wife Jacqueline is going to be out of town. He brings in a chef for the weekend and the best friend is along for the ride to provide the alibi. Bernard, however, has no idea Robert is having an affair with his wife, but when the inevitable complications unravel 'Bernard and Robert have to improvise at a breakneck speed.'

'In the end, of course, everybody realises where they should be and what their roles are and we do have happy endings,' says Ms. Jones. 'I think people need to be entertained and this is a light-hearted look at love and marriage and all the pitfalls and pratfalls that go along with it. I would hope people would come out and see it because they will have a wonderful time. It is funny and the characters are very real to people. I think they will really enjoy the show.'