

Feel-good moments ahead as Theatre Aurora presents Anne of Green Gables: The Musical



Step back in time and revisit one of Canada's favourite heroines this month as Theatre Aurora presents Anne of Green Gables ? The Musical.

The popular adaptation of Lucy Maud Montgomery's enduring story of red-headed orphan Anne Shirley who comes to live with the Cuthberts at Green Gables opens on Theatre Aurora's Henderson Drive stage Thursday, November 16 at 8 p.m., and continues on select dates and times through November 25.

At the helm of this production, with a book by Donald Harron and music by Norman Campbell, is director Keith O'Connell, a veteran of Theatre Aurora, who says despite never visiting the long-running musical in its home in Charlottetown, 'Anne' was always a dream production of his.

'This has been a bucket list show for me, which seems pretty funny for me to say considering Anne of Green Gables has been around [for a long time] as a musical, but? a lot of the shows, the true classics to me, have not been getting done as much as they used to be,' says O'Connell. 'This is pure Canadiana. It's just something that needs to be done today, especially coming out of three years of the pandemic; people need to feel good again in the theatre. That is why I was so drawn to this when I found that Theatre Aurora was going to be producing it. I wanted to play in Anne of Green Gables' sandbox!'

While he did not see the show in Prince Edward Island, O'Connell says he was instantly struck by the beautiful simplicity of the story and the music.

'From the opening beautiful harmonies where the ladies are singing, and the swells of the overture, it's beautiful, simple music and it's not complex for complexity's sake. There is not a lot of humour in this show. There aren't gags or shtick but there's a lot of areas whereby a subtle look, head gesture, a nod or something can add just a little bit to the scene. I look for those moments where I could take people just a little further in some of the dialogue.'

From the Director's perspective, although Anne's story is more than a century old, it's one that is as relevant today as ever before. The world may have changed since Lucy Maud Montgomery first set pen to paper, but what she created continues to speak to today's audiences.

‘There is just so much happening in the world today. You’re afraid to watch the news, you’re afraid to look at the newspapers,’ says O’Connell. ‘There is so much going on and when you come to rehearsal and you’re able to immerse yourself into this world of Anne of Green Gables and, just for two hours, forget and enjoy and just be in the moment with these iconic characters.

‘I am hoping the adults are taken back maybe to a moment in their childhood or when they had seen this before and just forgot what a beautifully written story this is. For the people who have never seen it before, for the younger generation to understand there is a series of books and/or the television movies that came out back in the 80s and early 90s? it is a living tribute to these characters. Anne’s story doesn’t just end here. I hope that by seeing this they see this as a catalyst to see more about this girl and what happened to her after Green Gables and the books and TV movies actually go on to explore. I am hoping to inspire people to want to know more about this girl.’

For more information on the upcoming production of Anne of Green Gables: The Musical, including ticket information, visit theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.

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