

Hobbs brings one of Sondheim's leading ladies to life in A Little Night Music



At an emotional crossroads, a renowned actress reflects on her life – a journey of love and loss – by singing the iconic song, Send in the Clowns.

It's one of the best-known pieces penned by the legendary Stephen Sondheim for Desiree Armfelt, the leading lady of A Little Night Music. And that song was reason enough for Aurora's Kerry Hobbs to put her best foot forward in bringing Armfelt to life in Wavestage Theatre's upcoming production of the musical.

“Stephen Sondheim is affectionally referred to as ‘God’ in the theatre world because his music has really rich, complex characters,” says Hobbs. “It’s a singer’s dream to perform Sondheim’s music. This is what Desiree sings when she is at her most emotionally vulnerable point and, as a performer, getting to tackle that material is truly a privilege.”

Wavestage's production of A Little Night Music opens Thursday, March 26, at the NewRoads Performing Arts Centre in Newmarket, through Sunday, March 29.

“Step into the shimmering twilight of Stephen Sondheim's A Little Night Music, a waltzing whirlwind of romance, regret, and razor-sharp wit,” says Wavestage. “Desiree Armfeldt, a renowned actress, is growing weary of her life on the road. A chance encounter with an old flame sets in motion a series of romantic misadventures that culminate in a madcap weekend in the country where passions erupt, jealousies flare, and hilarity triumphs over all.

“Part comedy of manners, part battle of the sexes, this funny, elegant work inspired by Ingmar Bergman's period film Smiles of a Summer Night explores a tangled web of affairs. Recipient of three Tony Awards, including Best Musical, A Little Night Music is a sumptuous, provocative, laugh-out-loud masterpiece that will leave you thoroughly enchanted.”

It's a work that Hobbs was enchanted by even before she first auditioned for Wavestage.

Active in community theatre since the late 1990s, this A Little Night Music is her first role with within the Wavestage community and Hobbs says the calibre of the production has been “fantastic.”

“It's a fantastically talented cast,” she says, particularly noting the actress who plays Desiree's daughter, Frederika, Harper Asch, is

fresh off the recent Stratford Festival production of Annie. "There are some really and truly gifted performers who are part of the process and Wavestage attracts that calibre of performers.

"When I went to the read-through, I had really only met one person in the cast before, so I sat down at this table and people began delivering their lines with those really intense, intense characterizations, and then when they sang, I thought, 'Oh, this is going to be a magical experience,' because the voices are fantastic and the performances are really strong."

Hobbs' magical experience with community theatre is something she says she "stumbled into." As a child, she regularly attended church with her family and "grew up singing next to my mother." She began working on her voice in early adulthood where her coach suggested she try out community theatre. She was instantly bitten by the bug, she says.

"It's really, really rewarding to be a performer, but very few people can make it a career. There are limited opportunities for people to do this professionally and still be able to pay a mortgage and carry on with their family obligations. There are lots of incredibly talented people, many of whom was professional training, who've gone into community theater as a way to maintain that passion while still doing something that supports their lifestyle. It's really an infectious bug. Once people get into community theater there are so many positive experiences related to it. It's a great community. It gives you the opportunity whether you're on stage or behind the stage, helping to be a part of a creative experience "there's really nothing quite like it."

As the cast and crew put the finishing touches on this month's performance, Hobbs says while *A Little Night Music* might not be Sondheim's best-known work, it offers a "truly delightful evening out, a great story, beautiful music, high calibre performance at a community price," and offers "we can all use a smile."

"It's a really good time to go to something that gives you that little bit of escape," she says. "We're in a time in the world where there's a lot of anxiety and a lot of frustration and fear. What Sondheim has created with *A Little Night Music* is a complex world with complicated characters who have messy lives, but at the end of the day, it all turns out right. You go through that journey with the characters and it ends on a note of hope with joy, and it's funny. You'll have a good laugh as you sit through the show, you'll enjoy the story, the music is truly beautiful, and, at the end of the day, you walk out feeling good which, I think these days, perhaps more than other times is a really important consideration!"

For more, including ticket information, visit wavestagetheatre.com/nightmusic.

By Brock Weir
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