

Local theatre charts path forward ahead of 60th anniversary

By Brock Weir

As a child, Sergio Calderon spent nearly the first decade of his life in densely-populated Mexico City before his family moved to Aurora.

Once here, he was surprised to find his new home backed onto a forest, which provided a borderless horizon to fuel his creative imagination. As he grew older and entered his teen years, his interest in the dramatic arts continued to grow and outside of Cardinal Carter Catholic High School, his only creative outlet was Theatre Aurora.

Now artistic director of Theatre Aurora, he and the Theatre's crew are looking to usher in a new age for the stalwart Henderson Drive theatre as it approaches its 60th anniversary in 2018.

"The effort to go to the theatre is something people need to consider nowadays," says Mr. Calderon. "There has been a conversation amongst theatre artists about the fact theatre as we know it is going to be extinct. That is not that theatre is going to be extinct, but theatre as we know it – the way it is consumed, approached and produced is going to change and go through an evolution. But, as we know it, it is kind of on its last legs."

To that end, Mr. Calderon says he was excited to approach the 2016 – 2017 Theatre Aurora season, which launched in September with *Love Letters*, kick-starting a seven production season rather than the standard five. It's exciting, he says, but also a lot of work in both putting on the shows and getting people in the audience.

"We don't have a theatre-going community," he says. "For people to buy into five is sometimes a challenge and if you're proposing seven, I think that is a pretty considerable risk, considering that each production will stand alone and will have a compelling experience every single night, all of our seasons in the last couple of years have been constructed with the idea it is an entire journey from beginning to end. We select the shows and we put them in the order that we do them in, with the thought the person who subscribes will enjoy day one all the way to day five – or in this year day seven – of their theatre going experience."

Last fall, The Auroran highlighted the first half of the 2016 – 2017 season, concluding with the December closer *A Christmas Story* and now the season picks up again on January 19 with a new spin on the Shakespearian classic *Much Ado About Nothing* which director Shawn Rocheleau has set in post-World War One Canada.

"It is very exciting because in this area, certainly north of Toronto, I don't think Shakespeare has been done at the community level for quite some time," says Mr. Calderon. "Besides being bold in the material we have chosen, we have been presented with some pretty fantastic opportunities, which we really had to take."

The Australian drama, *Speaking in Tongues*, carries the action through March. Described as a thriller mystery, it takes place in a hotel where two couples are having an affair with each other's partners without knowing they are there.

The season of "Borderless Love" closes in April, aptly, with *Old Love*, by popular Canadian playwright Norm Foster.

From ending its season with *Old Love*, plans are already underway for next year's theme which is the next logical step: "In Memoriam."

"Since I have been the artistic director, the seasons we have constructed thematically have been making decisions, creating connections, borderless love, In Memoriam next season and then the 60th season will be theatrical resurrection, magic," says Mr. Calderon. "I still need to find the two word catch phrase."

"It's the 60th Season. We have gone through the whole idea of reaching out and connecting with somebody, celebrating love, and then examining death. Coming from that, we want to celebrate everything that is theatre, everything that is art, everything that is culture. We want the shows to be about theatre."