

Murder and farce bring intrigue and laughs to Theatre Aurora's upcoming season

You don't have to go to Toronto for top-notch theatrical entertainment; premium productions are available right here in Aurora.

That's the message that Theatre Aurora aims to underscore as they continue the rollout of their 2024-2025 season. As The Auroran reported last week, Theatre Aurora's upcoming season, which opens with Meredith Wilson's 'The Music Man' and Norm Foster's 'The Melville Boys' aims to recapture the magic of their 2023-2024 season, which saw attendance surpass pre-attendance levels.

Bolstering that mission is the balance of the season, which showcases mystery and farce.

Next up is Agatha Christie's 'And Then There Were None,' a murder mystery which sees a disparate group of people invited by a mystery man to an isolated island and, one by one, the guests wind up dead.

'It has fabulous tension,' says Theatre Aurora Artistic Director Judy Cragg. 'The guests have been brought there and they don't know why. One by one they end up being killed off until you find out in the end what's been going on.'

'And Then There Were None' is sure to be a hit in a time when the humble murder mystery is seeing a significant resurgence in popularity.

'I think it is the familiarity,' says Theatre Aurora President Neill Kernohan on the hot streak of the whodunnit. 'I think that's why you're seeing things like Columbo and Murder, She Wrote coming out again.'

Adds Cragg: 'When we did Murder on the Orient Express last season, people would come out in the intermission chatting about, 'Who do you think it was?' It becomes this great discussion. People are, I think, still at the point post-pandemic that they still want to be entertained and challenged a bit, and we want them to be entertained. And Then There Were None is great. It's going to be lots of atmosphere, especially with the setting. The setting is a big part of that one.'

A theatre company might be forgiven for wanting to keep behind-the-scenes drama under wraps, but when you have a play as funny as Michael Frayn's 'Noises Off!' it's hard to resist.

'Noises Off!' is the closing production of the season.

Directed by Kernohan, it's another production with a big cast 'something that proves tricky as audiences need to see not only the hilarious backstage shenanigans, but also the on-stage antics of the play-within-the-play.

'It's just straight fun, but it's also really, really technically difficult,' he says of the show, which Theatre Aurora last mounted nearly 15 years ago. 'The timing is extremely difficult for the folks who are doing the acting, and I am really looking forward to working with them on that and how it is going to look. We're actually foregoing some rentals in the theatre just so we can have a little longer to be able to rehearse on stage with the set for just that reason. To me, as a director, that is what I am most excited about.'

Helping to bring this vision to reality, adds Cragg, will be Robert Ward, Theatre Aurora's Director of Operations, who is a retired engineer.

'He's not a set designer, he doesn't have a whole whack of theatre experience, but he is very good,' she says. 'I have no clues about building anything; I could hammer a nail into something, and that's as far as I'd go!'

To see how far they get along, book your tickets in advance!

'And Then There Will None' will be performed on select dates and times from March 7, 2025 to March 15.

'Noises Off!' will take over the stage on select dates and times May 2 through May 10.

'We've been talking to people ? we've spent some time at the Farmers' Market with our table ? and one of the major things I've heard is, 'I've been going down to Toronto;' I don't want to disparage any of the plays in Toronto, but they said, 'We can do a couple of your shows last year and we didn't realize the quality was there.' Now what they're saying is, 'I don't need to go to Toronto to see a good show, you can stay in Aurora and come to Theatre Aurora' and we want to keep that up. It's a good, fun season.'

For more information, including tickets, visit theatreaurora.com.

By Brock Weir