

Murder on the Orient Express brings classic whodunnit to Theatre Aurora



The Orient Express is set to steam into Aurora this week with a murder on board.

There's no need to wait out in the cold at the GO Station to get in on the action; all you need to have in hand is a ticket for Theatre Aurora's latest production, *Murder on the Orient Express*, which is set to open this Thursday, January 11 at their Henderson Drive theatre.

Directed by Neill Kernohan, *Murder on the Orient Express* is Ken Ludwig's adaptation of the classic Agatha Christie mystery that has enthralled generations of readers as famed Belgian detective Hercule Poirot races against time to solve a chilling murder before the killer strikes again.

"I think everyone has in their imagination, especially those who read the books, their own vision of Poirot and it is kind of fun to see another person's vision, the different mannerisms that are captured," says Bill Baker, who plays Bouc, a friend of Poirot's who is helping solve the case. "Everyone loves a good whodunit. The challenge here is how do you get a train in the theatre? I think a lot of people will say, 'How are they going to do this?'"

"How ARE we going to do it?" exclaims Chris Cole, who will be bringing the mustachioed detective to life.

Speaking jointly to *The Auroran* last week, Baker and Cole have a friendly rapport, which should serve their characters well and this isn't surprising as the duo have been friends for nearly 20 years, first working together in dinner theatre in Whitby.

They have always been looking for something further they could do together and, when they found Theatre Aurora's call for auditions, they came out together on the same evening to see if there was a place for them.

"Neill had everybody who was coming out to audition [do so] for two roles," explains Cole. "The two roles Bill and I auditioned for were about the only ones at our age that we could justifiably go for! When we had our call-backs, this is when Neill brought in everyone he was interested in looking at and matched them up together and that's where Bill and I got to read together, which was great fun up on stage."

"It was like putting on a comfortable old sweater a little frayed on the edges," Bill adds with a laugh, noting that, personality-wise, the roles they landed represent something of a role reversal as Cole often performs with a comedic edge.

Adds Cole: "The great fit for us too was we were playing friends in the show. Poirot and Bouc are very good friends. I don't think they have seen each other [in a while] but they slip right back into that again and they are such completely and utterly different people. We're actually pals in it and we tend to joke around a little bit during the rehearsals which I think has been an eye-opener to

some of the younger cast-members! But such are the relationships that develop within community theatre, a creative outlet that both men agree is invaluable in any town or city.

It's vitally important," says Cole, citing Theatre Aurora's recent production of *Anne of Green Gables: The Musical* bringing together actors of multiple generations.

Adds Baker: "Community theatre is the roots of theatre art — art itself — within the community. It's a place where people can come together and try, experiment, take risks and encourage youth to come out and pursue their passions, whether it be musicals, dramatic arts, or comedies. It's important for people to have a place to go for their entertainment and escape for a few hours."

And that's just what the two actors hope the audiences will experience during *Murder on the Orient Express*' run as well.

"I would love to think it will end up showing them the magic of theatre and what can be done and, as Bill said before, maybe a suspension of your belief, but still somehow see that with the mixture of the music we're going to have and some voiceovers and lighting that you could put a show on that actually involves a train in a realistic kind of way, and just to be able to listen," says Cole. "I think so often, everyone's attention span is about five seconds these days and to actually be able to listen. Christie is dialogue-heavy, but, somehow, she has remained, even in young people's eyes, as someone who can write a darn-good mystery. There is a great twist in *Murder on the Orient Express*, so as they're trying to figure out whodunnit, we're hoping they will be surprised when they do find out."

To see for yourself, head over to Theatre Aurora on select dates and times through January 20.

For ticket information, visit theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.

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