

Theatre Aurora explores the tense ties of family in The Attic, The Pearls & Three Fine Girls



By Brock Weir

Easter, a time of family gatherings, is now in the rear-view mirror for yet another year.

Sometimes they can be joyous occasions, sometimes they can be tense, such is the family factor.

Tragedy is the catalyst which brings three disparate sisters back under their parents' roof in *The Attic, The Pearls and Three Fine Girls*, Theatre Aurora's latest production, which opens this Thursday, April 12.

Returning home for their father's funeral, the sisters relive moments of their childhood and address unfinished business.

It's a story most people can relate to and while director Jason Silzer hopes it tugs on the heartstrings, he also hopes it provides the audience with plenty of laughter along the way.

?I wanted to get involved with directing *The Attic, The Pearls and Three Fine Girls* as soon as I saw Theatre Aurora had it on their season,? says Mr. Silzer, who has previously directed two productions for the local theatre. ?I had seen the sequel before I had seen the original ? in fact, I have still never seen the original other than the production I am directing ? but the writing of the sequel was so brilliantly fun and heartfelt, I got my hands on a copy of the script, read through it, and it was just as witty and lovely. I knew this was one I wanted to direct.?

There are two elements he says which are essential for him in making a bid to direct a play. First, the show has to have some ?meat? to it and this meat ?has to be juicy in some way.? Even if it is a light and fluffy piece, to catch his interest it has to have something you can sink your teeth into.

?That doesn't mean it has to be some heavy drama or anything like that, but it has to have something to play with and something to get into,? he says. ?Secondly, it has to evoke an image in my head of some kind. There have been shows this theatre has done where I have read the script, put it down and have no idea how I would go about putting it on this stage or another. Nothing pops into my head.

?With this, I read the script and I immediately had an image of some of the action and that was enough for me to grow that image into a production idea.?

The Attic, The Pearls and Three Fine Girls, which was written by Jennifer Brewin, Leah Cherniak, Anne-Marie MacDonald, Alisa Palmer and Martha Ross, checks every box.

It's well-written, he says. He has an affinity for the characters, and the element of comedy is welcome as well.

?The last two plays I've directed at this theatre were both dramas, so it is nice to do something a little lighter, something that gives you permission to go a bit more over-the-top in some of the moments, and gives you permission to just have a lot of fun,? Mr. Silzer explains. ?I just think it is one of those plays that has character. It has characters I care about, a storyline that is satisfying, and it has got some absolutely hysterical moments and it fits together as a whole.?

Mr. Silzer divides his time between his day job with a software company, and pursuing his passions as an actor-director. His first brush with the stage was in Scarborough at the age of 12 in a production of the musical *Camelot*. While still pursuing his love of

acting ? he is fresh off a stint in *The Addams Family*, in which he played Gomez ? he turned to directing about 10 years ago. There is a different satisfaction, he says, in each role ? and although they bring different highs, they inspire equal passion. ?There are plays I am interested in acting in and I have no desire to direct,? he says. ?The roles are great, but for me to want to direct something, I feel I have to have something to bring to it. [Here,] I think I have brought the show. I think the role of the director is to be the lynchpin of everything else. They have to serve to unify the vision, to make sure that everybody is on the same page at all times, and bring a cohesive whole to the stage. I hope that is what I have done. ?I want the audiences to leave with a good laugh, a little bit of their heartstrings being pulled. It is family, the action is driven by the action of the three sisters losing their parents, and I hope they leave with a little bit of that heart-flutter and smile. Of course, I hope they laugh a lot as well as the action gets more and more outrageous!?

The Attic, The Pearls & Three Fine Girls opens at Theatre Aurora this Thursday, April 12, running on select dates and times through April 21. For more information ? including tickets ? visit www.theatreaurora.ca or call 905-727-3669.