

## Theatre Aurora hosts Elly Gotz, a Holocaust survivor, for a night of education and reflection



On a recent February evening, Theatre Aurora played host to a special event featuring Elly Gotz, a Holocaust survivor who shared his story of survival and hope with a captivated audience.

The event was organized by the theatre to help further educate its cast of the upcoming production, "The Diary of Anne Frank," and brought together members of the theatre community for a night of education and reflection.

Elly Gotz, now 94-years-old, was just a young boy when he and his family were rounded up in Lithuania and sent to a concentration camp during the Holocaust. Despite enduring unspeakable atrocities, Gotz survived and went on to immigrate to Canada in 1964 after living in South Africa, becoming an engineer and raising a family.

In Toronto, Elly established several different businesses and achieved his lifelong dream of becoming a pilot, later moving on to glider flying.

During the event, Gotz shared his story with the audience, describing the horrors he witnessed and the unimaginable conditions he was forced to endure. Despite the darkness of his experiences, Gotz's message was one of hope and perseverance.

The event also featured a question-and-answer session with Gotz, providing audience members with the opportunity to engage directly with the survivor and learn more about his experiences.

The audience was visibly moved by Gotz's story, with many expressing gratitude for the opportunity to hear from a survivor and learn more about the Holocaust.

"Elly is a most remarkable man whose life journey has taken him from extent terror, with plans to suicide, to unfathomable freedom," said Jamie Sherman, who plays Otto Frank. "He is one of the richest spirits I have ever met."

Lia Baird, who plays Miep Gies, one of the Dutch citizens who hid Anne Frank, reflected, "Mr. Gotz reminds us of the power that discrimination, injustice, and antisemitism can have when fueled with such hate; but also how to embrace life to its fullest without filling your heart with hate."

Sean Dwyer, who plays Dussel in the play, summed it up: "The Elders in our society are always important sources of knowledge and wisdom, but Elly Gotz is certainly a particularly vibrant, valuable source! I will certainly seek to apply what I learned from Mr. Gotz in terms of attitude, perseverance and passion as I go forward both in my own life and in our upcoming production of The Diary of Anne Frank."

Theatre Aurora is proud to hold events that promote education and awareness around important issues, and this event was no exception. By inviting Elly Gotz to speak, Theatre Aurora hopes to provide the community with a powerful and meaningful opportunity to learn more about the Holocaust and its lasting impact.

"We are incredibly grateful to Elly Gotz for sharing his story with us," said Theatre Aurora VP of Productions, Judi Cragg. "It is so important that we continue to educate ourselves about the past in order to build a better future, and we are proud to be able to provide a platform for this important conversation."

The event was a reminder that even in the darkest moments of history, there are stories of survival and hope that can inspire us all to strive for a better future. Through the power of storytelling and community engagement, Theatre Aurora continues to work to ensure that the lessons of the past are never forgotten.

**By Neill Kernohan**