

## Theatre Aurora's 2025-2026 season finale six years in the making

What's the result when you combine two elderly sisters, a carafe of poisoned wine, and a long string of gentlemen who meet their maker after just a few sips?

Surprisingly, it's a lot of laughter in the classic 1941 play *Arsenic & Old Lace*.

Originally written by Joseph Kesselring and later adapted for the 1944 film classic of the same name starring Cary Grant, the dark comedy has a long history of making audiences laugh and it has a long history of coming to Theatre Aurora.

*Arsenic & Old Lace*, which is set to open May 1, 2026, running on select dates and times through May 9, is the final offering of Theatre Aurora's upcoming season, but it was originally slated to hit the stage on Henderson Drive nearly six years ago.

Five weeks into rehearsal on that particular production, COVID hit and much of our world was shut down. At first, the cast and crew thought the theatre would only be dark for a few weeks, but, as we all know, those weeks turned into months, and then years.

The lights may have cooled, but passion for the play did not, and the Theatre Aurora team is thrilled to be able to finally bring it to fruition.

*Arsenic & Old Lace* is not the only bona fide classic set to come to life at Theatre Aurora in 2026; their first production of the New Year is one that has been beloved by theatre-goers spanning three centuries: Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

First performed in 1895, its sparkling wit, dialogue, and social commentary has rendered it timeless, according to Theatre Aurora president Neill Kernohan.

"You know the sharp, witty dialogue and biting critique of classic convention still works today, but we really wanted to include a good old classic in the season," he says. "It's still really relevant and it's very funny, and we think it's really cool that it will allow the actors to flex their comedic timing."

*The Importance of Being Earnest* will open on January 30, 2026, and run on select dates and times through February 7.

This British classic will be followed between March 20 and March 28 by an emerging Canadian classic, *Where You Are*, written by Kristen Da Silva.

"It's very funny, but it's also very touching and heartwarming," says Theatre Aurora Artistic Director Judy Cragg. "It's got those pull-at-the-heartstrings moments of two sisters in their late 50s and early 60s who live and grew up on Manitoulin Island. One of them stayed there, married there, and is now a widow. The other one was the wild child sister who had a child out wedlock at a somewhat early age, took off, lived her crazy life, and now she has come back, living with her sister, and they're just having this life. Then the wild child's daughter shows up unexpectedly."

"It's a beautiful, heartwarming story. The setting is beautiful and the story is beautiful."

Even *Arsenic and Old Lace*, the final offering of the season, offers its heartwarming moments.

"It was the show that was closing out our 2019-2020 season," Cragg explains. "As everybody did, we kind of naively thought, well, this will be over in a month, so we put it on hold and thought instead of having it at the beginning of May, we could have it at the end of May and that didn't happen. Then we thought, okay, we'll hold off until September. After a while, we realized that wasn't going to happen, so we had to make the really difficult decision to cancel it completely."

'As you can imagine, the cast and team were pretty devastated. It was very difficult and just disappointing, but it's always been in the back of our minds, and from time to time, some people from the cast or patrons would say, 'Are you bringing it back? We really want to see it.' Finally, this year, I thought, 'Okay, let's bring it back.' It's a great show, it's a dark comedy with two crazy little old lady sisters who are basically poisoning these men who they think are only going to have a sad life and they're doing them a favour. It's old-fashioned mayhem, but very, very funny. It will be six years in the making, but we'll get there!'

As Theatre Aurora looks forward to its upcoming season, which, as The Auroran reported last week, will begin on September 19, 2025, with Rodgers & Hammerstein's A Grand Night for Singing, they're doing so knowing they've pieced together a season with back-to-back shows that are fun in their own ways.

'Whether it's a dark comedy, whether it's the completely wacko Panto, they're all fun in a different way,' says Cragg. 'You're also getting an interesting cross-section of different types of theatre.'

Tickets for the upcoming season are on sale now and can be secured through [theatreaurora.com](http://theatreaurora.com) or by calling the box office at 905-727-3669.

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