

Theatre Aurora's 'Totally Scrooged' on holiday programming

If you're a theatre patron accustomed to sitting quietly and politely in your seat during a show, you can throw all that out the window at Theatre Aurora this month as it launches its very first pantomime for the holiday season.

Totally Scrooged by Caroline Smith is a new spin on Charles Dickens' classic A Christmas Carol. It's a new spin indeed, but one that wouldn't necessarily be unfamiliar to the Victorian author. Pantomime has been a staple of the British theatre for centuries and one that invites audience participation – cheers for the heroes and boos for the villains all around!

Ever seen Dickens like this? Get ready for a riotous twist on the beloved classic! says Theatre Aurora. Packed with the zany fun of a traditional panto – complete with villains, heroes, a fabulous dame, rousing tunes, high-energy dance numbers, and plenty of audience involvement – this reimagined story is bursting with holiday cheer and theatrical magic.

Follow the grumpy Ebenezer Scrooge as three supernatural visitors whisk him away on a whirlwind Christmas Eve journey. Will he mend his ways, rediscover his spirit, and embrace the festive season?

Totally Scrooged is directed by Debbie Collins.

Panto has long been a favourite for Collins, who is also directing a Rapunzel-based panto for Theatre Orangeville this season, and Theatre Aurora's production is something of a reunion for her and Smith, having collaborated on various other pantos throughout the years.

It's completely interactive, there's no fourth wall – we talk directly to the audience, ask them to respond, yell, scream, cheer and do all of those things. For me, it's a great experience with theatre-goers, and with the audience, says Collins, whose first professional gig was performing in a panto staged by a British company at Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre, Ottawa's National Arts Centre, and Hamilton Place.

Panto originated in Britain and I learned from them and caught onto it really quickly because I just loved it. I just had so much fun doing it – I got to sing and dance, act and be silly and over-the-top. I've done about maybe two-dozen pantos in my career, almost every Christmas, and it's been wonderful. I wanted to be able to share this love I have for panto with all of these folks. So, as much as I could when we were putting this show together and I was directing them to just have fun and bring their crazy itself, and that's what they're doing!

For Collins, pantos are just about the fun and joy, and that's what she tried to underscore as director of Totally Scrooged – along with the simple message of being good and kind to one another. If you come out to the show, chances are that you'll recognize a few names and businesses as well because, in another bonus when it comes to panto, Collins says they have the freedom to make them very local.

People love to get to cheer or boo for a neighbouring town they might see as a bit of a rival, poking fun at each other like that in a friendly, loving way, she says. I would love audiences to come with their open arms and be ready to be entertained and have fun, and feel the love and beautiful talent of all the people who are doing the show because it's just a room full of talented, wonderful, beautiful people.

Totally Scrooged opens at Theatre Aurora on November 28 at 7.30 p.m. and runs on select dates and times through December 7.

For tickets and further information, visit theatreaurora.com or call the box office at 905-727-3669.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter