

Aurora's Lily Falk recognized with Emerging Playwright honour



Aurora's Lily Falk has always had a passion for the written word, but just out of decided to write a play that highlighted the experiences of young queer women.

The result was a play, *Crypthand*, which recently saw Falk named the winner of this year's RBC Emerging Playwright Award, an initiative of the Playwrights Guild of Canada.

‘About four-and-a-half years ago, I wanted to write a play that featured and highlighted young women, especially young women who were playing queer characters,’ Falk tells *The Auroran*. ‘I had done a bunch of theatre in university and just found that a lot of times people ended up playing characters that they didn’t have a lot of personal connections with, that they played people who were a lot older than them, and there weren’t a lot of queer characters in the plays that were selected.’

‘I wanted to write a play for me and the other queer young women in my life’ and from there I came across the story of Anne Lister online.’

Anne Lister, the subject of the 2019 BBC/HBO series *Gentleman Jack*, is often described as ‘the first modern lesbian,’ who left behind copious diaries detailing their 19th century life, and, in coded language, life as a lesbian.

‘What struck me about [Anne] really quickly is she was a complicated person, not necessarily a black-and-white ‘queer hero.’ She was also a challenging person, someone who had a lot of patriarchal rich British colonial mindsets, but was also really amazing in how she decided to live her life and buck every sort of social norm of her class.’

‘There are many layers and a lot of history around queer people using codes to communicate with each other, to hide, or not to be perceived.’

As a playwright, Falk, now a resident of Nova Scotia, says their love of writing and the arts took root while living in Aurora. A member of Marquee Theatrical Productions, where a turn as Gretl in *The Sound of Music* instilled a love of stagecraft, it was also nurtured through Theatre Aurora's youth program, drama programs at Aurora High School, and arts camps hosted by the York Region District School Board.

Since then, Falk has not only written this play but co-founded the Gale Force theatre company, which produced *Crypthand*'s first iteration. Winning this recognition from the Guild is an ‘unbelievable’ next chapter on the journey, Falk says.

?I remember years ago when I graduated university I first found out about this award and remember looking through the names of the people and the plays, googling the different plays that had won, reading about these young playwrights and wondering, what would it be like to write a full play. Definitely being interested but having no idea where to start, this means a whole lot. Nova Scotia is an amazing theatre scene, a super-supportive community, but we're a small centre, something that just feels wonderful, so having national recognition for the piece and having a jury from across Canada of established artists select the piece is really meaningful.?

Offering a bit of advice for aspiring playwrights locally, Falk adds: [What fuels me] is being in the creative community, being surrounded by people and in a community with people who are making amazing, original work. Definitely write as much, not only keeping it to yourself but finding somebody you trust, like a friend or someone you know, to read your play or your writing because you can write a play, but if you don't share with anyone maybe it won't actually exist. A play is not just something that is written, it's shared and made by a whole bunch of people. I think through that process I have been so lucky making Crypthand is a process of being a part of this new community I moved to, working with all these new designers, director and dramaturges. Writing can be this really beautiful process of connection with other people.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter