

"Love Letters" performance will help revitalize Theatre Aurora

By Brock Weir

Despite the beautiful prose and the often moving performances by the actors bringing it to life, A.R. Gurney's perennially popular play, *Love Letters*, can be a tough sell to theatres and audiences alike.

The play, which focuses on the correspondence between two lovers as they go through life apart, might tug at the heart strings, but two actors sitting on what is often a barebones stage, scripts in hand, bringing the words to life can't be called "lavish" by any stretch of the imagination.

But it is a beautiful piece that should be experienced more, says Sergio Calderon, Artistic Director of Theatre Aurora.

Aurora theatre-goers will have the chance to immerse themselves in the production for three days only, starting next Friday, September 16, in a special fundraiser to help revamp the venerable Henderson Drive theatre.

"A lot of companies are sometimes afraid to put on *Love Letters* because it is not necessarily commercially satisfying, if that is a thing," says Mr. Calderon. "It's readers' theatre, just two actors coming on stage with their scripts, but if you have really skilled actors/readers it is an incredibly compelling experience."

Mr. Calderon is confident they have the "brilliant" actors in place to do the script justice as they use their voices and emotions to draw the audience in rather than the glitz and glamour of a full-blown production.

It is a kick-off fundraiser ahead of the formal launch of the 2016-2017 season in October, which will bring in some additional money for some much needed TLC on the well-used Theatre Aurora stage.

"Since Jenn Manchur came on board, she has been working on our seasonal fundraising efforts," says Mr. Calderon. "Every year there is a very focused goal for what we want to fundraise. The first year she ran the fundraiser was for sound equipment. We have the new sound board and the new speakers that don't sound like hollow tunnels anymore."

Last season, their fundraising efforts were directed towards their lobby, but as Theatre Aurora wrangled with the Town over the execution of their new lease ("the uncertainty of our existence," says Mr. Calderon), that work was put on the backburner after negotiations went through their proposed revamping period.

"This year it is the stage itself," says Mr. Calderon. "Our stage needs a lot of TLC. Some of those floor boards I am sure have been there since that stage was built with a lot of the nails and screws squeaking in very specific areas. Seasoned actors who work on our stage almost know the spots. It doesn't necessarily look like it when you're sitting in the audience, but when you're up close, you can see the wear and tear."

"The lobby and the sound system were very specific to the enhancement of the audience experience, which is a pretty big buy-in. The stage still is something visual. For a while we tossed around the idea that our back stage could probably do with a lot of updating as well. We have ripped up most of the carpeting, which doesn't help keep the sound dampened. We probably should invest in acoustic tiles [for] all the expletives when someone's costume is malfunctioning."

But that's likely something for another season.

For tickets to *Love Letters* and to help support a renovated stage visit www.theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.