



CRANBROOK COMMUNITY THEATRE

Since 1964

Acting Out

Welcome Back!

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Board of Director meetings: October 27th and November 24th
- Renew your CCT Membership



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I would like to say "Welcome Back" to the members of the Cranbrook Community Theatre Society!

Generally, at this time of year we have our Annual General Meeting, we are set for the first production of the season, and the Studio is busy with community renters. This year of course, operations were adapted to reduce the risk of exposure to Covid.

Our AGM was held at the Stage Door on Sept 15th having an attendance of 22 in-person and live stream viewers of around the same. The business meeting reports and financials were presented and we welcomed Marnée Bellavance and Jennifer Inglis to the Board of Directors.

Together, this team is excited to begin the work of providing theatre and con-

tinuing to preserve and restore our historic building, the Studio/Stage Door in this new year.

In the Studio some of our renters have returned and we are getting more inquiries from new clubs and organizations. We hope that as we develop innovative ways to present "theatre", you will join us in viewing Live Theatre and Live Streamed Theatre in the 2020-2021 season.

Thanks to all who volunteer service to the Cranbrook Community Theatre Society.

The Board always sees changes in the personnel that run and volunteer for the Cranbrook Community Theatre Society. This year is no different as we say goodbye to our previous Board which include Michelle McCue, Kimberly Frixel, Trevor Lundy, Marsha Blom and Harriet Pollock. We want to thank them for volunteering their time, energy, and interest in community theatre.

We want to recognize Harriet Pollock for her dedication to the Board and community theatre for the past 40 years as Treasurer, Front of House

Producer, Concession Coordinator and many other tasks and committees over those years. Thank You Harriet, for your outstanding service! Marge Kemp is also stepping down from her position as Membership Chair after many years of keeping excellent membership records. She was also a long time Board member who spent many years as the Secretary.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the retirement of Rick and Marianne Smith as the caretakers of our beautiful heritage building. Their reliability and dedication to maintenance and cleaning the

Studio/Stage Door is reflected in the current state of the attractive facility.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

As we move into our new season, we are starting a new marketing and membership campaign.

If this is something you would be interested in being a part of, please email crancommtheatre@gmail.com or call 250-426-2490

Director, Ashlee Martin will get in touch with you.

“Almost, Maine”, CCT’s First COVID Times Show

The first production of the 2020/2021 season was a great success! Our thanks to the amazing cast and crew along with Directors, Bob and Michelle McCue, and Producer/Stage Manager, Brenda Burley, all of whom navigated a strict show time schedule. It was a very well choreographed, physically distanced dance backstage, with protocols to ensure everyone's safety. This group made it look effortless.

A standing ovation to our audience too! In the Stage Door theatre we had a sell

out of 35 seats each night except for Sunday. On average 20 people per show viewed the live-streaming online which was key to its success. When buying tickets online, audience members had the option to make a donation to the theatre. As a result we received \$366 in donations.

We are working on putting together the rest of the CCT season, so make sure to like us on Facebook and check the website for exciting updates about shows and auditions.

Play Review by Joe Szekeres

Commentary by Joe Szekeres, Toronto Columnist/Critic for On Stage Blog

Live Theatre is Back, Baby. Give thanks to those selfless volunteers who have made it work in Cranbrook I gotta hand it to the folks from BC's Cranbrook Community Theatre. They set out to provide safe attendance and participation in live theatre at a time of Covid, social distancing, masking and all that stuff to which we have become accustomed over the last six months.

Their play selection, 'Almost, Maine' by John Cariani, was a wise choice for the group to stage albeit producer/stage manager Brenda Burley and directors Michelle and Bob McCue probably had their hands full to ensure that protocols were constantly in place both at rehearsals, behind the scenes and on stage to ensure safety first for all.

Cast member Trevor Lundy concurred what I was wondering. I connected with him a few days prior to opening night, and he told me that actors were not allowed to be at other rehearsals for safety protocols. A "to the minute" schedule to enter the building AND to enter and exit the backstage area was put in place. Multiple rooms were turned into makeshift dressing rooms to help maintain the six feet distance. The opening night audience would also be socially distanced and only a set number in attendance with the performance streamed for others.

Obviously, I was watching the stream from my Ontario home. More about the streaming in a bit.

Kudos to Producer Burley and to the McCues to maintain this strict schedule. On a side note, it was interesting to watch how the McCues carefully directed each of the stories where the actors had to maintain their distance. Those who did not were real life couples. I won't spoil that fun here for future audiences to see who is connected in real life with whom.

The original off-Broadway production of 'Almost, Maine' used four actors who played the many roles. Again, given the time in which we find ourselves, it was a wise choice by the Cranbrook company to cast eighteen actors to play the roles. Why? Those of us who love the theatre are itching to return safely and I'm sure these eighteen people wanted to get involved to continue their love of live performance.

We enter the lives of some of the citizens of the remote town of Almost, Maine at 9 pm on a cold, clear and moonless Friday night. None of the characters from the other vignettes enter each other's story but there is mention of some of them in some of the vignettes.

Keep in mind I've never been to the Cranbrook theatre so I'm solely basing what I saw from the live stream. The intimate theatre stage did not appear cramped to me thanks to the specific set design of the McCues and Kimberley Frixel. Flats running along the back had painted evergreen trees and I thought I saw some snow painted along the bottom of the flats. I loved the lighting design of the moving clouds on the flats to create that upcoming wintry darkness, so nice work there from the lighting design team of Marnee Bellavance, Trevor Lundy and Sanjay Fisk. Just off-centre stage right and left were two wooden benches painted in red. Upstage was a pub style table with checkered cloth and two stools. On stage left there was an ironing board already set up with an iron and a shirt on the board. A laundry basket was on the floor.

I thought Sandy Kay's costume design were a solid selection of all the different looking textures, fabrics and colours of the upcoming winter season.

For the most part, I do applaud the work of live-streaming operators Jordan Nearing and Gordon Sheridan, because this task is a challenging one to assume. Camera work of close up and wide-angle

shots did help to focus my attention on specific characters and scenes. Yes, there were odd moments when there was freezing in the stream and it broke my attention span, but I could hear the voices of the actors and know the plot kept moving. I'm sure as each performance continues Messrs. Nearing and Sheridan will do their best to ensure that doesn't happen as often.

Regarding the production itself, these characters from Almost, Maine are quirky, odd, gullible, poignant, silly, crude and life instilling. The online programme mentions the play itself is a love story of many individuals in this small town who are drawn to the connotations of what love stands for and 'almost' connect (get the pun, here?) Yet in this time of Covid, social distancing (formerly called physical distancing) and use of masks, I believe that our human nature is crying for attention, affection and love. And who doesn't crave love in this time of Covid?

Space will not allow me to comment on each of these eighteen actors but suffice it to say that Michelle and Bob McCue have created with the cast realistic 'slice of life' characters who, in the midst of love, show us their sometimes painful and poignant vulnerability, their wise ass cracking and joking humour with a dash of supposed co-habitational or married bliss. For this, I send applause to each of the eighteen.

But sometimes a review has to point out those actors who leave that indelible mark where I put my pen down from writing my notes as I wanted to watch them, listen to them, hear them and see them change.

In a sweet, comical turn of an eye-opening moment, Andrea Grossman as Glory captured beautifully that surprise element of did she really do that in the vignette "Her Heart". As Jimmy in the vignette entitled "Sad and Glad", Jason Zimmer becomes that loveable big lug whom we are rooting for at the end after he has met his ex at her bachelorette party. Ferdy Belland as Steve in 'This Hurts' is a teddy bear, simple-minded young man-child who learns the pain of love in a comical way with an ironing board in the laundry room of a boarding house. The joys and anguish of young, impressionable love which will mature is handled with innocent sweetness in the segment "Seeing the Thing" by Savannah Fisk and Cedar Gross.

In some dramatic moments that ran believably true for me, Sanjay Fisk from "Getting It Back" and Trevor Lundy from "Where It Went" are two guys who poignantly and heartbreakingly show how hurt they are by the test of their relationships to their fiancée and wife.

Final comments: I fully support and acknowledge the tremendous work of Cranbrook Community Theatre in its slow and safe return to presenting theatre for the community.