

Sexy Laundry finds the humour in reality

BY FRANK MATYS
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A how-to sex manual and the romantic rush of Niagara Falls provide fodder for the opening show of the summer season at the Orillia Opera House's Studio Theatre.

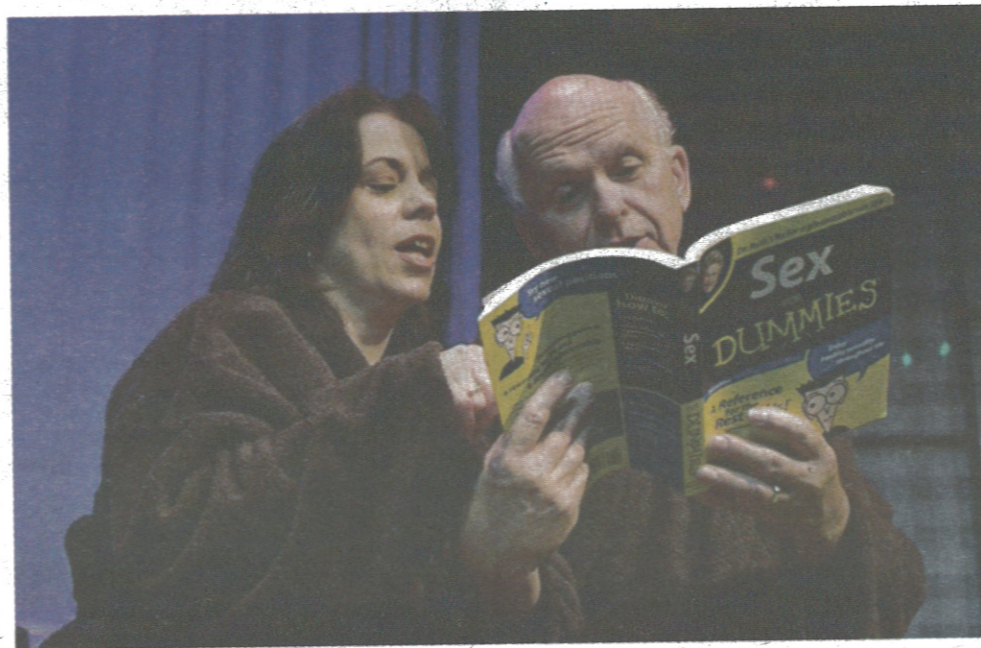
Running until June 25, "Sexy Laundry" offers a hysterical look into the lives of a long-married couple and their efforts to keep the passion alive.

"It's as much a comedy as it is a drama," said director Dave Campbell, one of four producers with Laughoutloud at the Opera House. "We've actually started calling it a dramady. There are more moments that are close to home and really make you think."

Written by Michele Riml, the show has garnered rave reviews across Canada, and has been well received at the opera house.

Campbell says it's a story that resonates with men and women alike.

"You'll see guys nudging each other and saying 'remember when,'" he says. "Nothing is funnier than a real condition. It is not slapstick humor. It is the funny thing of watching



MAX DURNFORD PHOTO

Laughoutloud presents "Sexy Laundry" at the Orillia Opera House until June 25. Written by Michele Riml, the two-person play tells the story of a couple seeking to rekindle the passion in their 25-year marriage.

where it is going."

The story centers on a couple that seeks to rekindle the passion in their 25-year mar-

riage with a weekend in Canada's honeymoon capital.

"They are at that point where the kids are

grown and they don't have the same responsibilities they once did," says Campbell.

The first act delves into the little things that can drive married couples, if not crazy then certainly around the bend.

"Like Chinese water torture, or the straw that broke the camel's back," says Campbell.

Negotiations are soon under way as the wife attempts to finagle her husband into some quality cuddle time.

Hubby is worried said cuddle time will distract from his traditional source of end-of-the-day relaxation: slumping in front of the television to watch the evening news.

Dipping into a copy of the wildly popular how-to manual "Sex For Dummies" does little to light a spark in the bedroom, with the couple awkwardly exploring each other's fantasies.

"It kind of backfires," Campbell says.

"What you have are two people who are desperate to communicate. They are doing their damndest, but they are shooting a little short of where they are trying to get."

Debbie Collins and Brian Paul comprise the two-person cast.

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entertainment

AGE: The Orillia Opera House, Laughoutloud Association and local businesses see theatre season as economic driver

Downtown theatrics have dollar value

JENNIFER BURDEN

The Packet & Times

Orillia Opera House and the Laughoutloud Association are hoping to revitalize downtown by giving summer theatre in Orillia a much needed

boost. Theatre was huge until about 10 years ago when the Sunshine Festival Theatre Company and Krista Storey, general manager of the Orillia Opera House, said this

is a consistent summer theatre business. Bank on, partnerships with the Opera House and local businesses have been difficult and traffic on production nights is picking, Storey said.

Theatre is really important to help from an economic perspective. "It directly feeds my business," Storey said. "It's a real community partnership," Storey said. "We've been able to bring the right people to the table. It's really going to be fantastic."

Maureen Way, general manager of the Stone Gate Inn, one of the partner hotels, said having summer theatre packages available has a big impact on her summer business.

"To me, it made sense to support this initiative," said Way. "It directly feeds my business."

Lisa Thomson-Roop, manager of marketing and public affairs for the Downtown Orillia Management Board, said she is excited about the new theatre packages available to visitors and

residents of Orillia because they are right on target with what theatre-goers are looking for. Thomson-Roop added that local business have been waiting for an initiative like this to happen for a while and it will only grow in years to come. "To have consistent theatre and know you can go to a show all summer long will make a difference," she said. "It's great news."

Dave Campbell, one of the four producers for Laughoutloud, said that without having a cohesive season in place, it's difficult to make theatre economically viable.

Having served as resident director for the Sunshine Festival Theatre Company in Orillia for their 2003-04 seasons, bringing renowned productions such as *Cats* and *Kiss me Kate* to the Opera House, Campbell said he knows what kind of traffic a solid theatre season can bring downtown.

"One dollar spent on theatre comes back three times," he said. "People don't generally run to a show just to do that and go. They make it an evening."

Campbell is hoping that residents of Orillia will take advantage of the upcoming summer theatre season and rediscover downtown.

"I think a lot of people, even in Orillia, forget to come downtown," said Campbell. "You almost need an excuse to come in and visit."

The four shows being presented in the Studio Theatre at the Orillia Opera House by Laughoutloud are: *The Judy Garland Story* (June 1-19), *Married Alive* (June 22 - Jul. 17), *Suds* (Jul. 27 - Aug. 21) and *The Radio Show* (Sept. 7 - 25.)

Participating hotels in the theatre packages include the Stone Gate Inn, the Best Western Couchiching Inn and Best Western Mariposa Inn and Conference Centre.

Participating restaurants are Era 67 Restaurant and Lounge, Sixteen Front Casual Fine Dining and Lounge, and The Grape and Olive Wine and Martini Bistro.

For more information on theatre packages, visit www.ontarioslakecountry.com



JENNIFER BURDEN The Packet & Times

Krista Storey is looking forward to revitalizing the downtown this summer by offering four theatre productions at the Orillia Opera House between June and September.

said she is excited about the new theatre packages available to visitors and

■ ENTERTAINMENT: Four shows planned

Theatre returns to Opera House in 2010

SARA ROSS

The Packet & Times

Theatre enthusiasts will once again add Orillia to their summer vacation spots with the return of a professional summer theatre team, says Opera House general manager Krista Storey.

A group of theatre producers, who brought *Kiss Me Kate*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and the all-time best-selling show *Cats*



Storey

to Orillia in 2004 and 2005 approached the Orillia Opera House several months ago to bring back a summer theatre program, which hasn't been the same since the Sunshine Festival Theatre Company ended in 2005, Storey said.

"We are very excited to have somebody bring in summer theatre. It's something that hasn't happened in several years," she said. "Last year, it was just different producers putting on different shows. There wasn't a real solid summer season."

The Orillia Opera House has partnered with Ontario's Lake Country to provide theatre packages, which will generate a "great" economic impact on the community, Storey said.

"We're providing them with all kinds of different variety and that way they will hopefully not stay one night, but perhaps stay two nights and do more while they are here," she said. "It centres a lot of things right in the core of the community, so people can stay locally. They can shop locally as opposed to just coming and seeing a show and leaving."

The four-member team is bringing four new shows to the Orillia Opera House between June 1 and Sept. 25,

including *The Judy Garland Show*, *Married Alive*, *Suds* and *The Radio Show*.

The producing team includes director/choreographer Dave Campbell, who staged high-profile Canadian shows including *Canadian Idol*, *Deal or No Deal*, *Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader*, *Radio Free Roscoe*, and currently *The Next Star* on YTV, set designer Tim Webb, whose local projects for the Orillia Opera House include *Kiss Me Kate*, *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Cats*. Writer and producer Debbie Collins, who brought the 2009 summer hit *Don't S*it Under the Apple Tree* to Orillia and dance choreographer Candace Jennings, who toured Canada and the U.S. as resident director of *Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* starring Donny Osmond.

"They have had wonderful experience at the Opera House in the past, so they want to bring summer theatre back," she said. "They are four phenomenal theatre people and we are so excited to have them coming."

Campbell said the Orillia Opera House is an "amazing" location for theatre.

"I don't know if people in Orillia are really aware of what an amazing facility that particular one is," he said. "The capabilities it has in terms of technical and fly galleries are superior to probably any theatre in the region."

The Orillia Opera House is selling 2010 Summer Theatre Flex Packs, four shows for \$104. The package can be purchased online at www.orilliaoperahouse.ca, or through the box office. Recipients can choose which shows they want to see and when.

"We're hoping this is a successful summer, which will lead to an even greater 2011," she said.

For more information, call the Opera House box office at 326-8011.

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