

After the last whistle blows

What does an ex-National Hockey League referee do for excitement after he retires? Bruce Hood finds that getting involved in community theatre is enough to give him butterflies.


"HOMECHILD: A Musical Journey" is coming to the stage at Erin's Centre 2000 Theatre on October 20, 21 & 22 at 7:30 p.m., and October 22 & 23 at 2 p.m. It is based on a true account of a Welsh family torn apart by the Child Emigration movement in the early 20th century.

"Yes, I'm there on stage singing my lungs out and having a good time at the many rehearsals - I'm not sure about doing it for real though" Bruce Hood said with a grin. "I'm pretty nervous already just thinking about it!" A resident of Erin, Ontario, Bruce was a referee in the NHL for 21 years starting back when there were just the Original Six teams, and was the first to ref 1000 League games.

Although used to being judged by many thousands live in the arenas and many more thousands on TV when refereeing, the former official says this is tougher. "Refereeing is reacting to a situation, while with being on stage - you are the 'situation'! Thank goodness I'm in a group of singers - it's a lot easier, just as it is refereeing in the NHL nowadays with two referees!"

This musical is a collaborative, community production involving the contributions of many talented members of Erin and surrounding areas, and resource support from the local community theatre. Information is available at www.homechildmusical.com, or Barb Perkins 519 855-6810.

Bruce Hood can be reached at 519 833-9979 or bruce@brucehood.ca.



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Creating Community with the Arts

Music and Academic Achievement

(Extracts of a 1995 presentation to the House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland, Select Committee on Children's Interests by Dr. Brian A. Roberts, Can Music Educator's Assn.)

Our preoccupation with mathematics and science in the curricular reform is misguided and will have serious implications and undermine the concept of a balanced curriculum.

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATIONS

While there is a growing need for experts in computing sciences, mathematics and sciences, these high end professions will absorb only the highest achieving students. For the majority of students, the curricular imbalance will rob them of opportunities to invest time in more meaningful studies related to other occupations or life goals.

In 1994, SAT test takers (USA) with course work in music performance, scored 49 pts higher on the verbal portion and 36 pts higher on the math portion of the test than students with no course work or experience in the arts. There is direct evidence that music study plays a significant role in the improvement in spatial reasoning, i.e. used playing chess, for engineering, architecture, navigation and anything requiring an understanding of how things go together in space.

ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Compared to Canada's manufacturing industries in 1985, the Canadian arts industry was largest with respect to employment, 3rd (in salaries) and 9th (in revenues). University recruitment by major corporations is beginning to favour arts and humanities graduates over MBA's, as being more rounded in social and communication skills and more flexible in career development.

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research on Canadians between 15 & 19 yrs shows the most important aspect is friendship, second only to music (72%). Sports ranked at only 44%. Music classes are generally performance based. This learning pattern is demonstrated in concerts, festivals, shows and other public events. Students develop stage presence and composure for presenting to groups. Music programs have performance groups attached to them in which students find many of their school friendships.

Large scale school musicals develop leadership and responsibility as well as provide a business model for participants to learn from; budgets are struck and maintained, funds raised, expenses accounted for, the show advertised and marketed.

Students need places in school where they can be successful. The nature of a musician identity has been shown to be such that students in school music programs can construct a successful identity, an enormous enhancement of self-worth and self-esteem. Students who feel good about themselves are more likely to succeed than students who must rely on doing well on a mathematics test to build a self-image.

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from the bookshelf

A REVIEW BY DIANE DINEEN

The Falls

Joyce Carol Oates, Harper Collins, 2004, hardcover, 496 pages

Joyce Carol Oates is a prolific writer, two books per year for each of the last forty years. Novels, short stories, plays, children's books, even a non-fiction book on boxing; her creativity moves in many directions. Her latest book is a work of fiction focussing on Niagara Falls, New York and on the nearby Love Canal area. Although a work of fiction, the novel covers a specific timeframe, 1950-1978; a specific, easily identifiable geographic location and it makes reference to several events in the recent past.

The novel opens with the marriage of Ariaiah and Gilbert. Ariaiah, age 29, has almost given up hope for marriage. Along comes Gilbert, a minister, and after a short courtship, they marry. Following tradition they go to Niagara Falls for a honeymoon. Less than twenty-four hours after taking their marriage vows, Gilbert takes a dive into the Horseshoe Falls. The shocked Ariaiah spends the next week prowling the Niagara Gorge waiting for the discovery of her husband's body and the legend of "The Widow-Bride" is born.

The hotel manager, fearful of bad publicity, assigns a friend of his to be Ariaiah's guide and guardian while the search goes on. Dirk Burnaby soon falls in love with Ariaiah and very shortly becomes Ariaiah's second husband.

Dirk and Ariaiah go on to a life which includes his successful law practice, a large house, three children and all the trappings of success.

Dirk becomes absorbed in a new case, that of a young woman who claims there is poisonous waste in her backyard. With a great deal of investigation and research he pulls together a class action lawsuit which he loses. Even in the courtroom it is obvious he won't give up, this environmental issue is just beginning. And then Dirk disappears.....

Oates is skilled at showing the dark side of a situation or place, whether the darkness inside a family or the darkness created by large and greedy companies. In this novel she paints vivid pictures of the poor side of town, the part of Niagara Falls affected by the dumping of toxic wastes in the abandoned canal. The sniping, controlling and put-downs in an unhappy household are presented so clearly that the misery is palpable.


The end of the book is more positive and here too Oates uses small details to show that circumstances are improving and relationships are warming; an old but special dress, a new haircut, a group photo in the sunshine.


This vivid picture of Niagara Falls, New York in the 1950's and 1960's would be of interest to anyone who knows the area or it would be a good holiday read.


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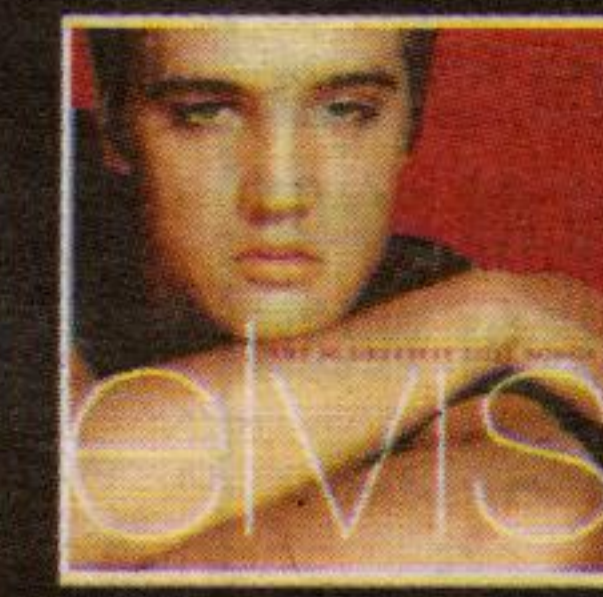















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