

Shadowpath shines light on York talent drain

BY SIMONE JOSEPH
Staff Writer

One by one, Alex Karolyi saw her talented friends move south.

Call it artistic brain drain or just plain common sense on the part of unemployed performing artists who flee the suburbs and head to the big smoke.

Adam Brazier is one of many talented natives of York Region who have found success south of the 905. He starred in a downtown Toronto production of Aladdin in December and according to him, while York Region has a wealth of wonderful community theatre opportunities, there are few professional acting options.

"I work all over the country and there are always auditions in Toronto. I don't think there are any (professional auditions in York Region)."

The major difference between community theatre and profession-

al theatre is the money. Professional theatre pays.

So it's understandable a Unionville native such as Mr. Brazier must go farther afield than his hometown to earn a living.

"It (community theatre) doesn't provide the opportunity for people who trained (in the arts) to work in York Region," Ms Karolyi said. "In Toronto, there are more professional resources available... theatre festivals, theatre companies. When you come to York Region, it's very barren. There's no real centre for the performing arts," she said.

Then, almost as an afterthought, she added: "That's slowly changing."

Ms Karolyi along with Courtney McNamara and Chantal Forde want to become a catalysts for change in York Region's theatre arts community.

The three women, all in their



ALEX KAROLYI

mid-20s, formed a professional theatre company called Shadowpath Theatre Productions in 2003 and received an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$25,000 to produce a

show in York Region.

"Trillium realized that there was a need for professional theatre in York Region to strengthen cultural awareness and provide options for professional artists in the region seeking employment," Ms Karolyi said.

All three women hail from outside of Toronto. Ms Karolyi and Ms McNamara are from Newmarket while Ms Forde is from Oakville.

Shadowpath is so named because it aims to shadow great modern playwrights such as Tennessee Williams and Henrik Ibsen by reinventing their popular plays, and establishing new paths in theatre through original works and innovative creation.

"There's always Norm Foster and Neil Simon (being produced by theatre companies.) We want to introduce new playwrights and revisit modern classics," Ms Karolyi said.

Last month, Shadowpath Theatre Productions presented John Osborne's Look Back in Anger.

"It's an edgy production. It's a drama... This show coins the phrase angry young man. He pushes the buttons of the other characters... It's not a light, happy comedy. It's about the dysfunctional relationship of four characters," said Ms Forde, who had a part in the play.

But a major obstacle the trio encountered was finding an available, affordable and appropriate place to perform. In the end, they chose the Factory Theatre in Aurora.

Shadowpath produced York Region shows in the past, but last month's production was the first to receive funding.

For more information, visit www.shadowpaththeatre.ca or call 905-955-2299.

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