

COMING UP: Stouffville playwright also directing production

Marr's 'Lake' dives into love, aging, marriage

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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What would happen if three couples got together to celebrate their 50th birthdays for a weekend on the lake?

Playwright Neil A. Marr thought he was going to find out a few years ago, but the plans didn't pan out.

So the Stouffville resident did what any other writer would do. He wrote a fictionalized version of that weekend.

The result is *Bienvenue Oh Trout Lake*, which debuts at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park June 6. It's a Markham Little Theatre production.

"It helps you look at aging through another lens," Mr. Marr, who also directed it, said.

The audience will see what happens when one of the men, Stan, brings along his much younger wife to Muskoka and the six of them then try to figure out life, love, aging and marriage.

"I don't like to judge in my writing. I like to let people think ... set the table. If we can laugh at anything, it's probably the best way to address issues," Mr. Marr said.

Like most young adults, back in the day Mr. Marr thought 50 was old. But now that he has reached this milestone, the teacher at Bayview Secondary School in Richmond Hill thinks otherwise.

"It's really very comfortable, I think, from my perspective," he said.

This is the third production in as many years staged in Stouffville by Markham Little Theatre.

In 2010, the theatre group staged *Shir-*

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Neil A. Marr
Stouffville playwright

ley Valentine, which was followed up with last year's Norm Foster production of *Storm Warning*.

Although the company calls Markham home, many of its actors and behind-the-scenes people actually live in Stouffville.

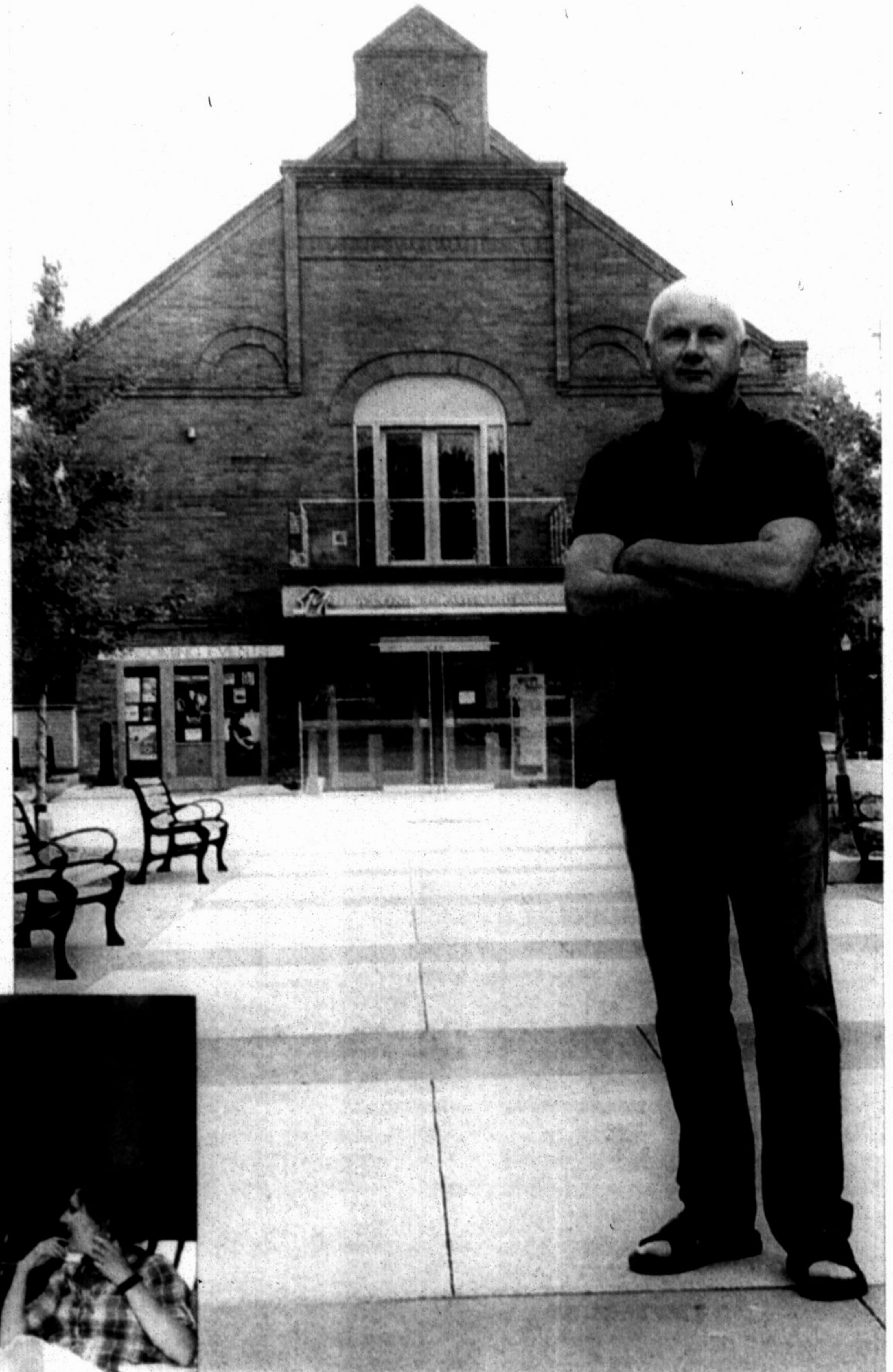
"The idea of running a play in your own town is kind of exciting and dangerous," Mr. Marr said. "When you're a writer, everyone's your critic. But that's OK. It comes with the territory."

Last year, Mr. Marr's play *PS. Uncle Angus* won best drama from the Association of Community Theatres - Central Ontario. He also received a special writing award from the organization for his original work.

Next up for Mr. Marr is potentially a piece on the famous five pioneer women.

There will be eight evening performances of *Bienvenue Oh Trout Lake* between June 6 and 16 at the Lebovic Centre for Arts and Entertainment - Nineteen on the Park.

Tickets are \$18 each and available at <http://nineteenonthepark.com/>



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Stouffville's Neil Marr stands outside Nineteen on the Park where his play, *Bienvenue Oh Trout Lake*, debuts Wednesday.



LYNN JONES PHOTO

John Sellens (from left), Josée Bazinet, Penney Donevan, Mark Champion, former Stouffville resident Jeff Bower and Stouffville's Gessica Lee Haase rehearse for Markham Little Theatre's two-week run of *Bienvenue Oh Trout Lake* at Nineteen on the Park.

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