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'Nice piece of modern theatre'

Halifax resident's play examines family damaged by secret that newcomer discovers

By ANDREA NEMETZ Entertainment Reporter

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Beth VanGorder plays Brooke, the troubled daughter of a separated couple and Connie Tremblett plays Christine, the father's perceptive new girlfriend in a scene from the Theatre Arts Guild production of *How It Works* by Halifax playwright Daniel MacIvor. The play is on at the Pond Playhouse until May 8. (ERIC WYNNE / Staff)

HALIFAX — Michele Moore has learned a lot about acting through directing her first play.

A veteran actor who has appeared in more than a dozen plays at the Theatre Arts Guild and two at Neptune Theatre, Moore is stepping offstage to direct a production of Daniel MacIvor's *How It Works* at TAG's Pond Playhouse in Halifax.

"It's a very nice piece of modern theatre," Moore says.

"It's about a family that comes apart. There's a 19-year-old daughter on meth, and it's the new girlfriend who sees something is going on with the daughter, who finds out the secret that is locking the daughter into her prison of drugs."

Still, Moore maintains, the play is not dark.

"It's very witty and wise. A very hopeful, thoughtful play. I hope it gets people talking."

Moore, who has been involved with TAG for about 15 years, first treading the boards when she was 54, says this is the first time the theatre group has done a MacIvor play.

MacIvor, a Cape Breton native and Governor General's Award-winning playwright, now lives just down the road from the Pond Playhouse. But the playwright won't be able to attend *How It Works* as he's in Toronto, where his latest work, *This Is What Happens Next*, is onstage.

"We wanted to do as many Canadian playwrights as we could. He's one of Canada's finest," says Moore, who also lives near the theatre.

Everyone wanted to be in the play because of MacIvor, she learned during auditions.

"The actors were so dedicated to the work that they came to the first rehearsal off book, which for community theatre is pretty astonishing." (Off book means the actors already knew the material and didn't need a script.)

The actors include Deborah Post as the recently divorced ex-wife Donna, Jonathan Tyson as ex-husband Al, Connie Tremblett as the new girlfriend Christine, and Beth VanGorder as the troubled 19-year-old Brooke.

"I could not have wished for a better cast," Moore says.

"The play is beautifully written. It weaves past and present. It's not a long play, it moves very quickly with very fast scene changes and is driven by lighting design and themed by sound."

Moore says she is also blessed with a wonderful production team, including Carolyn Boyer as stage manager and Chantelle Dooley as assistant stage manager and the girl in the fly mask.

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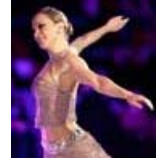
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Moore says she has learned from the directors she has worked with as an actor, including Ron Ulrich at Neptune (she had parts in One For The Pot and Liaisons Dangereuses), Gisela O'Brien and Iris Patterson.

Retired and frequently found on the golf course, Moore says she was surprised at how much satisfaction she got from directing. But she hopes to get back onstage.

Among her favourite credits is The Lion in Winter, for its opportunity "to have dialogue like that, to delve into the character of Eleanor of Aquitaine, an extraordinary woman."

On the comedy side, she's proud of her part in Bell, Book and Candle as "a crazy, lovely, wonderful aunt," a la Agnes Moorehead.

How It Works will be dedicated to the memory of Scott Murphy, a beloved member of the TAG community who died of a heart attack on April 16 at age 46. Murphy starred in TAG productions including Drinking Alone, by Norm Foster, last year and A Night in the Theatre, in 2008.

How It Works runs Thursday to Saturday at 8 p.m. this week and next at the Pond Playhouse at 6 Parkhill Dr., with matinees at 2 p.m. on the two Saturdays and next Sunday. It wraps up on May 8.

Tickets are \$16 for non-member adults and \$13 for members, seniors and students and are available at the Ticket Atlantic box office at the Halifax Metro Centre, at 17 participating Atlantic Superstore outlets, by phone at 451-1221 or at the door.

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