

## Local theatre company debuted first play last weekend

by **Nathan Howes**  
Special to Oakville Beaver

The founders of Oakville's newest theatre company promised audiences a comedy that would tug at their heart last weekend.

They delivered *XOXO*, the introductory offering of Two Juliets theatre company, founded by Meghan Chalmers, 21, and Franny McCabe-Bennett, 27, when it was performed at The Box in Toronto.

The pair met in the theatre performance program at Humber College in 2010 and have been working together ever since.

"We created a performance piece in theatre school that was so well-received we decided to continue writing together once we finished school. We premiered *XOXO* at the Hamilton Fringe Festival this summer," said McCabe-Bennett, who was in Toronto Saturday with Chalmers for the one-show performance and the official launch of Two Juliets.

*XOXO* is a 25-minute comedy-cabaret that focuses on dating, relationships and break-ups, Chalmers said.

"Even though *XOXO* is a comedy, there's a lot of sadness in it. There's sadness in relationships. It would be weird if (relationships) were happy all the time, especially if you were breaking up with someone," she said.

When people ask about *XOXO*, McCabe-Bennett said they have a hard time putting it into words.

"It's a series of little short scenes and/or monologues and songs and different types of qualities. It's not like a narrative play," said McCabe-



Two Oakville friends have launched a new theatre company, Two Juliets. Meghan Chalmers, left, and Franny McCabe-Bennett, debuted their first play, *XOXO* last weekend at The Box in Toronto. | photo by Graham Paine - Oakville Beaver (@halton\_photog)

Bennett.

Chalmers was in her final year at Humber when McCabe-Bennett approached her about creating a show for the Hamilton Fringe Festival.

Chalmers noted the idea for *XOXO* came about in December 2012, but the writing of the show didn't start until June of this year.

"We just didn't know where we would do it or where it would happen. We just wanted to get our ideas together, even if it didn't happen. Let's

just get together anyway," she said. "It sort of all came together the last two weeks before the festival."

The premiere of the show in Hamilton received great reviews, Chalmers said. The feeling of putting on the show for the first time was "really exciting."

McCabe-Bennett said starting the business with her friend was a natural progression. The 27-year-old was eager to start creating her own work.

"I left Humber after two years. It's

a three-year program and I felt like I didn't want to stay there anymore. I was ready to go off on my own and Meghan stayed and completed her third year," said McCabe-Bennett.

It also helps that working together comes easy for the pair — they have similar interests and "the same kind of things make us laugh," McCabe-Bennett said.

"We write comedy pieces, but at the same time we have such different perspectives. I know what will

make Meghan laugh, but what she says is always a surprise to me. There is something really exciting about that relationship," she said. "Meghan just turned 21 and I'm turning 28 in December...(it's) great about having those two points of view."

While there are no plans currently to perform *XOXO* in Oakville, McCabe-Bennett said there is a possibility of a future local show if there are enough requests for it.

"Oakville has a lot of really interesting performance spaces so it would be cool to see if we could find something in Oakville that we could do a show here," she said.

As for their next production, McCabe-Bennett noted they have some ideas right now but nothing is concrete yet.

"It's safe to say they're based on everyday life things. I would love for us to do a show that talks about food and eating and bodies," said McCabe-Bennett.

According to its founders, Two Juliets' productions promise shows full of "fun and stories they can relate to," Chalmers said. The best part about creating shows is that "you create other ideas for other shows."

"Franny and I are very passionate people and we're very excited (about our shows). People get excited too because they know that we have such a high energy and we balance each other well," said Chalmers.

"When we do something together, it's fun for everybody because they all get to experience the joy we have together."

The Two Juliets do not have a website as of yet. To contact Chalmers and McCabe-Bennett email itaughty-ourboyfriend@gmail.com.

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