

Burl-Oak probes The Dark at the Top of the Stairs

The Burl-Oak Theatre Group launches 2007 at the Oakville Centre on Jan. 11 with a classic drama that explores the perils, sacrifices and insecurities of being married with children.

The Dark at the Top of the Stairs won playwright William Inge a 1929 Pulitzer prize for his touching and autobiographical portrait of a family whose secret hopes and fears are bubbling just below the surface.

Inge's play takes the audience back to the early 1920s and into the home of Rubin Flood and his family living in a small Oklahoma town. Unemployment and fracturing intimacy threaten Rubin's relationship with his wife Cora. Sonny, their young son, is harassed by bullies while their shy, teenaged daughter, Reenie, faces the turmoil of her first dance.

The 10-year-old Sonny's fear of the "dark at the top of the stairs" echoes the inner demons of all the other characters on stage. Inge's powerful story tenderly implies that there is dark at the top of everyone's stairs, but that it can be dissipated by tolerance and compassion and by a companionship that demands not conformity, but love.

The Dark at the Top of the Stairs is on stage at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, as part of the Oakville Drama Series, from Thursday to Saturday, Jan. 11-13 and Wednesday to Saturday, Jan. 17-20. Tickets cost \$22 and are available through the Box Office at 905-815-2021, toll free at 1-888-489-7784 or online at www.oakvillecentre.ca. Curtain at 8 pm. Seniors and student admission is half price, at \$11, on Wednesday, Jan. 17.

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