

Dover's Lighthouse presents Jessie's Landing

By Denise Lemire, Curtain Calls – Sachem.ca

Who doesn't love a summer's drive to Port Dover? Better still is heading to Port Dover's Lighthouse Festival Theatre for the next slice of its fabulous 2011 lineup.

Playwright John Spurway's latest dramatic comedy captures the essence of parenthood in this world premiere of *Jessie's Landing*, directed by Mark Schoenberg and assistant director, Cory Doran. According to director Schoenberg, he and Spurway teamed up to mold the final piece together. They twisted and turned it and tweaked it to find that perfect "balance". It had to have the right combination to have it flow and yet touch the important bases to make it real for this father-daughter team.

Ah yes... parenthood... a delightful job for which we are never truly prepared until we are parents ourselves, searching for that elusive manual that we would have hoped came with our bundles of joy... well we all know, that never happens.

This particular story is about a father whose grown up daughter returns home after a four-year absence, bursting with her own good news only to face the reality that Dad has moved on with his life. That, in itself, presented a lot more hurdles that needed to be crossed if they were going to find the balance in their lives, including the opportunity to address issues of which were never spoken- the truth this father covered so as to protect his daughter and the denial that she carried with her to protect herself.

A dynamite two-person cast held us riveted as they told a funny and yet heart-wrenching story. In the role of "Jessie", Maria Dinn was incredible. She naturally flowed through the character of "Jessie" and also periodically assumed the "supporting" roles creating the framework of this Spurway masterpiece. Previously also at Lighthouse, she was "Natalie" in *Jenny's House of Joy* and "Kate" in Spurway's *Grounded*.

Playing the role of "Harold", we once again watched in awe as David Rosser hit the nail on the head. He was funny, he was typically a Dad... at times, a little goofy; other times, kind of awkward; hesitant not to hurt his daughter when he had to be firm, but handled it gently and lovingly. Rosser is quite the versatile feather in LFT's cap, as we recently enjoyed him in *Ned Durango* as "Orson"; previously as "Henry" in *The Perfect Pitch*; as well as "Mario" in *Hard Hats*.

A very colourful and yet delicately woven storyline that had us empathizing and knowing exactly what it was like to deal with a young adult child who had to now come to grips with the realities of life and Dad "Harold" having to come clean so that the two of them can move forward. A great set by Robert Judd, which was ideal for the characters needing to make those lightning-speed costume changes.

Jessie's Landing is now tied for my favourite John Spurway play. I loved *Between Friends* back in 2008. This Spurway gem was like peeping through a neighbour's window and seeing the realities of the greatest job we will ever have in our lives.

We all have to tap ourselves on the shoulder when we come through on the other side of raising our kids. There are no medals or certificates or trophies just the inward satisfaction that we did a pretty darned good job. That's what I got out of attending Lighthouse's opening night last week... thoroughly enjoyable.