

HAMILTON THEATRE: A PERSONAL JOURNEY

By Lyla Miklos

Hamilton Arts Council Theatre Guide

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Hamilton is the community where I found my artistic voice and discovered my passion for theatre.

My journey started at Hill Park Secondary School with drama teacher, Bill Cook, and music teacher, Sylvia Holinaty. I am still in awe of their miraculous ability to harness the restless energy of teenagers on stage every year.

My next outlet was the Theatre Aquarius Summer School Programme. Run by the larger than life Lou Zamprogna, this program gave me intense training in acting, singing, and movement. Lou's disciplined work ethic is something I strive to emulate to this day.

After auditioning at Hamilton Theatre Inc I found my theatre "home". Whether performing *La Cage Aux Folles* with Broadway's Rudy Tronto or *A Grand Night For Singing* with Hamilton's Sharon Reynolds, my repertoire was expanding. Discovering profound joy in the collaborative teamwork of a production was an epiphany for me.

As I moved on to working with the Player's Guild, Drury Lane, Piccadilly Circus and Daycar I experienced a broader range of Hamilton theatre. Whether it was an interactive and zany Italian wedding with director David Dayler, telling Matthew Shepard's story in *The Laramie Project* with director Willard Boudreau, or singing a Sondheim score in *A Little Night Music* with director Gary Smith, every production matured me as a performer.

And now, as the Host of Centre Stage on INDI 101.5 FM, I provide a venue for local theatre artists to connect with the wider community. The Hamilton Fringe Festival, Hamilton Place touring productions, HWDSB's Art Smart programme, Sky Gilbert's Hammertheatre and myriads more have visited the radio studio at Mohawk College's Fennell Campus. Spreading the joy of live theatre in Hamilton is a public service I do with pride. Expanding the world of theatre experiences for my listeners is a pleasure I revel in.

The intimacy of live theatre is an experience unlike any other. It is an art form with ancient roots, while also being a living tradition that is constantly evolving. Such

ongoing development is what makes theatre tangible and alive. When the lights go down and the curtain goes up we are transported and invited into a new reality. Theatre, unlike film, television, or our smart phones is where we and the performers share the air and space together. We give from and take in each other's energies. And if the magic mix of ingredients is just right we may even find transcendence.

As a theatre artist I am proud to call Hamilton my home. Hamilton's grassroots spirit proves all you need is a space and an audience to make theatre happen. My home city's fierce and bold creative energy inspires and transforms both myself and the entire community every day. Where will we go from here? How will our changing demographics, economic landscape, and new technologies affect the stories we tell? I don't know, but I can't wait to find out.

May the journey continue.

A Hamilton Woman of the Year in Communications, Mohawk College Alumni of Distinction, and Hamilton Pride Citizen of the Year, Lyla is a queer feminist labour activist, broadcaster, performer, writer, community organizer, administrator, publicist, sci-fi fan and theatre nerd. www.lylamiklos.com