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Export date: Fri Oct 30 2:12:05 2026 / +0000 GMT

Chris Hadfield touches down in Orangeville to talk space and writing career

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Theatre Orangeville brought Canadian space icon Chris Hadfield to the Opera House on Sunday (Oct. 26) to talk about his new novel, Final Orbit, part three of his Apollo Murders series.

Set in 1957, amongst the backdrop of the Cold War space race, Final Orbit follows a joint mission between three NASA astronauts and three cosmonauts. Kaz Zemeckis, a flight controller based on Earth, listens. Something goes horribly wrong, and three of the crew die in a mysterious accident. Amongst the chaos and confusion, a third power from the east is rising, as China sends its first man into space.

?It's been very delightful to have been able to release a book into the wild,? he said. ?It was a domesticated animal for a long time, and it feels wonderful to see how many people are enjoying it.?

Hadfield has enjoyed writing his whole life, starting with short stories as a teenager. Going into his early 20s, he wrote for an underground newspaper. But he said he was holding off on writing anything until he felt he had accumulated enough experience.

?When I was a brand-new astronaut, I was approached to write a biography, to which I said, ?a biography? I haven't done anything yet,'? he said. ?I wanted to get to a stage in my life where I had done enough things and maybe gained enough perspective that it was worth writing.?

He was eventually asked to write an introduction to Ray Bradbury's classic sci-fi novel, The Martian Chronicles, which led a UK-based publisher to suggest he try writing fiction. This led to Hadfield writing The Apollo Murders series, which applied what he had learned speaking to crowds during his career as an astronaut.

?Once I got selected as an astronaut, and because Canada has almost no astronauts, you have to go out and speak a lot,? he said. ?People want to hear stories about space that are cool. But they also want to hear the ?why?' and ?How does this apply to me?'. I learned more and more about what's useful and how to tell a story that's memorable,?

?If I tell you facts and figures of a space shuttle, you won't remember them. But if I tell you what it was like to fly one, and slip in some facts, you might remember them.?

This approach has paid off well for Hadfield's launch into fiction. His series has earned critical acclaim for its approach to science fiction, and here in town, Theatre Orangeville sold out tickets for his event well in advance.

Hadfield is just the first of many incoming authors to be hosted at Theatre Orangeville as part of Authors on Stage, a series created in collaboration with BookLore.

?This special series is more than an evening with acclaimed authors; it's a community collaboration that champions local arts and culture,? said Theatre Orangeville in a statement. ?Together, BookLore and Theatre Orangeville are uniting literature and live theatre in support of our New Play Development (NPD) Fund,?

?Every ticket purchased directly contributes to nurturing Canadian playwrights and helping bring new stories to life on our stage through workshops and commissions,? the statement added.

Next up, Theatre Orangeville will host author Alan Doyle on Nov. 23, which has already sold out. Adams Shoalts is next on Dec. 2,

and tickets are limited but still available. They can be found on Theatre Orangeville's website at: theatreorangeville.ca/fundraiser/authors-on-stage