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ALL ARTS & CULTURE

## TMU grad behind 'Heated Rivalry' discusses her work on the show

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By Colin Morley

You've likely heard of *Heated Rivalry*, the Canadian television show currently taking the world by storm.

What you might not know is that one of Toronto Metropolitan University's (TMU) own alumni, Lori Fischburg, who graduated in 1998 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in film production, is a producer and production manager on the critically acclaimed TV phenomenon.

The show, created by Jacob Tierney and based on the *Game Changers* novel series by Canadian author Rachel Reid, depicts the secret relationship between two pro-hockey players.

After premiering on Nov. 23, it became the most-watched original series on the Bell Media-owned streamer Crave. The show also had the most-watched debut of an acquired title on HBO Max in the U.S., which purchased the American streaming rights shortly before the Canadian premiere.

Fischburg was approached to produce the show by Tierney's producing partner, Brendan Brady, whom she had worked with before on independent horror film *The Void*.

"The industry is smaller than it looks in Toronto. You basically start to know everybody. So, he had this show and called me," Fischburg said in an interview with *The Eyeopener*.

The show has been praised by critics and viewers for its positive depiction of a queer romance.

First-year civil engineering student Aqib Zaman told *The Eye* "I think the representation is really unique, you don't see a happy, long-term, gay relationship in media like this."

Jessica Lu, a third-year business management student, said, "Being queer myself, it's just sweet to see these characters navigate their love for each other and have a happy ending. I do feel represented."

Fischburg is thrilled with the outpour of support for the show. "It's just so heartwarming to actually make a difference in people's lives, which is what people have been really reaching out to me about," she said. "It's such a good show, in that there's no real 'bad guy.' The relationship is just a beautiful relationship."

Fischburg has built a career as a well-regarded figure in the Canadian film industry.

As a freelance producer, line producer and production manager, she has worked on shows and films like *The Z Suite*, *SurrealEstate*, *What We Do in the Shadows*, *My Old Ass* and *Seven Veils*.

A self-described "cinophile," Fischburg said she credits her time at TMU with giving her the skills to further pursue her career.

"I loved film and photography going into TMU, but it made me have confidence to fall in love with what I want to do in the industry. It taught me how to think creatively and critically and communicate," she said.

Another highlight Fischburg recalled from her time at TMU was meeting legendary Canadian filmmaker Bruce McDonald, who came to speak with students.

For those interested in a career in film, Fischburg stressed the importance of maintaining connections.

"Keep in touch with people...I always say to [production assistants she hires for their first show or film] 'hire me one day' because you never know who's going to be the producer, you never know who's going to be the director."

As for what's next, Fischburg is currently in the planning stages for the second season of *Heated Rivalry*, which was announced by Crave in December.

"I don't have any dates or things like that. But we all want it to happen sooner rather than later...so the next year, or two, or five, will definitely be busy, but thank you to everybody for that, it's just been amazing," said Fischburg.

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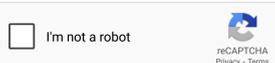
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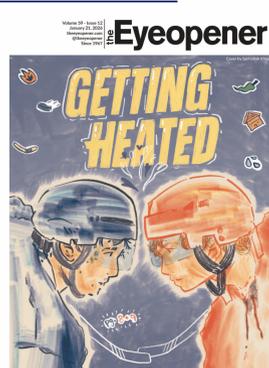
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