

Theatre Arts Guild festival stages new authors' one-act plays | The Chronicle Herald

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Playwright says seeing work performed on stage crucial part of process for new dramatic writers



Adam Lardner as The General, Valerie MacKenzie as The Woman and Jarrett Power as The Young Man rehearse *The Passion*, part of the Playwright Festival at the Pond Playhouse in Halifax. (TED PRITCHARD/Staff)

A play is never complete for the playwright until he sees actors bring his words to life onstage, says Nick Jupp.

The past president of the Theatre Arts Guild, Jupp has written two one-act plays that were performed at the Liverpool International Theatre Festival as well as at the guild, Dartmouth Players and Cape Breton University.

"Everyone wants to write a play, but they haven't experienced the whole thing till they've seen it performed," says Jupp. "Actors develop the characters in a way that may or not be exactly as you saw them. Quite often it's better than you envisioned."

Four new playwrights will get that chance with the Playwrights@TAG Festival slated for Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. at the Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Rd., Halifax.

Twenty-minute plays by Ryan Van Horne, James Boyer, Dean Taylor and Mary Wood will be presented by nine guild actors in full costumes, with sets and props.

The evening will be hosted by Debora Pollock, in glamorous gowns and jewelry, says Jupp. She'll introduce the plays and keep the evening flowing.

The idea for the festival was born after the guild's artistic committee received plays written by members that they wanted considered for inclusion in the guild's season.

"There was a reluctance to give them a full three-week slot," says Jupp. "But the committee wanted to find a way to accommodate them."

So the idea of the festival was born. It would be a non-competitive, worry-free festival with no financial commitment, something for members to have fun at and enjoy the new experience of writing a play and seeing it staged.

Jupp and guild president Angela Butler sat on a submission committee that saw about 15 entries and selected the four to be presented.

Butler is performing in Wood's one-woman play Brain Teaser, which she is also directing, with input from Jupp and Wood.

"It's a time-of-life play about a woman questioning her sexuality and her place in life, and whether she's still attractive," says Jupp.

Boyer, is directing his play Down for the Count, which features Elaine Casey, Helen Goodwin and Carolyn Boyer.

"It's about four women who have been friends their entire life, who have lived in the same small town," says Jupp. "The first of the four has passed away and left her property to the remaining three."

Jupp, who has directed about 20 productions in his 20 years with the guild, is directing Department of Common Sense by Van Horne and Compassion from Annapolis Valley playwright Taylor.

Department of Common Sense, starring Jocelyn Covert, Callum MacLean, Adam Lardner and Emily Jewer, is a comedy about government bureaucracy and red tape.

Compassion, starring Lardner, Valerie MacKenzie and Jarrett Power, is "a thinking play about compassion and the lack of it in the every day world," says Jupp. "There's a fictitious character, The General, who changes the lives of two strangers."

The playwrights will all attend the festival and Jupp hopes audience members will chat with them.

And, if the festival goes well, the guild hopes to do it again.

Tickets are \$13 and are available by calling 451-1221, visiting www.ticketatlantic.com, at the Ticket Atlantic box office at the Halifax Metro Centre, participating Atlantic Superstores and at the door.

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About the Author

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