

THEATRE ARTS GUILD

- 02 Directors Workshop
New Ticket Atlantic
Procedures
- 03 TAG Variety Show
On the Main Stage!
- 04 The History of TAG
- 05 Thought, Word & Deed
- 06 TAG COVID-19 Response

Canada's Oldest Continuously Operating Theatre Company



THE POND PLAYHOUSE

TAGTheatre.com

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CONTACT

November
2020

The official newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild

Win Some Cash Just in Time for the Holidays

TAG is excited to launch a holiday online 50/50 raffle fundraiser in support of the theatre! The winner will receive 50% of all the money raised. The Theatre Arts Guild is proud to be the country's oldest community theatre with a record of continuous operation. We are facing the challenges of maintaining the theatre during COVID-19 and need your support to maintain our community theatre.



Go to www.rafflebox.ca/raffle/theatrearts. Good luck to all our TAG supporters and thank you!

Final Day for Ticket Sales: December 11, 2020

Draw Date: December 12, 2020

Draw Location: TAG's Virtual Variety Show. Winner will be contacted directly to claim their prize.

Get Your Tickets Today! The winner of TAG's last 50-50 raffle won \$725!

Directors Workshop - Live on Zoom

Date: November 12, 2020, 7-9 pm

Host: Terri Coolen

Cost: \$15-Members/Students, \$20-Non members

Have you ever thought about directing, but aren't sure where to start? Join host Terri Coolen for a webinar about the director's craft, including planning, auditions, and rehearsals.

Following each topic, the floor will open to ask questions of our panel of experienced directors:

- Angela Butler
- Bill VanGorder
- Cheryl Theriault
- Michele Moore
- Nick Jupp
- Rebecca Humphreys

Register at tagtheatre.com. Registration limited. Secure your place now.



12

Directors Workshop - on Zoom

November 12th at 7pm

\$15 for members/students, \$20 for non-members. Register at tagtheatre.com before the class fills up.

19 -
28

On the Main Stage

Tickets are on sale now for *Choices* and *Alone*. Grab yours at tagtheatre.com. Limited seating for social distancing so don't delay!

New Ticket Atlantic Procedures

As all sectors have had to pivot and rethink their procedures to keep staff, patrons and volunteers safe, so has Ticket Atlantic, TAG's ticketing partner. When TAG tickets are again available for sale, there will be changes in the process.

* Tickets will be available only online at www.TicketAtlantic.com or by phone 902-452-1221.

* There are no ticket outlets at Atlantic Superstores (until post-COVID-19).

* Because Public Health requires that we maintain social distancing, seating capacity within the auditorium is significantly reduced. The seating plan has been divided into "bubbles" of two, three, and four as well as a few single seats. *It is important that patrons who wish to sit together, arrange for one member of the party to purchase all tickets.* If you ask the online system or telephone agent for a single seat, you will be given the option to purchase only the available single seats.

* If you do not see the seating configuration you want online, some special requests can be arranged by phone.

* There are a limited number of accessible seats that can be arranged by phone.

* When buying your tickets, we ask that you use the print-at-home or electronic (keep on your phone) options to avoid unnecessary handling of paper tickets at the theatre.

* There will be an option to purchase tickets at the door, however, to minimize close contact and handling of paper tickets, we encourage everyone to buy their tickets in advance.

TAG *Almost* Annual Variety Show

TAG's *Almost* Annual Variety Show is going online! It will be held on Saturday, December 12th. Participants will be performing on stage while the audience watches online.

Mark the date on your calendar and watch for more details soon!

Become a TAG Member!

Join or renew your TAG membership for our 2020-2021 season.

This year we're celebrating our 90th year!

All memberships are only \$15.

Join online here:

<https://tagtheatre.com/membership.html>



TAG *Almost* Annual Variety Show

12

Mark the date on your calendar and watch for more details soon!

Online 50/50 Fundraiser

Tickets are on sale until December 11th! Go to www.rafflebox.ca/raffle/theatrearts to get your ticket today!

Live Theatre is Back on the Main Stage!

Live theatre is back with *Alone* and *Choices* by Nicholas Jupp, two short plays written for the Liverpool International Theatre Festival.

Alone takes a couple all the way through life. Sometimes hilarious, sometimes poignant, and sometimes heartbreaking. *Alone* will grab you and take you to the very end. Starring the original cast, Angela Butler and Rob McIntyre.

Choices is about just that! Decisions and choices made in the past sometimes come back to bite, and they can bite hard when you least expect. Watch out! Starring Angela Butler, Rob McIntyre, Alex McAllister, Rayna Smith-Camp and Jennifer Robbins. Warning: Adult themes and language, moderate violence, unexpected loud sounds.

Runs Nov 19th to 21st and Nov 26th to 28th. Tickets on Sale Now at Ticket Atlantic on-line (please choose the print ticket at home option if you can) at www.ticketatlantic.com, or call 902 451-1221. If you plan to attend as a bubble group, please have one person purchase all the tickets so we get advance notice of your seating needs.

Theatre Arts Guild and The Pond Playhouse have a Covid policy in place that restricts sales to about a third of normal capacity. Additionally, we have helpful policies in place to guide everybody in an appropriate manner.

The performance is 90 minutes long with no intermission, just a short reset between plays.



The History of TAG: 90 Years and Counting What's in a Name?

What's in a name – or rather the name ... *The Playhouse*, included in the title of Theatre Arts Guild's place of residence from 1931.

The term *playhouse* as a synonym for theatre has been in use since Medieval times. It would have been nice if we could claim that it was the name used for Shakespeare's first theatre, but that was The Rose. His second workplace was simply The Theatre, until it was taken apart, transported across the Thames (as part of a nasty dispute about rent) and reopened as The Globe.

For the Little Theatre Movement and the Halifax Dramatic and Musical Club (which merged to form the Theatre Arts Guild (TAG) in March of 1931), I suspect the choice of The Playhouse for the name of their first home was an easy one to make. This first home set a pattern. However, it was not a purpose-built theatre, but a former hall (once belonging to St. Andrew's United Church) at the corner of Coburg Road and LeMarchant Street, a site now occupied by the Mona Campbell Building of Dalhousie University.

Playhouse number one was fine ... for a while. Unfortunately, the roof leaked and regular patrons learned not to sit in certain seats if it was raining outside! Through connections to the military, a move was made in 1935 to the top floor of the Navy League Building, a recreation centre for naval personnel on the corner of South and Barrington Streets. This facility housed all kinds of amenities - a café, pool tables, a hockey rink (in the basement) and, on the highest level, an auditorium and stage, known as Nelson Hall. As a bonus, Nelson Hall could be accessed through a separate entrance on Barrington Street. Just four years later however, this dream location was lost. Canada went to war on the 10th of September, 1939 and the country's wartime naval administration requisitioned the entire building.

No playhouse did not mean no Theatre Arts Guild. TAG transformed into a concert party troupe, thanks to the determination of Hugh O. Mills (one of its leading lights and the owner), with his brother Willett, of Mills Brothers Department Store on Spring Garden Road. By the time the Concert Party had transformed back into an amateur dramatic society, it was 1950 and the third evolution of the Playhouse was the gymnasium of HMCS Scotian, a naval reserve station on Upper Water Street – another not exactly ideal location.

The next move promised a brighter future, and in 1952 the Guild moved to number 27 College Street, on the top floor of a former Elementary School in the Halifax Catholic School Board, near the junction of Summer Street. (The site is now occupied by the rear entrance of the Sacred Heart School). On the top level was a stage, a lobby and several storage areas. Another amateur drama group occupied the basement of the building. TAG flourished in this new area and a settled routine was soon established. Membership rose to over 1,000 people and a subscription to each season (five or six plays) was available for \$6.00. January 25th, 1959 brought an end to this particular dream. The fourth Playhouse burned to the ground after a blaze began on the lower level. The eight cast members of *Candida*, who were rehearsing in the TAG space managed to escape, but everything else was lost, as the top floor eventually collapsed on to the floors below.

The years following the fire saw a period of decline in the Guild's fortunes. A house was rented on Victoria Street, which substantially reduced activities and various performing venues were used, including the auditoriums of St. Patrick's and Queen Elizabeth High Schools and the Atlantic Room of the Nova Scotian Hotel (now the Westin Hotel). After a good deal of searching, in November 1965 the

What's in a Name? continued...

Theatre Arts Guild found location number six – the hall to St. Augustine's Anglican Church (no longer needed after the construction of a new worship facility on Purcell's Cove Road), which included a hall in its basement. The price paid was \$7,000 and, with little money in the kitty, one of TAG's loyal members, Mrs. Bernice Ross, assumed the mortgage so the move could be made. Mrs. Ross covered all the bills, too, until productions began to bring in revenue and she was repaid.

The Pond Playhouse, as home number six was quickly named, has changed considerably in the intervening years. A new lobby area and bar has been built, with a rehearsal hall above with the same dimensions as the stage. The kitchen has been refurbished, and two galleries added to the east and north sides of the building provide much needed storage for props and costumes, and a workshop for construction activities and painting of sets. A new parking lot came into being last year, thanks to funding from municipal sources and there is hope that more funding can be acquired from federal sources for an upgrade to the lighting/sound booth.

In the 54 years the Theatre Arts Guild has been a presence on Parkhill Road, a great deal has been accomplished. I hope you enjoy what the sixth home of TAG has to offer!

~Judy Reade, TAG's Archivist

Now Playing Online ...

Catch *Thought, Word, and Deed*, an audio play by Joshua Law now at <https://youtu.be/WKudpq6jqtE>

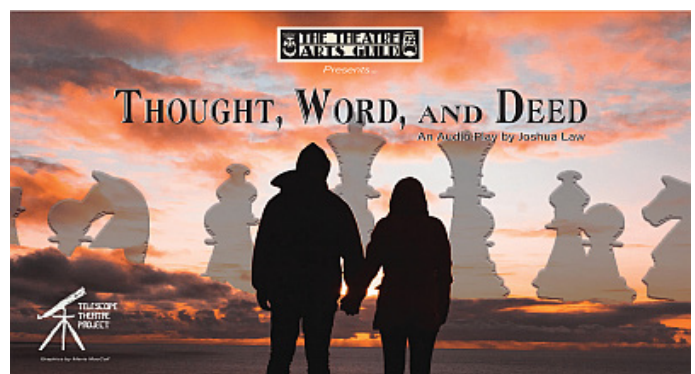
Thought, Word, and Deed by Joshua Law

Did you miss our first audio play? Worry not. *Thought, Word, and Deed* is streaming once again!

Set in the quiet town of Cochrane, Ontario in the mid-1990s, rumours surround two young lovers, Chris and Cayleigh, after they left a birthday party one Saturday night. As the town speculates, Cayleigh is sneaking out, Chris has run off, and her brother Jeremy seeks justice. What really happened between Chris and Cayleigh at the bandstand?

Now playing at youtu.be/WKudpq6jqtE and tagtheatre.com.

To make a donation, go to: www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-theatre-arts-guild/



TAG's Covid-19 Response/Implementation Committee by Esther VanGorder, Committee Chair

When Nova Scotia went into lockdown in March (seems an age ago now), not much happened at the Pond Playhouse beyond maintaining the building and hanging a "postponed" sign over the *Dracula – The Bloody Truth* poster. Lest you think that we've been idle ...

As things started to open up again over the summer, the theatre community began the long process of figuring out how we could get back to doing what we love - making theatre. Theatre Nova Scotia (TAG is a member) was charged by the Dept of Culture to create the Theatre Sector Plan (for both professional and community theatre) for reopening which had to be approved by Public Health before we could invite our volunteers and patrons back into the building. That plan was approved in early June around the same time that Public Health increased the gathering limits that would allow cultural events to proceed.

A COVID-19 Response Committee was convened by the Board and began to meet weekly over the summer to create a plan to submit to the Board. The committee consisted of Esther VanGorder (Chair and member of the TNS working group), Brenda Tyedmers, Lorne Abramson (Building Manager), Joshua Law (Bar Manager), Maddi McKay (Volunteer Coordinator), Rayna Smith-Camp (President), Nick Jupp, Cheryl Theriault and James Boyer. Led by Brenda, our expert Engineer/Project Manager, we completed a hazard assessment of the entire property, which was then extrapolated into a comprehensive plan for each space to eliminate hazards, add safety and increase sanitization, all to make the Pond Playhouse safe for our volunteers and patrons.

The Board approved that plan (see link below) at our October Board meeting and a COVID-19 Response Implementation Committee was convened to replace the first committee and put the plan into practice. The Committee – consisting of Esther VanGorder (Chair), Brenda Tyedmers, Lorne Abramson, Joshua Law, Eileen Wooley (Volunteer Coordinator as of the AGM in Sept), Bill VanGorder (Publicity Director), and Rayna Smith-Camp – has been hard at work ever since.

When you return to TAG, and we hope you will soon (see details of our live plays in this newsletter), there will be some obvious differences. As per Public Health Directives – masks are required at all times while inside the building, as is social distancing. Sanitization stations are placed throughout the building. Plexiglass shields have been installed at the ticket counter/bar and in the booth. Soft furnishings and any extraneous furniture have been removed from the lobby to minimize the surfaces that must be cleaned on a regular basis. Floor markings are being installed to aid in the movement and distancing of volunteers/patrons. Seating "bubbles" have been created so that the required 6ft/2m distancing can be maintained inside the theatre. Only every other row of seats is available and, with the exception of 4 accessible seats, the front row of moveable chairs has been removed. Entering and exiting the theatre will be monitored and controlled. Performers will maintain the required 12ft distance from the audience, and will not mix with patrons after the show.

One of the most important parts of the Sector Plan is the requirement for us to keep records of everyone who comes into the building in order to facilitate contact tracing should the need arise. Volunteers are required to sign in and out every time you are on site, and as patrons, you will be asked for a name and contact number for the ticket purchaser in your group. All of us feel for our professional Theatre colleagues, most of whom are unable to make a living in their chosen field during this time. Lucky for us, as Volunteers we are able to move forward, slowly and carefully, to create the live theatre experience we've been missing since March. We all look forward to welcoming you back.

If you have any questions about what we're doing to keep everyone safe, please contact Esther VanGorder at artistic-director@TAGTheatre.com.

For TAG's full COVID-19 Response & Re-Entry Plan (including initial hazard assessment) plus a summary PDF go to: tagtheatre.com/covid19_response.html

Theatre Nova Scotia Sector Plan: www.theatrens.ca/theatres-covid-19

NS Dept of Culture Guide for reopening:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Events-theatres-and-venues-COVID-19-prevention-guidelines.pdf>