

# THEATRE ARTS GUILD

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Canada's Oldest Continuously Operating Theatre Company



THE POND PLAYHOUSE

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## CONTACT

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The official newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild

### THE 5TH BIENNIAL PLAYWRIGHTS @ TAG FESTIVAL COVID EDITION

THE THEATRE ARTS GUILD  
Presents  
**The Fifth(!) Biennial  
Playwrights @ TAG Festival**  
Featuring  
**Dear Diary** by Judy Reade  
**Life During Wartime** by Heidi Hodgkinson  
March 25-27<sup>th</sup> @ 8PM via Zoom  
For tickets, go to [Eventbrite.ca](http://Eventbrite.ca)  
Free Admission, Donations Suggested

This year's Playwrights @ TAG Festival features two plays reflecting life in lockdown:

*Life During Wartime* by Heidi Hodgkinson chronicles Pamela and Tom, a couple trying to survive... each other. As they navigate the new normal together, will Pamela find the right eyeliner for Tom's work dinner party? Can Tom sit through a movie without looking at his phone? Tune in to find out!

*Dear Diary* by Judy Reade focuses on Meghan as she searches for Prince Charming. In an age of social distance, her world has shrunk to only her, the occasional delivery driver, and Chester, her snarky cat. How does she meet suitable young men when so many aspects of her normal routine are now unavailable? Will her prince someday come through her door with her favorite meal and whisk her away from her frustratingly limited existence?

Presented to you via Zoom March 25-27 @ 8PM, and hosted by the one and only Debora Pollock.

Tickets are free, but a minimum \$10 donation is suggested. For yours, go to eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/playwrights-tag-tickets-144541167523>

## Theatre Arts Guild Takes Steps to Create Digital Content

TAG is taking steps to produce digital content by amalgamating The Telescope Theatre Project into its program. On 1 February, 2021, TAG's executive board voted unanimously to accept a proposal by Telescope to assimilate them into TAG. The Telescope Theatre Project is a collaborative company of storytelling enthusiasts, dedicated to the production of lost/forgotten, and developing works of poetry, prose, and plays through various media, including: live theatre, and audio and/or visual presentations. Its artistic directors are Joshua Law and Kaylon Fraser.

Telescope's digital programming includes Radio Telescope, which produces original and little known plays adapted for radio, and The Poetry Nebula, showcasing original and fascinating poems throughout time. With this amalgamation, community members now have further opportunities to engage in storytelling by submitting pieces, either of their own creation and/or of their interest to direct.

### Submit a Play to RadioTAG!

To submit a play for RadioTAG, email [telescopetheatre@gmail.com](mailto:telescopetheatre@gmail.com)

Submission Requirements:

The work is of your own creation.

OR

The work is in the public domain

Joshua Law has dabbled in audio plays on and off since 2014, producing and directing *Blind Date/First Date* (2014/2020), *Living the Cave* (2016), *The Mermaid*, and *Thought, Word, and Deed* (2020) with TAG.

The first productions under this merger are *He Said/She Said* by Judith Reade to be released March 18th under our new studio series RadioTAG, and the second series of *The Poetry Nebula*, presented by Telescope's poet in residence, Melinda Antle. As TAG and Telescope develop their productions, Law will remain as producer to mentor artists in these alternative avenues, including sound editing, directing, and writing for radio. Further opportunities such as video will become available over time.

## Thank you TAG Donors!

This has been an incredibly difficult year - the pandemic has made it incredibly difficult to plan, produce and provide opportunities for our members and patrons. Despite this hardship, our community has come together in an unbelievable way, continuing to support the Theatre and our mission.

Thank you to the 99 unique contributors that have supported TAG since the beginning of the Pandemic with \$13,359.85 of donations. We appreciate all that you do for us, and we look forward to a joyous return to live theatre in the near future.

Donations are always welcome at <https://tagtheatre.com/donation.htm>

## 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>



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### *He Said/She Said*

Beginning March 18th you can enjoy Playwrights @ TAG on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/8pny6XPU6K0>



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-27

### *Enjoy Playwrights @ TAG Online*

You can enjoy Playwrights @ TAG online from March 25-27th on Zoom. Tickets available at <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/playwrights-tag-tickets-144541167523>

## *Now Playing on YouTube: He Said/She Said*



The Theatre Arts Guild is proud to introduce our new audio series, Radio TAG with our second radio play, *He Said/She Said* by Judy Reade

He's done it! Charles "H." Stone has written his first novel! Before he shares it with the world, it must face the scrutiny of Alice, his chief critic, and wife. What will she think of it? Will it pass her scrutiny, or would he have a better chance reading it to the dog?

Featuring the stellar cast of Tony Marshall and Cheryl Theriault, and directed by Joshua Law. This is one story begging to be heard. Watch on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/8pny6XPU6K0>

Make a donation here: <https://tagtheatre.com/donation.htm>

## The History of TAG: 90 Years and Counting Famous Names

With a history of 90 years, Theatre Arts Guild has meant many things to many people over time. The term we generally use to describe TAG's role today is community theatre, with community having two meanings – providing a place of entertainment for the area around us (and beyond) and being a non-profit organization whose members are amateurs and therefore are not paid. (Yes, we're all volunteers, which, given our longevity and achievements, some folk have found hard to believe). Being amateurs however, and not earning a living from the arts does not mean that we lack knowledge and experience! It has been the case that, over the decades, there have always been some members who hold a degree in theatre or music or who have received training within the professional realm. Before such training and opportunities were available in our province (Neptune Theatre opened in July 1963, when TAG had already been in existence for 32 years), the Playhouse provided "ground zero" for those who aspired to make acting their career.

Walter Borden will be a name familiar to many and, after bringing his talents to TAG, he joined Neptune Theatre in 1972 and also spent time with the Stratford Festival in Ontario. Perhaps you remember him as His Dark Shadow in the television sci-fi series *Lexx*, which featured several Hollywood luminaries – Rutger Hauer, Malcolm McDowell, Maury Chaykin and Barry Bostwick among others. This series provided an opportunity for many in the local theatre community to take a (small) part, David Renton and John Dunsworth should be included here – as TAG alumni! Jeremy Akerman, a former President of TAG was a cast member too.

Another name familiar to many will be Joan Gregson, who began her long career as an actress at TAG with a role in *King of Hearts* (1956), after being taken by her mother to see a performance. The tale is told that the young Ms. Gregson felt she could do better than those she had watched at the Playhouse and, with determination, became a valued member. The amateur theatre world in Halifax enjoyed her presence for a while (she was known for playing ingenue roles with the Guild), but she moved on to local radio dramas with the CBC, and then to the Neptune troupe for thirty-one years. A move to Toronto in the 1990s was made to explore further opportunities and she has continued with what is now a long-lasting career in film and television series. Perhaps you have seen her in the popular *Murdoch Mysteries* or in programmes based on the *Anne of Green Gables* stories.

A long career could also be claimed for Joan Orenstein, whose talent TAG was able to enjoy for a while before she travelled to perform at major theatres across the country. I include Ms. Orenstein to be able to point out that she performed in one of TAG's landmark ventures – the performance of *The Highland Heart* in Nova Scotia in Halifax (with a tour to various towns afterwards) in 1967, as part of Nova Scotia's celebrations for the country's Centennial Year. This play by Donald Wetmore was one of the largest presentations ever by TAG, with a cast of 34, including 6 children. Joan Orenstein has the distinction also of being the only TAG alumna to win a Genie for her role in the Thom Fitzgerald film *The Hanging Garden* (1967).

The individuals I have been able to highlight are examples of those who got their feet wet at Theatre Arts Guild, but then moved on to professional work in theatre, television and films. We have however benefited from those who have taken the reverse path – who have accumulated professional experience first and then enriched our amateur organization by their presence and participation. My husband remembers fondly working with Robert (Bob) Walsh, who had been a professional actor in both England and Canada and was a good friend of Mrs. Bernice Ross, TAG's fairy godmother, who provided great financial support at the time our move was made to the (continued on page 6)

## Theatre Arts Guild Ventures Into The Poetry Nebula

To expand our digital presence, The Theatre Arts Guild (TAG) is calling for poetry submissions for our new program, The Poetry Nebula, which was acquired following The Telescope Theatre Project's merger into TAG.

*The Poetry Nebula* was created in 2018 by Telescope, and narrated by Joshua Law and Melinda Antle, with the intent of showcasing new works such as *Bottle of Dreams*, and *Spoken by Antle*, and sharing such pieces as *The Dancer* by Dada artist/founder Emmy Henning, *Where the Mind is Without Fear* by Rabindranath Tagore, and others. To have a listen, you can go to: [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsTelk4N0nO\\_E3Q82PaRcpOM-UEGjRU4a](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsTelk4N0nO_E3Q82PaRcpOM-UEGjRU4a)

~ Joshua Law



*Submit a poem to The Poetry Nebula*

Email Josh at [telescopetheatre@gmail.com](mailto:telescopetheatre@gmail.com) by April 30th.

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## Submissions for The Poetry Nebula

If you have poetry you wish to share in The Poetry Nebula, whether your own or a piece that interests you, email Josh at [telescopetheatre@gmail.com](mailto:telescopetheatre@gmail.com) by April 30th with:

- 1) Your name
- 2) The poem
- 3) The name of the poet
- 4) If you wish to narrate it

We look forward to reading your submissions!

## Famous Names continued from page 4...

former St. Augustine's Church Hall in 1966. In fact, it was only the generosity of Mrs. Ross in taking over the mortgage on the property which made the move possible. Austin's introduction to the Guild was assisting on lighting for a production of *The Caretaker* by Harold Pinter at a Drama League Festival in 1985, featuring Bob as a wonderful snuffling, whining old man in an unhappy existence in a messy flat with two unsavoury youths.

Also with professional experience in Britain, including appearances in the popular crime program *The Bill*, we remember fondly the late Vanessa Walton-Bone, married to Ralph Urquhart, musical director for our pantomimes. Vanessa made a valuable contribution to any play in which she acted and brought attention to our theatre group through her pairing with Phil Reid in *The Lover* (again by Harold Pinter) both at TAG and at the Liverpool International Theatre Festival in 2008, with Vanessa being awarded the prize for Best Actress and the piece being named Outstanding Canadian Production.

My favourite memory of Vanessa is her acting in *Dancing at Lughnasa* in 2005. A particular photograph in our archives captures the essence of her part as she looks out of the window of the

Thank you friends of TAG!

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

farmhouse she shares with her sisters and thinks over the limited life she leads in Ireland. *Dancing at Lughnasa* is a drama, but Vanessa had great fun in a professional capacity at Neptune Theatre as Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

It's always gratifying to hear of TAG members and alumni succeeding in a professional career, even though their time at The Pond Playhouse might have been brief. I'm thinking here of Josh Cruddas, who was our young prince in the pantomime *Beauty and the Beast* (2010) and there's a great shot of Josh enjoying himself at the ball in the finale of this pantomime. Josh's training was in the theatre programme at Dalhousie University and he moved then to parts in local productions (you may remember *Call Me Fitz*, filmed in New Minas). Now he can claim movie roles in the same films as Jason Momoa, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (*The Silencing*, 2020) and Mads Mikkelsen and Vanessa Hudgens (*Polar*, 2019). Go Josh, go all our stars past and present – go, TAG!

~ Judy Reade, TAG'S Archivist