

# CONTACT

The Official Newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild

Canada's Oldest Continually Operating Community Theatre

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## NEXT AT TAG

### The Good...and the Bad February 4th to 6th

I wonder if you ever had an experience when watching or being involved in a play when you stopped and said to yourself "Wow!" Some thing, some movement, however slight, caught and held your attention - and you were hooked. In your own way, you had discovered the magic of theatre. At one and the same time you realized that what had taken your attention was pure illusion, but somehow it didn't matter and the memory stayed with you. My two most memorable "Wow" moments were quite different and decades apart. The first one was at the end of the school year when I was six. Our relatives were invited to the School to listen to various poems we had memorized. My class had been learning "The Owl and the Pussycat" by Edward Lear and Sister Rose had found some animal costumes from somewhere and class members stood at one end of the Assembly Hall in a circle and looked out on a sea of faces. I wasn't either the bird or his furry wife in this piece - I was the pig that married them, and the mask I was wearing hurt my face. But I distinctly remember looking out through the eye slits in the mask and trying to locate where my mother was sitting in the audience. This "Wow" moment

was not about my acting prowess - I didn't possess any and in addition, the ring through the nose in my mask made movement really awkward - it was the first realization that there was a gulf which separated me (the actor) from my mother (a member of the audience).

The second "Wow" moment came decades later, at the King's Theatre in Aberdeen, Scotland. It was a performance of Richard Strauss' opera "Der Rosenkavalier" with one of the stalwarts of the English opera scene, Dame Janet Baker, as the bearer of the rose to the young Sophie von Faninal. At the moment the rose was handed to the young girl, the lighting around the characters dimmed and the rose positively sparkled. It was as if fairy dust had been sprinkled on the petals! It hadn't of course - it was a well-planned, well-timed lighting cue! But you know, it didn't matter and again, I was hooked.....

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Tickets on Sale  
NOW!

#### TAG Ticket Prices

**\$15 All**

Note: TAG prices include all Ticket Atlantic service fees

#### Buy Your Tickets

- At the 23 participating Atlantic Superstore outlets
- By Phone (902) 451 1221
- At the door (subject to availability)
- Online at [www.ticketatlantic.com](http://www.ticketatlantic.com)
- Ticket Atlantic Box Office

## THE GOOD... AND THE BAD CONT'D

...In the 85 years of TAG history, I am sure there have been many of these surprise moments and I hope you will find some of your own in the excerpts we present in our Anniversary Revue. We're concentrating this time on the women characters presented in TAG

plays from the 1930s onwards. Some of these characters are young, some near the end of life. Some you will certainly warm to and some you will be glad to know exist only on the stage!

Here's hoping for just as many "Wow" moments at TAG in the next 85 years as there have been in the last 85!

Judy Reade

## TAG MEMBER INTERVIEW

Amal Bhattacharyya is a familiar face around the Theatre Arts Guild. You probably recognize his smiling face behind the bar when you arrive in the lobby and TAG actors will always remember his kind words and hugs after a show. For the last 50 years Amal has been a constant presence in the TAG community and as TAG's longest serving volunteer we thought he would be the perfect TAG member to interview for our 85th anniversary newsletter.

### **What made you want to volunteer with community theatre?**

I have always enjoyed theatre and volunteering. In my school and university days, I was involved with community theatre. So, volunteering at TAG has been a most rewarding experience.

### **You have seen many changes take place at TAG since you became a member. What is the most significant change?**

There are more than one. If I have to choose one, it's the interest and involvement of the younger crowd in all areas of the theatre.

### **What are your thoughts on the state of community theatre in the HRM today?**

It's becoming more and more alive and vibrant everyday.

### **If you could be persuaded to tread the boards, what would be your dream role?**

Chief Inspector Jacques Clouseau in Pink Panther. You can see, it's going to remain a dream for ever!

## NEW PARKING RULES AT TAG

Limited parking is available at the Pond Playhouse for our TAG audience. In addition, cars may park (carefully) along the SOUTH side of Parkhill Road (the opposite side of the street from the Pond Playhouse). Cars are not allowed to park on the north side (close to the Pond Playhouse) of the street. Parking is also available on Forward Ave (off Williams Lake) and there is a parking lot at the Frog Pond Trail off Purcell's Cove Rd. Thank you for observing the parking rules.

# AUDITIONS

## The Mystery of Edwin Drood

### The Mystery of Edwin Drood

Director: Janice Jackson

Performance Dates: **June 2nd to 25th 2016**

Auditions: **Sunday February 7th and Monday February 8th 6pm - 10pm**

at The Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Rd.

#### Audition requirements

1 song representing your range and dramatic abilities, can be from Drood

One contemporary monologue – maximum 2 minutes

One classical monologue – maximum 2 minutes

#### Appointment bookings

Set up auditions at: [edwindroodmystery@outlook.com](mailto:edwindroodmystery@outlook.com)

(give a 1 to 2 hour time frame in which you would like to audition in, we will do our best to accommodate)

*Drood or The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, written by Rupert Holmes, is a musical based on the unfinished Charles Dickens novel *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. This musical kicks off when the Music Hall Royale (a hilarious Victorian musical troupe) “puts on” its flamboyant rendition of the musical, which deals with John Jasper, a Jekyll-and-Hyde choirmaster who is madly in love with his music student, the fair Miss Rosa Bud. Miss Bud is, in turn, engaged to Jasper’s nephew, young Edwin Drood, who disappears mysteriously one stormy Christmas Eve—but has Edwin Drood been murdered? And if so, whodunnit? This play-within-a-play draws the audience toward one of the play’s most talked-about features, allowing the audience to vote on the solution as prelude to the most unusual and hilarious finale!

The actors in this production have two parts: their actor-self as a member of the Music Hall Royale, and the part they play in the Music Hall’s production of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

**Chairperson/Mayor Thomas Sapsea:** Music hall troupe leader and the Mayor of Cloisterham. A man or a woman, over 40ish. Baritone/Low Alto (D#3 – F#4 – can pop octaves if needed).

**James or Joyce Throttle, Stage Manager:** A non-singing role, male or female.

**Clive Paget/John Jasper:** Leading man and cad! 35-50ish. Bari-tenor (A2 – A4).

**Alice Nutting/Edwin Drood:** Prima donna and London’s leading male impersonator, also played the role of Inspector Dick Datchery. 25-45ish. Mezzo (B3 – E5).

**Deirdre Peregrine/Rosa Bud:** Love interest of Drood, A suspect in his murder. 16-30ish. True soprano (A3 – B5).

**Angela Prysock/Princess Puffer:** Princess Puffer, Madam, opium den owner. A suspect. Over 50. Serious low alto (F3 – D5) – must have a big chest voice.

**Janet Conover/Helena Landless:** Brother of Neville Landless, hails from an exotic land. Another suspect. 25-50ish. Mezzo (G3 – D5), strong ensemble singer.

**Victor Grinstead/Neville Landless:** Helena’s brother. 25-50ish. Bari-tenor (C3 – G4), strong ensemble singer.

**Cedric Moncrieffe/Reverend Crisparkle:** A vicar. A suspect. 40 – 60ish. Baritone (C3 – G4). Phillip Bax/Horace/Waiter: Speaking Role with some ensemble singing.

**Nick Cricker, Sr./Durdles:** The drunkard sexton. Over 30. Baritone or Tenor (B2 – F4) – ensemble singer.

**Nick or Nicole Cricker, Jr./Deputy:** Boy or girl, Any voice range – ensemble singer.

**Wendy and Beatrice:** Contemporaries of Rosa Bud, sing in the ensemble. Soprano or Mezzo – soprano (C4-D5)

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN HALIFAX...

### Expanding Your Theatre Vocabulary - the 60th in a continuing series

I've said this before, but I think it bears repeating in this Anniversary year that The Theatre Arts Guild (TAG) is proud to be the country's oldest community theatre with a record of continuous operation! The Guild was founded in March of 1931 and incorporated by an Act of the Nova Scotia Legislature in May of 1934. The men whose names appeared as supporters in this legal document were among the most prominent in the city – Colonel Sidney Oland, the renowned architect Andrew R. Cobb, Charles J. Burchell, K.C., and Dr. Frederick Sexton, the founding principal of the Nova Scotia Technical College.

“Dover Road,” by A.A. Milne was the choice for TAG's first production in May, 1931 and was performed at the Garrick Theatre (the present Neptune Theatre). By February of the next year, the group had a home, a former church hall on the corner of Coburg Road and LeMarchant Street in Halifax. Renamed the New Playhouse, this location was used until 1935, when a move was made to Nelson Hall, the auditorium of the Navy League building (corner of Barrington and South Streets). Four years later, Canada was at war and the building was requisitioned by the military authorities. After only eight years of existence, TAG was once again without a home. However the indefatigable Hugh Mills (one half of the Mills Brothers of Department Store fame), was not one to let a global conflict stand in the way of theatrical activity(!) and, with those TAG members still in Halifax, formed the 'Halifax Concert Parties Guild,' to provide entertainment to the troops flooding into the city.

Even after the cessation of hostilities, it took a while for the group to return to normal. The gymnasium of HMCS Scotian in the Naval Dockyard became the base for performances and then, in 1952, a former elementary school at

number 27 College Street. Here, the group flourished, with membership peaking at 1,100 and a season's subscription available for \$6.00. On January 25th 1959, however, fire broke out and the building and its contents were destroyed. One of the secret mottoes of TAG must be 'Never Say Die,' because nineteen days later, the play being rehearsed that fateful night was presented in the auditorium of St. Patrick's High School.

The effect of the fire, the loss of all resources and the situation of being, once again, with a home had a demoralising effect on the organization. Membership began to drop and support fell away. Events took a decided turn for the better in April of 1966, when the Guild acquired a former church hall at 6 Parkhill Road in Jollimore. This property, backing onto the Frog Pond, was renamed The Pond Playhouse and has been TAG's home ever since.

Putting down roots at the Pond Playhouse led to a resurgence in the fortunes of the Guild and a desire to considerably improve resources and facilities. After conducting fundraising over several years, a new sound and lighting booth, in conjunction with a new lighting control and power system was installed in 2004. From 2006 to February of 2008, a two-storey addition to the Playhouse was constructed, with a rehearsal hall on the upper level (Gratwick Hall, named for benefactors John and Lyn Gratwick) and lobby, bar area, kitchen, washrooms and office on the ground floor. Later that year, the auditorium was completely refurbished and a new seating layout established. All this work (plus a grant from the Municipality and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage) has given us, as one visitor described it, 'the perfect little theatre.'

I don't know if the redoubtable Mary Morrison has ever travelled from Cape Breton to see a performance at the Pond Playhouse, but I'm going to borrow one of her favourite phrases for my closing statement and say that over the last 85 years the Theatre Arts Guild has certainly `dun good, dear, good!

Judy Reade

### Coming Soon

#### Cat on a Hot Tin Roof - March 31st to April 23rd

On a late summer day in the mid 1950's, the Pollitt family have gathered to celebrate aging patriarch Big Daddy's birthday. But there is more to this gathering than a family reunion. Lurking under every interaction between family members and behind every argument we find lies and deceit.