

CONTACT

March, 2006

www.tagtheatre.com
info@tagtheatre.com

The Official Newsletter of



Canada's oldest continually operating
community theatre. 75 years and growing!

President's Message

—Esther VanGorder, President



Despite the wind, snow, and hail squalls today, I am still basking in the glow of April in San Salvatore. *Enchanted April* proved to be (as I suspected it would) an audience hit. Our wonderful cast played to sold-out houses from opening to closing nights, making this one of our most successful productions in recent history. Even Mother Nature cooperated—we lost neither performances nor audience to poor weather, as can often happen this

time of year. To those of you who weren't able to get seats, I can only say: book early for *Red, Hot and Cole*!

Strange as it may sound, sold-out houses are more work for our wonderful reservations manager, Lynn Bungay. Not only does Lynn call everyone who has booked seats to confirm their reservations, she also maintains long waiting lists. Prior to the final weekend of *Enchanted April*, Lynn made hundreds of additional phone calls to ensure that all the seats that were reserved were required. She found twenty-seven seats and was able to make at least some of those on the waiting list happy. If she hadn't done that, many of those seats would have remained empty—disappointing patrons and adversely affecting the show's budget and, subsequently, the capital fund. The moral of this story: if you can't use a seat or seats you reserved, please let us know. Some time ago, I privately bestowed upon Lynn the title of "Reservations Wizardess." I do so now publicly. Now, if I'd told Lynn in advance that I was going to praise her so publicly, she would have told me not to, which is precisely why I didn't tell her I was going to!

I am now going to shed my President's hat and don my Stage Manager's blacks.

We speak about theatre's "fourth wall"—the invisible barrier across the front of the stage between the actors and the audience. On rare occasions, such as in the Holiday Pantomime, the fourth wall is broken and the actors will interact with the audience, but in most productions, the stage is meant to be a separate world—before, during, and after the show. Perhaps because the stage at TAG is at floor level and the front row of seats are so close to it, audience members are lured onto the stage as moths to a flame. If you see the stage manager racing toward you, stop watch flying, you or somebody else is somewhere they shouldn't be—on the stage.

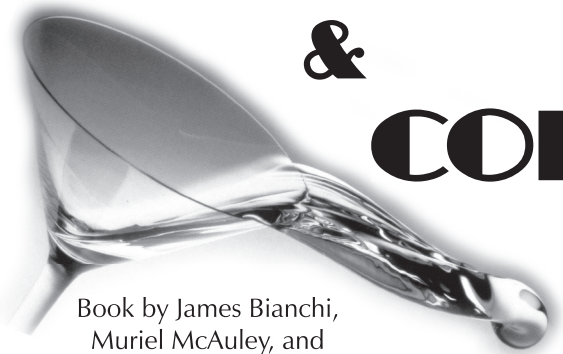
Stage managers are very protective of their casts and crew and of their stages for a multitude of reasons. Here are just a few:

- Countless hours have been spent getting the set just right. A carelessly spilled drink (another no-no: food or beverages on the set by anyone at any time) can ruin a set piece that's been

(continued on next page)

Our Next Production...

RED HOT & COLE



Book by James Bianchi,
Muriel McAuley, and
Randy Strawderman

Music and Lyrics by
Cole Porter

Directed by Rebecca Humphreys

Produced by Eileen Maxwell

Stage Managed by L.A. Beitenman

April 27th to May 13th, 2006

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday
Evenings at 8:00 P.M.

with matinées

Sunday May 7th at 2:00 P.M.
& Saturday March 13th at 2:00 P.M.

The box office opens March 30th for members and
April 6nd for non-members.

For Reservations Call

477-2663

or visit

www.tagtheatre.com

TAG Board, 2005-2006

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TAG's 75th Season: Upcoming Productions

Variety Night

Saturday, April 1st

Red, Hot and Cole

Book by James Bianchi, Muriel McAuley,
and Randy Strawderman

Music and Lyrics by Cole Porter

April 27th to May 13th

Director: Rebecca Humphreys

Dial "M" for Murder

a mystery by Frederick Knott

July 6th to July 22nd

Director: Bill VanGorder

The Theatre Arts Guild

Location: **Mailing Address:**

The Pond Playhouse *287 Lacewood Drive*
6 Parkhill Road *Unit 103, Suite 412*
Halifax, NS *Halifax, NS B3M 3Y7*

Telephone: (902) 477-2663

Internet: www.tagtheatre.com
 info@tagtheatre.com

Saraguay Club Closed for Winter No Dinner & Theatre Package

TAG regrets it is unable to offer the usual Thursday and Friday evening dinner and theatre package in conjunction with the Saraguay Club, as the Saraguay has closed for the winter this year. Watch this space for the return of the dinner/theatre package with the arrival of spring.

President's Message (Continued)

painstakingly upholstered or painted. Example: Someone quite innocently inspecting the set after the show accidentally spills red wine on the white couch, which then has to be cleaned and/or recovered.

- Props are crucial to the action, but they can be fragile and, if moved, can seriously affect an actor's performance. Example: Someone walks onto the stage prior to the performance, picks up a prop to examine it and replaces it—in the wrong place.
- Safety—Just because a part of the set looks solid doesn't mean it is. A railing can be purely decorative and not designed to be leaned against or sat upon. Foameister J Carruth creates wonders out of foam, but it's generally meant to be looked at and not used the same way something created of wood could be. Platforms and stairways end abruptly in darkness. Even those of us who know that have stumbled (myself included). Example: Someone leans against a decorative balustrade which is not fully anchored in place and falls, causing serious injury.
- Crew members are working behind the scenes moving furniture and props or climbing ladders to fix lights or drape curtains. Cast members may be changing out of their costumes into street clothes—all reasons why we do not welcome unannounced visitors backstage. We are happy to show off all parts of our theatre; but we ask that anyone who wishes to take a tour, check with the Front of House Manager or a member of the stage crew before looking around.

Please help us to maintain the magic of the fourth wall.

Back to wearing my President's hat: Even before the sun set on San Salvatore, the cast and production team of *Red, Hot and Cole* were hard at work. I know that this musical about the life and music of Cole Porter is going to be incredibly popular, so book early and book often. *

TAG Yard Sale

TAG is holding a major yard sale on Saturday May 27th (if rain, then Sunday the 28th). We are aiming to make it a somewhat up-market (bazaarish) affair, so please start identifying items among all your "stuff" that you can let go for the sale. Please contact John Gratwick (423-1606 or johngrat@eastlink.ca) to arrange for movement of your contributions. *

More on Red Hot & Cole

Red, Hot and Cole is your invitation to the party of the season! It's a soiree that begins today and travels through time, becoming an evening in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. This party bubbles with much more than champagne. It brings you classic Cole Porter tunes that have become international standards, from such shows and movies as *Anything Goes*, *Kiss Me Kate*, and *High Society*. Our party follows Cole Porter from the stages and penthouses of New York to Paris, Venice, and Hollywood. It's an elegant, musical tribute to a glittering age gone by and the man and talent who was Cole Porter.

A talented cast of TAG veterans and newcomers will be your guides on this magical journey. Many of our regular patrons will recognize David Chambers, Terry Coolen, Chris Morse, Jolene Pattison, Lowell Shore, and Rayna Smith-Camp, all of whom have been involved with TAG at least twice before. Preparing for their first appearances on the stage of the Pond Playhouse are Karla Bruce, Stuart Hiseler, Karen Myatt, and Lori Proulx. This diverse group of performers will knock your socks off, so prepare to be dazzled!

Director Rebecca Humphreys has been working hard with her cast and crew, and it's become clear very early in the process that this is going to be one special production. It's one you won't want to miss, so book your tickets as soon as that box office opens. *

Audition Notice

Dial M for Murder

Directed by Bill VanGorder; Stage Managed by Esther VanGorder

Auditions will be held on Sunday April 30th, 1:00–4:00 p.m. and Monday May 1st 7:00–9:00 p.m. at Theatre Arts Guild's Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Drive off the Purcell's Cove Road, just past the Frog Pond.

This summer production will run from July 6th to July 27th. Rehearsals will begin on Tuesday May 9th and will be held Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons with additional times as required.

The cast includes one or two females of 25–50 years and four or five men of 30–60 years.

Dial M for Murder is a classic thriller. In the story, a man learns that his wife is having an affair, and he decides to murder her. His "perfect" plan goes awry when the man he engages to kill his wife is killed instead. The movie version was directed by Alfred Hitchcock.

For information call Esther or Bill VanGorder at 453-4077 or e-mail bill.vangorder@ns.sympatico.ca. *

Award Winner!

Congratulations to Walter Borden for being named this year's winner of the Portia White Award. Walter's contributions as an actor and a writer to this community are extensive. Walter is quick to tell folks that he got one of his first group of experiences acting on the TAG stage while he was still a teacher. Congratulations, and well done! *

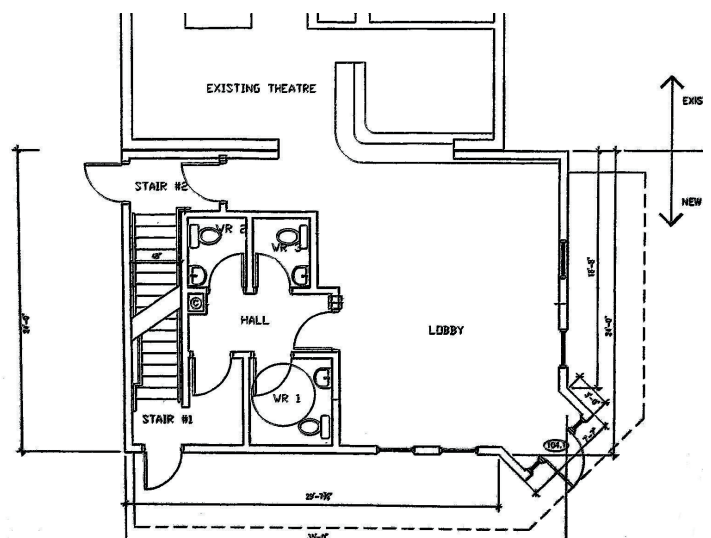
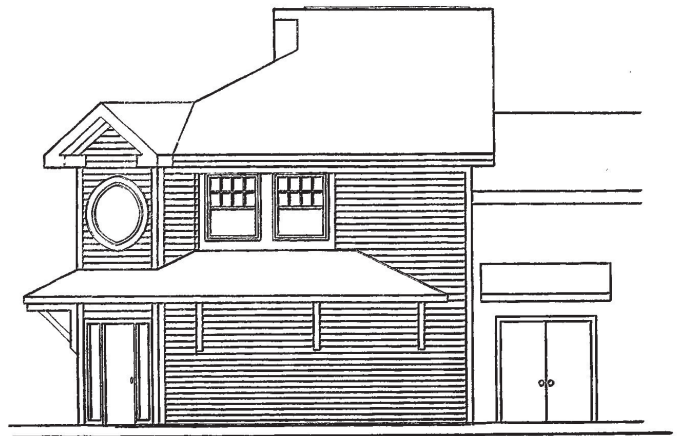
TAG Is Growing

TAG is expanding this summer! Plans have been finalized, and we are expecting the building permit shortly for a 24 x 35 foot extension to the front of the Pond Playhouse. No longer will our guests have to stand outside in bad weather or eat their cheesies elbow to elbow. The extension will be two stories on a full basement, creating new lobby space, accessible washrooms, rehearsal and workshop area (second floor), and costume and props storage.

The extension is estimated to cost \$195,000, of which \$75,000 is already in the bank. We are launching a fund-raising drive to get \$120,000 from corporate businesses, private citizens and the HRM Community Grants Program. Our campaign will be built around the theme "Friends of TAG", whose names will be permanently inscribed in the new lobby. There will be three categories of "Friends": Benefactors, Patrons, and Supporters for those who make gifts greater than \$20,000, greater than \$2,000 and greater than \$500 respectively. The first names on our "Friends" honour roll are those who already contributed, through three year pledges, to our building campaign of 2004.

TAG is a non-profit organization, with charitable status; consequently, tax receipts are issued for all gifts over \$20.

Sketches of the exterior of the extension and of the first floor are shown below. *



Expanding Your Theatre Vocabulary

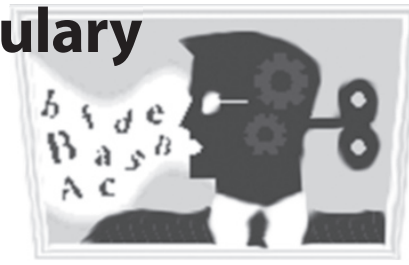
The Evolution of American Musical Theatre

(The fourteenth in a continuing series)

—Judy Reade, Props/Wardrobe Mistress

The American composer and songwriter Cole Albert Porter (1891-1964) is one of those personalities in whom interest never seems to wane. The recent film *De-Lovely*, starring Kevin Kline and Ashley Judd, brought the life and work of Porter to a whole new generation, and several of his musicals remain staples of the amateur and professional stage. (Last season Dartmouth Players performed *Kiss Me, Kate*, which was written in 1948 and based on Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*). After formal musical training at Harvard University, Porter began his career in 1915, contributing individual songs to revues, most of which were dismal failures. He continued writing songs, thankfully, and achieved great success from 1929-1954 with a string of musicals, including *Anything Goes*, *Can-Can*, and *Silk Stockings*.

It has sometimes been said that what we know as 'the musical' or 'musical theatre' is a home-grown product of the U.S. In fact, Porter and his contemporaries (among them George Gershwin and Irving Berlin), brought about the evolution of this form by drawing on and



expanding elements from several existing forms, both 'classical' and 'popular.' The musical, for example, draws much of its inspiration from operetta, whereby a frivolous, often sentimental story is told through the use of uncomplicated, pleasant music, interspersed with spoken dialogue. An earlier English form, the ballad opera, used songs set to tunes already in use, again alternating with spoken dialogue. To the basic structure of the operetta is added elements of vaudeville—primarily comedic interruptions, dancing, acrobatics, and magic acts—so that, at times, the musical takes on the character of a variety show. And from the variety show come attributes of the burlesque—the presentation of a serious subject in a somewhat undignified style, with broad, ribald comedy and a good deal of dancing by a scantily-clad female chorus.

Whatever influenced Porter, the musical was a form he unquestionably made his own. Musical styles come and go, but songs such as "Begin the Beguine," "Just One of Those Things," and "Do I Love You" will last a long, long time. *

Enchanted Reviewer

Reviewer Ron Foley MacDonald came to see *Enchanted April* late in its run and wrote a glowing review, which appeared on Aliant website, in the Entertainment section. Here are some excerpts from that review:

"The eight-person cast comprised a fascinating range of TAG newcomers and regulars. Vicky Strand, as Lotty, balanced shrill enthusiasm against a unrestrained sense of wonder in what could be considered the central role as narrator and instigator of the play's action. Debra Post, on the other hand, let her Rose maintain a deadpan sense of surprise that became more and more effective as the storyline cruised to its relentlessly happy conclusion."

"Iris Paterson walked away with the production in her role as the endlessly fussy Mrs. Clayton Graves; her polished comic timing and sheer love of language made the character the most memorable of the evening."

"Director Gisela O'Brien allowed the players room to stylize their performances, resulting in plenty of plummy English accents amidst oceans of British reserve, particularly in the dark and dank first act. Once the ladies arrive in Italy, the whole tone of the show changes over to lightness, sunshine, and an excess of free expression."

"The stunning seaside villa set—complete with an ocean view—was garlanded with flowers; it sported convincing decorations, mostly vases and other Italianate brick-a-brac brilliantly concocted especially for the show by 'foammeister' J Carruth. With almost fifty people listed as involved in the production staff, and another half-dozen helping out in administration and publicity, TAG has grown to the point where the cozy Pond Playhouse regularly sells out every seat for almost every single production."

"And while there were a few things that could have been improved—the characters change a little too fast and completely once they arrive in Italy, and their men seem a might too compliant—in the staging, there's no question that *Enchanted April* worked its magic on TAG's audiences once again." *

Sobey's Tapes

Please keep those Sobey's tapes coming. They can make a significant contribution to TAG. There is no need to tidy or straighten them. Take them to the theatre, shove them into the Gratwicks' mail box (984 Bellevue), or pass them to a TAG member who is amenable to getting them to us. *

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Dartmouth Players

presents

En Suite

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Crichton Avenue Centre, Dartmouth, NS

Tickets: \$12.00 adults; \$10.00 students/seniors

For reservations call 465-PLAY (7529)

www.dartmouthplayers.ns.ca

CentreStage Theatre

presents

Social Security

April 21st to May 20th 2006

Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00 P.M.

61 River Street

Kentville, Nova Scotia

For information call (902)678-8040