



# CONTACT

The Official Newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild

Canada's Oldest Continually Operating Community Theatre

The Pond Playhouse

6 Parkhill Rd. Halifax, NS.

(902) 477-2663

www.tagtheatre.com



## NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2023

### UP NEXT AT TAG

### SANTA CLAUS-THE PANTO

by Diane Kimpton

November 23- December 09, 2023

Director ~ Kimberly Charron

Producer ~ Bill VanGorder

Stage Manager ~ Patrick Charron

Santa and his elves are busy preparing at the North Pole as Christmas approaches. But Beatrix the Bad Fairy, determined to ruin Christmas, kidnaps Santa. It's up to Santa's daughter Crystal, Gloria the Good Fairy and Simon the snowman to rescue Santa and save Christmas.

**Starring:** Ralph Urquhart, Lise Renault, Amy MacKenzie, Heather Marshall, Geoff Herod, Freya Hartling, Jo Alarakhia, Elizabeth Nightingale, Deanne Neufeld, Nina Aube, Kyle Grace & Motley

SEE INSIDE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT PANTOMIME



PROUDLY PRESENTS



ARTISTIC & MUSICAL DIRECTOR:  
KIMBERLY CHARRON

PRODUCER:  
BILL VANGORDER

STAGE MANAGER:  
PATRICK CHARRON

TICKETS  
TAGTHEATRE.COM  
(NO PROCESSING FEES!)

NOVEMBER 23  
TO DECEMBER 9  
WITH 5 MATINÉES

THE POND PLAYHOUSE • 6 PARKHILL RD.

Poster Design by Kerry Hodgson

Tickets on sale now at tagtheatre.com

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Annual General Meeting took place on September 18th. Many thanks to all those who attended and participated. The board underwent a bit of a shuffle for this new season, but most of us are back again! I would like to extend my thanks to Shannon Nudds for her many years of incredible work as our Vice-President and Volunteer Coordinator. She may have stepped down from those duties, but we look forward to seeing her around TAG in the future.

Welcome to Louise Renault and Cheryl Theriault, who will be our new Volunteer Coordinators. If you volunteer with us for Front of House or bar duties and you have not received an email from them yet -- you will! On that note, if you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, do not hesitate to contact us.

Congratulations to the cast and crew of *On A First Name Basis*. I heard nothing but positive things through social media posts, in person comments, and through emails. Well done to everyone who helped to make it a success.

It will not be long now before opening night for the Pantomime is here. If you do not have your tickets yet, do not delay much longer as this is always a popular production which sells out quickly.

There is plenty of amazing community theatre happening now and in the new year, and I hope you will continue to support us and our fellow theatres. Wishing you all a very happy and healthy holiday season.

Rayna Smith- Camp  
President

## Sneak Peek into Our Newsletter

- *Up Next at TAG* (front page)
- *President's Message*
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- *TAG Online ~ Now Featuring*
- *Pantomine at TAG*
- *Featured Volunteer*
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- *Coming Soon-Evenings of G & S*
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- *Membership ~ added Benefit!*
- *TAG Executive Board*
- *Memories of... On a First Name Basis*
- *The History of TAG-  
90 Years and Counting*

## GREY SQUIRREL AWARD



The coveted Order of the Grey Squirrel was established in December, 2001 by the Board of Directors of the Theatre Arts Guild as a reward for excellence. The name was inspired by a stuffed grey squirrel that appeared on the set of almost every production during several years immediately prior to the establishment of the Award. The squirrel's antecedents are unknown, but are assumed to be impeccable as, in a truly inspirational fashion; the squirrel always performed flawlessly and left no mess.

## Double Squirrels this time!

Theatre Arts Guild proudly presented  
The Grey Squirrel award to  
Rayna Smith-Camp  
&  
Lorne Abramson  
at the TAG AGM, September 18, 2023

## TAG ONLINE

TAG Digital, The Theatre Arts Guild virtual stage, started as a response to the COVID-19 lockdowns in June 2020, in collaboration with The Telescope Theatre Project. Its aim is to share new, familiar, and obscure works of poetry, prose, and plays, and provide an educational, relaxing, and creative process for participants who desire to take part in a production, but are unable to commit to the demands of a live production. Since September 2020, they have released audio and video productions, made primarily available on YouTube.

The Telescope Theatre Project was a creative, collaborative cooperative of storytelling enthusiasts, with interests in poetry, prose, and plays. Formed in 2013 by Kaylon Fraser, Melinda Antle, and Joshua Law, their ultimate goal was to explore new, familiar, and lost works, and share them with artists and audiences. Following the amalgamation with TAG in 2021, the Project dissolved, but Telescope remains as a producer within TAG.

TAG Digital welcomes your submission of poetry, prose and plays  
[https://tagtheatre.com/tag\\_digital.html](https://tagtheatre.com/tag_digital.html)

*Note: Submitted pieces must be either original work or fall within the public domain (70+ years after death of author)*

Stream TAG's digital content for free!



## PANTOMIME AT TAG

### *What is a Pantomime?*

A Pantomime is a unique and UK-based tradition during the Christmas season. These festive productions are designed as family-friendly entertainment, catering to audiences of all ages, from young children to adults, making them a popular choice for family outings during the holiday season. What sets pantomimes apart is the high level of audience participation they encourage. Spectators are actively involved, shouting out and responding to the characters on stage, with traditional cues like "He's behind you!" or "Oh no, he isn't!" being common. These performances are famous for their cheeky humor and innuendo, incorporating jokes and wordplay that appeal to both children and adults, often with a wink and a nudge. Pantomimes break away from traditional theatre etiquette by encouraging active engagement and vocal responses from the audience, rather than maintaining silence and decorum.

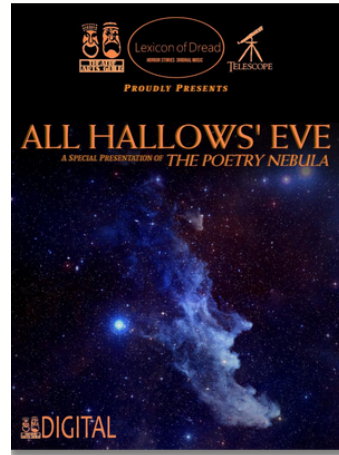
Pantomimes are infused with humor and modern references. These productions are musical comedies, featuring songs, dancing, and lively music that contributes to the festive atmosphere.

It's an annual tradition at TAG that was restarted in 1999, with many people attending them as part of their holiday celebrations and many families now in their 3rd generation of attendance. They are a vibrant and distinctive form of live entertainment that combines classic stories with comedy, music, audience participation making them a cherished part of TAG's holiday season.

### **Santa Claus- The Panto**

As Christmas draws near, a shadow of mischief looms as Beatrix the Bad Fairy, with a heart full of mischief, hatches a devious plan to sabotage the holiday. In a wicked act of malevolence, she kidnaps Santa Claus himself, hoping to cast a cold spell of disappointment over Christmas. But amidst the darkness, a glimmer of hope emerges. Santa's daughter, Crystal, takes up the mantle of her father's jolly mission, determined to rescue him and save the most magical day of the year. With unwavering determination and a heart as warm as Santa's, she embarks on a journey filled with challenges and adventure. Guiding her through the enchanted winter wonderland is Gloria, the Good Fairy, a guardian of light and goodness. Gloria's magic and wisdom offer a beacon of hope, helping Crystal navigate the treacherous path to Santa's rescue. And there's Simon the Snowman, a cheerful and loyal friend who has been a part of Santa's Christmas preparations for years. With his frosty exterior and a heart of gold, Simon brings a touch of humor and warmth to the quest. Together, this unlikely trio of heroes sets out to thwart Beatrix's plans, facing perilous obstacles and magical trials in their quest to rescue Santa and preserve the spirit of Christmas. With determination, teamwork, and a sprinkle of holiday magic, they strive to bring back the joy and wonder of the season, ensuring that Christmas will shine as brightly as ever.

## Now Featuring



All Hallows' Eve: A Special Presentation of The Poetry Nebula features the talents of: Charles Bull, Skylar Sullivan, Justin Mozel, Heather Mills, Phil Reid & John O'Brien

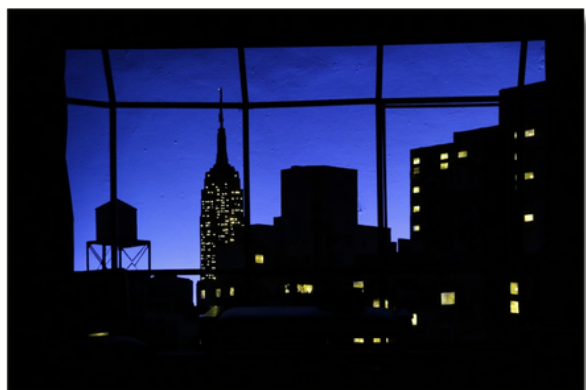
Produced by Telescope  
Directed by John O'Brien

With the Spooky Season upon us, Telescope and company ventured deep and dark to find familiar, and unbeknownst works of poetry to get you into the Hallowe'en spirit. This production is in joint association with The Lexicon of Dread: Created in 2021, the Lexicon of Dread Podcast is the brainchild of Halifax-based actor and composer John O'Brien. It was created with the help of local filmmaker Israel Ekanem, the creator/host of the BlackOut Podcast. Its goal is to resurrect classic horror stories, and to make them as frightening today as when they were originally published. Season One consisted entirely of O'Brien's chilling reading of H.P. Lovecraft's novella At the Mountains of Madness. It was scored with an eerie, atmospheric dark ambient soundtrack composed by O'Brien himself. Season Two will premiere later this year. Lexicon of Dread can be found on iTunes.



## Featured Volunteer

## BILL BARNABY



Bill got involved in community theatre at an early age shortly after his mother got involved in theatre as well. He was 8 or 9 when he saw his parents in the play *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* and was in awe of the flashing lights and the fun everyone was having on the stage.

He loves seeing all aspects of theatre come together, but everything technical is his main interest . Big lighting guy! Now at Theatre Arts Guild you will see Bill designing lights from time to time or assisting others on the techie side. He is the current Technical Director at TAG.

# BEING A VOLUNTEER AT TAG

## HEY TAG VOLUNTEERS!

WE WANT YOU TO JOIN THE FUN

THAT IS FRONT OF HOUSE FOR THE PANTOMIME!!!

Do you like people? Then this is the volunteer position for you!

There are a couple of roles: tending bar (everyone is always happy to see you), greeting folks and scanning tickets  
(The People will like you too).

Shifts are Thursday to Saturday evenings, with afternoon matinees Saturdays and Sundays.

Shifts are generally three to four hours long.

We need three people for each performance; you will work with one of our Front of House Managers.

The show runs from November 23 to December 9.

It's a lot of fun, and you can certainly volunteer on the same night you are attending the show!

Email us at [tagvolunteer@gmail.com](mailto:tagvolunteer@gmail.com) to get in on the fun (or if you have any questions) and help support  
your community theatre!

For returning Front of House volunteers, stay tuned! We will be in touch.

See you at Pond Playhouse!

Louise and Cheryl

# Coming Soon

## *Calling All Gilbert and Sullivan Fans!*

January 26th & 27th, 2024

TAG is returning Gilbert and Sullivan songs to the stage.

We are planning to have a sumptuous selection of the greatest hits.

Would you like to be involved?

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 7pm

At the Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Road

in Halifax's Jollimore community

off Purcell's Cove Rd (just past the Frog Pond)

Meet and Greet for friends old and new

Auditions for new soloists/singers

If we are lucky, we will get to sing a song or two together

The plan is that January will have a variety show format and have the audience  
join in on the choruses.

If you can't make our meet and greet night but would still like to be involved email

[jolenepattison76@gmail.com](mailto:jolenepattison76@gmail.com)



# AUDITION NOTICE

## Auditions for Murder Tonight

by Nick Jupp

Monday, November 27th 7-9pm

&

Tuesday, November 28th 7-9pm

The Pond Playhouse, 6 Parkhill Road  
in Halifax's Jollimore community  
off Purcell's Cove Rd (just past the Frog  
Pond)

Open auditions. No preparation required, excerpts from the script will be available for a cold read. Walk in between 7pm and 9pm on either night.

TAG is a community theatre and all experience levels are welcome.

A cast of eight, six female and two male.

The play moves back and forth in time about twenty years so three female actors comfortable playing late teens to early twenties and three comfortable playing the same characters in their late thirties to early forties. If you are not exactly in these age ranges you are still encouraged to audition since there is flexibility in the casting in order to make credible matches.

MIA - enrolled in a hair stylist program when young and the owner/operator of a successful Salon with her husband Liam when older.  
SOPHIA - completing University when young and a stay at home wife with her successful Lawyer husband when older.

OLIVIA - a cadet in a police training college when young and is un-married when older holding the rank of Detective Inspector.

Two male actors are required to play:

LIAM - a hair stylist and Mia's husband. They jointly own and operate a successful Salon.

NOAH - a law firm Partner and Sophia's husband. He is a high earner.

This production runs from  
March 7th to 23rd 2024.

There will be a reading in December once the cast is established and rehearsals will begin three evenings a week early in January. Additional rehearsals will be required closer to the opening.

Director: Nick Jupp; Producer: Lorne Abramson  
Stage Manager: Angela Butler

For more information, contact director  
Nick Jupp

902 448-5877 or 902 477-8697

# Unlock Exclusive Benefits with a TAG Membership

## Membership Has Its Benefits

Not only do members receive a discount on tickets, but a Theatre Arts Guild membership is also the ideal way to help your community theatre thrive while developing your own theatrical skills, interests, and making new friends. Now there is a *NEW BENEFIT* to membership - *EARLY ACCESS TO TICKET SALES!* Members can choose their performance dates and seats before tickets are available to the public.

**Become a member today!**

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

## TAG Executive Board 2023-2024

Rayna Smith-Camp, President

Vacant, Vice-President

Patrick Charron, Treasurer

Stephanie Demedeiros Ouedraogo, Secretary

Jennifer Robbins, Artistic Director

Angela Butler, Executive Producer

Bill Barnaby, Technical Director

Bill VanGorder, Building Manager

Louise Renault & Cheryl Theriault, Volunteer Development

Valerie Dubois, Web Director

Lorne Abramson, Publicity and Marketing Director

Angela Butler, Newsletter Editor

Bill VanGorder, Fundraising Director

David Williams, Bar Manager

Valerie Dubois, Membership

TAG Costumes and Props Team

TAG Archives

Michele Moore – TAG Phone Line



# *MEMORIES OF...* **On a First Name Basis**

**Director**

**Michele Moore**

**Producer**

**Angela Butler**

**Stage Manager**

**Jocelyne Hellou**

**Set**

**Design, Dressing & Constuction**

**Cheryl Theriault,**

**Brenda Tyedmers & J Carruth**

**by Norm Foster**

**Light & Sound**

**Operator**

**Joshua Law**

**Asst. Stage Manager**

**Palma Hemming**

**Light & Sound Design**

**Patrick Charron**



## **STARRING**

*"Poignant, devilishly  
funny and thought  
provoking"*

**Phil Reid  
as David Kilbride**



**Lorraine Cantwell  
as Lucy Hoppenstaad**

*"Unbelievable  
performances"*

*"The set was perfectly  
balanced with the  
play"*



### **Episode 13**

On the timeline that is the development of the theatrical form, theatre for children is a relative newcomer. What we now recognize as theatre (drama, comedy) began around 700 B.C. in the city/state of Athens in Ancient Greece, originating as part of the observances and festivities connected principally with the god of wine (and ritual madness!), Dionysius. These festivities were a mix of worship, processions, hymns, dance and drinking – a good deal of drinking. In brief, an activity intended for adults and certainly not one for younger people.

The spoken material which had formed a portion of these festivities began to be considered as a celebration on its own. Submissions were requested from writers and, to provide an equal footing for all entrants, rules were set down. The actual subject for the submissions did not differ from what the festivalgoers were already familiar with – The stories of the Gods and their interactions with humankind, the attempts of men and women to navigate the ups and downs of existence with fate (= the Gods) always hovering overhead. Competition entrants were men, the organizers of the events were men, and the actors were men. (Female characters were depicted through the use of masks). It's not that there were no female writers or female poets and lyricists, there were and fragments of their work have survived, some were even allowed to enter poetry competitions, but they were in the minority and the foundation is laid - a male-oriented and male-dominated structure which lasted for hundreds of years. Even the Brontë sisters for their first work in the 1840s used male pseudonyms for fear that the use of their real names would garner them less attention. Since in the theatrical sphere women (and children) begin on the margins, the spread of Christianity in Europe and beyond does nothing to improve their position. Women are faithful, obedient daughters, sisters, wives and mothers and seeing them on a stage could not be tolerated. Any woman who had such aspirations was regarded with suspicion. No 'decent' female would ever think of treading the boards. This particular glass ceiling gets broken in 1660. There seems to be some confusion as to the actress's name, either Margaret Hughes or Anne Marshall, but the play was definitely Othello, with the female in the role of Desdemona. With the ice broken, female performers, with the support of actors and theatre managers gradually join their male counterparts. Theatre, as an art form still remains an adult preserve. The material that is written is intended for adult audiences, those who attend are adults and the theatre-going experience expands into quite the social occasion, having long shed its religious origins.

Just because children don't fit into this particular scenario, does not mean that amusements were denied to young people or were absent from their everyday lives (and this runs through all classes). From Medieval times onwards, but within the confines of the home or in the streets and marketplace, there were activities aimed at bringing laughter to children and eliciting coins from their parents. Jugglers, acrobats, stilt-walkers, fire-eaters, magicians, animal trainers, jesters, puppeteers all can be seen, plus travelling groups of players whose dialogue was not at the child's level, but whose colourful costumes and slapstick antics would catch their attention. Many times as a child I sat on the sand on the Blackpool beach watching the Punch and Judy Show and wondering why Mr. Punch got to whack everyone (including the baby!). Always a noisy performance and my grandparents made sure I had some pennies to put in the velvet bag which was passed around at the conclusion of the performance.

*continued ....*

#### **Episode 13**

continued ....

So what are the factors which finally bring into existence theatre for children, that is staged entertainment in a theatre building of material which forms a story whose vocabulary and intellectual content are at the appropriate level? In the case of Margaret Hughes and her contemporaries change came about through determined social action - Why could not women appear as women on the stage after centuries being played by men? Why was there this stigma, this reluctance? These were social pressures to be overcome and a few brave souls were willing to break convention, after which time theatre-goers could only wonder why it had taken so long to happen.

We still have some centuries before us and during those centuries a number of circumstances must evolve for theatre for children to emerge in the early years of the nineteenth century. One of the first things to consider is the change of attitude towards children - young people are no longer considered to be 'adults in waiting,' but a subset of the population, with their own opinions, like and dislikes and - yes, fashions and catered activities. Another very important factor is the growth of education and the desire in many cultures for that education to be universal, with the opportunity for all children to be able to read and write. With the expanding ability to communicate in the 17th century we see the introduction of reading material for school use, but this has a definite purpose - what children learn will shape how they behave. The first school primers set out information to be memorized, plus the recommended interaction with other human beings. The child, formerly ignored, is now being moulded for later life.

There's a parallel activity here which complements school learning - the beginning of the collection and publication of folk tales and stories which had existed in an oral form for hundreds of years. These were stories which were familiar to children the world over, but which now began to be circulated in printed form, and for that, the ability to read was essential. There's not a dichotomy here - the lessons absorbed in school were the lessons of the naughty *Red Riding Hood*, who enters the forest alone and ends up (sorry to have to say this!) in the stomach of the wolf. There's yet another step to be taken here - from stories which warn and caution and have an underlying moral compass to stories which simply entertain and are intended to bring joy and provoke laughter. And, there's that facet called commercialism, meaning that theatre owners were looking to fill buildings during the Christmas season, when parents were already planning to spend on toys and treats for their offspring.

What finally emerges in the early years of the 19th century, through the development of all the factors outlined above is a holiday entertainment which had still more growing to do, but which we can eventually recognize as pantomime. Lots of elements went into this mix - characters borrowed from the Italian tradition of *Commedia dell'arte*, a travelling theatrical form popular in the 16th to the 18th centuries. Sections of the *Commedia* were true pantomime, with gestures but no dialogue. Harlequin (Arlecchino) becomes the star of the *Commedia* and the character begins to appear in other entertainment forms. Early pantomimes feature elements from ballet, a French form dating from the 15th and 16th centuries, an offshoot of the elaborate masques held at the French court. And the evenings include regular comedy sketches and short plays - All in all, quite the miscellany.

*continued....*

### Episode 13

continued ....

The expansive performances of pantomime's debut tend to be pared down later during this century, as impresarios determine what finds favour with their now target audience of families and children. What comes to dominate are the folk stories collected by Charles Perrault in 1697 and later the Brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in Germany and Hans Christian Andersen in Denmark (who contributes original pieces also such as *Thumbelina* and *Little Mermaid*). Children can now read these tales for themselves and being featured as a holiday entertainment, with the addition of music and elaborate costumes and sets. Forget the earlier attempts – We've found the winning formula! *Cinderella*, *Puss in Boots*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding-Hood* offer the attraction of a complete story, interesting characters, both good and bad, human and non-human beings (think pantomime horse) and a certainty that the goodies win and the baddies end up where the baddies always end up!! The bonus is that in the informal atmosphere of the story framework, audience participation is expected and encouraged. You can't do that in Shakespeare!

And pantomime as a form is still expanding. With the proliferation of children's books, literary characters such as *Peter Pan* become the subject of pantomimes and TAG's offering this year is based around Santa Claus, a staple of the holiday season, but whose origin is a 3rd century bishop known for good works and born in the Middle East. So, forget all the history - that's just to tell you how we got here from there - and enjoy our 21st century holiday fare with your family!

Judy Reade  
TAG's Archivist

