

President's Message

—Esther VanGorder, president



Happy New Year! After all the anticipation and preparations (and the most successful Pantomime ever) it's hard to believe that it's already near the end of January and the holidays are well behind us.

As I write this, the cast and crew of *Best of Friends* are hard at work rehearsing and creating the technical and artistic magic of our next production. *Best of Friends* is a light, romantic comedy to brighten the darkness of a Nova Scotia winter. Opening night is Feb 24th. Remember, one of the benefits of membership is that you have the exclusive right to book your seats for the first week the box office is open. For *Best of Friends*, the box office opens on Jan 27th.

I'm fast learning how fortunate I am as president to have such diligent and hard-working board members and committee members; it makes my job so much easier. In the coming months, I will be able to report in more detail upon the many projects—outside of the current production—that are in progress, but for now, let me simply summarize. The artistic committee is well into the process of choosing the shows for next season. This process actually begins early in the season, as we begin the daunting task of whittling down a plethora of excellent scripts to just five to present in the next year. The building committee continues to meet weekly to discuss and finalize plans for more building improvements. Some smaller projects are carried out during the season, as they don't interfere with the productions. Larger, more extensive renovations are planned during the season, but executed in the short summer months when the theatre is dark.

While "hovering" around the lobby and the house before the show starts, I have heard a number of comments from audience members about the seats that are taped off and reserved. Our box office arrangement does not allow for us to have pre-assigned seating. Our reservations manager, Lynn Bungay, is a wizardess at her job, but even she is not able to do this. There are only three reasons why a seat or group of seats would be marked as reserved:

1. If theatre patrons have physical disabilities that require them to sit in a particular area of the theatre, and they make this known to Lynn when they reserve, we will endeavor to hold these seats for them. This includes patrons that are visually or hearing impaired and require seating in the front part of the house, or those who cannot physically (or safely) climb the stairs to the upper rows of the house.
2. Our front of house volunteers often combine their shifts on the ticket desk or at the bar with the enjoyment of seeing the production, especially when they travel some distance to the theatre and wish to

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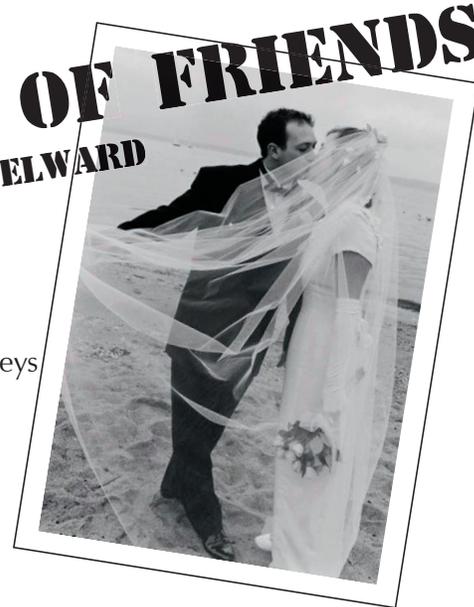
Our Next Production...

BEST OF FRIENDS

BY JAMES ELWARD

Directed by
Rebecca Humphreys

Produced by
Ann Miller



February 24th to March 12th, 2005

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings at 8:00 P.M.
with one Sunday Matinée on March 6th at 2:00 P.M.

Chase away the winter blahs by booking early for this witty romantic comedy. Hilarity breaks out when a long absent and famous writer returns from the dead to his wife and adult family, accompanied by the sweet young twenty-four-year-old he intends to marry. Complications ensue as family skeletons are exhumed and romance blossoms in unexpected places.

The box office opens January 27th for members and
February 3rd for non members.

For Reservations Call
477-2663

or visit www.tagtheatre.com

TAG Board, 2004-2005

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Saraguay Club—Dinner & Theatre

The Saraguay Club and The Theatre Arts Guild offer a dinner and theatre package (\$37.00 plus tax and gratuities) on Thursday and Friday evenings during TAG's productions.

During the run of *Best of Friends*, this package will be offered on February 24th and 25th, and March 3rd, 4th, 10th, and 11th. Arrive at the Saraguay at 5:30, enjoy a three-course dinner, and then travel to the Pond playhouse by 7:30 for an evening of entertainment.

To reserve this package, call TAG at 477-2663.

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

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make the trip only once. Because they arrive at the theatre very early (often as much as 1 ½ hours before curtain) and they reserve and pay for their seats, they are permitted to hold their seats, as they are not able to enter the theatre until minutes before the lights go up. It's sort of like "virtually" being first in line. Also, our volunteer bartenders must be able to exit the house quickly at the interval to get to their posts and serve you, our thirsty patrons.

3. The reason you may see a group of ten or more seats taped off is the last one that the Front-of-House manager will allow. Any booking of ten or more seats must be pre-paid in full and is not refundable. Because of this, we will reserve a section so that the members of the booking group can sit together.

I hope this explains our seating policy and soothes some of the consternation some of you may feel when the seat you really want is reserved for someone else.

If anyone has any questions or comments about this or anything else happening at TAG, please leave a message on the TAG phone line (477-2663) or send an email via our website www.tagtheatre.com. *

More on *Best of Friends*

—Ann Miller, producer

Rebecca Humphreys and a cast of nine actors (old hands and newcomers to TAG) are busy blocking *Best Of Friends* and bonding at the Pond Playhouse. This romantic comedy promises to be a light-hearted look at love, marriage and friendship—just the play to cuddle up to on a cold winter's night!!

The plot revolves around a middle-aged couple, estranged for a number of years but never formally separated. Archer (Phil Reid), the long-absent husband and famous writer, returns to the family home under extraordinary circumstances with Daryl (Alice Woodbury), his sweet, twenty-four-year-old fiancée. There he reconnects with his wife, Josie (Michele Moore) to seek a divorce; his cynical, spinster daughter, Kate (Karen Shewbridge); his son Merrill (Samme Smith-Camp), who emulates and worships his father; and Merrill's superficial wife Lib (Rayna Smith-Camp). Add to this family a sophisticated, red-hot literary agent (Helen Goodwin); a competent if nerdy entertainment lawyer (Ian MacDermid); and a busker-cum-reverend-cum-busker (Angus Duncan), and you have the makings of a good chuckle with a hopeful message.

Written by James Elward, *Best Of Friends* was first presented in February 1970 at The Strand Theatre in London and came on tour in the USA with Shirley Booth as Josie in the summer of that year.

The back stage gang for *Best Of Friends* is also a mix of TAG veterans and recruits. Newcomers include Ann Miller, producer, Geoff Ball, stage manager; Austin Cole, assistant stage manager; Donna Goyetche, sound operator; Dan McCormick, publicity; and Dorianne Mullins, assistant props coordinator. Our mentors include Rebecca Humphreys, director; Ian Vanderberg, set designer; Lorne Abramson, lighting designer (here, a veteran with a new mission), Judy Reade, costume designer, Deb Jewett, props coordinator, and Austin Reade, lighting board operator and so much more.

So book early with your significant other for a thoughtful evening of fun and romance. *

Next at TAG

Dancing at Lughnasa

by Brian Friel

April 28th to May 14th, 2005

Directed by Louise Renault

Produced by Bill VanGorder

Stage Manager: Esther VanGorder

Winner of the 1992 Tony award for best play, Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Broadway play, and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play.

The action of the play is told through the memory of the illegitimate son as he remembers the five women who raised him, his mother and four maiden aunts. He is only seven in 1936, the year his elderly uncle, a priest, returns after serving for twenty-five years as a missionary in a Ugandan leper colony. For the young boy, two other disturbances occur that summer. The sisters acquire their first radio, whose music transforms them from correct Catholic women into shrieking, stomping banshees in their own kitchen. And he meets his father for the first time, a charming Welsh drifter who strolls up the lane and sweeps his mother away in an elegant dance across the fields. From these small events spring the cracks that destroy the foundation of the family forever. But this haunting play is Friel's tribute to the spirit and valour of the past and its people. *



TAG at Neptune

—Nick Jupp, past president

The TAG Board is pleased to announce we will be returning to The Studio at Neptune this coming June with a production of Norm Foster's adult comedy *The Melville Boys*. Casting will occur late in February with two female and two male roles. The play is centered around two brothers (one carrying a very big problem) at their Aunt's lakeside camp for a weekend. They're away from the plastics factory where they both work, away from family and fiancé, a whole weekend of fishing, beer, and camaraderie. However, two sisters appear, paddling down the lake—local residents, no doubt. Now, what could possibly transpire at Auntie's camp, by the lake, out in the woods, when two girls meet two boys?

Plays by Fredericton-based Norm Foster have become internationally popular, and we are pleased to bring the humour and tender discoveries of *The Melville Boys* to Neptune's Studio stage. Dates, reservation information, etc. will all appear in the next newsletter. *



Upcoming TAG Productions

February 24th to March 12th, 2005

Best of Friends, a comedy by James Elward

Directed by Rebecca Humphreys

April 28th to May 14th

Dancing at Lughnasa, A Drama by Brian Friel

Directed by Louise Renault

July 7th to 23rd, 2005

The Hollow, a mystery by Agatha Christie

Directed by Iris Paterson

TAG's Nameless Stars

—Lynn Bungay (*Reservations and FOH*)

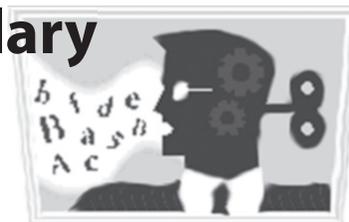
With each TAG production, the program lists the many contributors. Special thanks are always given to our Front of House Volunteers. But, just who are they? Well, it's about time—long overdue really—that their identities be known. Many have been volunteering for years. To those who are recent inductees, I hope you've had fun and will be back again in 2005. Do let me know if I've missed anyone.

Amal Bhattacharyya, Carl Anderson, Annette Aucoin, Dale Baker, Linda Bourbonnais, Carolyn Boyer, James Boyer, Joe Brown, Allayne Bruce, Angela Butler, Lorraine Campbell, Maureen Cameron, Malcolm Capstick, Cathy Carreau, J Carruth, Elaine Casey, Herb Chapman, Marg Chapman, Connie Cook, Sheena Dickinson, Terry Dolan, Mary Farmer, Pat Farmer, Vivian Fleming, Alain Godbout, Helen Goodwin, Margaret Henry, Andrea Hilson, Carolyn Humphreys, Deb Jewett, Julia Jewett, Heather Jupp, Nick Jupp, Harriett King, Rich Knowles, Christianne Lafferty, Cheryl Landry, Melanie Lantz, Ilze Lucis, Pam Lutz, Joyce MacDoanld, Judy MacDonald, Colin MacGillivray, Valerie MacKenzie, Frank MacLean, Alicia Malcolm, Roz Marshall, Tony Marshall, Brenda Marilyn Dempsey, McAdam, Rob McIntyre, Hugh McKervill, Moonhei McKervill, Linda McKinnon, Ron McKinnon, Virginia Moore, Michele Moore, Lorraine Morris, Janet Morrison, Peggy Mowry, Kevin Nugent, Gisela O'Brien, Joe O'Brien, Eddie Paterson, Iris Paterson, Dawn Patterson, Tom Pattillo, Jane Philip, Karen Phinney, Keith Phinney, Deb Post, Pat Priest, Paul Quinton, Judy Reade, Phil Reid, Willi Reid, Louise Renault, Jeff Roy, Jennifer Sangster, Warren Sangster, Roxanne Smith, Cheryl Theriault, Ethel Thompson, Hope Toumishey, Brenda Tyedmers, Bill VanGorder, Hugh Vincent, Jackie Warkentin, Janet Warkentin, Charles Westropp, Jane Westropp.



Thank you, thank you, thank you. We applaud you all! *

Expanding Your Theatre Vocabulary



Domestic (Dis)harmony

(The tenth in a continuing series)

—Judy Reade, *Props Mistress/Wardrobe Mistress*

Our next production, *Best of Friends*, might be described as a “domestic comedy.” More specifically, it presents a series of humorous situations which unfold within a week in the life of the Connaught family, arising out of the interactions of the members of the family and their close associates when the head of the family returns after being presumed dead in an aircraft accident. All of the action, all of the laughs (and some pathos) play out within the domestic setting of the Connaught living room.

In the present TV/multimedia age, action within the domestic setting, featuring ordinary human beings is very familiar to us (think *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, etc.) The domestic setting, however, which as a form of presentation has been known since the 16th century, has only really come to the fore in the last hundred years. Domestic life was generally considered too dull, and ordinary people just, well, too ordinary to be the stuff of theatrical pieces. To reinforce this view, just think of Shakespeare’s plays. How many can you name which have their principal setting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Joe-round-the-corner? There are enchanted forests, islands, seashores, and gloomy castles aplenty; kings, princes, ghosts, titled lords and ladies, but no Raymond, wife and kids, yappy mother, or brother who’s not too bright. Sensational incidents, stirring themes taken from the exploits of heroes and gods, and tales which

reflected pride in national exploits or which took their inspiration from Ancient Greece and Rome were much more to the public’s liking. Such trends continued well into the Victorian era, when melodramas set in gothic castles whose denizens were mysterious noblemen (with none too good intentions) were all the rage. Even for those writers who did favour domestic settings (Molière in France in the 17th century, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan in England in the 18th century) used the opportunity more to concentrate on personality traits, or differences in manners, upbringing and style.

As with all theatrical trends, there inevitably comes a reaction. As a counter to the sensational incidents and epic personages comes the attempt to portray human life in all its gritty realism. In contemporary theatre, this is normally taken as dating from 1956, with a play by the English writer John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger*. Osborne sets his play in a one-bedroom flat, using characters from the working class, with language taken from the streets, and the domestic setting was never the same again.

There are points of drama in *Best of Friends*, but an awful lot of laughter, too. Certainly Archer’s return to the bosom of his family means *they* will never be the same again! How is that? Well, you’ll have to come and discover that for yourself! *

TAG’s Next Variety Night

TAG’s 2005 Variety Night will take place on Saturday, April 2nd. Mark your calendar now for a great evening of fun and fellowship. Variety Night is for members only, another great reason to be a TAG member. Acts are now being booked for the Variety Night, so if you want to perform, contact the night’s Producer, Bill VanGorder at bill.vangorder@ns.sympatico.ca. *

RU on the TAG E-Mail List?

If you are not getting regular e-mails from TAG, let us know, so we can put you on the list for one or both of our regular e-mail systems.

We send out an e-mail “blast” whenever there is something new happening at TAG. These e-mails come out once or twice a week. These are especially useful for those wanting to know the status of seat availability for current productions or for those interested in auditions and other community theatre activities.

The other mailing is a once-a-month e-mail of news for the entire month. Not as current, and you may miss an event, but it does mean less e-mail in your inbox.

To get on either or both of these e-mail lists, send an e-mail to bill.vangorder@ns.sympatico.ca *

... and Silent Auction!!

There will be a new twist on Variety Night this year! Bring your checkbooks, and get ready to bid on fabulous items at our Silent Auction! Cheryl Theriault is looking for a couple of assistants in planning our first ever Silent Auction. Cheryl is also looking for contributions to the Silent Auction!

We have many talented patrons and members. If you are one of them, (and we know you are), please pull on your thinking cap, create something marvelous, and call Cheryl! If services are your thing, or if you have a fabulous connection to someone with equally fabulous services or stuff, call Cheryl at 492-0838.

This year’s Variety Night and Silent Auction will be held on April 2nd, so we’d love to have all items in hand at least a week prior. Once again, if you can help, in any way, please...

Call Cheryl at 492-0838. See her? Waiting eagerly by the phone? Don’t be disappointing! Call now! *

TAG T-Shirts for Sale

Have you seen the wonderful TAG T-shirts designed by Sheena Dickenson? Buy yours next time you are at the theatre. Twenty dollars will give you a T-shirt you will be proud to wear. T-shirts are available at the Bar. *