



CONTACT

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE THEATRE ARTS GUILD



TAG TICKETS

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phone (902) 451-1221 or
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THE POND PLAYHOUSE - 6 PARKHILL RD. HALIFAX NOVA SCOTIA INFO@TAGTHEATRE.COM

Next at TAG - Thirteen Hands

Thirteen Hands by Carol Shields will run February 11th to 27th, starring: Elaine Casey, Helen Goodwin, Ruth Le Lacheur and Kate Wilkinson. The production is directed by Louise Renault, produced by Bill VanGorder and stage managed by Esther VanGorder.

Thirteen Hands is set around a bridge table. Through different generations of players, the women in the play discover family histories, the tricks of getting old and a companionship that gets passed on like an exquisite heirloom to a next generation of bridge players.

Carol Shields' strength as a master of dialogue shines at its brightest as she returns to one of her favourite themes: exploring love, family, friendship, and the hidden meanings and larger truths found beneath the surface of the minutiae of daily life. *Thirteen Hands* is an exhilarating example of Shields' considerable achievements as a playwright.

Shields spoke often of redeeming the lives of people by recording them in her own works. "...especially that group of women who came between the two great women's movements. I think those women's lives were often thought of as worthless because they only kept house and played bridge. But I think they had value." Shields stated.

The Winnipeg Free Press wrote, "Shields must be congratulated for

bringing home a cleverly played grand slam... [a] beautifully written memory play."

The Ottawa Sun wrote, "...*Thirteen Hands* is light and funny - every audience member recognizes the quaint phrases of their mother and grandmothers...Yet the play is not without its poignant, hard-hitting moments."

The playwright: Carol Shields moved to Canada from Illinois in 1935 at the age of twenty-two. She studied at the University of Exeter in England, and obtained her M.A. at the University of Ottawa. She started publishing poetry in her thirties, and wrote her first novel, *Small Ceremonies*, in 1976. Over the next three decades, Shields would become the author of over twenty books, including plays, poetry, essays, short fiction and novels. Her work has been translated into twenty-two languages.

THIRTEEN



HANDS

BY CAROL SHIELDS

A beautifully written memory play... every audience member recognizes the quaint phrases of their mother and grandmothers.

Tickets on sale Jan. 15th

Buy Your Tickets

- * Ticket Atlantic Box Office
- * Charge by Phone at (902) 451-1221
- * Online at www.ticketatlantic.com (\$4 fee per online session)
- * At the 17 participating Atlantic Superstore outlets
- * At the door (subject to availability)

Mailing Address: Theatre Arts Guild 287 Lacewood Drive Unit 103 Suite 412 Halifax N.S. B3M 3Y7

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Sixteen years ago, our TAG entry in the Liverpool (NS) Theatre Festival was a collection of short plays that shared an underlying connection. I was there as a stage hand but the author and name of the production escape me at the moment. However, I do vividly recall two things about our festival entry. Firstly that TAG's Jill Vesey won the best actress award, and secondly a line from our play that included the phrase "in the heart of winter".

I don't know why that phrase burned itself into my memory, maybe because our Canadian winters are so different than those of my youth in southern England. But in any case "in the heart of winter" has stayed with me and like a permanent calendar entry pops into my head at this time of year. Being at the heart of something is a profound place to be, to be at the central, most crucial point means there is no need to look further. You are where all that matters resides and, in a sense, where true peace can be experienced.

Nobody ever remarks about the heart of summer, fall or spring, these seasons

are too unpredictable; flaky would not even be unfair to describe our summers. But a clear winter night with moonlight casting shadows on fresh snow, or in the midst of a raging storm; these are places that are truly both beautiful and peaceful. I know others would choose skating on clear lake ice, skiing down a mountain or perhaps even clearing snow so that bird feeders can be filled. It doesn't matter, because being "in the heart of winter" is a privileged and magical place to be.

Thirteen Hands by Carol Shields is our heart of winter play and I can't think of a more suitable production for this time of year. With the lives of four women unravelled and exposed around a bridge table, *Thirteen Hands* certainly gets to the heart of these women's souls. It's almost ten years since we last produced *Thirteen Hands* and it was incredibly popular. Carol Shields is one of Canada's most prolific novelists' and playwright with an international reputation. So please add to your magical winter experience a trip to TAG for a heart warming experience with *Thirteen Hands*. ~ Nick Jupp, President

AUDITION CALL HOW IT WORKS

by Daniel MacIvor

How it Works by Daniel MacIvor will run April 22 to May 8, 2010. The first Rehearsal is February 16th. The production is directed by Michele Moore and stage managed by Carolyn Boyer.

Cape Breton playwright Daniel MacIvor's *How It Works* introduces us to four unforgettable people: Al, his ex-wife Donna, his new partner Christine, and his daughter Brooke. A broken marriage, a new girlfriend and a troubled daughter. Using past and present, the play illuminates the lives of these four characters as they come to terms with their own stories and their own secrets.

"...a spiritual experience as MacIvor invokes the power of storytelling to heal broken lives. *How It Works* is pure joy." ~ Chronicle Herald.

Audition Dates & Times:

Sunday January 10th, 1-5 p.m.

Monday January 11th, 7-9 p.m.

Location: Pond Playhouse

6 Parkhill Rd. (off the Purcell's Cove Rd.)

The cast will comprise of four members: woman (30 -40), woman (40 - 50) woman (19 - 25) and man (40 - 50).

For additional information please contact the director, Michele Moore at michmoore@eastlink.ca or contact Carolyn Boyer at carolynjamie@eastlink.ca.

Want to Volunteer?

email info@tagtheatre.com
for more information

Send your newsletter
submissions to
newsletter@tagtheatre.com

Grey Squirrel Award - 2009

The Grey Squirrel Award recognizes contributions to the theatre above and beyond. It was presented to the "Thursday Crew" who have been practically living at the theatre for the past few years during the extensive renovations being made to the Pond Playhouse. *In this photo: Left (back to front): Austin Reade, John Gratwick, Joe O'Brien. Right (back to front): Bill VanGorder, Barbara Hart, Nick Jupp.*



TAG TICKET PRICES

\$16 - General Admission

\$13 - Members/Seniors/Students

Note: TAG prices include all Ticket Atlantic service fees except where tickets are purchased online (online service fee - \$4 per online session)

Community Notes

Bedford Players presents *Bedroom Farce* by British playwright Alan Ayckbourn. The comedy concerns four married couples who are at different stages in their relationships and whose lives intersect over the course of one very chaotic evening. The show runs April 22nd to May 8th. Visit www.bedfordplayers.ns.ca or call 832-3300 for more information.

Dartmouth Players presents the dark comedy *Woman in Mind*, by Alan Ayckbourn. A delightfully twisted and poignant tale of life, love and December Bees! The show runs February 3rd to 20th. Visit www.dartmouthplayers.ns.ca or call 465-PLAY or for more information.

Panto Wrap Up

TAG's holiday pantomime was a huge success again this year, *A Spirit for Evermore* entertained patrons of all ages. It was nice to see families relaxing together and sharing in the boozing and cheering. It featured black light, a dancing "dog" and three pairs of dancing shoes.



The cast of "A Spirit for Evermore"

Grand Finale 2010-2011 Season

The Artistic Committee of TAG is interested in submissions by directors who have a play in mind for the final production of our 2010/2011 season which would run late June, early July of 2011. We would like a strong finish to the season- a well-known play (or author) with great audience appeal. We would prefer a small scale production for this spot (rather than a musical with a large cast, for example). A comedy would be welcome although we are not restricted to that category.

If you are a director and have a play in mind, email us at artistic-director@tagtheatre.com ~ Debora Post, Artistic Director

Support TAG – Make a Donation Today

Renew Your TAG Membership Today!

visit tagtheatre.com/membership.htm for more information

\$15	Regular	\$10	Senior (60+)
\$25	Family	\$10	Student

Membership benefits include: \$3 discount off admission, newsletters and invitations to special members-only events

Ladies and Gentlemen, Please Take Your Seats!

Dedicate a Seat for \$500 and take a permanent place in the history of the Pond Playhouse Your seat will be identified with an engraved plaque.

- ▶ Celebrate a special occasion/event
- ▶ Cherish the memory of a loved one
- ▶ Record a milestone
- ▶ Raise your company's community profile
- ▶ Show your support for the arts

Your contribution is tax deductible.

All proceeds to the TAG Capital Campaign.

Visit www.tagtheatre.com or email seatsale@tagtheatre.com for more information about this exciting fundraiser!

50%+
SOLD!

Valentine's Already!

Leading up to Valentine's Day, TAG will be making a return visit to the Keshen Goodman Library. Our presentation, *Various Views on Love and Marriage*, is comprised of three pieces. In *A Marriage Has Been Arranged* by Alfred Sutro, a proposal is about to take place during a Society ball at the end of the 19th century, but the vital words take a long time to be actually spoken! Our second piece is *A Matter of Husbands* by Ferenc Molnar, in which a wily actress with a young (married) admirer successfully calms the fears of the man's wife. Specially for the children in the audience, the programme closes with an excerpt from *The Ugly Duckling* by A.A. Milne (creator of Winnie-the-Pooh). In this original fairy tale a Prince must go through the age-old ritual of solving a puzzle before gaining the hand of his Princess.

Everyone is welcome: Saturday, February, 6th, 2 PM, at the Keshen Goodman Library (330 Lacewood Drive, Halifax). ~ Judy Reade

January 2010 CONTACT

NOT ALWAYS A PRIMROSE PATH

Early Female Dramatists

Expanding Your Theatre Vocabulary - the 30th in a continuing series...

Carol Shields (1935 – 2003) enjoyed a thirty-year career as a novelist, poet, playwright and academic. Whilst also filling the quintessential roles of wife and mother, dictionary entries use the epithet 'author' to describe this American-born Canadian writer, whose *The Stone Diaries* (1993) won both the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the 1993 Governor General's Award (the only book to have ever received both awards). Shields' work garnered numerous other accolades from the world of publishing and, at her death, she was a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a companion of the Order of Canada. And many fellow female playwrights/authors in this country have achieved similar success — Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock (TAG presented her *Blood Relations* in 1994), Ann Chislett, Judith Thompson, Joanna Glass and Ann-Marie MacDonald (whose *Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet* opened our 2009/2010 season).

All of these women however, owe a deep debt of gratitude to the pioneer female dramatists, who had a more difficult path to climb, one that wasn't strewn with primroses! I have mentioned before in this series that, up to the early decades of the 17th century, the feminine parts in plays had invariably been taken by boys or young men (even Shakespeare's Juliet was male!). The young people were deemed to be apprentices and were trained

by the older actors, who were paid for the services they rendered. The first appearance of actresses (on the English stage) was in 1629. A group of French players, under the patronage of the Queen, tried giving performances in the Blackfriars area of London, but received a hostile reception, with the women being hissed and booed by the audience. Some stalwart souls obviously struggled on, since there is a comment recorded by a writer in 1633 that describes females who dare go on the stage as 'impudent,' also 'shameful' and 'unwomanish!' Female tenacity triumphs however and in 1656, a play entitled *The Siege of Rhodes* includes a Mrs. Coleman in the role of Ianthé. By 1660, a London production of the Bard's *Othello* features a woman in the role of Desdemona. A (male) writer of the day makes this comment...

"I come, unknown to any of the rest. To tell the news; I saw the lady drest — The woman plays today; mistake me not, no man in gown or page in petticoat."

Once the floodgates open, there is no closing them! Just ten years after the *Othello* production, the first (English) woman to earn her living by her writing, Aphra Behn (1640-1689) has begun her output of plays, novels, poems and political pamphlets. Such was her popularity that she was buried in Westminster Abbey. Behn did not have a background in theatre, but a popular successor, Susanna Centlivre did.

Born in 1669, by the opening of the 18th century, she is in London, writing and publishing under the name Susanna Carroll, after some years as an actress performing outside the capital. Centlivre eventually married a chef who was in the service of Queen Anne, so presumably it was still considered necessary for the female dramatist to have the social status of a married woman and an income based partly on her husband's earnings!

By the end of the 18th century, women who write plays no longer raise eyebrows and Susanna Centlivre's success is emulated by Hannah Cowley (notably *The Runaway* in 1776 and *The Belle's Stratagem* in 1780). The actress Elizabeth Inchbald appeared in a production of the latter and then went on to write some eighteen comedies, dramas and farces of her own. Jane Austen (in *Mansfield Park*) mentions one of Inchbald's pieces, *Lover's Vows*, which was written in 1798.

I can think of no better way to end this particular outline with a quotation from *The Platonick Lady*, written by Susanna Centlivre in 1706...

"And why this Wrath against the Womens Work?"

Perhaps you'll answer, because they meddle with things out of their Sphere;

But I say, no; for since the Poet is born, why not a Woman as well as a Man?" ~ Judy Reade