

THEATRE ARTS GUILD

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Canada's Oldest Continuously Operating Theatre Company



THE POND PLAYHOUSE

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The official newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild

A Message from Our President

Happy New Year! Here's hoping that 2021 will eventually allow us to enjoy some of our favourite events and activities – such as live theatre!

That being said, the TAG Board continues to receive and develop suggestions on how we can keep our audiences entertained from the comfort and safety of their homes. While we appreciate that many of you are suffering from Zoom fatigue, we hope you will continue to support us in our future online endeavours. Thank you to those who joined us online from all over the world to view the Variety Show in December. So much wonderful talent!

If you were unable to join us, you missed the walkthrough of the interior of TAG, which demonstrated how we are set up with the necessary approved cleaning products, sanitization stations, signage, and contact tracing information sheets. We still do not know when we will be allowed to reopen to the public, but we continue to stay prepared for whenever the time comes.

This season marks our 90th year. Yes...90th! This is quite a milestone to achieve for a community theatre. I may sound like a broken record at times, but I cannot stress enough that TAG would not have reached this point without the support we receive. Whether it be a monetary donation, purchasing a ticket to a performance, volunteering in some way, joining our Facebook page, sharing a social media post, or telling a friend about us – all of this contributes to our success and longevity, and allows us to continue to grow as an organization. Despite the current obstacles, I am confident that TAG will reach many more milestones like this and I'm excited to see what this 90th season has in store. As always, stay safe. Looking forward to seeing many of you online very soon. ~Rayna Smith-Camp

ZOOM!!!! Where did two years go? It's time for Our Fifth(!) Biennial Playwrights @ TAG

As with everything else, because of the Pandemic, there will be adjustments. Since we are unable to have live performances, Playwrights @ TAG is moving online.

So many of our activities, work and play, have been conducted on Zoom or similar platforms. What challenges have you experienced transitioning to using these platforms? What's life like under lockdown and ever-changing Public Health Regulations?

Write and submit an original, maximum 20-minute (minimum 10 minutes) play to be performed/recorded on Zoom about life under lockdown. Keep the cast to 3 or 4 if possible. Drama, comedy, musical, dance – the possibilities are endless. Three plays will be chosen by February 28, 2021. They will be pre-recorded either on TAG's or another Zoom account to be presented online for three nights March 25-27, 2021.

(continued below)



Now Playing: Thought, Word, and Deed by Joshua Law

Go to tagtheatre.com to enjoy this radio play. Donations gladly accepted!

Submissions for our Fifth Biennial Playwrights @ TAG

Submission Deadline February 21, 2021

Completed Script March 5, 2021

Production Dates March 25, 26 and 27, 2021

How to Submit:

Submit a PDF or word document to Esther VanGorder by email at artistic-director@tagtheatre.com by the February 21, 2021 deadline.

Submissions Must Include:

- * The theme of your play. For example: A comedy about trying to work with colleagues over Zoom or teaching Grandma how to use the internet; a serious drama dealing with financial stress caused by the pandemic.
- * A brief description of the key challenge in the play. For example: dealing with a failing cell phone during an emergency, or a deadline that has very serious consequences if not met etc.
- * A description of the character(s) involved.
- * A draft or completed script.

Our Holiday 50/50 Raffle Winner!

The draw for TAG's Holiday 50/50 Raffle took place live during our (Almost) Annual (Virtual) Variety Show on Dec.12, 2020.

Congratulations to our winner, Jocelyn LeBlanc, who took home \$585!



Become a TAG Member!

Join or renew your TAG membership for our 2020-2021 season.

This year we're celebrating our 90th year!

All memberships are only \$15.

Join online here:

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



Playwrights @ TAG Submissions

Deadline is February 21, 2021. Email Esther at: artistic-director@tagtheatre.com

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Enjoy Playwrights @ TAG Online

You can enjoy Playwrights @ TAG online from March 25-27th. Stay tuned for more details once we receive and accept submissions.

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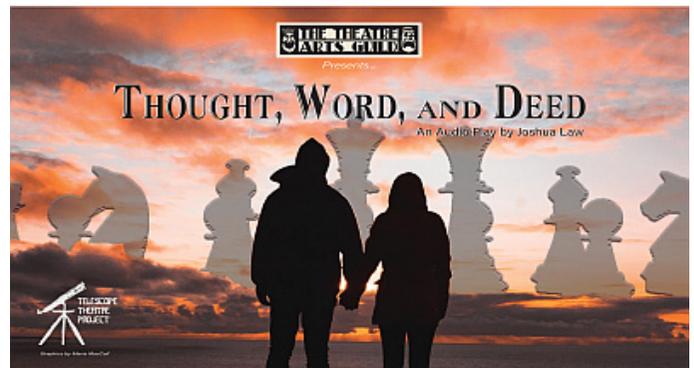
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It's Not Too Late to Catch Thought, Word, and Deed by Joshua Law

Worry not. *Thought, Word, and Deed* continues to be available!

Set in the quiet town of Cochrane, Ontario in the mid-1990s, rumours surround two young lovers, Chris and Cayleigh, after they left a birthday party one Saturday night. As the townspeople speculate, Cayleigh is sneaking out, Chris has run off, and her brother Jeremy seeks justice. What really happened between Chris and Cayleigh at the bandstand?

Now playing at youtu.be/WKudpg6jqtE and tagtheatre.com.



To make a donation, go to: www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/the-theatre-arts-guild/

The History of TAG: 90 Years and Counting We Miss the Panto!

If this had been a normal season at TAG, we would have enjoyed our holiday pantomime in late November-early December. It's our special feature aimed at children – children of all ages, that is! Pantomime is a unique theatrical experience – It's bright, colourful, it includes characters we know in costumes we love and, most of all, it provides us with lots of laughs.

Just what is it that makes pantomime so special? Not to bore you with too much history(!), our starting point goes way, way back in time to Ancient Rome, to an entertainment which borrowed elements from an even earlier time – Ancient Greece. The entertainment was called *pantomimus*, consisting of a solo male dancer who acted out a story without speaking any words. (Panto, by the way, means *all* and *mimus* means *copying* or what we now call mime). The dancer had simple musical accompaniment to provide the rhythm plus a chorus who sang the outline of the story.

Although this particular form did not have a long development, elements of it survived, most notably in a form of popular theatre which was invented in Italy, called *commedia dell'arte*. The various stories of the *commedia* were performed by professional troupes who travelled the countryside, introducing characters their audiences could easily identify with (and which, under different names you will have seen in our Christmas productions). These included the star-crossed lovers, the bumbling servants who always mishear instructions, the heroine's father who objects to anyone marrying his daughter, etc.

By the 1600s, the *commedia* style had found its way to England, where it became known as the Harlequinade, after the name of the principal male character, Harlequin (the lover of Columbine). Over the next two hundred years, various adaptations were introduced – the mime of the *commedia* was dropped in favour of the spoken word. The Harlequinade, at first part of a larger evening's programme which included serious drama and opera became longer and a whole evening was devoted to its presentation. Perhaps most importantly, the European themes were replaced with fairy stories or folk tales more familiar to English audiences. Many of these tales were European in origin – think Hans Christian Andersen or Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm – but of a different nature and more relatable than the classical framework of the Harlequinade. Having mentioned Andersen and the Brothers Grimm, I have to include the French author Charles Perrault, whose collection *Mother Goose* (published in 1697), introduced us to Cinderella, Puss in Boots, and Sleeping Beauty.

You might think that pantomime is a recent addition to the TAG roster, but *Cinderella* in 1933, followed by *Aladdin* in 1934 were the first offerings. The English influence on the Guild in the 1930s is easy to trace, since the first play (May, 1931) was *The Dover Road* by A.A. Milne. You'll recognize him as the author of the Winnie-the-Pooh books, but Milne was a highly successful playwright in London before finding greater fame as the author of children's books and poems about a teddy bear and his woodland friends.

After 1934, pantomime disappears from TAG's radar. (It was after all a huge undertaking, with forty or more in a cast, including actors, singers, dancers and a male barbershop quartet!). At the end of the 1970s, TAG had a flourishing Young Company, so pantomime reappeared with *Pinocchio*, *The World of Pooh* and *Aladdin* from 1978 to 1980.

In 1997, interest picked up again, bolstered by the arrival of Jeffrey Pockock, who as a child in England had appeared professionally in pantomime. With *Babes in the Wood* (1999) a definite commitment was made to pantomime as an integral part of the TAG experience (with considerable support

We Miss the Panto continued...

from Angela Butler). This has continued to the present (and has been embraced by many other groups in the province). Yes – Pantomime is a financial as well as a theatrical hit!. Apart from using published scripts, we have been fortunate to be able to present the work of several TAG members, beginning with *Red Riding's in the Hood* by Cheryl Theriault and Lorne Abramson in 2004, followed by Jamie Boyer's *Shipwreck on Fantasy Island* the following year. Cheryl partnered with Brenda Tyedmers for *Jack and the Beans Talk* in 2007 and *The Frog Prince – A Webbed Pantomime* in 2016. All of these made use of traditional pantomime elements while introducing a new, often local perspective – Do you remember The Kingdom of Jollymore?

Although we've had to forego the pantomime for this pandemic year, we're keeping our fingers and toes crossed that by the Christmas season of 2021, our panto will return. Then we hope you will join us in this unique entertainment and all those things that make panto special. Cheer the hero and heroine, boo every time the villain enters and departs the stage, giggle at the outrageous costumes of the Dame (often played by a man) as the custard pies hit the floor during the kitchen scene in the Palace and, when Jack's mother tells you that there isn't a ghost standing behind her, you can shout as loud as you can, "YES, THERE IS!"

~Judy Reade, TAG's Archivist

Our Volunteer Coordinator

Shannon Nudds is temporarily filling in as Volunteer Coordinator as TAG looks to fill the position. If you are interested in this position, or if you have any questions about what's involved, please contact tagvolunteer@gmail.com.

TAG's Almost Annual Variety Show (Virtual) a

A big thank you to everyone who participated in TAG's Almost Annual Variety Show in December. It was much enjoyed by everyone, not just here in the HRM but all over the world! TAG was able to raise over \$400 thanks to everyone who donated to the event. See you at the next show!