



# CONTACT

The Official Newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild



Canada's Oldest Continually Operating Community Theatre



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**The Pond Playhouse**

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## Up Next at TAG

### DRACULA – THE BLOODY TRUTH

May 12 - 28, 2022

By Le Navet Bete and John Nicholson

Directed by Nick Jupp

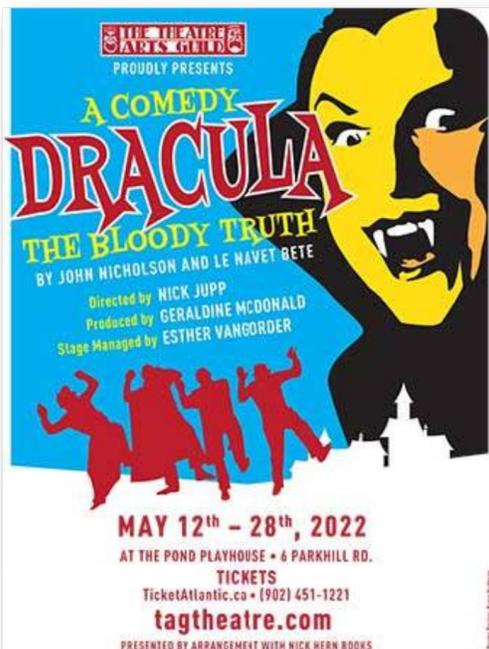
Produced by Geraldine McDonald

Stage Manager - Esther VanGorder

Dracula - the Bloody Truth a comedy? The answer is yes, absolutely and a hilarious comedy the like you have never seen before. Irish author Bram Stoker wrote the original Dracula novel that has been made into many movie versions, television productions, comic book tales, video games and stage plays. However, in our production Dracula's nemesis Professor Van Helsing visits TAG in order to set things right and tell you, the audience, what actually happened and the real ending to the story that Stoker got so wrong. In order to help him explain the true Dracula story Van Helsing brings three actors to TAG who will assist him as he educates you and eventually sends you home with the bloody truth.

From Transylvania and Castle Dracula across the seas to Yorkshire with all that he needs to expand and protect his vampire protégées did Van Helsing really track down Dracula and put an end to his unearthly ways? Or is he alive and well living amongst us today? If vampires have ever entered your thoughts you owe it to yourself to attend Professor Van Helsing's enlightening presentation and find out the bloody truth for yourself.

**Warning** - wooden stakes, garlic, unearthly sounds, scary lighting, the odd (very) vampire, a horse replica, a cargo sailing ship (actually only a pretend one, the real thing was too expensive) and many other frightening things might appear in the production so be warned.



#### COVID PROTOCOLS:

While there have been changes to provincial COVID mandates, TAG believes it is important to keep everyone as safe as possible. Based on the strong recommendations of Dr Robert Strang and Dr Lisa Barrett, we are maintaining the following protocols for Dracula to provide a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience.

- 1) TAG requires that volunteers always wear a mask, with the exception of actors while performing on stage.
- 2) TAG requests that all patrons always wear a mask while in the building. Masks can be adjusted while enjoying beverages and concessions but must be replaced when finished. Please continue to maintain physical distancing whenever possible.
- 3) Reduced seating will be available on the first Friday, May 13th and both matinees, May 22, and 28th of the production.

**Tickets on sale starting April 19th at [ticketatlantic.com](http://ticketatlantic.com).**

## President's Message

Happy Spring, everyone!

As we emerge from our winter hibernation and continue to face this pandemic, I hope you are finding ways to stay active and safely support local.

Many businesses and organizations are now reopen and Theatre Arts Guild is excited to do the same.

In March 2020, the cast and crew of *Dracula: The Bloody Truth* finished their dress rehearsal, put the costumes on their hangers and went home. No one imagined it would be two and half years later before they would finally reunite. However, they are currently rehearsing for the May 12th opening and we hope to see many of you there. Please note: we have several Covid protocols in place and we urge you to familiarize yourself with those prior to purchasing your ticket. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact any Board Member. The safety of our cast, crew, volunteers, and patrons remains a priority.

While you wait for live theatre to return, why not enjoy an audio play? TAG presents *Village Wooing* by George Bernard Shaw. The link to this three part play can be found on our website.

The ongoing support TAG continues to receive is so greatly appreciated. It has been unfortunate we have not been able to do what we love to do, but it's satisfying to know we will be returning just as strong. Please continue to support our fellow community theatres during this time.

Stay tuned for some announcements regarding the 2022/2023 season! Be well.

Rayna Smith Camp  
President

**It's finally coming!**

### **The 2022/2023 Theatre Arts Guild Season Launch**

**When:** May 16th @ 7PM

**Where:** The Pond Playhouse and your home

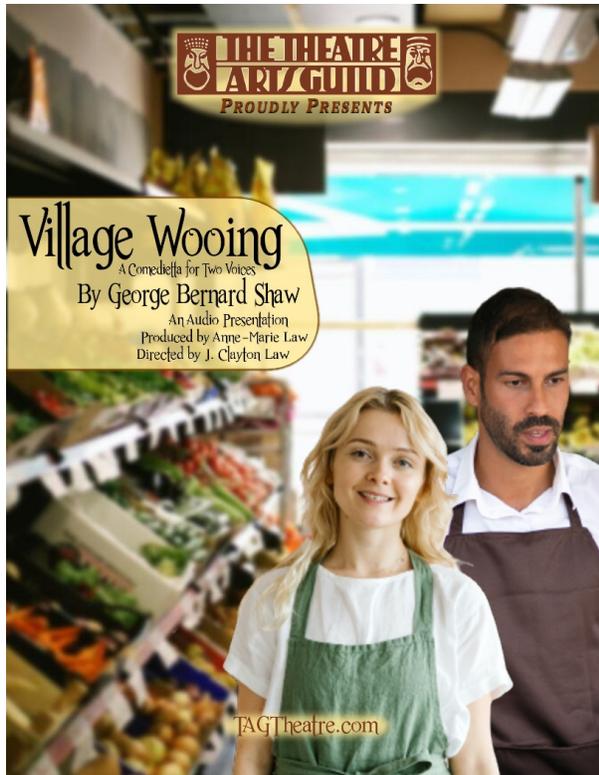
**Our home:** Stream it live on Facebook at  
<https://www.facebook.com/TAGHalifax>

## Newsletter Highlights

- *Up Next at TAG (front page)*
- *President's Message*
- *Special Announcement*
- *TAG Online*
- *Featured Volunteer*
- *TAG Archives*
- *In Rehearsal*
- *Call for Submissions*
- *TAG Executive Board*
- *Membership*
- *The History of TAG- 90 Years and Counting*

**Special  
Announcement**

# TAG Online



The Theatre Arts Guild proudly presents  
**Village Wooing**  
by George Bernard Shaw

From the deck of the H.M.S. Patagonia to the village shop, a shop assistant pursues a travel writer for marriage in TAG's first interprovincial audio production.

**Starring Tamara Shortt and Chris Clarke of Cochrane, Ontario.**

**An audio play in three parts.**

**Now available for download at**

**[theatreartsguildhalifax.bandcamp.com](https://theatreartsguildhalifax.bandcamp.com)**

#### *A Director's Note*

*In 2019, Joshua Law travelled back home to Cochrane, ON and caught a very rough production of Fairytale as Told by Our Father, or some title like that.*

*When the lockdowns began, and TAG ventured into audio plays, Josh thought of putting together an inter-provincial production. His first thoughts went back to his hometown, the hastily crafted show, and the breakout performances of two actors: Chris Clarke and Tamara Shortt.*

*With Anne-Marie Law as producer, rehearsals began in January, meeting once a week, and recording was completed at the beginning of February.*

*In editing, there was a major snag: the gain for most of the recordings in episode 2 were set so high that their vocals distorted. By this point, scheduling re-recording sessions was problematic. After some experimenting, and discussions between director and producer, the decision was made to make it a lo-fi production, finding the perfection in imperfection.*

*To listen to our grand experiment.*

*Joshua Law  
Director*



# Bandcamp

TAG is now on Bandcamp, where you can download all of our audio content for however much you wish.

<https://theatreartsguildhalifax.bandcamp.com/audio>

# Featured Volunteer

Volunteers are fundamental to ensure that community theatre survives. Here at Theatre Arts Guild we are very fortunate to have many dedicated and passionate volunteers who devote their talents and time to keep theatre alive in Jollimore and HRM.

Our featured volunteer in his issue is no exception.  
Presenting Joshua Law

## How did you become involved with The Theatre Arts Guild?

*Like most volunteers, I signed up to help with front-of-house. I've known about TAG since I was a teenager, following the passing of my cousin, Michael Ardenne, who served as artistic director in the 70s. When I moved out here in 2009, I hoped to join at some point after graduating; I didn't until the end of 2017, with a brief attempt in 2015. Sigh! Theatre and night shifts don't mix.*

## What area of theatre do you enjoy the most?

*I do enjoy being on stage, playing many characters in the same show, but I'm more into dramaturgy, the research and development of a script. I love delving deep into a play, and finding what gems are between the lines, and polishing a piece to make it the best it can be.*

## What are you up to now at TAG?

*I currently serve as Executive Producer. Since June 2020, I have led the charge to keep the theatre active by producing and directing digital pieces. At time of writing this, our audio play Village Wooing is set to premiere Thursday evening for a three episode run, and TAG's fifth audio play, Behind the Beyond, has completed recording with editing to begin this weekend. Two of my own works are currently awaiting a readthrough, but I'm waiting for warmer weather to hopefully do so in Dingle Park (nerve pending). A third and fourth are rattling what mind I have left.*

## Joshua Law



*all photos credit  
Bruce Goodick*



# TAG ARCHIVES



## A new book - *The Volunteers: How Halifax Women Won the Second World War* **The Wartime Volunteers – Including TAG members!**

There is a poignant photograph in the TAG Archives which illustrates the well-known saying “A picture is worth a thousand words.” The picture was taken in May of 1939, and the two men in the photograph are preparing a sign for the upcoming production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in the Nelson Theatre, on the top floor of the Navy League club, Barrington Street. These two members are unaware that, in three months time, Canada will be at war and, with the entire building requisitioned for military use, TAG is without a home.

Hugh Mills, the indefatigable co-founder of the Guild, quickly realized that trying to continue a normal programme was out of the question: on the other hand, there were audiences aplenty in the service personnel passing through the port on their way to Europe. Acting on his thinking, the Theatre Arts Guild morphed into the Halifax Concert Party Guild, with the addition of musicians, dancers and established entertainers from the local community. It was quite an impressive undertaking, as the author believes “Mills’s collection of volunteer talent comprised some seven hundred individuals, none of them paid.”

This new book by Leslie Lowe (published by Nimbus) provides fascinating insights into the experiences of one of the members of the Concert troupe, Charlotte Guy, not only in Halifax but in France, Belgium and Germany once the war was over. The conditions for the performers, needless to say, were far from ideal – No weeks of rehearsal in a warm, dry theatre, but a hurried call to go to a Church hall or a canteen or a ship moored in the harbour - and that after a full day’s work in the Mills Brothers store! The tour in Europe (at the request of the Canadian Army) was undertaken with financial assistance from the city’s principal newspaper – hence the addition of *Halifax Herald* to the group’s title. Charlotte’s experience of ruined landscapes, while performing for personnel waiting to be repatriated, was one that few Canadians outside the military were able to witness.

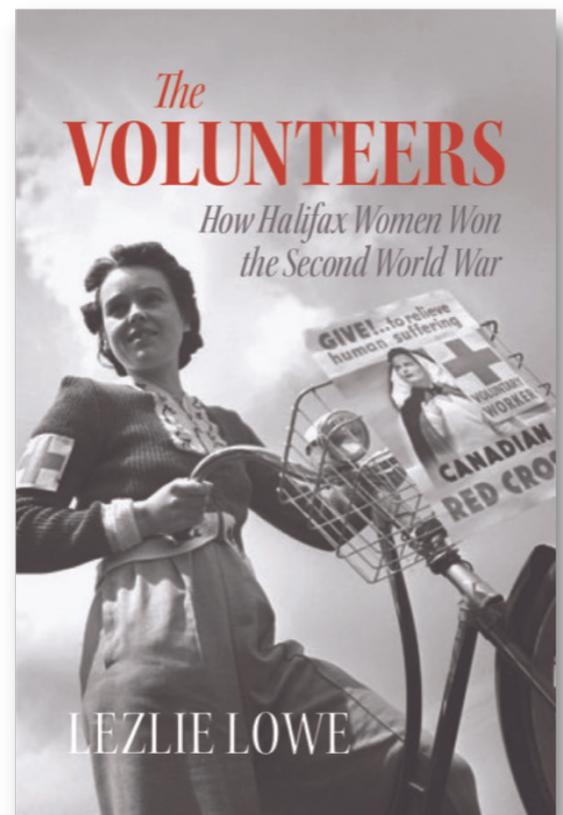
Charlotte and many redoubtable Halifax women like her are featured in *The Volunteers: How Halifax Women Won the Second World War*, which is available directly from Nimbus or local bookshops Bookmark and Coles at \$22.95. The book is also available online from Amazon.

As TAG’s Archivist, this book provides welcome verification of the Guild’s work during the war years. I certainly knew about the existence of the Concert Party, but anything about the war years that had been collected by TAG members was lost, together with all other assets, in the fire which destroyed the College Street School in January of 1959.

You will notice on our masthead our claim that TAG is the community theatre group with ‘the longest history of continuous activity’ in the country. We are proud of that claim and of women like Charlotte Guy, who made it all possible.

My thanks to the author, Leslie Lowe, for her support and assistance.

Judy Reade  
TAG’s Archivist



## DRACULA- THE BLOODY TRUTH



Photo credit  
Bill VanGorder



Rehearsals have begun!  
Our 5th audio play  
**BEHIND THE BEYOND**  
Directed by J. Clayton Law  
Produced by John O'Brien

COMING THIS SUMMER

Join humorist Stephen Leacock for a night at the theatre with a production of the scandalous Problem Play, *Behind the Beyond*.

Lady Cicely is deprived of life, and seeking a way out of her languishing existence with her husband, Sir John Trevor, a politician in the House of Commons. With Jack Harding, Sir John's secretary, she plots a way to run away with him. Meanwhile, Jack's mother, Margaret, has sent a letter to Sir John saying she is on her way, reminding him of his past deeds. How long can one run from reality? Can one truly hide from truths and revelations behind the beyond?

Based on the book, *Behind the Beyond, and Other Contributions to Human Knowledge* by Stephen Leacock, 1913.

**Starring:**

Mark DeWolf as Sir John Trevor

Hannah Blizzard as Lady Cicely

Charles Bull as Jack Harding

Heather Mills as Margaret Harding

With Bill VanGorder, Joshua Law, and Jenny Martynshyn

And a special appearance by Phil Reid as Stephen Leacock



## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



### Call for Submissions

Want to make an audio play? Want to learn how?  
E-mail Joshua Law at [telescope theatre@gmail.com](mailto:telescope theatre@gmail.com) with a script you wish to direct in our 22/23 season.  
The script can be 1 minute or more, but must either be original or within the public domain.

Deadline: 30 June, 2022



## TAG Executive Board 2021-2022

## TAG Memberships - Join Online!

**A TAG membership is the ideal way to help your community theatre thrive while developing your own theatrical skills, interests, and making new friends. Now you can join online at [tagtheatre.com/membership.html](http://tagtheatre.com/membership.html)**

*Rayna Smith Camp- President*  
*Shannon Nudds- Vice-President and Volunteer Development*  
*Patrick Charron- Treasurer*  
*Stephanie Demedeiros Ouedraogo- Secretary*  
*Jennifer Robbins- Artistic Director*  
*Joshua Law- Executive Producer*  
*Bill VanGorder- Publicity, Marketing and Fundraising Director*  
*Lorne Abramson- Building Manager*  
*Valerie Dubois- Web Director and Membership*  
*Angela Butler- Newsletter Editor*  
*David Williams- Bar Manager*  
*TAG Technical Team*  
*TAG Costume and Props Team*  
*TAG Archives*  
*Michele Moore- TAG Phone Line*

## Episode 7 - The 'Lost' Theatres of Halifax

It's been disheartening during the time of the pandemic to be deprived of live theatre because of not being to gather in groups, but necessity has always proven to be the mother of invention, and our lack of the live experience has been replaced by other audiovisual forms. This separation from live theatre has certainly made us value what this art form provides - enjoyment, laughter, sadness, empathy, reflection, the sense of being part of a very long tradition in this city. There have been theatres in Halifax almost as long as there has been a Halifax! We have the military establishment to thank for that, with English soldiers bringing amateur theatrics with them and setting up a theatre within the Citadel. This was an all-male enterprise of course, with the female roles being played by men. (Shakespeare's plays were presented under the same premise, so no change in certain circles by the 18th century!).

With the military's activity well established by 1773, it wasn't long before there was also provision for civilian theatrical entertainment - and on no small scale. The Grand Theatre on the west side of Argyle Street dates from 1789 and could accommodate an audience of 500. Not always on a secure financial footing, this venue under new ownership became the Theatre Royal. The Nova Scotia Archives has a painting of the Grand Parade in 1819 in its collection showing the Grand (close to the National School, now the Five Fishermen Restaurant). The theatre is long gone unfortunately, and the site is now occupied by an office building. In the 19th century, the premier location for the arts was an imposing brick structure on Barrington Street, at the foot of Spring Garden Road. This was the Academy of Music, in use from 1877 to 1929. Although orchestral and choral concerts were the focus here, the Academy also hosted ballet companies, theatrical performances and even lectures of general interest. The Dalhousie University Archives has in its collection a playbill for Hamlet, performed at the Academy by the Valentine Stock Company (from Ontario) in November of 1900. (Stock companies continued to visit Halifax for many years. TAG hosted the Intimate Opera Company from London, England, in 1937).

But impressive as the Academy was, it could not withstand the march of time. There was a new form of entertainment that had captured everyone's attention - moving pictures, so in 1918, the Academy changed its purpose to become a cinema - The Majestic. Theatrical performances continued to be a featured however and one of TAG's parent groups, the Halifax Dramatic and Musical Club used the stage to present comic operettas. Some of the Club's star performers later became involved in yet another popular and expanding form - radio, though local opportunities for work were limited. (CHNS was Halifax's first radio station, broadcasting from 1926).

Development in the movie industry was rapid and the owners of the Majestic decided a whole new structure was needed, incorporating the latest cinematic technology. The Majestic was demolished and its replacement was definitely intended to put Halifax on the map. This was Halifax's answer to the Medieval castle (disguised as a cinema) - The Capitol, operating from 1930 to 1974, and huge, accommodating 2,000 patrons. By way of comparison, the Rebecca Cohn auditorium of Dalhousie University can seat 1,023 and Neptune's Fountain Hall 458. When working at TAG's bar one evening, I happened to mention the Capitol to an audience member. She had been to the cinema as a child, and spoke of what a memorable experience it was - crossing the drawbridge to get to the Lobby (which was guarded by a knight in armour), the spaciousness of the Baronial Hall (= auditorium) and the elaborate 'retiring room' for female attendees! Like the earlier Majestic, the Capitol was also used for fundraising events (and there were many during the war years), for visits of movie stars, contests and theatrical performances and yes - Theatre Arts Guild graced the stage with the thriller *The Locked Room* in 1937. Like its predecessors however and with further growth in cinematic technology and the opening of new cinemas outside the downtown core, the Capitol passed into history. Maritime Telegraph and Telephone, the owners of the block, demolished the building in 1974 in order to construct the Maritime Centre.

Some of you are probably asking - "Why hasn't she mentioned Neptune?" I'm going to end this episode looking at this important component of Halifax's theatre scene - and its story is quite as complicated as the examples we have already looked at! On the corner of Sackville Street and Argyle Street, Neptune began life in 1915 as the Strand Theatre, specializing in vaudeville acts. We sometimes dismiss this form of entertainment as simply 'variety acts,' but many performers who later became well-known movie stars got their start on the vaudeville circuit - Judy Garland, the Marx Brothers, Milton Berle and Canadians Marie Dressler and Walter Huston among them. By 1928, with popularity for vaudeville waning, the Strand became the Garrick Repertory Theatre, presenting both a winter and summer programme of plays. And here's the main reason for this article (!) - In May of 1931 an amateur dramatic group, recently formed through the merger of two existing Halifax organizations, presented its premier performance on the stage at the Garrick. No prizes for guessing the name of this group - it still exists nearly 91 years later! The play chosen for the debut was *The Dover Road*, by A.A. Milne.

The change to repertory theatre was not successful for the owners and times were hard generally, so the Garrick, after only a short time in existence became a cinema, called the Odeon. And so it remained until certain concerned citizens, well aware of the lack of professional theatre and theatre opportunities in the city successfully campaigned and raised funds for another transformation - the Odeon cinema into Neptune Theatre (opened July 1st, 1963). Colonel Sidney Oland (also a benefactor of TAG) actually purchased the space, which was then donated to the new management Board.

I hope you've enjoyed this brief look at these 'lost' theatres and I close with a reminder that TAG has not changed its name and can still be found at 6, Parkhill Road, where you are most welcome in the audience or on the stage at our productions!

