

CONTACT

June, 2004

www.tagtheatre.com
info@tagtheatre.com

The Official Newsletter of



Canada's oldest continually operating
community theatre. 74 years and growing!

Call For Nominations

—Nick Jupp, Nominating Chairperson

TAG's Annual General Meeting is coming up in September, and as usual, a new slate of officers and managers will be elected. All TAG members in good standing are eligible for election to the board, and the nominating committee is working to find a willing slate.

The various board positions cover three general areas: show production, the Pond Playhouse building, and matters financial. Each of these categories is broken down into specific responsibilities, so there are fourteen officer and manager positions to fill.

One position that has been very hard to fill recently is Front of House Manager. This person is responsible for all volunteers and activity in the lobby prior to, during, and after each performance, and that includes locking up for the night! This position would appeal to a highly organized person who loves to take care of our patrons fifty to sixty times a year. It's primarily organization and fun, but with a definite dash of responsibility, such as managing cash, coordinating with crew in the booth and backstage, and dealing with emergencies.

Please e-mail your area of interest to Nick Jupp at njupp@dymaxion.ca or telephone at 477-8697.

If you are not yet comfortable standing for a board position, there are a number of committee memberships available. These positions are not elected, but this would be a good time for you to remind us of your areas of interest. The new board members elected in September will be recruiting committee members in areas such as fundraising, building maintenance, play selection, and set building. Just send a message confirming an area of interest and we'll pass it on to the new board in the fall. *

Annual Summer Readings

The Gratwick Partnership, Lyn and John Gratwick, will be presenting their annual summer readings at the Pond Playhouse on Saturday, August 7th at 8:00 P.M. This year's topic is: *The World of Insects and other Creepy Crawlies*. The readers will be John and Lyn Gratwick, Nick Jupp, Judy Reade, Eric Rountree, and Vanessa Buhr-Rountree.

The show will be a double bill. The first half of the evening will be a joint presentation with Dartmouth Players entitled *Stage Costumes: The Inside Story*, which will show some of the funniest, prettiest, and most dramatic costumes we have used, with commentaries by Judy Reade, Val Tyner, and Lyn Gratwick. The readings will commence after the interval. *

Our Next Production...

Dead Guilty

by Richard Harris

Directed by Frank MacLean

July 8th to July 24th, 2004

Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays at 7:00 P.M.

Sunday Matinee July 18th

at 2:00 P.M.

Produced by Bill VanGorder

Stage Manager: Esther VanGorder

Produced in cooperation with Samuel French, Ltd.

A thriller to entertain your summer mind.

Starring

Leslie Milne

Helen Goodwin

Arlene Dalton

Colin MacGillivray

Assistant Stage Managers.....Jocelyn Le Blanc
and Tom Pattillo

Lighting DesignDave Chambers

Set Design.....Kate McConnell

CostumesValerie MacKenzie.

Set Construction ChiefNick Jupp

PublicityBeth VanGorder

Poster Design.....Cheryl Theriault.

For reservations, call

477-2663

or book online at

www.tagtheatre.com

Board of Directors, 2002-2003

President Frank MacLean
Vice President Tom Pattillo
Secretary Esther VanGorder
Treasurer Carolyn Boyer
Past President Nick Jupp
Technical Director Austin Reade
Artistic Director Brenda Tydemers
Executive Producer Louise Renault
Membership Manager Helen Goodwin
Publicity Manager Michele Moore
Props & Costume Manager Judy Reade
Reservations Manager Lynn Bungay
Building Manager J Carruth
Special Projects Manager Rich Knowles
Community Relations/Capital Campaign Bill VanGorder
Newsletter Editor Eric Rountree

Upcoming TAG Productions

July 8th– 24th: *Dead Guilty*, by Richard Harris, directed by Frank MacLean.

August 7th: The Annual Gratwick Partnership Readings.

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 *Dead Guilty*, this package will be offered on July 9th, 10th, 16th, 17th, 23rd and 24th. 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

More About *Dead Guilty*

Our next production, *Dead Guilty*, will finish off our season with a flourish and introduce some great new TAG traditions. Read on!

About the Play...

Audiences will be deeply intrigued by our summer thriller, *Dead Guilty*.

This powerful revenge thriller will have the audience on the edge of their seats. When John Haddrell dies at the wheel of his car, the woman at his side is not his wife Margaret, but his lover Julia. Recovering from injuries sustained in the crash, Julia is visited by Margaret, who apparently knows nothing of the affair. When Margaret begins to encroach on Julia's life, events take a sinister turn. Julia's dismissal of home helper Gary and her estrangement from her counselor Anne leave Margaret and Julia alone in the house together. This combination could prove to be deadly.

Opening Night

Join us for a new experience at TAG: The Opening Night Gala. A wine and cheese reception will be held on opening night, Thursday, July 8th, at 7:00 P.M. It will be open to all who book seats for the 8:00 P.M. performance. (This new event is looking for a host sponsor. Let us know if your business would like this opportunity to assist TAG. Call Producer Bill VanGorder at 453-4077.)

\$5.00 Senior, Student, and Starving Artist Night

In our ongoing effort to make TAG productions accessible to everyone, the first Friday night, July 9th, will be \$5.00 Night. Tell your friends who are not able to pay the regular admission of \$12.00 for non-members or \$10.00 for members, students, and seniors. Invite them to join us on July 9th for the 8:00 P.M. performance.

No Late Seating

Please remember, *no one* will be seated after the curtain goes up at 8:00 P.M. until the interval. Please arrive at the theatre no later than 7:40 P.M. to claim your reservation. Unclaimed seats will be sold to "walk-in" patrons after 7:40 P.M. *

Audition Notice

Auditions for the 2004 Christmas Pantomime, *Red Riding Hood*, will be held on Wednesday, September 8th, and Thursday, September 9th, at St. Augustine's Church on Purcell's Cove Road. For more information, please leave a message on TAG's reservation line (477-2663), and someone will get back to you. *

Announcing...

TAG's 2004/2005 Season!

September 30th to October 16th, 2004

Halo, a dramatic comedy by Josh McDonald

Directed by Frank MacLean

When an image of Jesus appears on the side of a Tim Horton's restaurant in Nately, Nova Scotia, life is forever changed. The town's inhabitants are challenged to ask difficult questions about faith, life, and love, with sometimes moving, sometimes hilarious results.

December 2nd to 18th, 2004

Red Riding Hood—A Christmas Pantomime, a classic tale adapted and

directed by Lorne Abramson & Cheryl Theriault

Our ever-popular, sell-out annual pantomime twists a classic tale, as the creatures of the forest battle over the last stand of trees in a very pleasant park. Laugh as a cast of misfits join together in an epic battle of good versus evil. What can we say? There are wolves, love, cheesecake, and of course, a happy ending!

February 24th to March 12th, 2005

Enchanted April, a Romantic Comedy by Matthew Barber

Directed by Gisela O'Brien

When two proper London housewives rent a villa in Italy for a holiday away from their bleak marriages, they recruit two other, very different, English women to share the cost and experience. Amid the wisteria blossoms, they rediscover laughter, learn new truths about themselves, and find just the romance they need, though perhaps not the romance we—or they—expect to find.

April 28th to May 14th

Dancing at Lughnasa, A Drama by Brian Friel

Directed by Louise Renault

An illegitimate son 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 twenty-five years as a missionary in Uganda. Other disturbances occur that summer: The sisters acquire their first radio, whose music transforms them from correct Catholic women into shrieking, stomping banshees, 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. This haunting play is Friel's tribute to the spirit and valor of the past and its people.

July 7th to 23rd, 2005

The Hollow, a mystery by Agatha Christie

Directed by Tuby Anonst

Lady Angkatell, intrigued by the criminal mind, has invited Hercule Poirot to her estate for a weekend house party. The Belgian detective's arrival at the Hollow is met with an elaborate tableau staged for his amusement: a doctor lies in a puddle of red paint, his timid wife stands over his body with a gun, and the other guests look suitably shocked. But this is no charade. The paint is blood and the corpse is real, turning a pleasant weekend into one of Poirot's most baffling cases. *

TAG at Neptune

—Nick Jupp, Director, *Later Life*

At the time of writing, our Neptune show, *Later Life*, is in rehearsal at Neptune and is soon to move from a rehearsal hall to The Studio stage. This additional TAG production is possible due to the helpful generosity of Neptune's Ron Ulrich and Robin Creelman, who are firm believers in making connections with community theatre.

Initial rehearsals started back in February at a number of homes, and we later moved to the training facility of a helpful local business. Now we share a rehearsal hall with a number of cats at Neptune who need to warm up before performing (or is that purring?) on the main stage.

Our play, *Later Life*, is by A. R. Gurney, author of last season's *The Dining Room* and an earlier season's *Sylvia*. We have three TAG regulars in the cast: Deb Post, Angela Butler, and Terry Coolen. New to TAG is Mike Chandler. The play relies on us becoming interested in the characters and what decisions they might make as the play closes. This means the actors needed to work very hard on character development to become completely comfortable in someone else's skin (there go those cats again). Every play has its challenges—perhaps the set, perhaps some physical comedy—but *Later Life's* challenge requires the actors to become extremely credible.

Aside from the novelty of working downtown in a large facility, Neptune is hopeful we will take away an understanding of some of their production challenges. We most certainly will, and this knowledge will be useful to us in the future. One of the things we have noticed is precise and organized scheduling. With plays running, others in rehearsal, auditions, and a theatre school operation, everything—including facilities and people—is scheduled and planned to the minute. This brings a great sense of order, even when things go wrong, because it becomes a matter of adjusting the plan, not panicking!

In community theatre, we tend to mix and match our duties according to time and skills available. At Neptune, as you would expect, everybody is trained and experienced in specific areas, so we needed to learn that asking the right person—not just any person—is important, and that respecting their schedules is crucial.

The facilities and equipment are much more substantial and capable than ours, so a chance to use bigger and better toys is most welcome, especially when expert help is so willingly available. Other useful things we have observed relate to standard procedures that enable the facilities to be used efficiently. It may seem to be a small thing, but nobody leaves clutter or litter around; otherwise the next person will have to clean up before they can start their job. There are definite conventions about sweeping and wet mopping the stage floors so the next people on-set have a clean work space right away. Also, there is great respect for each other's space and time. Interruptions are kept to a minimum, and everybody is noise sensitive.

(continues)

Community theatre does not need to go that far, as we tend to have one show in production at a time. But some of what happens at Neptune will help us to make things go more smoothly back home on our own small stage. We were at Neptune last year in a co-production with Dartmouth Players, but this year we are solo, making this the first time back alone since our opening show in 1931 when we rented the building, which at the time, was the Garrick movie house. *

Expanding Your Theatre Vocabulary

(The seventh in a continuing series)

“Will the real John Barrymore please stand up...”

—Judy Reade, *Props Mistress/Wardrobe Mistress*

I Hate Hamlet, the fourth production of the 2003/2004 season, presented an opportunity which our audiences have not had for some time—that of seeing an historical personage portrayed on stage. Most of our plays feature characters which are purely fictional, and we sometimes forget that theatre offers to playwrights the opportunity to analyze and evaluate (sometimes re-evaluate!) the lives and actions of actual historical figures.

Our historical figure in *I Hate Hamlet* was the American Shakespearean actor, John Barrymore (and for those of you who saw this production, I don't know who had more fun—Tony Marshall playing the role, or the audience watching him!). Barrymore's name seems to be perpetually linked with the description 'Shakespearean actor,' but that wasn't always the case. He was born in Philadelphia in 1882 to an acting family—his father, mother and uncle were all on the stage. John was more interested in art, however, and he began his working life as an illustrator and cartoonist. His brother Lionel and sister Ethel, however, followed their parents into the theatre, and John was eventually persuaded to try acting, beginning with comedies and farce. He enjoyed some success as a 'matinee idol,' but it was meeting the American playwright Edward Sheldon that turned the tide in his career. Sheldon, believing that Barrymore possessed a formidable power as an actor which the public had not been given the chance to experience, began to cast him in dramatic roles. Barrymore's success as

a tragic actor was instantaneous, and it was inevitable that he should be drawn to Shakespeare. He enjoyed enormous success as *Richard III* in the 1919/1920 New York season and as *Hamlet* during 1922/23. The drama critic of the *Tribune* newspaper spoke of his performance in the latter as “the most inspired performance which this generation has seen.”

However, Barrymore found the long runs of Shakespearean works boring and too intense, and so he turned his attention to film. Greta Garbo was one of his co-stars, and Katharine Hepburn made her film debut with him in *A Bill of Divorcement*. By the mid-1930s, though, his penchant for hard living and reckless drinking (*I Hate Hamlet* was right on that score!) was beginning to take its toll. His memory became increasingly erratic, and producers were reluctant to hire him. He ended a once-illustrious career on a radio programme hosted by the singer Rudy Vallee, during which he presented comic and dramatic monologues. Barrymore died in 1942, and yes, 'cirrhosis of the liver' appeared on his death certificate!

Barrymore was married four times, with Dolores Costello (an actress and model) as wife number three. The son of this union was named John Drew Barrymore, who in turn produced a daughter, the film actress Drew Barrymore. The acting dynasty continues, therefore...

Paul Rudnik might have been accurate in his portrayal of John Barrymore, but when it comes to the character of Hamlet, he (and Shakespeare) are on more shaky ground.

Shakespeare composed *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* in either 1601 or 1602, but the sources from which he drew his material are much older. A volume of popular legends (*Historiae Danicae*), which included the story of Hamlet, appeared around 1200, and there was a French version, claiming to be based on an Italian original, published by Francois de Belleforest towards the end of the 16th century. What is fact and what is fiction about the Danish prince is consequently not at all clear, but Shakespeare did use a real setting for the play. Shakespeare's 'Elsinore,' is actually Helsingor in Denmark, and Helsingor has a castle, the 'Kronborg Slot.' Amongst Shakespearean scholars, there is speculation that the author had visited this castle, perhaps as part of an acting troupe, and had decided that it would make an appropriate setting for his very dark and sombre tragedy. *

Support Our Friends!

Dartmouth Players

presents

Little Shop of Horrors

June 9th to 26th

Call 465-7592 for reservations.

CentreStage Theatre

presents

Cinderella

June 11th to 26th

Call (902)678-8040 for reservations.

Contact is produced five times annually.

Please send comments or contributions to Eric Rountree, newsletter editor, at eric@routree.com