

CONTACT

The Official Newsletter of the Theatre Arts Guild

Canada's Oldest Continually Operating Community Theatre



The Theatre Arts Guild

The Pond Playhouse

6 Parkhill Rd. Halifax, NS.

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tagtheatre.com

APRIL 2026

UP NEXT AT TAG



Spring weather is finally here!

And *SpringFest*, dedicated to **JOY**, offers 2 nights of great entertainment:

April 24th features skits, music performances, and more.

April 25th features the 6-member Retrobeats cover band on stage once again for a night of dancing to some great tunes!

Whether you're joining us for one night or both, get your tickets now as they will go quickly.

Based on the 1988 rom-com, *Mystic Pizza* tells the story of three working-class waitresses who navigate the complexities of life, love, and family in a small-town pizza joint.

The infectious score features megahits of the '80s and '90s, from "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" to "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" and songs originally recorded by Melissa Ethridge, John Cougar Mellencamp, Wilson Phillips, The Bangles, Belinda Carlisle, and Bryan Adams, among many others.





Tickets for *Mystic Pizza* will be available to TAG Members starting Thursday, May 7th, and to Non-Members on May 14th. Additionally, there will be a “pay what you can” preview night on Tuesday, June 2nd. No reserved seating required.



Parking Update: No Parking on Parkhill Road

The legal parking areas have changed on Parkhill Road and the Jollimore area.



Limited parking is available at the Pond Playhouse parking lot for audience members. There is no parking allowed on Parkhill Road. However, parking is also available along Williams Lake Road, in the parking lot at the Frog Pond Trail off Purcell's Cove Road, and at the Cunard Junior High parking lot. Thank you for observing the parking rules.



THE HISTORY OF TAG – Heading Towards 100 Years (1931/2031)

Episode 25 – Sing, Sing, Sing (and Dance!)

Although we tend to associate Theatre Arts Guild with plays, TAG does have a musical heritage, and it was acquired honestly. I know that many of you are aware that TAG was formed in 1931 as a result of the merger of two organizations, The Halifax Drama and Musical Club (which focussed on operetta) and the Little Theatre Movement (which focussed solely on plays). The Club began its life in 1923, with a presentation of *The Mikado*. In a sense therefore, we already have one centenary as part of our history. The Club's focus on operetta was very much in keeping with the times. Light opera was a popular music form in Europe and beyond in the 1920s, particularly the works of Franz Lehár and the Strauss family. Operettas did not comprise the whole repertoire however; the Club also presented concerts and piano recitals by the President.

After the creation of TAG in 1931, programmes show a decline in musical content. This can be attributed, I think, to TAG's involvement in the Dominion Drama Festival (D.D.F.), a national initiative begun in 1932, to encourage competition among amateur drama groups. During this participation in the Festival, one of the plays of the season also served as the Festival entry, at the regional level first and, if successful, at the national level. Although TAG had considerable success in the regional competition, with subsequent photographs of the winners with their trophies in the local newspapers, success in Ottawa always eluded the group. The D.D.F. did achieve its aim in encouraging amateur performances, but over the years, more professional companies were founded in Canada, also provincial amateur organizations were formed and began to hold their own competitions and the need for the Festival declined. The organization was disbanded in 1978.

The pattern of having a musical production was not part of a regular season. The Gilbert and Sullivan fans among our members will be glad to hear that *The Pirates of Penzance* was performed in 1968 and *The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill (an ambitious choice!) in 1978 and *The Fantasticks* in 1983. Not too shabby, huh? I have to mention *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (1989), because it was directed by a young Carol Kemp, who, as Carol Grimmitt contributed to our Gilbert and Sullivan *Sing-Along* presentations in 2024 and 2025.

Although as I've said we don't include musical offerings as a part of every season (there's this little question of rights, which are expensive, sometimes very expensive since it is necessary to buy/rent instrumental parts and piano scores), each musical does bring something special which causes it to become memorable. *Noel and Gertie* in 1999, the story of the partnership of the actress Gertrude Lawrence and composer Noel Coward, was our entry in the fourth international theatre competition in Liverpool and subsequently the Canadian entry in an international amateur theatre competition in Aruba! *The Boy Friend* (2001) had Richie Wilcox playing Bobby Van Heusen – the same Richie Wilcox whose *Coal Bowl Queen* recently gained plaudits for his writing and directing at both Ship's Theatre and the Alderney Landing Theatre. *Oklahoma* (2009) was memorable for Dick Sircom from Dartmouth Players building us a surrey that could be brought on and off the stage and yes, there were concerns about getting it through the doors (and these were new doors since the renovations to the building were not yet completed). *The Drowsy Chaperone* (2012) saw the visit from Toronto of Lisa Lambert, one of the composers. We were thrilled, to say the least! The aviator, Trix, in the show was played by Lise Renault, whom we have just seen as Mrs. Hannah Mumler in *Summerland*.

Going through the list of productions for details of musicals brought back so many memories. *Red, Hot and Cole*, a biographical piece about the life and music of Cole Porter gave us the talents of many local singers, including Karen Myatt, now with an established professional career. Jolene Pattison, one of the leads in the *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (2016) - a play built around a murder, with said murder having to be voted on by the audience - was responsible for reviving our presentations of the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, with a *Sing-Along* in 2023 and *Love and Larceny* last year. Thinking about audience participation, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (2013) provided an opportunity for audience members to be part of this competition. We were fortunate in being able to persuade some notable members of our community to 'try their luck.' For that and other reasons, this show brought a lot of laughs. And if we're looking for oohs and aahs, for very different reasons, *The Full Monty* ended our season in 2014. A big thank-you to those guys who were willing to show us a good deal of skin!!

I've talked about full musicals so far, but we have featured other shows which were musical compilations, sometimes of our own arranging. *The Highland Heart in Nova Scotia* (for Canada's Centennial year of 1967) included many traditional Maritime melodies. Pam Lutz was instrumental in devising *Romance with a Twist* in 2003 and I put together a musical retrospective for our 80th Anniversary in 2011. John and Lyn Gratwick, after whom our Rehearsal Hall is named, brought us *The World Goes 'Round*, which was our introduction to the genius of John Kander and Fred Ebb. Not know the names? Just think Catherine Zeta Jones in *Chicago* - one of my all-time favourite shows! Our pantomimes always include music and singing and I haven't even touched on our dance prowess in plays, as seen in *Stepping Out* (2018) and the wonderful dream sequence in *Oklahoma!*

I make no excuses for being a fan of our musical presentations, so if you've seen any of these productions, if you saw *Nunsense* in 2023, another success, then we hope to see you at the 2025/2026 season presentation *Mystic Pizza*, running June 4th to 21st (note change of date). Rest assured, there is nothing suspicious in the pizza and the town is called Mystic, but there is music and singing and dancing and that's all that matters.

Judy Reade, TAG's Archivist

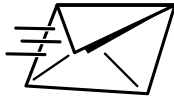




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TAG's Mailing List

TAG sends out regular email bulletins about productions, auditions, special events and other local community theatre news. Emails from your contacts are considered trustworthy and are less likely to be flagged as spam, ensuring they reach your inbox instead of the junk folder.

Please add communications@tagtheatre.com to your contact list to ensure delivery of TAG emails to your inbox.



THE POND PLAYHOUSE HOME OF THE THEATRE ARTS GUILD

A history first requested by TAG's Wednesday Work Group,
members of which are featured in the photographs

**Judy Reade, TAG's Archivist, with thanks to Bill VanGorder and Austin Reade
who supplied the photographs**

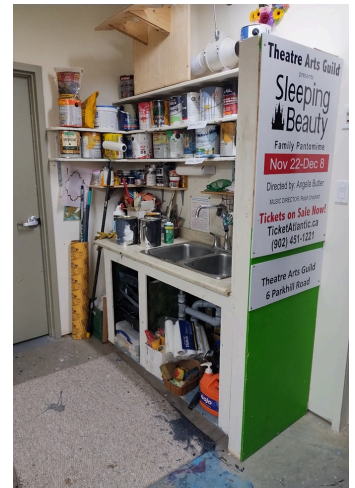
PART THREE

2008. Summer – Renewal of the Auditorium

As soon as the season was over, the building focus switched to the auditorium, with particular attention to the seating (to bring all aspects of this arrangement up to code). All seats were removed, plus the original flooring. New risers were to be constructed, plus new stairs, plus new flooring. It was quite the scene, walking into a completely empty space! There was even the uncovering of a piece of TAG's history – a section of the original floor had been painted as a forest for the production of *The Cave Dwellers* in 1968. The reworked seating plan gave us 90 audience places, divided into two halves round a central aisle, with steps mounting up on each side, with short runs then leading down to the door into the 'House.' With the attention now directed to the auditorium, it was decided to make other improvements to the area. The ceiling over the seats was removed, to improve circulation of air, which precipitated the decision to reroof the 'old' part of the Playhouse, which in turn led to challenges in joining this new roof to that over the Rehearsal Hall, due to a difference in height. Nothing's ever easy! In addition, four large exhaust fans were installed in the attic, above the dressing rooms. These exhaust air from above the stage, which is replaced by fresh air ducted to the back of the auditorium.

2017/2018 Season – More Expansion – The Galleries

Although a great deal of work had been accomplished by the end of 2008, this was not considered to be the conclusion of expansion at TAG. The most important aspects had been covered – the construction of the Rehearsal Hall (for the actors), a new Lobby and bar (for the patrons), a re-configuration of the seating area (again, for the patrons) and the upgrading of the stage (for actors and crew). Once these concerns had been taken care of (easy to say, but involving hours and hours of work by TAG members, volunteers and professional tradespeople), attention was turned to the pressing need for more storage and work space and the upgrading of facilities for the actors in the shape of a larger dressing room, green room and backstage bathroom. This need crystalized into an addition to both the north and east sides of the Playhouse, dubbed Galleries, the one on the north side to be a workshop for construction of sets, plus storage for wood, tools, paint supplies, etc. On the east side, the space was to be for costume and properties storage, with a small sewing and laundry area. Costumes were to be stored on racks by the interior wall of the auditorium, with props on shelves built against the outside wall. The costume corridor also enabled easier access from backstage to the lobby. No more having to dash out in the rain and snow, then run around the side of the building in order to make an entrance from the back of the auditorium! On the east side of the building the 'shed', which at times had been a storage area and the location of the boiler, was demolished. All funds which had been raised for the main project had been used, so a new round of fund-raising was necessary for construction of these Galleries, however some funding was secured through the federal Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Grant.



2019, Summer – Parking Improvements

The parking area gets some attention, being enlarged and resurfaced with new line markings. Of the \$50,000 cost, Councillor Shawn Cleary provided half from his District Capital Fund.

Judy Reade, TAG's Archivist



Memories of Summerland

March 26, 2026 to April 11, 2026

Directed by: Bill VanGorder
Produced by: Geraldine McDonald
Stage Managed by: Esther VanGorder
Photo credit to Katherine Kepkay

Cast:
Jesse Robb as William Mumler
Lise Renault as Mrs. Mumler
Dom MacKinnon as Joseph Tooker

A "Spirited" Success at Pond Playhouse!

Audiences were captivated as the Theatre Arts Guild transported us to William H. Mumler's mysterious New York City photography studio, circa 1869—a place where the living and the dead shared the same frame. That haunting world came vividly to life in *Summerland*, written by Arlitia Jones, Produced by Geraldine MacDonal and Stage Managed by Esther VanGorder.

Under the direction of Bill VanGorder, actors Jesse Robb, Dom MacKinnon, and Lise Renault delivered performances full of mystery, emotion, and suspense. Their work captured the longing for connection, the clouds of doubt, and the intrigue of the spirit world with striking depth.

Theatre-goers praised the show as “a fascinating portrayal of the contest between reality and the spirit world” and “an intriguing piece of theatre with solid, skillful acting.”

With sold-out matinees and enthusiastic audiences throughout its run, *Summerland* proved to be a hauntingly beautiful success—an unforgettable journey into the unknown.





Membership Has Its Benefits

Not only do members receive a discount on tickets, but they also receive

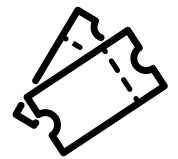
EARLY ACCESS TO TICKET SALES!

Members can choose their performance dates and seats before tickets are available to the public.

All memberships are \$15 and are valid from September 1st to August 31st.

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