

# GABRIOLA PLAYERS



Spring 2021 newsletter

## A message from the directors

First, and as always, thank you so much for your support during this past, difficult-for-all year.

When last year's One-Act Play Festival was halted halfway through its run, things looked bleak indeed. With two and a half shows in our 2019/20 season cancelled and little prospect of live theatre resuming at any point last year, we found ourselves heading into what should have been our 2020/21 season facing the prospect of a very hefty deficit.

Then we took a gamble. We could still perform live, albeit virtually. And you stuck with us. Audiences for **Don't Pan(dem)ic!** in September and **Christmas Crackers** in December were larger than we dared hope and helped to staunch the flow.

You were also very generous in December when, absent a panto at the Community Hall, we offered audiences a chance to watch (in return for a donation) Lesley Hazeldine's 2018 panto *Pirates of Nursery Rhyme Island* online. And you were again generous when we reached out last month with an [appeal](#).

No one-act plays at the Rollo this year? Never mind. We're going to **Spring Forward** next month with a **Virtual One-Act Play Festival** from **May 20 to 23**. This year's show will feature two delightful new plays written by Gabriolan authors Anne M. Holmes and Wendy Phillips and a quite wildly entertaining sketch by Ray Appel and Scott Rivers. (See page 4 for more information.)

As well as springing forward, we're also looking back in this newsletter with a few "old timers" sharing memories of some of their favourite productions over the past 17 years.

We are now accepting applications for the **Don Whifton Memorial Bursary**. If you are – or know – a Gabriola student who will be studying some aspect of theatre arts in the next academic year, you may qualify for the \$1000 bursary. (Details on page 7.)

Who knows what vaccination might bring? We still haven't abandoned all hope of bringing the Bard back to the garden this summer. And in December we may once again be shouting "Behind you!" at the Community Hall.

In the meantime, enjoy the virtual festival next month and, in the famous words of Dr Bonnie Henry, be kind, be calm, be safe.

Best wishes from your friends at Gabriola Players.



Ray Appel



Donna Deacon



Joe DiCara



Lesley Hazeldine



Miranda Holmes



Dave Innell



Brenda Joy



Marshall Mangan



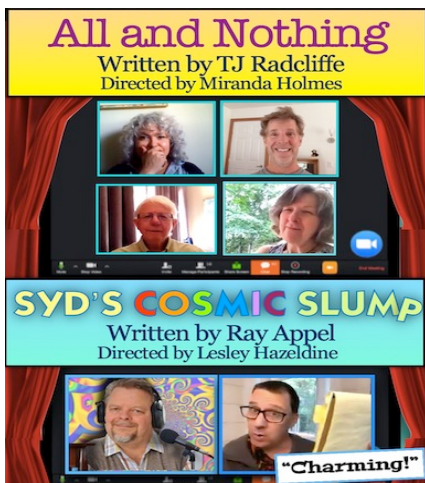
Tom Radcliffe

# Zoom Zoom!

It was all looking pretty dismal for theatre last spring when everything went into lockdown. The 2020 One-Act Play Festival was cancelled halfway through its run, as were a planned production of *The Realistic Joneses* and last summer's *Bard in the Garden*. There seemed little prospect for an autumn show or the annual pantomime.

Then board member Tom Radcliffe floated the possibility of a live online show using Zoom (a platform of which few of us had ever heard before the pandemic). Was it possible? Could we pull it off? Would people watch? The answer was yes, yes and yes.

## DON'T PAN(DEM)IC!



## CHRISTMAS CRACKERS



In September we went online with two new pandemic-themed short plays, ***All and Nothing*** by Tom and ***Syd's Cosmic Slump*** by Ray Appel, who'd turned to playwriting when he found he was unable to paint in lockdown. (To hear Tom and Ray discuss their plays, click [here](#).)

In December we were back with two cracking new Christmas-themed short plays, ***The Christmas Project*** by Tom and ***The Nativity Auditions*** by Ray with Lesley Hazeldine and Scott Rivers.

We'd like to thank everyone who bought tickets and came along with us for the virtual ride. And for the incredibly positive feedback we received.



## Spring forward!

If the pandemic has taught us nothing else, it is that there is truly amazing talent on this island of ours. In January we put out a call for submissions of new one-act plays we might perform as part of our **2021 Virtual One-Act Play Festival**. The response was quite extraordinary. In addition to several one-act plays from Gabriola writers, we also received submissions from Vancouver Island and one from a playwright in New York!

The selections have been made and we are delighted to announce that next month we will be broadcasting three new plays by Gabriola writers:



This will be the third one-act play by Anne M. Holmes to be performed by Gabriola Players, beginning with *That's Nice* in 2015, then *An Unhelpful Complication* in 2017. In ***A Divine Comedy***, theatres are about to reopen, but the first read through of a new one-act about Shakespeare's long lost religious play is taking place on Zoom.

Ray Appell and Scott Rivers, the creators of ***Gabriola Squares***, invite you to "join us in this hilarious half-hour Gabriola game show where the contestants are challenged, the points are tallied, the laughs spill out and the stars abound! Over 25 questions about life on Gabriola! No matter where you're from, you'll love this game show about life in Paradise."

***Social Distance*** is the first play written by Governor General award-winning young adult author Wendy Phillips. In it we meet, Maggie, who has recently left an unhappy life behind in the city in exchange for a cabin on a remote island. But in spite of the pandemic, she's not getting the personal space she needs. Her son wants her childcare skills and her moral support. Her old friend wants her to start an online art career. And her new neighbour has plans that are definitely up close and personal. Does Maggie have what it takes to live her own life? And how much social distance is enough?

## Can't wait until May to see Gabriola Players perform a one-act play?

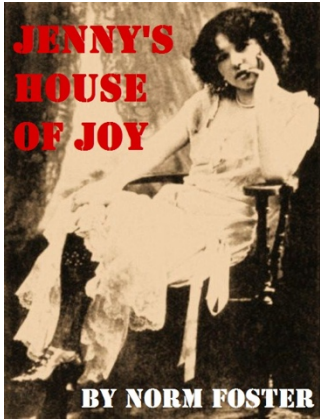
Don't forget four of the one-acts we've produced in the past, all written by local playwrights, are available to view on our YouTube channel. Just click on the title. ***Lemon Yellow Laces*** by Dennis Johnstone was performed in 2015 and was the winner of the Best Original Script Award at the 2015 Qualicum One-Act Play competition. ***The Family Visit*** by Lesley Hazeldine was performed in 2016. ***An Unhelpful Complication*** by Anne M. Holmes was performed by Gabriola Players in 2017 and was a finalist in the 2018 Canadian National Playwriting Competition. ***Living in Paradise***, also by Lesley Hazeldine, was performed on Gabriola and Galiano Islands in 2018.



## Looking back

Speaking of past productions... As we begin to look forward to live theatre once again being possible on Gabriola, we reached out to some of our longstanding members to ask them about favourite productions past. Here's what they had to say.

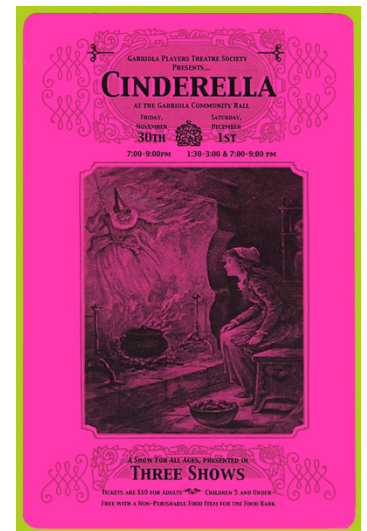
**Jean Wyenberg** has been with us since the very beginning. "Wow. So many years and so many plays. From my first ever theatre experience in our first ever performance, **The Vagina Monologues** in 2004, to directing the tenth anniversary revival of the same play.



"I have to say two of my favourite roles were as Jenny in **Jenny's House of Joy** – a wonderful cast and a great play – and the first of the **Robin Hood** pantos in which I played Friar Tuck along with Paul as Will Scarlet and Cecil Ashley as Little John. So much fun. I've had lots of fun directing plays, too. Two crazy ones that I loved were **Boise Idaho** (a one act play) and **Snow Flake and the Five Gnomes**, which was a kind of half panto. So many wonderful shows. The more I think about it, the more I remember!

"One of our earlier productions that I was not acting in nor directing was **Lend Me A Tenor** – a brilliant farce that I know convinced some Gabriolans community theatre can be a class act. And finally, **The Odd Couple** (female version) in which I played Olive against Jenn Feenan's Florence. What a total blast that was!"

If you love the pantos, you can thank **Jenn Feenan**, who introduced this British holiday tradition to Gabriola in 2007. "The first panto Gabriola Players produced was **Cinderella**. It was difficult to cast and even more difficult to find behind the scenes crew. But we managed to put on a good show together. Someone asked me later why we didn't have any singing. Singing! Phew! I knew I had more work cut out for me the following year. Surprisingly, there was a lot of talent here on the island just waiting for an opportunity to be involved and they all stepped up – make up artists, costume people, set builders and (huzzah!) singers. There were also lots of actors! **The Wizard of Oz** had a cast of 12, plus munchkins, and roughly 20 behind the scenes crew. It was also nice to include Mara's dancers – it felt like the whole community had a role to play. It was a tremendous amount of work, but I had so much fun and such a sense of pride seeing so many people working towards a common goal. I'd never directed anything 'musical' before. I even had to write some of the songs, as we couldn't use any of the originals. For me it is the play of which I am most proud. The panto was a great success and each year it gets better and better. Well done, Gabriola Players!



*Gabriola Players Pantomime*

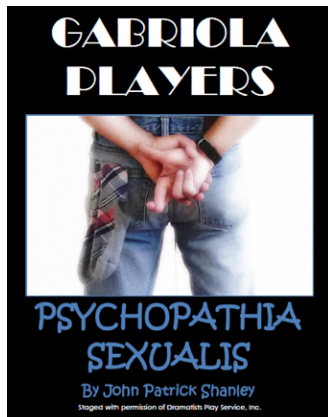


And if anyone loves pantos, it's **BJ Godson**, who's appeared in every one of them, along with many one-acts and full productions. "When tasked with choosing two of my favourite roles from the twenty-two productions I've been in, I thought my head would explode – but in a good way. So many wonderful Gabriola Players memories to sift through, bringing joy into my heart during a time when we all need a lift. As the Rat King in the **Pied Piper and the Tail of the Rat King**, I danced in my throne chair, played with the jewels in my immense tail, got thrown in prison with General Scurvy and kept forgetting who my daughter Daisy was. A fun panto! But I must give an honourable mention to Little Miss Muffet in **Pirates of Nursery**

**Rhyme Island**, sporting my favourite costume of all the plays, and a super fun amount of singing and dancing. And I have to give a happy nod to the role of Mr. Happy in **Ali Baba**. And last but not least my role as Twinkie the

Elf in **The Christmas Caper**, where I had one of the silliest and most fun times singing and dancing with the late and sorely missed Nancy Jenner as Old Man Winter.

"For a change of pace, in **Lemon Yellow Laces**, my usual 'ditsy' over-the-top panto character was replaced with the sassy, smart, outspoken homeless girl Polly. A wonderful 'real life' role which both challenged and rewarded me in ways I can barely describe – and allowed me to emote one of my favourite lines ever 'my mother was a fucking psycho'. Yes, it was in the script! I thank all the gang involved with Gabriola Players, which has been a huge part of my life these past 18 years. May we **soon** be back on a real stage, entertaining our loyal audiences!!"



**Donna Deacon** has been active with Gabriola Players for the past decade. "I've been lucky enough to be involved in many wonderful plays and pantos. It's hard to pick just one or two favourites but at the top of my list of memorable productions is **Psychopathia Sexualis**, John Patrick Shanley's wickedly smart, funny play. As Lucille, a feisty Texas bombshell whose fiancé has a secret sock fetish, I got to work alongside a hugely talented cast and spar with my real-life 'beau', Garry Davey, in some of the most exhilarating and challenging scenes I've ever played.

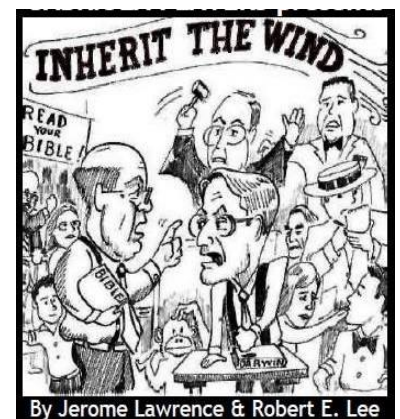
"Also high on my list of favourites is **Inherit the Wind**, a complex play which brought so many passionate Gabriolans together to make a statement about hate, intolerance and religious bigotry. **Jenny's House of Joy**, was memorable because I was on stage with some of the best women I've ever known, while playing Frances, a slightly "past-her-prime" brothel worker looking for a good cowboy. Another standout was Mrs. Darimont in **The Exquisite Hour**, a deliciously quirky role that made me fall in love with acting.

"In recent years, I've discovered the joy of directing and after dipping my toe in with two one acts, I took the plunge with Norm Foster's full length play, **Old Love**. What a fantastic experience! The cast put their heart and soul into making it a truly memorable, sold-out production. And last, but certainly not least, in 2020, I directed a beautifully written little play, **Life on Mars** by Elliott Hayes, which was shaping up to be truly out of this world just as the pandemic hit."

**Miranda Holmes**, like Donna, has been involved with Gabriola Players since 2011. "Oh, my! Such a challenge to pick just a couple of shows. I've had such a lot of fun in my 'collaboration' with UK playwright Robin Bailes, four of whose pantos I've directed. And there has also been the thrill – for both actors and audiences – of discovering, thanks to Garry Davey, that we could actually do **Shakespeare**!

"If I really have to restrict myself to two, the first would have to be **Inherit the Wind**, which I directed in 2014. As I said when I wrote last June about how the show came to be, it truly was a labour of love for every member of the cast and crew. I'm not sure if I've ever felt as proud of anything as I did on opening night. Pure theatre magic.

"Pure satisfaction? Okay, my own play, **An Unhelpful Complication**. Everything from the writing to the rehearsals with Charlie (who had more trouble with playing a Tory cabinet minister than a former cold blooded assassin) and director Dave to the four performances was an absolute joy. (With the possible exception of the Saturday night show when I had to call for not one line, but *three*. Bit embarrassing when you wrote the play.)"



## How about you?

Is there a production you've particularly enjoyed over the years? Tell us which one and why in an email to [gabriolaplayers@gmail.com](mailto:gabriolaplayers@gmail.com). We'll include your favourite in the next newsletter and enter your name in a draw to win a pair of opening night tickets to whatever our first actual **live** performance turns out to be.

## A helping hand

Last month, on the anniversary of the first lockdown, we sent out an appeal. Although the response to our online shows had been extremely gratifying, the revenue from these shows was considerably less than would have been the case with live performances.

Three quarters of our annual revenue comes from ticket sales, nearly half of which is generated by the panto. The remainder comes from program ads, membership fees and some donations. Revenues may have been down considerably, but overheads, such as insurance and storage, remain the same.

Many of you responded immediately by renewing memberships or making charitable donations. (Gabriola Players is a registered charity and tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$25 or more.) For this we thank you very much indeed.

If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please consider doing so if you can. If you're not a member, please consider becoming one. (Membership is \$15 per year for an individual, \$25 for a family membership.) Or, if you prefer, you could simply make a donation. All support is gratefully received.

To find out how you can help, click [here](#).

## Notice something new on the cover?

Earlier this year we decided our logo was looking a bit tired and needed an update. Our thanks to Ray Appel and Miranda Holmes for our new look.



## Don Whitton Memorial Bursary



Don Whitton was a member of Gabriola Players from its inception, involved in numerous productions before he passed away in 2010.

In his memory, Gabriola Players offers an annual bursary of at least \$500\* to a Gabriolan who is registering or has registered to study some aspect of Theatre Arts at a British Columbia university, college or recognized training centre. The focus of study can be acting, directing, stage management or any related technical skill, such as lighting, sound or set design.

The Bursary may or may not be awarded in any given year, depending on whether there are applicants who meet the qualifying criteria. If you know someone who might be interested in applying for the 2021 bursary, click [here](#) for more information.

\* Thanks to the generous donations of the Whitton family and others, the bursary is often more than \$500. This year's bursary, if awarded, will be \$1000.