

GABRIOLA PLAYERS



Summer 2023 newsletter

A note from the directors

If we do say so ourselves, our 2022/23 season has been a great one.

We kicked off in September with performances of Will Eno's delightfully quirky play [The Realistic Joneses](#).

In early December we wowed audiences – despite blizzards and communications blackouts – with [Cinderella](#), which completed the five-panto [collaboration](#) between writer Robin Bailes and director Miranda Holmes and which has been hailed as the best panto we've ever done. ("How are you ever going to top that?" many people asked after seeing the show.)

In April we were back with our full production, Jerry Mayer's delightful comedy *2 Across*. (See next page for more about the show.)

Most recently we staged our annual **One-Act Play Festival**, which once again featured new works by Gabriola writers – a tradition we began with our 10th anniversary season several years ago and have attempted to maintain since. A big thank you to everyone who came out to see this sold out production. *The Trouble with Trees*, written and directed by Dave Innell, resonated with and tickled the fancy of Gabriolans. *Ruby Red Lipstick*, written and directed by Anne M. Holmes, brought many to tears. And the darkly funny *Honour Among Thieves*, written by Elliott Hayes and ably directed by Donna Deacon, left audiences gasping and earned the two actors a well-deserved standing ovation. Audiences told us this was also our best festival ever. (More on the plays involved, along with some of Bill Pope's [photos](#), on pages 4 and 5.)

Once again we would like to thank our season sponsor, Tina & Guy, and all the [island businesses](#) who have supported us with program ads.

And now for some sad news. We won't be trying to top *Cinderella* this year. Gabriola Players is currently experiencing some capacity issues which make it impossible for us to mount a panto. It was a tough call to make, but the simple fact is we need to recruit new people for crucial backstage roles. (See page 7 for more details on how you can help.) While we are doing so, we will be offering a limited season in 2023/24: a full production in November this year, our One-Act Play Festival and another full production in the first half of next year.

Enjoy the rest of the summer, everyone. Fingers crossed we get some much needed rain. See you next season!



2 Across

It was more of a rollercoaster than a train ride from the airport into the city for free spirit Josh (Ray Appel) and straightlaced Janet (Judy Evaski) in Jerry Mayer's *2 Across*, staged at the Rollo in April.



Starting off with cross words over the *New York Times* crossword puzzle, these two polar opposites gradually began opening up to one another. (A couple of illicit miniatures helped.)



Before journey's end, Josh was begging for a chance to see Janet again.



Bravo to Judy and Ray for their portrayals, which, as one attendee said, left audiences wanting to know what happens next. (Extra kudos to Ray for creating the great 4'x8' set panel!)

Our thanks to Bill Pope for these and the other great [photos](#) he took of the show.

One-Act Play Festival

"What a captivating evening of theatre!"

There were a lot of firsts in this year's festival: first western Canada performance of one play (*Honour Among Thieves*) and world premieres of two new plays by Gabriolans.



Wendy Phillips and Tammy Mueller in Honour Among Thieves Photo: Bill Pope

The former is the second play by Elliott Hayes which Donna Deacon has directed for Gabriola Players. Describing the joy of working on it with two talented actors, she says: "What a privilege it was to direct *Honour Among Thieves*. Working with Tammy and Wendy on this complex, challenging play was incredibly satisfying. It was gratifying to hear how much audiences loved their performances! I'm so proud of the work we achieved together."

Audiences certainly did love the play. Here are just some of the comments we received.

"Kudos to the actors and to the director for finding this wonderful Elliott Hayes play and so skillfully bringing it to life."

"I hope Wendy and Tammy got a standing ovation after every show. They certainly deserved it. Amazing performances."

"Mesmerising play. We were on the edge of our seats at the end. Well done!"

"The actors were great! It was just a delight to watch them escalate the emotional and physical stakes!"

"Unbelievable that this was Tammy's first stage performance. Bravo!"

Dave Innell credits his wife Jan for encouraging him to try writing a play. The result was *The Trouble with Trees*. It certainly resonated with Gabriola audiences. Of his experience as a first-time playwright, who also directed his work, Innell says: "It was a great life experience to write a play and then watch actors bring my words to life." Hopefully this won't be the last time we hear from this writer.

This is what audiences had to say.

"So much fun watching the actors have so much fun in *The Trouble with Trees*!"

"Felt like this was written for me. The trouble with neighbours, eh? Thanks!"

"What a great slice of Gabriola life!"

"Such a hoot. Particularly loved the vacuum bit!"



Katie MacLean, Scott Rivers, Christine McKim and Neil Shilladay in The Trouble with Trees. Photo: Bill Pope

Ruby Red Lipstick, written and directed by Anne M. Holmes and performed by her and Benjamin Sams, reduced many to tears. According to Holmes: "This little play began life as a homework assignment from a playwriting workshop I did in 2021. It had never occurred to me to put it forward for production until I started working with Ben on *Cinderella* last year. It also wasn't part of the plan for me to play Violet, but I am very glad it turned out that way. We said at the beginning that, if we got it right, we could make a little magic and I think we succeeded."



They did indeed. Here are just some of the comments.

*"I was in tears at the end of *Ruby Red Lipstick* and I certainly wasn't the only one."*

"I can't believe that play was only 15 minutes long. So much emotion packed in."

"That was a great piece of theatre! Nicely nuanced, deeply vulnerable performances."

*"Miranda and Ben were perfect as Violet and James."
"Passionate, sad, but beautiful story."*

To see more of Bill Pope's photos, click [here](#).

We need your help

If you've ever examined one of our panto programs, you've probably noticed that considerably more than double the number of people are involved off stage than on. People you seldom see during a performance, but who play absolutely crucial roles in every production – be they the stage managers, the set painters, the make-up artists, the people in charge of sound and lighting. These are the unsung heroes without whom there would be no show.



The cast and a small percentage of the crew from Ali Baba.

We have been blessed over the years with an extraordinary group of people who do these jobs with great commitment. Some have moved off the island and others are simply feeling their age. It is fair to say we find ourselves with a capacity issue and in need of an infusion of new blood. Which is the reason we took the difficult decision not to mount a panto this coming winter.

If you love live theatre and want to see it continue on Gabriola, we need your help. Actors may be the ones standing in the spotlight, but they would be the first to admit the biggest round of applause should go to the stage managers and everyone else behind the scenes who pitches in to make them look good.

We will offer training and support you during your learning curve. What we need from you is a love of theatre. **Please** consider joining us. To find out more, send an email to gabriolaplayers@gmail.com.

Want to get on board?

While we're at it... There are **board members** who are stepping down this year and we would love to hear from people who might be interested in stepping up. We would be particularly (but by no means exclusively) keen to hear from individuals with a good head for numbers willing to replace Joe DiCara, who has done an excellent job as our treasurer for the past several years. If you are interested, please get in touch.

And finally...

Our operating costs (such as insurance and storage) will remain the same – or increase – but without the revenue generated by a panto we face the prospect of a substantial deficit at the end of our limited 2023/24 season. We hate to ask, but... If you are not already a member of Gabriola Players, please consider becoming one. If you already have an annual membership, please consider switching to a monthly sustaining membership. If you are able to do more, please consider making a donation. We are a registered charity, so all donations are tax deductible. Everyone who donates \$100 or more will be listed in our programs (unless you request anonymity).