

# LANGHAM COURT

# NEWS

Langham Court has been the home of the Victoria Theatre Guild since 1935. Its Mission Statement:  
"To foster and celebrate the art and practice of sustainable community theatre."

June 2011

## A Royal Finale to our 2010-2011 Season *Elizabeth Rex* Runs June 8<sup>th</sup> to June 25<sup>th</sup>



Photo by David Lowes.

**The Queen takes centre stage**

**Shakespeare (Paul Terry, Elizabeth R (Jean Topham), and Ned (Kyle Kushnir)**

# Art Show

The art show **for Elizabeth Rex** offers the works of **Ken Horn** and runs from Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. If you wish to meet the artist, he will be in the theatre on Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 4 p.m.

**Ken Horn** writes that he was born and raised in Scotland. He then spent a few years waffling in art colleges in Sweden and England. Fortunately nothing was learned or lost there.

About 10 years ago, he started painting what had been percolating in his noggin for the last 40 years.

The style that emerged has changed little in the last decade and he finds that he's a narrative painter who is drawn to the ancient and mystical.

He paints mostly people, for only people really interest him.

## The Non Profit-Organisation

### The Business and Professional Women's Club of Victoria

The **Business and Professional Women's Club of Victoria**, otherwise known as **BPW Victoria**, strives to encourage and support women in becoming leaders in our business and professional communities. The Victoria chapter of this organisation is also part of the national and international **BPW** Associations, and enjoys consultation status with the **UN** while helping women realise their full potential around the world. **BPW Victoria** has a long history and was one of the founding Canadian clubs, but was dismantled in 2008 due to a dwindling membership. Under new leadership, BPW Victoria re-chartered in 2010 thanks to the hard work and dedication of a core group of women in the Victoria community.

The club holds monthly meetings (for members and non-members) at the **Union Club** of Victoria where we have various female speakers as a way to facilitate our initiative to support women in businesses and professions. Through shared stories, experiences and seminars, we feel that BPW Victoria helps to encourage women in their own business professions and also to take on and become aware of leadership positions in our community. The local club has several initiatives including a mentorship program, a scholarship fund, and several other less formalized fund-raising and support initiatives. We are actively trying to recruit new members as our club has just re-established itself, so please consider coming to one of our events and bringing your female friends and colleagues to share in the encouragement and support we offer and can provide to one another. Our group does encourage networking, but we see ourselves as fundamentally different from other women's groups in Victoria, as our main objective is to give back to

the community and actively pursue a direction of social consciousness in relation to women's issues.

If there is a women's issue that we can help to provide support on, or you have an interest in contributing to or becoming a member of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Victoria, please contact [info@bpwvictoria.com](mailto:info@bpwvictoria.com) or visit our website: [www.bpwvictoria.com](http://www.bpwvictoria.com).

*Laura MacLean, BPW Victoria - Vice President*

## Are you receiving us???

If you do not have an e-mail address, could you please arrange to pick up your copy of the Newsletter from the theatre during Box Office hours.

If there are any concerns about this please, contact Denise at [gm.langhamcourt@shaw.ca](mailto:gm.langhamcourt@shaw.ca). We will have Newsletters available in the theatre lobby on the first of the month in a limited amount. Because we are trying to be 'green,' please ask someone in the Box Office if you need a hard copy. We thank you for your understanding.

# Editor's Notes...

As this is the last Newsletter of the 2010-2011 Season, I want to thank everyone involved in any of our Main Stage and **Readers' Theatre** productions. **Langham Court** is home to so many who have skill, talent, dedication and endurance, and I feel it a privilege to be part of such an amazing group.

This Newsletter is, once again, the result of teamwork. So many people to thank, including **Danda Humphreys** and her remarkable red pen. Danda can spot a typo from a mile away and her red pen flows freely over the newsletter every month. I also want to thank **Denise Brown** who, as General Manager, has taken pdfs of the newsletter and by magic tucked them into our web site at the beginning of each month; and as Producer of *Elizabeth Rex*, she has ensured that I have the correct name and gender of the performers in the publicity shot on page one. And that brings me to our resident photographer, **David Lowes**, whose pictures have livened up this Newsletter time and again. Thank you, David. I also am indebted to regular contributors **Lisa Leighton** and **Ned Lemley**. They keep us up-to-date on the comings and goings of the Costume Workshop and Loft. With all that's gone on these past months, with two period dramas back to back, I am surprised that either of them found a moment to send me their news.

What I have seen so far of the costumes for *Elizabeth Rex*, as well as those for *A Month in the Country*, fills me with awe at the collective genius of our team of costume designers, cutters and sewers. You all deserve a standing ovation and a long-term contract with the BBC Drama Department. Another individual who deserves an ovation is **Erin Hoyt**

who, with her team of helpers, brought the first – of many, I hope – **ACTivate Festival** to our theatre. Congratulations, Erin, it was a resounding success!

I also want to thank **Bill Adams** for his fascinating article on the Revolve Saga, **Sheila McKenzie** for her delightful theatrical reminiscence, and all those who have taken the time and trouble to let me know when and where auditions and productions are happening around town.

Just a reminder that there will be no Newsletter in July as your editor is taking a month off. The next issue will be posted on the web August 1<sup>st</sup>, so the submission deadline will be July 20<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile, *On Golden Pond* with **Geli Bartlett** and **Dick Newson**, is on at **St. Luke's** until June 5<sup>th</sup>. Then there's the Summer General Meeting on Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, the **Langham Court** Yard Sale on July 16<sup>th</sup>, and our Giant Annual Costume Sale on August 7<sup>th</sup>, as well as auditions for *The Melville Boys* on July 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and for *The Drowsy Chaperone* on September 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>. Volunteers are essential for both the Yard Sale and the Costume Sale, so even though our 82<sup>nd</sup> Season ends with the closing of *Elizabeth Rex* on June 25<sup>th</sup>, there's plenty going on in and around the theatre.

I wish you all a great summer and don't forget to pick up your tickets for *Elizabeth Rex*, opening June 7<sup>th</sup>.



## *Elizabeth Rex Company*

**Behind the Scenes:** The play is directed by **Judy Treloar**, produced by **Denise Brown**, and stage-managed by **Nick Stull** assisted by **Heather Jarvie** and **Dallas Ashby**. The set design is by **Bill Adams**, and lighting design by **Perry Burton** with **Karrie Wolfe** as mentor. The music is orchestrated by **Rick Underwood** and sound effects by **Alan MacKenzie** assisted by Sound Operator **Eric Grace**. The Elizabethan costumes are designed by **Lisa Leighton** along with Principal Costume Creators **Ann-Marie Arneson**, **Lisa Leighton** and **Chris Stusek**, who head up the team of Costume Creators including: **Elodie Adams**, **Donna Barnfield**, **Toshik Bukowiecki**, **Lynn Cadrain**, **Colette Cole**, **Kirby Delaney**, **Anney Fagan**, **Abigail Hodson**, **Jane Krieger**, **Di Madill**, **Madeleine Mills** and **Gloria Snider**. The Milliner is **Tierre Taylor**, hair and wigs are the work of Designer **Lal O'Connor** with Stylists **Tommy Lacroix** and **Cristina Woods**, while make-up is handled by Designer **Petrina Dezall** with Assistant **Chelsea Wilson**.

**On Stage:** The cast for this exciting period piece by Canadian playwright **Timothy Findley** includes the following: **Lynn Cadrain**, **Alex Carroll**, **Antoinette Church**, **Jennifer Doyle**, **Michael King**, **Kyle Kushnir**, **Quinn MacTavish**, **Michelle Mitchell**, **Whitey Mitchell**, **Courtney Noble**, **Ian Ofukany**, **Henry Skey**, **Kevin Stinson**, **Melissa Taylor**, **Paul Terry**, **Jean Topham** and **Drew Waveryn**.

# The Achievement of ACTivate

*By Erin Hoyt*

The **Activate Festival** has come and gone, but it will never be forgotten. Over the course of the weekend of the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, we the folks of **Langham Court** as well as plenty of others in the greater theatre community witnessed a reaching out over age, background, and experience to unite through art. It was an extremely moving experience for all involved.

Saturday and Sunday mornings saw more than fifty participants each day taking part in theatre education workshops of all sorts. The halls of **Langham Court** echoed with laughter and learning. For both evening performances, **ACTivate** and it's talented participants were able to entertain close to two hundred people from the ages of 9 to 90, proving that with love and a goal in mind, we can break down age barriers and work towards building a stronger and more united theatrical base in the Victoria. This was my goal and all those who came to watch and worked so hard made this dream come true.

I would like to personally express my deep gratitude to some people who came to my rescue and saved me a great deal of time by providing their skills when I was feeling spread thin. A huge shout out goes to **Bill Adams, Al MacKenzie, Karrie Wolfe, and Tony Cain** for their help and technical advice. Bill and his crew kindly painted the stage making it possible to have a very polished look. Bill also built us a beautiful door and given my skills with a hammer I know that we could not done it without him. Al was kind enough to hover around the theatre, keeping himself busy with projects just in case I had technical questions. Karrie and the crew were awesome when they provided us with a basic focus and a cheat sheet to help me program the lights, and finally, Tony was my rock as he pitched in with everything he could, and most of all listened to me when I needed an ear. Also I want to give a big thank

you to the workshop leaders **Melissa Blank, David Macpherson, Odile Nelson** and **Andrew Wade**.

There are so many others that made this possible, including the cast from **Elizabeth Rex** who gave up some of their stage time, and please know that I will continue to thank each one of you personally every time I see you.

On a personal note...I truly hope that this festival can be used as a model for future endeavours of this kind. I believe in the importance of education and camaraderie, and I think that **ACTivate** provided this to every single person who participated. I saw seniors and children embracing each other and laughing together. They felt a sense of connection, appreciation and mutual respect of their skills. It is my most profound hope that a new chapter will be opened for the amateur community, one where the youth are inspired to volunteer and learn from those with more experience, and one where the veterans acknowledge and utilise the enthusiasm and skills of those who are just starting to spread their theatrical wings. Thank you to the Board for their faith in this project. Thank you to all of you who participated and put your blood, sweat and tears into this behind the scenes. Love each other and learn together.

I will be meeting with the Board to provide feedback and to ask for this festival to continue. If you were lucky enough to participate in or witness this event, please send a letter of support to the board through my email. I will then present them at the next meeting. My address is [erinmusic@live.com](mailto:erinmusic@live.com). Thank you again. This final gesture on your part could make all the difference.

## News, Views and Reviews

### Remembering When . . .

(An occasional column in which members reminisce about happenings and mis-happenings on stage, back-stage or in the wings at **Langham Court** or any other theatre. And now over to you, **Sheila McKenzie . . .**)

## The Ghost of Langham Court

*By Sheila McKenzie*

The unseen role of stage manager (SM) is a responsible one, and can sometimes be quite challenging. Once rehearsals are over, the SM ensures the smooth running of all

performances by coordinating the cast as well as front-of-house and back-stage crew. When I took on this role at



**Langham Court** in 2004 for the play *Da* by **Hugh Leonard**, my major challenge was the theatre ghost!

**Langham Court Theatre** is an old building by Victoria standards and used to be the carriage house and barn of an old (turn of the 19th to 20th century) mansion that is now the apartment house next door. Victoria was founded in the 1840s, and before that was First Nations territory. Local history remembers everyone who founded the city, and by all accounts their ghosts are remarkably active in the older parts of town.

The **Victoria Theatre Guild** is celebrating its 82nd anniversary, and has had **Langham Court Theatre** for most of that time. Before the renovations in 2005, the backstage area was a warren of somewhat isolated rooms created out of the old carriage house and, of course, the theatre had its own ghost. Lore has it that “she” visits plays that have ghosts in them.

The character *Da* in *Da* is the ghost of the playwright’s father; in fact, most of the characters in *Da* are either dead, or memories of real people in earlier times. Imagine my surprise when, ignorant of the lore and sitting in the glassed-in booth at the back of the theatre on opening night, I heard over the headphones my Assistant Stage Manager (ASM) in the wings gasp, “Oh! A lit match has just fallen onto the stage from mid-air! This is weird!”

After I had dispatched her to get the fire extinguisher and confirm that there was indeed a match on stage and that it had gone out, she said “Oh, there’s a funny smell! This is spooky!”

I spent the rest of the first act determining that the smell was consistent with a lighted match (and so probably *was* from a lighted match) and reassuring the ASM that, even though she was sitting alone in the dark, she was very close to the actors and audience and could easily get help if there was any personal threat from the eeriness she sensed all around. I even got the headphones sizzling with jokes about who might be up on the catwalk playing games!

The burnt match was retrieved at intermission, and examined by all after the show. We concluded the only possible explanation to be that the actor who played *Da*, who had put an unstruck match in his pocket early in the

play, must have dropped it later, unnoticed, on the stage and, after his exit, some other actor’s shoe must have kicked it up in the air and ignited it at the same time; hence the ASM had seen and smelt it fall, lit, apparently from mid-air. There were several thespians who found this explanation less likely than the possible presence of a ghost!

On the second night of the show, *Da* couldn’t find his matches at all. Several of us searched the stage, the dressing rooms and (according to sworn testimony) all costume pockets, but didn’t find them, and I handed down the obvious decision that the play would go ahead without matches. However, when *Da* was putting on his costume shortly before curtain up, he turned around in the dressing room to find the matches strewn on the floor. “Must have fallen out of my trouser pocket,” he said, with quavering conviction. “I was sure I looked there.”

The following night, I assure you I ransacked the building for strewn matches before anyone else arrived at the theatre, and gently reminded cast and crew of the very real danger of playing with fire. I had a “spooked” team and all I needed was to have to manage some practical joker as well as the theatre ghost! Whatever the truth of the matter, at the first sign of “weirdness” I was fully prepared to call everyone on stage before curtain up while I performed an exorcism that would go something like this: “Look here! If you want to watch us, fine, but please sit down, shut up and enjoy the show! Just don’t upset my team!”

My old authoritarian persona was re-emerging from my childhood in Glasgow, a tough city at the time, where drunks as well as Girl Guides got turfed from their haunts into the street at 9:30 p.m. and all waited for the same buses. While I have no evidence that ghosts resemble drunks in any respect, I sure learned respect then for the psychological value of a convincing performance!

Fortunately, we had no more “visitations” and the “exorcism” wasn’t necessary, but *Da* sure added to theatre lore. The question is: did the renovations bury (or maybe annoy?) the Ghost of **Langham Court Theatre**?

*(Have you any theatre anecdotes to share? If so, please send them in to Danda Humphreys at [Dandah@shaw.ca](mailto:Dandah@shaw.ca).*

## Langham Court’s Revolving Saga

*By Bill Adams*

When Langham’s resident set builder, **Bill Adams**, was asked by director, **Toshik Bukowiecki**, to design the set for *A Month in the Country*, it quickly became clear that the play required two distinct settings: the interior of the Russian country house, and the garden outside of the house. The

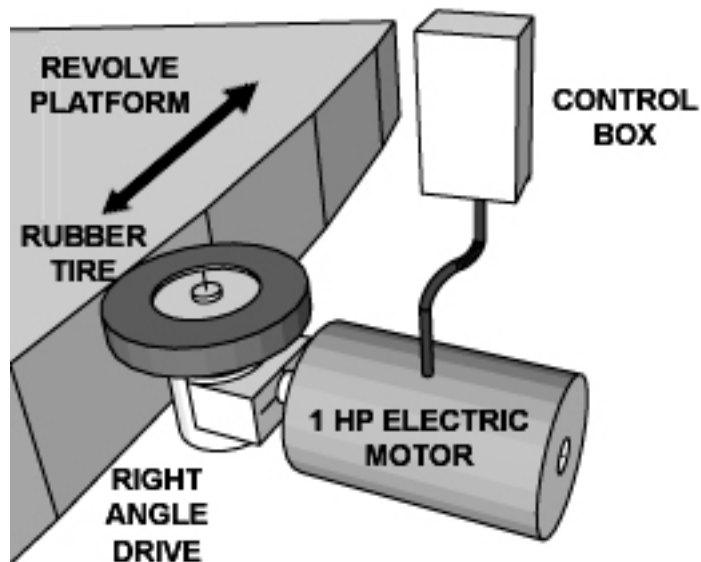
obvious solution was to create a revolving set that would have two positions.

This presented a number of challenges, not the least of which was the fact that the stage floor was a warped, undulating and bumpy old thing with 3/8 of an inch of

accumulated paint, tape and other assorted rubble. There was also a difference of almost 1½ inches in height between the high spot on stage left and the dip in the centre of the stage. This sort of irregularity doesn't work for a large revolve.

It took the set crew a full week to build the stage floor up to a flat level surface before we could commence construction.

The next challenge was to figure out how we were going to move the rotating platform. In February, Bill started doing research into a motorized revolve mechanism, and found a company in Toronto who had the resources and expertise in this sort of thing. The system would require an electric motor strong enough to do the job, a gear reducer that would slow the motor rpms to 1/60 of the speed and would turn a wheel that would push the edge of the revolve platform.



So all of this was ordered. When the company in the U.S. sent it to the distributor in Toronto, the Toronto guy realized that they had sent the **big** right angle drive and we needed the **small** right angle drive. So he sent the big one back, and got the small one in its place. All this was sent to **Langham Court Theatre**.

Problem was, the original motor and big angle drive matched, but that motor didn't match with the small angle drive. So we had to call up and explain our problem.

Meanwhile, time was passing and Opening Night was getting closer. Our guy in Toronto ordered the correct matching motor. Bill told him we needed it ASAP but he wound up sending it by oxcart, and the earliest it would get to Victoria was the morning of the Preview performance with the full audience in attendance.

On the morning of the preview, Bill picked it up and together with **Alan MacKenzie** and **Bob Goth**, (a new and very accomplished volunteer), we put it all together and bench tested it – it worked fine. We installed it – and it didn't work. Then we spent the whole day (no lunch break) with lots of phone time to the distributor and the manufacturer to try to adjust it to make it work. It would work sometimes, then not work. Frustrating. By six o'clock – two hours before the Preview curtain, it seemed to be working fine. Bob stayed to show the crew how it worked and they were able to make it perform. He stayed backstage through the first two scene changes – no problem.

"I think you guys are good to go," he said, and left to have dinner. The next scene change, the machine broke down in the middle of the revolve. They had to quickly unbolt the wheel and push the platform around.

When Bill learned of this failure, he quickly got on the phone to the Toronto guy with news of a catastrophic failure. Suitably aghast, he promised a replacement control box (which was the cause of the problem). He said he'd send it ASAP with a note to 'hold for pickup,' rather than having it put on a delivery truck and delivered who-knows-when during the day. He was assured that the UPS depot would be open on Saturday. When Bill showed up at UPS, it was closed. It's never open on Saturday.

Monday was the next available day, but that was Easter Monday. When you phone UPS you wind up talking to somebody in Bangladesh or somewhere who doesn't have a clue whether or not it would be open on Easter Monday. But when Bill went to the depot – yahoo – it was open. Shown the tracking number, the guy at the depot said, "Oh, that was put on a delivery truck. It'll be delivered today."

Bill let him know how dismayed he was that it was not being held for pickup as per instructions. He said, "Well, it's on priority delivery, so it should arrive at the theatre soon." Being holiday Monday, no one else was at the theatre, so Bill rushed all the way back from the Royal Oak depot, only to find the **UPS** sticker on the door saying the **UPS** truck had been there but there was no one here for delivery. Good grief! They would try again tomorrow!

Fortunately, the **UPS** depot man, who knew how distraught Bill was when it wasn't held for pickup, phoned him when the box returned to the depot and said he could pick it up that afternoon. Another trip to the depot and back and then Bill and **Alan MacKenzie** put it all together and calibrated it, and we're happy to report that it's working fine.

The Toronto guy was so dismayed by this whole saga that he has donated the original motor (which didn't match the right angle drive but can be altered to do so). This could be a back-up motor, or be used for some other purpose.

It's been quite a journey, but now we have a fine piece of equipment that undoubtedly can be used for many shows in the future.

# News From the Costume Guild

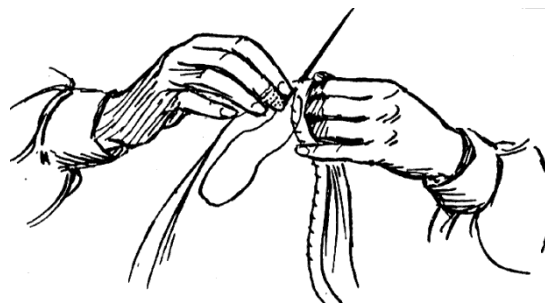
## Contemplating Rex

As we approach the opening for *Elizabeth Rex*, I would like to do something unusual: ask for your appreciation for the costuming team on the play. It may not be the biggest or most elaborate costume build Langham has ever done, but it's certainly the biggest I've done in more than 10 years at the theatre. And it's a big education, in everything from Elizabethan textiles, fashion and construction techniques, to how to make seven metres of modern fabric fit onto less than one metre of modern waist. By the time we open, we will have created more than 70 original pieces for the show.

None of this could have happened without our incredible volunteers. They are talented, generous, creative, patient, hard working, intelligent, good-humoured people who have all given massive amounts of their time and energy. We all do it on shows, but the scale of this build has meant a completely different magnitude of work. Our volunteers of course have other time constraints and commitments, but they have invested countless hours and days on projects that push their limits of knowledge and experience; they have been willing to share what they know and be open to learning; and they have supported an elaborate process that must at times have seemed overwhelming.

In the process, we have welcomed several new people to the theatre (and if this doesn't scare them off, nothing will). We have mentored. We have created a wealth of period pieces that will go to the Costume Loft. We have also learned that a hula-hoop makes a fine farthingale ... although we doubt that was common knowledge in 1601.

I have loved this script since I first read it, and every time I work on the show, it just gives me more energy and pleasure. That is at the heart of our group, that energy and joy in the opportunity to be able to build so much of the costume side of it.



So please join me in appreciating our wonderful costume volunteers. They deserve it. They are: **Elodie Adams, Ann-Marie Arneson, Donna Barnfield, Toshik Bukowiecki, Lynn Cadrain, Colette Cole, Kirby Delaney, Anney Fagan, Abigail Hodson, Brittany Kinahan, Jane Krieger, Di Madill, Madeleine Mills, Gloria Snider, Chris Stusek and Tierre Taylor.** (And me.)

Enjoy the show!

*Lisa Leighton*  
*Costume Designer for Elizabeth Rex*

## Notes from Aloft

It's an official **G.A.S.** August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011! All you Courtiers who want to have a GAS by preparing for the **Giant Annual Sale** had better get in touch. In June and July I'm hoping that you and a friend or two, people you like to work with, will come to the loft during open hours, choose a section that interests you, and cull items that we may toss because they are useless or that we bag for the Sale because they are redundant.

Then, starting Sunday, July 31<sup>st</sup> I will be holding work parties daily, usually three to four hours long. I will develop the roster of volunteers based on the responses I get from Courtiers as to their preferences for what day(s) and what times of day, e.g. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. or 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.,

evening, etc. I will need individuals to man The Loft when a work party occurs during busy hours.

**I am asking volunteers to put in six to eight hours before sale day to earn the right to shop early.**

**I am seeking a courtier to recruit a crew of four or five others who will come at 2 p.m. on Sale Day to help the exhausted Courtiers who have been there all day to wrap things up by 4 or 5 p.m.**

**Contact me at home: 250-475-1418 or at [l.m.lemley@gmail.com](mailto:l.m.lemley@gmail.com) or in the Loft at 250-384-2025.**

### Item

Thanks for holding on to your donations. Now that **Elizabeth Rex** has moved out of the rehearsal room, we can put a few things there and **Sylvia Rhodes** has offered some space in her clean, dry garage. Thank you, Sylvia!

### Item

I'm looking for someone to work on some of our wigs. Thank you, **Mary Stendall**, for culling the collection. Some wigs need combing, some need styling.

### Item

I have ordered 100 new boxes to replace the worn-out ones. I want to put together a work party to fold the boxes, tape them, label them, fill them, break down the old ones and dump them. I'll spring for pizza if you'll bring the beer.

### Item

Many thanks to my stalwart volunteers: **Eileen Bennett**, **Jane Krieger**, **Thelma Midori**, **Madeleine Mills**, **Mary Stendall**, **Aja Young**. You made a very busy April and May easier for me and for our clients.

*Ned Lemley*

*Costume Co-ordinator*

## Production Chair Report

This being the last Newsletter before the summer, I'd like to congratulate us all on a delightful season. Our productions, from **The Odd Couple** through to **Elizabeth Rex** have been of the highest quality and sometimes broke even. Our 82<sup>nd</sup> year has continued a tradition of challenging and entertaining our audiences while providing great ammunition for our actors and production teams.

Thanks for the memories.

*Roger Carr*

*Production Chair 2010/11*

## Summer General Meeting

The Summer General Meeting and Barbecue is scheduled for Sunday, June 26th, 2011. The Meeting is at 4 p.m. with the barbecue to follow.

*Toshik Bukowiecki*

*President*

## Theatre Yard Sale

Would anyone be interested in being part of a team to organise a Yard Sale in the theatre parking lot, to take place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the same day as the **Moss Street Art Walk**? We need one volunteer to take charge of the sale and several more to sort and price items during the preceding week and to take charge of the various stalls on the day. If you want to have a great time and raise funds for **Langham Court**, you'll sign up right away. Please email: [rhodes.s@shaw.ca](mailto:rhodes.s@shaw.ca) or phone 250-727-2677.



# Auditions

(Langham Court Theatre auditions are posted on our web site at: [www.langhamcourttheatre.bc.ca/auditions.html](http://www.langhamcourttheatre.bc.ca/auditions.html))

## *The Melville Boys*

By **Norm Foster**, Directed by **Tony Cain**

**Audition Dates:** Saturday, July 9<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup>  
from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

**Call backs:** Tuesday, July 12<sup>th</sup> from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

**Characters:**

**Lee Melville.** Mid-30's. Serious, responsible, working class and very much a family man

**Owen Melville.** Late 20's. Party animal. Working class. Juvenile attitude especially when he plays his fantasy role as Jesse James.

**Mary.** Early 30s. Very smart, practical, can be tough but has a sincere, soft, feminine side to her.

**Loretta.** Mid-20's. Blonde, smart, just like her sister, sure of herself. Self-centred.

*The Melville Boys* opens September 29<sup>th</sup> and runs to October 15<sup>th</sup>.

## *The Drowsy Chaperone*

Book by **Bob Martin** and **Don McKellar**.

Music and lyrics by **Lisa Lambert** and **Greg Morrison**.

Director: **Roger Carr**, Musical Director: **Donna Williams**.

Choreographer: **Jacques Lemay**

The show of our season next year is the multiple **Tony Award** winning musical *The Drowsy Chaperone*. We're starting the audition process early, September 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, and we'll be looking for a cast of 17 actors, singer, dancers. It going to be a blast.

## Four Seasons Musical Theatre Auditions for

### *NARNIA: the Lion, the Witch and The Wardrobe*

**Four Seasons Musical Theatre Society** is producing this first and most famous story of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. This will be a full length musical.

Auditions for this full-length musical will be held at the **Isabelle Reader Theatre** at **Spencer Middle School** at 1026 Goldstream Avenue in Langford between 12:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday June 11th. It would be preferable (but not absolutely necessary) if you come prepared with a musical theatre number to sing and have a short monologue. Be prepared to do a cold reading and some basic choreography. Dress comfortably! And no scents.

Please RSVP to [info@fourseasonsmusicaltheatre.com](mailto:info@fourseasonsmusicaltheatre.com) as soon as possible to reserve an audition time. For more information and for a full list of characters go to [www.fourseasonsmusicaltheatre.com](http://www.fourseasonsmusicaltheatre.com)

# What's On

## Langham Court Theatre presents

### *Elizabeth Rex*

By **Timothy Findley**. Directed by **Judy Treloar**

"If you will teach me how to be a woman, I will teach you how to be a man." Thus speaks Elizabeth I, the queen who ruled like a man to an actor specialising in women's roles as they engage in conversation in Timothy Findley's award-winning play, which takes place in a barn the night before the Earl of Essex is executed.

*Elizabeth Rex* previews Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> and runs from Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup> to Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup>. To purchase your tickets, call our Box Office at 250-384-2142, 805 Langham Court, Victoria or go to [www.langhamcourttheatre.bc.ca](http://www.langhamcourttheatre.bc.ca)

# St. Luke's Players Presents

## *On Golden Pond*

By **Ernest Thompson**, directed by **Geoffrey Davidson**

The cast includes well-known **Langham Court** members: **Geli Bartlett** as Ethel and **Dick Newson** as Norman, with **Catriona Black**, **Rich Gautier**, **Alex Bannister**, and **Rob LeBlanc**.

The play will be presented at St Luke's Hall, 3821 Cedar Hill X Road from May 25<sup>th</sup> to June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Tickets (Adults \$15, Seniors & Students \$13) can be obtained at: **Amica at Douglas House**, 50 Douglas Street; **Ivy's Book Shop**, 2188 Oak Bay Ave; **Petals Plus Florist**, 3749 Shelbourne Ave.; **Russell Books**, 734 Fort Street; and at the door. For more information, please call 250-37-1291.

## Friends of the Greater Victoria Public Library

Bring you

### A Spectacular Summer Book Sale

At the **Nellie McClung Branch Library**, 3950 Cedar Hill Road (Cedar Hill Rd near McKenzie) on Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup> from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. (\$3.00 admission) and Sunday, June 26<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. (admission free). Then from 1:45 p.m. to 3 p.m. it's all the books you can take away for \$5.00.

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## Our Coal Miner's Daughter: Phyllis Gaskell



It is no surprise that **Phyllis Gaskell** sings as well as acts; not only is she a coal miner's daughter but she was born in Wales, outside Cardiff. As an infant, Phyllis won first prize in a baby show, and her picture as the

Bonniest Baby was used to advertise Nestlé's. Alas, the only modelling fee Phyllis received was a copy of the photograph.

When she was five years old, her father suffered injuries from a fall and had to give up coal mining so the family moved to Buckinghamshire, to High Wycombe where her father traded in his miner's lamp and worked as an engineer. Two years later, the seven-year-old Phyllis was given her first stage role. She was cast as the Prince of Yen. Young Phyllis was somewhat ticked off at being cast in a boy's role until she saw that her princely costume was far more elegant and fancy than the gown the Princess was forced to wear.

Her mother died when Phyllis was only eight years old. Being so much younger than her brothers, she was the only child left at home and was sent to live with her Godmother,

who looked after her until the young girl left home to join up.

In 1939, while Phyllis was still in school, war was declared, and shortly afterwards the 17-year-old joined the **ATS** as part of the Signals Corps, where she remained until the end of the war in 1945. Except for a brief term in Belfast, throughout most of the war Phyllis was stationed in London. Although there were times when the bombing was a little too close for comfort, she never thought she'd get hit, and for a young girl in her late teens, early twenties, life was pretty exciting during those war years. In London, she was billeted in a hotel near Hyde Park Corner. Some nights she would be on fire watch duty in her steel helmet. Phyllis recalls the sound of shrapnel falling on her helmet, but still she was convinced she was invulnerable. She also recalls practice manoeuvres in which she had to crawl across Hyde Park on her stomach. She had a paper with contact names on it. It was rice paper and if caught by the enemy she was to eat the paper. Fortunately that never happened, as Phyllis felt it would make a very dry, unappetising meal. When not fire watching, working with the signals corps or on manoeuvres, Phyllis went to shows, met the stars, was entertained by young men in uniform and occasionally got

caught in late night bombing raids and had to take shelter in the underground tube stations.

When the war was over, Phyllis returned to High Wycombe, which seemed exceedingly dull after her stint in the **ATS**. Two years later, in 1947, Phyllis and a girlfriend came to Canada. Her first stop was New Westminster to stay briefly with her Godmother's cousin. Next stop, Vancouver, where the two English girls shared an apartment. Phyllis had experience as a telephone operator and her Godmother was sure she'd get a job right away. Unfortunately, the telephone company refused to hire Phyllis because of her eyesight. Although almost blind in one eye, this was the first time her eyesight had become a handicap. However, it wasn't long before the resourceful young woman found work. She joined the staff at **Spencers**, which later became **Eatons**. Three years later, in 1950, Phyllis met a young man, Ted, at a staff dance, and within a short time the two were married.

Although **Ted Gaskell** was working at **Eatons** when the two met, it was his ambition to work on a newspaper, and he had already written several articles for different papers. Luck was with the newlyweds. The same year they were married, Ted was offered a reporters' job on the Penticton Paper, so the couple moved to the interior where they stayed until Ted was invited to become Editor of the **Comox Free Press**. They moved down to Courtenay and it was while living there that Phyl and Ted began their involvement in theatre. Ted started the Comox Drama Club at the same time he was editing the **B.C. Drama Newsletter**. Then in 1963, the Gaskells moved to Victoria and became thoroughly immersed in the theatre scene here.

Both Ted and Phyllis were frequent performers in **B.C. Drama Festivals** and in 1975 Phyllis won Best Actress in the **South Island Zone** for her part in the Joan Mason Hurley play *Parents Day*. Two years later she won another Best Actress award. Phyllis acted with a number of local companies including **Bastion Theatre** under **Peter Mannerling**, **St. Matthias Little Theatre**, **St. Luke's Players**, **Four Seasons Musical Theatre**, **VOS** and, of course, **Langham Court Theatre**. In December 1965, the Victoria Theatre Guild put on a production of *Aladdin*, directed by **Tony Burton**, Victoria's expert on Panto. *Aladdin* was performed at the **Mac**. Phyllis played the part of the Fairy Dewdrop who is the first to come on stage. Tony suggested she come in swinging from a rope. When she refused, he then suggested she ride in from stage left on a motorbike. Once again, Phyllis refused. Tony exacted his revenge by painting a picture of his recalcitrant star as the Fairy Dewdrop dangling from a rope tied around her middle. *Aladdin* was Phyllis' first production with **Langham Court Theatre**.

While they were in Courtenay, Ted directed *Guys and Dolls*. Although Phyllis was ideal for the part of Adelaide, a part she longed to do, Ted, to avoid any hint of nepotism, cast

someone else in the role and gave Phyl a lesser part. Some years later, **VOS** was doing *Guys and Dolls*. Once again, Ted was in the director's chair. By this time Phyllis was a bit too mature for the role and was assigned the part of the Salvation Army Brigadier instead. Once again, the role of Adelaide eluded her. Then years later, Phyllis had the opportunity to sing Adelaide's Lament in a variety show at her church. She was really looking forward to performing her favourite role, Unfortunately, Ted became really ill and Phyllis had to bow out. However, recently at a show with the **Monterey Notables**, Phyllis finally got the chance to be Adelaide and to sing her Lament complete with sniffs and wheezes!

As well as performing in musicals and straight plays, Phyllis became a Social Worker, first in Courtenay, then in Victoria. Although at first she lacked the paper qualifications, she was doing the job and it wasn't long before she gained the necessary qualifications on paper through taking evening classes at **UVic**. As well as her work on stage at **Langham Court**, Phyllis has worked on props for several shows and also produced. She also took charge of the flowers in the lobby and the lounge during each production. She would come in during the run to water the bouquets and replace them when necessary. She became known as our resident flower lady and was dubbed Floral Phyllis for more than ten years. Although Phyl was never on any of **Langham Court's** committees, whenever help was needed in any area, she would be only too willing to pitch in any way she could.

As well as performing on stage, Phyllis has worked in films and modelled for **The Bay** and for the cover of **Seniors Magazine**. In 1966 she played **Mrs Tweedie**, the Oak Bay representative, in the **Oak Bay Parade**. Shortly after, she was kidnapped by the **Esquimalt Buccaneers**, and on **Buccaneer Days** she as trundled along in their parade, locked in a cage.

In the past, Phyllis thought of herself as an actress who could sing, but recently, with the increasing number of gigs at **Monterey Centre** and at her Church, she sees herself as a singer who can act. Apart from her cameo role in *Waiting in the Wings*, Phyllis' last time on the **Langham Court** stage was in the 1986 production *Light Up the Sky* directed by **Jutta Woodland**.

Phyllis has not let her 80 plus years deter her from doing what she most enjoys. Recently, she teamed up with a friend from her church and the two of them do a singing act: he as **Johnny Cash**, she as **June Carter**. She is also the lead singer for the band, **Charlie and the Angels** that performs at **Monterey** and other Senior Centres. So our own coal miner's daughter is still enjoying life belting out the tunes.

# Mark Your Calendar

Wednesday, June 8 – Saturday, June 25

*Elizabeth Rex*

Saturday, June 11

12:30 to 8 p.m. auditions for *Narnia*

Sunday, June 12

2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Art Show in the lounge

Saturday, June 25

5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friends of the Library Book Sale

Sunday, June 26

9 am to 1:30 p.m. Friends of the Library Book Sale

Sunday, June 26

4 p.m. Langham Court Summer General Meeting

Saturday, July 9

12 noon to 2 p.m. auditions for *The Melville Boys*

Sunday, July 10

12 noon to 2 p.m. auditions for *The Melville Boys*

Saturday, July 16

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Langham Court's second annual Yard Sale

Wednesday, July 20

Deadline for submissions to the August Newsletter

Sunday, August 7

GIANT ANNUAL COSTUME SALE

Friday, September 16 – Sunday September 18

Auditions for *The Drowsy Chaperone*

Wednesday, September 29 – Saturday, October 15

*The Melville Boys*





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