

∞ VOLUME 23
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ENGLISH & THEATRE
∞ ACADIA UNIVERSITY

VOICE



**Oh dear sisters
our life is not
ended yet.
We shall live!**

~Anton Chekov **три сестры**



(L. to R.) Nile Whidden with Robin Moir (Olga), Connor LaFarga with Katie Chevel (Masha) and Blake Ward with Andrea Switzer (Irina).

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AUTHORS @ ACADIA
 Anna Marie Sewell & Pam Palmater
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 Daniel Scott Tysdal
 Cornelia Hoogland
 Joan Clark
 Leanne Simpson
 Sheryl Craig
 Andrew Steeves
 Rita Wong
 Sean Michaels

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THEATRE REVIEWS

HOUSE OF BLUE LEAVES

By John Guare
 (Directed by Robert Seale)
 by Stuart Harris

Watching Robert Seale's production of John Guare's *The House of Blue Leaves* feels almost like visiting distant relatives remembered only in photographs or long-forgotten childhood memories. In this case, your place in the Denton Theatre gallery is both as an observer and as a house-guest in proximity to the dingy and nostalgic apartment set. The lead of the play gets on-stage to provide some musical entertainment in the opening moments, almost directly acknowledging the audience's role. He starts to play... and from there it slowly becomes clearer why these people are considered estranged in the first place.

The House of Blue Leaves first premiered Off-Broadway in 1971 and though it originally concerned the state of a mid-60s America, its

numerous revivals in the intervening years are telling. Seale's adaptation is transplanted from its original cultural context, lending itself more to a Canadian sensibility with elements like having Halifax stand in for New York or name-dropping Jian Ghomeshi. Its spirit, however, remains intact, and it proves that Guare's play is still thematically relevant in a time when new media reshapes our obsession with celebrity and silent injustices are given the spotlight. The production's potency lies in its human insight. It critiques our relationship with the notion of fame using characters trapped in a Lacanian nightmare, stuck in a destructive, futile chase with the myths and imagos we create for ourselves. We tell ourselves stories of the heroes we'd like to be, and some sink to unsavoury behaviour to make sure these idealizations never escape them. For instance...

Artie Shaughnessy (Chris McEwan) is an animal shelter employee by trade, but he's dead-set on making it big as a songwriter and performer in spite of a lack of talent. Living a drab existence with his wife as members of the lower-middle class, his neurotic visions of fame and fortune often get in the way of maintaining a stable relationship. Of course, that's not to say that relationship could ever be called conventional. Artie may be crazy, but his wife is Bananas with a capital B (because that's her name). Portrayed by Jenna Newcomb as ethereal with the odd bout of lucidity, she manages to be one of the saner personalities in an otherwise manic



Stephen Roberts, Chris McEwan, Morgan Wright

mélange of misfits. She's also a schizophrenic at risk of being institutionalized by Artie's sexually active but culinarily chaste downstairs mistress, Bunny Flingus (Morgan Wright), who's got plans to run away with the wannabe musician to Hollywood in their vain pursuits.

Of course, it all starts to go downhill when the Pope comes to town. It isn't until news of this esteemed arrival breaks that Artie finds himself in the company of more quirkiness. His childhood friend, Billy Einhorn (Stephen Roberts), is a famous Hollywood producer working with a deaf actress named Corrina Stroller (Malia Rogers). His brother Ronnie (Nile Whidden) has gone AWOL, hiding out in his apartment with a terrorist plot to take down His Holiness. Even a trio of debauched nuns (Ashley Wells, Andrea Switzer, and Katie Chevel) show up to worship the man in the mitre on TV.

No matter how obsessive their motives or misguided their actions, these personalities speak to a common human desire for validation. The absurdity of it all is that what makes these characters seem more human, and keeps us invested, is often the very same thing that alienates them. Sympathy is tested against ugly decisions, and this dissonance is where the darkness emerges between the periods of comic lunacy.

There's a particularly feverish pitch to the proceedings that extends beyond the development of the off-beat cast. The anachronistically retrograde set design upsets this adaptation's grounding in the modern day. The longer periods of back-and-forth

between the dramatis personae are punctuated throughout with slapstick, left-field wit, peripheral gags, and the occasional explosion. There's always uncertainty in anticipating how this comedy of blunders

will ultimately be diffused, if it gets diffused at all, and this through-line of tension keeps its drama compelling.

And for all the theatrical volume that escalates over the course of the play, *The House of Blue Leaves* knows how to end with a bang—without making so much as a peep. The grimest shock is saved for last, and it left the stands quiet enough to hear the air escaping.

Over forty years on, John Guare's hysterical creation continues to stand the test of time. In the face of distressing human flaw,

House of Blue Leaves works precisely because it gives us permission to laugh.



Jenna Newcomb

THREE SISTERS

By Anton Chekov
(Adapted and Directed
by Michael Devine)

by Mark O'Reilly

From March 9-12 & 16-19, the Acadia Theatre Company performed Anton Chekov's *Three Sisters*, first performed in Moscow in 1901. The director of this production, Michael Devine, took on the challenge of adapting the play to the modern day by shifting the setting to the 21st century, and the geographical location to Grožny, the war-torn capital of the Chechen Republic. The Russian military garrison in an outpost city remains from the original, and the three Prozorov sisters remain thousands of kilometres from their beloved Moscow.

The coherence of the adaptation to the 21st was strong and the play did feel more familiar. Chekov's dramatic themes of longing, the search for purpose and love, deception, and depression endure into our own time and resonate more on a personal level. The tension between the 19th century romantic elements and the abrasiveness of the 21st century anti-Russian city of Grožny foreshadows the unfortunate end of the characters in the play.

Although certain elements, like the conflict between the antique feeling in the Prozorov's aristocratic home and the presence of cell phones on set, were slightly jarring, the presence of such modern elements was a necessary side effect of making a modern adaptation. The use of the screen in the middle of the set, with still frame pictures coming up on screen as they were taken in the play, was surprisingly enjoyable and fit in very smoothly to the play. In contrast to this effective use of the technical tools of the 21st century—the video messages sent by Baron Tuzenbakh (played by the likable Blake Ward) before his duel—felt awkward in the context of the rest of the play. The incorporation of modern music pieces and references, with songs like Mary Costa's "Once Upon a Dream" from *Sleeping Beauty* that was played on the record player, were familiar and fun additions to the play that show how even minor elements in modern adaptations can allow a contemporary audience to relate to a play written more than a century ago.

The theatre in Denton Hall was comfortably full on both nights I attended the play and the audience's engagement created a supportive environment. The set of the production immediately caught the eye. The seating and performing areas had swapped locations; the room was the inverse of what I had become acquainted with during *The House of*

Blue Leaves (directed by Robert Seale) shows just months earlier. The cement ‘risers’, the gray-scale colour, and the lack of clutter on the set were effective in relating both the context and the theme of the play. The set, with antique and elegant furniture, largely white in colour, was useful in communicating the inherited affluence of the Prozorov family in the opening moments of the play.

that is characteristic of Chekhov’s plays was, at least in part, compensated for by an aesthetically pleasing and meaningful set.

In this play, many of the characters had fairly significant roles and contributions to the plot; therefore the production relied heavily on the performance of many actors of the Acadia Theatre Company. It is clear that the actors put in an immense amount of

This fact is impressive considering the linguistic intricacies and subtle complexities in the script of the play.

The debate over whether the play is tragic or comic has continued since it was first produced. Though the play does not contain the “one-liners, factory-made plots and cartoon-level satire” North Americans more typically associate with comedy the play does find the humour in “the awkward moments and interactions of daily human life” (Director’s Notes, Michael Devine). Although the play effectively conveyed some comedic elements, and the audience did burst out in laughter at several points, the significance of the play for me remains in the tragic end and the failure to realise any real purpose or meaning in life that was sought for by all the characters throughout the play. As the youngest sister Irina



Tuzenbakh (Blake Ward) wooing Irina (Andrea Switzer) in the Prozorov Home

Also, Devine’s adaptation placed an emphasis on the death of the Prozorov family with elements like the dusty grey feel of the set and the chalky makeup on the faces of the sisters. From this, it could be interpreted that Devine set it up so that the two years that pass in the story are a dream-like retelling of the story, where the characters slowly realize not only their own mortality but also that they might already be dead. The character Chebutykin (played by the entertaining Chris Bolton) is one of the characters who becomes the most aware of this when he says “none of this is real,” especially towards the end following his existential crisis. The lack of action on-set

work and all three of the sisters, Olga (Robin Moir), Masha (Katie Chevel) and Irina (Andrea Switzer) acted impressively well. I especially enjoyed Robin Moir’s performance as Olga as she was exceedingly consistent and committed to her role as the oldest sister. Some other central characters who stood out for me were Andrei (Stephen Roberts) and Natasha (Malia Rogers) as their performances were convincing and memorable. Also, minor castings such as Nile Whidden as Solyony and Anna van Hoof as Rode were performances I particularly appreciated. In my opinion, every actor contributed positively to the overall coherency of the production.

says: “I’ve dreamed of love, I’ve been dreaming of it for years, day and night, but my soul is like a wonderful piano which is locked and the key’s been lost.” Or, as expressed in the haunting words of Andrei, the brother of the three sisters: “every burning coal in our lives turns into an ember.”

Overall, *Three Sisters* was an impressive performance that the Acadia Theatre Company should be proud to have produced. Devine’s adaptation was thought provoking and stimulating, showing that Chekhov’s themes still resonate. The play explores the challenging quest for meaning and raises interesting questions about the relationship between the past, the present and the future.



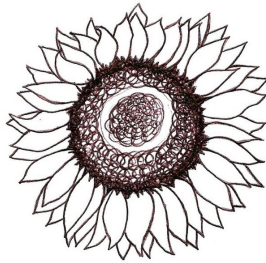
MINIFEST 2016

by Sarah Bishop

Once again, Acadia Theatre Company presented Minifest. This year was filled with awesome plays that were quite entertaining and surprising. The evening started out with *A Long Trip*, a play that will certainly stand the test of time. It opens with an older couple, in which the man is trying to get the woman to remember their first kiss many years ago. The story itself is accompanied by the flashback of their first kiss. Both the flashback and the conversation of the couple end with a tragic goodbye of the woman leaving for a long trip.

The second play, *Enter Daisy Buchanan*, was a breath of fresh air inspired by the American classic, *The Great Gatsby*. We see actress Katie Chevel portraying Zelda Fitzgerald and while showing her insanity, we also get to see some the fictional relationship between F. Scott and Zelda, without actually seeing Scott himself. Maddi Mackinnon played Daisy Buchanan, the fictional embodiment of the American dream, who enters into Zelda's insanity most likely through a dream and tells the story of Daisy and Gatsby. This story follows the controversy over who really wrote *The Great Gatsby*.

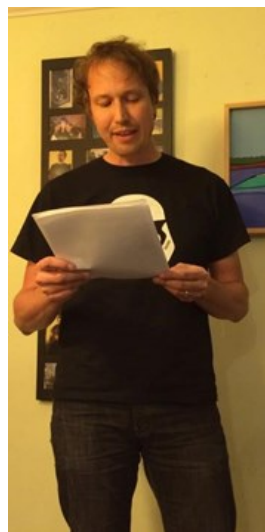
A New Lease was certainly different from the first two plays, mainly because there was little set design physically on stage but lots that was built up in our imagination. I think this play took the most audience participation, because someone was pulled from the audience as a special guest (and then stuffed into the imaginary trunk of their car) and the audience was asked to imagine the set. I liked the fact that there isn't any real reality but just different imaginations of the characters. Although this was a dizzying play, it was light and enjoyable.



The play *Sunflower*, directed by Zachery Craig, was a great piece that directed attention to the ideas of Oscar Wilde's homosexuality with his companion told through the eyes of a young girl finding old documents and shown through Wilde's companion's own thoughts and actions. This was a great way to honor Wilde and also show the struggles of homosexuality at the time.

After *Sunflower's* bitter-sweet ending the audience was thrown into a religiously good time with the play *Rise and Fall*. This is all about Father Gerard, a priest who when travelling saved himself from a plane crash and landed in a gay club where he was given ecstasy and was changed forever. Father Gerard, played by Rian Mizzi, begins knocking on a stranger's door and tells his revelation. Frima (Anna Vanhoof), the kind stranger, discovers who she is along with Father Gerard and they begin their new lives, living for themselves.

After *Rise and Fall*, the audience was transported into a darker realm of the theatre, into *Fish Tank*. We were asked to look at Emma (Zoe Swinimer) and Tim's (Colin McGuire) broken fish tank that they were burying in the back yard. However, it wasn't the broken fish tank that was truly the problem but the devastation of losing a child and the relationship coming undone because of it. This play was unlike the others from Minifest, focusing on a real moment that can happen and not on fiction or other worlds of reality. It was intense and very uncomfortable. The audience was sitting in on one of the worst fights a couple could have. However, it was real and somber, a great way to end this year's Minifest that was full of possible realities for everyone.



Participants were encouraged to dress up, and many donned their most terrifying and creative costumes. Some particularly clever costumes were Faculty Advisor Dr. Jon Saklofske's "Here's Johnny" costume based on *The Shining*, and AES President Blake LeBlanc's disguise as the Fantastic Mr. Fox.

Throughout the evening, attendees shared eerie stories to get into the

Halloween spirit. Some literary highlights of the evening included a few creepy two-line stories, Stephen King's "The Road Virus Heads North," and a retelling of urban legends such as "The Hook" and "The Boyfriend's Death"/ "The Mad Axeman."

The stories were followed up by terrifyingly themed charades to finish off the evening. At the end of the night, the door prize of a Murder Mystery party game was awarded to AES member Stuart Harris. The AES is looking forward to more goosebumps and chills at next year's Halloween event and thanks everyone for coming out to make this event a thrilling success.

ACADIA ENGLISH SOCIETY SOCIAL EVENTS

BAD POETRY NIGHT *by Allison MacDougall*

The Acadia English Society started off this year with a very successful Bad Poetry Night. The event was well attended as students, alumni, and faculty crowded into TAN Coffee to hear a selection of some of Acadia's best bad poetry. Dreadful yet hilarious pieces of prose, poetry, and puns were read to the cheers and jeers of a delighted and disgusted audience.

Some highlights were dramatic readings of 90's hit music, embarrassingly entertaining childhood writings, and the standout piece "A Mysterious Hunk." The event was met with enthusiasm and was unanimously enjoyed by all.

(above L. to R.)

Stuart Harris, Mercedes Peters, and Jon Saklofske.

HALLOWEEN PARTY *by Morgan Geauvreau*

Every year, the Acadia English Society hosts a Halloween Party to celebrate all things ghostly and ghoulish. In past years, the event has taken place at Paddy's Pub in Wolfville. This year, the AES decided to change things up a bit, and instead hosted the party on October 22 in the Quiet Reading Room of the Vaughan Memorial Library that was decorated with creepy tombstones and jack-o-lantern lights; guests to the event were greeted with tasty treats and a chance to walk away with a Murder Mystery party game, donated by Christine Kendrick, as the door prize.



WORDS ON TAP 2016

by Morgan Geauvreau
and Georgia Woolaver

The Acadia English Society was delighted to host Words on Tap (formerly Poetry on Tap) on April 8th in the Michener Lounge.

In order to more accurately describe the variety of contributions encouraged from presenters, the AES executive decided to rename the evening “Words on Tap.” Typically hosted during the last few weeks of the winter semester, Words on Tap is a way of celebrating the creative talents of our students and faculty. The evening was filled with performances by a number of presenters from a variety of disciplines including: English, Biology, and Education. The event was a resounding success and had a high turnout from students and faculty.

As in past years, AES was thrilled to share the evening with the launch of *estuary*’s print edition for 2015-2016. On behalf of *estuary*, Wanda Campbell thanked Andrea MacMurtry for her hard work and dedication to making the creative arts

magazine a success over the last few years.

The evening began with a laugh as members of the audience guessed the original titles of famous poetic works in limerick form, presented by

Many of the English department faculty were able to attend this year, and contributed to the evening by reading their own work, or some of their favourite pieces.

Particular highlights of the evening were engaging presentations by Wanda Campbell and Andrea Schwenke Wyile. Other special performances included a poem recited from memory by Meredith MacEachern, and a poem composed by Jon Saklofske dedicated to Hans Solo in the style of Keat’s “Ode to a Grecian Urn.” The Acadia English Society would like to thank all presenters and



Maddie Fray presenting

Amy Parkes. This game was followed by a special performance from English Society Executive members Sarah Bishop, Stuart Harris, and Mercedes Peters, who performed an entertaining lip-sync of “Word Crimes” by Weird Al Yankovic.

attendees for their participation in this year’s Words on Tap. We appreciate your support and look forward to seeing you next year.



estuary

by Andrea MacMurtry
Editor-in-Chief



estuary cover photograph by Nicole Havers

For my final year at Acadia, and on the *estuary* board, I want to reflect and give thanks to all of those who have helped support the fine arts at Acadia over the year. This town is blessed to have such beautiful areas to inspire art. University itself has so many changes and choices it forces you to make, and those emotions, good or bad, can encourage one to lift a pen to paper and let it out. Living on a hill, being able to look out at the places around you and the people who shaped you can be a startling thought when you're at a place encouraging you to think, so I want you all to take a pause and think about where you have come from, now and again, and see how far you've come.

A huge thank you goes out to Wanda Campbell, who is a fantastic professor and a great listener to any questions, and who still managed to find the time to send people with submissions towards *estuary*. To Acadia University and the Student Union for their continued support of our magazine, thank you as well. To my editorial board, as many of us are graduating this year, I wish you well in all your endeavors and thank

you for all the hard work you put into *estuary* during your time here. To the ones who will continue on with *estuary* or join it in the future, I wish you all the best, and hope that *estuary* continues to be a creative outlet for all artists at this school. Finally, I send a giant thank you to the creative minds at Acadia University and the community that continues to submit, read, and support *estuary*.

We accept submissions of creative writing, visual art, and original music (mp3), emailed to estuary@acadiau.ca

2016 ANNUAL ATLANTIC UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH CONFERENCE



Davita DesRoches and Trevor Barton-Barto presented at the 2016 Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference, on Saturday March 19, 2016 at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. Davita's paper "Exhuming Skeletons and Rewriting the Margins in *George & Rue* and *The Secret River*" and Trevor's paper "F*** Marriage: Robinson's Immortal Critique" were both well received.

DARREN GREER

by Rachael Laritz

In this year's One Book Nova Scotia book club, *Just Beneath My Skin* by Darren Greer was selected. One Book Nova Scotia is an initiative in which Nova Scotian librarians decide on one single book by a living Canadian author that members will read for the year. The author of the chosen book is required to give ten readings across the province.

Unfortunately, only four people showed up for Greer when he came to present in the Quiet Reading Room at Acadia's Vaughan Library this October 29th, and none of them had actually read the book. Therefore, it was primarily the academic librarians who stimulated the discussion, with genuine questions for him about its content. One criterion for One Book Nova Scotia is that the novel must appeal to a broad range of adult readers of varying ages, literacy levels, and life experiences. As it seemed like each librarian provided an example from a personal life experience to back up their questions, it is evident that Greer's book met this criterion successfully.

Greer said that the initial brainstorming of ideas for the novel took many years, because he was never able to piece together a complete story. But then, one night, as he was going to bed, the entire novel flashed through his mind. The only thing left to do was write it! He was so excited. To conclude the presentation, half the audience got a free copy of Greer's novel *Just Beneath My Skin*.



∞ AUTHORS @ ACADIA ∞

ANNA MARIE SEWELL & PAM PALMATER

by Rachael Laritz

On Tuesday, September 22, in the KC Irving Environmental Science Centre auditorium, Anna Marie Sewell kicked off Acadia's first *Authors @ Acadia* Poetry Reading and Performance of the year. Being part of the Mawio'mi festival, her poetry readings covered Aboriginal themes. Her performance combined music with poetry as she played guitar to the melodies in which she sang her poems.

Sewell dedicated her first poem of the evening to her great great grandfather, and all the other Mi'kmaq men of his time who built Boston and New York's skyscrapers: "I like to think that what kept these men grounded were the good women in their homes, who brought them back to Earth". The men built the future--and lives for their families.

'Mimico', Sewell's third poem, explored the Mimico town history (near Toronto). In Ojibwe (a Mi'kmaq language), 'mimico' means 'passenger pigeons'. Once a very common bird species, large flocks of passenger pigeons would turn the whole sky black while

passing through towns. Mi'kmaq chiefs would gather in Mimico to eat gigantic feasts during this time. However, since 1887, Mimico Station in Toronto has been a prison center for male inmates.

Later, Sewell read 'Poem of Silence'. Apparently, Margaret Atwood dedicated 11 pages of the *Norton Anthology of Canadian Poetry* to Duncan Campbell Scott. Sewell complained that Atwood's next book should leave 11 pages

empty (Scott was not only a poet but a deputy superintendent of the Department of Indian



Hummingbird in A Minor
~Quentin Syliboy



affairs, promoting assimilation of First Nations people). This would acknowledge equally talented poets who have lacked the same chances to be discovered, specifically, First Nations damaged by residential schools.

While performing, Sewell played slideshows of her sister's landscape artwork. Sewell reminded us that land carries our lives and histories: "nature is calling out to us to make different, better choices in how we treat the Earth."

At 7pm, Dr. Pam Palmater entered the scene. Palmater presented a First Nations approach to global warming. If we are to avoid catastrophic climate change in our lifetime, 99% of oil in the tar sands has to stay in the ground. Production has to stop by 2020 if we are going to stop increasing the Earth's temperature by 2%. If Alberta were a country, it would be the country with the highest greenhouse gas emissions in the world. The Inuit and First Nations have been worried about Canada's resources for years, but the government and media have sheltered the rest of Canadians. 130 First

Nations have boil-water advisories, and have experienced declines in their fish stocks and other natural resources.

However, these resources all come from the same place. Therefore, all Canadians will soon face similar problems. If Canadians want to stop global warming, they will have to work together with First Nations, and force the government to take better action. First Nations know they need to fight to save Canada's resources, and the rest of Canadians have the population, power, and wealth to help First Nations put their plans in action. But the first step, she added, was not to vote for Harper.

DAN MACCORMACK

by Micah Carruthers

Not an author in the traditional sense, Dan MacCormack came to Acadia on September 25 to present his ten songs inspired by David Adams Richards novels. A Halifax-bred songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and pioneer of creative outlets, MacCormack said that although he has been complimented on his unique approach to using novels as inspiration for songs, it in fact isn't unique at all. The collision between literature and music has existed for centuries from ballads inspired by classic tales to Led Zeppelin styling "Stairway To Heaven" after *Lord of the Rings*. In this way, literature and music have a complicated relationship: they are

constantly influencing one another, and neither seems to be able to exist without having taken from the other.

Therefore, it's no wonder MacCormack got the idea to create an album that paid homage to his favourite writer, Dave Richards. But why is Richards his favourite? MacCormack explains the origin of his intense connection to Richards' novels:

"Richards does in his novels what the music traditions I love have always done; he finds beauty, peace, and meaning in the lives of ordinary, and often poor, people." Although Richards has fifteen novels published,

MacCormack only wrote ten songs. But that is no small feat. His album *Symphony of Ghosts*, released in October 2016, took five years to create, as each song was inspired by a different novel and each novel had a distinctive concept to capture. "I honestly didn't think I'd get past six," he admitted. Richards' books were so full, juxtaposing joy with intrigue and all

"The water of our great river makes us disappear—we become at twilight in the babble of water a symphony of ghosts."

~David Adams Richards

connecting to historically rich backgrounds—creating a song that fully reflected the breadth of his novels posed a much larger issue than MacCormack initially expected.


He had decided to choose a major theme from each novel that he felt "struck a chord, pun intended." But even that was a massive endeavor. For example, the song "Walk the Line" was so difficult to pin down because he didn't want to risk being "so specific without limiting the audience and alienating anyone." His intended audience is Maritime, with each song having a different flavour to represent different regions. For example, "Good Friday" took a lot of tweaking before MacCormack was satisfied, as he wanted it to sound like "you were deep in the northern New Brunswick woods." And Richards' reaction to the homage? MacCormack proudly stated that Richards absolutely loved the album, which was a relief as anything other than that would have been pretty devastating—he had invested five years of his life in the album. However, it was well worth the effort as not only has MacCormack received a lot of press from his use of Richards as a muse, he has also picked up many of Richards' fans as well as his inspiration himself.



icehouse poetry

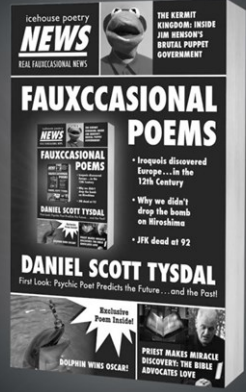
NEWS

REAL FAUXCCASIONAL NEWS



**THE KERMIT
KINGDOM: INSIDE
JIM HENSON'S
BRUTAL PUPPET
GOVERNMENT**

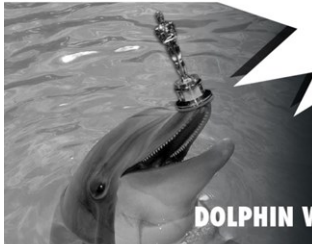
FAUXCCASIONAL POEMS



- Iroquois discovered Europe...in the 12th Century
- Why we didn't drop the bomb on Hiroshima
- JFK dead at 92


DANIEL SCOTT TYSDAL

First Look: Psychic Poet Predicts the Future...and the Past!



**Exclusive
Poem Inside!**

DOLPHIN WINS OSCAR!



**PRIEST MAKES MIRACLE
DISCOVERY: THE BIBLE
ADVOCATES LOVE**

DANIEL SCOTT TYSDAL

by Rachael Laritz

On October 6 in the Quiet Reading Room in the Acadia Library, Daniel Scott Tysdal came to perform and talk about some of his poems from his collection called *Fauxccasional Poems*. His poem “the Oath of Isis” consisted of a group performance of us all reading along with him from photocopies of the poem he had passed around. As usual, the Box of Delights Bookstore staff was at the back of the room with copies of *Fauxccasional Poems* for people to buy afterwards. This became handy for Tysdal when he realized he had not printed off enough copies of the poem for the large audience that came to see him: “Gosh, can I please borrow some of these?!” While Tysdal meant “Isis” in this sense to refer to a peacekeeping Egyptian goddess rather than the ISIS conflicts we have been hearing a lot about in the news, it was evident while reading the poem that the role of the goddess here is to go back in time and stabilize world peace so that future conflict would never arise.

Poems like this constitute the rest of Tysdal’s book. He takes a catastrophe that has occurred in the world, such as the bombing of Hiroshima, and writes a poem that talks about hope and reconciliation—in this case, he imagines that it was decided “not” to drop the bomb. In the poem about the Hiroshima bomb, Tysdal tried to convey the idea of peace between the East and the West by combining the Eastern Haiku with the Western sonnet in a harmonic way.

The Oath of Isis

Composed on the occasion of the Goddess Isis, her forces, and her followers forming a nation state in Northern Iraq on June 29, 2014.

I, [your name], being in the glorious presence of you, the Goddess Isis, voluntarily declare that I will work to preserve and expand your nation and your gift of love and love of life. With your guidance, I will be healer of the sick, liberator of slaves, and enricher of the poor. My plea to all will be: build what you must build. I will gather the dead, scattered parts of our torn love and lift a new body, living and whole. I will learn the sun’s secret name. In your throne seated, I will serve as a throne for all. I vow that we will prevail not by numbers, nor equipment, nor weapons, nor wealth, but rather by your bounty, through your creed alone. I will speak that secret name and with the sun’s power I will shine.

CORNELIA HOOGLAND

by Georgia Woolaver

On the evening of October 21, Authors@Acadia welcomed author Cornelia Hoogland. The presentation included readings from her collection of fairy tale poems *Woods Wolf Girl*, a reading of an excerpt from her play *Red*, and a video clip from a live performance of the play. I arrived about 15 minutes early, and was glad to find a seat available as the room was already quite full. The audience was a mixture of Acadia faculty, interested community members, and Acadia students. The author was introduced by Acadia professor Dr. Andrea Schwenke Wyle, after which Hoogland took the floor with a short reading. In her discussion about the study and importance of fairy tales, Hoogland makes a case for real life lessons contained within many fairy tales, pointing out that fairy tales themselves are very old and transcend culture. When reading fairy tales such as "Little Red Riding Hood," the reader is encouraged to ask questions such as "what and who are really dangerous?" and "what should we fear?" These questions encourage critical thinking and caution in a world where things are not always as they seem.

Hoogland's work is also related to the Walking With Our Sisters movement, and the REDress Project, both of which are art projects dedicated to raising awareness about missing and murdered aboriginal women. In the multitude of different interpretations of the Little Red Riding Hood story available, Hoogland reminds us "there is always a

symbolically asking the question "where are the women? What happened?" In the play *Red*, the background set is comprised of seventy-five men's suits hung in a similar way to the dresses; the subtle movement of the empty suits powerfully contributes to the foreboding atmosphere of the scene.

After some readings and viewing a clip from a performance of *Red*, the author asked some questions of the audience. Participation was thorough and enthusiastic from many members of the audience. When asked about what inspired her work related to Little Red Riding Hood, Hoogland replied "every child has one book obsession, guess what mine was? I started with one poem, which started with the line: The girl walked into the woods." Hoogland relates Little Red Riding Hood to a coming of age story as well, as "a long journey Little Red took to go from girl



wolf; the girl is always eaten." Given the age of fairy tales, and the consistency of the young woman as victim, Hoogland suggests that Little Red Riding Hood can be considered to be an early representation of missing and murdered women. Also related to The REDress Project is the set dressing for Hoogland's play, *Red*. The REDress Project consists of an exhibit of several red dresses hung up on clothes hangers, as if waiting to be worn,

to woman". The presentation ended with Hoogland reading two of her newer poems, and then opening the floor to questions. She invited members of the audience to stay after the presentation to speak with her about any further ideas or questions they might have, an offer which was enthusiastically accepted by many members of the audience. Overall, this was a very enjoyable and engaging presentation from an interesting and talented Canadian author.



JOAN CLARK

by Rachael Laritz

On Tuesday, October 27, Joan Clark read passages from her book *The Birthday Lunch* in the KCIC auditorium. It was soon after her husband died that she started to write the book, drawing from her experience of grief for him in order to write about grief experienced by her fictional characters. Now that four years have passed, the book is finally finished and was published this summer. Clark used Sussex, New Brunswick as the setting of the story. During the talk, Clark told us that to use a very specific, non-fictional setting for one's novel results in an added pressure to make sure that every detail about the town is accurate. Therefore, she would often be driving an hour and a half to walk down the streets of Sussex to fill in any missing pieces. Clark adds that while many people have been convinced that she based some of her characters on real people they knew in Sussex, she claims to have made them all up! This fictionalizing also includes her use of her husband as a source. While it was certainly her husband's death that gave her the inspiration to write

a novel revolving around grief, the characters experience grief in different ways than she did. Furthermore, she did not want to depict a slow death that drags on for three hundred pages. Rather, Clark said she wanted to keep the death as tight as possible.

LEANNE SIMPSON

by Rachael Laritz

On October 30, Leanne Simpson read from *Island of Decolonial Love*. It was her second presentation at Acadia in two days. The previous night she had given a well-attended speech about "decolonizing the academy." Tonight she read from stories that incorporate her indigenous ancestral origins with the Western culture in which her family and fellow indigenous people also belong, due to colonization. In her stories, she writes in English, with occasional First Nation words appearing here and there. While she uses the word "decolonial" in the title of her collection, the relationship to colonization is complex, as she and many other indigenous people have grown up with both Western culture and indigenous culture. Therefore, to strip indigenous people from the part of Western culture that they belong to would be to take away a part of their cultural identity. Simpson's collection therefore raises the controversial debate about how indigenous people, as well as other colonized groups, should write poetry and literature that represents themselves and their culture. Should they write in their own language, so that members of their culture can understand and appreciate it, or should they write in

English and be heard by everyone, despite the fact that they are writing in the language of the colonizers? Simpson felt that this particular presentation out of the week was especially meaningful to her, as tonight her family was there in the audience to watch her. One of the spoken word pieces that she played on the projector for us was a short movie of herself interacting with her little girl out in nature on a peaceful sunny day. The absence of First Nation words within her narration of the video, along with her wistful humming recorded in the background, helped convey sadness towards the dilemma felt by many indigenous people as to how they should best raise their kids within the colonized land in which they live.





SHERYL CRAIG

by Staff

On November 16, at the KCIC, I had the pleasure of listening to Dr. Sheryl Craig's talk, "Jane Austen and The Divorce Bill."

Craig's discussion revealed how the meaning of literary texts are enriched when explored in light of social and political backgrounds. In fact, Craig's work as a whole focuses on just such historical contexts. Her new book *Jane Austen and the State of the Nation* (Palgrave 2015), looks at the world that Jane Austen inhabited, including the role of new tax laws, the stability (or instability) of the banking system, wars, and political affiliations. She shows how the turmoil of the time informs many of Austen's literary themes (such as her obsession with money). Over all, a well-presented, very informative talk!

ANDREW STEEVES

by Amy Parkes

A frigid winter Tuesday night might not seem like the most auspicious beginning, but this semester's run of Authors @ Acadia opened with great evidence to the contrary. The auditorium space of the KC Irving Centre was comfortably crowded, the seats full of faces I recognised. Professors from all and sundry departments; a baker's dozen of Acadia students, both by singletons and pairs; my own neighbours in the portion of the audience without direct ties to the university. Hilary, from the Box of Delights Bookstore on Main Street; the quiet elder gentleman I always catch sight of in the

summer, when the cafés put chairs out in the sun. In short, exactly the kind of company I anticipated to keep, our thick winter coats spilling over the backs and arms of the few empty seats left.

And, patient and unassuming, was Andrew Steeves—the man of the evening. I had a chance to talk to Andrew before he spoke: he was incredibly kind, personable, and enthusiastic about his profession. And *profession* is surely the best word for what he does—there is nothing so exquisite as the care he takes in his work. In heavy boots and thick plaid and tidy workman's glasses,

Andrew was the image of a maker: one who creates. He seemed ceaselessly made of stories. Totally modest in the telling, Andrew touched the bridge of his nose, the frame of his glasses. He was benignly distracted as he read to us, involved much more deeply in the process of sharing his art.

Here are the bones of his approach: "There is nothing so important," Andrew said, "as the moment and your awareness standing in it." At times when he finds himself losing touch, he goes into the woods behind his home. He compared wandering the stacks to wandering between trees; Andrew has a gift for earth-based metaphors. As I listened to him, it was clear he trusts the natural, the local, and the organic. His philosophy was astute in its natural simplicity. "Deep regard," he explained. There was nothing more important to him than "the

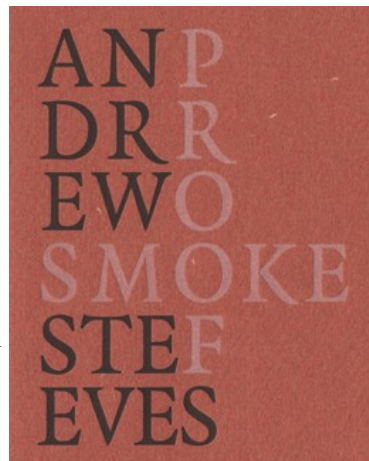
simple act of telling the truth."

This was the take-away message for writers, readers, and publishers alike: real, physical books tell the truth. Beyond that, this little patriotic press that has survived like a weed, pushing despite its smallness, was what maintained the truth-telling. As he answered our questions, there was a ribbon that linked all of

Andrew's thoughts. The grassroots of publishing, sustainability, and creativity were "at the very heart of what the country really needs." Andrew was there, too. At the dovetail between poet and publisher was, he said, the act of

typography. Currently in the process of developing his own font, Andrew was inspired by the letters he saw here, especially in the Old Hortonville Cemetery. "Poems hold our ability to tell the truth," Andrew said. As I listened to his cadence and his gentle enthusiasm, it was impossible to miss the implicit caveat: there was poetry in publishing.

As the evening came to a close, I noticed that he held his book like I remember my father holding a book. My father, with his fifth-grade education, quite literally read everything he could put his hands on. There was something similarly sacred in Andrew's demeanour toward his craft, an understanding that he was part of something so much bigger than himself, something that extended even farther than all of us who have a Gaspereau Press book on our shelves.



RITA WONG

On Februaury 10, poet Rita Wong was to have read from her latest collect *Undercurrents* and presented on the poetics of water, but unfortunately, it was water in the vicious form of a blizzard that kept her away from Acadia.



DECLARATION OF INTENT by RITA WONG

let the colonial borders be seen for the pretensions that they are
i hereby honour what the flow of water teaches us
the beauty of enough, the path of peace to be savoured
before the extremes of drought and flood overwhelm the careless
water is a sacred bond, embedded in our plump, moist cells
in our breaths that transpire to return to the clouds that gave us life through rain
in the rivers & aquifers that we & our neighbours drink
in the oceans that our foremothers came from
a watershed teaches not only humbleness but climate fluency
the languages we need to interpret the sea's rising voice
water connects us to salmon & cedar, whales & workers
its currents bearing the plastic from our fridges & closets
a gyre of karma recirculates, burgeoning body burden
i hereby invoke fluid wisdom to guide us through the toxic muck
i will apprentice myself to creeks & tributaries, groundwater & glaciers
listen for the salty pulse within, the blood that recognizes marine ancestry
in its chemical composition & intuitive pull
i will learn through immersion, flotation & transformation
as water expands & contracts, i will fit myself to its ever-changing dimensions
molecular & spectacular, water will return what we give it, be that
arrogance & poison, reverence & light, ambivalence & respect
let our societies be revived as watersheds



SEAN MICHAELS

by staff

On March 22, Acadia was treated to a reading by Sean Michaels, music journalist and author of the Nova Scotia Bank Giller Prize winning debut novel, *Us Conductors*. He began by introducing the Russian inventor, scientist, and spy Leon Theremin upon whom his own character Lev Theremen is based. He later explained that though he incorporated many factual details, he allowed himself to move beyond biography and hagiography by conjuring fictional details, like making his character Lev an expert in karate.

He also explained Theremin's most famous invention, the electronic instrument named for him that consists of a box of electronics with vertical and horizontal antennae which emit electrical fields. This very difficult musical instrument which, as far as we know, is the only one you play without touching, is played by waving one's hands between the two antennae to modulate pitch and volume by disrupting the electrical fields.

Michaels encouraged the audience to remember how revolutionary such an instrument would have been long before the electric guitar or the synthesizer or the million and one electronic beeps and signals which now

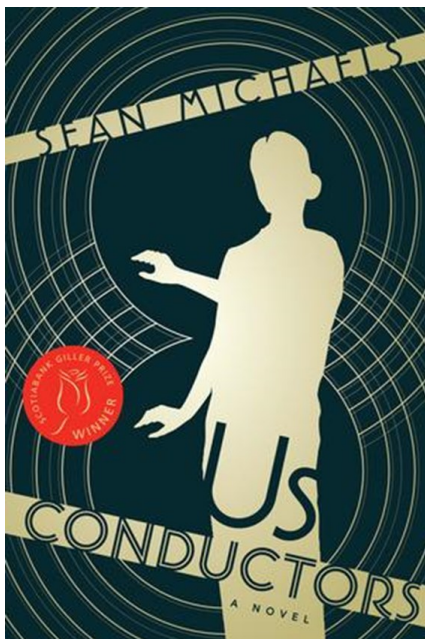
govern our days. In the age of Lenin's Russia, people believed this instrument would revolutionize music the way Edison's bulb had revolutionized lighting, or the electric stove had revolutionized cooking. As he explained, "Most musical instruments require their players to strum, push or blow into something. They require that sticks strike skins or horsehair strokes strings. Only the theremin seems to rely on nothing more than its player's presence or absence. Only the theremin appears to run on hope."

He went on to read three sections from the book, and in each section asked the audience

movement: the *dzeooo* sound of a theremin being switched on, and a drum beat to accompany a scene of dancing in a Manhattan speak-easy between Lev and Clara, who became the most renowned thereminist of all time. And rather than end the reading with a dark scene from the gulag which he had visited in research for the novel and where Theremin was eventually imprisoned, he chose instead a lighter scene from Lev's childhood. Everyone in the audience was encouraged to hold up an imaginary vacuum tube like it was a wine glass, a conch shell, or an emerald, and see it begin to glow when in contact with the electric field of overhanging copper wires.

The reading concluded with a lively and engaging question-and-answer session in which Michaels was asked about the decorum of using historical characters in a fictional work and how far is too far when it comes to invention. He responded that an author has the responsibility to think hard about this question, and use the bits and pieces of history to make something new, while trying not to hurt anyone. When asked about where one goes after winning the prestigious Giller

Prize with a debut novel, he talked candidly about all the hard work and fear and hope that goes into a writing project, and how this important stamp of approval had given him the freedom to write without worry at least for the time being.



He went on to explain that since he had always been drawn to magic realism, his next project would be set in the present with elements of the fantastical, including one of those weird little family

run grocery stores where the olives are next to the lingerie, and the dogfood is next to the frozen peas. He also talked about the influence of the contemporary music scene on his chapter headings and Theremin's other inventions, some of which succeeded and some of which did not, including the terpsitone, an electrical stage in which the music is created by a dancer's movements.

As to whether he himself plays the theremin, he responded that he has two in his possession but, as much as his publicist would love it, he doesn't bring them along to readings because they are insanely difficult to play well, and part of the goal of the book was to redeem the theremin from its kitschy extraterrestrial sci-fi reputation to an instrument of true charm. Instead he played a recording to demonstrate the ethereal beauty of the high notes that sound very much like an accomplished opera singer. According to Michaels, it is an instrument that requires us to wonder, as we stand before it with arms upheld, if we are conducting the music, or if the music is conducting us?

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Are you interested in participating in the English Society or *Voice 4* or *estuary*? Get in touch with The Department.

