

Shaw Guild Newsletter – February 2021

Message from the President, Alan Walker



Greetings Everybody,

This past week I received an email from Volunteer Canada, the registered charity that provides national leadership and expertise on Volunteerism, to increase the participation, quality and diversity of volunteer experiences.

Although it may be early to discuss this, the email introduced me to their theme for this year's National Volunteer Week, April 18th – 24th, that being **Value of One, The Power of Many**. To quote them, this reflects "the awe-inspiring acts of kindness by millions of individuals and the magic that happens when we work together towards a common purpose".

"This past year, we have seen people supporting family, friends, neighbours, and strangers, people standing up to systemic racism, and people sharing insights on how to create a more just and equitable society. We recognize the value of the caring and compassion that each one has shown another, and we recognize the power of people, organizations, and sectors working together."

This is particularly apropos of Guild members; whilst we may not yet be able to "perform" for Shaw, in our own ways we have still found time to support the local community. As examples we only need look to the Guild's leadership on the LOT O' NOTL project and the nascent Town Ambassador Program.

The formulation of our IDEA Team, chaired by Susan MacDonald, will be one way to expand our learnings on racism, and how we how best we might stand up to it.

All of this is fresh in my mind having recently read the Report to the Executive Committee, LOT O' NOTL project, and it included not only lessons learned to make it even better (if that is even possible) but it also detailed "rave" reviews given by customers, merchants and the Shaw. Kudos to Shaw actor, and Guild friend, Emily Lukasik, and to the Guild Team who made this such a success.

As you are aware, the EC is continually looking to provide activities and events for Guild Members whilst we endure the current lockdown. In this, Shaw has been a very generous partner, and in recognition of that I extend my gratitude to them.

Which brings me, in conclusion to send a big **"Thank You"** to all of you who have renewed your Guild membership.

Shaw Guild Membership Renewal - Thank you for your faith and hope!

To date, over 200 Shaw Guild volunteers have renewed their fees for 2021, a huge testament to how much we believe in the future of the Shaw and the importance of the human connection that the Shaw — and the Shaw Guild — embody.



Membership fees help us with necessary operating expenses and allow us to continue to offer you as many experiences as we can before the season begins (and we do believe it will begin in some form this year) and we can finally do what we are all waiting for: get out and volunteer!

We have a number of online events planned for Guild volunteers in the months ahead. On February 11, Shaw actor Jenny Wright will sit down with Brenda Weafer for an interesting chat (details in next article). Also, you may have already signed up for Friends Gym with Alexis Milligan on Tuesday mornings, which is now being extended to Guild volunteers. That's just a

start. Watch for more exciting news on Guild exclusives soon.

If you haven't already renewed for 2021, we hope you will continue to be part of the Guild. There are two simple ways to submit your \$20 annual fee:

E-transfer: Transfer your payment online to the Shaw Guild and the email address shawguildmembership@gmail.com

Once your transfer is complete, email Membership Chair Susan MacDonald with the answer to your security question at susan.e.macdonald@me.com

Mail: Send a cheque (please include name(s) of those renewing) payable to Shaw Guild, to:
Shaw Guild Renewal, P.O. Box 83, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, L0S 1J0

February 11 at 4pm - First Shaw Guild Event of 2021 presents "A Day in the Life of a Shaw Actor"



Join us as we have an in-depth chat with Jenny L. Wright, a longtime member of the Shaw Company. Jenny will talk to us about what it is like to be a part of the Company – and particularly how she prepares for a day mid-season where she might be in two productions on the same day – possibly in different theatres!

Tune in **Thursday, February 11th at 4 pm** for an interesting conversation with a wonderful and talented actor! Should you have questions for Jenny you can enter them in the YouTube chat during the talk, and we will address them if we are able to.

Access the live broadcast (and the recording afterward) at youtube.com/watch?v=F0i4nlffn1I

WHAT'S COMING UP?

They may look different this year, but the Activities Team has been hard at work coming up with interesting and informative activities for members.

As of the beginning of February, Shaw Guild members have been able to join Shaw Movement Director **Alexis Milligan** in her Tuesday morning Gym classes. This past week, 31 folks participated with Alexis virtually for a fun and energetic fitness session. I know from personal experience that this has quickly

become the highlight of my week! For Guild Members only. You can get more information by sending an email to activities@shawguild.ca.

As you can see from the notice above, we are looking forward to our chat with **Jenny Wright** on February 11th. On March 11th, Guild President **Alan Walker** will sit down with Artistic Director **Tim Carroll** for a session called "TC Unplugged!" This will be done over ZOOM, and TC will take questions from the audience (you!) live.

On Thursday, March 25th, instead of our usual visit to the Scene Shop, we will get to check in virtually with **Lesslie Tunmer**, Head of Scenic Construction, and **David Edwards**, Head Stage Carpenter, for "Setting the Stage" - a behind-the-scenes look at how sets go from paper, to construction to actually being used in the Festival Theatre. Watch out for a glimpse into some backstage magic!

The annual "Cheers to Volunteers" event is happening on April 22 at 11am, celebrating all of you who contribute your gracious gift of time and enthusiasm to the Guild and the Shaw Festival! **Tim Jennings** and **TC** will join us for "What's the Buzz"? - an informal look at what is going on at the Shaw. They will take questions from the live audience.

As you can see, there are lots of ways to stay informed and entertained for the next few months! Watch your email for links and times as these events approach. We are excited about them, and hope you are as well!

Stay safe and warm everyone - see you on the "small screen"!

Brenda Weafer, Activities Chair.

Linden Allée upgrade!



When patrons return to The Shaw in 2021, they will be treated to a new fully-shaded gathering place beneath the trees in the tranquil Linden Allée. Courtesy of a successful Trillium Grant application by Shaw, local landscaping company Tree Amigos was contracted to design and install a stunning interlock "avenue" running the full length of the Allée.

The new "grand walkway" will be fully lit to enhance ambiance and safety for those attending an evening performance. A most welcome addition, it is yours to discover and enjoy!

Paddy Parr, Shaw Gardens Chair

February is Black History Month: A Short History of Black Theatre in Canada

Black theatre in Canada has a presence dating back to 1849 and perhaps further. From the earliest days of the Underground Railroad movement, Black Canadians have aspired to careers in the performing arts. Like most artists, their struggle has not been an easy one, but the legacy of their contribution endures.

Among the earliest recorded Black theatrical performances in Canada were those by the **Toronto Coloured Young Men's Amateur Theatrical Society**. An advertisement in the Toronto Mirror (9 February 1849) noted that the group would perform for three nights on 20, 21 and 22 February, and they would present "Venice Preserved by Thomas Otway" (1652-1685), along with selected scenes from Shakespeare.

It is interesting to note during this same period the type of theatrical activity the Black community was fighting vehemently against. On four separate occasions during the 1840s, members of the Black community petitioned to restrict the presentation of the crude and vulgar travelling minstrel shows that came up from the US and toured widely in Canada. Among the most notorious performances during this period was Jumping Jim Crow, a song and dance done in blackface by white minstrel performer Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice.

Although Black theatrical organizations seem to be few and far between in this early period, several Black Canadians excelled in theatre and the field of popular entertainment during the last half of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century. One such example is Canadian-born actor Richard B. Harrison who was born in Ontario in 1864, the son of fugitive slaves who had fled the United States. Others included Sheldon Brooks, a musician/composer, best remembered for the song "Some of These Days" that made 'Red Hot Mama' Sophie Tucker famous.

The 1920s and 30s ushered in numerous forms of artistic growth and expression in the Black community. Perhaps what could be called the first truly professional Black Theatre in Canada is [The Negro Theatre Guild](#), which emerged in Montreal in the early 1940s. It continued for over three decades.



In the late 1960s and early 1970s Black theatre began to flourish across Canada. The wave of West Indian immigration that began in the mid-60s brought new artistic and cultural influences that soon blended with the Black diaspora in Canada.

The history of theatre in Canada has been enhanced from its earliest beginning by the contributions made by Black artists, and Canada's cultural heritage and national character are enriched because of this.

(This article has been adapted from "The Growth and Development of Black Theatre in Canada: A Starting Point" by Robin Breon).

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Historical Society has an app for that. Enjoy some time outside with the Voices of Freedom Park Walking Tour App. Visit vofpark.org to download or view content online.

In Memoriam

Lenore Morrison



It is with much sadness that we report the passing of Lenore Morrison on January 19, 2021. Just last October, we joined with Lenore in celebrating her 25th anniversary of service with the Guild. Lenore was a longtime host, greeter, and ardent supporter of the Shaw Festival. She personified the ideal Shaw Ambassador - always a smile and an enthusiasm that was contagious. She will hold a very special place in our memories.

Aldo Potenza



With sadness we report the passing of former Guild Gardener, Aldo Potenza, on Tuesday, January 19, 2021. Those of you who remember Aldo, will be reminded of his gentle charm. He always brought sunshine to our group. We send our condolences to his wife, (former) Shaw voice teacher, Carol Baggott-Forte.

Ruth Hunter



With sadness we report the passing of former Host, Ruth Hunter, on Wednesday, January 20th, 2021. Those of you who remember Ruth will be reminded of her familiar smile and pleasant disposition. Ruth particularly enjoyed her time volunteering as a Guild Host for the Shaw Festival, and never said 'no' to a request for help. We send our condolences to her beloved husband, Guild Gardener, John Hunter and their family.