



INTERACTIVE

THE NEWSLETTER OF VICTORIA TARGET THEATRE SOCIETY
a troupe of mature performers, acting as a voice for the elderly, using drama as a teaching tool

AFTERGLOW

New show “touching, inspiring”

Target Theatre’s latest project is an “experiment” that explores new avenues for the company of senior actors. “The show has taken us on a voyage of discovery, examining how events in our past can shape who we are today, and showing the audience how each may lead an inspired life in the future,” says Helder

Schäfer the troupe’s executive artistic director.

The 50-minute performance piece, entitled *Afterglow*, has currently six scenes and was written by individual players under the guidance of the director. The premiere performance was to a full house at UVic’s intimate black box Barbara McIntyre studio theatre, March 18, as

part of Victoria’s Embrace Aging month. It had the audience respond with comments such as, “outstanding... touching and inspirational”, “fabulous mosaic of such breadth and from both ends of the spectrum...”

The troupe began work on the project in October. Initially,



Players (from left) Phyllis McGee and Jane Krieger present Fred Storgeoff with his home-built puppet “Dolly Hearton” in a scene of *Afterglow*.

it was a struggle to figure out what to do with the collection of personal anecdotes the players brought to rehearsals. But it all came together in February “when we had one of those ‘Eureka’ moments,” the director says. “Suddenly we had a sense of how to present it as a dramatic performance piece.”

The spark for the *Afterglow* project came from visiting Winnipeg actor and playwright Maggie Nagle. “We had performed her short play *Fourteen Years* during our 2003-04 season, and when I learned that she was in the Belfry Theatre production of *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl* last fall, I invited her to meet the players during one of our daytime rehearsals,” Heldor says.

After seeing the troupe in action and fielding questions by the players, Maggie turned to them with a challenge. She suggested they’d for once abandon the tried and the true, refuse to be pigeonholed, forget about being seniors, and instead express what makes them human and alive at this very moment in their lives.

She suggested that this may entail one person presenting a 30-second poem or another doing a dance or a few people singing or doing a mime, or someone showing what silence may be like... “and see where that takes you.”

VICTORIA TARGET THEATRE SOCIETY

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Company of Players

June Boston, Madge Craig, Lou-Ann Edgar,
Rosalie Frampton, Judy Haynes, Ernie Jarman,
Jane Krieger, Dorothy Mabey, Fred Mabey,
Madeleine Mills, Phyllis McGee, Fred Storgeoff.

Executive Theatrical Director

Heldor Schäfer

Board Members

Sue Mitchell, president; Joan Looy, past pres.;
Sheila Statham, vice-pres.; Kim Dixon, secretary;
David Davies, treasurer; Kathie Davies.

She said that the result may be a half-hour cabaret-style performance or ten minutes of just showing what makes each of us “me.” The important part of this experiment, she said, would be to explore new paths that have nothing to do with teaching a message or with physical age.

Maggie told the players about a close friend of hers who has had a stroke and is now partially paralyzed and in a wheelchair, but who doesn’t let that slow her down. This woman has an independent and life-affirming spirit and an unquenchable thirst for life. She often invites Maggie to the opera, theatre, and dinner engagements, and enjoys socializing with people in general and her young friend in particular.

“Maggie’s idea of experimentation refreshed my memory about what theatre (and life) is supposed to be all about,” Heldor says. “It is certainly more than only using the logical side of the brain as we often do when researching and writing scripts. We have lots of other senses that we often neglect. I felt that if I could translate this concept, this idea Maggie presented to us, into a language that the players could understand and relate to, it just may help us create innovative theatre.”

Perhaps *Afterglow* will only remain a one-shot experiment, or it could become the first step in Target Theatre’s voyage into new, uncharted territory. If nothing else, it should teach players and audiences alike that the “good old days” can be more than mere reminiscences or memories upon which we look with nostalgia.

“If the past can show us why we are who we are, perhaps we can face the future with renewed purpose,” Heldor says.

New players

Target Theatre has grown. In January the company of players welcomed Madge Craig, Judy Haynes, and Jane Krieger. Judy has helped out backstage in every production since 2003, while Jane and Madge were understudies in the 2005 performances of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*. Jane also assisted as costume coordinator and stage decorator and later took on the role of

a retired surgeon in the play when a regular cast member had to drop out. She apparently played that part so convincingly a member of the audience later asked, "Is she a doctor in real life?" Madge got her acting break with her first on-stage appearance in *Afterglow*, and she will also have the role of bag lady in three upcoming performances of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*.

The company of players now has twelve members—three men and nine women.



Getting ready for rehearsal are (from left) players Dorothy Mabey, Madge Craig, Fred Storgeoff, Phyllis McGee, Ernie Jarman, backstage manager Judy Haynes, Lou-Ann Edgar, and Jane Krieger.

WORKSHOPS

“I’m Still Here”

We had a ten-hour workshop with Vrenia Ivonoffski, artistic director of Act II Studio at Toronto’s Ryerson University. Target Theatre players worked with her Sept. 23-25 on *I’m Still Here: a research-based drama on living with dementia*. The play is about the experiences of people with Alzheimer’s disease, their caregivers, family, and health professionals. Ms Ivonoffski was vacationing in the Gulf Islands while on sabbatical and volunteered to spend three days rehearsing the play with us. *I’m Still Here* was co-written by her with other researchers and has toured eastern Canada.

One player enjoyed the workshop so much she decided to produce the play independently, enlisting the help of five fellow Target actors and a university student director. It was presented at the Embrace Aging theatre festival.

Acting students perform two plays

Our annual theatre performance workshop was attended by ten participants, Oct. 4 - Nov. 23. Students’ previous acting experience ranged from involvement in amateur theatre to those who had never set foot on stage before. The

annual workshop is designed to give mature novice actors the opportunity to learn performance skills from the ground up. One participant, who had been in community theatre productions, both as an actor and backstage crew, later said, “I’ve learned things about being on stage that nobody has ever taught me before.”

The course culminated in the students performing two short Target plays, *A Quiet Day in the Country* by John Tench, and *Hips* by Jo Cannon, at James Bay New Horizons, Nov. 27.

About this newsletter

We are sending this newsletter to those who requested it either as a printed copy or via e-mail. You may view a colour version of this newsletter and back issues on our web site. If at any time you wish to stop future mailings to your address, please let us know. We also welcome questions and comments by phone, mail, fax or e-mail (see contact information page 2).

We don’t charge for *Interactive*, but if you would like to become a member of Victoria Target Theatre Society, we certainly welcome you

to join. The annual membership fee is \$20 for individuals, \$30 for couples or families.

Benefits include voting rights at our annual general meeting in June, running for board membership, participating in committees such as fundraising, publicity, and play reading, opportunities to learn about theatre while assisting at performances, attending our social events, and of course receiving this newsletter.

Students report on Target


Catherine Day and Paula Murphy, two students working on their Master of Counselling Psychology degree program at City University, attended a regular Target meeting in October and interviewed the players for a "Psychology of Aging" class project. A few weeks later they surprised us by sending thank-you cards, a bouquet of flowers, a box of chocolates and an audio tape of their in-class presentation. So we took some time out reading, smelling, eating, and listening... Thanks, Catherine and Paula!

Events Calendar

Apr. 8: Target play *Nobody Wants My Old Organs* plus the popular comedy *I'm Herbert*. Gordon Head United Church, 4201 Tyndall Avenue, Saanich. 7:30 p.m. Sponsored by "The Uniters." Admission \$10. Phone 477-9835 or 592-4458.

WANTED

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volunteer members for the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
of
Victoria Target Theatre Society
(starting June 2006 AGM)

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Please send letter of intent to:
The Board of Directors
Victoria Target Theatre Society
1728 Douglas Street • Victoria, BC V8W 2G7
Info.: 477-6054

For further details keep watching www.islandnet.com/target

Apr. 23 & 24: *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*. Eric Martin Pavilion theatre, 2328 Trent Street, Victoria. Sunday at 2:30 p.m. and Monday at 7:30 pm. Sponsored by the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Victoria Chapter, as part of National Organ Transplant Donor Awareness Week. Free admission. Phone 721-3405.

June 15: Target Theatre is to present two plays from its existing repertoire at the first annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day conference, sponsored by the BC Council of Senior Citizens Organizations, in Vancouver. Performance details to be announced.

Senior Celebration festival

Target Theatre had a display booth at *Senior Living Magazine's* first annual Senior Celebration Festival at Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, Mar. 3. The all-day event, which was part of Embrace Aging Month, had demonstrations and displays by over 100 artists, authors, hobbyists, clubs and societies. Our booth was staffed by members of the company of players who took two-hour shifts meeting the public and fielding questions about Target Theatre, its history and upcoming performances.

Our Sponsors

We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their financial contributions:

Friend of Target (\$20-\$75):

A. & R. Rankin; Aline Allard; Elisabeth Read; Juliana Saxton; Lou-Ann Edgar; Madeleine Mills; Tony Montgomery.

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