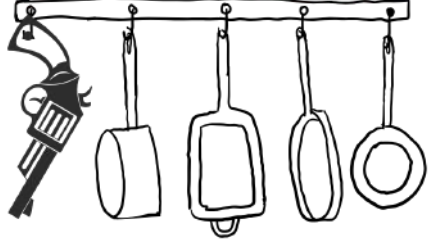


# Doris & Ivy in the Home

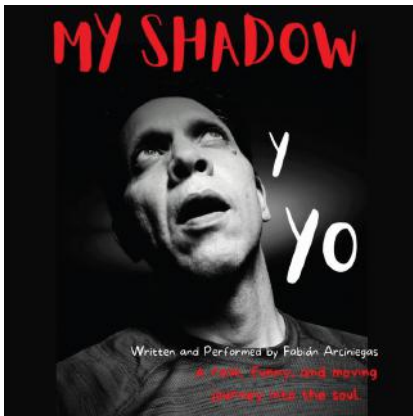
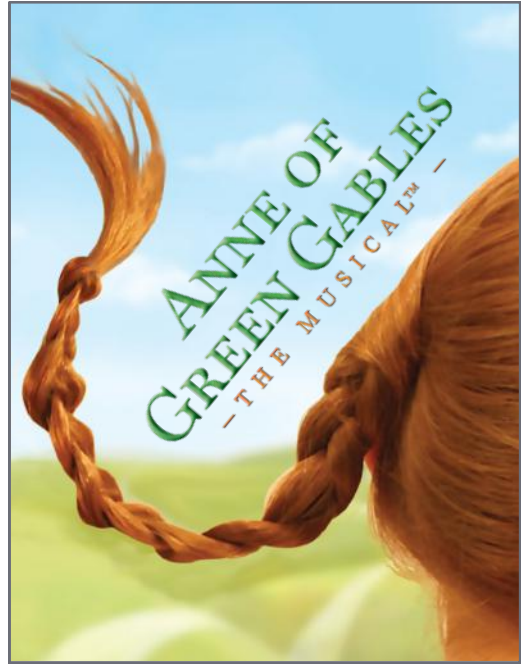


# TOO MANY COOKS



**HSE**  
Live Theatre!  
Highlands Summer Festival

NONO





Ella Gooley

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Ella Gooley and Ed Canning



# President

## Rita Jackson

Welcome to Highlands Summer Festival's Made in Canada season from me, Rita Jackson, and all the Highlands Summer Festival Board. We are thrilled to be providing exciting and professional-level theatre to the Highlands and beyond, using the wealth of our talented local performers. Each year, actors eagerly await the chance to perform in these carefully selected plays – and you, our audiences, await the opportunity to enjoy these high level performances. We thank you for trusting the board and production teams to create something special for you – something memorable and something out of this world.

We could not do it without the dedicated and continued backing of so many in our community. Our gratitude goes to the long list of sponsors and advertisers who support the season and join in the excitement and enthusiasm of our community.

AND I must recognize those countless, dedicated, hardworking volunteers who, numbering well over 125, start working as early as the week right after the previous season closes, already creating plans for the next. Those who are building, painting, marketing, singing, acting, back-stage managing, hosting, guiding, feeding, boarding, promoting .... And so much more - we could not do it without you. THANK YOU.

You might wonder how it is that so many people get involved behind the scenes. For some, it gives a chance to use their skills to help create magic. For others, it's a chance to learn something new. And for all, it's an opportunity to work with great people and have a lot of fun. Might you be one of them? If you're curious about volunteering – or anything about the Festival – let's talk! Drop me a line at:

[president@highlandssummerfestival.on.ca](mailto:president@highlandssummerfestival.on.ca)

Twenty-six years ago, a handful of theatre-loving enthusiasts got together in a local living room and had a vision, a dream of creating a summer extravaganza of performance entertainment that would rival any put on in the 'big cities south'. The 2026 Highlands Summer Festival season continues this professional quality of entertainment for you with our Made in Canada season. Sing, dance, laugh, cry, wonder and enjoy!



# Artistic Producer

## Douglas (Dougie) Walker

I am thrilled to present the Highlands Summer Festival's new season. Entering my second year as Artistic Producer, I remain inspired by the incredible support of our community. From our tireless production teams and talented casts to our dedicated volunteers and board, everyone has worked magic to bring professional theatre to Haliburton. This year, I wanted a theme that celebrates home: Made In Canada. Every production this season was crafted by Canadian creatives to showcase the immense talent our country offers.

We kick off with the classic musical *Anne of Green Gables* by Donald Harron and Norman Campbell, featuring a vibrant cast eager to share this beloved story.

Next is Norm Foster's *Doris and Ivy in the Home*, directed by Myrna McBrien. This wonderful comedy is a testament to living life to the fullest, regardless of age or stage—expect to laugh and cry, probably at the same time.

Our third show features the celebrated Colombian-Canadian opera singer Fabián Arciniegas in *My Shadow Y Yo*. Through a masterful blend of song, monologue, and wit, he guides us on a journey of migration and acceptance.

We then return to comedy with the hilarious farce *Too Many Cooks* by Marcia Kash and Douglas E. Hughes. Set in Niagara Falls, Ontario during Prohibition, chaos ensues as a father and daughter attempt to open a restaurant amidst madness, mistaken identities and murder. Directed by Mr. A. Braatz, it's an absolute must-see.

Closing the season is Orangeville's own Leisa Way and the Wayward Wind Band with *Sweet Dreams: A Tribute to Patsy Cline*. Leisa is our most-requested act, and with the combination of charismatic performance and the band's musical talent, it is the perfect way to finish our summer.

I am beyond excited for you to experience these shows. It will be a summer of joy, laughter, and great theatre. I look forward to welcoming you all!



Lauren McInnes, Christine Jonas-Simpson, Annabelle Borgdorff, Renee Griffith, Catherine Wheeler, and Meg Mardus

# Festival Schedule & Tickets



## SEASON PASS

In late November, Highlands Summer Festival offers a Season Pass at a special pre-season price. This is a great way to see all of the productions and save money! Season Pass holders have an opportunity to reserve seats for the performances they select. Season passes are sold as part of our Christmas promotion each year. You can order your pass from the Highlands Summer Festival Box Office. The box office can be accessed [online](#), by phone (705-457-9933 • 1-855-457-9933) or by [email](#).

The Season Pass makes a great Christmas gift for a friend or yourself. Watch the local papers, check out our [website](#) or join our [mailing list](#).

## SINGLE TICKETS

Tickets for all Highlands Summer Festival productions are available at a single seat price of \$40.00. Single tickets are only available through the Highlands Summer Festival box office. The box office can be accessed [online](#), by phone (705-457-9933 • 1-855-457-9933) or by [email](#).

This year we are offering reduced-priced, \$20, youth tickets for all matinée performances. This special price is available for anyone 18 years of age or younger. Please indicate how many youth tickets you require when ordering. Proof of age may be required at the theatre.

## CONDITIONS

- All seats sold in the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion venue are reserved.
- All sales are final, no refunds or exchanges.
- Tickets will be honoured only for the performance for which they are issued.
- Wheelchair seating is available at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion. Please reserve at least two days in advance so we can accommodate your needs.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JUNE 28	29	30	JULY 1	2	3	4
	 7:00 pm Opening	 7:00 pm	 7:00 pm	 7:00 pm Curtain Talk	 2:00 pm	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
 2:00pm CurtainTalk	 7:00 pm	 7:00 pm	 2:00 pm			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	 7:00 pm Opening	 7:00 pm	 7:00 pm Curtain Talk	 7:00 pm	 2:00 pm	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
 2:00pm	 7:00 pm	 7:00 pm Opening	 7:00 pm Curtain Talk	 2:00 pm		
26	27	28	29	30	31	AUGUST 1
	 7:00 pm Opening	 7:00 pm	 7:00 pm Curtain Talk	 7:00 pm	 2:00 pm	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
 2:00 pm Opening	 7:00pm	 7:00 pm Curtain Talk	 7:00pm	 7:00pm		

**NEW**

**Evening Performances start at 7:00 pm**

Matinées start at 2:00 pm

CURTAIN TALKS follow selected performances.

All performances take place in the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion at the High School in Haliburton

The logo features the letters 'HSF' in a large, dark blue serif font. A yellow spotlight beam shines from the top left onto the 'H'. Inside the spotlight is a yellow oval with the text 'Live Theatre!' in blue. To the right of 'HSF' is the year '2030' in red, stacked vertically. Further right is a large, dark blue question mark. Below the 'HSF' and '2030' is the text 'Highlands Summer Festival' in a dark blue sans-serif font.

# HSF 2030 ?

Highlands Summer Festival

There's no better time than a significant anniversary to assess your progress and take a serious look at the future. Last year, with twenty-five seasons under our belt, the Highlands Summer Festival board wondered what HSF could look like in five years. The context included:

- a dramatically changed landscape for providing live theater, especially after the disruption of COVID
- continuing challenges with financing live theatre
- substantial changes in staff and board leadership

Immediately following the 2025 season we undertook a strategic planning process - with some help from our friends at Haliburton County Development Corporation - to understand our challenges, develop a vision of where we should be in five years, and create a plan to get there.

We began by sending a survey to 800 of our patrons. Almost one in three responded, an astonishingly high result. Among the things you told us...

- musicals and comedies are, by far, the most preferred show type,
- when we're selecting shows, you want us to consider local cast members, including young actors, shows appropriate for younger audiences, and run times of less than two hours
- you would like better sound and improved accessibility
- one in five said they prefer matinées, and your preferred start time for evening performances is evenly split between 7:00 pm and 7:30 pm. (For 2026, we've moved evening performances up to 7pm. We hope half of you will forgive us.)
- many of you want us to retain a print program, handed out at the theatre, but even more of you expressed a preference for downloadable programs available prior to the show.

**WE HEARD YOU!** Our 2026 season reflects what you said was important – a musical and two comedies, earlier start time, local cast, lots of young actors. We've retained a smaller print program and added a downloadable digital program option with expanded content.

We are working with The Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavillion and others to improve the sound system at the theatre. Improved accessibility is a long-term goal that we will continue to address.

# HSE?

Highlands Summer Festival

2030

Live Theatre!

## POINT US IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION....



Click on an arrow to take a short survey to let us know how you feel about our first steps towards 2030!





**THANKS TO OUR  
PRESENTING SPONSOR...**

**BMO**



# ANNE OF GREEN GABLES

— THE MUSICAL™ —

Book by Donald Harron

Music by Norman Campbell

Adapted from the novel by  
L.M. Montgomery

Director & Choreographer  
Douglas Walker\*

Music Director  
Melissa Stephens



Setting: Prince Edward Island

Time: 1870s

Presented in two acts with  
one 15-minute intermission

ANNE OF GREEN GABLES-THE MUSICAL is presented by arrangement  
with Concord Theatricals [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com)

# The Players



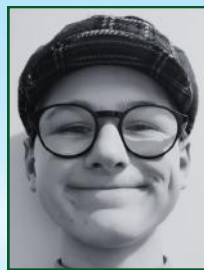
Ella Gooley  
*Anne Shirley*



Kirsten Sixt  
*Marilla Cuthbert*



Ed Canning  
*Matthew Cuthbert*



Thomas Austin-Ward  
*Gilbert Blythe*



Lauren McInnes  
*Rachel Lynde*



Fia Marziali  
*Diana Barry*



Evelyn Mardus  
*Josie Pye*



Annabelle Borgdorff  
*Mrs. MacPherson/  
Miss Muriel Stacy*



Catherine Wheeler  
*Mrs. Sloane/  
Mrs. Blewett*



Renée Griffith  
*Mrs. Pye*



Wayne Black  
*The Minister*



Max Ward  
*Earl/The Station  
Manager*



Curtis Eastmure  
*Cecil*



Meg Mardus  
*Mrs. Spencer/  
Lucilla*



Christine Jonas-  
Simpson  
*Mrs. Barry*



Róisín Hogan  
*Prissy Andrews*



Ruby Mansfield  
*Ruby Gillis*



Penelope Irvine  
*Tillie Boulter*



Brooke Gooley  
*Gertie Pye*



Ruairí Byrne  
*Moody Sloane*



Luna Marziali  
*Geraldine Buote*



Rowyn Foster  
*Tammy Sloane*



Aiofe Hogan  
*Missy Andrews*



Chris Chumbley  
*Mr. Phillips*

## Creative Team

Director & Choreographer - Douglas Walker\*

Music Director - Melissa Stephens

Dance Captain - Annabelle Borgdorff

Stage Manager - Grant Gooley

Assistant Stage Manager - Paul Vorvis

Lighting Design - Adam Jules

Sound & Lighting Technician - Nadarra Collette

Set Design - Jason McQuarrie

Set Construction - David Mills & Crew

Set Decoration - Sue Vorvis & Crew

Set Dressings & Props - Beth Kipping &  
Melissa Stephens

Costumes - Melissa Stephens

Wigs, Hair, Make-up - Beth Kipping

Crew - Brenda Eastmure, Amy Brohm,

Dave Charbonneau and Kate Lovett

Young Actors Supervisor - Jill Gooley

Special thanks to

Hans Andersen

Greg Shikaze

\*Courtesy Canadian Actors Equity



Ella Gooley and Kirsten Sixt



## Director's Notes

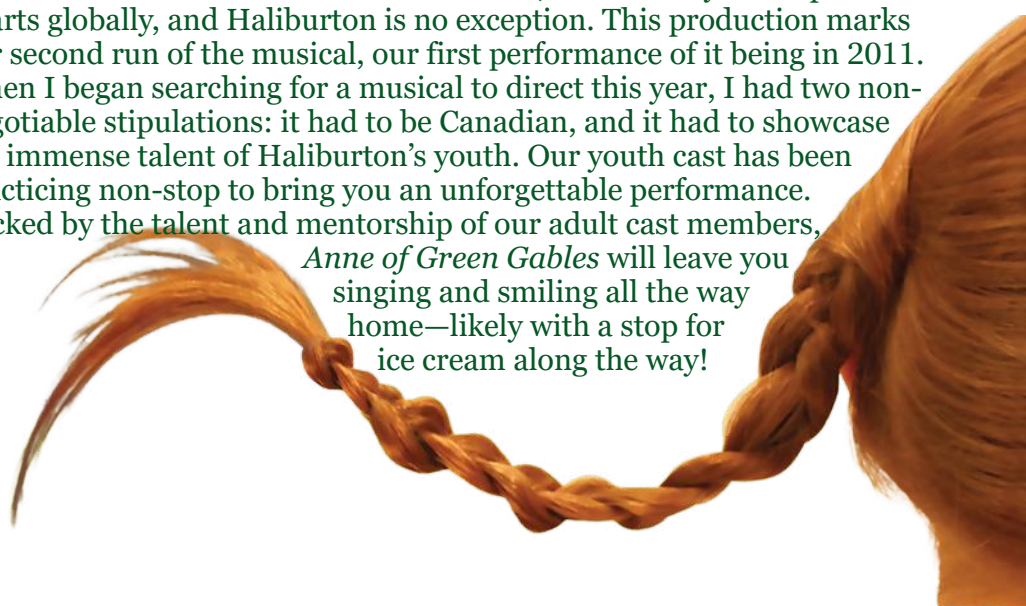
### Dogie Walker

I couldn't be more excited to present an icon of the Canadian stage: *Anne of Green Gables – The Musical*. Based on Lucy Maud Montgomery's 1908 novel, the story of Anne Shirley is a cherished part of our national identity. This beloved family musical follows the journey of a spirited, red-haired orphan who arrives at Bright River Station dreaming of a fresh start. Though siblings Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert originally intended to adopt a boy to help on their Prince Edward Island farm, they are quickly captivated by Anne's vivid imagination. Despite her fiery temper and knack for finding trouble, Anne transforms their quiet lives with her heart of gold, finally finding the home she has always craved.

The stage production, originally directed and choreographed by Alan Lund, has a historic legacy. It has been performed every summer since 1965, headlining the Charlottetown Festival at the Confederation Centre of the Arts. This makes it Canada's longest-running mainstage musical. In 2014, Guinness World Records officially named the Charlottetown production the "longest-running annual musical theatre production" in the world.

While its roots are in Prince Edward Island, Anne's story has captured hearts globally, and Haliburton is no exception. This production marks our second run of the musical, our first performance of it being in 2011. When I began searching for a musical to direct this year, I had two non-negotiable stipulations: it had to be Canadian, and it had to showcase the immense talent of Haliburton's youth. Our youth cast has been practicing non-stop to bring you an unforgettable performance. Backed by the talent and mentorship of our adult cast members,

*Anne of Green Gables* will leave you singing and smiling all the way home—likely with a stop for ice cream along the way!







Ella Gooley, Kirsten Sixt, and Ed Canning



Ella Gooley and Ed Canning



# Dougie Walker

Director  
*Anne of Green Gables -  
The Musical*

Douglas Walker is looking to build on the success of his first season with the Highlands Summer Festival as the Artistic Producer. After the hilarious absurdity of *Urinetown*, Douglas is following up with a more classic tale, *Anne Of Green Gables*. This season builds on his history with the festival, which includes a moving performance in *Every Brilliant Thing* and his directorial debut with the rollicking 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.

His creative talents extend beyond directing and producing, though. Douglas has also showcased his writing and performing chops in *Candid Cabaret with R.C.S.*, and his choreography has been featured in *The Rink* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* at the Highlands Summer Festival.

On stage, Douglas has toured extensively across Canada and beyond, appearing in popular productions like *Jersey Boys*, *Mamma Mia*, and *The Soul Of Motown* (Stage West), as well as *Avenue Q* on its UK National

Tour. He has also performed in *The Voice of the Turtle* and *Affairs of State* (Classic Theatre Festival), *Miracle on 34th Street* (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), and even *Scooby Doo Live: The Mystery of the Pyramid* (UK National Tour, Warner Bros.). His theatrical journey has taken him across the globe, including performances with *The Tenors* (Netherlands Tour) and *Sesame Street* (Universal Studios Japan).

Beyond the stage, Douglas has appeared in several television productions, including *Frankie Drake Mysteries* (CBC), *A Christmas Exchange* (Lifetime), *In The Dark* (The CW), *Jazz Ramsay: A K9 Mystery* (Hallmark), and *Rabbit Hole* (Paramount). He has also lent his voice to *Hyperscape* (Ubisoft) and the audiobook *Unrest* by Gwen Tuinman (Penguin Random House).

As he continues in this exciting role of Artistic Producer, Douglas is dedicated to fostering artistic excellence, innovation, and community engagement at the Highlands Summer Festival.

All my love to Jocelyn, Lachlan & Kaja for their unwavering support. xxx



Thomas Austin-Ward, and Raurí Byrne

# Melissa Stephens

Musical Director  
*Anne of Green Gables -  
The Musical*



Melissa Stephens – executive producer, musical director, and wardrobe mistress, is from London, Ontario and a distinguished alumna of the University of Western Ontario. She holds degrees in music and education, along with a diploma from the Western Conservatory of Music. Residing in Haliburton for over four decades, she has become a central figure in the community's arts scene, celebrated for her comprehensive engagement and dedication.

An acclaimed multi-instrumentalist, Melissa's proficiency spans the piano, organ, and flute. Her musical direction and talent have earned her significant recognition, including the titles of "Highlander of the Year" in 1998 and "Artist of Distinction" in 2007. These accolades underscore her impactful contribution to the arts in Haliburton and beyond.

Melissa's leadership roles are pivotal within the local arts community. She serves as the Executive Producer of the Highlands Summer Festival and the Administrator for the

Highlands Opera Studio, closely collaborating with esteemed figures such as Artistic Director Richard Margison and General Director Val Kuinka. Her creative talents extend to costume design and construction for the festival and opera productions, showcasing her versatile contribution to the performing arts.

In her capacity as a music educator, Melissa offers private lessons and conducts four choirs across Haliburton, Lindsay, and Bancroft, nurturing the next generation of musical talent. Her involvement with the Adverse Conditions, Highlands Soul Band and the Highlands Chamber Orchestra, are an added highlight to her broad musical influence. Melissa is also a retired secondary school teacher who doesn't know when to stop.

Melissa's commitment to the Haliburton arts scene is unparalleled. Through her extensive roles—from musical director to executive producer—she continues to enrich the cultural landscape, proving herself a cornerstone of the community's artistic heritage.

# Backstage Spotlight...

## It just made sense to step up!

When the call went out for someone to stage manage *Anne of Green Gables – The Musical*, Grant Gooley figured it just made sense to step up.

After all, he had training in television broadcasting and a background in stage managing with a long-running murder mystery dinner theatre in Ottawa. He had the skills and experience.

Then there was the fact that his two daughters are in the show. “This is the most rewarding thing, a once in a lifetime opportunity, to be so close to my family and collaborate on building something beautiful.”

Ella Gooley, 16, plays the fiery Anne. Ella is a conservatory pianist who loves to sing, as six hundred people learned in June when she performed the



Jill, Grant, Ella and Brooke Gooley

national anthem at the opening of the Haliburton Sports Hall of Fame. Brooke, 14, is an Instagram creator with millions of monthly views. She will be featured in the role of Gertie Pye. Both Ella and Brooke performed in the Summer Festival's 2022 production of *The Sound of Music*. Mom Jillian also has a background in theatre arts and will be helping young cast members keep things organized backstage. It's truly a family affair.

The family connection may be a beautiful thing, but there are potential pitfalls. "I definitely have to put my hand over my mouth sometimes. I have to be careful not to be in dad mode, so I don't embarrass them. And it's hard not to shed a tear in rehearsals watching your daughter play a scene where somebody is dying."

Fortunately, the work demands focus. Anne is an ambitious production, with thirty characters played by twenty-four performers. As stage manager, everything in the musical's two acts and twenty-three scenes runs through Gooley. Additional complexities include the use of

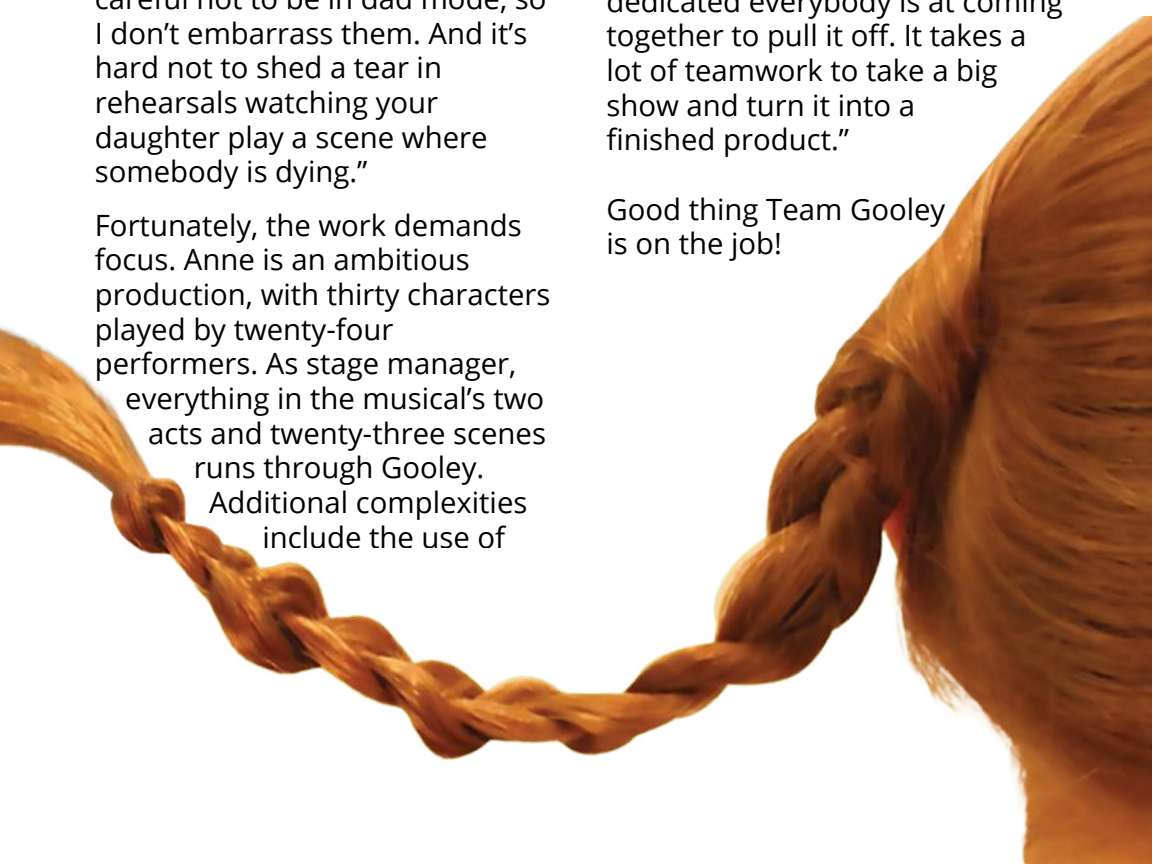
projections that will contribute theatre magic to scenes like the three-legged race. (There's also fake ice cream, but at press time details were still classified.)

On opening night, a handoff takes place when the director turns complete control of the show over to the stage manager. But the SM has a huge role throughout the rehearsal process, including the gargantuan task of scheduling.

"Everybody is so busy, we've got kids at track meets, kids in sports and other obligations, so there's a lot of juggling," says Gooley.

"I'm always amazed by community theatre and how dedicated everybody is at coming together to pull it off. It takes a lot of teamwork to take a big show and turn it into a finished product."

Good thing Team Gooley is on the job!





Meg Mardus and Catherine Wheeler

# On Stage Spotlight...

## Theatre rookie steps on stage!

Regular theatre-goers will recognize almost all of the kids in *Anne of Green Gables* from past seasons. But, there is one new young face gracing the stage at this season's Highlands Summer Festival performance of *Anne of Green Gables*.

Ruby Mansfield is a 13-year-old Haliburton County local. She started attending Festival shows with her step-mom when she was younger, and remembers being completely captivated by life on the stage.

After taking a summer theatre course at the Haliburton School of Art and Design last year, Ruby found the confidence to audition for the opening show of this year's lineup, *Anne of Green Gables*.

She loved the story of Anne, and felt excited when she made it through the two rounds of auditions to get to the stage. "I really wanted to make new friends and have some new experiences," said Ruby. "This seemed like a really fun thing to do."

With it being her first time on a professional stage, Ruby looks back on her time with rehearsals

with warmth and excitement. "I definitely learned a lot of things about singing and dancing," she said. "I really hope to do it again next year."

When asked to share some advice for other theatre enthusiasts, Ruby is adamant that everyone should try out for a role on the stage. "Just do it," she said, with great excitement. "It's a big jump, trying something new, but it's better to know than to ever wonder 'what if?'"

Ruby is playing the character of Ruby Gillis in this year's production of *Anne of Green Gables*. She is very excited to show her friends and family what she's been working so hard on, and is thrilled to welcome the community to the theatre.





Penelope Irvine, Róisín Hogan, Luna Marziali, Ruby Mansfield, Aiofe Hogan, Brooke Gooley, Annabelle Borgdorff, Ruairí Bryne, Evelyn Mardus, Thomas Austin-Ward, Fia Marziali, Ella Gooley, Rowyn Foster



# Doris & Ivy in the Home



Written by Norm Foster

Directed by Myrna McBrien\*

Setting: Paradise Village Retirement Centre  
Canmore, Alberta

Time: Current Day

Presented in two acts with one 15-minute intermission

*Doris and Ivy in the Home* is staged by arrangement with Pam Winter, GGA, [www.ggagency.ca](http://www.ggagency.ca) and was first produced by Upper Canada Playhouse in Morrisburg, ON in June 2022.

## Players



Lesley English  
Doris Mooney



Isabel Buttler  
Ivy Hoffbauer



Roger Bird  
Arthur Beech

## Creative Team

Director - Myrna McBrien\*

Stage Manager - Anabelle Craig

Assistant Stage Manager - Myra Stephen

Backstage Crew - Deborah Neve

Lighting Design - Adam Jules

Sound & Lighting Technician - Nadarra Collette

Set Design - Sue Vorvis

Set Construction - David Mills & Crew

Set Decoration - Sue Vorvis & Crew

Set Dressings - Sue Vorvis

Props - Sue Vorvis

Costumes - Melissa Stephens

Special thanks to Kirsten Sixt, Greg Shikaze,  
Scot Duggan & Canoe FM, and Paul & Sue Vorvis

\*Courtesy of Canadian Actor's Equity



# Director's Notes

## Myrna McBrien

As part of this village community, I feel incredibly fortunate through the years to have shared the theatre experience with actors, crew, fellow directors, and numerous volunteers who have become cherished friends. One never knows when or where a friendship will begin—and perhaps that is one of life's greatest gifts. It is also one of the joys of growing older: the adventure of discovering new connections, even the most unexpected ones, never truly ends.

Children form friendships so easily—free from self-doubt, self-consciousness, or fear of judgment. In *Doris and Ivy in the Home*, friendship emerges quickly, almost by accident, and yet the childlike trust still needs to be earned. Sometimes, the hardest person to trust may be yourself. Despite heartbreak and loss, the characters find that their varied experiences do not divide them, but instead bring them together. They learn to open their hearts to possibility, to set aside fear, and to trust in connection. Within the safety of unconditional friendship, they discover—or re-discover—vulnerability, intimacy, and love.

While *Doris and Ivy in the Home* has drawn comparisons to Foster's *Jonas and Barry in the Home*, it possesses a heart and spirit entirely of its own. Norm Foster has a remarkable ability to write with authenticity—guiding us from laughter to the most tender and difficult truths of the human experience. He reminds us that even in life's later chapters, often symbolized by the "golden years," there remains immense potential for joy, growth, and the most meaningful connections.

In bringing this warm, humorous story to life, our committed team, talented cast, and hard working crew have joyfully worked together to celebrate lives fully lived—lives that, despite hardship, remain open to friendship, vulnerability, and unconditional love.

In an uncertain world, one hopeful constant endures - the discovery of love. Through this story, Norm Foster gently reminds us never to give up on love. We hope you enjoy the journey.





# Myrna McBrien

## Director

### Doris & Ivy in the Home

Myrna is a seasoned actor and director with over twenty-five years of experience spanning both amateur and professional stages. As an actor, director, and producer, she is recognized for her storytelling, team-minded leadership, and commitment to creating character-driven work. Her years with the Highlands Summer Festival reflect a deep passion for theatre as both an art form and a vital community experience.

Most recently, Myrna appeared as Gingy in her own theatre company's Toronto production of *Love, Loss, and What I Wore* by Delia and Nora Ephron, having played the role previously at Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. As a director, she has helmed recent Toronto productions of Norm Foster's *Doris and Ivy in the Home* and Willy Russell's *Shirley Valentine*. Myrna's producing credits also include *Kingfisher Days* by Susan Coyne, in which she also starred in Hamilton.

Her longstanding involvement with the Festival includes performances in *Annie*, *The Goodbye Girl*, *The Last Resort*, *Looking*, *Fallen Angels*,

and *The Ladies Foursome*, the latter of which she also directed. She has also directed notable Festival productions such as *The Dining Room*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Shirley Valentine*, and last summer's *Drinking Habits*. Myrna is honoured to return to the Festival and to work alongside its dedicated artists, volunteers, and loyal supporters. She extends her sincere thanks to Melissa and Douglas, and to the Board for the opportunity to once again contribute to this vibrant, community-minded theatre.

Special heartfelt thanks goes to her brave and beautiful cast, the behind the scenes teams such as set design, building, painting, tech, light design, all volunteers, and backstage crew. Myrna wants to thank her wonderful stage manager for keeping us all organized, and uplifted every step of the way.

Myrna invites you to enjoy another fabulous HSF season—and believes wholeheartedly that you are never too old to get lost in the magic of theatre. Love to the family, and cheers to friends who become family.

PERPETUAL SEWING  
SISTERS





Darby Bayly, Mac Rider, Victoria Bingham,  
Annie McBrien, Sam Buckland, Russ  
Davidson, Janice Kiteley, Kirsten Sixt  
*Drinking Habits*, 2025

# Jack Brezina

## The Excitement is Still Live Theatre...

Jack Brezina is holding court at Castle Antiques, sipping from a cup of coffee and answering questions about his twenty-five years on the board of the Highlands Summer Festival, while greeting a steady stream of well-wishers. His eighty years show in the slight stoop of his tall frame and the careful pace of his steps. They show not at all in his quick wit or the ready twinkle in his hazel eyes.

"They gave me a lifetime season pass when I retired from the board," he says, "which was a very nice gift, and I intend to use it right up until my gate is announced."

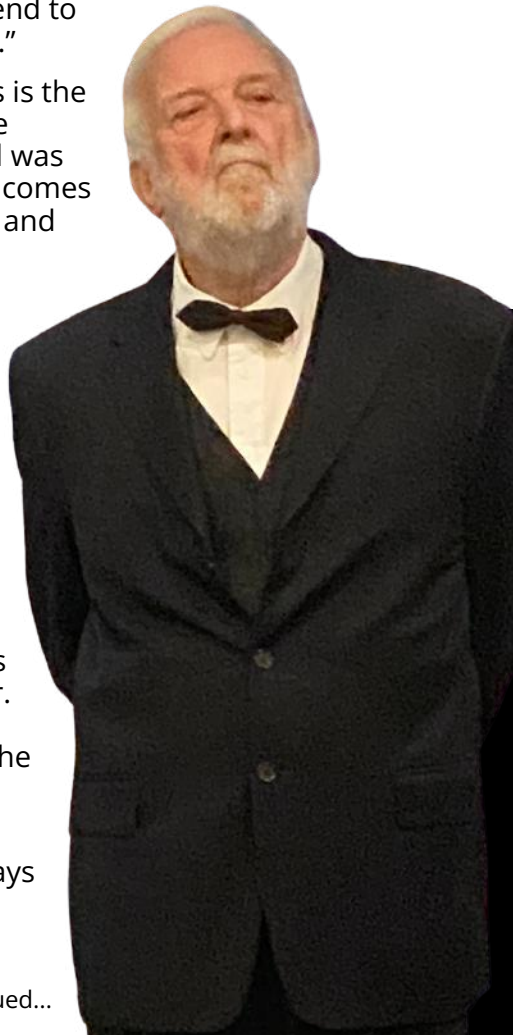
That light-heartedness is characteristic, as is the way he downplays his contributions to the Festival. "I think mostly what I contributed was my enthusiasm. Theatre is the circus that comes to town on a train, unloads the elephants and marches down the street. It's exciting."

"So I contributed my love of it all. That and maybe some journalism skills. I was still running the Minden Times when we started the Festival, so I could help with publicity and photography."

Current members of the board have a somewhat longer list. "We now have three people trying to keep up with all the things that Jack did," says Sue Vorvis, chair of the marketing committee.

"Jack is the world's best arm-twister," adds Ken Loney, the Festival's general manager. "He can drag favours out of people while making everyone feel good. I don't think the Highlands Summer Festival would still be here after twenty-five years without Jack."

Joan Chappell, a former board member, says he was a treat to work with because, "he always knew exactly what he wanted."





**JACK BREZINA**  
Henry the Old Actor  
*The Fantasticks*, 2007

For Melissa Stephens, executive producer, Jack's contribution is his community mindedness. "After family, I think community is the most important thing to him – and sometimes community might win out. Whenever somebody needs help, if he's available he's there. Morning noon or night."

Jack and Pat Brezina moved to the Highlands from Cochrane, Ontario, with their two young kids, Kerry and Kevin, both pre-school, in May of 1979. By the early Eighties, Pat was teaching elementary school and Jack had settled into his role as publisher of the Minden Times. "I also did some editing, reporting, sales, mailing and sweeping." It wasn't long before he got involved with the Highlands Little Theatre. Twinkle: "They let me be on stage!"

When a high school renovation opened up the possibility of creating a new community theatre, Jack was an ardent supporter. The conversion of the gymnasium into the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion had many funders – the provincial government, local school board, and various grants – topped off by enthusiastic local fund-raising that raised more than \$750,000. "We had a grand opening over three gala nights," he recalls, "involving performers from all over the county. Actors, folk singers, Scottish dancers and pipers, everyone. There were more than two hundred people on stage for the finale."

And then the question became, what next? The theatre was a school classroom nine months of the year, but it couldn't just sit empty the rest of the time. We had a strong performing arts community here, and we wanted to build on it."

A group came together. Each chipped in a bit of money for working capital. They designed a logo, planned a season, and divvied up tasks. At the end of the year they had recouped their investment with enough left over to launch the next season. "Finances have always been a challenge," Jack says, "but we've always managed to finish the season in the black." COVID was a particular challenge. After that great intermission, Jack decided it was time to step down as board chair, but he stayed on as past chair for three more years, helping to ensure a smooth transition.

Don't call it a retirement. Immediately after his last meeting with the Festival board he launched into directing the Little Theatre's acclaimed production of *Calendar Girls*. And his familiar presence will be back at the Festival through the summer to host this season's post-performance Curtain Talks.

Asked about the future, he goes immediately to prospects for the Festival. "I was delighted when Dougie said yes." (Douglas Walker became the Festival's Artistic Producer in 2025). "There's new energy on the board, and renewed public support. "The excitement is still live theatre."

# Curtain Talks

Back by popular demand, Highlands Summer Festival continues its practice of presenting Curtain Talks throughout the season. Also back by popular demand, Jack Brezina will host our Curtain Talks!

Curtain Talks, are a great way to discover why and how the creative team were inspired by the play and its characters. Patrons can pose questions to the cast and crew members as they offer insight into the process that went into creating the play. We will present one curtain talk for each production (two for *Anne of Green Gables- The Musical*). If you don't have tickets for the productions when Curtain Talks are being held, you are welcome to attend ... and it's free. Simply show up at the end of the performance and take a seat after those wishing to leave have left the auditorium. So come and listen and ask questions. Previous season Curtain Talks are posted on our website, so if you can't attend you can always review them on line.

We hope you enjoy these extra features and that you will join us for the following Curtain Talks:

*Anne of Green Gables - The Musical*  
July 2<sup>nd</sup> and July 5<sup>th</sup>

*Doris & Ivy in the Home*  
July 15<sup>th</sup>

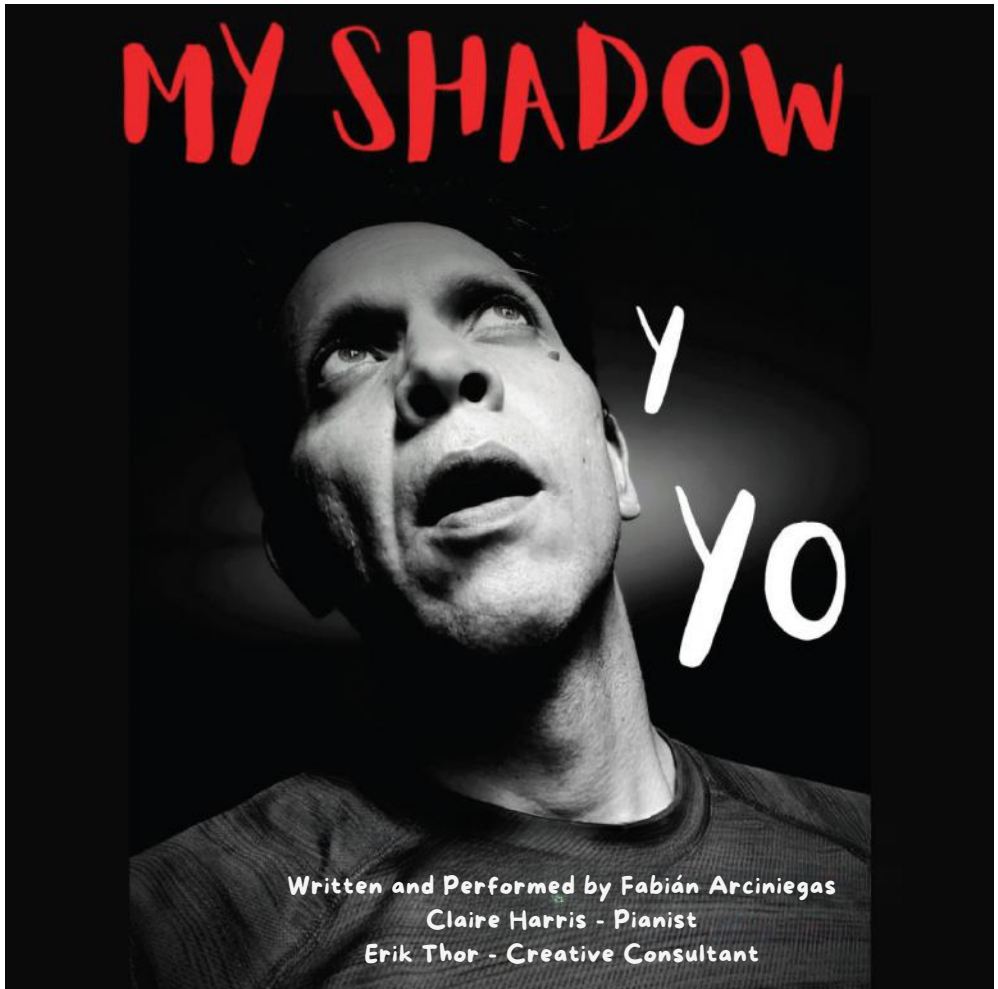
*My Shadow Y Yo*  
July 22<sup>nd</sup>

*Too Many Cooks*  
July 29<sup>th</sup>

*Sweet Dreams*  
August 4<sup>th</sup>

To view Curtain Talks from previous seasons, visit our [website](#).





**A raw, funny and moving journey into the soul...**

An introspective and deeply personal yet humour-infused exploration of identity, transformation, and the human psyche. Acclaimed Colombian-Canadian opera singer Fabián Arciniegas invites audiences on a journey through migration, self-doubt, and reconciliation with his "shadow," a concept inspired by Carl Jung.

This one-person show masterfully blends monologue, music, movement, and sharp wit, weaving a poignant narrative that tackles profound themes with a touch of levity. Featuring an eclectic musical repertoire, from haunting Latin American melodies to classical arias and comedic moments that catch you off guard, "My Shadow y Yo" is a raw, moving, and entertaining portrait of resilience and self-acceptance.



# Fabián Arciniegas

Fabián Arciniegas is a versatile Colombian-Canadian singer-actor. He brings a wide-ranging repertoire to life, from Baroque to Contemporary.

Inspired by his love for chamber singing, Fabián discovered a passion for new composers and successfully toured Canada and internationally as part of the series Crossing Borders. He has premiered new compositions by composers such as Saman Shahi, Patricia Morehead, Michelle Lorimer, Chia Yin Wu and Mario Gómez Vignes. He has performed with prestigious organizations including the Canadian Opera Company, Toronto Operetta Theatre, and Opera in Concert.

He is the creator and performer of "Colores", a show that invites audiences to engage with classical and contemporary music through pop music and storytelling.

He premiered his new show "Yo And My Shadow" in September 2024 as part of the Northumberland Festival Of The Arts.

Recently he took part in the Toronto premiere of the opera Angel's Bone by composer Du Yun with Loose Tea Theatre and Sound The Alarm Theatre.

In 2023, he performed in the Canadian premiere of Saman Shahi's new opera, "Before the Last Meter," at the Watershed Festival in Kingston, ON. The opera had previously premiered in Atlanta.

He premiered Patricia Morehead's song "Landscape for Tenor and String Orchestra." He also performed his show "The Colores" in Parry Sound, Toronto, Warkworth, and Cobourg.

After premiering the song cycle Orbit by Saman Shahi in 2015, he was invited by the composer to perform and record the songs for his debut album which was released in September 2020.

Continued...



In past seasons, he has performed as part of the chorus with the Canadian Opera Company in the production of Verdi's *Aida* (cancelled due to COVID-19), *Otello* and Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. He has also performed *Le Remendado* for Julie Nesrallah's production *Carmen* on Tap!

Fabián has worked with conductors such as Johannes Debus, Kevin Mallon, Derek Bate, Robert Cooper, Sandra Horst, Miah Im, Andres Posada, Miguel Caballero, Alberto Guzmán and Dmitri Manolov.



## Claire Harris

Claire holds a Masters in Performance from the Royal College of Music, London, UK. During her studies, she was awarded the Violette Szabo GC Memoriam Prize, the Soirée d'Or Award and the John and Marjorie Coultate Award. She also won the Accompanist Prize in the national Maggie Teyte Competition. Prior to moving to Toronto, she was a staff accompanist at the Royal College of Music, London, as well as working with companies including English Touring Opera, the Rossini Young Artists' Festival, and the Academie de La Roche D'Hys annual opera workshop. She has performed at prominent venues including Cadogan Hall, Royal Festival Hall, and Wigmore Hall in London.

Claire is currently Associate Music Director with Opera by Request, Toronto. With this company, she has been Music Director for productions of *Don Pasquale*, *Don Giovanni*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Madame Butterfly*, and *Così fan Tutte*.



# Sean Pennylegion

## ...has a long list of passions

Sean Pennylegion's current passion – in a long line of passions – is championing democracy, particularly municipal democracy, specifically municipal democracy here in Haliburton County.

Pennylegion helped drive a grassroots project, the Haliburton Highlands Healthy Democracy Project. "I've been yipping about it for quite a while and at the end of 2024 it came together organically."

"It's important because we're bringing to light that a very important election is coming up, and hoping to light a fire under everyone and get more people involved." Phase one of the project offered a series of four well-attended workshops in all parts of the county. Phase two, funded by a LIP grant, will provide a set of all-candidates meetings in every

municipality. "We're neutral. We have no axe to grind. We just want to get people engaged."

Pennylegion is something of a renaissance man. Over the years you might have found him running the Humane Society in Guelph, or the post office and general store in Woodview, near Peterborough, or in Haliburton Forest guiding a canopy tour in the clouds, or piloting a submarine, or managing the Forest Festival.

He also collects certifications the way some people collect spoons. High Ropes Challenge Course Instructor. NAUI scuba diver. Canoe tripper. First responder. First aid. CPR. Royal Life Saving. Super Host. Oh, and Smart Serve. He can take you into the clouds, pull you out of the water, or pour you a drink.

Continued...



Pennylegion has had a long involvement with theatre, usually backstage, but he made it onto the boards a couple times. A police officer who says "yes sir" three times, and a corpse, both roles with Highlands Little Theatre. "Onstage is not a comfortable spot for me. It tightens my sphincter."

He served for eleven years as treasurer of the Highlands Summer Festival. (Actually, it's hard to find a community organization in the county that he *hasn't* served on.) "The Highlands Summer Festival is in some ways the granddaddy of performing arts in the county. It's the model to which one would aspire. Creative. Disciplined. Professional."

A year after leaving the role, he still bumbles with ideas for enhancing the Festival. "My involvement with the Highlands Summer Festival was a big deal in my life. It was rewarding, stimulating. The level of creativity is very high."

Sean and Gwen Pennylegion moved to Haliburton in 2000, after selling their general store. "We had bought a derelict store in Woodview and turned it into a thriving business. Gwen did a lot of that. Her customer service skills are exceptional."

For many years they chose to work on six month contracts, Gwen at Fleming college, Sean at Haliburton Forest. "I got pushed outside my comfort zone a lot there, and you grow from that." In the other six months they did bicycle touring around the world – southeast Asia, New Zealand, Australia – packing everything with them. "We were self-contained, with sleeping bags, tent, cooking stove. That wasn't always comfortable either. You go into a place, you don't speak the language, you don't know where you're going to sleep. But we met wonderful people and we always figured it out."

He retired from the Forest in 2015, only to find his calendar filled with worthy projects in the county, including a part time gig as a courier for the Haliburton County Library. "I'm hangin' with really interesting people doing good stuff. Quality human beings who make things happen in this community. What could be better?"

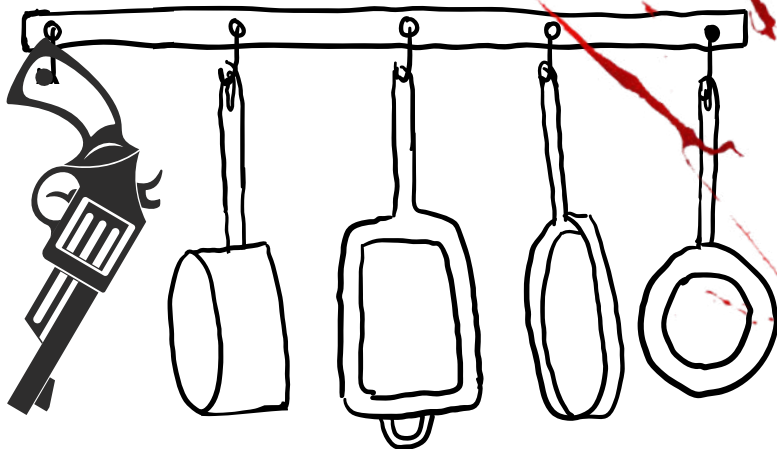
So what's next? Is there something else on the horizon? Is he maybe ready to settle down and relax?

"Well... I'd like to do more cycle touring."

**You go, Sean!**



# TOO MANY COOKS



Written by: Marcia Kash &  
Douglas E. Hughes

Directed by: A Braatz\*



Setting: Niagara Falls  
Time: 1930s

Presented in two acts with one 15-minute intermission

"Too Many Cooks" is presented with Concord Theatricals on behalf of  
Samuel French, Inc. [www.concordtheatricals.com](http://www.concordtheatricals.com)

# Players



Daniel Wheeler  
*Mickey McCall*



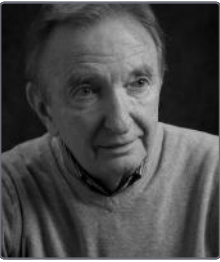
Douglas Tindal  
*Irving Bubbalowe*



Jewel Sisson  
*Honey Bubbalowe*



Jordan Kovacs  
*Frank Plunkett*



Jim Dwyer  
*Alphonse "Noodles"  
Feghetti*



Trevin Bain-Gross  
*Shirley*



Victoria Bingham  
*Veronica Snook*



Alex Kocot  
*Hamilton X. Effing*

## Creative Team

Director - A Braatz\*

Stage Manager - Sadie Kelly

Assistant Stage Manager - Kimberly Strong-Knight

Lighting Design - Adam Jules

Sound & Lighting Technician - Nadarra Collette

Set Design - Sue Vorvis

Set Construction - David Mills & Crew

Set Decoration - Sue Vorvis & Crew

Set Dressings - Sue Vorvis

Props - Kimberly Strong-Knight and Beth Kipping

Costumes - Melissa Stephens

Wigs, Hair, Make-up - Beth Kipping

Crew - Alicia Shepherds

Special thanks to Greg Shikaze

\*Courtesy of Canadian Actor's Equity





# Director's Notes

## A Braatz

Firstly, thank you for joining us and for supporting the arts. It's important that we take time to reflect on how we got here and what truly matters. For me, that is creativity. When we invest in creation, its impact ripples outward—through our communities and into the wider world.

*Too Many Cooks* is one of my favourite pieces, and I was fortunate to connect with the writers to better understand the motivations behind it. Though set in the 1930s, the play feels strikingly relevant to today's political climate. Its satire lands in ways that echo the world we live in now.

In approaching this production, we focused on grounding each character's experience in truth, even within the chaos. By working closely with the text, rhythm, and pacing, we aimed to bring its fast-paced comedy to life. Through timing and a sense of musicality, we discovered the moments that let the story breathe and collide.

History may not repeat itself, but it often rhymes. We cannot fully understand where we are going without acknowledging where we have been. While this story is fictional, it carries a deeper truth—because, in many ways, that is what comedy does best.

I am deeply grateful to HSF, our cast and crew, and the Haliburton community and beyond for embracing and supporting this work. Bringing a production to life is no small feat—let alone five in a single month—and it is only possible through the dedication, generosity, and creative spirit of so many people. That commitment to artistry is something the world truly needs.

Now, sit back, relax—and before long, you may find yourselves leaning forward, caught up in the chaos and laughter.

Thank you, and enjoy the show.





## A Braatz

### Director

### Too Many Cooks

A Braatz is thrilled to join HSF's 2026 season. A multifaceted artist, he works as an actor, singer, musician, writer, director, producer—adapting to whatever role is needed. He has performed on stages and screens across Europe and North America, bringing his dynamic talents to diverse projects.

A Braatz believes storytelling unites us, sparking our shared humanity and driving progress through creativity. "Every story is our story," he says, reflecting his commitment to invigorating the spirit of commonality through art.

Grateful for the family and friends who have supported him on this journey. A Braatz looks forward to many more years of creating and connecting.

Follow on IG: @albraatz)



Liam Moshier and Taliah Dumas Stephenson  
in *Salt-Water Moon*, 2025





Sweet Dreams takes audiences back in time to spend an evening with the music of one of the greatest entertainers of all time. Backed by a full five-piece band, well-known Canadian stage star, Leisa Way, a powerhouse singer and entertainer herself, celebrates not only the music of this legendary singer, but tells stories about Patsy's life that have never been heard before. This concert has been playing to sold out crowds at over 60 theatres across North America.



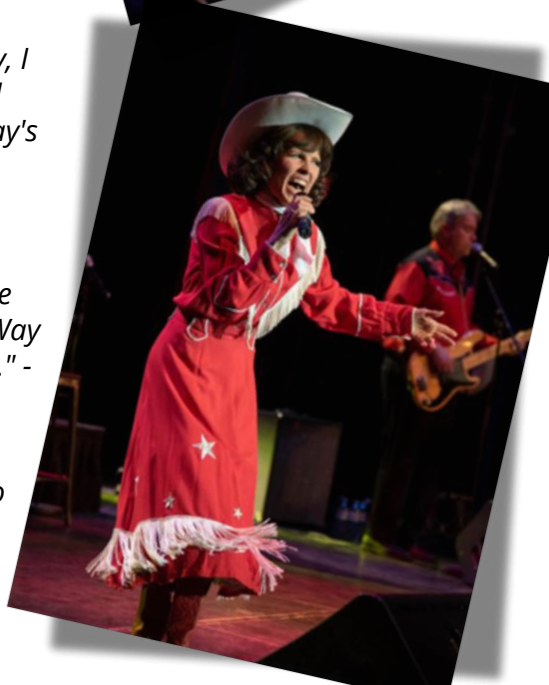
Leisa Way delivers the songs of Patsy Cline with a pure heart and sensational vocals. Her strong, full, honest voice will thrill any fan.

*"Canada's Leisa Way dominates the stage, filling every corner of the theatre with her rich, vibrant voice. And if ever a singer could be said to be "channeling" the late, much-loved Patsy Cline, then that singer is unquestionably Way. Backed by a four-man band of outstanding musicians, artists in their own right, Leisa Way delivers classic Cline numbers like Crazy, I Fall to Pieces, The Tennessee Waltz, and Walkin' After Midnight that had Saturday's capacity crowd cheering" - Morrisburg Leader*



*"No one has come as close as Way in emulating the essence, the voice and the passion of the country music legend... Way causes shivers with her grandiose voice." - Banner Review*

*"Leisa Way's brilliant portrayal of this unforgettable country music icon has to be her greatest triumph to date." -- Country Music Jukebox, Germany*



# Festival Company 2026

## THOMAS AUSTIN-WARD

Gilbert Blythe, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Thomas is ecstatic to be back with HSF. You may have seen him in *Urinetown* or in *Let's Make Opera* last year. Thomas is currently attending school at J. D. Hodgson, finishing grade seven strong as the conductor of the band. In his spare time, Thomas loves attending choir and practicing the many instruments he plays. Thomas loved being a part of this show and hopes you are no longer "Wonderin'" about him.

## VICTORIA BINGHAM

Veronica Snook, *Too Many Cooks*  
Victoria is delighted to be joining the company of the Highlands Summer Festival again this year. You may recognize her from her previous roles as a nun in *Nunsense*, *Nunsensations*, and *Drinking Habits*. Other favourite roles included Penny in *You Can't Take It With You*, and Bunny in *A Murder Is Announced* (HLT). She would like to thank her fellow cast members and all of the amazing crew who help make the magic happen. Cheers!

## ROGER BIRD

Arthur, *Doris & Ivy in the Home*

Roger has performed improv and written and performed sketch comedy and a series of multi-character satires. Other stage credits include Danny in *Night Must Fall*, Ted in *The Foursome*, Roat in *Wait Until Dark*, Albert in *The Dinner Party*, Mitch in *Tuesdays with Morrie* and Scrooge in *Gravenhursturst Christmas Carol*. Roger thanks his family for their love and support.

HSF  
Debut  
Season

## WAYNE BLACK

Minister, *Anne of Green Gables*

Following retirement from a career in education, my wife and I moved to Haliburton. Music has played a significant role in our family activities, so it was a natural step to become involved in the Festival Choir, the orchestra and the band, along with the church choir. Then, one summer, when an actor became ill, I was invited to take on the part. Since then, I have been privileged to play minor roles in several productions including this one.

## ANNABELLE BORGDORFF

Miss Stacy/Mrs. MacPherson/Dance Captain, *Anne of Green Gables*

This is Annabelle's first season with the Highlands Summer Festival, however she has acting experience starring as Wadsworth in *Clue* and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with the HHSS Drama Club, and as Margaret in *Much Ado About Nothing* at Redeemer University, where she studies Languages and Fine Art. Theatre allows her to exercise all her artistic talents: singing, acting, and dancing!

HSF  
Debut  
Season

## ISABEL BUTTLER

Ivy, *Doris & Ivy in the Home*

Isabel is delighted to make her acting debut with the HSF as Ivy in *Doris and Ivy in the Home*. A former artistic director of Razzamataz Kids' Shows!, she has long nurtured a passion for performance. With creative roots spanning the Canadian Arctic, Germany, Austria, and Haida Gwaii, she brings warmth and authenticity to the stage. Isabel thanks her children and cast mates for their support.

HSF  
Debut  
Season

# Festival Company 2026

## **RUAIRÍ BYRNE**

Moody Sloane, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Ruairí is thrilled to return, having previously appeared in *Urinetown* and *The Miracle Worker*. Ruairí began performing at age three. His diverse credits include a COVID-inspired collaboration with Josh Cruddas and contributing to a voice-acting thesis for London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. An ACTRA Actor, represented by Foster Talent, Ruairí is currently working on a feature film. He is a multi-instrumentalist with a passion for dialect.

## **ED CANNING**

Matthew Cuthbert, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Ed is excited to participate in the HSF for the second time, having performed in *Urinetown* last year. When he is not performing as an Employment Lawyer at Ross & McBride LLP, he can be found refinishing furniture on Basshaunt Lake or getting music therapy with the Highland Singers. A native of Port Perry, theatre has been his joy for over 50 years.

## **CHRIS CHUMBLEY**

Mr. Philips, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Chris has been involved in the musical and theatrical communities of Haliburton since his high school years. He is pleased to once again be a part of the Highlands Summer Festival. Previous involvement with HSF has included roles in *Urinetown*, *She Loves Me*, *Glorious* with the Highlands Little Theatre and *Mustard and Punch Up* with Ctrl-ART-Del.

## **JIM DWYER**

Alphonse "Noodles" Feghetti,  
*Too Many Cooks*

 Jim, as a producer, director and actor, has been a regular on the cottage country stage for many years. He has performed in both community theatre and professionally throughout Ontario. Among his favorite efforts have been *Dial "M" For Murder*, *On A First Name Basis*, *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *Gin Game*. Jim is honoured to have been invited to join this very talented *Too Many Cooks* team.

## **CURTIS EASTMURE**

Cecil, *Anne of Green Gables*  
After spending last season as stage manager for *Salt-Water Moon*, I'm delighted to be back in the spotlight, singing and dancing. My HSF highlights include Uncle Max in *The Sound of Music*, Doc Gibbs in *Our Town*, the Bank Manager in *Mary Poppins*, and Robert in *Proof*. I also spend much of the spring building sets, which is great fun.

## **LESLIE ENGLISH**

Doris, *Doris & Ivy in the Home*  
After a 15-year hiatus from the stage, Lesley is, in equal measure, both thrilled and terrified to return. Reflecting on her love of performing, she shares, "amateur theatre is an exhibitionist's alternative to bridge" — and she's never liked bridge! Past Festival credits include *Looking* (2011), *Sylvia* (2010), and *Butterflies Are Free* (2009). She is delighted to be back. Enjoy the show.

# Festival Company 2026

## ROWYN FOSTER

Tammy Sloane, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Trading her JDH Grade 5 desk for the world of Avonlea, this 11-year-old is back for her second act with the Highlands Summer Festival. After discovering her love for the stage two years ago in *The Miracle Worker*, she's thrilled to join the ensemble for this timeless musical. She is ready to fill the theatre with song and make this summer one for the books!

## BROOKE GOOLEY

Gertie Pye, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Brooke Gooley grew up in music and never stopped. At 12, she launched a YouTube channel with thousands of followers. Now an Instagram creator pulling millions of monthly views, she inspires teens through humour and heart. She runs a crochet and clothing brand, and made her Festival debut as Brigitta in *The Sound of Music*. Follow her: [instagram.com/brookegooley](https://www.instagram.com/brookegooley)  
[youtube.com/@BrookeGooley](https://www.youtube.com/@BrookeGooley)

## ELLA "RHAЕ" GOOLEY

Anne Shirley, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Ella Rhae has been making music since she was three. The Toronto-born, Haliburton-based folk-pop artist wrote her first song at five, won an award for it, and never really stopped. She's a Grade 8 conservatory pianist, a Berklee attendee, a provincial festival winner, and the kind of vocalist people remember.

## RENÉE GRIFFITH

Mrs. Pye, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Renée is delighted to be cast in the role of Mrs. Pye in this summer's production of *Anne of Green Gables - The Musical*. She recently had the honour of portraying Ruth in Highlands Little Theatre's production of *Calendar Girls*, and the role of Officer Barrel in HSF's 2025 summer production of *Urinetown, The Musical*.

## AOIFE HOGAN

Missy Andrews, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Aoife Hogan is a grade five student in J. Douglas Hodgson Elementary school. This is Aoife's second appearance in the Highlands Summer Festival. Aoife has many hobbies, including singing lessons, travelling and dancing which she does competitively. Her favourite place she's visited is Belize. Aoife's favourite musical is *Matilda*, having seen it at London's West End. Her favourite animals are dogs and capybaras.

## RÓISÍN HOGAN

Prissy Andrews, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Róisín Hogan is very excited to be making her second appearance in the Highlands Summer Festival. She was previously in *The Miracle Worker* two years ago, playing one of the Perkins girls. Róisín is a grade eight student at J. Douglas Hodgson elementary school, and is graduating this year. Some of her hobbies include playing guitar and piano, reading and theatre.



Ella Gooley, Brooke Gooley, Evelyn Mardus and Penelope Irving in *The Sound of Music*, 2022

# Festival Company 2026

## **PENELOPE IRVINE**

Tillie Boulter, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Penelope Irvine is excited to be back performing with the Highlands Summer Festival. Previous credits include Gretel in *The Sound of Music* at age seven and *The Miracle Worker* in 2024. In addition to theatre, she is actively involved in hockey, dance, volleyball, soccer, and track. She has a strong passion for acting, singing, music, and athletic performance.

## **CHRISTINE JONAS-SIMPSON**

Mrs. Barry, *Anne of Green Gables*  
I am so excited to be a lady of Avonlea! This is my sixth show with the Highlands Summer Festival. I am grateful to the HSF, as this is where I learned to act. Singing and dancing in this show is a challenge for me – but it is also pure joy! I am so delighted to be in a show with such an amazing creative team, cast and crew.

## **ALEX KOCOT**

Hamilton X. Effing, *Too Many Cooks*  
Alex is excited to be returning to the Northern Lights stage for another Festival season! Previous HSF credits include Leaf Coneybear in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (2024), John "Earnest" Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2022), and Mercutio in *Romeo & Juliet* (2018). Alex would like to thank his wife for her constant patience throughout the rehearsal process.

## **JORDAN KOVACS**

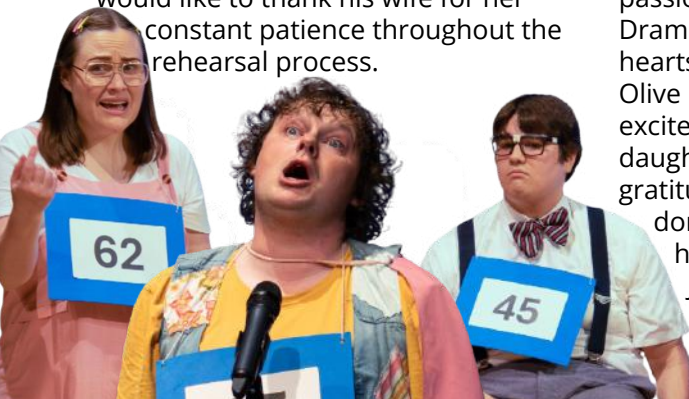
Frank Plunkett, *Too Many Cooks*  
Jordan is ecstatic to be back for his fourth season. He began acting in mid 2023 with Arpad Laslow in HSF's *She Loves Me*. Credits include Johnathan Harker in *Dracula: A Comedy in Terror*, William Barfée in *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and Patrick Simmons in *A Murder Is Announced*. Jordan thanks his family, friends, and co-stars for being amazing people and offering support during tough times. Follow Jordan: Instagram/Facebook: @unusual.jordan

## **EVELYN MARDUS**

Josie Pye, *Anne of Green Gables*  
A familiar face at the Highlands Summer Festival, Evelyn returns for her fourth summer of theatrical fun. Best known for her standout turns as Little Sally in *Urinetown* and Helen Keller in *The Miracle Worker*, she brings a unique spark to every character she inhabits. In her theatre "off-season," you can usually find her juggling a busy sports schedule of hockey, track, soccer, volleyball, and basketball!

## **MEG MARDUS**

Mrs. Spencer/Lucilla, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Returning for her fourth season at the Highlands Summer Festival, Meg is a passionate educator who gets to teach Drama and Music. After capturing hearts (and a second-place trophy) as Olive in 2024's Spelling Bee, she is excited to share the spotlight with her daughter, Evelyn. Much love and gratitude to Paul, Julian and Freddie! "I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing." – William James



Meg Mardus, Alex Kocot, and Jordan Kovacs in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, 2023

# Festival Company 2026

## RUBY MANSFIELD

Ruby Gillis, *Anne of Green Gables*

Ruby is a student at JDH who has a passion for music, dancing, and art, and has always appreciated Canadian plays. When she's not acting, you can find Ruby reading, playing the piano, or hanging out with friends. She has greatly enjoyed her time with the Summer Festival and can't wait for her next show.

HSF  
Debut  
Season

## LAUREN McINNES

Mrs. Lynde, *Anne of Green Gables*

Lauren has been involved with the Highlands Summer festival from the very start, as one of its founding members. After a hiatus of 6 years, she is excited to be back on stage, in the cast of *Anne of Green Gables* for the second time. Lauren keeps herself busy with her grandchildren and her music students. She enjoys singing with the Peterborough Singers and plays in the Muskoka Philharmonic orchestra.

## FIA MARZIALI

Diana Barry, *Anne of Green Gables*

Fia is very excited to perform in the Highlands Summer Festival this year. She has performed in two other plays before, *The School of Rock* as Tomika, and *The Miracle Worker* as a young girl at the Perkins School for the Blind. Fia is happy to expand her skill set and share the story of *Anne of Green Gables*.

## LUNA MARZIALI

Geraldine Buote, *Anne of Green Gables*

Luna is so glad to join one of HSF's productions this year! She has done two other productions including *The School of Rock* as Millie, and *The Miracle Worker* as one of the Perkins girls in the school for the blind. She has worked in a commercial for a boardgame called *Beat the Parents* with the Actors Access agency.

## JEWEL SISSON

Honey Bubbalowe, *Too Many Cooks*

Jewel Sisson is excited to work with Highlands Summer Festival for the first time.

Having attended productions as a child, it feels like a full-circle moment. Her theatre experience includes pantomimes *Snow White*, *Robin Hood*, and *Little Red Riding Hood* with Coldwater Village Players, multiple Sears Drama Festival entries during high school, and supervising theatre arts summer camps in OrilliaOffstage. Jewel works as an occupational therapist in Muskoka, helping people regain independence.

HSF  
Debut  
Season

## KIRSTEN SIXT

Marilla Cuthbert, *Anne of Green Gables*

Kirsten is delighted to return to Highlands Summer Festival. Marilla's heart is as big as PEI itself and bringing her to life has been a true joy. Past roles include: Sister Philomena, *Drinking Habits* (HSF), Shirley Valentine, *Shirley Valentine* (HSF, FC), Audrey II (puppeteer), *Little Shop of Horrors* (FAP), and many others. Kirsten directs Teaching Awareness through Puppetry and is grateful to her family, cast and Dougie Walker for all the laughter and support!



# Festival Company 2026

## DOUGLAS TINDAL

Irving Bubbalowe, *Too Many Cooks*  
Douglas Tindal (fourth season) played Officer Lockstock in *Urinetown, the Musical* (2025) and Earl in *The Birds and the Bees* (2024). He is the author of *Tales from Wine on the Porch*, a collection of humorous short stories, and two plays. Doug and Mardi live in Haliburton village where he is at work on a novel, serves on the board of the Summer Festival, and helps to organize Bookapalooza, a festival for booklovers.

## MAX WARD

Earl/Stationmaster, *Anne of Green Gables*  
Max Ward made his debut on the Highlands Summer Festival stage in 2004 as Herr Zeller in *The Sound of Music!* More recently, in October 2025, Max enjoyed playing the role of Tom Winkler in the Let's Make Opera production of *Crane Lake Cleanse*. Now Max will be performing the roles of both Earl the Mailman and the Stationmaster...but not at the same time!

## CATHERINE WHEELER

Mrs. Blewett/Mrs. Sloan,  
*Anne of Green Gables*  
Catherine is thrilled to be back for her second appearance with the Highlands Summer Festival. Last year's musical, *Urinetown*, was a fantastic experience. The story of *Anne of Green Gables* has been close to her heart since childhood, and she is delighted to be a part of this year's performance, working with such an amazing cast and crew. We hope you enjoy the show!

## DANIEL WHEELER

Mickey McCall, *Too Many Cooks*  
Daniel is happy to be welcomed back for his third season of the Highlands Summer Festival. He is excited to expand his acting range and explore a new genre of theatre. He much enjoyed his first musical in last year's performance of *Urinetown* and is excited for something new and different this year.



Douglas Tindal, Daniel Wheeler, Evelyn Mardus, Thomas Austin-Ward, Jordan Kovacs, Catherine Wheeler, and Ruairi Byrne in *Urinetown - The Musical*, 2025



Evelyn Mardus, Thomas Austin-Ward, Gracie Griffith, and Ruari Bryne, *Urinetown - The Musical*, 2025



# Early Stage Spotlight...

## The second coming of early stages!

The Highland Summer Festival's Early Stages program began in 2013 and continued until Covid-19 shut it (and everything else) down.

Its seven seasons helped a generation of local young people discover a love of theatre, including Gracie Griffith, seen in last season's *Urinetown*, and the young leads of this season's *Anne of Green Gables – The Musical*, Ella Gooley as Anne and Thomas Austin-Ward as Gilbert.

A relaunch – maybe think of it as Early Stages Part Deux – is still just a gleam in artistic producer Dougie Walker's eye, but planning is underway.

The first Early Stages offered a kind of theatre day camp for 10 to 14-year-olds, with games and instruction by theatre students from Sheridan College. It was a four-week program, roughly the same time frame as the Festival, with a performance at the end. Service clubs contributed bursaries to assist with the tuition, which was \$190 through all seven years.

Dougie Walker is thinking about some changes. He hopes the second incarnation may provide opportunities for a broader age range, and focus more on musical theatre.

This program is for your kids and grandkids! We would like to know what you think of some of the options we are considering for a re-established Early Stages.

Please take a couple of minutes and answer our brief survey.



You will be returned to the program when you press SUBMIT



# It takes a County...

The Highlands Summer Festival Season is only possible with the amazing talents and dedication of over 100 volunteers - actors, directors, producers, designers, builders, painters, movers, theatre staff, managers, ticket manager, and the members of our Board of Directors.

The work of our volunteers is wholehearted supported by our community. To the very many organizations, business, and individuals who have contributed to the development of this year's Highland Summer Festival, we are truly grateful.

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- Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion Board, Technical Manager Tasha Ferguson, and Booking Manger Heather Smith
- HHSS Principal Jennifer Mills and custodial staff



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# Friends of the Festival

*We get by with a little help from our Friends –  
and so much more!*

Friends of the Highlands Summer Festival help us to grow and excel. You help us:

- fund facilities, like our energy-efficient LED theatre lighting or our current drive to improve sound quality in the theatre
- ensure excellence in our productions, like securing the leadership of professional directors
- carry our love of theatre to the next generation through our casting policies, youth discounts, and Early Stages initiative.

Join the company and be recognized as a Stage Hand (up to \$49); Actor (\$50); Director (\$100); Producer (\$250); Executive Producer (\$500); or Headliner (\$1000). As an individual donor, you are eligible to vote at the Highlands Summer Festival's annual general meeting in April, and help shape the next twenty-five years. Corporate donors at the \$1,500 level receive a full page ad in our Program and additional recognition.

Please consider your 2026 donation to the Highlands Summer Festival. Visit our [secure donation page](#).

We will issue a tax receipt for all contributions over \$25. All donors are recognized in our Festival Program and on the Festival website – and all donors help ensure the continued growth and excellence of the Highlands Summer Festival, one of Canada's finest regional, community theatres.

We look forward to your ongoing support.

Board of Directors  
Highlands Summer Festival



The following individuals, organizations and businesses have become Friends of the Highlands Summer Festival by contributing to the success of the 2026 Season. We thank you for your support.

#### HEADLINER

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#### DIRECTOR

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Wendy Ogilvie  
Jane Robinson  
Katrina Shaddock  
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Chalene Smith  
Carol Stewart  
Heather Taylor  
Maggie Thompson  
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Maraylene Welch  
Renée Woltz  
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#### ACTOR

Joan Bell  
Barb Bohlin  
Rodger & Nancy  
Cummins  
Margo Davidson  
Robert Deubel  
Jan Garrow  
Eleanor Hall  
William Hearn &  
Ruth Hunt  
Linda Lewis-Daly  
Randall Lintall  
Carolyn Ludlow  
Diana McCullough  
Judith McNeilage  
Philip Meades  
Christine Miller  
Sally Moore  
Anne Murray  
Sylvia Perkins  
BJ Romans  
Gwen Scriven  
John & Judy Skinner  
Susan Spencer  
Bob Stiles

#### ACTOR

Verla Stinson  
Wilma Warne  
Marie Watson  
Sylvia Winder

#### STAGEHAND

Robin Begin  
Bruce DeLazzer  
Wendy Evenden  
Laurie McFarland  
Peggy Menzies  
Reet Murray  
Stephen Robson  
Barb Swannell  
Ulrike Woll-Morrison



# Behind the Scenes

Mounting a theatre season of this magnitude is no easy task. Its success involves many willing and eager individuals who bring a variety of skills to the numerous tasks at hand.

## **BOX OFFICE:**

Beth Johns, Ken Loney, and Bessie Sullivan

## **FRONT OF HOUSE:**

Wendy Hampson leads a team including Andrea Roberts, BJ Romans, Carol Greenwood, David Zilstra, Diane Burchert, Gina Stanley, Guy Armstrong, Heather Carroll, Helen Gabel, Ilse Marie Tarte, Jan Gerrow, Jim Wilson, Joan Hawley, JoAnne Collins, Karen Armstrong, Karin Stieg-Drobig, Karley McNamara, Linda Cherry, Lynn Holmes, Marie Zahab, Mary Fox, Nancy Cook, Sharon Briscoe, Wendy Harding, and others

## **SET CONSTRUCTION:**

Manager David Mills assisted by Curtis Eastmure, Barry Hughes, Donn Lovett, Doug Norris, Sue Vorvis, Andy Salvatori, Rob Schwering, Ken Collins, and Norris Turner

## **SET DECORATION TEAM:**

Manager Sue Vorvis with Beverley Andersen, Jacqueline Halupka, Gill Stephen, Mary Hillaby, Jenny Rieger, Ruth Carter, Leslie Croft, Rita Jackson, and Betty Mills

## **TRANSPORTATION:**

Ken Loney and friends with trucks and trailers

## **SET & STRIKE CREW:**

David Mills, Norris Turner, Jack Brezina, Brian Kipping, Ken Loney, Sean Pennylegion, Barry Hughes, Rob Schwering, Doug Norris, Ken Collins, Curtis Eastmure, and crew

## **PROMOTION & PROGRAM:**

Sue Vorvis, Emily Stonehouse, Douglas Tindal, and Renée Griffith

## **WEBSITE MANAGEMENT:**

Sue Vorvis and Ken Loney

## **SOCIAL MEDIA:**

Renée Griffith and Sue Vorvis

## **PHOTOGRAPHY:**

Wendy Evenden

## **ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS:**

Brian & Beth Kipping, and Melissa Stephens

## **REFRESHMENTS:**

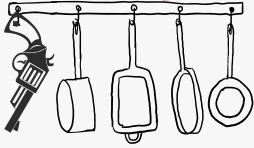
Lindsey Coates, Mary Hillaby, and Laurie McFarland

## **50/50:**

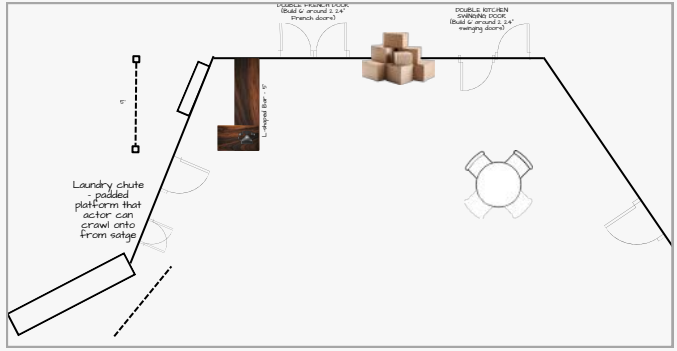
Robin Begin, Linda Cherry, Christine Jonas-Simpson, Barb Moore, Sylvia Perkins, Jane Symons, and Rikki Woll-Morrison



# TOO MANY COOKS



## Design Concept



# Rules of Set Decoration

Our sets contribute to the magic of theatre, whether it's an other-worldly *Urinetown* or a down-home country cottage. Painting each set requires a small group of volunteers with a vast range of talents, from 'great with a roller' to professional artists. The work can be complex but there are a few simple rules:

## The Thirty Foot Rule

The set is intended to look its best at a distance of thirty feet or more. To the audience it should appear as a subtle plaster texture. Up close it's a visible tone-on-tone painted rag application. A fine mahogany wainscoting is actually a red/brown paint base overlaid with various colours of water-downed paint brushed together to imitate grain and highlights. We don't bother with subtle details because you'll never see them. And if one of our painters gets stuck on a detail, another will helpfully call out 'thirty feet'.

## The Paint Rule

If it can't be done with paint, we simply don't do it. Fortunately, there is very little that can't be done with paint. In *Anne of Green Gables*, we painted rock foundations, flooring to give the look of worn painted pine plank, weather-aged cedar, rotting cedar shingles, plank siding, dragon-tooth cedar shingles, authentic custom stencil wallpaper, beadboard, hand painted signs, cast-iron, and a cherry tree, to name just a few.

## The Anything Rule

The Anne set is almost all wood, but we will paint anything. Metal, plastic, stone, glass, vinyl siding, and fabric are often painted to create a specific vision. For *Shirley Valentine*, we spray-painted yards and yards of canvas drop cloths to imitate a Greek beach; we painted the stage to resemble a hardwood gym floor in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and the terrace fence in *Doris and Ivy in the Home* is topped with plastic garden borders from the dollar store and painted to look like an iron fence.

## The Mixing Rule

You can achieve any colour in the universe by mixing paints left over from previous shows. There are dozens of cans of paint, in a multitude of colours, stored at our shop, all from previous year sets. When a small amount or special colour is required, we simply mix it up. There are over a dozen custom mixed colours and washes used in the Anne set. For example, we mixed or applied eight different colours to transform wood into aged cast iron, and we used more than a dozen colours to paint the cherry tree.



### The 'Not Garbage' Rule

You might throw it out, but we use it. A stiff, paint-filled brush is a tool. The stiffer the brush, the better the wood grain. We use stiff, paint-filled chip brushes (super cheap at \$1.25) to create wood grain, old rags to create texture, wood blocks to create the illusion of peeling paint, scrunched up paper to create cracks in concrete, feathers to create veins in marble, and sea sponges for, well, everything. We use fine art brushes and good quality paint brushes, but it is the 'that's not garbage' items that create the magic.

### The Magic Sponge Rule

Sea sponges are always at hand. Always used damp, they combine paint to apply multiple colours at once to create bricks, marble, granite, concrete, soot, break-up, and so much more. Best of all, a sponge can be used to 'paint' over an 'oops' or simply wipe one out completely.

### The Flat First Rule

Sets are typically designed flat, which makes them lighter, and easier to paint and move. Our stock flats are a 1x3 pine frame with a quarter ply skin. Each of the six flats in the kitchen for Anne were painted no fewer than ten times to create the effect of an old, but well-kept kitchen in a rural farmhouse in a small Maritime town.

- Primer
- Wallpaper base colour coat
- Beadboard base colour coat
- Wallpaper base colour coat
- Beadboard base colour coat
- Beadboard grain application
- Beadboard lines
- Wallpaper texture application
- Wallpaper stencil application
- Baseboard and chair rail, painted as grained wood, applied to the finished wall

### The "It's the Actor's Fault" Rule

If the audience is looking that closely at the set that they see our mistakes, the actors are not doing their job!

Continued...



### The 'A Little Help' Rule

Typically, our sets are created on-site by our own construction team. On occasion, however, the design calls for a piece that requires a little more finesse or precision that our team doesn't have the tools, time, or space to produce. Fortunately, we have some friends who have the skills and tools to take on these pieces (probably not the time, but they always come through). For *Anne of Green Gables*, we needed help with the cast-iron stove and the cherry tree.

Hans Andersen, his third season with HSF, crafted a cast iron stove to make Marilla's heart swell with pride. The dimensions are perfect, the doors open and close, and the details are authentic! Mary Hillaby and Gill Stephen transformed the raw wood into aged, well-used cast iron.

Due to space limitations on the stage, it was decided that the cherry tree as originally designed would have to be scaled back to a silhouette. Greg Shikaze, his second season with the HSF (cityscape for *Urinetown* in 2025, wall sconces for *Too Many Cooks*), took one look at the sketch and knew exactly how to create some dimension without actually taking up stage space. He precision-cut puzzle pieces for the trunk, limbs, and canopy, layering them with spacers to create the illusion of depth. Jacquie Halupka, a local artist and part of our set decoration team, expertly captured the beauty of a cherry tree in spring.

Would you like to help make magic? [Get in touch!](#)



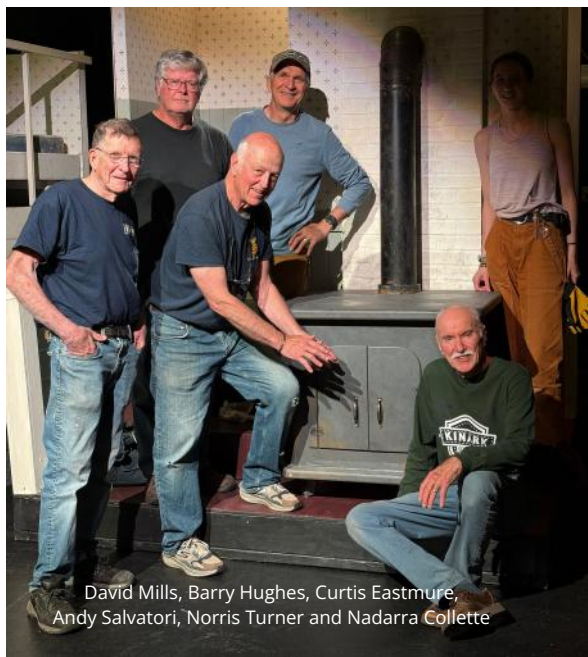
# Move-in Day...

Building the set for *Anne* was a massive undertaking in time, skill, materials, and space. The set has four main units - kitchen, house, train station, and front entry - and a couple of smaller pieces - the wagon and cherry tree; the kitchen and house are so heavy they are mounted on air pucks so that they literally float on stage. The set was constructed and painted in our shop over a period of six weeks.

And then, many of the construction team members who laboured long and hard to put the set together, pull it all apart! Under the very experienced direction of David Mills (HSF founder, actor, stage manager, construction team manager to name but a few of his roles over the past 26 years) the team, with a little help from Ed Canning, who will appear as Matthew Cuthbert, and Nadarra Collette, our sound and lighting technician, moved all the pieces from the shop and carefully reconstructed the units on the Northern Lights stage.

Move-in day is long and frustrating. If asked, David will tell you that the set never goes back together quite the same as it did in the shop and, even after 26 years, he still doesn't know exactly why doors don't swing, trim doesn't fit, pieces go missing. But, at the end of move-in day (or days in the case of *Anne*) the doors swing, the trim fits, new pieces/hardware are added as required, and the pieces roll/float as they should.

Finally, the team sinks into the seats to see what you will see. And when they are satisfied that you will feel the magic, confident the actors and backstage crew will bring the set to life for you, they leave the theatre to return to the shop to work on the next set.

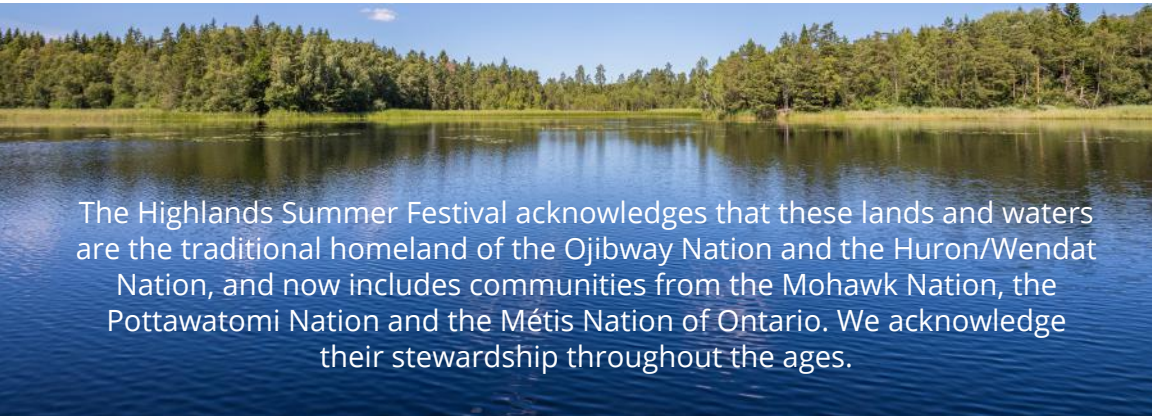


David Mills, Barry Hughes, Curtis Eastmure,  
Andy Salvatori, Norris Turner and Nadarra Collette

# About the Festival



The Highlands Summer Festival is a not-for-profit, charitable theatre company in the Haliburton Highlands, presenting live dramatic and musical productions utilizing the facilities of the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion and other venues. The Highlands Summer Festival was created to encourage the development of theatrical skills and talents in the Highlands, especially among young people. We are committed to presenting at least one Canadian production each season.



The Highlands Summer Festival acknowledges that these lands and waters are the traditional homeland of the Ojibway Nation and the Huron/Wendat Nation, and now includes communities from the Mohawk Nation, the Pottawatomi Nation and the Métis Nation of Ontario. We acknowledge their stewardship throughout the ages.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

President: Rita Jackson

Past President: Brian Kipping

Treasurer: Susan Vorvis

Directors: Renée Griffith, Emily Stonehouse,  
Jennifer Strype, and Douglas Tindal

**ARTISTIC PRODUCER:** Douglas (Dougie) Walker

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCER:** Melissa Stephens

**GENERAL MANAGER:** Ken Loney

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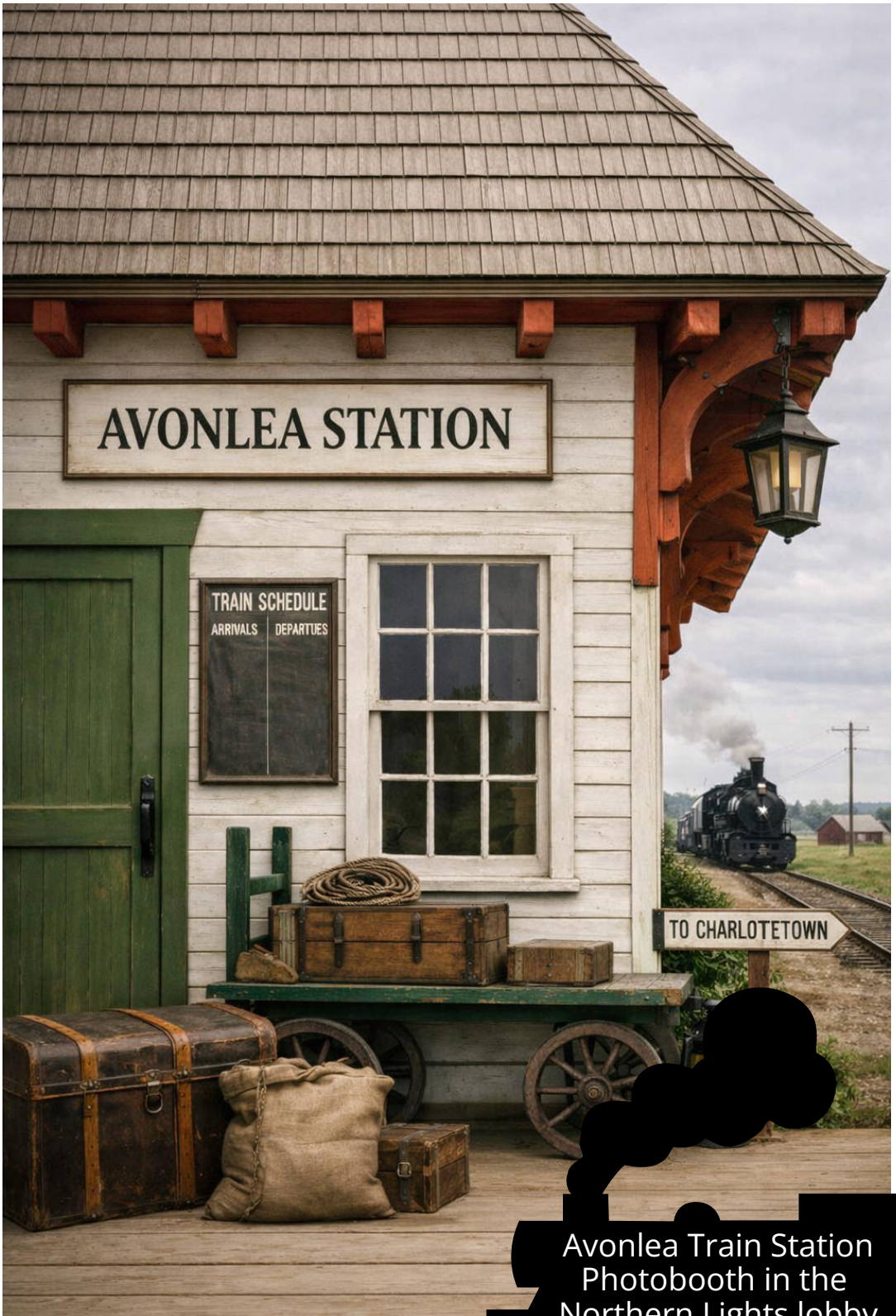
Highlands Summer Festival  
Box 938, Haliburton, Ontario K0M 1S0

## **TICKETS AND GENERAL ENQUIRIES:**

Box office: 705-457-9933 • 1-855-457-9933

email: [tickets@HighlandsSummerFestival.on.ca](mailto:tickets@HighlandsSummerFestival.on.ca)

website: [www.HighlandsSummerFestival.on.ca](http://www.HighlandsSummerFestival.on.ca)



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