

# Fifty years of award-winning community theatre

By **VIRGINIA BANCUR**  
GLT president

Georgetown Little Theatre Productions Inc. (GLT) had its beginning in an amateur theatricals evening class that was held at the Georgetown District High School during the winter and spring of 1959-60. As a grand finale the members of the evening class staged a one-act play called *The Mayor of Torontal*.

Members of the cast included Vera MacDonald, who is still active in GLT today and Mary and John Goebel. In the fall of 1960, this enthusiastic group along with Mike and Mary Peleschak, Gord and Cathy Hunt formed the nucleus of what was to become Georgetown Little Theatre.

The first play the new group performed was *Dirty Work At The Crossroads*, a melodrama. Gord Hunt remembers, "since this was a very small

meeting, everyone who wanted a part got one; I was cast as the hero, Adam Oakhart."

Rehearsals for the three-act play started in October 1960 and the play was presented in February 1961 at Wrigglesworth School.

From 1962 to 1969 the group performed in the Georgetown District High School auditorium, located at the west end of the present gym. Although the stage was considerably larger than the one at Wrigglesworth, the acoustics in the hall were less than ideal, especially when there were small audiences for the last play of the season.

The group turned full circle and returned to Wrigglesworth where performances were presented until the spring of 1979. The plays for the 1979-80 and 1980-81 seasons were performed at Sacre Coeur Hall, until the new theatre opened in the fall of 1981.

GLT had the honour of being the first group to perform in the new theatre, named in memory of John Elliott, a former Georgetown councillor. We presented *Not Now Darling* with Lois Elliott portraying Janie, making her first hometown appearance in the theatre named after her father.

The Elliott family continued to support the arts and provided GLT with rehearsal and set-building facilities in two separate warehouses. Costumes and props were stored in an old school in Norval. Although the new theatre provided us with a fine stage and comfortable seating for our patrons, a strong desire still existed for GLT to acquire a building that would adequately serve all our needs under one roof.

At our 25th Anniversary Jubilee, we were proud to announce that negotiations had been finalized with the Town of Halton Hills to purchase the old Stewarttown Hall. On January 2, 1986, our dream of owning our own facility became reality and we took possession



PRIVATE LIVES 1968

of the Stewarttown Hall.

Members worked diligently to build a new costume room in the attic; an entranceway at the back of the stage increased its potential; and a dressing room enabled us to conveniently present one-act plays to our members and guests.

Disaster struck on Monday, March 30, 1998 at 6:40 a.m., the Halton Hills Fire Department was called to our Studio in Stewarttown when a passer-by noticed smoke coming from the building. By 8 a.m. it was completely engulfed in flames and by 2 p.m. nothing was left standing.

With the exception of our archives, which were stored in an old steel and stone vault and suffered only minor smoke and water damage, everything was lost; all the costumes, furniture, and the set for *Dial M For Murder* in the workshop.

With determination and perseverance, the members raised funds to rebuild a new and better home calling on local businesses and the community to assist. Many members devoted their time and efforts including Dorothy Hunt, John Carter and Mike Wilson.

The new custom-built Studio was opened on the footprint of the previous Studio in 2002, and is the envy of most other theatre groups in Southern Ontario. It offers a rehearsal space the approximate size of the stage at the John Elliott Theatre, a huge costume collection, and a large area where sets can be constructed.

In 2003, members of the Georgetown Little Theatre Productions started the Georgetown Little Theatre Youth Company (GLTYC) to fulfill the need for a community theatre group for youth in Georgetown. GLTYC provides young people between the ages of 10-18, the opportunity to learn about all aspects of theatre from acting and writing to stage management, to make-up and more, all the while building teamwork and leadership skills. As part of the continuing development of the GLTYC, a series of workshops, rehearsals and other events are organized on Saturdays throughout the season.

The company produced its first play, *Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the spring of 2004 season. The annual spring show enables the youth to work with more experienced members of the adult company.

During our 2004-05 season, the Youth Group also produced its first annual one-act play festival produced entirely by the youth, giving them a chance to showcase their own talents. The youth members welcome the challenge of producing thought provoking and interesting plays using their imagination and forcing the audience to use theirs. The audience was transported to the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina for the production *Dark of the Moon*. They faced the challenge of turning a cast of 25 into a variety of insects in *The Insect Play*. Make-believe took us to the world of Narnia in an adaption of *The Lion, the Witch and the*

*Wardrobe*. We travelled back in time to Salem, Massachusetts to relive the witch trials in *The Crucible*.

The GLT Youth Company was proud to participate in part of Georgetown's history when they presented the world premiere, *The Georgetown Boys*. The play written by GLT member Sam Hancock based on the works of an author, told the story of Armenian boys travelling from Europe to Georgetown for a better life.



OUT OF SIGHT OUT OF MURDER 2003

The Youth Company is a vital and vibrant part of the GLT family. Besides being a youth theatre group, the young people are very active with GLT in the community. You can find them at Canada Day painting faces and participating in the parade. They have assisted the Town in their Volunteer Appreciation Event and the Acton BIA in the Leathertown Festival. On the Sunday of the Georgetown Fall Fair, you will find them in the children's area painting faces.

Georgetown Little Theatre Production members assist various not-for-profit community groups with their fundraising efforts through a donation of show tickets, benefit nights or providing ac-

tors for an evening event.

For 50 years, entries into various theatre festivals have netted GLT many awards, along with nominations for Best Director, Producer, Lighting, Visual Design, and Acting categories.

As we embark on the next milestone in GLT history, we would like to thank all the people whose volunteer participation, vision, and artistic talent has made Georgetown Little Theatre Productions Inc. the success it is today.



NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH 1961

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