

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier University



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Laurier festival to raise curtain on acting skills and their applications

Waterloo, Ont. (Dec. 23) — *Shakespeare's* assertion that "All the world's a stage" will be played out in practical terms and light-hearted fun during Wilfrid Laurier University's annual public festival Tuesday, Jan. 12, through Sunday, Jan. 17.

Called "The Actor's Craft," the six-day festival will feature workshops, panel discussions, concerts, exhibits, and plays that highlight acting skills and demonstrate their uses in settings as varied as business, social work, psychology, sports, and music.

Business professionals will learn how to be more effective in their presentations; teachers and professors will discover tips for the classroom; musicians will find advice for enhancing their showmanship and managing performance anxiety; athletes and coaches will pick up ideas for improving concentration; and therapists will become more attuned to the non-verbal communication that goes on in counselling situations.

Bernard Hopkins and Marti Maraden are among the theatre professionals who will be participating in "The Actor's Craft." Both have played leading roles in productions of the Stratford Festival, the Shaw Festival, and the Grand Theatre in London. Hopkins and Maraden have performed numerous film and television roles, and have major directing credits across Canada.

"An actor offers his or her skills as a gift," says Leslie O'Dell, a professor of English at Laurier and festival chair. "This is an opportunity to spread the wealth around."

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O'Dell, who directs drama productions at Laurier and is the text consultant for the Stratford Festival, says the festival theme evolved from ideas about what function theatre plays in society, just what it is actors do when they act, and what they have in common with those in other fields. With psychology professor Richard Walsh-Bower, she is conducting research on how an actor's own soul and emotions are affected by acting.

The festival will feature three performances of *Our Country's Good* by Timberlake Wertenbaker. The play follows the first British penal colony to Australia in 1789 and explores the effects of the military's attempts at reform by having the prisoners put on a play. It will be directed by Kevin Orr, a Toronto-based director who is visiting Laurier to direct the play and teach a modern acting course.

On the festival's family day, theatre professionals will guide children five and up through the performance of fairy tales — complete with costumes, props, and make-up.

At a murder mystery night, audience members will be both suspects and detectives assigned to solve a case staged with the assistance of the local production company Dead Funny.

Both aspiring and seasoned actors will be able to take advantage of workshops on techniques for auditions, clowning, and the staging of fight scenes. They will be led by veterans of the Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, and other production companies.

In a discussion that looks at the church service as theatre, Paul Bosch, a professor of liturgics and spirituality, will critique today's trend toward entertainment evangelism.

Lectures in eight regular classes will be open to the public; their topics range from the clinical uses of drama to the actor in Shakespeare, computers, and spiritual growth.

Except for performances of *Our Country's Good* and the murder mystery theatre, all the events are free; none require advance registration.

Note: A detailed schedule accompanies this news release. Dr. Leslie O'Dell can be reached at home at (519) 669-5316 during the holidays.