



INTERACTIVE

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

It's steak-and-kidney pie for lunch at organ donation play

"If we're going to offer 'dinner theatre', we'd better put something on the menu that grabs

people's attention!" Those were the thoughts of Target's executive theatrical director **Heldor Schäfer** when he decided to finish the 2004-05 season with two performances in mid-June.

So how did *Nobody Wants My Old Organs* get on the playbill, and steak-and-kidney pie on the menu?

The play, developed by the players who currently range in age from 51 to 81, had been commissioned by the Victoria chapter of the Kidney Foundation of Canada last summer, with première performances in Victoria, Surrey and Vancouver this winter. It centres around Molly, 73, who tries to explain to her argumentative daughter that she wants to be a life-giving organ donor "when I'm dead and gone." A cast of diverse characters—from bag lady to hot dog vendor, golfers to bartender—weigh in on the topic, dredging up various controversies and urban myths surrounding this sensitive subject.

As audience members spread the word about the performance and the content of the play,



Target Theatre players Ernie Jarman, Rosalie Frampton and June Boston during a recent rehearsal of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*.

people who hadn't seen the opening shows kept asking the troupe to perform the play one more time at home in Victoria. So the decision was made to stage it for two performances at season's end. The Ambrosia Centre on Fisgard Street was picked because the troupe had used that venue before and found it "clean, cozy and central" with good acoustics.

Since it is also a catering centre, they thought, why not have a dinner show or at least lunch theatre? When Kidney Foundation organ donor awareness coordinator **Ken Merkley** was asked if he thought it would be in poor taste to put liver and onions or steak-and-kidney pie on the menu, he just laughed.

"I took that as a go-ahead," Helder says.

As during previous performances of this play, a representative of the Kidney Foundation will be on hand during question-and-answer sessions following the performances.

As a companion piece to this locally written play, Target Theatre will reprise the popular comedy, *I'm Herbert* by Robert Anderson. In it,

Herbert and Muriel, a couple in their nineties, reminisce and argue about the past, but they are hazy as to the facts when it comes to their previous marriages (and perhaps affairs?)... What's worse, they don't always remember who the other one is!

This short play is about two people suffering from dementia, which normally would be a rather gloomy subject. But the playwright makes it funny and thought-provoking all at the same time. Actors **June Boston** and **Fred Mabey** still have a few decades to go before reaching the two protagonists' age, yet they easily get away with tackling such a serious topic, seasoning it with a healthy dose of humour. Besides, with steak-and-kidney pie on the menu, and a few meaty subjects on Target Theatre's fare, a little spice doesn't hurt.

Nobody Wants My Old Organs and *I'm Herbert* will have a performance-only matinee on June 17 at 2:30 pm; admission \$12, students and seniors \$10. A three-course plated lunch accompanying the Father's Day show, June 19 at 12:30 pm, is available for \$29.95. Audience members who are a bit queasy may pass on the kidney menu and choose an alternative—breast of chicken with mushrooms, or a vegetarian plate. Reservations are required for the luncheon show by June 14. Phone 477-6054.

How long does it take to write a play?

Every now and then Target Theatre's director is asked the question, "How long does it take to develop a new play from scratch?" Well, how about this for an answer: "Anywhere from three months to a year."

In 2003 we produced an original play, *A Leak in the Plumbing*, for the Vancouver Island Health Authority's bladder continence workshop. From initial request to eventual performance it took less than eleven weeks to research, write and rehearse this play which included an "audience participation" segment. Our latest project, on the other hand, took a bit longer. In January of 2004 the Victoria chapter of the Kidney Foundation of

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Company of Players

June Boston, Lou-Ann Edgar, Rosalie Frampton,
Ernie Jarman, Dorothy Mabey, Fred Mabey,
Madeleine Mills, Phyllis McGee, Fred Storgeoff.

Executive Theatrical Director

Helder Schäfer

Board Members

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



Canada asked us, “Would you consider producing a play on organ donation?” A year later, Victoria audiences saw the world premiere of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*. Inbetween, a

lot of work had to be done—from securing funding for the project to researching the subject, improvising scenes around the issues of life-giving organ donation as it relates to the elderly, then writing, designing and rehearsing the play. Fortunately, it was the Kidney Foundation which took on the marketing and publicity aspects, reaching audiences they felt would most benefit from seeing the play.

The initial production, funded by a grant from the Victoria Foundation, was performed locally at the Eric Martin Pavilion in the Royal Jubilee Hospital in January, then travelled to the Lower Mainland with performances at the Wheelhouse Theatre in Surrey and at the Vancouver Playhouse.

Because of an enthusiastic response, Target Theatre has decided to offer more public performances of this topical play. What apparently struck a chord with audiences here and on the Lower Mainland was that *Nobody Wants My Old Organs* tackles both pro and con arguments about the sensitive issue of organ donation in a sometimes humorous way. Nor is the play all about just this one issue, but it touches on the dysfunctional relationship between a mother and her daughter, and the challenges other characters face, too.

Following performances many people have made suggestions about future productions. Especially on one point there seems to be agreement. “Your group should continue public performing,” wrote one person. And this request was echoed by many audience members during question-and-answer period after each show.

Getting ready for our 4th annual theatre workshop

It’s time to think of our next theatre performance workshop for novice and “rusty” actors. There won’t be another newsletter before it starts in September, and so we encourage prospective participants to phone or e-mail us now if they’re interested. It will most likely be an evening course, but please tell us which weekday is best for you before we make our final choice.

This isn’t merely an acting course but a theatrical mini production. Participants will form a small theatre cast to rehearse a short play, with the director of Target Theatre gently guiding them from first read-through to actual live performance in front of an audience in eight weeks!

About this newsletter

It is gratifying to see the interest our plays have generated in the past couple of years. Approximately twenty percent of our audiences ask to be placed on a mailing list to be kept informed about Target Theatre news and performances.

We send this newsletter to those who requested it either as a printed copy or via e-mail (the latter in colour). If at any time you wish to stop future mailings to your address, please let us know. We also welcome questions and comments by phone, mail, fax or e-mail (see contact information on our masthead, page 2).

We don’t charge for *Interactive*, but if you would like to become a member of Victoria Target Theatre Society, we certainly welcome you to join. The annual membership fee is \$20 for individuals, \$30 for couples or families.

Benefits include voting rights at our annual general meeting in May (our new year has just started so you would now get nearly 12 months as a member), participation in committees such as fundraising, publicity, and play reading; opportunities to assist at performances; being invited to our annual Christmas party and other events; receiving e-mails about goings-on; and of course getting this semi-annual newsletter.

Our audiences share their ideas

Audiences at our public performances have made dozens of suggestions for new play topics. When asked, "What issues on aging would you like to see treated by Target Theatre in future performances?" responses included a wide range of ideas. At last count the list of topics stood at more than 70, with subjects ranging from dating among seniors to caring for someone with dementia, dealing with hearing loss to intergenerational relationships. Here are just a few examples:

- Being the survivor of a long-time marriage.
- Coming to terms with our physical limitations.
- Desire to meet a "love" partner; loneliness.
- Driving: is it still safe (when to consider giving up a driver's license).
- Family dynamics: how do grandchildren treat their elders?
- Fear of dying.
- Forgetfulness; early signs of dementia.
- How the elderly feel emotionally in their relationships with friends and family members (is it different because you have aged?).
- Satire on government funding and seniors' taxes vs seniors' incomes. Poverty.
- Transition from own home to a retirement residence or nursing home; diminished control over our lives; choices, privacy.
- Trying new things in old age: drama, painting, and other creative endeavours.

While the subject of any play to be developed will largely depend on the organization commissioning us to produce such a play, we will still consider our audiences' suggestions. Who knows, perhaps a few of the topics could be worked into the subplot of a major play.

I'm Herbert keeps on running...

In the past, Target players with their artistic directors have usually developed, written and performed their own original plays. Recently,

however, we have added to our repertoire by selecting suitable plays that are already published. Of course such works have to fall within the Target Theatre mandate of creating empathy for the elderly and raising people's awareness about the aging process. One such "outside" play, the short comedy *I'm Herbert* by Robert Anderson, was originally part of our 2003-04 selection of plays which, under the collective title *Can't You Hear Me?*, toured communities throughout the capital region from Sooke to Sidney. In fact, the play proved so popular we kept performing it this season for organizations such as the Grads of Saanich Newcomers, Gordon Head Lions Club, and James Bay New Horizons Society. And, as mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, it will also be the companion piece to our June 17-19 performances of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*.

Youth and old age

A group of five Target players presented a staged reading of the play *A Quiet Day in the Country* for Youth Voices of the organization Power of Hope, March 8. The local group's mandate is to teach youth leadership through the arts, and they had asked us to demonstrate the use of "theatre of the oppressed."

This is a form of intervention drama that allows audience members to join the actors on stage and come up with ways to improve any questionable actions of the characters. Persons are oppressed when someone causes them to lose their independence, if they are intimidated, dominated, treated badly, subjected to abuse or even just bad manners by somebody else.

This play, by the late **John Tench**, shows a group of adult children taking their elderly father for a Sunday drive, ostensibly to provide a pleasant change for him. However, they constantly argue with each other and belittle, ignore, and patronize their dad. With the young people of the Power of Hope stepping up to explore solutions, this afternoon event was a delightful experience in intergenerational relationships in more ways than one!

Target tidbits

A 15-MINUTE EXCERPT from *Nobody Wants My Old Organs* was performed by the players on Apr. 28 at the Elder Friendly Community Network breakfast. This group, consisting of people with professional or personal interests in various issues of aging, meets once a month. Originally, our director had been asked to present a lecture about Target Theatre, but he decided it would be more effective to animate his presentation with a sample of Target Theatre's actual performance work. Hopefully, the scene has whetted the attendees' appetites enough to want to see the entire play at the Ambrosia Centre, June 17-19.

BETWEEN PERFORMANCES the troupe's meetings this season have covered improvisational exercises as well as scene work to keep the players' acting skills honed. We also have read aloud some published scripts for future consideration and are continuing to search for plays suitable for performance by Target Theatre. Of course these works have to deal with themes relating to aging and at the same time contain plenty of roles for senior actors.

THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY was held Dec. 10 at our director's home. This was a break with tradition as, for many years, veteran player **Lou-Ann Edgar** had hosted Target parties at her picturesque property at the base of Mount Tolmie. But after her family's move to James Bay, the new house there wasn't quite ready to host a Christmas crowd.

In lieu of the usual gift exchange, guests donated the money they would have spent on a party present. The "winner" of the jackpot drawn from a number of suggestions of worthy causes was the Victoria Aids Resources Centre Society.

NEW PAGES HAVE BEEN ADDED to our web site. Visitors to the site can now read "teas-



Target Theatre's cast and director of Nobody Wants My Old Organs posing for a pre-show photo at the Vancouver Playhouse, Feb. 6, 2005. From left: (back) Fred Storgeoff, Dorothy Mabey, Lou-Ann Edgar, June Boston, Rosalie Frampton, Fred Mabey, Ernie Jarman; (front) Heldor Schäfer, Phyllis McGee, Jane Krieger.

ers" (a few sample pages) of Target's plays free of charge. They may order the entire scripts for a small fee.

WE MAY OR MAY NOT win this one, but the Kidney Foundation of Canada has nominated us for the BC Medical Association's excellence in health promotion award! This award recognizes the special efforts by an individual or an organization for their work and leadership in improving the health and wellness of British Columbians. Thanks to **Pauline Buck** and Ken Merkley for considering us worthy of such an honour!

AND WHILE WE'RE AT IT let's credit Ken for coming up with the play title *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*, and fellow Victoria chapter member **Diana Dobson** for hatching the idea of having us do a play on organ donation in the first place!

All the news that's fit to be heard or seen...

At the start of our production of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs* we had some media coverage on radio, TV and in print.

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reporter **Jeff Weaver** recorded a scene from the play for broadcast on CBC Radio One, while VITV (the New VI) video-taped another scene which was shown Jan. 25 on their sister station, City TV, in Vancouver. An article and picture of our oldest and youngest actors, **Ernie Jarman** and **Phyllis McGee**, appeared in the News Group's Weekend Edition of Jan. 28th

Target Theatre's executive theatrical director was interviewed live, Jan 31, on CBC Radio's provincial afternoon show, *All Points West*, with host **Joanne Roberts**.

Volunteers

A heartfelt thank-you to the people who volunteer their talents to Target Theatre. In addition to our dedicated players and board members, we had the following helping us in various on-stage and backstage jobs during the 2004-05 production of *Nobody Wants My Old Organs*:

Judy Haynes backstage manager
Madge Craig understudy
Jane Krieger actor, costume & set design
Diane Whelan costume & set design
Bill Coull sound operator, stage hand

Our Sponsors

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

Friend of Target (\$21-\$75):

Connie Attwell, Henry & June Boston, Pat Brown, Bob & Gail Disler, Jean Field, Rosalie Frampton, Ellen Gabelmann, Dorothy Guch, Ron & Peggy Hoover, Harry and Doreen Jenkins, Joan Looy, Elizabeth Macmillan, Tony Montgomery, Ella N. Nicholl, Kathleen Penner-Davies, Alex & Rae Rankin, Elisabeth Read, Juliana Saxton, Noreen Adrie Sochor, Grant & Ione Stevens, Edwin H. Turton, Judith & Herbert Weill.

Target Donor (\$76-\$250):

Canada Safeway, Telus, Wal-Mart; Dr. Richard Chambers; Helen Lansdowne, Ingrid Pohl, Glenis & Gary Leitch, Lou-Ann Edgar, Owen & Linda De Bathe, Elspeth Brown.

Target Supporter (\$251-\$750):

Cheap Tickets & Travel, Thrifty Foods.

Target Patron (\$751-\$2000):

Laurie Jane Coleman

TARGET THEATRE

presents

Nobody Wants My Old Organs

a play about the issues facing seniors as they consider organ donation or transplant, and

I'm Herbert

a comedy about forgetfulness by Robert Anderson



June 17th • 2:30 pm

\$12, students & OAP \$10

June 19th • 12:30 pm

Admission: \$29.95 includes 3-course plated

Father's Day Lunch

Seating limit: 80. Reservation required



AMBROSIA CENTRE

638 Fisgard Street, Victoria

Reservations: 477-6054