

THE GEM THEATRE



PEAKS ISLAND
PORTLAND, MAINE



From the Playwrights:

We are pleased and excited to welcome you to the premiere of the *Trunk Show*.

The seed for this play was planted when dusting a framed handkerchief. More than 10 years ago, Jo was the cleaner of the 5th Maine Museum while creating a memorial bench and garden for her Dad. She became curious about a framed handkerchief with embroidered signatures. Every time Jo dusted it, she copied another name to research. Solving this 'mystery' was the inspiration for the *Trunk Show*.

After a winter of writing and revising the *Trunk Show* script, forming the Ad Hoc Theatre Company, casting the show with both year round and summer residents, finding a director, finalizing performance dates, we were ready to start rehearsals.

As performance spaces were shut down due to the pandemic, we were heartsick to learn that *Trunk Show* would not be staged. However, with a little bit ingenuity and a whole lot of help from others, we re-wrote the stage play. (Just in time to celebrate Maine's Bicentennial.) *Trunk Show* is now a radio drama highlighting the history of summer stock theatre and the famous actors who performed on Peaks Island.

We hope that you find enjoyment (and a little respite from 2020) as you listen to *Trunk Show*. The cast and crew still hope that a stage version of *Trunk Show* will be performed live in the near future - complete with popcorn and root beer.

Many thanks, Jo Israelson and Heather Murdoch Curry

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We want to thank all of the actors and those generous people who have contributed their time and talent to this project especially:

Lisa Houston, Director, who formed us into a cohesive team, provided direction and helped us embody our characters

Steve Devoney, Editor who spent many, many hours researching amazing sound effects and many more hours editing

Chris Marot at PI Radio (PIR 1700 AM) for recording, conducting interviews and airing the show.

With much appreciation to the following individuals for support and encouragement:

Fifth Maine Museum, Susan Hanley, President Board of Directors

Peaks Island Lion's Club, Tim Murphy, President

Rhonda Berg, Harborview Properties

Miranda and David Vinograd

The Trunk Show: A Radio Drama in 2 Acts

ACT 1

Scene 1: Peaks Island, Present day

Scene 2: Casco Bay ferry, 1924

Scene 3: Boardwalk/Union House Hotel

Scene 4: Peaks Island House restaurant

Intermission: Musical Interlude

Solo Performance by Estelle Beauregard

ACT 2

Scene 1: GEM Theatre

Scene 2: Union House Hotel

Scene 3: Peaks Island, Present day



From a GEM THEATRE Playbill:

GEM THEATRE

PEAKS ISLAND
PORTLAND HARBOR, MAINE

EXECUTIVE STAFF

C. W. T. GODING.....Manager
GEO. E. BROWN.....Business Manager
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RAPHAEL H. RAY.....Electrician
C. A. HANSON.....Scenic Artist
Maurice Woodbury.....Properties

MISS ELIZABETH CLARK'S ORCHESTRA.

SCALE OF PRICES

Boxes (seating six) per chair, 50 cts
Orchestra, entire floor, 40 cts.
Balcony, 25 cts. or 10 cts.
General Admission, 15 cts.
Portland ticket office at Casco Bay and Harpswell
Lines, open from 7 a. m. to 9 p. m.
Ticket office at Gem Theatre opens one hour before each performance.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

Upon application to the box office, either person, by mail, or telephone, patrons may have the same seat reserved for each week, with the underst.

that the tickets are to be taken before 12 o'clock the day of the performance. Failing to do so simply cancels the privilege and incurs no liability whatever. Seats ready two weeks in advance.

Seats may be reserved by mail, telegraph or telephone and the best seats remaining at the time of application will be held until 7.15 o'clock for evening performance, and until 1.45 for matinee performance.

Every lady who removes her hat during a performance contributes to her own comfort and shows a graceful consideration for those who occupy a seat behind.

Persons finding lost articles in any portion of the Theatre will please leave them with the Janitor.

Patrons will please report to the Manager, in person or by letter, instances of inattention or misdeemeanor on the part of any attache of this Theatre. He engages to speedily correct any want of courtesy to his patrons by persons in his service.

Steamers leave Portland for afternoon performance 2.00, and for evening performance at 7.30 and leave promptly at close of each performance for the city.

Steamer for Portland always waits until the close of the performance.

Carriages may be ordered at 5.30 for matinee and 10.30 for evening.

Cars of the Portland Railroad will be in waiting at the head of Custon House Wharf to take theatre patrons to Munjoy Hill, West End, and suburban towns, without change of cars, for one fare

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Cast and Crew:

Heather Murdoch Curry as Glorianna King

Heather's interest in theatre and music was sparked by her Mother who always encouraged her to get past her shyness by auditioning. As a result, Heather became addicted to performing and was in every school play or musical as well as chorus and band.

On Peaks Island, under the direction of Liz Rollins, Heather had a chance to once again stretch her acting muscles in a supportive and creative environment. She had a part in John Cariani's *Almost Maine* and played Sonia in Christopher Durang's *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. Heather wrote and acted in one-act play *Grateful* - a short biographical piece about the passing of her mother - performed at the Peaks Island Shorts Festival in 2018. She also played in *Hats Off* - a one-act period piece depicting the lives of the Daveis sisters - early Peaks Island conservationists.

Heather has had the honor of having small roles with the Portland Fenix Theater as well as in the Maine Playwright's Festival.

Heather is grateful to be a full time resident of Peaks along with her husband Ray.

Steve Devoney as Robert Conness

Steve started his professional career as a production specialist in camera, lighting, sound and editing. He spent the next 37 years working in every aspect of production for the C-SPAN Education and Marketing department, as well as producing and editing independent documentaries.

His foray onto the stage was as a singer and guitarist, working with country, rockabilly and vocal harmony groups in the Washington D.C. area.

Steve and his late wife made it a tradition to perform in the annual Peaks Island Variety Show. He continues to work with the producers on technical and video elements. At last year's show, Steve co-wrote and performed a 5-minute comedic act about Peaks Island.

He is a single father of two teenaged boys. Their family has been coming to Peaks Island for the past 7 years.

Eddie Devoney as Crane Wilbur

Eddie is best known for his boyish charm and his ever changing hair color. He is an aspiring artist and actor that began his acting career quite by accident. He was standing in line waiting for a

speech and diction class to begin at his community college. The line turned out to be an audition line for an upcoming play. By the time he finished the reading, he had landed not one, but two parts in the new 2019 play “Our National Museum of the Unforeseen Tragedy” by Renee Calarco.

He has been coming to Peaks Island with his family for the past 7 years. Eddie has worked as a stage director and lighting technician for the Peaks Island Lions Club variety show for the past 3 years.

Stephanie Eliot as Taxi Driver, Bell Hop, Assistant

Known to audiences on Peaks Island as their own homegrown Lily Tomlin – Stephanie is a versatile character actor as well as a puppeteer. As a member of the Peaks Island Players, she has performed in numerous plays, including *Almost Maine* as well as in *Finest Kind* at the TEIA Peaks Island Selected Shorts Festival.

She conducted her puppet making workshops and live performances throughout Maine.

Stephanie is a year-round resident of Peaks Island.

Nancy 3. Hoffman as Estelle Beauregard

Nancy 3. has performed internationally as a singer, pianist, accordion player, and music director. She is a founding member of The Casco Bay Tumblers Klezmer band. As founder of The Maine Squeeze Accordion Ensemble, she directs, plays and sings with 4 other accordion players and a percussionist. She performed her one-woman rendition of Gilbert and Sullivan’s operetta *The Mikado* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in Scotland. Ms. Three has performed in a dozen countries and sings in 25 languages.

Nancy was recently the onstage accordion player for a production of the award winning play, *Indecent* performed at GableStage in Coral Gables, Florida, with Lisa Gutkin, Grammy award winning violinist of The Klezmatics. Nancy 3. is also the director and curator of the world’s only Umbrella Cover Museum featured on NPR and BBC radios and The Weather Channel. She holds the Guinness World Record for the most umbrella sleeves (covers). She lives on Peaks Island, Maine and in Key West, Florida. Her middle name is really the number three.

Lisa Houston: Director, Set Designer, Theatre Technician

Lisa Houston is an educator from Pennington, N.J. Lisa has directed over 60 productions in the N.J./N.Y.C. area. She has served as a professional set designer and theatre technician. Lisa assisted with the recent Peaks Island TEIA theatre productions. She believes in the power of theatre to retain humanity in our ever-changing world. Lisa and her family spend summers on Peaks Island.

Will Harding: Sound effects

Will Harding is a sophomore at Temple University in Philadelphia studying theater. He spends his summers working/relaxing on Peaks Island. He will never shy away from the opportunity to work on a new theatre project whether acting or working on the technical side of things. Will is thrilled to have researched the sound effects that bring this radio show to life!

Jo Israelson: Artist, Playwright, Blogger

Portland, Maine native, Jo Israelson is a nationally known socially conscious artist, sculptor and most recently, playwright. Her works often reveal little known historic facts that are reflected in present day events.

Her site specific work *Welcoming the Stranger – building understanding through community based art* was exhibited at the Maine Jewish Museum in 2015-6 and Gilford College, Greensboro 2016-7.

Jo's play, *Hats Off*, was performed at the Peaks Island TEIA 2018 Shorts Festival. The actors portrayed the efforts of the Daveis Sisters – early 20th century Maine conservationists - to improve the lives of islanders – both human and animal.

Jo writes the artist blog: The Stone Path www.thestonepath.wordpress.com.

She and Heather Murdoch Curry co-authored the *Trunk Show*.

Liz Johnson as Maddie's Mom

Liz Johnson is a certified Sea Kayak Guide and coordinator of the first Maine Greenland Paddle Festival that was held on Peaks Island in 2019. She spends most days outdoors teaching either kayaking in the summer or skiing during winter.

Having raised children, Liz was a natural fit for her role in Trunk Show.

Liz lives year-round on Peaks Island, where getting to the ferry on time is part of daily life.

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Brijit Joyce as Bettie

Bridget is a full-time, high school English teacher who works locally. Her acting background has mostly consisted of playing “Romeo” each year with her co-teacher, “Juliet,” for a slightly-amused audience of freshmen.

She and her husband, Chris, are part time tinkerers. Bridget writes and manages a used bookshop on their property and Chris operates Peaks Island Radio out of their attic. Bridget and Chris live in a 136 year-old house on Peaks year-round with their two children, cat, and yard ducks.

Michelle Mola as Maddie/Viola

Michelle Mola makes her acting debut in the *Trunk Show*. She has also performed in full length productions by writer, choreographer Jack Ferver; their production *Chambre* 2016 was nominated for a Bessie Award for Outstanding Production. As a movement coach, Michelle has worked with clients in film production, stunt coordination, theater and dance companies from coast to coast, including Jeremy O. Harris’s *A Boys Company Presents: ‘Tell Me If I’m Hurting You’*. You can read about this play in the July issue of Vogue Magazine. In 2020 she founded Peaks Body, personalized Pilates services for recovery, maintenance, and exercise variety www.peaksbody.com. She lives on Peaks Island year round.

Ray Davis Curry Murdoch: Narrator, Radio Announcer

Ray is an actor and musician who has appeared previously in 2 Portland Fenix Theatre summer plays, Acorn Theater’s Naked Shakespeare mashup, as well as Peaks island productions. He recently purchased a boat and is learning to sail as well continuing to sing and play mandolin with friends. Ray is enjoying his 6th year on the island.



Peaks Island in the late 19th century was famous for its summer entertainment and earned the nickname "Coney Island of Maine." Entertainment on Peaks Island has a long history, beginning with a picnic grove that visitors accessed by rowboat during the 1850s. ...later transformed... into an amusement park, known as Greenwood Garden, that featured an open-air roller rink later converted to a playhouse and later a dance hall, merry-go-round, bandstand, beerhaus, Ferris wheel, midway, and observation tower. <http://www.portlandlandmarks.org/peaks-island-amusement-district>

Greenwood Garden holds the history of summer stock theatre, not only on Peaks Island, but throughout America. The Gem Theatre seated up to 1500 patrons for each performance beginning in 1898 to about the mid 1920's until it was destroyed by fire in 1934. Programs often included an opening vaudeville act, a play and a closing musical act. The Peaks Island Lions Club is currently the custodian of the historic Greenwood Garden land and the replacement theatre.

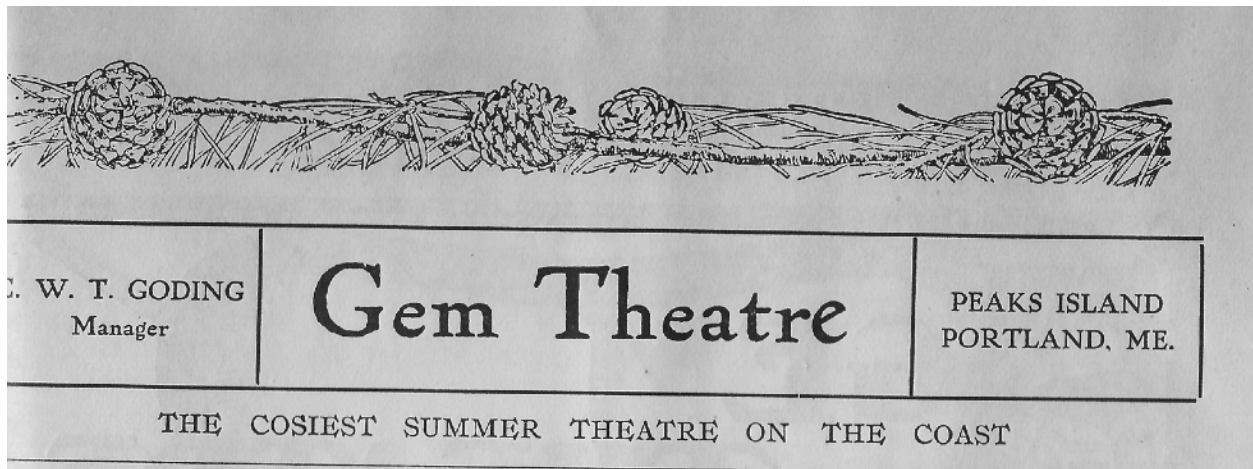
At one time, this island outside Portland, Maine was predominantly known for its actors and actresses plying the board of the McCullum's Theater, the first summer stock theater in the nation. For eight decades, various different structures housed the plays and musicals of vacation bards up from New York City and other environs to get a little Maine summer fun and ply the sets of the theaters. ...

<https://americasbesthistory.com/spotlight2019-3.html>

The 5th Maine Museum archive contains a commemorative handkerchief signed by the cast of one of the first summer stock productions in Maine. Signatures include Bartley McCullum, impresario and founder of the Gem Theatre and other Maine Theaters; actor Sydney Toler, best known for his role as Charlie Chan; Robert Conness, New York producer/director/actor; and Crane Wilber, playwright and lead in the Perils of Pauline silent films.

Radio was the first broadcast medium, and people regularly tuned-in to their favorite radio programs, and families gathered to listen to the home radio in the evening. A variety of new entertainment formats and genres were created for the new medium, many of which later migrated to television: radio plays, mystery serials, soap operas, quiz shows, talent shows, daytime and evening variety hours, situation comedies, ... By the late 1920s, .. sponsored musical features soon became the most popular program format.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Age_of_Radio



Fact or Fiction?

The characters and content of the *Trunk Show* are based on extensive archival research conducted at the Maine State Archives, Maine Historical Society, 5th Maine Museum and other on-line sources.

Historic figures:

Robert Conness (1867 – 1941) actor, playwright
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0175231/>

Dick and Bess (horses)

John Ford (Bull Feeney) (1894 – 1973) Hollywood director
https://www.imdb.com/find?q=John+Ford&ref =nv_sr_sm

Bartley McCullum (? – 1916) actor, entrepreneur
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0567245/>

Pearl White (1889 – 1938) actress
https://www.imdb.com/find?q=pearl+white&ref =nv_sr_sm

Crane Wilbur (1886 -1973) actor, writer, director
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0928108/>

Historic Places on Peaks:

GEM Theatre
Greenwood Garden
Moonshell
Peaks Island House and 16 other hotels
Webber's Store

Historic Events:

Passage of the 19th amendment Women's Right to Vote
18th Amendment Prohibition 1920 – 1933
GEM Theatre fire September, 1934

Historic References

BF Keith's Theatres, New York, Boston, Portland
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith%27s_Theatre_\(Boston\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keith%27s_Theatre_(Boston))

Cape Cottage Casino and Theatre
https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/spec_photos/1167/

Katharine Gibbs School
<https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/katharine-gibbs-invents-modern-professional-secretary/>

Perils of Pauline – silent movie serial
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Perils_of_Pauline_\(1914_serial\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Perils_of_Pauline_(1914_serial))

Quarantine was a 1924 play starring Helen Hayes
<https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/helen-hayes-22218>

"Tomorrow's Children" film – banned in New York due to dissemination of birth control information
https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0220107/?ref_=nv_sr_2?ref_=nv_sr_2

