

# UPSTAGE

THE BELFRY THEATRE – AN INSIDER'S GUIDE

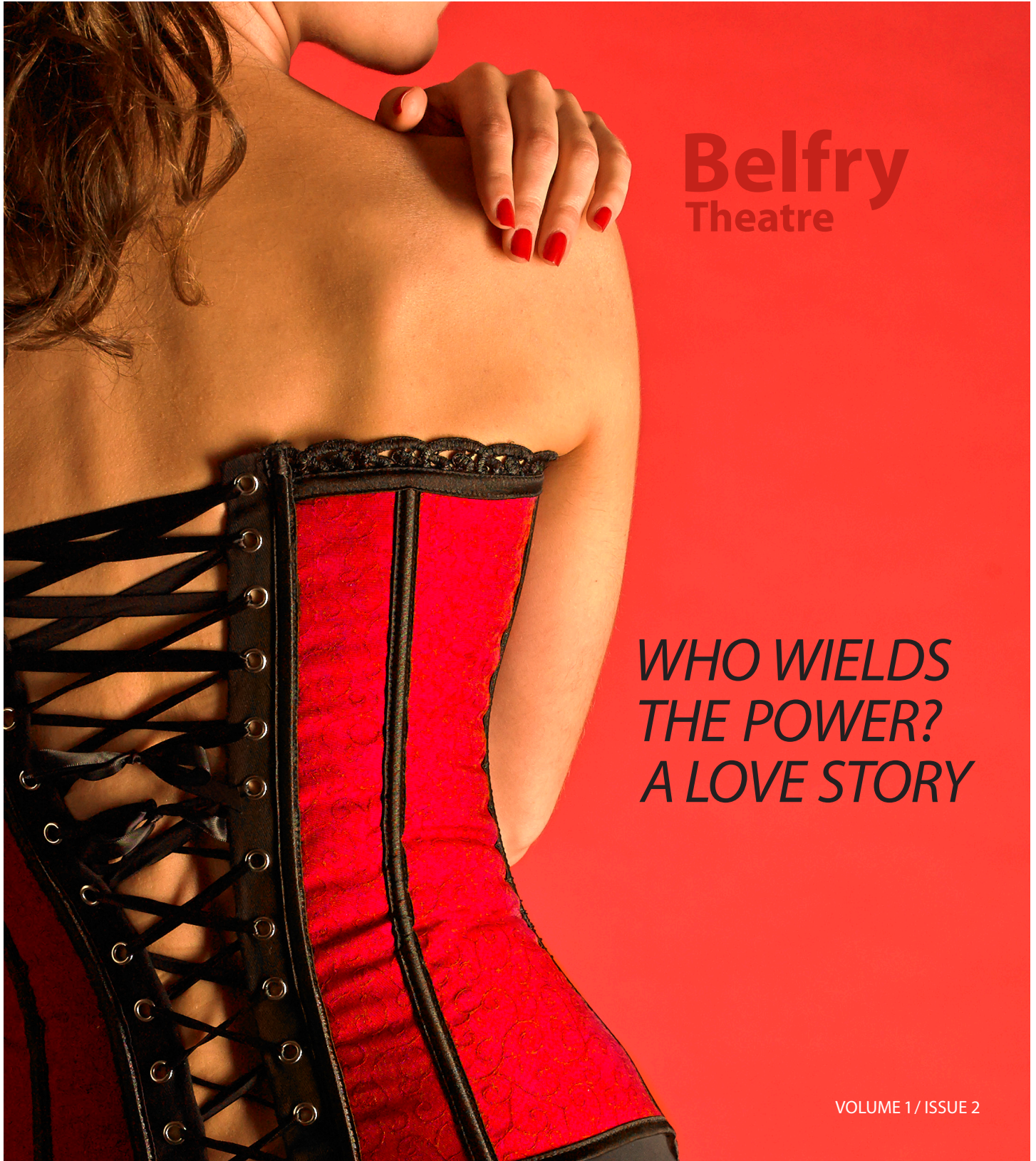
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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2014

BOOKS / LIBRARIANS UNLEASHED

THEATRE / WHY THIS PLAY?

ENGAGE / PODCASTS



**Belfry**  
Theatre

*WHO WIELDS  
THE POWER?  
A LOVE STORY*

VOLUME 1 / ISSUE 2

# VENUS IN FUR

## hello

Welcome to the Belfry, our new production of *Venus in Fur* and the second issue of *Upstage*.

After the rousing success of *The Rez Sisters*, our season takes a decidedly sexy and steamy turn with *Venus in Fur*.

David Ives' seductive dark comedy takes us to new worlds and we urge you to read our lead story, "Who Wields the Power?" to gain some insight into the source material for this Tony Award nominated play.

Actors Vincent Gale and Celine Stubel are Thomas and Vanda, and they, like the audience, will wrestle with the intense sexual dynamics that the play explores.

David Ives recently said in an interview: "The play has a little something for everybody. It has some comedy and sex... in my experience, I think it also seems to speak to women a lot. Vanda is such an out-there character. Many women have stopped me in the street to say how much they like her."

We'd love you to join us for an evening destined to make your November a lot hotter. Thanks for being part of the Belfry.

**Tickets are on sale now at 250-385-6815 or at [www.belfry.bc.ca](http://www.belfry.bc.ca)**

**Before *Fifty Shades of Grey*, there was Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's classic erotic novel, *Venus in Furs*. In this Tony Award nominated play, the tables are turned as a young actress auditions for an adaptation of *Venus in Furs*. Funny and stimulating, this play weaves sex and power into an exhilarating game of cat and mouse.**

## synopsis

Thomas Novachek is the writer-director of a new play opening in New York City. His play is an adaptation of the 1870 novel *Venus in Furs* by the Austrian author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (his name inspired the term masochism). The play begins with Novachek lamenting the inadequacies of the actresses who have showed up that day to audition for the lead character, Vanda von Dunayev. At the last minute, a new actress, Vanda Jordan, bursts in. At first it's hard to imagine that she will please this very particular writer-director. But she convinces him to let her audition for the part of Vanda, with Thomas himself reading opposite her. As lightning flashes and thunder crashes outside, they become caught up in the characters they are reading.



## B4Play

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8  
at 11 am**

**Belfry Theatre  
Studio A  
1291 Gladstone Avenue**

**Join CBC Radio's Gregor  
Craigie for a live talk  
show featuring  
Celine Stubel (Vanda) and  
Michael Shamata (Director)  
from *Venus in Fur*  
and some very special  
community guests.  
Free event.**

### WHO WE ARE –

*Upstage* is the Belfry Theatre's new magazine. Our goal is to give you a leisurely, deeper look into our productions. With your tablet or computer you can view our expanded digital version of *Upstage* on our website or at [issuu.com/belfry-theatre](http://issuu.com/belfry-theatre).



our thanks to production sponsors for VENUS IN FUR –



Blue Heron Advisory Group



UPSTAGE  
is supported by –







Titian's *Venus with a Mirror* is referenced in the play.

# WHO WIELDS THE POWER? A LOVE STORY

(A GENTLE INVITATION TO SHY THEATER-GOERS TO COME AND EXPERIENCE DAVID IVES' *VENUS IN FUR*)

by **Georgia Sitara**, PhD

In 1870, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch published his novel *Venus in Furs*, in which the main male character experiences exquisite sexual satisfaction from being dominated by a beautiful woman wearing gorgeous fur. Two decades later, the author was dismayed to learn that a doctor of psychiatry, Richard von Krafft-Ebing, had used Masoch's family name 'to denominate a sexual perversion' (masochism) in his catalogue of sexual pathologies. Krafft-Ebing considered only reproductive sex to be 'normal' sex. He considered it a perversion for men to willfully give up power as the dominant sex and find pleasure beyond the missionary position. Sadism (also named after another literary figure, the Marquis de Sade) was merged with masochism to create the new term of sadomasochism (S&M or SM): erotic pleasure obtained through subjugation and domination. It would take a century for the medical establishment to agree

with Sacher-Masoch that Krafft-Ebing got it wrong all those years ago. SM is no longer considered a pathology by the medical establishment, although there is still some way to go to unshackle the popular imagination.

In David Ives' play *Venus in Fur*, an actress comes in to audition for a stage adaptation of Sacher-Masoch's novel, and reads with the playwright/director. The play is explicit about its concern for the rights of women, and its disdain for sexism and woman-blaming

## story highlights

Celine Stubel and Vincent Gale last starred together in our hit comedy, *God Of Carnage*.

*Venus in Fur* and *God of Carnage* have both been made into films by French director Roman Polanski.

In preparing for this production, Director Michael Shamata has immersed himself in the worlds of psychology and mythology.



## why I chose this play

*Venus in Fur* is simply the funniest and the sexiest play I have seen in years!

I first heard about this play in 2010, when it burst onto the scene in an off-Broadway production at the Classic Stage Company in New York. It opened the following year on Broadway, and was nominated for the Tony Award for Outstanding New Play. By that time I had acquired a copy of the script, read it, and pondered it as a possible show for the Belfry. However, it wasn't until I saw a performance of the play that I realized just how scintillating an evening of theatre it can be.

To quote Charles Isherwood's review in the New York Times, "while it's as funny as any play currently on Broadway, *Venus in Fur* ... is also something darker, stranger and altogether more delicious: a suspense-packed study of the erotics (and the semiotics) of power, in which the two participants ... prove to be seriously, almost scarily adept."

There is an undeniable sexual tension throughout the play – a tension born of desire, flirtation, ego, intimacy and need. The stakes are high – Vanda wants the job and Thomas wants an actress who can bring his play to life. They both have a lot on the line. The power shifts are constant and never quite clear. There is a mystery at the heart of this play – a mystery that adds to the tension, and will eventually be revealed.

In addition to all of the above, this play provides exceptional roles for two actors. Knowing that Celine and Vince were available and interested in playing these characters made choosing this play a no-brainer!

**Michael Shamata**  
Artistic Director

(WHO WIELDS THE POWER? continued)

culture. It explores power struggles between the sexes and power struggles between lovers. In this play, 'there are no villains' – only an intricate exchange of power. It is a play within a play about (erotic and gender) power play.

What should theatre-goers know about SM? First and foremost, enthusiasts tell us that SM is about pleasure, not pain. It is what John Cougar Mellencamp was singing about in his 1982 hit song "Hurts So Good."

Theatre enthusiasts may also appreciate SM practitioners' description of SM as theatre. SM involves scripts which participants plot, negotiate and work out together. Together, they create the scenario that they will play out. Consent is the fuel. The play cannot proceed without it. Dynamic tension is built through dialogue, an intellectual exchange about giving and withholding power.

Like theatre, SM play also involves props (ordinary everyday objects invested with erotic meanings and sensuous pleasures) such as fur, feathers and leather, as well as objects associated with power and control, such as dog collars and whips.

Also like theatre, participants adopt roles – such as mistress and slave or master and servant – for the agreed upon duration of the play.

Most importantly, participants switch. The roles of mistress and slave, master and servant are not permanent. Through the course of the play, the mistress becomes the slave, the servant becomes master. What is more, power does not always reside with the master. In SM, 'the top is ruled by the bottom.' It challenges our pre-conceptions of power and opens the door to new understanding.

Power is fluid. It is abdicated. It is wielded. It is exchanged. It is an intellectual thrill to explore its deft handling in this play. David Ives' *Venus in Fur* takes place entirely during one audition, one evening, one location. Ives harnesses many SM tropes – script, roles, props, power play, negotiation, consent and switching – to bind the audience, like a lover, to the play. It is playful. Masterful. It will leave you thinking about where power resides and about who wields it.

**Georgia Sitara** (PhD) teaches "A History of Sexuality" and "Sex, Power and Pleasure" for the Departments of History and Women's Studies at the University of Victoria.

# cast & creatives



**Vincent Gale**  
Thomas  
Novachek



**Celine Stubel**  
Vanda  
Jordan



**David Ives**  
Playwright



**Michael Shamata**  
Director



**Christina Poddubiuk**  
Designer



**Erec Hassell**  
Lighting  
Designer



**Tobin Stokes**  
Sound Designer/  
Composer



**Chari Arespacocha**  
Assistant  
Director



**Jennifer Swan**  
Stage  
Manager





BOOKS

## belfry librarian

We've unleashed the GVPL Librarians on our season scripts. For *Venus in Fur* our Librarian has put together a mix of smut, how-to, and tough-woman-gets-ahead books to help you get even more out our production.

FICTION

### Unrestrained

by Joey Hill (eBook 2014)

### Best Women's Erotica 2013

(2012)

### The Darkest Lie

by Gena Showalter (2010)

### Sweet Temptation

by Maya Banks (2010)

### Beauty's Punishment

by A N Roquelaure (1999)

NONFICTION

### She Comes First: The Thinking Man's Guide to Pleasuring A Woman

by Ian Kerner (2004)

### Thrive: The Third Metric to Redefining Success and Creating a Life of Well-being, Wisdom, and Wonder

by Arianna Huffington (2014)

### The Alpha Woman Meets Her Match: How Today's Strong Women Can Find Love and Happiness Without Settling

by Sonya Rhodes (2014)

### The Corporate Dominatrix: Six Roles to Play to Get your Way at Work

by Lisa Robyn (2007)

### Women Who Run with the Wolves

by Clarissa Estes (1991)

### Don't Mess with the Princess

(Downloadable Audiobook 2012)

### The Greek Myths

by Robert Graves (2001)

### Oh My Gods – A Modern Retelling of Greek and Roman Myths

by Philip Freeman (2012)

### The Female Eunuch

by Germaine Greer (2006)

### Fifty Writers on Fifty Shades of Grey

(2012)

### Fifty Shades of Feminism Book

(2013)

MUSIC

### The Velvet Underground & Nico

Velvet Underground (CD 2002)

List Compiled by Librarian Olivia Anderson, GVPL.

# get engaged

## B4PLAY PODCASTS

If you can't make B4Play in person you can hear the full interviews on our website (the respective show page) and our SoundCloud page – [soundcloud.com/belfrytheatre](http://soundcloud.com/belfrytheatre).

Select segments from B4Play will air (usually during our opening week) on CBC Radio's *On The Island*.

## FREE CHILDCARE PERFORMANCE SUNDAY, NOV 23

During select Sunday matinee performances, we offer free, professional childcare (ages 3–10) at the Springridge Early Childhood Centre at 1222 Gladstone Avenue, just a block from the Belfry (free parking is available right across the street in the Victoria High School Parking lot).

We only have a limited number of spots available. To book your tickets and childcare, please call our Box Office at 250-385-6815.

## AFTERPLAY WEEKS NOV 18 – 22 / DEC 2 – 6

Following selected performances of *Venus in Fur*, we'll host Afterplay – a facilitated discussion where patrons can share their thoughts with fellow audience members. It's a chance to "debrief" after the show and hear how other audience members experienced the play.

## TALKBACK THURSDAY THURSDAY, NOV 20

Following the 8pm performance of *Venus in Fur*, join the actors from the show and your fellow audience members for a 20-minute Q & A session.

## PROJECT GUTENBERG – VENUS IN FURS

You can download a free copy (for your tablet, Kindle or computer) of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novel *Venus in Furs* at Project Gutenberg – [gutenberg.org/ebooks/6852](http://gutenberg.org/ebooks/6852).



### GET SOCIAL

Follow us on facebook or twitter to learn more during the run of *Venus in Fur*.



The Belfry Theatre flourishes thanks to support from individuals like you. Please make a tax-deductible donation by December 31, or a pledge for monthly giving. Every dollar you contribute makes a tremendous difference to the work we do.

### How to contribute

BY PHONE 250-385-6815

ONLINE [belfry.bc.ca/donate](http://belfry.bc.ca/donate)

BY MAIL 1291 Gladstone Avenue, Victoria, BC V8T 1G5

## thank you for your support!

BELFRY THEATRE  
ANNUAL FUND  
APPEAL

## parts & labour

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my position is the opportunity to network with artists across the country. During our previous production – Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* – many artists came to the Belfry for the first time. Among them was our Assistant Director Ryan Cunningham, who was recently appointed the new Artistic Director of Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto.

Over the course of a number of exciting conversations, Ryan and I discussed potential collaborations between Native Earth and the Belfry. One of these is a play called *Huff*, which is written and performed by Cliff Cardinal, whose mother, Tantoo Cardinal, was so extraordinary in *The Rez Sisters*. Native Earth is planning a tour of this play, and we have already booked it for our 2016 SPARK Festival.

One of the other projects we talked about was the next play in Tomson Highway's trilogy: *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. By coincidence, I was speaking today with Andy McKim, Artistic Director of Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto. This is the theatre that first produced *Dry Lips* (during Brian Richmond's tenure

as AD), and they are looking at mounting a new production during the 2016-2017 season. Andy has also been in discussion with Ryan at Native Earth, so it looks as though these stars might align and bring the play – originally called *The Rez Brothers* – to the Belfry stage.

Like-minded people are scattered across the country, in theatres large and small. Connecting with those with whom the Belfry is in sync is a joy, and brings with it a fresh injection of energy and excitement.

**Michael Shamata**, Artistic Director



Tantoo Cardinal  
(as Pelajia Patchnose)  
in *The Rez Sisters*  
by Tomson Highway



Congratulations to Belfry supporters Nikki and Bruce MacKenzie, who have been married for 65 years. He's a spry golfer at 92, and she is vibrant and charming at 87.

This fall they celebrated their "sky blue" anniversary with their four children, 11 grandkids and six great-grandkids.

Bruce and Nikki have watched the Belfry grow from the beginning, when they moved to Victoria in 1975. They joined founding philanthropist Paddy Stewart on a memorable

New York theatre trip in the early days, where they braved the dangers of the big city in order to see numerous plays and musicals on and off Broadway.

The MacKenzies have been subscribers and donors to the Belfry's annual fund for decades now. Says Bruce: "We like to see things succeed and knew the idea was good and wanted to participate in its success. It is very important to keep live theatre available to the public." In particular, they appreciate the Belfry's

mandate to produce new plays and Canadian works. Contemporary theatre and musicals are their favourites.

The couple observes that the Belfry has forged healthy relationships among other theatre companies over the years. They predict that these partnerships will become increasingly important in the future for the arts to survive.

From all of us, thank you Nikki and Bruce, for nurturing the Belfry Theatre so well, along with your family over the decades.

**We like to see things succeed and knew the idea was good and wanted to participate in its success. It is very important to keep live theatre available to the public.**

For information on the many ways to support the Belfry Theatre before the end of this tax year, contact Development Manager Susan Stevenson at 250-385-6835, ext. 229 or [development@belfry.bc.ca](mailto:development@belfry.bc.ca).

**Susan Stevenson**, Development Manager

For the full story please see our digital version of UPSTAGE at [issuu.com/belfry-theatre](http://issuu.com/belfry-theatre)





## how to buy tickets

### BY TELEPHONE 250-385-6815

Please have your credit card ready, as well as the date and time of the performance you wish to attend.

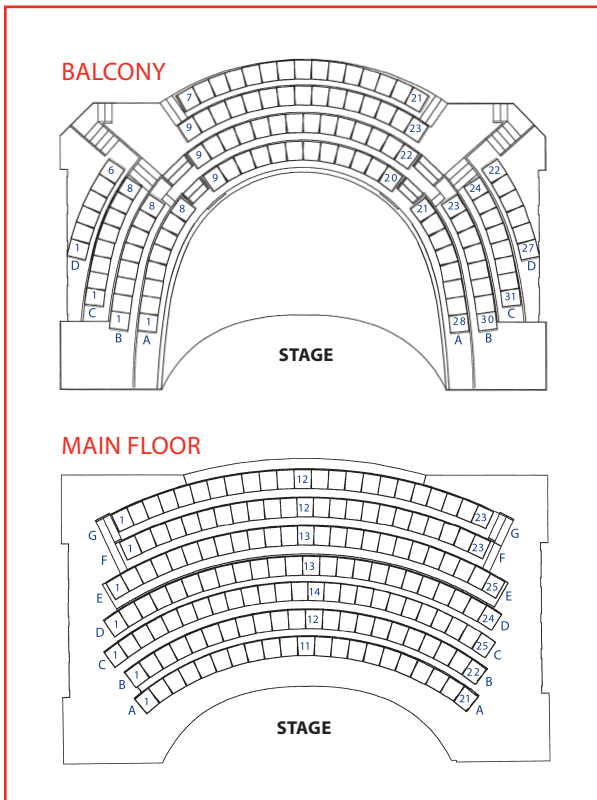
### ONLINE

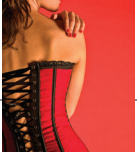
Visit [www.belfry.bc.ca/tickets](http://www.belfry.bc.ca/tickets), and buy your tickets online, anytime.

### IN PERSON

Drop by our Box Office.


We accept Visa, Mastercard, American Express, debit card, cheques, and, of course, cash.




SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
						 VENUS IN FUR <b>2014</b> 8 11am B4Play
NOV 2	3	4	5			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
		8pm Venus P	8pm Venus P	8pm Venus O	8pm Venus	4pm Venus 8pm Venus
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
2pm Venus		8pm Venus A	8pm Venus A	8pm Venus T	8pm Venus A	4pm Venus 8pm Venus A
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
2pm Venus CM		8pm Venus	1pm Venus 8pm Venus	8pm Venus	8pm Venus	4pm Venus 8pm Venus
30	DEC 1	2	3	4	5	6
2pm Venus		8pm Venus A	8pm Venus A	1pm Venus SM 8pm Venus A	8pm Venus A	4pm Venus 8pm Venus A
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
2pm Venus		8pm Venus	8pm Venus	8pm Venus	8pm Venus	4pm Venus 8pm Venus
14	2pm Venus C					

						  THE BEST BROTHERS HOW TO DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY 24 11am B4Play
JAN 18	19	20				
25	26	27	28	29	30	
		8pm B/D P	8pm B/D P	8pm B/D O	8pm B/D	
FEB 1	2	3	4	5	6	
2pm B/D		8pm B/D A	8pm B/D A	8pm B/D T	8pm B/D A	
8	9	10	11	12	13	
8pm B/D CM		8pm B/D	1pm B/D 8pm B/D	8pm B/D	8pm B/D	
15	16	17	18	19	20	
2pm B/D		8pm B/D A	8pm B/D A	1pm B/D SM 8pm B/D A	8pm B/D A	
22	23	24	25	26	27	
2pm B/D		8pm B/D	8pm B/D	8pm B/D	8pm B/D	
MAR 1	2	3	4	5		
2pm B/D C						

25	26	27	28	29	30	31
		8pm B/D P	8pm B/D P	8pm B/D O	8pm B/D	4pm B/D 8pm B/D
FEB 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2pm B/D		8pm B/D A	8pm B/D A	8pm B/D T	8pm B/D A	4pm B/D 8pm B/D A
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
8pm B/D CM		8pm B/D	1pm B/D 8pm B/D	8pm B/D	8pm B/D	4pm B/D 8pm B/D
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
2pm B/D		8pm B/D A	8pm B/D A	1pm B/D SM 8pm B/D A	8pm B/D A	4pm B/D 8pm B/D A
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
2pm B/D		8pm B/D	8pm B/D	8pm B/D	8pm B/D	4pm B/D 8pm B/D
MAR 1	2	3	4	5		
2pm B/D C						

						   THE GOD THAT COMES FISH EYES, BOYS WITH CARS & LET ME BORROW THAT TOP THROUGH THE GAZE OF A NAVEL 6 7 B4Play
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
		8pm Spark	8pm Spark	8pm Spark	8pm Spark	4pm Spark 8pm Spark
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
2pm Spark		8pm Spark	8pm Spark	8pm Spark	8pm Spark	4pm Spark 8pm Spark
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
2pm Spark						

						 VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE 11 11am B4Play
APR 5	6	7	8			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		8pm Vanya P	8pm Vanya P	8pm Vanya O	8pm Vanya	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
2pm Vanya		8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya T	8pm Vanya A	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya A
26	27	28	29	30	MAY 1	2
2pm Vanya CM		8pm Vanya	1pm Vanya 8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya
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2pm Vanya		8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya A	1pm Vanya SM 8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya A	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya A
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
2pm Vanya		8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya
17	2pm Vanya C					

APR 5	6	7	8			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		8pm Vanya P	8pm Vanya P	8pm Vanya O	8pm Vanya	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
2pm Vanya		8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya T	8pm Vanya A	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya A
26	27	28	29	30	MAY 1	2
2pm Vanya CM		8pm Vanya	1pm Vanya 8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2pm Vanya		8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya A	1pm Vanya SM 8pm Vanya A	8pm Vanya A	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya A
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
2pm Vanya		8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	8pm Vanya	4pm Vanya 8pm Vanya
17	2pm Vanya C					



coming up  
next –

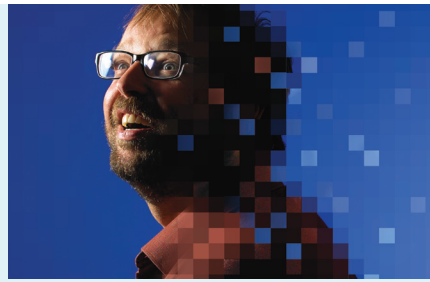
single tickets  
on sale now!



## THE BEST BROTHERS

by **Daniel MacIvor**  
JAN 27 – MAR 1, 2015

★★★★ (out of 4)...  
**Comedy at its purest.** TORONTO STAR



**Belfry**  
Theatre

## HOW TO DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY

by **Itai Erdal, James Long, Anita Rochon**  
& **Emelia Symington Fedy**  
JAN 27 – MAR 1, 2015

...warm, witty and, naturally, beautifully lit. VANCOUVER SUN

250-385-6815 or [www.belfry.bc.ca](http://www.belfry.bc.ca)



## THE GOD THAT COMES

created by **Hawksley Workman**  
and **Christian Barry**  
live music and performance by  
**Hawksley Workman**  
SPARK Festival MAR 10 – 22, 2015

**A tour de force...** CALGARY SUN



## THROUGH THE GAZE OF A NAVEL

created by **Anita Rochon**  
& **Emelia Symington Fedy**  
SPARK Festival MAR 10 – 22, 2015

**Yoga Satire. Brilliant, brash, and wickedly  
wise.** DANIELLE LAPORTE, AUTHOR OF *THE DESIRE MAP*



## FISH EYES, BOYS WITH CARS & LET ME BORROW THAT TOP

created and performed by **Anita Majumdar**  
SPARK Festival MAR 10 – 22, 2015

...ease, elegance and intelligence.  
DEEPA MEHTA



## VANYA AND SONIA AND MASHA AND SPIKE

by **Christopher Durang**  
APR 14 – MAY 17, 2015

**Brainy and witty and clever and cute...**  
VARIETY

our thanks to season sponsors and government funders –



**BELFRY THEATRE**  
1291 GLADSTONE AVENUE  
VICTORIA, BC V8T 1G5

