Playwright’s Notes – Jill Daum

I began writing this play before my husband John publicly announced he had Alzheimer’s. I was attending a workshop, led by the Wet Ink Collective, and was secretly writing scenes about the difficult aspects of my life. Constructing a story about a struggling reluctant caregiver became a pain-relieving release for me. Then John got caught up in the idea of creating a piece of theatre while we were processing his diagnosis. It was the first time in our relationship that we collaborated on a script. Working on the music was as cathartic for him as the words in the play were for me.

I also had a strong desire at the time to write a play about a woman who lived a “small life”. I’d recently seen a play where the plot revolved around the main character’s fear of losing his high-profile successful career and ending up in a retail job.

I was working in a bookstore and I couldn’t help but be struck by the fact that a job like mine was being portrayed as a gigantic failure.

I loved my retail job and the friends I made there. So I became more and more committed to writing the narrative of a woman who had a “job” and not a “career”. A family and not a big social life or salary. A good person who, despite her well laid plans, was uncontrollably affected by the cruel disease of Alzheimer’s.

And Alzheimer’s is exceedingly cruel. It’s a long and difficult road that gets harder every day that you’re on it. The disease doesn’t only smother the unique exquisite minds of vibrant beautiful people, it also ransacks families and haunts us all.

It’s only bearable through community, and hopefully the sharing of our stories will help lessen our fear and shame.

It’s taken the talents and time of many people to help me write this play. I need to thank the B.C. Arts Council, John Mann, Wet Ink, Jane Heyman, Pam Johnson, Diane Brown and Ruby Slippers, Peter and Melody Anderson, Pete McCormack, The John Moffat and Larry Lillo Prize, Harlan Daumann, Hattie Daumann, Bill Millerd and the Arts Club, Rachel Ditor for being such a strong advocate, the Belfry Theatre, and the brilliant Mr. Shamata for his insightful guidance and the generosity with which he shares his expertise.