

# UPSTAGE

Belfry  
Theatre

A GREAT PLACE TO READ ABOUT GREAT THEATRE • SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2017

VOLUME 4 / ISSUE 1

## Hannah Moscovitch

*BELFRY DEBUTS*

*THE CHILDREN'S REPUBLIC,*

*HER LATEST PLAY*

# Hello!

## Welcome to the Belfry and the premiere production of *The Children's Republic*.

*The Children's Republic* is based on the true and inspirational tale of Dr. Janusz Korczak, a selfless advocate for children's rights. In this issue of Upstage, Dr. Robert Oppenheimer provides us with a brief biography of Dr. Korczak and Michael Shamata delves into the realities and importance of producing this play, at this time.

The play takes place in a Jewish Orphanage, confined within the walls of the Warsaw ghetto.

Dr. Korczak struggles to protect the children and save them from the horrors of World War II. A powerful and true

story of beauty and heroism in a world devoid of freedom and the necessities of life.

Hannah Moscovitch has continued to work on this piece throughout rehearsals and director Christian Barry has assembled a fine team of actors to tackle this important piece of theatre.

Young actors Lily Cave and Simeon Sanford Blades (*A Christmas Carol*) will star with Sophia Irene Coopman and Zander Eke.

Paul Rainville (last seen at the Belfry in *Art*) will play Dr. Janusz Korczak with, Kerry Sandomirsky (*Brilliant!*) as Stefa, his longtime colleague. Rounding out the cast is Sari Alesh, a recent arrival from Syria, who played violin with the Syrian National Symphony Orchestra.

Thanks for being part of the Belfry and we look forward to seeing you soon.



**UPSTAGE** is produced four times per year and can be found at

branches of the Greater Victoria Public Library, the Belfry and online at [issuu.com/belfrytheatre](http://issuu.com/belfrytheatre). If you would like a digital copy please drop us a line at [hello@belfry.bc.ca](mailto:hello@belfry.bc.ca).

**BELFRY THEATRE**  
**1291 GLADSTONE AVENUE**  
**VICTORIA, BC**  
**V8T 1G5**  
**[WWW.BELFRY.BC.CA](http://WWW.BELFRY.BC.CA)**



## B4Play

Gregor Craigie  
Photo by Don Craig

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9 AT 11 AM**

Belfry Theatre, Studio A,  
1291 Gladstone Avenue

Free Event. Join us in Studio A for a live talk show hosted by CBC Radio's Gregor Craigie, featuring playwright Hannah Moscovitch, director Christian Barry and retired child psychologist Dr. Robert Oppenheimer.

If you can't make it to B4Play in person, don't worry: you can listen to these always-entertaining interviews on our website or listen to our podcasts at [soundcloud.com/belfrytheatre](http://soundcloud.com/belfrytheatre).

*The Children's Republic* is generously supported by



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A BRIEF  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THE LIFE OF  
**Dr. Janusz  
Korczak**



**BY DR. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER**  
AUGUST 2017.

JANUSZ KORCZAK WAS A POLISH-JEWISH PAEDIATRICIAN, AUTHOR AND PSYCHOLOGIST. BORN HENRYK GOLDSZMIT IN 1878, KORCZAK ADOPTED HIS PEN NAME AS A YOUNG MAN WHEN HE BECAME A PUBLISHED AUTHOR.

Above all Korczak believed that children should be recognized as full human beings and treated with respect. This approach was at odds with the prevailing beliefs of the time, and many of his ideas are still radical even by modern standards.

Korczak was a successful young paediatrician in Warsaw when he decided to give up his medical practice in order to focus on running a pair of orphanages for Jewish and Catholic children. This became the main focus of his work with children over the next thirty years. As movingly portrayed in the play, Korczak and his close colleague Stefa Wilczyńska, together with their staff, created an oasis of hope in the midst of suffering for the Jewish children in their care.

The titles of two of Korczak's many books: "How to Love a Child" and "The Child's Right to Respect" give a sense of the values he espoused. He wrote "Children are not people of tomorrow, they are people today" and he was also a key figure in the development of the international movement for children's rights that began in the 1920s.

Korczak also developed a Children's Court, complete with child judges, that offered all the inhabitants of the orphanage a chance to seek justice for perceived wrongs done to them. This included the right of any child to accuse an adult staff member of mistreating him or her, an almost unheard of concept at that time or even today.

Janusz Korczak (centre) with some of his orphans.  
Photo by Shlomo Nadel / Courtesy of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada

Korczak and Stefa intended to help each child realize their full potential in life. This careful attention to the needs of each individual child is one of the most impressive aspects of his child-care model. There were also weekly opportunities for visits from former orphans, which over time came to include their spouses and their own children.

Besides supervising the running of the orphanages, Korczak was busy with his involvement in many other activities. These included writing books both for and about children, appearing in the city's courts on behalf of delinquent youth, and offering regular radio shows for both parents and children as "The Old Doctor". »

### Story Highlights

As they have grown quite a bit you may not recognize Lily Cave and Simeon Sanford Blades - they played Fan and Tiny Tim in our original production of *A Christmas Carol*.

Camellia Koo has designed all three productions of *The Children's Republic*: Great Canadian Theatre Company in Ottawa, Tarragon Theatre in Toronto and the Belfry's production.

We have presented three plays by Hannah Moscovitch - *Little One*, *The Russian Play* and, this past March, *What a Young Wife Ought to Know*.

Photo by David Cooper



Korczak also developed and ran the children's section of a national newspaper with a staff of child writers and editors from all over Poland. In addition, Korczak lectured on children's needs at the medical school and he ran an ongoing training program for the younger staff at the orphanages.

Many graduates of Korczak's orphanages later joined the Kibbutz movement and some became ministers in the Polish government. During WW2, Korczak and Stefa continued to take care of the children after the Jewish orphanage was forcibly re-located to the Warsaw

Ghetto. Then, in early August 1942, all 200 children were marched to the train depot and sent in cattle cars to the Nazi death camp at Treblinka, along with Korczak, Stefa and the rest of the staff. They were all murdered on arrival. This year marks the 75th anniversary of their deaths. ▲

Dr. Oppenheimer is a retired child psychologist living in Victoria, with a longstanding interest in Janusz Korczak's work. Robert is an active member of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, their website at [www.januszkorczak.ca](http://www.januszkorczak.ca) is a great resource for learning more about Korczak's life, and includes on-line access to his "Selected Works" and other publications about him.



Hannah Moscovitch is an incredibly exciting voice in Canadian theatre. We have presented three of her remarkable plays during three separate SPARK Festivals. Last year at SPARK, we presented her heart-stopping *What a Young Wife Ought to Know*, in a searing production from 2b theatre in Halifax, directed by Christian Barry, the director of our production of *The Children's Republic*.

*The Children's Republic* is a play that I saw at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto seven or eight years ago. It had a very successful run, but, knowing that Hannah was interested in revisiting it, we commissioned a new version. Two happy workshops later, we have an exquisite script, and one that is unhappily all too appropriate for the social climate in the world today.

It does our hearts good to see and hear the words and actions that Hannah has written – that represent the words and actions of a remarkable human being, whose love and respect for children was more powerful than the hate that surrounded and eventually destroyed them.

I chose this play because I love Hannah's writing and I love this play – especially in this new version. I did not know when I chose it that Nazi flags and slogans, rallies of hate, and lack of moral leadership would be the issues of the day.

Michael Shamata, *Artistic Director*

## Cast & Creatives



**Sari Alesh**  
VIOLINIST



**Lily Cave**  
METTYS



**Sophia Irene Coopman**  
SARA



**Zander Eke**  
ISRAEL



**Paul Rainville**  
JANUSZ KORCZAK



**Kerry Sandomirsky**  
STEFA



**Hannah Moscovitch**  
PLAYWRIGHT



**Simeon Sanford Blades**  
MISHA



**Christian Barry**  
DIRECTOR



**Camellia Koo**  
DESIGNER



**Kaitlin Hickey**  
LIGHTING DESIGNER



**Jennifer Swan**  
STAGE MANAGER



**Sadie Fox**  
ASSISTANT STAGE  
MANAGER

## LIVE EVENTS

Throughout *The Children's Republic* we'll host a number of events that will deepen your theatre experience or just plain astound you.

### AFTERPLAY

Facilitated discussions – audience member to audience member – follow every evening Mainstage performance of *The Children's Republic* (except Opening Night and Talkback Thursday). These are a great opportunity to share your thoughts and hear fellow patrons' reactions to the production and the ideas it presents.

### TALKBACK THURSDAY

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21**

Meet some of the actors post-performance when they return to the stage to answer questions and provide insight into the play.

### BOOKSMACK

**MONDAY, OCTOBER 2 AT 7:30 PM**

Librarians go head-to-head as they race against the clock to speed review their favourite books in these fun and competitive events, co-presented with the Greater Victoria Public Library.

### VOCALEYE

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1 AT 2 PM**

For our patrons with low or no vision, we offer this VocalEye performance during *The Children's Republic*. Trained Audio Describers provide descriptions of the visual elements of the show, allowing people with low vision to enjoy the theatrical experience without missing any of the details.

### THE FLAME

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 AT 7 PM**

Join host Deborah Williams for an unforgettable evening of true tales at Victoria's preeminent true storytelling series. The Flame is a storytelling series that features real people, sharing their personal true stories in front of a live audience. The Lobby will be set up cabaret-style; seating is first-come, first-served — those arriving later may find standing room only. Lobby opens at 6pm. Tickets are \$15 Adults and \$9.50 Students, plus tax.



## Belfry Librarian

The wonderful librarians from the Greater Victoria Public Library have compiled a list of books to help you get even more out of our production of *The Children's Republic*.



*The Boy In The Striped Pajamas*  
by John Boyne

*By Chance Alone: A Remarkable True Story of Courage and Survival at Auschwitz*  
by Max Eisen

*Constantine's Sword*  
[DVD video]

*Family History of Fear: a Memoir*  
by Agata Tuszyńska

*From a Polish Country House Kitchen*  
by Anne Applebaum

*Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust*  
by Jan Tomasz Gross

*Graffiti Knight*  
by Karen Bass

*Irena's Children*  
by Tilar J. Mazzeo

*Maus: a Survivor's Tale*  
[graphic novel]  
by Art Spiegelman

*Mister Doctor: Janusz Korczak & the Orphans of the Warsaw Ghetto*  
by Irène Cohen-Janca

*The Night Trilogy: Night ; Dawn ; Day*  
by Elie Wiesel

*Sarah's Key*  
[DVD video]

*Schindler's List*  
by Thomas Keneally

*A Traveller's History of Poland*  
by John Radzilowski

*The zookeeper's wife: a War Story*  
by Diane Ackerman

*East of Berlin*  
by Hannah Moscovitch

*White House in a Grey City*,  
Written and illustrated by  
Itzhak Belfer

Compiled by Marianne Baatz,  
Library Assistant, Greater  
Victoria Public Library



## SPOTLIGHT ON SUPPORTERS

# Rob & Shirley Hunter

Kevin Loring in *Home is a Beautiful Word* (2014), one of the Hunters' favourite Belfry productions.

Photo by David Bukach

Belfry donors Rob and Shirley Hunter have been married for 34 successful years. Rob, who came from Vancouver, has benefited from the love of Shirley's large extended family, as she is a third generation Victorian. He started Devon Properties in 1980 and by the time Rob and his partner sold the company this year, it had grown into the largest property management company on the island and leading broker of apartment buildings. Fortunately, both Rob and Shirley believe that "if you are doing well, it's important to give back to the community." Shirley was the first chairperson for Greater Victoria Crime Stoppers and is active in fundraising for supportive housing.

Their attendance at the Belfry goes back to the eighties. Rob confesses that his taste in theatre may be a little more traditional than Shirley's. However, looking back, it turns out that the plays he has loved the most were ones that Shirley persuaded him see, including the very memorable *Mom's the Word* and Joel Bernbaum's *Home is a Beautiful Word*.

The Hunters support the Belfry because of our encouragement of emerging playwrights, the need for "home grown" art, and also because the Belfry is "comfy and homey and feels good."

It is one of the cultural destinations that they enjoy most in the city. They realize that none of this can exist without community support.

We are fortunate that the Hunters have generously supported both our artistic work as well as our Capital Campaign to fund the recent renovations. The Capital Campaign made sense to them, as after building commercial properties for 40 years, they could recognize the need to maintain and upgrade buildings and are aware of how much money it takes to keep a facility of this nature functioning in top form. They cite having a more functional concession area and the expansion of the women's washrooms as just two of the practical changes that will make an important difference for the Belfry's future.

Thank you, Rob and Shirley, for your generous support, and your outreach into the community to help raise funds for this remarkable transformation of the Belfry Theatre in 2017.

To help the Belfry reach our \$1 Million Capital Campaign goal, contact Susan Stevenson at [development@belfry.bc.ca](mailto:development@belfry.bc.ca) or 250-385-6835 ext. 229.

# Calendar



## The Children's Republic

### PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

**September 12 – October 8, 2017**

Tuesdays – Thursdays at 7:30 pm

Wednesday Matinees at 1 pm  
(September 20, 27, October 4)

Fridays + Saturdays at 8 pm

Saturday Matinees at 4 pm

Sunday Matinees at 2 pm

Free Childcare – Saturday, September 16  
at 4pm / Sunday, September 24 at 2 pm

### Audience Engagement Schedule

**B4PLAY** · Saturday, September 9 at 11 am

**TALKBACK THURSDAY** · September 21

**AFTERPLAY** · Following all  
evening performances\*

**VOCAL EYE** · Described performance  
Sunday, October 1 at 2 pm

\*Except opening night and Talkback Thursday

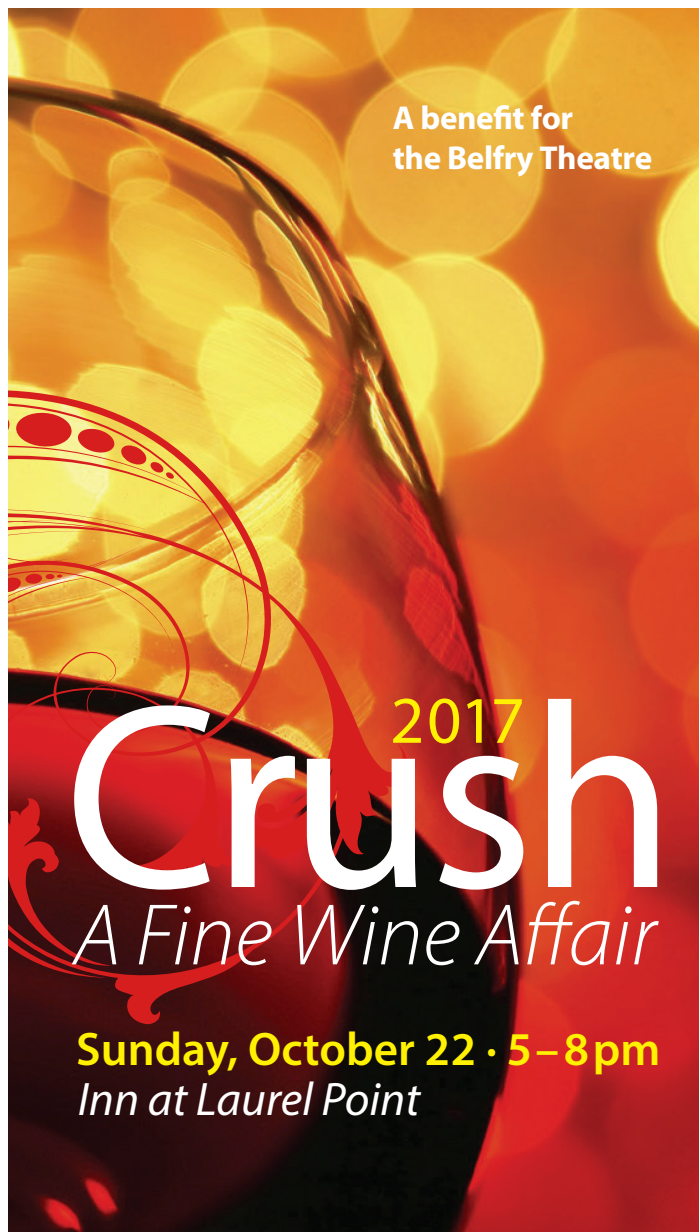
## How to buy tickets

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

**In person**  
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