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Eastern Townships Life & Culture: Past, Present, Future
Vol. 52 - No. 8 - May 2025

PERFORMING ARTS

IN THE TOWNSHIPS

From Struggles to Stages
to Spectators

PLUS:

Poetry from a Vermont
Neighbour

Memphremagog Steamers:
Film Review

Townships Moon Heckles
Haskell Restrictions





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 Our office is located on the traditional territory of the Abenaki people (the people of the rising sun).
 We acknowledge their stewardship and appreciate that we are all guests on Abenaki Territory.

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Claude Dufresne

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What Do You Think About the TOWNSHIPS SUN?

We are considering a few changes to our content and look, and we need YOUR feedback! Please answer a 3-minute survey at TOWNSHIPSSUN.CA. Responses are anonymous. Thanks for your help!

FRESH BLOGS & FREE ACCESS, "News & Notes" TownshipsSun.ca

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Subscription Drive: Where Are We?, *by R.A. Garber*

BU Singers' Season Wraps Up: The Secret Sauce of Singing, *by Melanie Cutting & friends*

... and more!

A bird's eye view of The Piggery Theatre's weathervane Hatley Township. Photo: Robert Donachie



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Keep Live Performance Alive!

by Ross Murray

Five years ago, everything ended. We worked from home, we played at home, we took up knitting. Theatres shut down, venues went dark, performing arts seasons were cancelled. Prior to the shutdown, I was scheduled to perform in a play at the Haskell Opera House that spring. As rehearsals began in February, I remember my castmates asking, "What if things get worse?"

They got worse.

There was no theatre on the border for all of 2020 and 2021. Then in the spring of 2022, I was asked to do an interview about the legend (or myth) that the former Beatles almost met at the Haskell Library, which was the basis for my play *All Together Now* in 2019. The interview took place inside the Opera House. I remember walking through those doors after two years and creaking up the stairs, breathing in this 120-year-old building, a beloved place where I had been a spectator, a director, a performer. My eyes actually welled up. It was like greeting an old friend.

Theatres to me combine the sacred and the spectacular. To be part of a theatre audience is to partake in a kind of worship, not of some deity but of the endlessly surprising human imagination and infinite ways it can entertain us. Plus there are lights! Sounds! Decor! Dazzlement! Soft seats!

Last spring, I went to Broadway for the first time in my life. (I know, what took me so long...) Among the shows I saw was *Sweeney Todd* by the musically gymnastic Stephen Sondheim. I was awestruck not only by the performances but especially by the set, which featured a tower that turned into a crane, a furnace, and later a bridge, and then the bridge tilted! No CGI, just mind-boggling, breath-taking ingenuity happening before my very eyes.

There's nothing like live performance, whether it's in a beautiful old theatre like the Haskell or the quaintly, candlelight Gustin Hall in Fitch Bay, which you can read about in this issue of the *Sun*. And it's not just the space and the spectacle but the coming together that makes live performance so unique.

So why do we resist? If the pandemic taught us nothing else, it should be to appreciate in-person performance. And yet, as dance spectator Kathryn Owen points out in this issue, the lure of pyjamas is all powerful.

Plus, we are bombarded with entertainment options that we can more easily and passively consume. We don't even need to stand up! Just pull our phones out of our pockets or ask Alexa to play music. There's so much stuff! No wonder it's next to impossible to make a living as an artist or as a producer of the arts, as you'll also read in this issue. Politics is even threatening performance venues like the Haskell Opera House (see *Townships Moon*).

Perhaps, then, as Etienne Dominique notes in his recollections of being a musician in the 2000s, we should think of attending live performance as an act of rebellion. By seeking out performances in our towns and region, we are saying no, if only briefly, to mass-produced entertainment. Plus, by patronizing the arts, you are essentially buying local, and that, as we're learning, is more important now than ever. (Oh, and by the way, you can also buy local by subscribing to the *Townships Sun*!)

There are endless opportunities to enjoy the performing arts, from free shows in the park to concert series. Lose the PJs and take advantage of them! Because remember: we lost it once, we don't want to lose it again.

Happy reading!



The cast of *Bride of Memphré*, written and directed by the guest editor, performed by Borderline Players at the Haskell Opera House, 2023

COMMUNITY FORUM

Haskell Situation (and Almost the Haskell) Makes Reader Rabid

Hi John & Rachel! It's amazing how you two seem to pop up everywhere. We were watching "The National" last night on CBCNN, and who do we see exiting the Haskell in Stanstead but you two! We've been supporters of the Haskell since the 90s when we would attend Gilbert & Sullivan operettas by the Montreal West Operatic Society, *Little Shop of Horrors*, Stuart MacLean, and other confections too numerous to mention. We'd take a picnic, a bottle of wine, and then rent cushions and enjoy the show, never failing to enter the raffle, and of course never winning! We'd bring our friends, our parents, even our 1964 Meteor, and absolutely adored the whole experience.

Probably the only truly international incident was when we were attending a corny concert by a duo from Cote St-Luc with my father, and Tony was bitten by a bat, which caused a string of reactions by the Quebec, Vermont, Canadian, and U.S. governments (the bat was released on the American side by Tony, and just perhaps that little fellow then made his way to New York, bit the bastard, and Bob's Yer Uncle, a rabid presidency).

What a shame to see what Trump and his thug clowns are visiting upon that cherished icon of friendship and cooperation!

- Ed Pederson, Canterbury, QC

Editor's Note: Look for blogs about the Haskell Library and Opera House on TownshipsSun.ca.

Other Satisfied Customers

I invite you to subscribe to the *Townships Sun*. I joined in 1977-85. It's a friggin' great read. And this magazine keeps improving under the editor R.A. Garber and team of writers. It's only \$35 a year. Since I re-joined in 2023, it has been a joy to check my mail. The only thing I look forward to!

- Tom Axtell, Camp Comfort via Facebook

I have been receiving your magazine for the past year. I spend time in the Townships to visit friends. The magazine does a great job introducing people to all the Townships has to offer. March 2025 issue was a great analysis of the people and places that sustain the Townships' unique nature. Thank you, all — I can only imagine how much work you do.

— Ellen Lesiuk, Edmonton, AB

Bull's Head Now Online Only

My brother Barry and I purchased Bull's Head in 2006 from Dr. Peter O'Donnell in Richmond. We did our best to build up

the business while working our full-time jobs as well. Finally, in November 2009 we made the decision to sell the business to the Pearson brothers in Richmond. They did a great job promoting the product and came out with some new flavours, including root beer and ginger beer. They are still operating the business, but the products are no longer available in stores. They are now only selling their products online. If you live in the Richmond area, you go and pick up your online order at the Central Hotel. A distributor in the Sherbrooke region will deliver the product to your home if you order three cases or more at Bulls-head.com.

I love the magazine. Keep up the good work!

Cheers!

— Brian Husk, Pierrefonds, QC

Editor's Note: Look for more on Bull's Head in our June issue.

Elbows up, Environmentalists!

I was impressed with the April 2025 issue, *Elbows Up, Farmers*. It was timely and informative. In particular, the Bill 86 article "Having Land, and Not Ruining It" was very illuminating. I attended Heather Ross's presentation to the St. Francis Valley Naturalists' Club and can attest to her dedication to her land and her understanding and commitment to the importance of biodiversity on her farm. All the more impressive is her work toward obtaining the conservation designation for the Blackwood Reserve — spending her own time and money to ensure that future generations of farmers and community can reap the benefits of a healthy and balanced land. Kudos!

So imagine my dismay to learn that various organizations are actually hindering the designation of protected status to green-zoned land in southern Quebec. What are the reasons to freeze Ross and 200 other applicants to obtain environment conservation protection within the so-called green zone? As farmers, they clearly see the value in protecting their private land: value from a balanced ecosystem obtained from clean ground water, wind erosion breaks, and more, which ultimately benefit farm crops and livestock. Why does the UPA not want to defend conservation, and why are government departments not aligned on the regulation of agriculture and natural areas in the same geographic region? What are they not telling us?

I very much wish courage to Heather Ross and her 200 fellow farming conservationists, to negotiate with the Quebec ministries (and the UPA) to protect their valuable farms with environmental protection programs. And come on, Government, get your act together to help them.

Thank you, Townships Sun, for the great investigative work!

— Chris Pollard, Canton-de-Hatley, QC



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Phantom of the Haskell

by John Mackley

Well over a century has passed since the construction of the Haskell Free Library and Opera House in 1901-1904. The building straddles the Canada-United States border in the twin towns of Derby Line, Vermont, and Stanstead, Quebec.

Built before any regulations against doing so existed in either country, the Queen Anne Revival-style building was deliberately situated atop the border to represent the local cross-border camaraderie.

The very existence of the Haskell Free Library and Opera House is a showcase to international diversity, equality, inclusion, and acceptance.

The land and building were donated by Canadian-born Martha Stewart Haskell in honor of her late American-born husband, Carlos Haskell to house an international library and performance theatre. It is a Parks Canada recognized Historic Site.



Haskell Free Library and Opera House

Haskell imagined the Opera House would generate revenue to help support the “Free” library. Its 1908 charter says it was to be “forever managed and used for the support and maintenance” of the downstairs library. Alas, it never achieved this goal.

Nonetheless, the second-floor Opera House theatre seats 500 and has hosted regular theatrical productions, ballets, and concerts over the past century, including plays by local and regional playwrights and actors from Vermont and Quebec, in both English and French.

It has featured performances from as far away as the Cameron School of Dance from Brossard and the Orford Arts Centre. The Canadian Symphony has performed concerts there on a number of occasions.

The Haskell’s “What’s Up” listing shows the next event is the launch of *Dreamers and Steamers: The Steamboat Era on Lake Memphremagog*, by Louise Abbott.

Borderline Players is a relatively young theatre troupe of volunteer actors, directors, and producers from both sides of the border. Founded in 2018, it is registered in both Quebec and Vermont. Based in the Haskell in Derby Line, Vermont and Stanstead Quebec, they come together to produce plays written and performed by Americans and Canadians. They often perform at the Haskell Opera House.

A phantom has attempted to take up residence in the Opera House of late, and it is to this dark presence that we award this month’s Townships Moon.

The United States Border Patrol agency has shut down Canadian access to the Haskell’s main entrance, which happens to be on the American side by a matter of a few feet. (Till October, only library-card holders or persons with limited mobility may use the front entrance.)

Until a new entrance on the Canadian side can be built, other Canadians are forced to either cross the border at a regular port of entry or use a rear-service door. Viewing the back door, I felt like a second-class citizen in my own country.



Utility door destined to be new Canadian entrance

To my mind, this eliminates, with no justification, more than a century’s precedence of neighbourly tolerance that allowed everyone to use the sidewalk that leads to the front door.

Asked what would change when it comes to staging and attending performances in the Opera House, Sylvie Boudreau, President of the Haskell, said “US and Canadian authorities have no jurisdiction inside the library and opera house. We will have signs reminding users to exit through the door they entered. No barriers will be installed inside the building. The Haskell will remain a symbol of friendship, unity, and exchange between our communities, our two countries, and our families” (free translation from French).

Bravo and brava to everyone involved with the Haskell for sticking to their principles and our collective Canadian values!



John Mackley lives, loves, laughs, and writes in the Eastern Townships.
(Photos: John Mackley)

The Art of Persistence

by Ziv Przytyk

As a young kid growing up in Way's Mills on my family's organic farm, art and artists were part of my surroundings. I was inspired by the eclectic mix of family members, musicians, philosophers, activists, and travelers who lived on and visited the farm. I credit them for my love of all things artistic. That, and *The Muppets Show*, along with festivals like Bread and Puppet in Vermont, fueled my dream of pursuing the performing arts.

Like many young dreamers, I aimed high—I auditioned for the Cirque du Soleil school in Montreal at 17, right after high school. I failed miserably. But that failure didn't deter me. Instead, it redirected me. In the early 2000s, I returned to Way's Mills, and for four years, my best friend, my ex-wife, and I ran an art gallery in Ayer's Cliff. Those influences, combined with the creative freedom of having access to the family farm, allowed me to pursue my passion in a different way. If I couldn't join the circus, I would create my own.

And so, in 2006, ShazamFest was born.

This summer, ShazamFest celebrates its 20th anniversary, an outdoor four-day festival of music, art and performance of all varieties. For two decades, I've organized and performed on the very stage I built. Since its inception, I have participated in and curated hundreds of cabarets, concerts, art shows, and circus performances, mostly here in the Townships.



When I first envisioned ShazamFest, my goal was simple: to create a festival that could provide work for myself and other young people from the countryside who wanted to pursue a career in the arts.

I was quickly disabused of my lofty ambitions. The festival lost money for the first ten years — money I couldn't afford to lose. The reality of being an artist is that unless you're among the lucky 1% who happen to be in the right place at the right time with the right idea, financial success is elusive. Sure, it's possible to make a living in the arts, but very few will ever be well off.



Kids get in on the act at ShazamFest. (Photos by Claude Dufresne)



ShazamFest's programming goes well beyond music to feature everything from acrobatics to burlesque.

But here's the thing: most of us don't make art for money. We create because we have to. It's a drive we can't switch off. It's how we interpret the world around us—and the one inside us.

Art is habit-forming. You keep doing it until you get good at it. In my career, persistence has been my greatest asset. It took over ten years for ShazamFest to stop bleeding money and another five before it started paying me. But the wealth I've gained from this journey isn't financial—it's the incredible community that has grown around the festival and the countless opportunities it has created.

Some of the best shows I've ever organized were the ones that lost money but had the biggest impact on the audience and the artists involved. The shared experience of a powerful performance, the relationships built through artistic collaboration—those are the real rewards.

The Eastern Townships is an incredible place to live because of its artists. Just within my small neighbourhood of Way's Mills, there are internationally recognized painters, musicians, and performers. But the reality is that most of them don't make their living here. They built their careers in other places before settling in the Townships, drawn by the natural beauty and the slower pace of life.

For those of us trying to build a career within the region, especially as anglophones, it's not easy. While Canada has a wealth of funding opportunities at every level of government, applying for grants is an exhausting process. When I started writing grant applications over 15 years ago, a proposal was five pages long.

Today, that same grant requires 25 pages of documentation, yet the funding amounts haven't significantly increased. More and more of my time is spent on administration, leaving less for actual artistic creation—a reality that makes little sense to me.

I worry about the future of arts funding. With our current provincial government and uncertainty at the federal level, I fear that financial support for the arts will be among the first things cut. And when funding disappears, it's the working artists—those already scraping by—who will be hit the hardest.

Most of my life, I've worked side jobs to support my artistic career. I've been a farmhand, a construction worker, a shop owner, a bartender, and a cook. It's only in the last two years that I've been able to work full-time in the arts. If funding diminishes, many others like me will be forced to take on non-artistic jobs just to survive.

But no matter what happens, art will endure. Artists create because they must. Whether we're performing in grand theatres, in small-town community halls, or on makeshift stages in the countryside, the arts will always find a way. And as long as there are people willing to fight for it, to organize, to perform, and to dream, the artistic spirit of the Eastern Townships will thrive.



Ziv Przytyk was born to back-to-the-land hippies and raised on an organic farm near Way's Mill. After a stint as a farmhand out west, Ziv returned to the Townships, where he ran an art gallery in Ayer's Cliff for four years before founding ShazamFest, which celebrates 20 years this season. Visit www.shazamfest.com

Musical Kids Find a Home

by Ross Murray

Art Babayants can spot a musical theatre student a mile away.

"When they get on stage, it's like, 'That's a musical theatre student.' There's immediately some incredible presence and energy. They don't just get on stage and show their amazing voice and musicality but there is a character they're also presenting to the audience."

Prof. Babayants leads the Musical Theatre concentration at Bishop's University, now in its fifth year. The program has gone from about 9 students when it began during the pandemic to 18.

The program refines an interest in musical theatre that has been at BU and elsewhere in the Townships for years, in both English and French. But there has never been a program specifically targeting the genre, certainly not in English. BU's program is the first and only one of its kind in Quebec.

It's a concentration, not a major, somewhat by design, says Prof. Babayants. Most of the students in the program already have a major, most often either drama or music.



Art Babayants is the director of BU's musical theatre concentration.

"They have an expertise in drama or in music, but now, in addition to that, they can have another area of expertise that is very much related to their major," he says, "and I think it's a really wonderful and sort of freeing solution, especially for those who are not necessarily ready to commit to one type of theatre or one type of music."

The concentration offers a broad range. For instance, music majors must take a movement class, drama students take music courses. This year, students are learning Argentinian dance.

To date, the program has presented two musicals: *The Drowsy Chaperone* in 2023 and last year *Spring Awakening*.

This year, Prof. Babayants is teaching devised theatre, a collaborative process that begins without a script but merely with an idea, a theme or even a feeling. This leads to improvisation and script development. While it's still a work in progress, this year's production will be a revue-style, somewhat cheeky homage to Broadway. It will open in Turner Theatre on May 30.



The Drowsy Chaperone was presented in Turner Theatre in 2023. (Photo: Bishop's University)

"I love that the theatre becomes a space where people from different communities connect rather than theatre as a space that includes only people of my little cultural silo," says Prof. Babayants.



A scene from 2024's production, *Spring Awakening*. (Photo: Bishop's University)

The new production is a sort of next-level development for the young program. The concentration is also drawing a different sort of student than early on.

"They are obsessed with musicals," says Prof. Babayants. "Generally they are impossible because they wouldn't shut up about musicals they would love to stage. They constantly ask for a meeting and they bring a maquette of the set that they developed for a particular production."

These students didn't fall into the musical theatre concentration by accident, he says, but because they passionately want to study it.

While the upcoming spring production will feature mostly known songs from existing musicals, they have also opened up a contest to Quebec-based librettists and composers to present a number for possible inclusion in the show.

"It is very important for musical theatre creators to actually see their work on stage," says Prof. Babayants. "It's such a difficult process to write but it also requires a lot of support from theatre institutions and, unfortunately, there isn't really much support for musicals here in Quebec. So one of my ideas is to ensure that Bishop's becomes an important centre for musical theatre creation."

The irony is that there is no shortage of love for musicals among the public.

"It's a type of theatre that has existed for thousands and thousands of years," says Prof. Babayants. "I remember talking to a student who had just moved from India,

and she was asking what kind of theatre I do. I told her musical theatre, and she said, 'What other types of theatre are there?'"

The program's two productions have indeed proven popular. The *Drowsy Chaperone* sold out the small Turner Theatre – presented in May after most BU students had left for the summer – while *Spring Awakening* last March drew large crowds at Centennial Theatre. These audiences, says Prof. Babayant, were roughly 50/50 BU community and the greater community, including francophone spectators.

"When I did my PhD at the University of Toronto, one of my focal points was how to break cultural and linguistic silos, because I did notice that in Toronto, when you go to the theatre, the audience tends to be older, white and middle class but the city is not white or old but young and very diverse," says Prof. Babayants. "When I moved to Estrie, I saw it's a majority francophone region and I thought we're doing a very popular genre, why not bring those folks to the theatre?"

One way to make francophone spectators more comfortable was to offer sur-titles in French. They also provide a certain number of tickets free to new Quebecers.



Ross Murray writes humour, novels, plays but not yet a musical in Stanstead.

Country Music

by Simon Petraki

For a country boy who lived a very rural Eastern Townships life until the age of 16, I'd say a quarter-century is a good amount of time to devote to a big city. I spent my wilder and more energetic years (16-40) in Montreal, surrounded by culture and interesting people who helped me cultivate my passion for the arts. After almost 15 years of working in music (and all things audio), I felt like my skills/contacts as an independent music-producer/sound-engineer were established enough to make a move and return to my roots.

In 2021, I found a great deal on an old house in the heart of Fitch Bay. The decision was rooted in wanting to invest in something that was mine instead of into another commercial rental space in Montreal where I would have had to rebuild my studio in someone else's building again. The house I bought is perfect for a studio since there was a huge ballroom on the second floor where people used to come dance during the late 1800s (Hamilton's Hall).



Gustin Hall gussied up for Cameroon singer Clerel back in February 2025.

I spent the first six months of 2023 renovating that big room to get ready for my first recording contract in the new studio – a 16-day project, recording an album with Toronto singer/songwriter Julie Neff and her band. They all stayed over in my extra bedrooms, testing my new “recording retreat” studio model and proving that it worked well. The album is now fully mixed and mastered. Julie is refining her launch plan and aligning all the moving parts involved in releasing an album properly. (It comes out next winter.)

All in all, it's great to be back – closer to my parents and old friends, and back in a rhythm of life that feels less hectic. The studio has its busy periods but in the

downtime I have a thousand renovations to do on this 150-year-old house.

Aside from audio-related freelance jobs for Stanstead College, I'm also volunteering for Action Communautaire des Cantons de Stanstead (ACCS), a local non-profit organization seeking to bring the community together through social and cultural activities. I help as a liaison to the bands/artists that we hire, as well as all things technical with the live sound of the shows. The other five ACCS volunteers are all crucial in planning and executing these events for the public to enjoy.

Each year, under the banner of Fitch 'n Musique, ACCS hosts a series of seven to eight concerts in Fitch Bay's Gustin Hall, a charming venue with good acoustics and room for up to 65 people to enjoy a seated show. These concerts are well-attended showcases for local and regional artists that bring the community together through the universal language of music. This focus on homegrown talent not only supports the artists but also

fosters a sense of community pride. The variety of musical styles and genres featured in Fitch 'n Musique makes sure that there is something for everyone, from folk and classical to jazz and contemporary.

In addition to the indoor concerts, ACCS hosts an annual outdoor concert in Thayer Park. This event is a highlight of the summer season and usually draws about 150 attendees. The outdoor setting allows for a larger audience and creates a festive atmosphere that appeals to families, friends, and music lovers of all ages.

The success of ACCS's concert series would not be possible without the generous support from the local municipality. This financial backing is crucial in covering the costs associated with organizing and hosting the concerts, from artist fees to venue expenses.

We aim to continue our mission of bringing music and cultural activities to our neighbourhood in fun and accessible ways. The community's commitment to supporting these events is evident in the continued popularity of the Fitch 'n Musique series; it's what gives us the motivation

to keep donating our time to it. We can always use some extra help though, so if anyone is interested in volunteering please write to accstanstead@gmail.com to get in touch!

More about Simon's studio at www.seratonestudio.com. Find out about ACCS at www.facebook.com/actioncommunautaire2017



Simon Petraki is a sound engineer who operates Seratone Studio. He recently relocated to the Eastern Townships, where he grew up, and rebuilt a new and improved Seratone in his home in Fitch Bay.

The Struggles of the Bar Band

by Étienne Domingue

I sang in various rock bands from the mid-2000s to the mid-2010s (namely: Doppelgänger Effekt, All Alone With Joseph, and Powerful Others), performing mostly original material. We did not headline as many gigs as some of our more successful friends (like the Stairway Movement, the Water Solubles, or the Massawippi Skank), but we did play at the Lion, the Magog, the Maysen, the Gait, and Shazam Fest (among others). Some of our songs (alas, not my best work) aired on CJMQ. Doppelgänger Effekt received a grant from Sherbrooke's Conseil des Arts to record and release an album (also not my best work).

In my albeit limited experience, the main challenge has always been establishing productive partnerships with music venues. The most popular places for local live music are drinking establishments first and concert venues a distant second. Negotiating fair distribution of the proceeds, even for charity events, isn't always straightforward. I understand venues are businesses with substantial overhead, but getting paid in cheap beer is only amusing for so long. Marketing and distribution can also be challenging, but those are moot points if you can't play in front of people.

Whereas cover bands and jazz ensembles can make a bit of money from playing terrace bars in the summer, it is extremely difficult to make a profit—let alone a decent living—from performing original rock music on the local scene. To do that, you have to scale up your operation (that is: tour widely and sell merchandise). Our albums barely broke even and that was in the days when people still bought CDs. Streaming platforms create opportunities to reach a broad international audience, but they don't pay much, if at all. Ultimately, the most reward you can expect for making original local rock is encouragement from the community—that, and the lifelong friendship with your bandmates.

While I am not terribly optimistic about the future of the arts under late-stage capitalism and rampant automation, I do hope that more people begin to realize that art is not a product but a meeting of the minds. It is already possible for corporations to cut out artists



The author in his younger days and in a hat

and have their machines produce halfway decent visual art, poetry and prose; it won't be long until AI masters musical composition as well. People, however, should want to see local art, read local books, and listen to local music made by humans. Through art, we visit another person's subjectivity—we bear witness to an emotionally driven process as creators push against the boundaries of their idiom, their medium, or their talent.

If this act of witnessing were ever to be eclipsed by the passive consumption of mere entertainment, humanity will be diminished, even worse than we already are courtesy of cultural imperialism. Few experiences are as intensely, authentically human as enjoying live music in person—I hope that, in time, more people come to understand it as an act of resistance.



Étienne Domingue lives in Sherbrooke where he works for a small heritage non-profit. His favourite hobbies include writing, procrastinating instead of writing, and distracting from his genuine feelings of inadequacy with attempts at self-deprecating humour.

Knowlton Players: A Community of Acting

Knowlton Players in a nonprofit amateur theatre group in Brome Lake. The group puts on 2-3 shows a year and also holds workshops, readings and other theatrical ventures.

All our actors are volunteers. We are challenged, at times and depending on the nature of the play, in finding young male actors. We like to use different venues for our shows (theatre, inn, church, community centre), although some of the costs are high.

We make donations to the community with the profits from our shows. We give to elementary schools and a high school for their art and drama programs, a food bank, museum, library and to the local hospital.

Knowlton Players is a community of acting, sharing and friendship. It will go on as long as there are people interested in volunteering, directing, acting and being involved in all that it entails to put on a show.

- Submitted by Vivien Grenier, president of Knowlton Players. Visit knowltonplayers.ca

Shall We Dance?

by *Kathryne Owen*

A couple of years ago, I clicked “interested” on a Facebook event. As had become customary for me, I expected this to be a symbolic gesture of support while allowing me the space to gently avoid committing to an outing.

But then a colleague wrote me to say that she too was “interested” in this event, an evening of Vivaldi at Université de Sherbrooke. Should we make a night of it? I was surprised to find myself resisting the outing, for no other reason than complacent comfort.

Recognizing this, I pushed myself to say yes, reigniting a lifelong appreciation for the performing arts. Despite begrudging the fact that I had to wear pants past 8 pm, I was thoroughly fulfilled by the outing, gushing about how terrible it was that I hadn’t done this sort of thing more often... after all, it was such a source of joy and replenishment. Life has a tendency to fill up with an unlimited supply of obligations. When or why those obligations stopped including self-nourishment, I couldn’t say for sure.

At the concert, I learned that the Université de Sherbrooke’s Salle Maurice O’Bready offers a gamut of options for entertainment: theatre, concerts, comedy, and dance. Better yet, they offer promotional packages for each series, which is far more commitment than clicking

on a fake button on a social media platform... and yet, I said yes.

Dance is something I’ve always loved, but for some reason it felt less accessible to me than its counterparts. We have an abundance of talents and riches in the Eastern Townships, which leads to a prolific variety of theatre, music, and exhibits that one may find themselves “interested” in. Dance seemed far less available, and I couldn’t be happier to have been mistaken about that.

I found myself buzzing with anticipation preparing to attend the first show in the dance series, performed by les Grands Ballets Canadien.

It was awful.

There was a shocking lack of feathers, tulle and not one ballerina slipper to be seen! The dancers donned loose grey pants and shirts and were barefoot. The storyline was abstract, the music unsettling, and the lithe, fluidity of any movements were totally lost under the dancers’ industrial frocks. I was deflated and resentful. How dare they offer me this jagged pill of a performance when I had made such an effort to stay out of my pyjamas and risked a room full of strangers to be there!

It wasn’t until I recounted the performance for a friend that it dawned on me. I went into every aggravation that



Claudia Chan Tak (left and opposite) is a multidisciplinary artist trained in visual arts (Concordia University) and contemporary dance (UQAM). Her practice blends textile work, dance performance, and intimate archival processes to explore themes of memory, identity, and family heritage.

A resident of Montreal, she is the inaugural recipient of the Musée des beaux-arts de Sherbrooke’s Kesar Creation Grant. Her work has been presented across Quebec and internationally. Claudia has received the William Douglas Award (2015) and the Mécènes Investis pour les Arts Prize (2018), and is recognized for her contributions as a choreographer, performer, actress, costume designer, and video artist.



offended my expectations and found myself thawing with realization. Among the shards of disillusionment, I found pain, loss, fear, loneliness, and raw anger. The performance had been about the death of a loved one, and it finally dawned on me that it had been highly effective in relaying those emotions.

I've always believed that artistic interpretation is one of the most empowering elements of art in all its forms. With music, theatre, and fine arts, I have become accustomed to finding my voice and my impressions. Dance tickled a whole new part of my mind. I had a whole new set of expectations to abandon and limitations to destroy. What a privilege to be given that opportunity.

The annual series features six dance shows in total. It has been a terrific journey. Of course, there have been times when I left the venue with little more than a sincere "good for them!" or "that took energy!" At times, I left quiet and pensive. Other performances I left feeling perplexed and not quite sure how to describe my response. Then there were the times that I was so filled with joy that I thought I might burst.

No matter what my emotional journey, it has been such an enriching experience to witness the extraordinary physical and emotional expressions that these dance companies share. I still have to fight myself to go sometimes. I know without a doubt, however, that the outing will be nourishing for my mind and, dare I say, my soul.

Like most things, once I invited dance into my life, it began to pop up everywhere. I discovered that there are a number of opportunities in our community.

There are pop-up events at different establishments: dance schools that offer shows and workshops; Swing Sherbrooke Dance company hosts open dance nights in their studios as well as cafés and restaurants around town. It's amazing what you can find on the internet once your search algorithm has taken note of your interests (terrifying and somewhat helpful).

I encourage you to give it a try. Take that baby step out of your comfort zone and reignite a passion that glows warm and fuzzy in your heart. The outcome is well worth it.



Kathryne Owen has been a Townshipper for over 30 years. She is a lover of the arts and has contributed to the community through a number of mediums, including music, theatre and fine arts. (She has yet to dance.)

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From Jazz Night to Jazz Festival

by Sonia Patenaude

Jazz lovers in the Eastern Townships often need to become jazz seekers, as opportunities to enjoy professional jazz concerts are few and far between. There are some oases to quench one's thirst for the blue note in a few locations: weekly jazz jams at Boquebière in downtown Sherbrooke; Café 440 on Wellington South provides musical gigs on occasion, including jazz; the Musique Chez Nous series at Bishop's University programs one or two events per season involving members of the music faculty and seasoned professionals.

However, one location stands out as a true haven of professional jazz in the Townships: The Mercantile, or "Le Merc" as it is affectionately known to patrons and village dwellers, is a cozy café located in the village of North Hatley. Since 2021, the Mercantile has been owned by Lyman Carter, who recently returned to his hometown of North Hatley. He has been welcoming live jazz music by professional musicians for the past two years, as initiated by Jon Gearey and Louise Thibault on Saturdays, with regular guest Michael Gearey (Jon's son). Over time, the musical offering expanded to Thursdays, where Jon invited pianist Eric Harding. They were joined soon after by Carlos Maldonado Cisneros on double bass.

What started as a steady gig for the band and a recurring jazz rendezvous for patrons will soon blossom into a full-fledged jazz event in August, the first of its kind in North Hatley: The North Hatley Jazz Festival.

The North Hatley Jazz Festival, will be presented from August 7 to 10 in multiple locations in and around North Hatley and will feature 12 performances, including two ticketed events and 10 free shows, showcasing exceptional local talent alongside musicians from Montreal and beyond. This provides a wonderful opportunity for musicians in training to share the stage with seasoned pros. As such, two student combos will take part in the festival — one from Bishop's and the other from Université de Sherbrooke. Each evening will close with a jam session in true jazz fashion at the Mercantile, where artists will be invited to join the Auburn Trio. The full program, developed by Jon Gearey, Harding, and Cisneros, will be available sometime in May 2025.

"For the love of jazz and love of community," is Jon Gearey's response when asked what is the "raison d'être" behind the upcoming musical festival. A professor in the Music Faculty of Bishop's University and at Université de Sherbrooke, Gearey teaches jazz music history and guides young musicians in the apprenticeship of guitar playing.

"The thing about jazz music is that it is best enjoyed when shared," he says.

And sharing he does when he takes the stage at "Le Merc" with his colleagues or when he sits in on jazz jam Tuesdays at Boquebière with professionals and students alike.



The Auburn Trio is at the heart of the jazz festival's plans

Organizers of the North Hatley Jazz Festival have held two benefit concerts in support of the budding jazz festival featuring the Auburn Trio. On December 22, guest musicians included vocalist Louise Thibault and Michael Gearey in the cozy United Universalist Church (UU) in North Hatley. Despite a February snowstorm, jazz aficionados made their way once more to the UU to enjoy a Valentine-themed concert featuring singer Isabella Hallia and Frank Rackow on saxophone.

If you have missed these events, fear not, a third fundraising event will be presented on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 11 at 4 p.m. at Sainte-Élisabeth Church, North Hatley. Tickets (\$20) will soon be available online at NorthHatleyJazz.ca and at the door on the day of the concert. The evening will be a captivating musical journey, featuring two distinct sets that highlight both instrumental melodies and expressive vocal performances. The concert will open with an instrumental set, featuring the Auburn Trio along with saxophonist Richard Savoie and Maude Bastien on drums, showcasing the smooth, dynamic jazz of Brazil's legendary Antonio Carlos Jobim. The second half of the evening will feature singer Marc Tetrault, whose expressive vocal performance will provide a beautiful contrast to the instrumental set.

This program promises a rich and dynamic musical experience, blending vibrant instrumental sounds with captivating vocal performances in a variety of languages! A fitting preview for what promises to be an exciting venture as the North Hatley Jazz Festival transforms one of Quebec's most beautiful villages into a vibrant scene, uniting local and international musicians for a celebration of jazz culture at the heart of the Eastern Townships.

For more, visit northhatleyjazz.ca



Sonia Patenaude when not performing, ensures audiences know who else is hitting the stage, launching a book, or exhibiting visual arts. Since March 2020, she has been sharing an Arts and Culture segment in collaboration with Daniel Coulombe on CJMQ's "The Friday Drive".

Acrobats Anonymous

by Mylène Moliner-Roy

I remember at a very young age watching acrobats make mind-bending poses seem effortless. As I stared in awe at them under the spotlights, my heart would fill with wonder and admiration. Flexibility, balance, strength, control, emotion—how could such a short moment in time be filled with so much intensity? I was moved by their ability to touch the impossible and defy gravity. The awe I felt quickly turned into determination—I wanted to be one of them.

I spent hours rolling in the grass, trying to hold the sky with my feet, pushing the lawn over my head. Inversions became my workout, my meditation, and my art—a very conceptual art, one that helped me change my views of the world, find a new vantage point. Quite literally, it would turn things upside down. When I balance on my hands, I touch the earth. I hold the world and feel its steadiness rise through my arms and up my spine, stretching into the sky. I reach a moment when time slows down and peace slips into my mind. Grounded and connected I settle in a moment of harmony. This connection to the moment is the essence of my art, one that celebrates the power of the body and the ability of the mind.

After training for hours, I briefly took my art out in public. I spent my teenage summers doing street performance, entertaining myself as much as my audience. At first, I was terribly shy, but the beauty I



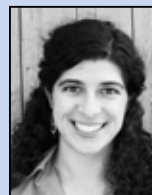
found in movement helped me overcome a fear of standing in public. Acrobatics became an interface for me to enter into contact with passersby. I discovered I could move in ways I couldn't talk and movement became my preferred medium to share beauty and emotion. My stage was a plain street, bare of any lighting, music, or special effects. Through movement alone, I could connect with strangers, convey emotion, and share unspoken stories.

When those summers ended, I put my passion aside and focused on my studies. I slowly grew in and out of skills and eventually more out than in... Gymnasts retire early, and by the time I turned 30 I thought the apex of my acrobatic journey was far behind me.

But life put a few people on my path who helped me reconnect with my passion. I started training again. Slowly but steadily, I've unlocked skills that I thought were beyond my reach — an indescribable sense of accomplishment. Cruising on this second wind, I have decided to push further and qualify for an intensive standing acrobatics program.

Training with professional acrobats is a dream come true. I may have reached the highest level of acrobatic skills I could have dreamt of, yet my art remains private. I practice in my living room or at the park with friends. What is performance without an audience? Does it count as art if I keep it to myself?

I don't know what's ahead, but for now I am an anonymous acrobat. I defy gravity in solitude, not for applause but for the sheer love of movement, balancing not for spectacle, but for the personal triumph of standing against the pull of the earth. Handstands remind me that strength comes from within, that perspective is ever-changing, and that playfulness should never be lost. No matter where life takes me, I know one thing for certain — I will always seek for a place to balance upside down, because in that moment, I feel free.



Mylène Moliner-Roy is an architect by day and acrobat by night. She practices and teaches acroyoga, hand to hand and stilts in her free times.

ETRC Townships History Quiz *by Jazmine Aldrich*

(ETRC-P001 Piggery Theatre Fonds)



- Which prominent North Hatley philanthropist, pictured here, donated his piggery to the Townships Playhouse Guild to be transformed into the iconic Piggery Theatre?
 - Sam Pollock
 - Gordon Lebaron
 - Arthur Virgin
 - Filmore Sadler
- What year were the St. Francis Theatre Company and its Festival Lennoxville founded?
 - 1965
 - 1972
 - 1979
 - 1982

ANSWERS: Page 22

- Which American opera house was the Haskell Opera House long rumoured to be modelled after, despite the Haskell having opened first?
 - Civic Opera Building (Chicago)
 - Metropolitan Opera House (Manhattan)
 - Boston Opera House
 - Central City Opera House (Colorado)



Jazmine Aldrich is head archivist at the Eastern Townships Resource Centre. She has also worked with archival organizations in Quebec and Ontario.


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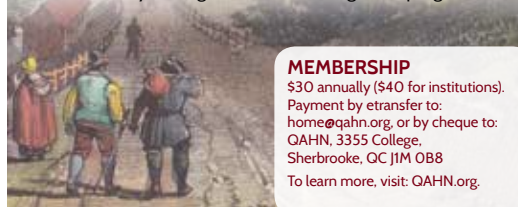
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CROSSWORD FUN IN THE TOWNSHIPS SUN

CLUES - ACROSS:

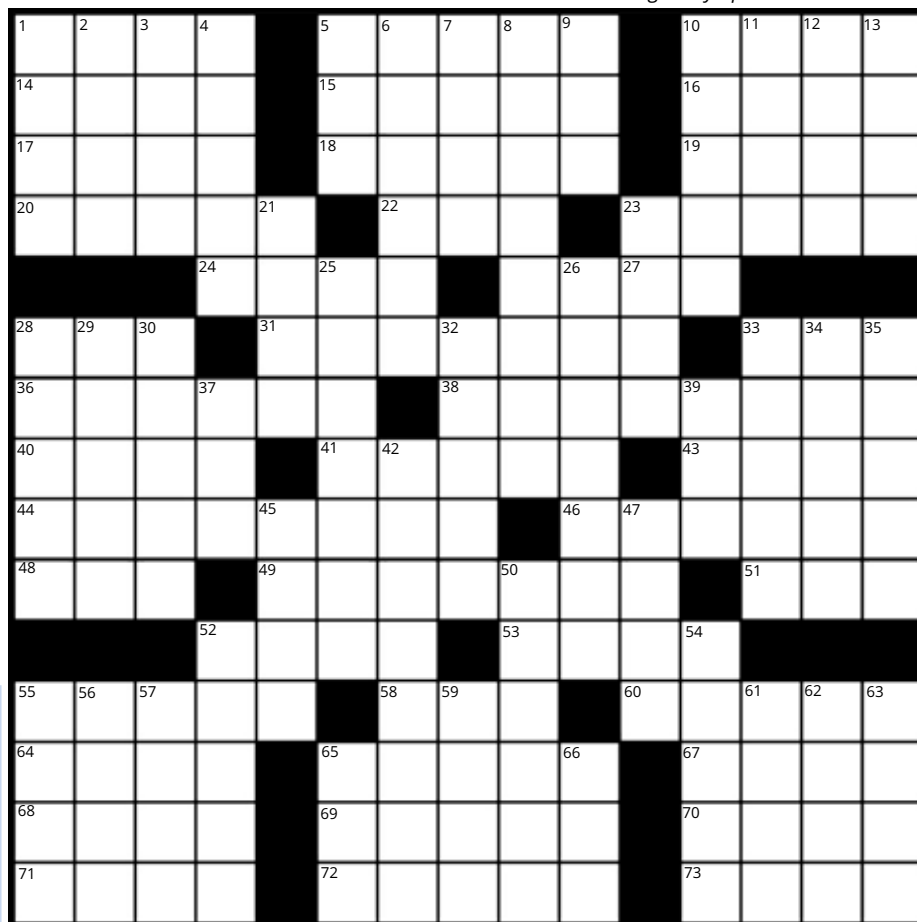
1. Composer Stravinsky
5. Outdated
10. Author Timothy Findley's nickname
14. The decorated lower part of an interior wall
15. As Bertie Wooster might ask when feeling 17 A, "What's ___ to do?"
16. It comes out of a lion's mouth,
17. Adrift (mentally)
18. University in Peterborough, Ontario
19. Melodious component of an opera
20. Decorative pillow covers
22. "___ et amo," wrote Catullus, in a quintessentially ambivalent poem.
23. US department store chain
24. Drinks small amounts at a time.
26. Device in a drain
28. Currency code for Singapore
31. A project you pursue with intensity and from pure pleasure is a "_____ project."
33. Initialism for a pain-relieving chemical first used commercially by Bayer
36. Grow more intransigent
38. Measurements of horizontal angles from north, relative to the observer
40. Name of a family of celebrated baseball players
41. Peaks
43. Delicious green spheres
44. Curved upper surface of the water in a glass
46. Scuffle
48. In Montreal, the direction along Sherbrooke Street as you walk from McGill's Roddick Gates towards the Main
49. One of the lively arts (US sp.)
51. Informal way of referring to a straight person
52. Observes
53. In British usage, this type of exam is known as a "viva."
55. Braid
58. Brief way of referring to a design indelibly marked on the skin
60. Dr. Seuss character who "speaks for the trees"
64. Turbulent water might be said to do this.
65. Exclamation of dismay (two words, very informal)
67. Tiny thing or creature
68. Given name of Italian Prime Minister murdered in 1978
69. California city ___ Park
70. Major deity in ancient Egypt
71. Catholic liturgical service
72. Hoard
73. Combining form meaning one billionth

CLUES - DOWN:

1. Golden Age film star/director Lupino and an operetta princess could together be called this.
2. Deep, narrow cut
3. Small ancient-Greek buildings for musical performances
4. Uses mobile phone outside home network
5. Light tap
6. From one side to the other
7. Small outbuilding
8. Make hygienic
9. Humorous way of forming the opposite of "inept."
10. Walk heavily
11. Eastern Townships maple-syrup producer that markets chiefly to Europe
12. Of hair or complexion: light coloured
13. Brief way of referring to a campus group of a certain kind
21. Type of groove that gives tire treads extra traction
23. Call letters of Texas A&M's student radio station
25. Dash, élan
27. Carouse
28. Disgrace
29. Second-century Roman physician
30. In certain musical instruments, part that provides an unvarying tone
32. Kafka's disturbing story about transformation begins, "One morning, when Gregor ___ woke from troubled dreams...."

33. Partisan movement in occupied territories of Ukraine
34. Sedimentary rock, formed from clay and other minerals, that tends to split in thin layers
35. What gives you an edge
37. Familiar initialism for a driving offence
39. Major American courier company
42. When the prompter needs to nudge the actors, she does this. (Two words.)
45. Proof reader's word that reverses "dele."
47. River of Central Russia
50. Adds up to
52. Cylindrical storage structures
54. Willy of Death of a Salesman
55. Baby carriage
56. She who gets whatever she wants, according to her song in Damn Yankees
57. Canes, walkers, wheelchairs are examples of mobility ___.
59. PBS News Hour co-anchor Nawaz
61. Dante employed the verse form known as terza ___ in the Divine Comedy.
62. The fish known as snoek in South Africa goes by this name as well.
63. Combining form meaning "strange" or "foreign"
65. An affectionate name for your German grandmother
66. More than one denial

Thanks to CrosswordGrids.com, whose blank grid "15 x 15 Sample Crossword Puzzle Grid #10" was used in constructing today's puzzle.



Rina Kampeas is a retired freelance translator and a diaspora Townships resident who enjoys solving crossword puzzles. She is exhilarated by the opportunity to construct them for the Townships Sun.

On the Road in the Townships

by Vanessa Rigaux

In the fall of 2024, my work as the project manager for ELAN Quebec's regional digital media project, CDAH in the Regions ("CDAH" stands for "Community Digital Arts Hub") brought me to the Townships, and I had the pleasure of getting to know several organizations in the area, including the *Townships Sun*, Literacy in Action, and the Piggery Theatre.

The mission of CDAH in the Regions, which wrapped up this past March, was to support community training in digital media by offering workshops, internships, and mentorship both in person and online. Through partnerships with arts, culture, and heritage organizations, the initiative also provided technical support for digital projects and helped equip artists with tools to create, promote, and archive high-quality digital content, strengthening artistic communities across Quebec.

After hearing from *Townships Sun* volunteer Marie Moliner about an interest in support of digital media, CDAH in the Regions was able to support the Townships Young Voices competition with two interns who helped to bring in a record number of applicants for the open call this year.

The interns received training in content creation and social media strategy from program mentors and an artist talk with Townships documentary filmmaker Louise Abbott.

Speaking to the success of the placement, one of those interns ended up working with me as a cinematographer for a performing arts profile documentary filmed at the Piggery Theatre.



Wayne Doba and Andrea Conway; still from video by Kayla Jeanson

That project first took me to the other side of the Townships in Sutton. Nestled in the forest, Studio 676 is a creative space for life partners Andrea Conway and Wayne Doba. The pair met on stage in San Francisco, at the Theatre ZinZanni, famous for their circus cabarets set in "Spiegle tents" of 19th and 20th century Belgian designs.

Sparks flew, and the two soon began to work on a new act together. Wayne, a tap dancer, and Andrea, a former top gymnast-turned-circus-acrobat (she toured with Cirque de Soleil's Saltimbanco for nine years) created a

vaudevillian tap and comedy act under the character names of Dik and Mitzi. The duo premiered their new act at the Wintergarten Cabaret in Berlin and began a life of touring together. The Eastern Townships became their special place to regenerate and create new material.

I was introduced to their work at the Montreal Fringe Festival last summer and fell hard for the tender and entertaining story of "By Our Side: An Entertaining Transplant Story." Little did I know I would be getting to know the behind-the-scenes story very soon.

FIRST LOOK: PIGGERY THEATRE 60TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM

June 14: Mystery Dinner (Show & Buffet) 6pm; \$30

June 21: Bowser & Blue (Comedy & Music) time TBA; \$30

July 5: 60th Anniversary Event (Musical entertainment and refreshments) 1pm-4pm; Entry by donation.

-8pm: Cadillac Music (popular songs from 60s,70s and 80s); 25\$

July 12: Highway 10 (Bluegrass country music) 8pm; \$25

July 19: Marie-Claude Dubeau (two singers, two dancers, decades of music: classical, rock, country) NB Fundraiser for St. James Anglican Church Hatley. Tickets sold by fundraising committee.

Aug 9: Porter Family (Variety of country music) 8pm, Price TBA

Aug 15: Terryjoe Bango & Woodshredders (Tribute to Bob Dylan) 8pm; \$25

Sept 6: Vintage Wine Band (popular music from 1960-2000) 8pm; \$25

Theatre play: *By Your Side* (A tap dancing, romantic transplant story starring Andrea Conway & Wayne Doba) Three performances, one per month in June, July & Aug. at 2pm or 8pm. Dates TBA.

MORE DATES TBA. For information, please call: 819-842-2431



Trevor McKinven interviewed by Vanessa and Xania on the Piggery stage (photo Marie Moliner)



Xania Keane, Vanessa Rigaux, Andrea Conway, Wayne Doba, and Trevor McKinven take a break from a chilly (photo Marie Moliner)

In Sutton, I received a warm welcome from Andrea and Wayne, and after two days of shooting rehearsals and some clowning around, we headed together to visit the famous barn outside North Hatley. There we met with Ruth McKinven and son Trevor. We gathered in the warm McKinven farmhouse for a meal, shared stories and took notes on the Piggery's rich history. The adventures of the icy weather, unheated barn, and other challenges on the location shoot were all well worthwhile.

The vibrant energy, beautiful scenery and history of the Townships continue to draw both tourists and locals, creating a shared experience around the magic of performing arts. I was fortunate to observe and document some truly special moments in the daily lives of performing arts organizers and artists.

Life in the Townships is rich with performing arts and artists, and I can't wait to hit the road again, likely in warmer weather, when Ye Ol' Piggery will be warmed up with music, theatre, and surely some dancing too.

The short film, *60 years at the Piggery Theatre*, featuring Conway & Doba in *By Our Side* can be viewed online on the [CDAH webpage](#) and will also be shared via the Piggery's website soon. CDAH partnership activities in the Townships were made possible through a two-year project funded by ELAN and the government of Canada.

The interns received training in content creation and social media strategy from program mentors and an artist talk with Townships documentary filmmaker Louise Abbott.

Run by a board of volunteers, The Piggery has evolved from its Broadway roots to encompass a family-friendly, feel-good vibe. The 60th season program—yet to be revealed—will feature the world-class story of Conway and Doba. It will also feature home movie nights with found films from the early Piggery days in the 50s and 60s to the loud and raucous bands that bring in those living in the hills and valleys of the region.



Vanessa Rigaux is a cultural worker specializing in marketing, producing, and community development. She holds a degree in Theatre Performance from the University of Winnipeg and an MA in Media Studies from Concordia. She is the artistic director and co-founder of the Montreal Clown Festival.



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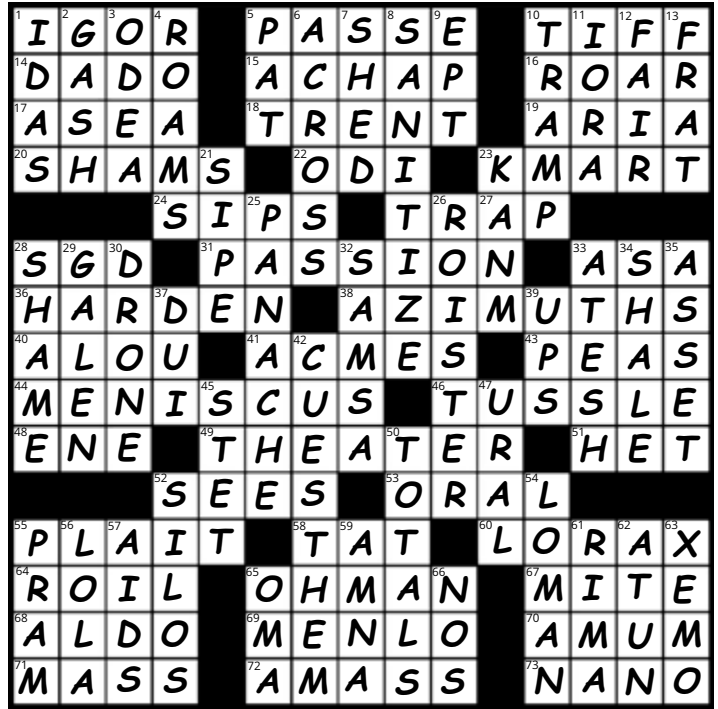
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History Quiz C : 3
Answers: B : 2
C : 1

A NEW FILM BY LOUISE ABBOTT

Steamers and Dreamers

Review by Melanie Cutting

Eastern Townships writer, photographer and documentary filmmaker Louise Abbott has dedicated most of her career to exploring the culture, heritage, and natural environment of rural and indigenous communities in Canada and abroad as well as the social and environmental challenges facing these communities. Her latest project, a historical documentary centring on steamboats on Lake Memphremagog, is absolutely charming.

Although I am familiar with some of her work (my personal favourite focuses on round barns in the Eastern Townships), this was actually the first complete film I'd seen that Louise Abbott crafted, and it is a gem.

Everything from the excellent selection of illustrative historical photos and the delightful background music to the inspired choice of interviewees and the accuracy of the information regarding well-known Townships personages — and of course the history of steamboats — this film will hold your attention for the full 47 minutes running time.

If you're lucky, as I was, you'll also find some familiar folk popping up in the film, such as archivist Jody Robinson and several members of Estria, a group of musicians based in North Hatley, featuring Pauline Farrugia, Erich Kory, and Douglas Nadler. All of those participating on camera in the film, both francophone and anglophone, come across as extremely personable and very knowledgeable about their areas of expertise.

The film opens in 1857 at the dawn of the steamboat era on Lake Memphremagog with the building of the Mountain Maid steamboat by George Fogg and Ephriam Cross and its subsequent June launch. At the same time, a rail line was being considered for Newport, Vermont at the southern point of the lake. This would allow tourists boarding the steamer ferry in Newport (US) to dock at Magog (Canada).

Meanwhile, the area was being promoted to "city folk" as pastoral and highly desirable for vacations and day trips. Needless to say, the tourist trade sparked the creation of hotels and other related attractions.

Mountain House, a posh hotel, was built at the base of Owl's Head, but ultimately burned to the ground. In 1899, the second iteration also perished in a fire. Virtually all buildings were made of wood at that time, the most readily available material in the area. The leisure and commercial aspects of the lake worked well together as the area around Lake Memphremagog expanded and thrived.

When luxury hotels began their inevitable decline, they were replaced by cottages and campgrounds, utilized by more middle-class folk. A brief history of lighthouses is also included in this fascinating and very well-researched documentary. Once again, although plentiful, wood proved to be a highly perishable material for construction.

Canada's wealthiest man at the time, Sir Hugh Allan of Scotland, and his brother Andrew had arrived in 1826. Among their eventual passion projects was the building of the Lady of the Lake paddle wheel steamer to boost tourism, as well as a 120-foot wharf at a cost of \$100,000 (in today's dollars) to accommodate the enormous boat. To this day, the Lady of the Lake serves as the elegant emblem of Newport, Vermont. From 1909 through the 1950s, a third steamboat, the Anthemis, paddled around the lake, offering a popular dining option when the Lady of the Lake was taken out of service in 1917. When it sank, the Northern Star took its place and continues to delight residents and tourists with excursions around the picturesque lake.

Chock-a-block with information about the colourful history of this picturesque section of the Townships and presented as a most fascinating filmed snippet of both our past and present, this documentary will pique—or renew — your interest in finding out more about our home turf.

Steamers and Dreamers will be premiered at the Haskell Opera House in Derby Line, Vermont, at 3:30 pm on May 10 this year. As always, attendance is open to all.

*Dreamers and Steamers:
The steamboat era on Lake Memphremagog*



A film by Louise Abbott

Launch: Saturday, May 10, 2025, 3 p.m.
Haskell Opera House
Stanstead/Derby Line
Free entry. Everyone is welcome!

This film was made possible by the financial support of the Government of Québec, and the 100th Anniversary of the Cultural Development Agreement as well as additional funds from the Eastern Townships CIP of Magog, Lennoxville, Hatley, and Derby Line, the Municipality of Derby, the Municipality of Stanstead, the Municipality of Derby Line, the Municipality of Derby Line, the Municipality of Derby Line, and the Municipality of Derby Line.



Aboard the Lady of the Lake (Brome County Historical Society)



Melanie Cutting is a retired Student Services administrator, who worked at Champlain Regional College in Lennoxville from 1972 until 2005. Since her retirement, she has been active in a number of volunteer activities, including Uplands, Meals on Wheels, Townshippers' Association, and the Townships Sun.

Neighbour

by Judith Janoo

I have borrowed notes
from the organ of the night.
I have played them
on the border where
I've waited for your lavender
to gush into blossom, your fields
to scent miles of quiet.

I have walked between
your ice sculptures in this winter
of discontent. Each glazed figure,
animal, diplomat, village,
a window to friendship,
seeing in, seeing through.

I have taken in smoke
of burning forests, yours
and mine, and static meant
to bank on fear, churn us,
separate us, break down
power lines. Yet in nearness,
our voices can pass through
cans and string I'll keep tuning
until the static is gone.

I have measured harmony
in lavender chords,
my thoughts drizzled
with the raised feathers
of gray jay and eagle,
who will still be neighbors
when we wake tomorrow.

I will hold a note until
you come in,
until stars go cold,
I'll watch for your geese
to nest again in my pond.

La vie te prend telle que tu te donne



Sandra Tremblay is a visual artist professionally dedicated to painting, community-engaged art, and cultural mediation. Her paintings, often chiaroscuro, draw on a playful and humanistic vision. She also collaborates on scenographic projects and creates shadow theatre in urban spaces. Her work and artistic explorations are often infused with symbolism and sensuality. She has lived in Sherbrooke since 2007 and is originally from Lac-St-Jean.

(Photo credit: Normand Achim)



Judith Janoo won the Soul-Making Keats Award, the Vermont Award for Continued Excellence in Writing, and the Anita McAndrews Prize for Human Rights Poetry. She is a contributing editor of the Mountain Troubadour. Her poetry has appeared in journals including Pedestal Magazine, Sow's Ear, and the Fish Anthology. Just This, her poetry collection, was published by Kelsay Books in 2023. She lives in Burke, Vt.