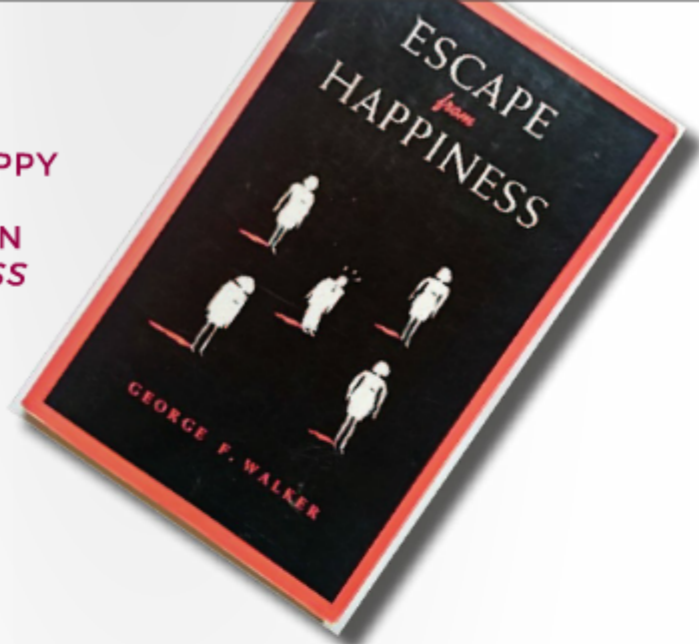


HOW TO STAY IN OUR 'HAPPY PLACE' LESSONS FROM NORA IN ESCAPE FROM HAPPINESS



Mental health and wellness seems to be a topical and pervasive theme in the theatre and media today. In the last year alone in Victoria, we've seen an Intrepid Theatre Fringe festival show about a lovable psychiatric patient who believes he is the reincarnation of Egyptian King Ramses II in *Icarus Dancing*, a play by Joan MacLeod at the Belfry that explored a young man's depression and how the mentally ill is treated by the police, and now Langham Court's fifth play of their season humorously explores a dysfunctional family, and all their emotional problems in George F. Walker's *Escape From Happiness*, slated to open in late April.

It will be interesting to see how the theme of happiness and mental wellness is dealt with by Director Wendy Merk, who directs this dark comedy.

Langham Court is one of the oldest and most established of the community theatres here in Victoria, and audiences there have come to expect at a minimum to be entertained, if not moved and stirred to deeper emotions and provoking thoughts while attending the theatre. At least that's what we can hope for as theatre artists.

Lately, attempting to appeal to a different generation, Langham has included at least a couple edgier, alternative theatre shows in its yearly program. Keeping busy with six shows a year, their spring show *Escape from Happiness* is the latest in a series of dark comedies by the prolific and popular Canadian playwright who grew up in the East End working class district of Toronto. The prequel to *Escape From Happiness*, titled *Better Living*, was also directed by Merk at Langham Court Theatre in 2011. As Merk explains, she is keeping some elements from the previous Langham production in this current show, such as similar set designs by set designer Don Keith and three of the actors from the previous production will return to reprise their roles.

The play is set inside the family's kitchen, in a poor working class neighborhood in Toronto, and is about this dysfunctional family full of criminals and delinquents, and the tea-loving mother, Nora, who maintains her cock-eyed optimism throughout all the drama that ensues. The Director explains, "Pretty much everybody in the play is emotionally ill or has issues." There are rage issues, abandonment issues, all kinds of fears and paranoia such as a fear of growing up, people who are narcissistic and have problems accepting responsibility. There are inefficient or confused cops, and criminals making threats. One of the three daughters sees a therapist. All three daughters have some kind of emotional baggage. But through it all, Nora, the family's Matriarch remains in her 'happy place', she retains a positive outlook on life.

So, can we take lessons from Nora on how to stay in our happy place? What is the secret to finding happiness? Throughout the show, audiences can expect Nora to give various characters little "pep talks". Her lessons may prove to us to be little nuggets of wisdom, or perhaps absurdity. It all depends on what audiences take away from the show. Merk says the fact that this play mixes humor into what could be seen as darker issues, is "just the kind of funny, odd humor that really appeals to Canadians." Merk, who also had a hand in choosing to bring this work onto the Langham stage, is pleased to include a Canadian play in the mix.

She first encountered George F. Walker's work in the early 90's, when she attended the premiere production of *Escape From Happiness* at the Factory Theatre in Toronto.

About Langham's production, "I think it's going to be a really enjoyable show," Merk says. Audiences are bound to laugh at the satirical, ridiculous situations the characters face. And laughter is often the best lesson of all on how we can stay happy. According to The Laughter Online University's research, "Individuals who laugh easily and frequently have better self-esteem and a much more positive outlook on life in general." There is even a link on their website to a project called Laughter Wellness, which incorporates play and laughter into therapy. Another great reason to come laugh and play with us- and stay in your happy place this season!

EVENTS CALENDAR

1) Cadence presents: 4 Men, 4 Microphones, No Instruments

With their stunning display of musicality created entirely with their own voices, the Juno Award nominated and Toronto based a cappella quartet Cadence will present their first ever concert performance in Victoria on Sunday April 24th. Cadence has been wowing audiences across the country and around the world for over 20 years in sold out jazz clubs, concert halls, and music festivals.



Cadence presents: 4 Men, 4 Microphones, No Instruments

The ensemble features Victoria born and raised Lucas Marchand a graduate of Vic High and UVic who will be remembered as a stalwart with the Vic High R & B Band, the Midnights, and UVic's Chamber Singers, as well as the winner of Victoria Idol in 2004.

The performance, a treat for all ages, will be held at St Aidan's United Church, 3703 Saint Aidan's Street, and begins at 3 pm with doors opening at 2:30. Tickets are available through Eventbrite (cadencelivevictoria.eventbrite.ca/) or at the door. www.cadence-unplugged.com

2) Theatre Inconnu presents:

A Lie of the Mind by Sam Shepard. May 5 - May 21
What is the nature of love? New York Drama Critics Circle Award. "A play of enormous emotional power and intellectual strength." Hollywood Reporter
<http://www.theatreinconnu.com>

3) Langham Court Theatre- *Escape from Happiness*

A dark comedy by George F. Walker
Directed by Wendy Merk
This very funny dark comedy, set in working-class Toronto tells the story of Nora, the matriarch of an eccentric, wacky family. April 20 to May 7, 2016.
Langhamtheatre.ca - 250-384-2142

4) Uno Fest

Experience circus, comedy, opera, Shakespeare, dance & multimedia solo performance at Intrepid Theatre's 19th annual Uno Fest. Uno Fest is a hotbed of experimental theatre and contemporary performance, featuring acclaimed artists, new voices, and local premieres. Tickets start at \$17, and there are 12 Pay-What-You-Can performances throughout the festival. Tickets: intrepidtheatre.com or call Ticket Rocket: 250-590-6291

5) Circus Incognitus

Hilarious, sweet and elegantly simple; Adkins virtuosic circus skills and endearingly sweet everyman character

recall the great clowns of silent film and the golden age of cartoons. Guaranteed to elicit laughs, gasps, and cheers from children and grownups alike. Part of Intrepid Theatre's Uno Fest. Ages 5+

Saturday May 21, 8pm McPherson Playhouse

Tickets: intrepidtheatre.com

or call RMTS Box Office: 250-386-6121

6) Lifetime Networks 13th Annual Gala Dinner & Auction

Appetizers, Dinner, Wine, Entertainment & Auction. May 13th at the Union Club. Reception at 6:00pm, Dinner at 7:00pm. Tickets \$80 per person.
Ticket Information at info@Lnv.ca or call 250-477-4112.
For Sponsorship Opportunities call or email Carlene at 250-477-4112 and at carlene@Lnv.ca

7) Almost Free Magazine's 2nd Annual Charity Golf (and Foot Golf) Tournament

June 30, 2016; 3pm Shotgun Start. Golf: \$75 Foot Golf: \$50
Burger Buffet Dinner, Silent Auction & More.
Be part of a fantastic day raising money for Lifetime Networks Society, supporting people with developmental disabilities. To register, call Almost Free Magazine at (250)-419-2579 or email elissa.vaf@gmail.com.

Deena Kinarthy, Arts & Entertainment and Media Expert
deena.vaf@gmail.com



LANGHAM
+ COURT
+ THEATRE

APR 20 – MAY 7, 2016

ESCAPE FROM HAPPINESS

DARK COMEDY BY GEORGE F. WALKER
DIRECTED BY WENDY MERK

funny & zany sequel to *Better Living*

2 FOR \$20
WED APR 20

2 FOR \$30
APR 26 & MAY 3

250.384.2142

langhamtheatre.ca