

# Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia



2014/2015

## DEBUT PERFORMANCES FOR MERMAID'S QUEEN OF THE SNOW

Canada's acclaimed theatre for family audiences has joined forces with Marie-Louise Gay, the award-winning creator of *Stella and Sam*, to launch a new touring production designed for young spectators aged three to seven.

*Stella, Queen of the Snow* tells the story of an endearing brother and sister as they celebrate the first days of winter. Snowmen, snowballs, snow angels and the mysterious white stuff itself all play a role, evoking Sam's thoughtful questions and Stella's humorous answers. First published in 2000, the book (as well as its television adaptation and French-language edition, *Stella reine des neiges*) is a favourite among Stella and Sam's worldwide fans. Close to two million copies of Stella's adventures have been sold in more than 25 languages.

The hour-long production incorporates Marie-Louise Gay's stunning imagery and whimsical characters, wonderfully translated from page to stage through the medium of imaginative puppetry and striking scenic effects. Mermaid's creative team includes Jim Morrow as director and production designer; Steven Naylor as composer; and Nick Bottomley as projection designer. The author/

illustrator herself provides the recorded narration for both English and French-language versions. Touring company members include veteran performers Kaitlin Morrow and Seann Murray. Michael Panich joins the company as stage manager.

Marie-Louise Gay, who is one of Canada's best-loved creators of children books, has published more than sixty titles and achieved international acclaim for her work. She has been widely recognized as both an author and illustrator, earning three Governor General's Awards, the Vicky Metcalfe Award for Body of Work and the TD Book Giveaway Award where half a million copies of *Caramba* were given to every child in first grade across Canada. Following its well-received inauguration at the Magnetic North/Stages Festivals, the production will tour from coast to coast with more than 120 performances scheduled in centres ranging from Calgary and Vancouver to West Palm Beach and Manhattan. The show will launch the 2014-2015 Family Fare series at MIPAC on September 27, 2014.

Stella and Sam books are published in English by Groundwood Books and in French by Dominique et Compagnie. For further details about the books please see [www.marielouisegay.com](http://www.marielouisegay.com)

## MERMAID'S SIGNATURE PRODUCTION VISITS SHANGHAI

**M**ermaid Theatre's signature production will embark on another international adventure with the company's first visit to The People's Republic of China. Regarded as one of North America's favourite family shows, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favourites* will be a featured program of Canada Week at the China Shanghai International Arts Festival. Four Mandarin-language performances at the Children's Art Theatre of China Welfare Institute on October 25-26, 2014 as well as one performance at the Wuxi Concert Hall on October 28 will mark Mermaid Theatre's debut.

The hour-long triple-bill production includes the story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar's* metamorphosis into a beautiful butterfly; the fanciful account of *Little Cloud's* travels through the sky; and *The Mixed-Up Chameleon's* discovery of his own unique nature. On the road continuously since 1999, Mermaid's compilations of Eric Carle stories have generated remarkable statistics and earned considerable praise from audiences on several continents. To date more than 3000 performances in six different languages have been seen by more than two million spectators in fifteen countries.

Directed and designed by Jim Morrow, who ranks among Canada's most esteemed puppetry creators, the show incorporates Steven Naylor's evocative original music and innovative "black light" staging techniques. The production has been awarded a Citation of Excellence by UNIMA-USA, one of North America's most prestigious awards in the field of puppetry. Company members include seasoned performers Jonny Thompson and John Allen MacLean, stage manager Shawn Sorensen, and general manager Lisa Gleave. The Mandarin-language version features recorded narration by Dashan, the legendary Canadian-born stage and television performer acknowledged as the most famous foreign artist in China.

The Caterpillar's first appearance in China has been facilitated by the Canada Council for the Arts (Audience and Market Development), and by the Province of Nova Scotia (Arts Nova Scotia and Industry Growth). The engagement will follow the production's sixth return to Singapore, where the company will present sixteen performances at the Drama Centre from September 27 through October 5, 2014 at the invitation of long-time collaborator ACT 3 International.



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Mermaid Theatre will present more than 400 performances during the 2014/2015 season. Four touring companies will travel extensively in the United States and Canada, visit Nova Scotia schools, return to Singapore for an eighth engagement, and debut in The People's Republic of China. Simultaneous bookings in Davis, California and Shanghai, China, as well as same-day appearances in El Paso, Texas and Singapore exemplify Mermaid's heralded role as Canada's most active touring company.

## SIMULTANEOUS NORTH AMERICAN TOUR

**M**ermaid Theatre continues to make Canadian theatre history by touring simultaneously with two identical copies of the same production. To accommodate demand, duplicate versions of the puppets and props have been constructed in order to facilitate concurrent engagements. During 2014-2015, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar's* circuit will feature first-time residencies at the prestigious Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, Georgia; the Omaha Theater Company; and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte, North Carolina. The

ten-month tour (one of the longest to be undertaken by Canadian theatre artists) will present 220 performances, and visit twenty-four states as well as four centres in British Columbia and five in Québec. Joining the company for the first time are performers Jackson Fowlow and Graeme Black Robinson, with veteran stage manager Christine Oakey returning for her eighth assignment. While English will predominate, the French and Spanish versions of the production will be offered on both sides of the border.

## CODE GREEN RETURNS BY POPULAR DEMAND

The Mermaid Institute of Puppetry Art's popular curriculum-based production, *Code Green, Enhancing awareness of species at risk* will return to Nova Scotia's elementary schools with an updated edition in the fall of 2014.

Following the model of earlier presentations with the same name, the production is an interactive theatre piece intended to explore the impact of insensitive human activity on the natural environment. Created through extensive consultation with wildlife specialists, the play introduces students to several threatened species, including the little brown bat, the piping plover, the woodland caribou, and the Blanding's turtle.

An 'embedded' wildlife scientist and three spirited puppeteers share the stage, imparting solid information through the imaginative incorporation of video footage, interpretive comments, a lyrical soundscape and innovative puppetry. The creative team for *Code Green* includes co-directors Jim Morrow and Struan Robertson, co-designers Jim Morrow, Deborah MacLean and Struan Robertson, composer Paul Cram and puppeteer/performers Hilary Adams, Rachel Hasting and Rynne Chisholm. The production will tour with generous support from Arts Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Educational Facilities Society and the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund.



NOVA SCOTIA  
HABITAT  
CONSERVATION  
FUND



# MIPAC

## MERMAID IMPERIAL PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE

Now established as a major destination for artists and fans alike, MIPAC's diverse program showcases both emerging local talent and prominent touring entertainers. The Family Fare Series, unique in Nova Scotia, has been especially successful in attracting audiences new to the excitement of the performing arts. The elegantly renovated 416-seat facility - a former cinema and vaudeville centre known as The Imperial - has again become a vital community asset, thanks to strong support from audiences, local services and businesses, and government agencies.

For online ticket sales and details about the 2014-2015 Performing Arts Series, please see:

<http://mermaidtheatre.ca/mipac/current-season>



Théâtre de L'Oeil 's *The Star Keeper* Photo: Léon Gniwesch



Canadian  
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## Mermaid Hosts ACPA/AMCA

Since its inception, Mermaid Theatre has played a pioneer role in promoting the art of puppetry. Mermaid's management provided the catalyst for the Nova Scotia International Puppetry Festival during the 'seventies, and the creation of the Institute of Puppetry Arts in 1998 laid the foundation for diverse teaching, mentoring and outreach activities. In particular, the Institute's professional training intensive known as Animotion has garnered widespread respect as its graduates launch their careers in the performing and media arts. The Theatre Loft, with its increasingly popular artist-in-residence program, has become an important centre for puppetry-related research and development.

The new initiative will provide a platform for the region's puppet theatre artists by forming an alliance among worldwide practitioners of the age-old art. *The Atlantic Canada Puppetry Association/Association des marionnettistes du Canada atlantique* will be formally affiliated with UNIMA-Canada and UNIMA-International, sister organizations whose mandate is to link puppeteers nationally and internationally and to promote the artistry of Canada's puppeteers at home and abroad. The ACPA/AMCA, with headquarters at Mermaid, is registered under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and governed by a founding board of directors drawn from the four Atlantic Provinces. Further information (and a membership form) is available by accessing the Mermaid Theatre website ([www.mermaidtheatre.ca](http://www.mermaidtheatre.ca)).

## Youthreatre Broadens Outreach

Launched in 1990 by Christopher Heide, the Mermaid Youthreatre has played a vital role in encouraging young people to explore generational issues through the medium of theatre. A broad range of topics has been tackled over two decades, resulting in honest and often provocative staged pieces collectively scripted and performed for their peers. Under the leadership of Kaleigh Heide, the program's current coordinator, the program is open to all local youth aged 14-19. During the past season, the Youthreatre's thoughtful exploration of youth violence (titled *The Hivemind*) was created in collaboration with the Second Story Women's Centre in Lunenburg, NS. Based on positive response from audiences in Queens County schools and at the Nova Scotia High School Drama Festival, further development of the piece, along with a new focus and an expanded touring circuit is planned.

## An Encore for the Puppet Cabaret

Following the outstanding response to the debut event last season, Mermaid's friends and fans will gather for the second annual Puppet Cabaret Fundraiser on January 31, 2015. Revenues generated will support Mermaid's unique community outreach programs and facility upgrades. Along with hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, a cash bar, and the chance to bid on some great auction items including pieces from Mermaid's talented creative teams, guests will be treated to a lively (and likely irreverent) revue performed by some of Windsor/West Hants' most prominent citizens. Hosted once again on the MIPAC stage by Global TV's Jill Chappell, this is definitely not Mermaid's usual Theatre for Young Audiences fare! Tickets are \$60 with a tax receipt will be issued for a portion of the ticket price. The event is open to adults aged 19 and over.



### MERMAID THEATRE STAFF

Artistic Director: JIM MORROW  
Managing Director: SARA LEE LEWIS  
General Manager: LISA GLEAVE  
Artistic Advisor for Music & Sound Design: STEVEN NAYLOR  
Administrator: CATHY WHITE  
Office & Tour Coordinator: JASON TUCKER  
Production Manager: DEBORAH MACLEAN  
Production Associate & Workshop Coordinator: STRUAN ROBERTSON  
Youthreatre Coordinator: KALEIGH HEIDE  
Technical Director: MICHAEL JAMIESON  
House Manager: RICHARD COCHRAN  
Box Office Manager: JESS WEIR

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS: 2014/2015

Chair: ED MACDONALD • Vice Chair: JON OULTON  
Treasurer: GARY JOHNSON • Secretary: ALEX JURGENS  
Directors: JOHN BREGANTE • ANDREW G.M. KIRK • LINDA MACDONALD • SHAYLA STEEVES • LAY YONG TAN

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