



ALBERTA THEATRE PROJECTS

# WAITING *- for the -* PARADE

BY JOHN MURRELL

DIRECTED BY KATE NEWBY

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STUDENT MATINEE | 11:30am  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2016

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Waiting for the Parade takes place on the Home Front, World War II, Calgary. Through a series of 24 slice-of-life vignettes, war time songs and presentational monologues, we are shown the war time experience through the perspective of five very different women, brought together by their collective desire to assist with the war effort. Together these women struggle, argue, sing, drink and dance, and they find a way to survive a defining moment in Canadian history, when a national identity based on working together and accepting difference was born. Originally created here at Alberta Projects in 1977; this charming, funny, and touching drama that is one of our country's best-loved plays.

### ***A note from our Artistic Director about the play:***

*"I look forward to introducing a new generation to this landmark of Canadian theatre in a production that reflects the faces in our community today. The play premiered right here at ATP, by Governor General's Award-winning playwright, John Murrell. It explores the human side of living together in a world of clashing values, and celebrates the spirit of helping your neighbour that Calgary is known for to this day.*

*Come back to a time, not so long ago, when Bowness was a training ground for recruits, and a young woman ran a sewing shop on Centre Street, just around the corner."*

- Artistic Director, Vanessa Porteous

## **SETTING**

**The Play takes place in various locations around Calgary between 1939 and 1945.**



Photo by Kenneth Locke

## **PRODUCTION BACKGROUND**

Waiting for the Parade, is a drama in 24 scenes by John Murrell. First produced by Alberta Theatre Projects; February 4, 1977 at the Canmore Opera House in Heritage Park, Calgary. Murrell was commissioned by ATP to write a Canadian history play while he was writer-in-residence from 1975 to 1977, he interviewed people who had lived through the war, and found that the stories he liked best were those of the women. They were powerful memories of waiting for news, of shifting loyalties and enmities.

The play discovers how the dynamics and tensions between the women were a reflection of the war itself, how the pressure of such extraordinary circumstances reveals character – how some thrive and some recoil, how some find laughter and others only worry. It comes down to getting through, to surviving. As Marta says towards the end of the play, ‘So that’s how she manages to stay alive. I wonder if it would work for me.

Murrell expresses his belief that “women are the connective tissue which allows the human race to keep faith that normal life will ultimately return. Women remind us, with wit and resilience, of the great importance of family, and also that family is not everything; of the great importance of patriotism, and also that patriotism is not everything. Their pragmatism is utterly heroic.”

Murrell also believes in the importance of retelling history back to the people who have inherited its consequences. He unearths memory and desire to revisit the past and to review the present. For Murrell, the parade of history never passes by – it is an ongoing event to which we all are witness.

### *“Murrell’s Note”*

“In every action and every response that we have, if we develop memory as a strong organ, we can bring all of our past and all of the past of all of our people, back to the race virtually, forward with us into every instant of life. We can bring all of the wisdom, passion, and perception of beauty that we’ve ever had (and even that our forebears had) forward into each instant of our lives, or at least we can get close and close to doing that, and that is what human evolution is about.”

## **CHARACTERS**

### **JANET**

Janet is a woman in her mid-thirties at the start of the play. She is not well liked by the other woman due to her extreme take-charge busybody attitude. She is seen as a drill sergeant of the home front. She keeps the women busy creating care packages for soldiers, arranging parties for recruits who are being send-off, or those who have returned wounded, and preparing for the event of a possible air strike. Her display of bullying patriotism and volunteer work is compensation for the shame she feels that her husband has not enlisted. Janet's husband has been exempt from active service by reading the news casts on the radio.

### **CATHERINE**

Catherine in her late twenties at the beginning of the show, her young husband has gone overseas to assist with the war. In his absence she has taken a job as a trolley girl at the local munitions plant. As his absence lengthens her loneliness, fear and exhaustion lead her to pursue the affections of other men.

### **EVE**

Eve is a young woman in her mid-twenties at the start of the show. She is school teacher whose nationalist husband, Harry is too old to enlist. She is appalled by his militaristic posturing, and enthusiasm towards the war. She is against conscription and tries to keep her young students from enlisting.

### **MARGARET**

Margaret is in her mid-forties at the start. She is the oldest of these women, a widow Margaret and mother of 2 sons who she feels are both lost to her. One of her sons is off fighting in the war and the other has been jailed for passing out Communist propaganda. She is seen at the prudish matriarch of the group, but deep down she longs to be one of the girls and reclaim her youth.

### **MARTA**

Marta is in her late twenties at the start. She was born in Germany, but has lived in Canada since she was 12. She has been a Canadian citizen all her adult life, and is suddenly stigmatized for her accent and her heritage. Her father has been interned for being a Nazi sympathizer. She must deal with worrying about his physical and mental welfare in imprisonment as well as her own personal increasingly frightening harassment in her community.

