



# **A Manual for the Fourth Stage Performance Series**

**September, 2008**

The Ottawa StoryTellers  
[www.ottawastorytellers.ca](http://www.ottawastorytellers.ca)

## Getting Hired

The Fourth Stage is a professional storytelling venue that hosts experienced tellers. A certain level of storytelling experience is assumed. Once you have told in a number of smaller and less formal venues, the Artistic Director (A.D.) will consider you for a spot in the program.

- Please introduce yourself to the A.D., and engage her in a conversation about the kind of material you are interested in telling.
- Even if the A.D. knows you already, and has heard you tell, she would still benefit from hearing about the different genres and methods that interest you.
- If the A.D. has not heard you tell, feel free to invite her to a program which you feel showcases your telling. There is no guarantee she will be able to attend, but she will try.

If you have a specific idea for a program - and this can mean a show that you have developed completely independently, a general idea for a grouping of stories that you would like to be a part of, or anything in between - please share this idea with the A.D. She cannot accommodate all the ideas that come along, but the more she has to work with, the better the storytelling season will be.

Please do not feel over-looked or slighted if she is not able to accommodate your show ideas in a given season. There are many tellers and many ideas to draw from, and the selection does not necessarily reflect upon the quality of your suggestions, but more often upon the overall arc of the season and the balance that must be found.

If you have an idea for a performance that is outside of the usual for the venue, please feel free to mention it to the A.D. For example:

- Ideas for multi-night runs that can be linked to another event or seasonal happening, such as the three-night run of *The Odyssey* that was linked to the National Art Centre's production of *The Penelopiad*.
- Having a magician/actor/musician/performance artist work with the tellers.

It is essential that you mention all show ideas to the A.D. when she makes the official call for ideas (generally in January or February). Even if you have discussed a show idea with her at length previously, send a short note reminding her of the conversation if you are eager to see the show happen. Email communication is preferred.

Once the A.D. has mulled over all the possibilities and created an ideal program on paper, she will contact you, outlining the show that she envisions (at this point, generally a vague outline) and identifying the other tellers who she is asking to participate. Take a little time to think it over, if you need to. But please don't take too long, because at this point, the A.D. herself is probably under a deadline! Know that the show proposals are still very flexible, and your artistic vision will be as much a part of the final product as the A.D.'s, even if you are being asked to participate in a show that you did not propose.

### **Making It Official**

Once you have accepted an invitation to perform, the following process takes place:

- The A.D. will send you a contract by email (see attached sample contract).
- Please fill out two copies, providing all the requested information, and mail both of them to the A.D.
- She will sign your copy and mail it back to you.
- The A.D. requests that you mail the contract in within two weeks of receiving it, as some of the information requested is time-sensitive.

The contract requests the following supporting materials:

- A professional photograph, with the following qualifications:
  - High quality, high resolution, jpeg file that can be emailed.
  - Professional quality headshot. Action shots are supplemental.
  - Black and white is preferred.
  - If you do not send a photo when it is requested, the A.D. will search her files for an old picture of you, and will be tempted to use the least flattering one she can find as revenge.
- Two professional bios:
  - 25-30 words
  - 100-150 words
  - Please send these bios by email.
  - See attached sample bios for reference.
- Artistic resume:
  - See attached sample resume for reference.
- List of technical requirements:

- Special microphone needs. We know that many tellers would prefer to use a headset microphone or lapel microphone, but the Fourth Stage tech crew does not like to use them, and often has problems with them. Therefore, unless it is necessary for you to have a specialized microphone for some reason (if you are playing the cello or dancing in addition to telling, for example), you will be asked to make do with a standard microphone.
- Other items, such as a table, a ramp, or a flying monkey. Some technical requirements will evolve during the rehearsal process. The A.D. will send out an email requesting your technical requirements the week before the show to cement any changes.
- At this point out-of-town tellers should tell the A.D. (by email is preferred) that they want to be billeted, if necessary. Closer to the time of the show, the A.D. will arrange it.

## Preparation

What you do artistically to prepare for a show is entirely up to you, and the A.D. wouldn't dream of interfering with the process that works for you. However, the sooner you know what your show will contain, the sooner the promotion can start. At least a month before the show, if not sooner, the A.D. needs to be able to write a fairly accurate description of the show for a press release. If it is for a show that you are creating in conjunction with the A.D., this can be done between you, but if it is for a show that you are putting together more independently, you will be asked to provide this information.

Getting permission to tell material that is protected under copyright is the responsibility of the teller. This is often a lengthy process, so please begin it well in advance of the performance (at least several months before).

Except in the case of out-of-town performers, there will be at least one rehearsal before the show. The key rehearsal is generally a run-through, and the A.D. will attend. Other developmental rehearsals are recommended, and the A.D. will attend those as needed. Shows that have a musical component, in particular, often require more than one rehearsal. The rehearsals cannot take place at the venue, so an alternative location must be chosen – often at the house of one of the performers or the A.D.

At the rehearsal, there will be discussion surrounding potential costume and set ideas. Not every show lends itself to costume and set but if you feel that your show does, and you have an idea, please speak up! Very little budget exists for

set and costume, as it gets expensive very quickly and then there is the problem of who takes custody of the items once the show is over. Therefore, the set and costumes are generally drawn from the existing possessions of the performers and A.D. It is possible to request set items from the NAC a week before the show, but it's always a little risky depending on this, as it's difficult to predict what exactly will turn up on the night of the show.

Whether you tell standing or sitting is up to you and your fellow tellers. The stools provided by the theatre are quite tall, and are sometimes not comfortable for more petite tellers. There are smaller stools belonging to the Ottawa StoryTellers which can be used, but getting them to the theatre for the show must be arranged ahead of time and can sometimes be a challenge. If you really want them, it is best to find a way to get them there yourself.

It is sometimes possible for us to provide you with one or two complimentary tickets for the night of your show. This depends somewhat on how many tickets have been pre-sold. If it is a friend or family member who you wish to comp in, he or she may be put to work before the show (helping with set-up, etc.). It is worthwhile to keep in mind that comps are not reflected in the official audience numbers, so your show will look more successful if you encourage friends and family to purchase their tickets! If you know someone who the Ottawa StoryTellers might wish to impress for some reason, you could make a case for offering a comp. Ask the Artistic Director about comps a couple of weeks prior to the performance.

## **The Night of the Show**

- Sound Check
  - Please arrive at 5:30pm, earlier if there are complicated technical issues to work out.
  - Promptness is appreciated by the tech crew, as they need to have time to eat dinner between setting up, the sound check, and the show.
  - The sound check is generally fairly simple and quick, and will not take much time. If you want to run through some of your material to get a feel for the stage, the tech crew does not seem to mind, though they will continue setting up around you.
  
- Food
  - There is food available for snacking in the Green Room. Please let the A.D. know if you have particular dietary restrictions so that she can provide something you will be able to eat.
  - If you choose to venture out of the theatre in search of alternative food, please be back in the Green Room by 7:00pm, when the doors open to

the audience or the A.D. will think you have run off and will begin to hyperventilate.

- It is a general policy that water bottles are not to be taken on stage, so hydrate well before the show!
- Other
  - Interacting with the audience prior to the show or at intermission is entirely at your discretion. Some tellers find that it warms them up, and others find it distracting.
  - If there is anything else that you need before the show or at intermission, please do not hesitate to ask the A.D.

## Show Time

The show starts at 7:30 pm, or sometimes a few minutes later if the audience is still settling in. The A.D. will take the stage to introduce the show. If there is anything specific you want her to mention (background information, etc.), be sure to tell her prior to the show. She will also take the stage at the end of the first act to announce the intermission, and at the very end of the show to thank sponsors, etc.

If for some reason you do not want the audience to applaud between stories, please let the A.D. know and she will mention it during the introduction. Be warned that the audience likes to applaud, and will not necessarily honour the request. If you want to avoid it, move quickly from one thing to the next.

At the end of the first act, you can choose to bow before exiting the stage, or not, as you see fit. You should definitely bow at the end of the show - please take a moment beforehand to coordinate this with the other people who share the stage with you so that the presentation is smooth. And do try to look like you're enjoying it!

The NAC records the show, and gives the Ottawa StoryTellers one copy. The recording is for personal edification only, and may absolutely not be sold or reproduced in any quantity. If you are interested in listening to this recording, please contact the OST Administrator. Often the whole show does not fit cleanly on one disk, so there are little bits missing in the transition.

After the show is over and schmoozing with the audience and breaking down are completed, many tellers meet up and go out for dinner and drinks. This is optional, of course, but can be a good opportunity to talk about the show and storytelling in general.

## On Being a Professional Performer

It is likely that as an established storyteller, you are already aware of the ins and outs of being a professional performer. But as a lot of people come to storytelling without a performance background, it is perhaps worth mentioning a few of the principal guidelines for running a career in the performing arts.

- Communication
  - Respond promptly to correspondence from the A.D. or the organizer.
  - Have a working email address and check it often.
  - Be easy to reach.
  - Communicate your needs clearly to the A.D. or the organizer.
  
- Promptness and Reliability
  - Arrive on time.
  - Take responsibility for being reliable. If for some reason you cannot be there when you said you would, give the A.D. or the organizer advance notice and help to arrange a replacement.
  
- Appropriate Promotional Materials
  - Have professional photographs, bios, and resumes available for the moment you need them.
  - Having these materials will also make you feel more professional, which in turn makes you seem more professional to the outside world.

## **Critique Meetings**

On the Monday evening following a performance at the NAC, storytellers who are a part of the Fourth Stage rotation meet to discuss the show. This exercise is not very useful if only the people who told that week turn up, so we ask that when you agree to tell at the Fourth Stage, you commit to coming to at least half of the meetings. It is not a part of your contract, but there is an understanding that as a part of the community, you have a responsibility to contribute feedback, and in return, will receive it yourself.

The actual critique process is to be done in a way that is constructive and not in any way offensive. We have established a process in which the tellers give their impressions of the show and ask specific questions for which they would like feedback and opinions. The group then responds to these specific requests. If you have feedback that is not solicited, it can sometimes be appropriate to mention it – but often that is better left to one-on-one conversation. You are asked to be sensitive and use your discretion.

We meet to discuss the performances of out-of-town tellers as well, and though they are not in attendance, it is a useful exercise. Some of our best discussions about the art of storytelling happen at these particular meetings, as we are freer to discuss the good and not as good points of the show candidly.

You are also free to critique the A.D. during these meetings. She finds the feedback very useful as it enables her to gauge which artistic experiments are successful and what she can do to make you more comfortable and prepared as a teller.

For more information, please see “Critiquing” prepared by Jan Andrews on the following page.

## Ottawa StoryTellers Fourth Stage

### Critiquing

(Prepared by Jan Andrews)

Critiquing is becoming an increasingly important part of the Fourth Stage process. In the meeting following each show we take time to consider what went well and what did not. We do this with a view to inspiring ourselves to work towards yet greater glory in performances to come!

We are all agreed that critiquing can be a useful tool for artistic development. It helps us understand our strengths and weaknesses so that we can serve our listeners better.

We also know that critiquing is not the same as criticism or reviewing. Critiquing is undertaken for the teller's benefit. Care must, therefore, be taken to ensure that the critique is shaped and offered in a form that is not only honest but also beneficial.

To forward our aims, we have decided upon the following process. It will be subject to continual trial and exploration but will provide us with a structure from which experimentation may start.

1. Each teller will be expected to establish the context for discussion by outlining his/her thoughts, feelings, concerns, hopes, artistic goals, as an opener.
2. Those offering critiques will frame their comments as responses to the teller's initial statement. They will not go beyond this unless asked by the teller to do so.
3. Critiques will be the result of careful consideration, preferably in advance. Random, off-the-cuff comments will be avoided as much as possible (although we all know a spirit of spontaneity and friendship is crucial. Belly laughs are allowed!)
4. Critiques will focus on the specific, rather than the general. Blanket statements will be avoided since these provide less opportunity for insight and have greater potential for misinterpretation. (Yes, we need to hear, "That was grand. I loved it." but we also need the details as to what made it so knock-your-socks-off-stunning. A comment such as "I think you lost your audience." is only helpful if it's followed up with reasons as to how.)

5. Tellers will take responsibility for stopping the critiquing at any point. (It's up to each one of us to know when enough is enough.)
6. Critiquers will do their utmost to speak in respect of conventions applying to particular genres. (Fret not when tragedy gets tragic; when epic feels epic; when war stories deal in war; or love stories in love. Fret only when the performance doesn't seem to be doing whatever it's supposed to be doing well.)
7. Care will be taken as regards areas of responsibility. (It's true, we have to think whether the set was appropriate, whether the title was well-chosen, whether the material was suited to the venue but we also have to know it was probably the Artistic Director who organized all that.)
8. The A.D. rules! She's there to ensure that discussion stays focused and appropriate and to see that all are heard. She's there to make certain tellers feel they are being supported as opposed to hindered. She's there to help things grow.

## Sample Documents

The following documents may help you to prepare for the Fourth Stage. We have included samples of a Storyteller's Contract, tellers' bios and a Storytelling Resume.



## SAMPLE STORYTELLER'S CONTRACT

**BETWEEN:** Ottawa Storytellers

**AND:** Name: Snow White

Address:

Home Phone:                      Work Phone:

Email:                                      Fax:

Website:

**THE PARTIES AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING:**

Ottawa Storytellers as represented by Caitlyn Paxson  
 Email: [caitlynpaxson@hotmail.com](mailto:caitlynpaxson@hotmail.com) Phone: (613) 322-8336

Hires the above named teller to do the following activity as described below.

**ACTIVITY:**

Performance : The Poisoned Apple: Back from the Dead  
 Date: June 12, 2010  
 Time of performance: 7:30 pm  
 Time of sound checks: 5:30 pm  
 Location: Fourth Stage, NAC

**TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:**

A list of all technical requirements must be submitted by email.

**SUPPORT MATERIALS:**

Teller will supply artistic director with the following materials by email:

1. A 35 word bio
2. A 100 word bio
3. An up-to-date artistic resume
4. A high resolution jpeg headshot

**FEES:**

In compensation for the performance provided by Snow White, under the conditions outlined above, Ottawa Storytellers will pay the teller the following fee, payable on completion of the activity.

Please state name to whom the cheque should be made out: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount: \$200

Please note that all payments are dependant on the successful attainment of grant funding.

**MEDIA:**

The teller is willing to do media interviews yes\_\_ no\_\_

The teller gives permission for the use of photographs and short audio clips for purposes of publicizing this event or other Ottawa Storytellers events: yes\_\_ no\_\_

**SIGNED:**

Caitlyn  
Ottawa

Paxson Sno  
Storytellers Teller

w White

**DATE:**

**Please sign two copies and return to:**

**Ottawa StoryTellers**

**5 Beechwood Ave.  
P.O. Box 74015  
Ottawa, ON K1M 1M0**

## Sample Bios

**Kim Kilpatrick.** Born, a) blind and b) determinedly independent, Kim works as a storyteller, music therapist and coordinator of volunteers, She is particularly known for her readiness to find the humour in the rollicking events of her childhood and in the situations brought to her on a daily basis by her disability. She has told at: the Ottawa Storytelling Festival, Rasputin's Folk Café, The Tea Party, The Fourth Stage, and in many other local venues.

**Katherine Grier.** An Ontario teller who has spent many years in Newfoundland, Katherine tells for people young and old, in schools and the Parent-Child Mother Goose Program, in festivals and concert venues, and over cups of coffee and glasses of wine. She is particularly drawn to the longer epic and wonder tales of journeying through difficulties and darkness towards new understanding.

**Alan Shain.** Alan comes to storytelling from a background in stand-up comedy at Yuk Yuks. He has toured extensively in Canada, Australia and England with his one-man theatre piece, Still Waiting For That Special Bus. A disability activist, born with cerebral palsy, he has committed himself to improving opportunities for all disability artists. He tells tales both personal and traditional and is a master at shaping his material so that listeners cannot help but enter into his stories' world.

**Jennifer Cayley.** Jennifer has been a storyteller for nearly two decades, telling locally and across the country. Her repertoire includes epic, traditional, literary and personal material. Arts education and administration are the day jobs.

## SAMPLE STORYTELLING RESUME

*Jennifer Cayley*

### PERFORMANCES AND WORKSHOPS

#### Performance Series

National Arts Centre: Fourth Stage Ottawa Storytellers (2001-2008)  
 Stories From the Ages: Winter Series: Ottawa (1995-2007)  
 Stories From the Ages: Summer Telling (1997, 1999, 2000, 2005)  
 Fireside Epic: Toronto: (1998-2003)

#### Festivals

Les Jours sont contes en Estrie: Sherbrook (2007)  
 National Storytelling Network: St. Louis, Missouri (2007)  
 Toronto Storytelling Festival (1998,2003, 2006, 2007,2008)  
 Ottawa Storytelling Festival (1992-2007)  
 Homeric Festival: Toronto (2003)  
 North Bay Storytelling Festival (1999)  
 Vancouver Storytelling Festival (1998)

#### Educational Work

Occasional School performances (2000–2007)  
 OAC Artists in Education Roster (2006-2008)  
 Prologue to the Performing Arts Roster (2008,2009)

#### Workshops

SC/CC National Conference (2007, 2008)  
 Voice and Movement:Connecting to the Story (3 day master class)  
 Montreal Storytelling Guild (2007)  
 Voice and Movement:Connecting to the Story  
 Ottawa Storytellers  
 Voice and Movement:Connecting to the Story (2007)

## PERFORMANCE REPERTOIRE

### Epic

The Odyssey	Cyclops Scylla, Charybdis Sirens Cattle of the Sun	Kalevala  Morte d'Arthur	Creation Fire and Sun The Sangreal Achieved
The Iliad	The Death of Hector Achilles Takes Notice	Mahabarata Am	The Death of Arthur In the Beginning ba
King James Bible	Exodus: Moses and Egypt Jacob The Song of Solomon	Ramayana Orlando Furioso Metamorphoses	The City of Gates Hanuman Jumps Enchantment The Creation Pyramus and Thisbe
The Mabinogian	Lady of the Fountain	Hi'iaka The	Journey

### Some Favourite Traditional Folk, Fairy and Wonder Tales

Shee an Gannon and Gruagach Gaire	The Pincoya's Child
The Golden Apples of Lough Erne	The Selkie Wife
The Otter King	Mollyandroat
The Woman Who Went to Hell	Yellow Bird
Childe Rolande	Mollyndroat
The Black Bull of Norrway	Mother Holle
Binnorie	The Cow Tail Switch
Abdullah of Land and Sea	The Corpse Watchers
Magic Brocade	The Water Carrier
Butterball	
Wise Father, Wise Daughter	

### Literary

Sara Maitland	A Book Of Spells, In Praise of Older Woman
Tim Wynne-Jones	Some of the Kinder Planets, TashKent
Jumpa Lahiri	Interpreter of Maladies, A Temporary Matter
Sheila Burnford	The Incredible Journey

### Personal

Two Women, Two Lakes	Shared autobiographical program exploring loss and homecoming
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## TRAINING

### Arts Education

York University: Certificate Course in Arts Education (2006)

### Storytelling Workshops

One day workshops have been taken with the following tellers and actors: (1996-2007)

Chirine el Ansary (Cario)	Elizabeth Ellis (Texas)
Matts Rehman (Sweden)	Cathy Miyata (Toronto)
Gail de Vos (Edmonton)	Tanya Jacobs (Toronto)
Celia Lottridge, (Toronto)	Lynda Howes (Toronto)
Jan Andrews, (Ottawa)	

### Voice and Movement

University of British Columbia: National Voice Intensive (2006)  
 Five-week voice intensive, directed by David Smukler  
 National Arts Centre: Shelagh Langston (2003&2004)  
 Three day voice and movement workshop  
 Stratford Festival: (2003)  
 Janine Pearson: Voice Workshop  
 Roy Hart International Voice Centre (2002)  
 5 week creative voice intensive  
 Peter Ryan (2000)  
 16 hours of voice and movement  
 Dance Network: Peter Ryan: (2000-2002)  
 Weekly creative movement  
 National Arts Centre: Anne Skinner, Brian Doubt: (1999)  
 Four day voice and movement intensive  
 Voice and Movement

## OTHER ARTS RELATED EXPERIENCE

### MASC: Artists for Schools and Communities (1989-2005)

Co-founder and executive director for 18 years of non-profit arts education organization. MASC works with culturally diverse artists/artists groups from all disciplines. Artists offer workshops and performances throughout Eastern Ontario and Western Quebec to over 150,000 students in more than 250 schools each year.

### Storytellers of Canada/Conteurs du Canada

Board Representative for Eastern Canada (2005)  
 Provincial coordinator for Ontario (2000-2006)

Chair of Ethics Committee (1999)

**Juries**

City of Ottawa, Ontario Arts Council

**Contract Work, Arts Administration**

Baobab Tree Community Drum and Dance: Funding Research (2007)

Ottawa Storytellers: Capacity Building (2006-2007)

Mariposa in the Schools: Capacity Building (2006)