

arts

The Art of Living

magazine



Summer
2025

arts hudson

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COMING THIS SUMMER TO VILLAGE THEATRE

*A Theatrical Tour-de-Force
as Riotously Funny
as it is Deeply Moving*

Bed & Breakfast By Mark Crawford



Produced & Directed by
Trevor Barrette

JULY 9-20

MATINÉES AND EVENINGS

*A Blockbuster LIVE
CONCERT Featuring
Legendary Hit Music!*

MEMPHIS To MOTOWN: FROM SOULSVILLE TO HITSVILLE

A Chris McHarge Production

Featuring legendary artists like...
Otis Redding, Sam & Dave,
Isaac Hayes, The Staple Singers,
Smokey Robinson &
The Miracles, Gladys Knight &
The Pips, Marvin Gaye,
The Temptations,
The Four Tops and more!

JULY 23-27

MATINÉES AND EVENINGS

NEIL SIMON'S the Odd Couple

*"Richly hilarious
and remarkably original. Wildly, irresistibly,
incredibly and continuously funny..."*
- New York Daily News

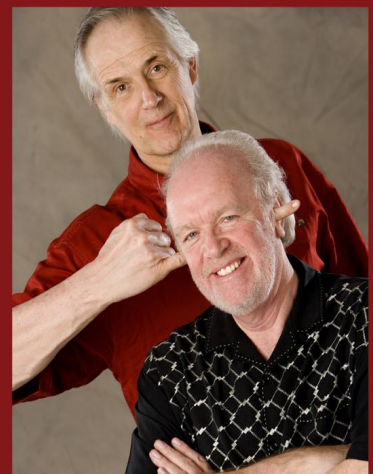


AUGUST 13-24

MATINÉES AND EVENINGS

THE COMEDY
AND MUSIC OF

BOWSER & BLUE



SEPTEMBER 19-20

MATINÉES AND EVENINGS

TICKETS & INFORMATION - VILLAGETHEATRE.CA - 450-458-5361



Village Theatre Continues Successful Season

HVT professional season follows sold-out co-productions

The Hudson Village Theatre has this year experienced high audience attendance levels so far as the theatre comes off a series of co-productions with local community groups.

Murder mystery *The Games Afoot*, produced with the Hudson Players Club, sold out as the show opened, as did the musical *Nine to Five*, produced with Encore Musical Theatre. The fund-raiser *Halfway There* also did extremely well. It helped that all three were excellent shows, greatly enjoyed by the audiences (see reviews by Kathryn

Lamb elsewhere in this issue of Arts Hudson).

During the summer, the theatre will launch its professional season as Executive Director Kalina Skulska navigates a new organizational structure without an Artistic Director.

Rather than having a resident Artistic Director to program and direct the summer professional productions, the theatre is working with experienced Montreal directors to produce specific shows. This summer that will be *Bed and Break-*

fast by Mark Crawford in July and *The Odd Couple* by Neil Simon in August - see ad on the inside front cover.

Tickets are already selling well for some evening shows and the matinees. The brought in shows are also selling well. It looks like our local theatre is heading for a block-buster year.



Hudson Creative Hub

A Legacy of Love and Leadership: Gentile Family Gift Helps Establish Core Team

Thanks to a heartfelt donation from the Gentile family, the Hudson Creative Hub has entered a new chapter grounded in community, creativity, and continuity.

In honour of their late father, Camillo Gentile—who passed away in October 2024—Gina, David, and Paul Gentile have made a generous contribution to support the hiring of a core team.

"This team will help the Hub rise to its full potential," said Gina Gentile. "Our dad put his heart and soul into this place. We just want to see it continue and grow." Camillo Gentile's impact on the Hudson community was immense.

(continued on page 4)



Brilliant Briana Doyle Launches Her First Debut Solo Album

The Road Is Long, at The Hub in Como

by James Parry

Confession time dear readers. Even since first meeting her in person some five years ago and listening to her pure and beautiful voice since then on **YouTube** or when performing together with **Seiji Gutierrez** as **Pagoda Starling**, or with her band **The Breeze** - comprising **Seiji, Brian Ito, Bryan Bowser** and **Carole Corman** who teaches music in **St. Lazare** who joined them on bass for the launch - on stages both locally and further afield, I have been an unabashed fan of **Briana Doyle**. Her soaring, heartfelt vocals are frequently compared to **Joan Baez, Jann Arden**, and **Judy Collins** and yet she sets her own distinctive mark on whatever she does and whenever and where ever she performs.

blazers in the music world, would be proud of that analogy. Even more so when I learned at the launch that Briana has facilitated songwriting groups and workshops while still finding time to produce a weekly songwriting circle at **Cardinal Brewery** right here in downtown Hudson.

In essence, her heartfelt debut album weaves together stories of love, resilience, and longing. Featuring five original songs and a tender reimagining of a beloved
(continued on page 6)

And after a little over a year actually recording her first ever debut solo album titled *The Road Is Long*, launched at **Hudson Creative Hub** this past April, I sincerely believe that these legendary ladies and, in a sense trail-



Parrydisse Hudson by James Parry

One of the wonderful and magical things about living in Hudson, as **Mireille** and I have for the past 40 years or so, is constantly meeting so many fellow residents with fascinating stories to tell. Stories that have never before appeared in print and were never really sought after in the first place. Invariably they come from quiet, modest, unassuming individuals never seeking the limelight, no personal gain, nor fame.

And in this our Summer edition of *Arts Hudson* magazine, I would like to share with you one such story. About a gentleman whose family first settled in our neck of the woods way back in 1858, moving from **Coteau du Lac** to **Como** where they bought land on **Cote St. Charles** before moving to **Lakeview Farm** on **Main Road** which remains the current family home. Intrigued? Then to parryphrase **William Shakespeare**, read on Macduff!

A TRUE VISION FOR THE FUTURE, AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF HUGH 'CHIP' PARSONS

As one of Canada's most respected ophthalmologists specializing in microsurgery helping to preserve or restore vision, not only in this country but around the world - including for many years teaching others in **China, Thai-**

Under the direction and watchful eye of Chip Parsons, a Mongolian ophthalmologist examines a patient during his recent visit there.

land, Vietnam, Cambodia, Israel and most recently **Mongolia - Hugh 'Chip' Parsons** kind of gobsmacked me with his answer to my first question when I asked him why he does it?

Replied Chip with a smile, "I am often asked why I continue to work overseas on a purely voluntary basis but I have found that if someone feels obliged to ask me that question, they are not likely to understand my answer. For it is a part of many of us. For we are meant to put back more than we take out. We all bring special skills to the world and there are endless ways in which we can give back. Mine is teaching and sharing my experiences. And what I learn from my students and patients is likely more than they learn from me."

Undaunted in the nicest sense of the word, and with an equally big smile, I continued the interview at his stunning lakeside cottage in **Cantley, Ontario**, to learn more about this remarkable man who moved to **Vancouver** in 1989 for his beloved wife, **Christina Aquino-Parsons**, to train in oncology, and where they have lived and flourished ever since.

I learned that he went to **Hudson Elementary School, Hudson High**, did CEGEP and obtained a Bsc at **McGill University** followed by Medical School at **Dalhousie University**, Internship at McGill, then Residency in ophthalmology at **Dalhousie** followed by Fellowships at **Wills Eye Hospital** in Philadelphia and **University of Toronto** in vitreo-retinal diseases and surgery, and so becoming a fully qualified ophthalmologist. Wow! Quite an

academic journey, that would lead him to establishing his own practice in B.C.

Explained Chip, who retired from that practice just last year, "After completing my internship I was inspired by ophthalmology as it requires knowledge of medicine, such as in the case of diabetes, and the skill of microsurgery. Restoring or preserving vision is a very rewarding experience with a huge impact on a patient's life. And, from day one, this was the specialty for me."

Can you elaborate as to why you decided to pursue this very specialized field? I continued. "Well, the subspecialty training in retinal surgery was going through exciting development at the time and my mentors and surgeons were the very best of the best. I enjoyed every minute of it for the 37 years I was working in the field, and I was able to participate in, and contribute to, some of the greatest eye treatments ever. It was like riding the biggest wave for all those years!

"Despite recent advances, however, loss of eyesight is one of the most common causes of disability in our Western society and, in the developing world, loss of vision is the most common cause of disability, and no families are unaffected. In fact, 10% of those living in the developing world have severe vision loss and the most impoverished have up to 17% loss of vision, including the nomads in Mongolia for example. Cataracts are the most common cause. But, thankfully, if the patients have access to care then many cases can have their vision restored."

WHY A TEACHER AROUND THE WORLD?

Which brings me to his incredible contributions over the decades to helping such patients achieve just that. And here is how he explained it. "Teaching has always been my passion. My Mom was a teacher and she would always ask who I



had been teaching. During my years in practice I trained over 24 retina fellows from all over the world and taught many medical students and ophthalmology Residents. I started working and teaching overseas in Vietnam in 1995. After about 30 visits, however, they no longer required my teaching. And that was my ultimate goal. To be no longer needed!"

Added Chip, "I have taught in China with many visits. Also in Thailand and Cambodia and then I started work in the Philippines which has a great need and where I led over 25 medical teams, including cancer surgeons, Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists, pediatricians, and ophthalmologists. With a population of over 100 million, however, it was difficult to measure progress and I focused more on providing Canadian-based training as being a more effective means of providing care."

OFF TO MONGOLIA WITH THE NOMADS

And how did Mongolia of all places come about? I asked. Explained Chip, who recently returned from such a visit, "I first went there in 2014 as a tourist and it was there the light went on and I felt there may be a need. I came home, started my research, and found out, yes, there was a great need for our services. For Mongolia, with a population of only 3.4 million, is the most sparsely populated country in the world, and I knew that we could make a difference in that 1.4 million Mongolians, due to challenging environment, geography, great distances and poverty have great difficulty obtaining care."

"The only location was the capital, **Ulaan Baatar**, where patients could obtain care. Cataracts are the most common cause of blindness and there are no surgeons outside of the capital who can provide care."

And what is your personal goal there? I asked. His answer: "I have many more visits planned

and it is to train enough eye surgeons, who will work in the rural regions, and provide comprehensive medical and surgical care. In fact, we are on the cusp of establishing the training program, although change is never easy for any of us and the Mongolian training programs require significant input to be sustainable. Once the program is established, they will be training two to three cataract surgeons per year eventually without our support, and for the small population the impact of the teaching will start to be felt with the first cohort. In addition, we take a team to remote regions to perform surgeries for those who cannot obtain care. And as was the case in Vietnam, success will mean we will no longer be required to undertake these medical missions."

And much closer to home to witness first hand yet another voluntary lasting legacy of Chip and the Parsons family, you need to look no further than the **Vaudreuil-Soulanges Palliative Care Home on Como Gardens** in the heart of Hudson. For it was they who donated the land on which it was built in 2007 and who have been supporting the project for many years.

In closing, couldn't resist asking him why he is known as Chip and not Hugh? And he laughed. "My father was also called Hugh and as a youngster I was known as a chip off the old block!" Some chip! Some very remarkable gentleman. And certainly one ophthalmologist of which not only Hudsonites but all Canadians can be proud. Ah, you just gotta love it!

ONE FOR THE HISTORY BOOKS BY HOMEGROWN LOCAL AUTHOR

And now I would like to turn the spotlight on another lifelong resident of Hudson whose family first arrived here in 1825 from **North-ern England** (Cumbria), even earlier than that of Chip. In brief, he is also a graduate of **Hudson High**, holds a B.A. in Urban Geography & History from the **University of Guelph**, is a retired veteran of the **Hudson and Rigaud Fire Departments** with almost 27 years of service, and is a retired employee of the Town of Hudson's **Public Works** as well as **Urban Planning Departments** with over 35 years of service there.

Often referred to as Hudson's unofficial historian, he is also unquestionably our most prolific author of self-published fiction and non-fiction books - over a dozen to date - including his very latest launched in April commemorating
(continued on page 8)

Chip Parsons helping a young Mongolian girl restore her vision while sharing with others over there his extensive knowledge and expertise gained in Canada.
Photo courtesy of Chip Parsons



Halfway There, by Norm Foster

Review by Kathryn Lamb

It's finally spring, and sometimes a little trip down east is just what the doctor ordered! Our destination was Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, a town that sits exactly half way between the equator and the north pole. We find ourselves in a cheery local diner, bright blue and pink with red ruffled café curtains.

Halfway There by Norm Foster played at the Hudson Village Theatre May 14-25. It opened with a choir of birdsong, accompanied by Neil Young's Heart of Gold, a kind of metaphor for idyllic beauty being confronted by something a bit darker. Four friends meet regularly at the diner to exchange gossip, advice and sympathy. They know everything about each other and pretty much everything that goes on in town.

The humour starts up immediately (this is Norm Foster after all) and absolutely nothing is sacred or off limits. Everything from botched circumcisions (the victim still flinches around cutlery) and flatulence, heavy menstrual flow and loneliness is fair game. All these conversations are backed by the gravelly voice of Neil Young.

There's nobody like Neil when you are discussing disappointing relationships, disillusioning behavior, untrustworthy motives, you name it. The ladies' deepest disdain, however, is reserved for Toronto, a city from which no good can ever

come. At this point an unknown man walks into the diner. This unknown man - a doctor, actually - has moved to Stewiacke for a month to replace the regular G.P. His name is Sean, and he is from - you guessed it - Toronto. It is immediately clear that some things are about to change.

The appearance of Sean redirects the focus of their conversations and activities. They all enjoy his presence, a few would like a little more. Everybody's relationships, past and present come up for scrutiny, and secrets come to light.

But the precise and fast-moving hilarity doesn't ever let up, and the audience is in stitches - in the words of the author "buried under a mudslide of humour". And we are loving it.

In plays like this, the actors have to be right on, and each one of these ladies was up to the job. Jennifer Wade as Janine, Lisa Vindasius as Vi, Lisa Crowhurst Fisher as Mary Ellen, and Susan Walsh Cote as the priceless Rita, each with her own worries, fears, disappointments, each very individual, but with an unbreakable attachment to her friends and the town. The fast-moving dialogue, body language and facial expressions are delivered with skill and precision. Sean, (Ron Torchia) the doctor from away, was the perfect

foil for all that female energy.

Don Anderson, the director and mastermind behind this production seems to have been made for Norm Foster (although I know he has many other theatrical accomplishments under his belt!). He told me how much he was inspired by various aunts and relatives from his own life, and that personal connection was evident.

Karen Pearce designed the wonderful costumes - I particularly loved Rita's leopard print and leathers, as well as Janine's great apron collection. James Berryman's set made me want to go there. Peter Garbacz was the stage manager, ably assisted by Wil Schonfelder and Lily Zubis-Tanona.

I saw in this play a great exploration of female relationships. Behind the fast moving, hilarious dialogue lurked hidden truths, some of which only appeared in retrospect. You can be lonely in or out of a relationship. Honesty and trust are hard to come by. We protect ourselves from anticipated hurts. And sometimes a risk is worth taking.

The play, as it turned out, was almost sold out before it opened! The audience was in stitches throughout, and a standing ovation ended the evening. Well Done!

Hudson Creative Hub, continued from page 1

A passionate arts advocate, savvy businessman, and tireless organizer, he was known for his relentless drive and his deep love of life, family, and opera.

In 2022, Cam led the effort to purchase and transform the historic St. Mary's Church Hall into the Hudson Creative Hub. Originally built in 1879 and rebuilt in 1988 after a fire, the hall has long served as a gathering place for the community. Under Cam's leadership, it found new life as a

cultural centre open to the public for exhibitions, performances, and educational activities.

Now, the team carrying his legacy forward includes technical director Bill Dueck, a 35-year veteran of the music industry; Joëlle Jérémie, who took over daily operations during Cam's illness and remains in a transitional leadership role; and Briana Doyle and Seiji Gutierrez of Troubadours and Vagabonds Productions, who bring artistic insight and marketing

expertise.

This new chapter builds on the work of volunteers who helped the Hub take root. With continued community support, this dedicated team will guide the organization into its next phase—always with Cam's spirit at the heart of it.

To learn more, donate or become a member, visit

www.hudsoncreativehub.org.

The BIG little Canadian Film Festival 2025 Was Best Ever

By Clint Ward

From April 21 to 27 just a bit short of 1400 film goers enjoyed the 10th offering of the *Hudson Film Festival*. To celebrate the first decade, the organizers and supporters went all out to deliver a real Festival Experience for the Western Quebec and Eastern Ontario lovers of the art of film.

Close to 150 passes were purchased for a maximum following of the 16 feature length film program which began with Canada's entry in the Academy Award stakes. *Universal Language* was a quirky film with an off centre sense of humour featuring Winnipeg in the language of Iran. Director Matthew Rankin was present after the credit roll to introduce the opening film and illuminate the essence of the story.

Hockey – we are in that time of year – was the evening subject of the Festival's first day. *Ice-Breaker* was about the 1972 summit series between Canada and Russia. It was based on the book, *Ice War Diplomat* and author Gary Smith started the after film audience conversation along with director Robbie Hart. Also included in the onstage discussion was Pierre Plouffe, a fan who traveled to Moscow to see the last 4 games but ended up in Jail and was saved by Gary Smith who was a Canadian Diplomat based in Russia.

Day two was devoted to three First Nation Films, *So Surreal: Behind the Masks*, *Soleils Atikamekw* and *Sugarcane*. Two guests joined in the celebration to enhance day 3 for more Festival Experience atmosphere. Producer François Tremblay enlightened the audience about the filming in Switzerland where Quebec director Lea Pool shot the footage for the marvelous film *Hotel Silence*. In the evening, the principle actor of *Le Successor*, Marc-André Grondin was on hand to give the audience a master class in acting following the film.

Alfonso Maiorana the director of the afternoon day 4 music documentary, *Goddess of Slide: The forgotten Story of Ellen McIlwaine* offered even more details of the musician's brilliant talent.

A highlight of the Festival completed the day with the screening of the story that won the Best Canadian Film Award at the Toronto International Film Festival. *Bergers (Shepherds)* was a film based on Mathyas Lefebure's popular book *D'où viens-tu, berger?* The author was on stage to discuss his adventure of becoming a shepherd in France.

Day 5 featured three films and began with an emerging young director's first film which was a winner of the Werner Herzog Award in 2024. Harley Chamandy started filming, *Alien Sunshine* when he was 22 and he had a lot to say in a recorded Zoom interview following the film. The next up was the powerful story, *Richelieu*, about seasonal migrant workers in Quebec. Completing the day was a comedy, *The Young Werther* which was a modernized version of an eighteenth-century novella by Wolfgang von Goethe.

The free popcorn Desjardins' Day 6 featured 4 films with the first three from Quebec, *Tous Toqués (All Stirred Up)*, *Mlle Bottine (Miss Boots)* and *La Petite et le Vieux (Blue Sky Jo)*. The

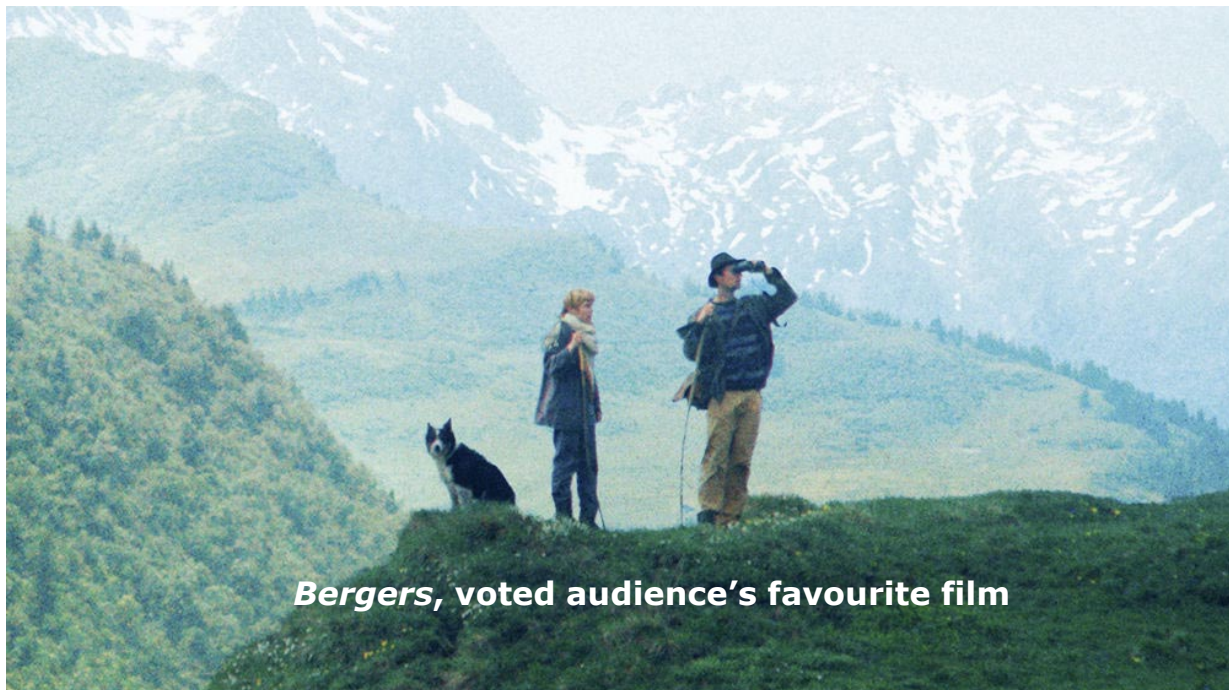
final film of the three included a session with the final guest of the Festival, the star of the film, one of Quebec's most revered actors, Gildor Roy.

The fourth film of the day was *Swan Song*, a documentary about Canada's ballet icon Karen Kain ending her life long career, directing *Swan Lake* for the National Ballet of Canada.

Early in the film there is a quote by her that has a lot to say about what theatre is all about. "There're Swan Lakes all over the world and they're danced beautifully – but I'm tired of looking at things that are academic exercises – I want to be moved – it's theatre, you know – I want to cry."

All that was left for the BIG little CANADIAN FILM FESTIVAL was day 7 and the two final attractions. In the afternoon, The Best of Ben's Screening Room took centre stage. It featured the top films of the many years that the Festival highlighted the works of young filmmakers – the stars of tomorrow.

All ended with the Celebration Dinner at Hudson's Creative Hub where the 2025 Festival audience favourite film results were released. In order, the winning three films were *Bergers*, *Hotel Silence* and *La Petite, Le Vieux*. The Hudson Film Festival projector is now off and the screen is up but both will come to life again in 2026.



***Bergers*, voted audience's favourite film**

classic, it takes listeners on an evocative journey through life's challenges and joys.

Recorded in **Toronto** with producer **Joel Schwartz** and percussionist **Mark Mariash**, it showcases rich melodies and intimate storytelling, reflecting Briana's pride in a bilingual Canadian identity and her belief in bridging divides through music. With lyrics in both of Canada's official languages, it captures the very essence of the vibrant, bilingual environment she calls home right here in our neck of the woods.

But don't just take my word for it folks. This is what **B.C.-based Rob Jones**, a music blogger and lifelong music fan at **The Delete Bin** (thedeletebin.com), is on record as saying. "This album is a stylistic amalgam of folk, country, and pop music rooted in the **Judy Collins** and **Kate Wolf** school that, very wisely, puts singer-songwriter Briana Doyle's yearning and crystal clear voice way up front. The songs feel very personal. Yet, she makes them universal as she explores themes of nostalgia, connection and disconnection, and of moving forward as best as one

can, capturing those things that are common to the human experience."

I caught up with Briana recently to learn more of the six tracks on the album, all written by her save one - but more about that later - how they came about and what inspired her in the telling. And so for your listening pleasure, albeit in print until you buy an album or go online, here they are.

Hold on To Your Heart. Explained Briana, "I wanted to capture and reflect the strength we find in friendship. A kind of upbeat anthem of optimism and perseverance reminding us that, while life can feel lonely, we are never truly alone."

Black Cat Round. "This song was written during the Covid pandemic when I got really annoyed by my own bad luck streak. It wasn't enough that everything was going wrong in the world, I also had a string of minor annoyances that tipped me over the edge. It got me thinking about superstitions and wondering what I had done wrong. And then I had to laugh that I had even thought about it. Sometimes things just

don't go right and you just have to make peace with it. Such was the seed for this particular number."

Vraiment. "A soulful and plaintive French ballad, this song explores the bittersweet emotions of seeing an old flame move on, blending poignant lyrics with hauntingly beautiful melodies."

Take Me Home. "This song was inspired by a sunny Sunday drive through Hudson, Quebec, when I suddenly saw the lilac growing over an old fence on Main Road and it was refined in the **Girls & Guitars Songwriting Workshop** organized by the **Guelph Hillside Festival** in January 2022, and recorded the following year with producer **Joel Schwartz** in **Toronto**."

The Ballad of James and Mireille. "This is a bilingual love story brought to life through the tale of an enduring relationship that transcends language and time, inspired by a real-life couple here in Hudson whose bond bridges cultural divides."

"As for the closing number, *Can't Help Falling in Love* this is a tender, stripped-down rendition of the **Elvis** classic, revealing the inevitable vulnerability and raw beauty of falling in love."

To learn more or to acquire an album of your very own, Briana can be reached at her website **brianadoyle.com** where one can hear her music, learn of upcoming performances, sign up for her newsletter or email her.

As for the CD, this is currently only available directly from her and she can arrange to deliver it in person in Hudson or pop it in the mail.

Her music is also on **Bandcamp** and she will be releasing each song one at a time on streaming services over the next few months including in June *Black Cat Round* on Friday the 13th! Go figure!

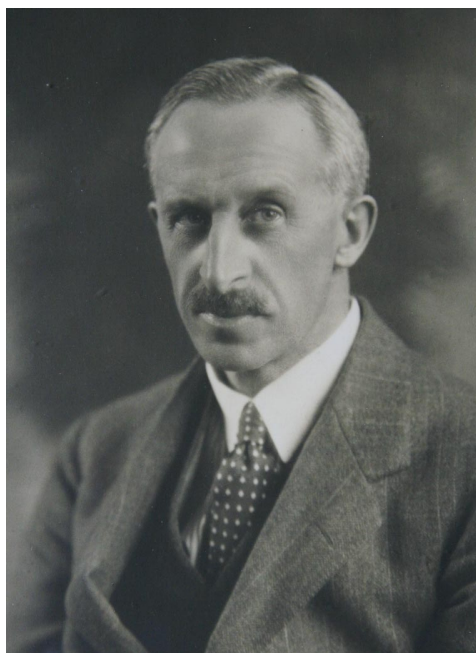
James Parry with Briana Doyle following the show
at the Hudson Creative Hub.
Photo by Steve Gerrard



Greenwood Centre for Living History

Percy Nobbs - A man of many perspectives

by Karen Molson, special contributor



Percy Nobbs during his teaching time at McGill where he was Dean of Architecture

150 years after the birth of Percy Nobbs, Greenwood Centre for Living History is presenting an exhibition of his life and work. Best known as an architect in the Edwardian era's Arts and Crafts tradition, Percy Nobbs was a man of many other gifts and passions.

After he graduated from the University of Edinburgh at age 21 with a Master's Degree in Architecture, he accepted an invitation to become Macdonald Chair of Architecture at McGill University. As a professor of Design, he conceived and carried out commissions with his partner George Hyde: they built several prominent buildings

A mural painting Percy Nobbs did here at Greenwood above the fireplace in the Nobbs Room. It depicts a scene in Scotland from his childhood.

in Montreal and on the McGill campus, as well as others across Canada.

Percy Nobbs' connection with Greenwood came about through his marriage to Mary Cecila (Cecil) Shepherd, daughter of Dr. Frank Shepherd, Dean of Medicine at McGill. The Shepherd family owned Greenwood. Cecil and Percy's marriage took place on the grounds of this Como home in 1909, and their two children were born in 1910 (Phoebe) and 1912 (Frank).

Cecil Shepherd Nobbs came to inherit Greenwood, and she, Percy, and their children spent many happy summers here. Percy extended the home with an addition to the east, today called the Nobbs room. The exhibition of Percy Nobbs' life and works will shed light on both his personal and professional interests and



accomplishments.

Many of his formative years were spent in the St. Petersburg area of Russia; he would visit the country again as an adult, where on one visit to Moscow in 1896, for the coronation of Czar Nicolas II, he painted the Kremlin lit up for the first time by electric light.

Much of his other artwork, some never seen before by the public, will be on display. His sculptures will be highlighted, as well as the four books he wrote: one, his memoirs, and the other three on fencing, design, and fly fishing. His sword (epee) that he took to the 1908 Olympics in London where he competed, is featured as well, as his desk which he had shipped to Canada from Russia.

You can see all these things, and more, visiting Greenwood this summer!

Wednesday-Saturday 10-4; Sunday 12-4



Parrydisse, continued from page 3

and saluting the **80th Anniversary** of our **Royal Canadian Legion Branch #115** located at **56 Beach Road** in the centre of town.

His name, of course, if you haven't already guessed or skipped to the following paragraphs, is **Roderick L. Hodgson** known to just about everyone as simply **Rod**. The book's title? *The History of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch #115, Hudson, Quebec, Canada 1945-2025*. Coffee table size, 228 pages long, and packed with both colour and black and white photographs, it is dedicated to the military veterans of Hudson and area who have served since the **Boer War** in **South Africa** way back in 1899 and especially to those who made the supreme sacrifice and who today are remembered on the **Cenotaph** right outside The Legion and the only one of its kind in the entire **Vaudreuil-Soulanges** region. Also to the many hundreds of members and their families who for all those 80 years have helped preserve the community's proud military heritage.

To learn more about this multi-faceted man who has been a Branch #115 member since 1978, has curled there for about 16 years, and is a past Branch President as well as a former President of the **Hudson Historical Society**, I caught up with him, where else, but right there on Beach Road. And here's how it went down.

Q: *Growing up here just a few blocks away, did you ever think about becoming a writer in some sense let alone as an actual author?*

A: "No, I never did. But here I am today with 14 books done, some of them co-authored, three books edited and now another, my 18th, in the process of being written."

Q: *Did any one specific person encourage you to become a writer way back then?*

A: "Not really. The only person I had close dealings with in local history was **Margaret Peyton**, a descendent of **Captain R. W. Shepherd** who built **Riversmead**

and headed up the **Ottawa River Navigation Company**. She taught school at Hudson High for many years, mainly History and Latin, and she was very involved with **Greenwood's** founding as an historical site."

Q: *When did you write your first book, what was the title, and why?*

A: "It was published in 1991 as *Historic Hudson Part II* then re-printed and updated with a new title in 2009. The initial one had the **History of the Hudson Fire Department**, the local branch of the **Canadian Pacific Railroad** and **Ice Harvesting on the Ottawa River, 1906-1961**. I did not really know much about writing and I just followed a title of an earlier book for the Hudson Historical Society called *Historic Hudson*. In 2009, **Martin Hofton** added a chapter about the **Dragon Powder Works** explosion in 1917 and the new title became *Steam, Fire, Ice & TNT!*"

Q: *What inspires or drives you to continue writing new books?*

A: "I just want to preserve the history of Hudson and its immediate area. However, I have also written three historical fiction novels based on Hudson as well as one of my favourites, namely, *Barns: Classic Structures from Across the Land*. Of course, there is also my local military history book, *Defenders of the Flag* now about to go into its fifth edition."

Q: *There is so much fascinating and factual research in your new book and, in addition to your own files and records, you obviously received a lot of input from others in the community with regards to the text and photographs. Correct?*

A: "Yes I do have a great

deal of my own info about our Branch #115 as I have long been a member. The Legion's own archives also helped with photos and data as did the **Curling Section's** own two books/albums celebrating its 50th Anniversary in 2014. Interviews with many current members also really helped as it did by me being able to use some of their photos. No single person really helped me, however. Just a combination of archival facts, photos, and photographs from various members of the Legion parades, donations, and curling events and the like."

Q: *I understand that your initial print run of 80 or so copies is completely sold out. How do you feel about that? And any plans for a second printing if the demand is forthcoming?*

A: My initial print run was 86 at \$40 per copy of which 83 were sold with 100% of sales of them going to the Branch. I got one as the author as did the Hudson Legion and I had to send one to **Library & Archives Canada** as per the norm. I can only do a second printing if enough sign up on the waiting list and so far I only have two."

Well, make that three Rod and put me down for one. And a big bravo on a job well done and mission accomplished. Definitely one for the ages as only you could write it!
And that's a wrap!

With tulips in full bloom, author Rod Hodgson poses with his newly-released book at Place Vimy directly outside Hudson Legion Branch #115 on Beach Road.

Photo by James Parry



The Game's Afoot, by Ken Ludwig

Presented by the Hudson Players Club and Village Theatre

Review by Kathryn Lamb

"The Games Afoot", Ken Ludwig's elegant comedic "who-dunnit", arrived at the Hudson Village Theatre in late April, directed by Heidi Hawkins.

On opening night, I entered the theatre to see in front of me a stunning example of 1930's great-house décor. From the glorious chandelier, that took my eyes right up to the roof, to the crimson, gold-stenciled wall panels (that echoed those on the walls of the theatre itself), it felt like I was sharing this huge baronial space with the actors themselves. Here, in this lavish mansion on the Connecticut river, we meet William Gillette, a very successful actor in the UK and US, best known for bringing the role of Sherlock Holmes to the stage. His existence and his mansion in Connecticut are actually factual. The rest of this story is invention.

A Christmas house party is underway, and guests are arriving, both welcome and unwelcome. Outside all is stormy, but inside is a cozy cocoon of superficial bonhomie. The plot develops as the characters present themselves. All are theatrical types-dramatic, larger than life, and still craving the spotlight even when off-stage. William Gillette (John Sheridan), the perfect host, is tall, confident and elegant (in a tweedy kind of way). The other men, Simon Bright (Tommy Furino) and Felix Geisel (Jean-Frédéric Samson) are perfectly-tuxedoed, urbane and cultured, but possibly not quite what they seem.

This play is rich with strong women. Gillette's mother, played by Diana Gausden, is the catalyst who keeps this story rolling. Every word, and gesture is perfect as she massages egos, makes observations, takes actions or disappears, as necessary. Madge Geisel

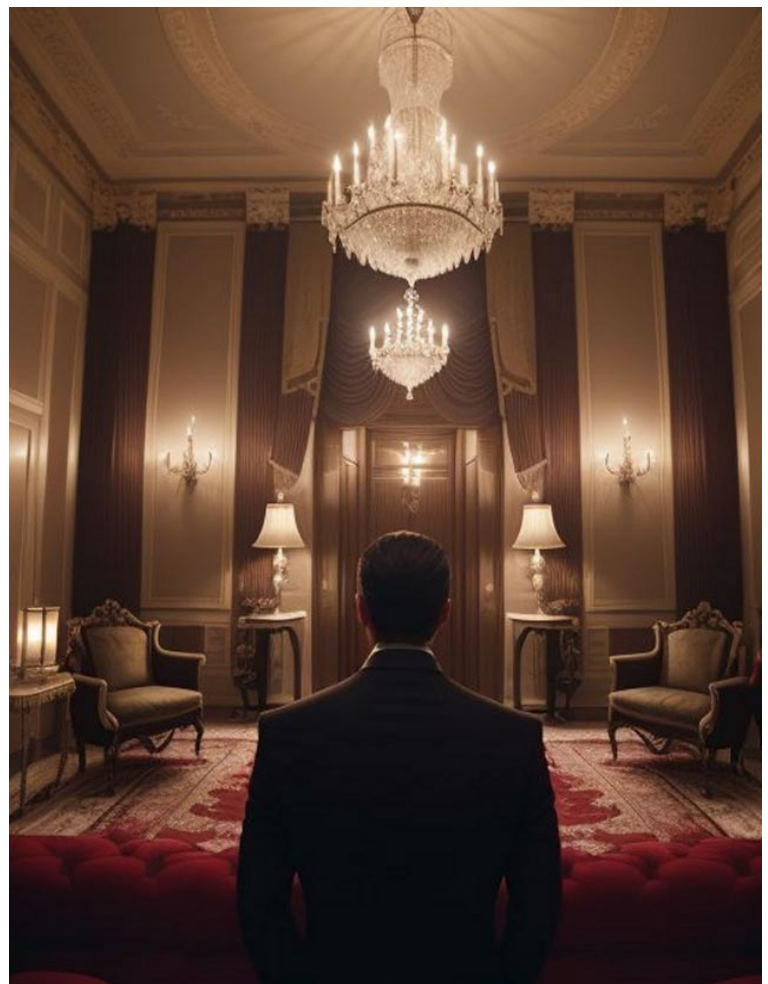
(Genevieve Grenier) is a forceful presence, vivid in purple satin, and Aggie Wheeler (Robin Glance) as the ingenue, is soft-spoken and delicate. Inspector Goring (Christine Priest), called in to investigate a "possible" murder, reveals a love of the dramatic, despite her very undramatic job. Lastly, Fiona Chandler totally owns the role of the dazzling Daria Chase, an acid-tongued theatre critic whom Gillette has invited to this "celebration". Her performance left me with a few heart-stopping images that I think will remain seared in my memory for a very long time.

This play is an intricate balance of mystery and farce, murder and over-the-top acting. Directing such a performance and coaching the actors must have been a challenge, so kudos to Heidi Hawkins.

The production also benefitted from a brilliant backstage crew including set designer James Berryman, costume designer Karen Pearce, and stage manager Shelly Walters, all of whose talents visually brought this play to life. I also wanted to point out the large painting in the upper right corner of the set. It was a custom portrait of Gillette and his

mother created for this production by artist Jim Istvannfy. Credit goes as well to the younger members of the team (Wil Schoenfelder, lighting designer and Lily Zubis-Tanona, assistant stage manager) who will hopefully carry their passion for the theatre into future productions.

I was held captive from opening line to finale, and I could see that the whole theatre audience felt the same. I believe that every seat for every performance was sold out. That's quite a feat for a local company. The Hudson Players Club has been in existence for 77 years, and their skill and experience are well recognized. But beyond that, they perform as volunteers because our local theatre is such a precious community resource. Thank you all!





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Helen Henshaw

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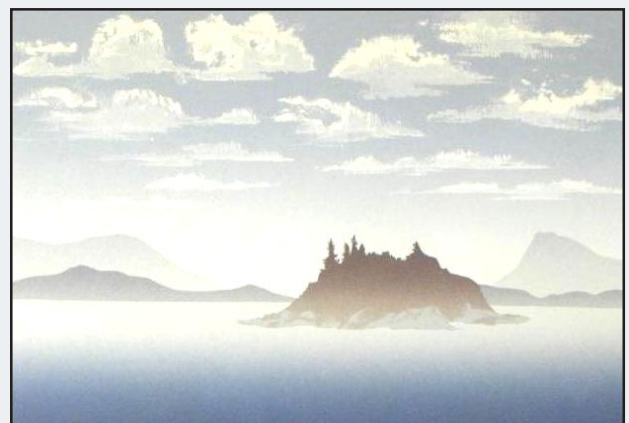
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Nine to Five, book by Patricia Resnick, music by Dolly Parton

Produced by Encore Musical Theatre at the Hudson Village Theatre

Reviewed by Kathryn Lamb

What to say about a show that was almost a year in the making, and that spectators were so blown away by, they were still talking about it weeks later?

The Broadway hit musical, ***Nine to Five*** (book by Patricia Resnick, music by Dolly Parton), directed by Corey Castle with musical director Jen Baltuonis, played at the Hudson Village Theatre in mid-March to sold out audiences, and was exactly what we needed at the tail-end of a very long winter.

The voices were great, both principals and chorus. The three leads, Violet (Maggie Newstead), Judy (Elizabeth Proulx) and Dora Lee (Amanda Caron) formed a diverse and formidable trio.

After a series of misadventures in their toxic work environment (this was the 70's), they are forced to use their diverse talents to kidnap Franklin Hart Jr. (Don Anderson), their tyrannical, misogynistic boss, and hold him hostage. They managed it, and no one in the office was mourning his absence, in fact everything seemed to be going exceedingly well, with the exception of one hold-out. That one was Roz Keith, the boss's loyal, spinsterish assistant who was hopelessly in love with him. Sylvia Mauri played Roz, and somehow totally transformed herself for this role.

The plot benefitted from the fact that Franklin Hart Jr., the bad guy, brilliantly played by Don Anderson, was not only REALLY bad, but sleazy and irreparably corrupt. The ingenious method of his confinement, dreamed up by Violet,

Judy and Dora, was both humiliating, ironic and felt supremely satisfying.

The finale, when it arrived, accompanied by the "big boss", Mr. Tinsworthy, (Fred Aronson, wearing a magnificent white cowboy hat), was exactly what we needed to hear. Performance at the firm was up. The ladies had aced the management of the workplace by introducing new, more flexible, employee friendly practices, and Violet was promoted. Franklin Hart, now an insignificant sidebar, was to be transferred to the Venezuela office, where he hopefully could do no more harm.

The chorus performed seamlessly throughout with strength and enthusiasm, and the dance routines were skillfully choreographed and

delivered. Even the frequent set changes, required by the story as it unfolded, were smoothly integrated to look like part of the choreography. The lighting and sound worked well, and the costumes were perfect.

Although times have changed in the 40 years since the original film came out, I think the message still rings true. The conflict is not always men against women nor rich against poor, but between those who hold power and those who don't. What weapons do we have to rectify injustices? I think the lessons are all here. Cooperate, strategize, and try to be fair. Use determination, teamwork and humour. Leave behind those who undermine you or don't appreciate what you have to offer. It is a useful manual for our times too.



Memories of Hudson

Tales that might have happened - the books were not stolen

by Art MacDonald

Max was the last of the janitors at Hudson High. Later, after he retired, there were caretakers and then there were custodians, but no more janitors

The kids liked Max although they couldn't have told you why. In any case, he was considered a "good guy" by the kids. They said hello to him when they saw him, respected him and called him by his first name, one of the few adults to receive that privilege.

It probably helped that he was a large man with a potentially very loud voice and that he looked as if he could pick up the average student and break them in half. But he never had to make use of those qualities.

Matt Henderson came to Hudson High from Mount Pleasant Elementary School and was initially overwhelmed. Mount Pleasant had one corridor with a few classrooms off it but the high school had two stories with an additional wing and hundreds of students.

Matt was tall and skinny and had a light complexion, blue eyes and sandy hair. He gave a somehow unfinished impression, more than other boys his age.

One morning their classroom was inexplicably locked and the teacher sent Matt to find Max and his master keys. Max was washing the floor downstairs, something he seemed to spend a lot of time doing. He had a bucket and a mop and would find an area not currently in heavy use and wash it. Matt approached diffidently, not knowing what to expect.

"Mrs. Walters sent me to tell you that the door to 8C is locked," he said.

"Oh, she has forgotten her key again," Max said. "I'll come right with you and call me Max."

Max bustled up, unlocked the door,

smiled at Mrs. Walters who thanked him, smiled at Matt and went back to his floor. Matt decided he liked Jim and thought of him as a kind of benign presence in the bowels of the school, making sure everything worked and was spic and span. Spic and Span was the cleaning product Max used.

Matt got used to the larger school and made it into grade nine. A year below him a whole new class came in. Matt liked Alicia in the new grade eight. She was tall with dark, wavy hair and dark eyes which had an unusual depth to them. Being in different grades they didn't see much of each other and Matt was shy and quite passive as far as girls were concerned.

They sat together on the school bus for some time and he would dance with her if she came to one of the school dances but he wouldn't phone her or ask her out to the movies or even ask her to meet him at the dances. Alicia was disappointed but girls did not take the initiative so, eventually she dated someone from her own grade

Matt didn't notice - he had discovered books. He spent all his spare time in the library reading anything that caught his attention. It was not the books or the reading that captivated him but the learning. He found he was hungry to know how things worked, how they were developed, what their background was, what they were made of and everything else. He read novels and stories which taught him about the world, and reference books which told him about things. When he couldn't find an interesting book, he took out a volume of the Encyclopedia Britannica and looked through it.

Matt was an only child and came from a solid, well-to-do Hudson family. His mother was a large, jovial woman, warm on the surface and less so underneath. She was very active with the United Church

Women, arranging good works, sending money to orphans overseas and volunteering in the community. His father was an engineer for one of the large Quebec engineering companies. He had helped build the big dams for Quebec's hydro-electric plants and was now doing the same things overseas.

Mainly as a result of his father's influence, Matt had been raised with a high sense of personal responsibility. His father never gave him a chance to explain if something didn't work out. "Matt," he'd say, "I'm sure there is a reason why you didn't do what you said you would. I assume that there is a good reason because you are smart, honest and hard-working and wouldn't fail to do something for no reason. There's always a reason and that reason is important to you. But no one else is interested. The key thing for everyone else is that you didn't do what you said you would and they don't care why. They want to know what you're going to do to fix any problems you have caused and whether you've done something to make you more reliable in the future."

Matt's father was smart, honest and hard-working and very self-confident. He thought that was because he had achieved things but it was because of the way he had been brought up. And with all his honesty and hard work and self-confidence, he was dissatisfied. His dissatisfaction was not due to the way he had been brought up. It was due to his feeling that he had missed out on things. He had come back from the war and settled down, married, had Matt and built his career and now he felt he would have liked to have done a few other things.

Matt was in the library as usual. He was now in grade ten and was developing a sense of who he was and what he wanted to be. He knew he wanted to know as much as he could about everything he could think of and he knew that, while he

was not as smart as the smartest kids, he could get the marks he wanted by hard work.

He refused to cheat as some of the kids did. He didn't even try to see what other kids were writing and, even when multiple choice exams were brought in and it was easy to see what other kids has chosen, he didn't look. For one thing, he got better marks than most so the other answer was likely to be wrong but also, it didn't fit with his character. Teachers told the kids that, when they cheated, they only cheated themselves and most kids took that for a self-serving cliché but Matt thought that it applied to him. He also didn't cheat when he played solitaire.

Jim came by with a wheelbarrow full of books. Matt said hello and they exchanged a few words. "Where are you taking those books?" Matt asked.

Jim explained that the library was full and had bought some new books so some old ones were being thrown out. Matt looked through the books, treasures. "You can't throw these out," he said. "They are valuable and I haven't even read all of them yet."

"Take them," Jim said. "I'm just putting them out back for the garbage so I'll take them to your locker instead." And that is what they did.

For several days afterwards Matt took a few of the books, as many as

would fit in his school bag, home and put them on the bookshelf in his room. He looked at a few of them and they still had the little envelope with the library card in them and the names of the students who had borrowed the books were written on the cards.

Three years later, everything changed. He was at McGill in Engineering and was going to move into an apartment downtown. His father had left his mother to do some of the other things he thought he had missed doing and to unsuccessfully look for the warmth his wife was not able to give him. The house was sold and Matt was going through his things with his mother and packing up to move into Montreal.

"You shouldn't have stolen those books from the school library," said his mother as they packed up his books. "They were being thrown out," he said and could see she thought it was just an excuse.

Lying in his apartment that evening and thinking about starting a new phase in his life, he remembered what his mother had said and found that he was shocked, twice. Once because his mother had gone through his things and seen the little library cards and again because she had thought that he could steal the books. "You never really know someone," he thought, "even your own mother."

And even more scary, "Nobody ever really knows you, not even your own mother."



Arts Hudson Calendar of Events

June 2025 Events

Greenwood Centre for Living History, greenwoodcentre.org

June 14th - Music in the Garden - Saturday 2:00 to 3:30 pm, \$10.00

June 18th - StoryFest - Andrew Coyne 7:30 to 9:00 pm, \$20.00

Village Theatre, villagetheatre.ca

June 27th to 29th - Panto Auditions, Peter Pan, sign up on the website

Cardinal Microbrewery Events, cardinalhudson.com

Live music every weekend, plus an ongoing program of comedy nights, trivia and tasting events - see website for details

July 2025 Events

Town of Hudson, hudson.quebec

July 1st - Canada Day Celebrations

St. Thomas Park - family fun and kiosks - 1:00 pm to 10:30 pm

Greenwood Centre for Living History, greenwoodcentre.org

July 5th and 6th - Music in the Garden - 2:00 to 3:30 pm, \$10.00

July 13th - Traditional Tea, 11:00 am to 4:00 pm (2 sittings) \$25.00

Starting July 17th, every Thursday - Art in the Garden, family activity, 1:00 to 3:00 pm, \$10.00

July 20th - Music in the Garden - Saturday 2:00 to 3:30 pm, \$10.00

Village Theatre, villagetheatre.ca

July 9th to 20th - "Bed and Breakfast," by Mark Crawford, directed by Trevor Barrette
Wednesdays, July 9* & 16, 2 pm; Thursdays, July 10 & 17, 8 pm; Fridays, July 11 & 18, 8 pm;
Saturdays, July 12 & 19, 2 pm & 8 pm; Sundays, July 13 & 20, 2 pm; *Preview

July 23rd to 27th - Memphis to Motown - a Chris McHarge production - 8:00 pm

Hudson Players Club, hudsonplayersclub.ca

July 26 and 27, August 1, 2, 3, and possibly August 23

Shakespeare by the Lake at Jack Layton Park

A Midsummer Night's Dream - directed by Raymond Just - 7 pm to 9 pm, donation

Cardinal Microbrewery Events, cardinalhudson.com

Live music every weekend, plus an ongoing program of comedy nights, trivia and tasting events - see website for details

August 2025 Events

Greenwood Centre for Living History, greenwoodcentre.org

August 2nd - Music in the Garden - Briana Doyle, 2:00 to 3:30 pm, \$10.00

August 14th, Greenwood Gourmet Dinner, 6:00 to 10:00 pm, \$180.00

August 17th and August 31st - Music in the Garden - Saturday 2:00 to 3:30 pm, \$10.00

Village Theatre, villagetheatre.ca

August 13th to 24th, "The Odd Couple," by Neil Simon

Wednesdays, August 13 & 20, 2 pm; Thursdays, August 14 & 21, 8 pm; Fridays, August 15 & 22, 8 pm;

Saturdays, August 16 & 23, 2 pm & 8 pm; Sundays, August 17 & 24, 2 pm

Cardinal Microbrewery Events, cardinalhudson.com

Live music every weekend, plus an ongoing program of comedy nights, trivia and tasting events - see website for details

September 2025 Events

Village Theatre, villagetheatre.ca

September 19th, 7:30 pm and 20th, 2:00 pm Bowser and Blue