

A Great Place to See Great Theatre

showguide

**Belfry
Theatre**

Inside
It's Perfect Politics
Belfry B4Play
The Belfry Librarian

PROUD

by Michael Healey

Funny
and
foul-mouthed,
yet
surprisingly
sweet.

GLOBE & MAIL

www.belfry.bc.ca

FEBRUARY 4 –
MARCH 9, 2014

Performance Schedule

February 4 – March 9, 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
						1 11am B4Play
4	5	6 Preview 8pm	5 Preview 8pm	6 Opening 8pm	7 8pm	8 4pm 8pm
9 2pm	10	11 8pm Afterplay	12 1pm 8pm Afterplay	13 8pm Talkback	14 8pm Afterplay	15 4pm 8pm Afterplay
16 2pm Childcare	17 7:30pm Booksmack!	18 8pm	19 1pm 8pm	20 8pm	21 8pm	22 4pm 8pm
23 2pm ASL	24	25 8pm Afterplay	26 8pm Afterplay	27 1pm Student 8pm Afterplay	28 8pm Afterplay	MAR 1 4pm 8pm Afterplay
2 2pm VocalEye	3	4 8pm	5 8pm	6 8pm	7 8pm	8 4pm 8pm
9 2pm Closing	<p>Greater Victoria Public Library Talks February 14 at 10:30 am – 11:15 am / Bruce Hutchison Branch February 21 at 10:30 am – 11:15 am / Central Branch</p> <p>ASL An American Sign Language (ASL) interpreted performance. VocalEye Audio describers provide descriptions of the visual elements of the show.</p> <p>BOX OFFICE HOURS During Performance Weeks Monday 9:30 am – 5 pm Tuesday – Saturday 9:30 am – 7 pm Tuesday – Sunday one hour prior to curtain time for in person sales only.</p> <p>During Non-performance Weeks Monday – Friday 9:30 am – 5 pm</p>					

Tickets

250-385-6815 or
www.belfry.bc.ca

B4PLAY

Saturday, February 1 at 11am
Belfry Theatre, Studio A, 1291 Gladstone Avenue

Join CBC Radio's Gregor Craigie for a live talk show featuring artists from *Proud* and some very special guests.
Free event.



Why I Chose This Play

I first became aware of *Proud* due to the controversy surrounding the decision of Toronto's Tarragon Theatre not to produce it – the concluding play in a trilogy that began with *Generous* and *Courageous* – followed by playwright Michael Healey severing ties with the company, where he had been Playwright-in-Residence for 11 years. He had premiered several plays there, winning many awards in the process. But now he was ending a successful creative relationship, because the Tarragon Artistic Director was concerned, as were Tarragon Board members, that the play was potentially libelous to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, even though a legal opinion stated it was clearly satire.

Michael, of course, is best known for his play *The Drawer Boy*, and his talent as a writer, combined with his leading character, added to my desire to read the script. With the Tarragon out of the picture, Michael

self-produced the premiere of *Proud* in Toronto last year, directed by former Belfry Artistic Director, Miles Potter, who also directed the first productions of *The Drawer Boy*.

By that time, I had read a couple of drafts of the play. I found it very funny. I found it very sexy. And I found it surprisingly less vicious in its treatment of the Prime Minister than I had expected. In fact, it made an argument for trying to understand what motivates the man. Michael himself has said, "... part of the job of this [play] is to sell that guy to people who've already made up their minds about not liking him – to get those people with deeply entrenched feelings about the Prime Minister to reconsider those feelings."

At this particular time in the politics of this country, a play set in the Prime Minister's Office, featuring the PM, his Chief of Staff, and backroom machinations, is a pretty delicious proposition!

Even when I chose it a year ago, before Nigel Wright had become a household name, it had plenty to recommend it. Not to mention that we live in the provincial capital! This is only the third production of the play and they have all been produced in government towns (Toronto, Ottawa, Victoria). Makes sense. Maybe the title of this article should be "How Could I Not Choose This Play?"

In a season based on the plays of Shakespeare, it might be difficult to justify choosing *Proud*. It can be seen as either a breather from the Bard, or as an homage to Shakespeare's history plays, with their abundance of political maneuverings. Is our PM Richard III or Henry V? The opinion you walk out with may be different from the one you had when you arrived.

Michael Shamata
Artistic Director

It's Perfect Politics

by Janni Aragon

Hello

Welcome to the Belfry Theatre and our new production of *Proud* by Michael Healey.

Given that the show is about our Prime Minister we should take a moment to say what *Proud* is about, and what it is not.

It is a sexy and cheeky satire that imagines a different outcome to the 2011 Federal election, one where the Conservatives take a majority of seats in Quebec and one where the Prime Minister takes a young, inexperienced MP under his wing.

It does not slam the Prime Minister or hurl abuse at him for grievances, real or imagined. It is one very, very funny attempt to understand him.

In the words of playwright Healey "I essentially shut down a dinner party the other night when I argued Harper was a patriot. The point of the play is that politics have to be inclusive, and inclusive of that guy, too."

We've scheduled plenty of free events around the city (see our calendar for details) where you can learn more about the play, gain insight into the creative process and meet the actors.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Politics is not merely about who gets what, when, and how, as Harold Laswell noted some 75 years ago. Politics is one of the oldest games for clans or other groups strategizing how to better their friends or foes. Politics is messy and complicated, like a good relationship or book that you just cannot put down.

Thanks to our news cycle, we wait on the edge of our seats for the next story dishing the latest scandal or success by our representatives. In the era when the American media know who Rob Ford is and his actions read like a character out of *Grand Theft Auto 5*, we might agree that people have low expectations for politicians. Add to this the coverage of the various Senate scandals and we see that Canadian politics is anything but boring. *Proud* is timely and timeless for we know that each simple act by the government is never simple and always politically motivated. If we could glimpse into the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), what would we find? Supporters will argue that we will find a world leader hard at work, while detractors will note that the PMO continually distracts the public and listens hard to its financial benefactors and the political hegemon to the south.

Some might argue that formal Canadian politics today is a mix of success, sordid human failings, pride, and maneuvering by narcissistic players. *Proud* is a satire made all the more interesting because portions

of it feel ripped from the headlines of past and present events in Ottawa. The playwright explores questions such as: How does the Prime Minister lead; what does he really think; and what would he do to support the party and country? How far would the Chief of Staff go to keep things running smoothly in the PMO? Do Members of Parliament play nice with the Prime Minister or are they calculating their next step or move up the political ladder?

Let's examine the politics on which *Proud's* characters are based. The Prime Minister is the head of government and leads the executive branch of the government. In this play, the Prime Minister is presented as leading the country with an overwhelming mandate based on the sheer majority from the previous election.

The Chief of Staff essentially runs the office and is an integral part of the inner circle for the PM. Each PM might have a different leadership style, but the Chief of Staff and Principal Secretary are key players in the PMO. The Chief of Staff is the right hand of the Prime Minister, keeping things together and has historical memory for the PM and the party at large. A good Chief of Staff should be able to guess what the PM will need next. A good Chief of Staff is a skilled political player and knows the cost of the game. Part of this game is protecting the PM.

Thanks to the parliamentary system Canadian politics is party-centric. Each Member of Parliament represents their riding, but at times it feels like the mantra is "party first, riding second." A new Member of Parliament is not only trying to maneuver her or his way around Ottawa, but also step carefully around the media and perform as a team player for the party leadership. Some MPs are better than others at following the party's lead and these MPs are usually rewarded for their efforts. Likewise, MPs who embarrass the party are often punished in different ways and this will vary from the attention they get from the PMO and party at large.

In *Proud* we have a new MP who also happens to be a woman. A woman in formal Canadian politics might find herself the focus of scrutiny during the election in a different way than a male candidate. What is she wearing? What is her marital status? Does she have children? Is she pretty? Is she deserving of her seat? In *Proud*, the Member of Parliament, Jisabella Lyth, clearly is a combination of various archetypes for some women politicians. Women politicians are often read as ambitious, undeserving, absent parents or partners, and either rely on their femininity or eschew it to adopt more masculine leadership traits. Women politicians are more nuanced than this, but we have examples that play into these

cast & creatives



Charlie Gallant



Rick Roberts



Celine Stubel



Kieran Wilson



Michael Healey
Playwright



The Belfry Librarian

We've unleashed the GVPL Librarians on our season scripts. For *Proud* our Librarian has put together a list of books to help you get even more out of our production.

Power Trap: How Fear and Loathing between New Democrats and Liberals keep Stephen Harper in Power – and What Can Be Done about It
by Paul Adams (2012)

Parties, Elections, and the Future of Canadian Politics 2013
Bittner and Koop (ed.) (2013)

The Big Shift: The Seismic Change in Canadian Politics, Business and Culture and What it Means for Our Future
by Darrell Jay Bricker (2013)

America But Better: The Canada Party Manifesto
by Chris Cannon (2012)

How We Lead: Canada in a Century of Change
by Joe Clark (2013)

Beyond Question Period: Or, What Really Goes on in Ottawa
by Roy Cullen (2011)

Shopping for Votes: How Politicians Choose Us and We Choose Them
by Susan Delacourt (2013)

The Ugly Canadian: Stephen Harper's Foreign Policy
by Yves Engler (2012)

The Best Laid Plans
by Terry Fallis (2007)

Canadian Pie by Will Ferguson (2011)
List Compiled by Ursula Benoit, GVPL.

archetypes. We can think of the Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, or our own Belinda Stronach, who switched parties and felt the sting of the negative reaction to her betrayal – or was that growth? The Lyth character clearly is multidimensional.

Healey is a skilled playwright who asks the question “What might have happened differently if the Conservative Party had won a majority in Quebec in 2011?” He provides one possible answer in *Proud*, and along the way explores loyalty, ambition, and gender in politics. Is the play partisan? Perhaps, but overall it is provocative and will make you laugh and squirm in your seat. That’s the point about politics, right? You do not want to know how it is made. Ultimately, the play is about political survival. It has been hundreds of years since Machiavelli wrote about leadership in *The Prince* and Sun Tzu wrote about military strategy in *The Art of War* and ultimately both works are about politics and survival. Who knows what books will be written about Stephen Harper in the future (editor’s note: for current books on the subject, see our Belfry Librarian reading list), but in this play, as in life – and whether you like him or not – our current Prime Minister is a survivor.

Janni Aragon is an Assistant Teaching Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Victoria. She teaches Gender & Politics, American Politics, Politics and Popular Culture, and numerous other courses.



Glynis Leyshon
Director



Pam Johnson
Set & Costume Designer



Luc Prairie
Lighting Designer



Tobin Stokes
Sound Designer

AFTERPLAY WEEKS

February 11 – 15

February 25 – March 1

Ever want to “debrief” after seeing a show? Or maybe you’re curious how other audience members interpreted the play. Stick around after the evening performances on the dates listed above, and chat with fellow audience members.

TALKBACK THURSDAY

Thursday, February 13

Following the 8 pm performance of *Proud*, join the actors from the show and your fellow audience members for a 20-minute Q & A session.

BELFRY AT THE LIBRARY

Delve into the themes and peek behind the scenes of Michael Healey’s hilarious new play *Proud* during this casual conversation with an artist from the show and an expert from the community. Register online at www.gvpl.ca or call your local branch for more information about these free events.

BOOKSMACK!

Monday, February 17 at 7:30 pm

Fast, furious and fun, GVPL librarians return to the Belfry for Booksmack. They’ll let their hair down, take off their glasses and speed review their favourite books. Highbrow, lowbrow and everything in between, including some great titles inspired by *Proud*. Free event.



Our annual SPARK Festival returns MARCH 17– 30, 2014.

TERMINUS

Imagine a Tarantino film set to poetry.

LITTLE ILIAD

A Skype conversation between characters called Evan and Thom, the latter about to ship out from Kingston to Afghanistan.

WHEN IT RAINS

What looks like a graphic novel, makes you laugh, and breaks your heart?

Incubator

For 27 years Victoria’s Target Theatre has been active in the local community. This year we’re mentoring them as our Incubator Company, presenting a collectively created piece devised specifically for SPARK.

Single Tickets \$ 15–20 (plus GST)
Festival PASS \$ 65 / four vouchers
valid for any show during SPARK

www.belfry.bc.ca

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Dazzlingly
witty,
surgically
precise
and
scathingly
satirical.

TORONTO STAR

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PROUD

by Michael Healey

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PROUD
FEBRUARY 4 – MARCH 9, 2014
BELFRY THEATRE
1291 GLADSTONE AVENUE
VICTORIA, BC V8T 1G5