THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING

by JOAN DIDION

starring SEANA McKENNA

Belfry Theatre

NOVEMBER 10 – DECEMBER 13, 2009
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Sunday, December 6th, 8pm
Belfry Arts Centre
$15 advance/$18 at the door
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250-385-6815
thehumanstatues.com
The Belfry Theatre presents

The Year of Magical Thinking

By Joan Didion

Starring Seana McKenna

Director  Michael Shamata
Designer  John Ferguson
Lighting Designer  Michael Walton
Composer  Brad L’Écuyer
Stage Manager  Kim Charleen Smith
Apprentice Stage Manager  Sara Robb

The Year of Magical Thinking is approximately 90 minutes long with no intermission.

Produced by special arrangement with Samuel French (Canada) Ltd.

The Year of Magical Thinking was originally produced in New York by Scott Rudin, Roger Berlind, Debra Black, Daryl Roth, The Shubert Organization, and Executive Producers Stuart Thompson and John Barlow.

The Year of Magical Thinking is generously supported by

The Belfry Theatre is a social-profit professional company operating within the Canadian Theatre Agreement in association with Canadian Actors’ Equity Association. The Belfry Theatre is an active member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and the Professional Arts Alliance of Greater Victoria (ProArt).

Please enjoy the performance.
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<td>Michelle Morris</td>
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**Special Thanks**

Cover Photo: Seana McKenna in *The Year of Magical Thinking/

Photo by Terry Manzo/Jane Francis Design

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival

Ruth Stevens, Stratford Shakespeare Festival

Dr. Brian Winsby

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<td>Amanda Verhagen</td>
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Latecomers & Re-admission
The Director of each production designates moments in the show when the seating of latecomers will cause the least amount of distraction for actors and audience members. Should you leave the theatre, our House Manager will not be able to reseat you until one of these breaks.

Babes in Arms
The Belfry is proud to produce adult contemporary theatre. Our productions are not suitable for children 10 and under, including babes in arms.

Recording Devices
No cameras or recording devices are permitted in the theatre.

Audience Advisories / Running Times
We make every effort to advise you of strong language, subject matter or extreme technical effects (strobe lights, fog). Please look for signs at the entrances to the theatre. Advisories and running times are available at the Box Office as of the first preview.

Food & Drinks
Please feel free to take only food and/or drinks you’ve purchased from the Belfry bar into the theatre. Our goodies are packaged so that they don’t make a lot of noise and disturb your fellow audience members.

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Please refrain from using perfume and cologne when you come to the theatre. Some of our patrons are highly allergic to scents.

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Artistic Director's Notes

Welcome to the Belfry Theatre. And welcome to two very special events: the Canadian premiere of Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, and a return to the Belfry stage by Seana McKenna, after an absence of 13 years.

This beautiful story, which premiered in New York a mere two and a half years ago, reminds us of theatre's roots in storytelling. The power of the shared experience strengthens the human bond between everyone in this room together. Through the incredible specificity found within her story, Didion achieves a universality that is inescapable.

A piece of theatre of this nature would be pointless without an actress of the most exceptional quality. In this respect, we could not be more blessed. Seana McKenna is one of this country's most gifted and respected artists. Working with her on this remarkable piece has indeed been a "magical" experience. I thank her for her bravery, her simplicity, and her unbelievable honesty.

I also thank you, our audience, for the kind of support that makes it possible for us to bring you the best in contemporary theatre. Theatre that makes us see the world through new eyes. Welcome to the world as it is seen by Joan Didion and Seana McKenna.

Michael Shamata
Artistic Director

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FROM THE NOVEL
ANNE OF GREEN GABLES
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Born in Sacramento, California in 1934, Joan Didion is an American author, best known as a novelist and writer of personalized, journalistic essays. During her senior year at the University of California, Berkeley, she won first prize in an essay contest sponsored by Vogue; the prize was a job in the magazine’s New York office.

During her two years with Vogue, Didion worked her way up to associate feature editor, wrote her first novel, Run, River, and met her future husband of almost forty years, John Gregory Dunne, who at the time was writing for Time Magazine. The couple married in 1964, and moved to Los Angeles, where they made their home for the next 20 years. They co-wrote a number of screenplays, including The Panic in Needle Park, starring a young Al Pacino, and Up Close and Personal, starring Robert Redford and Michelle Pfeiffer.


Didion is celebrated as a practitioner of “new journalism”, a genre which was popularized by Tom Wolfe, who explained that “it is possible to write journalism that would read like a novel,” and which exhibits subjectivity. In “new journalism” the author’s voice is critical to the reader’s experience.

Joan Didion began writing The Year of Magical Thinking on October 4, 2004, and finished it on New Year’s Eve, 88 days later. She went on a book tour following the release of this memoir, giving many readings and interviews – a process which she found to be “therapeutic”.

About the Playwright - Joan Didion

At home in Malibu, Quintana Roo Dunne and her parents, John Gregory Dunne and Joan Didion, in 1976. (John Bryson/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images)
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Seana McKenna

Celebrating thirty years as a professional actor, Ms. McKenna is delighted to return to the Belfry and be reunited with Artistic Director Michael Shamata and designer John Ferguson. She was last seen here acting in *Atlantis* with her husband Miles Potter, a past A.D. of the Belfry. She also appeared here in *Children*, *Educating Rita* and in the first Canadian production of another solo piece, *The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe*, which toured Canada. Most recently, she played the title role in *Phèdre* at the Stratford Festival, where she has spent 18 seasons playing more than twenty of Shakespeare’s leading ladies, including his wife in *Shakespeare’s Will*. Other Stratford credits include *Trojan Women*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *Private Lives*, *Fallen Angels*, *Noises Off* and the premiere of *Good Mother*. At MTC she appeared in *Hedda Gabler*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Born Yesterday*, *Dancing at Lughnasa* and the Canadian premiere of *Wit*, which she also starred in at CanStage and the Vancouver Playhouse, earning a Jessie Award. She has Dora Awards for acting, in *Saint Joan* (Theatre Plus Toronto) and *Orpheus Descending* (MTC/ The Royal Alex), and for directing *Valley Song* (New Globe). Other favourite roles include Blanche Dubois (TNB; MTC/Citadel), Maggie the Cat (MTC;The Grand), Eliza Doolittle (Shaw) and Cleopatra (Centaur). Last winter, she starred in *Medea* (MTC/Mirvish Productions) and in *Doubt* (Canadian Stage), and this January, will reprise *Phèdre* at San Francisco’s A.C.T.

Film and television credits include *Flashpoint*, *Eleventh Hour*, *Burn Up* and a Genie Award for her work in *The Hanging Garden*. She teaches at Stratford’s Birmingham Conservatory, is the host of CBC Radio’s *Worldplay* and writes a column on theatre for the quarterly, *Escarpmnt Views*. She lives in Harrington, Ontario with Miles and their son Cal.
Joan Didion was born in Sacramento California and earned her BA degree from the University of California at Berkeley. She has written five novels, eight works of nonfiction, and seven screenplays with her late husband John Gregory Dunne. *The Year of Magical Thinking* was first produced at the Booth Theatre in New York on March 29th 2007. She is a member of the American Academy of Arts & Letters, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, The Berkeley Fellows, and Council on Foreign Relations. Awarded the 1996 Edward MacDowell Medal, 1999 Columbia Journalism Award, 2002 George Polk Book Award, 2005 American Academy of Arts & Letters Gold Medal in Criticism & Belles Lettres; 2005 National Book Award for Nonfiction; and 2007 National Book Award for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. She is a contributor to various periodicals, most frequently The New York Review of Books, which published in serial parts both Salvador and Miami.

John is back at the Belfry where he most recently designed *The Real Thing*. John has been resident designer for Theatre Calgary, Neptune Theatre, the National Arts Centre, the Canadian Stage and has designed for all the major regional theatres from coast to coast as well as Mirvish Productions, The Canadian Opera Company, Pacific Opera Victoria (most recently *The Magic Flute*), the Shaw Festival and the Stratford Festival where he has designed twenty productions. He is the recipient of two Dora Mavor Moore Awards, Montreal’s La Soirée des Masques Award, Vancouver’s Jessie Richardson Award and a Tyrone Guthrie Award.

Recent design credits include: *A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Macbeth, Hamlet* (Stratford Festival); *Mimi, or a Poisoner’s Comedy, East of Berlin and Generous* (Tarragon); *Night Mother* (Soulpepper); *The Lord of the Rings* (Associate Special Effects Designer – London & Toronto); *Oliver! and Blood Brothers* (Theatre Aquarius); *A New Brain* (Acting Up Stage); *Offensive Shadows* (Studio 180); *Norway. Today and Tiny Dynamite* (Theatre Smash); *The Drawer Boy, Sexy Laundry, Moonlight and Magnolias and Over the River and Through the Woods* (Grand); *Oliver! and This Is How It Goes* (Neptune); *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia? and The Last Five Years* (MTC); *The Vertical Hour* (PTE); and *Hay Fever* (Theatre Calgary). A native of Winnipeg, Michael now calls Stratford, Ontario home.
Brad L'Écuyer  
Composer  
Artistic Director for Victoria’s Gotta Getta Gimmick and a graduate of the Canadian College of Performing Arts, Brad is thrilled to be back at the Belfry. Credits include Composer/Lyricist: Samuel (Belfry MiniPlays), The Darkside Cabaret (Victoria Fringe) and the Free Spirit Conservation Tour (Royal BC Museum/BC Hydro); Bandleader: Urinetown (Belfry); Music Director: Sweeney Todd, Falsettos, Little Shop of Horrors (GGG), City of Angels (Company C); Orchestrations: Victoria Symphony and Noel Coward’s Play Orchestra, Play (Shaw Festival). Brad was this season’s music intern at the Shaw Festival where he worked on Sunday in the Park with George and Play Orchestra, Play.

Kim Charleen Smith  
Stage Manager  
As Resident Stage Manager at the Belfry, Kim continues to enjoy her season with The Year of Magical Thinking. She is very happy to have made the decision to return to her native Vancouver Island just over a year ago to join the Belfry family. Her career has spanned over 20 years and she has been blessed with the opportunity to Stage Manage opera, ballet, musicals, sporting events, plays and performance art pieces. A graduate of The National Theatre School of Canada, Kim continues to seek new and exciting opportunities in which to learn and grow in her chosen profession. Selected company credits: Pacific Opera Victoria, Canadian Stage, Vancouver Playhouse, Opera Hamilton, Theatre Calgary, Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Livent Productions.

Sara Robb  
Apprentice Stage Manager  
Sara graduated from the Technical Theatre Program at Malaspina in 2006. She has worked as a freelance technician and seamstress for the last 3 years in Victoria with several companies, including Intrepid Theatre, the Belfry Theatre and Atomic Vaudeville. She is thrilled to be back at the Belfry as the Apprentice for her second season. Other Stage Management credits include: Death Of A Salesman (Blue Bridge Repertory Theatre), Ride The Cyclone (Atomic Vaudeville), Peter Pan; Romantic Hearts; Inferno (BalletVictoria), Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad (The Other Guys Theatre Company) and The Josephine Knot (Theatre Bombus).

Rehearsal photos  
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