

From Legless Stocking to...StoryFusion Cabaret!

By Heather Whaley

When Lorne Brown and Cathy Melville decided to step down from producing “The Legless Stocking” in Toronto, many hearts sank. It was a nine year run of amazing storytelling and music and blending of the arts, which was held at various venues throughout the city. On May 31st of this year, at “The Butler’s Pantry,” Lorne announced that the show we were about to experience would be the conclusion of “Frick and Frack’s” (as they so affectionately introduced themselves) Legless Stocking shows. Although most of us already knew, you could hear a pin drop, a voice sigh, and gasps from those who were unaware. Lorne also told us that the door was open for a new concert series idea and that Storytelling Toronto, who sponsors the program with funding from the Toronto Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council, would accept proposals. Eyes flitted about. Who would be so brave as to take this on?

I thought about it often after that night. I’ve organised, coordinated, and directed many programs and concerts over the years. I’ve performed solo and in partnership with others throughout the GTA and at the Toronto festival, and I especially love it when I have an opportunity to showcase other artists, just as many have done for me. And to have funding to produce such a series was extremely appealing! An ideal opportunity. But I live in Whitby, and the concerts would take place



Carol McGirr

in the city, which would mean a bit more driving into Toronto to make arrangements and seek out appropriate venues. Sure, I could do it – but certainly not alone.

My mind reminisced about my involvement with the Backseat Balladeers, our casual ballad group that has been meeting monthly for the past few years. We all found a passion for learning new ballads and folksongs that could blend with stories, while taking Lorne Brown’s ballad courses from 2007- 2012. We soon discovered our knack for creating thematic programs, which eventually lead us to deliberately plan sets at the Toronto Festival and fundraisers. We found that by having an agenda, it gave us incentive and provided spring-board ideas that enhanced broader thinking.

Ah, ha! This was it! I could lead a new concert series with the help of my

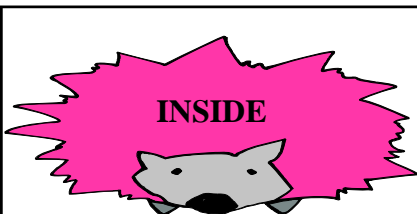
Backseat Balladeer colleagues, most of whom live in Toronto and know the city! When I asked them, they readily agreed. Although some of the originals in the group (like Joan Bailey who we miss terribly) are no longer among us, with the likes of Meryl Arbing, Karen Blair, Kathleen Bailey, Pat Bisset, Ruth Danzinger, Donna Dudinsky, Kim Michele, Judith Nancekivell, and Cathy Melville (when available), I couldn’t ask for better.

I realize that to carry on with the next “leg” of the journey, from “The Legless Stocking” to a new concert series for Storytelling Toronto, means

big shoes to fill. There will be no attempt to try to replicate its format and style. That can’t possibly be done. When one Artistic Director steps down there is usually a slightly different vision for the new Artistic Director, which makes for unique programming. But we, the Backseat Balladeers, have learned from the best and I’m sure trickles of Lorne’s influences will slip in here and there. We shall do our best to dress for the occasion!

The title “StoryFusion Cabaret!” does not mean everyone will be sporting classy hats, elaborate costumes, red lipstick, and painted faces, (well, maybe...). I and my co-directors will aspire to dress the stage with the stories and music of new and familiar faces, ranging from traditional to contemporary to eclectic voices. Sometimes these will be the voices of our elders telling traditional stories, integrated with

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Old traditions, carried forward in new ways. That's the theme that emerges for me as I review the submissions for this issue, and my first year as editor. Deborah Dunleavy continues her support as I craft Pippin's new shape and Chris Cavanagh refines the form. Lorne Brown and Cathy Melville tenderly put Legless Stocking into the magician's hat, and Heather Whaley

and the Backseat Balladeers pull out StoryFusion Cabaret! Young kilt-clad storytellers Joshua and Noah Bryant stride forward with confidence in the old stories and traditions that have nourished them.

As you review this issue and perhaps your year, enjoy the stories- and the silences in between.

Dawne McFarlane



STORYTELLING IN THE CITY

1,001

FRIDAY NIGHTS

of

STORYTELLING

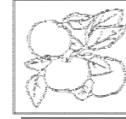
www.1001fridays.org

Every Friday night since 1978 storytellers and listeners have been gathering in downtown Toronto. Each evening is hosted by an accomplished storyteller. Anyone is welcome to tell a story. Every Friday night is unique.

Suggested donation: \$5.00
Innis College Café
(corner St. George, one block south of Bloor St.
W. St. George Subway - St. George St. exit)

Time: 8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.
2 Sussex Street, Toronto.
www.1001fridays.org

PIPPIN is the newsletter of
Storytelling Toronto



The Storytellers School of Toronto is a registered, non-profit organization that provides a creative home for a community of storytellers, listeners, and story-explorers. Our mission is to inspire, encourage and support storytelling for listeners, tellers and those who have not yet heard. Since 1979 we have been providing courses and workshops; holding gatherings, festivals and events to celebrate and present the art of storytelling; supporting the creative work of storytellers; and producing publications about storytelling and storytellers.

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Dawne McFarlane

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chris cavanagh

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Marylyn Peringer

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Legless Stocking: Lorne Brown, Catherine Melville
STORYFIRE: Catherine Melville

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Tales of a Grandson

By Joshua Bryant

Dunfermline, Scotland
(*editor's note; I joined tellers Joshua, Noah, and Beverly Bryant at the 2014 Scottish International Storytelling Festival. I was inspired to meet a family of storytellers, and asked Joshua to write an article for Pippin.*)

Scotland has a fine tradition of storytelling, which is continuing into a new generation of young storytellers like me. My name is Joshua, and you could almost say I've been raised into the life. My mum is a professional storyteller, and her dad was just a rascal as a child. My first memory of real storytelling was on my grandad's knee, listening to him tell me stories of his mischievous youth. That's what really started my fascination with the "bold heroes." I was only young, and I idolized my grandad (I still do, really), so his mischievous misadventures didn't really register as being 'wrong' at the time. I didn't really register either that my grandad was passing down probably the greatest gift he ever could to me. The Tales of a Grandfather are precious to any grandchild, I think, and a classic Scott-ish motif. I'm 17 now; Papa still tells me stories, and I've started telling some too. I've still got a very long way to go before I reach my full potential, I have no illusions about that, but I think I'm off to a good start, especially since I won the Young Storyteller of the Year competition this year.

I suppose I should tell you a little about myself. As I said, my name is Joshua, and

I'm 17. I'm in my final year at high school now, studying Maths, Chemistry, Physics and Psychology. Not much there related to storytelling, I know, but they're to prepare me for my other course at university. I'm applying for Scottish Studies (which will be useful for my storytelling) and

my favourite stories to tell are Celtic tales, revolving around the Gods and Heroes of the ancient times. Tales of Fionn and the Fianna, Cú Chulainn, and the Tuatha Dé Danann (the Celtic gods) all fascinate me – I could listen to them for hours! The stories that I love to tell are rooted in a landscape – when I tell

them, I need to see that place in my mind's eye to give the story everything it truly deserves. Probably the best story I tell (at least, it's my favourite) is a Celtic story explaining the origin of the healing powers of herbs, which was told to me by George MacPherson, a master storyteller and tradition-keeper (the Gaelic word is *seanchaidh*, pronounced "shen-ahay"). I don't restrict myself to stories from the Celtic tradition, but I also collect stories from other lands – one of my favourite stories is about the origin of the Lakota Sioux flute. Storytelling is an escape from the modern world for me, and it's a connection to the history of a people and a landscape which we absolutely cannot lose! People wouldn't allow a religion to be lost (well, not these days, anyway),

and I feel storytelling has an equal significance – what is a preacher, if not a storyteller?

I hope you've got some insight into the next generation of Scottish storytellers, and that you're thinking about coming over to visit us in the future!



Joshua, Beverly, and Noah Bryant at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh

chemistry (which is my other passion). Some day, I'd like to travel the world collecting and telling stories. Toronto's definitely on the list of places to visit!

To be honest, I'm a bit of a history nerd with a particular interest in the Celtic times, so it's not surprising that my fa-

LA BEFANA'S GIFTS - A Storytelling Oratorio

by Deborah Dunleavy

We escaped to the island on Charleston Lake this past summer. Loons and os-



prey pay us visits there. And the occasional mink or water snake. There is no internet demanding our attention, no e-mail, no texting. It is the perfect atmosphere for creative musings. Sitting at the large kitchen table my husband and creative co-conspirator Howard Alexander joined me as we mapped out the narrative and musical accompaniment for our storytelling oratorio "La Befana's Gifts".

The story is a familiar one, especially to the children of Italy. On the eve of the Epiphany La Befana, the little old woman pays a visit and leaves a gift for each and every child – or so the story goes. A few years back I was invited to be the narrator for John Rutter's "Father Heinrich's Christmas". And since that time I had thought it would be exciting to write something stylistically similar based on the story of La Befana.

Thanks to the Alice Kane Award "La Befana's Gifts" is now on the threshold of having its premier. It takes place at 7pm on December 13 at the 600 seat Wall

Street United Church in Brockville. The piece is written for storyteller, soloists, choir and small music ensemble. That evening a young girl sings the part of the shepherd while three men with extensive music credentials take on the roles of the three wise men. The Brockville Community Choir sings the Angel's Chorus and an awe inspiring Alleluia. Accompanying both teller and singers is a nine piece music ensemble.

We are thrilled that Dr. Heather Eyerly, Associate Professor of Choral at the Crane School of Music, SUNY Potsdam in Upper New York State will conduct the first performance of "La Befana's Gifts". Our hope is to have the oratorio published and made available for future performances.

Deborah Dunleavy and Howard Alexander now reside in rural Eastern Ontario where they continue to conjure up creative musings by the warmth of the wood stove. Deborah can be reached at teller2go@gmail.com

SUHRAWARDI- A Philosophical Story of Love and Longing

by Ariel Balevi

Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (1155-1191) was a mystic philosopher, often associated with Sufism. He was the founder of an important philosophical school known *Illuminationism* of which he was given the honorific title *Shaikh al-'Ishraq* "Master of Illumination." His school had a major influence on philosophy in Iran, most particularly on the later philosopher Mulla Sadra (1571-1640) who led a renaissance in philosophy during the Safavid period. The philosophy of Suhrawardi is a brilliant synthesis of Islam, Neo-Platonism and the religion and mythology of Ancient Iran. Its central concept is "light" as a divine and metaphysical source of knowledge which emanates throughout the universe in a descending order of ever-diminishing intensity, and through complex interaction governs the species of mundane reality.

Suhrawardi in his treatises (risal-e) explains his philosophy through telling a

story. This philosophical storytelling draws on mythological and religious figures, often re-inventing them, to create narratives that operate both as engaging story and a carefully constructed philosophical argument. One of these, *Fi Haqiqat al-'Ishaq* ("On the reality of love"), offering a compelling interpretation of the story of Yusuf (Joseph) and Zulaykha, tells with the immediacy of a lived experience, the story of the cosmic force of love and longing, and how it can transform each of us in our daily lives.

Ariel will be telling from Suhrawardi's A Philosophical Story of Love and Longing on Dec.21 at The Pomegranate Restaurant, to celebrate The 'Longest Night' Shab-e Yalda.



Theresa and James

by Molly Sutkaitis

Theresa was born in the month of February in the year 1898. James was born in September of the same year. Theresa was the middle child in a family of seven.

James was the second oldest in a family of five. They both left school and entered the work force when they became fourteen. That was the way in those days for children of working class parents. The older children helped put bread on the table for the younger ones. Theresa considered herself lucky, because when she got taken on in Templetons Carpet Factory at age sixteen she became an apprentice carpet weaver. They were justifiably proud, those Templetons workers, as they made carpets for members of the royal family! James worked as a general labourer in horse stables until World War One started. Then he went into the army. He was in the cavalry and saw action in France.

A friend of Theresa had emigrated to Boston and had gone into domestic service. She wrote glowing reports about life as a maid to a very rich lady. This friend wrote that rich American ladies liked Scottish servants and that this friend would find Theresa a job immediately. Theresa was moved by this news and told her friend she would go, if she could ensure that there would be a job awaiting her on arrival. The job was found, and Theresa packed in the weaving trade.

James had had a taste of adventure in WW1. He was in the cavalry. He had always loved horses; his father and grandfather had both imported horses from Ireland, and James had worked with horses before going to war. After being in France during the war and for a time after, James found Glasgow unexciting. His elder sister Annie had emigrated to Philadelphia and worked as a cook in a big house. Annie encouraged James to join her in Philadelphia, and so he decided to emigrate.

Now it so happened that James and Theresa got passage on the same ship. On that ship there was a fiddler who loved to play music for dancing. A space was cleared in the hold, and the dancing began. Theresa loved to dance! If a man asked her, she would dance with him. If no man asked her, she danced with a woman. If she had no partner, she danced by herself. James, on the other hand, was not a dancer. He had what was called "two left feet!" Theresa danced her way across the Atlantic. James sat and watched the dancers.

The boat stopped at Boston. Theresa said goodbye to James, who was traveling on to Philadelphia. Time passed; ten years to be exact. In the meantime, Theresa's sister had emigrated to Philadelphia, married and had a family. Theresa visited Peggy once a month on her long weekends off. James found work at Budds, a

car manufacturing firm.

They never met till one night at the wake for a man who had travelled over the Atlantic on the same ship as Theresa and James. When James saw Theresa he asked,

"Are you Theresa McKee? "

"Yes " she replied, "Are you James Downie?"

"Are you married?" asked James.

Theresa replied that she was not. James then asked Theresa to go out with him and she did, every long weekend for a year. Sometimes James went to Boston on his free time. They got engaged, but Theresa couldn't tell her employer or she would have lost her job as lady's maid. She wore her engagement ring and later her wedding band on a chain around her neck. The next American Thanksgiving they got married from Theresa's sister Peggy's home in Philadelphia.

Their first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, so when their second conception took place they decided to return to Scotland. Theresa was by this time over thirty and in those days that was considered old to give birth to the first child. Theresa wanted to give birth in Scotland .

You may have deduced by now that Theresa and James were my parents. This is the story I told Dawne after she told a true story of Mary Anderson at 1001 Friday Nights on Nov 22 ,2014.

Listening to the Silences

by Taima Tyebjee

At each Storytelling Toronto AGM an elder is asked to give a talk. At the last one I had been asked to do this. Some of the storytellers suggested I should submit my talk to Pippin, so here it is.

I'd like to share with you some thoughts, thoughts from certain master musicians, thoughts from across cultures. Pandit Arolkar, who I knew in India, used to tell his students to listen keenly to the silences, which may appear unexpectedly during a performance, silences that barely last a fraction of a beat. As has been said

in a Zen proverb, he would say that it is these silences that enhance and make music. Mozart and Debussy too have talked about music and silence.

I want to connect these thoughts to those pauses, those few moments of silence, that can similarly happen quite unexpectedly during the telling of stories. A pause may happen when the storyteller feels the need for a quiet moment between the listeners, the teller and what has gone before. Or perhaps the storyteller may stop to search for a word or an image, or for what is yet to come. For the

listener a silence can be a time of active listening, not just waiting. In fact it can be a space just to be with what has gone before, or to let a reflection or an association appear. Or yet it might be a space, where the listener is held in suspense of what lies ahead.

I wanted to take this chance, so that together we can acknowledge something small but precious, these small pockets of silence that enrich the telling and listening of stories. I ended with a Korean story about a boy, who yearned for silence.

Three reasons to visit Iceland

by Mary Gavan

1. Blessed with a summer temperate of 12C allows one to revisit winter clothing with its food-friendly pants and voluminous sweaters.
2. Blessed with soft rain, a 60 – 80% daily guarantee of drowning downpours so invigorating for the skin. The accompanying wind saves the effort of a stiff hair brush work out.
3. Blessed with museums – such as Witchcraft, Whale penis collection. Storytellers- I could not dream of these even in my darker moments.

My visit was an exceptional experience. New thrills include being doused by bubbling geysers; riding Icelandic horses; and walking on lava hot beds whose yellow sandstone look contrasts with the green of the land and the black of the rocks.

Books

Top 10 Iceland, Eyewitness Travel: Includes Thrift Stores for the shop-till-you-drop folk in the land of 20 hours daylight. *Iceland, Lonely Planet:* introduces a modicum of thrift into this price-is-never-right country where prices are double the Canadian norms.

Nutrition

Food is best eaten without question to nomenclature or ingredients, which are an extravaganza dip into the ends of the food chain. Rancid shark is chewable while whale fat is merely a local variation of bread and dripping.

Language

Icelanders are multilingual with English as their 2nd language. Their language is the Germanic model of throwing in multitudinous letters occasionally interspersed with vowels. A delight for crossword lovers.

Bars

The prices unlikely to induce temperance but do slow the rate of consumption.

Boo! At the Barns



Storytelling Toronto Storytellers were once again invited to tell at Boo! At the Barns, a huge spooky annual event put on by the Wychwood Barns Community Association.

Storytellers, Sandra Carpenter-Davis, Kim Michele, Rubena Sinha, Lynn Torrie, Sarah Abu Sharar, and Heather Whaley shared over three hours of storytelling. This included Halloween Fun Tales and Rhymes for wee ones in the early part of the evening, and Horror Tales and Legends for older families later on. An open mic wrapped up the evening with youth sharing humorous and gross tales- sure to be great future storytellers!



(Continued from page 1)

young musicians and spoken word artists and poets. Other times, there will be voices of experience telling classic and original stories, tales of an era or genre of music, musicians and instruments that populate our diverse culture. There will be authentic and original voices representing our many different nationalities. They will

bring rich enlightening stories to the audience. All in all, StoryFusion Cabaret! will be a blend of voices in cabaret fashion "featuring music, song, dance, recitation or drama." Storytelling meant for performing, meant to entertain, and meant to be memorable!

StoryFusion Cabaret! was enthusiastically launched on November 15/14 at The

Butler's Pantry with a presentation of "Blind MacNair" (by Thomas H. Raddall). It featured renowned storyteller Carol McGirr, balladeer and storyteller Meryl Arbing, and Emily Yarascavitch who is the winner of the 18 and under Maritime Fiddle and Step Dance competition.

EVENTS — Winter 2014-15

Every effort has been made to present current information. Sometimes the completion and delivery of Pippin is subject to the volunteer hours available to produce it.

Pomegranate Restaurant and Ariel Balevi invite you to join us for an evening of stories to celebrate: The 'Longest Night' Shabe Yalda. **Sunday December 21st.** Storytelling begins at 8 pm. Dinner will be served prior to the storytelling. Ariel Balevi, accompanied by kamancheh player Shahriyar Jamshidi, will be telling the story from Suhrawardi's A Philosophical Story of Love and Longing. **Pomegranate Restaurant - 420 College Street - Toronto. Please call ahead to Reserve 416-921-7557**
Suggested minimum donation \$5.00

Modern Storytelling at the University of Toronto

Register now to join Dawne McFarlane for 10 evenings of storytelling and creative writing. Tuesdays 7-9pm, Jan.27-March 31/15. Discover the secrets of ancient stories that speak through your contemporary writing. Explore the depths of a traditional story, write your own original one, and wonder anew as the story works on you. University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies Creative Writing Program SCS 3083-001
<http://learn.utoronto.ca/interactive-course-search...>

Stories Aloud

The Baden Storytellers welcome Dawne McFarlane to Stories Aloud on Friday January 9/15 at 8pm at The Button Factory, 25 Regina Street in Waterloo. Plan to also attend on Saturday January 10/15 Dawne's

workshop "The Gesture of Story," exploring the use of gesture in storytelling. Workshop runs 9.30am-12.30pm.

Join us for **Stories Aloud** on the second Fridays of the month, from September through June. It's the Story Barn experience in a new venue with the same open storytelling charm. Admission is \$5 and bring a mug for hot apple cider. Stories begin at 8 pm and go until 10:30 pm. You are welcome to just listen, but if our story charm should work its magic, you are welcome to share a tale. For more information, follow the Baden Storytellers Guild and the Story Barn newsletter: <http://badenstorytellers.wordpress.com>

StoryFusion Cabaret! presents...

The Evolution of Blues Guitar in Story and Song Featuring **Jack de Keyzer** two time Juno Winner and seven time Maple Blues Winner, blues guitarist, singer, song writer, and band leader blues virtuoso. **With an authentic voice, Jack de Keyzer shares the story of the blues through time.**

With Storyteller, singer, song writer, **Heather Whaley** and Spoken Word Artist, poet, and singer, song writer, **Niki Andre**. From the Arctic Circle to Puerto Escondido, Mexico; from Athens, Greece to Hornby Island, BC, virtuoso guitarist, Jack de Keyzer plays the blues world - wide. One of Canada's most awarded and


in demand live performers, he has also played on hundreds of recordings and live sessions with artists ranging from Etta James to Ronnie Hawkins and Bo Diddley to Blue Rodeo.

"The finest blues guitarist in Canada" Jeff Healey / "If Jack de Keyzer was from Chicago, New York or LA, he'd be famous" Bob Dylan

Saturday, January 31, 2014 8:00 p.m.

The Centre for Social Innovation — 1st floor cafe entrance through to stage - 720 Bathurst St. (Bloor St.) \$22 regular / \$17 advance. Purchase in advance (must be received by **January 26, 2015** please)
PayPal on-line at www.storytellingtoronto.org
Or send a cheque to Storytelling Toronto 601 Christie St., Suite #173, Toronto ON M6G 4C7— Ph: 416-656-2445
info: admin@storytellingtoronto.org
Pay at Door reservations, contact heather@heatherwhaley.ca

The Guelph Guild of Storytellers meets on the second Wednesday of the month at The Bookshelf, 41 Quebec St., Guelph. Experienced tellers who would like a spot on the program should make contact in advance. Info: www.guelpharts.ca/storytellers or Sandy Schoen, (519) 767-0017, guelphstory@gmail.com



STORYTELLING AT THE TMC

HAFT PAYKAR

A Tapestry of Tales from a Twelfth Century Persian Romance

Wednesday December 17 at 6:30 pm

The Haft Paykar, an epic romantic poem, tells the story of Bahram Gur, king of Ancient Iran who marries seven princesses, building for them a palace of seven pavilions. Join Ariel Balevi, a storyteller whose repertoire derives from the literary and folklore traditions of Iran, Turkey, and Central Asia, as he recounts some of the tales Bahram heard as he visited each princess in her pavilion...a journey woven into a tapestry from the many coloured threads of story itself

General \$15, TMC Members \$12. Full-time students pay-what-you-can.

To register, call 416-599-5321 x2228 or email programs@textilemuseum.ca

TMC art in life Textile Museum of Canada
55 Centre Avenue
Toronto ON M5G 2H5

Rug for Bahram Gur, Qum, Esfahan, 12th c. From the collection of Ethel Rossiter, House of Persian Rugs, Calgary, Alberta

Due to low pre-registration as well as the date of the event conflicting with other events in the city during the busy holiday season, the storytelling performance *Haft Paykar: A Tapestry of Stories from a Twelfth Century Romance* at the Textile Museum of Canada is being rescheduled for **February 18, 2014 at 6:30 PM**. There will be **no** performance on December 17, 2014.

STORYTELLING TORONTO COURSES

Register now for
Storytelling Toronto's

Further Explorations: Life as a Storyteller

This seminar-style series of evenings is open to experienced storytellers with a substantial repertoire. January 13, 27; February 10, 24; March 10, 24; April 7 (7 Tuesdays, 7 – 9:30pm) Please contact Lynda Howes at 416-534-7390 or email her at lyndaandjames@sympatico.ca

GETCHELL, Susan - Susan Margaret Getchell passed away suddenly on Friday August 29, 2014 at Victoria Hospital, London in her 65th year. Beloved wife of 43 years to Bryan Getchell, kickass mother of Leah and Hilary Getchell and adoring Nana to Jude and Katelyn. She will be deeply missed by her aunts, uncles and cousins both in Canada and in



England as well by the close friends, colleagues and students she touched over her 40 years of librarianship and storytelling.

Susan was a longstanding member of the storytelling community. She will be missed, and her voice will be remembered.



This *newsletter* is made possible in part by a grant from the Ontario Arts Council's Literary Festivals and Organizations Operating Funding.