

109TH SEASON



A DRAMA

THE COLUMNIST

BY DAVID AUBURN

JUNE 8 – 25, 2022

DIRECTED BY SARAH HEARN



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THEATRE

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The Columnist

BY DAVID AUBURN

Originally produced by the Manhattan Theatre Club,
(Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer)
at the Samuel J. Friedman Theater on April 4, 2012.

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THE COLUMNIST

A DRAMA | BY DAVID AUBURN

Cast

(in order of appearance)

Joe Alsop	Chris Cottrell*
Young man (Andrei)	Alex Henkelman
Stewart Alsop	Paul Williamson
Susan Mary Alsop	Kirby Naftel
Abigail	Rhea Grace
Halberstam	Kyle Fournier
Philip	Alex Henkelman
All voice overs	Mike Kennedy

*Chris Cottrell appears with support from the Canadian Actors' Equity Association

Synopsis

From the Pulitzer and Tony Award-winning author of *Proof*, a drama about the press and power, sex and betrayal. At the height of the Cold War, Joe Alsop is America's most influential journalist, beloved, feared and courted by the Washington world. But as the '60s dawn and America undergoes dizzying change, the intense political dramas Joe is embroiled in become deeply personal as well. **NOTE: adult content.**

Setting

Various locations, over the span of two decades

ACT 1

- Scene 1: A hotel room, Moscow, 1954
- Scene 2: Alsop's house in Georgetown, Washington, January 1961
- Scene 3: A bar in Saigon, September 1963
- Scene 4: Joe's study, November 1963
- Scene 5: Joe's study, that night

ACT 2

- Scene 1: New York, Columbia University auditorium, backstage, 1965
- Scene 2: Joe's study, November 1965
- Scene 3: Outside a church, winter, 1967
- Scene 4: The Mall, Washington, summer 1968
- Scene 5: Joe's study, that night

THE COLUMNIST is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection.

When you watch this play, you might find yourself asking, “why would anyone write a play just about some unknown journalist?” David Auburn, the author (also of *Proof*, performed at the OLT in 2005), was asked that question and his answer was that when he decided to learn more about the Vietnam War, he kept coming across the name “Alsop”. Further digging revealed “how influential and famous they [Joe and his brother, Stewart] were at the time to the world of journalism and foreign affairs – especially Joe. And it interested me how forgotten he was now. And I asked myself: How does someone go from being so central and so essential to the political dialogue to almost being forgotten? I wanted to get at what a magnetic and flamboyant and complicated person he was, how mercurial he was, how polarizing he was as an individual.”

The Columnist covers 14 turbulent years (1954-1968) in the lives not only of Joe Alsop but also of the United States as a nation. From the exuberance and hope at the start of the 60s, embodied in a new young president, John F. Kennedy, through the trauma of his assassination, and into the insatiable, grinding jaws of the Vietnam conflict, we see a nation uplifted and dropped again all within “the two hours’ traffic of our stage”. With the exception of the character of “Andreï”, all the people in this play are real (“Abigail” is actually an amalgamation of all the step-children Joe Alsop had), and all the events actually happened, although Auburn has compressed dates and times to fit within his play format.

Joe’s rabid anti-communism expressed repeatedly through the play, although not unusual at the time, was and remained strident throughout his life; he was a vocal supporter of America’s involvement in Vietnam, and in his column, he strongly advocated for escalation. Alsop was particularly skilled at playing on President Johnson’s political vulnerabilities to push him to deepen US commitment in Indochina. He wanted to provoke the president into action as he warned about the impact a defeat would have on American credibility, attacked Johnson’s manhood (calling him a “bed-wetting, pinko, sissy-boy”, as Halberstam notes in the play), accusing him of weakness, and comparing him (adversely) to Kennedy. Convinced Alsop’s writing limited his manoeuvrability in Vietnam, LBJ came to resent Alsop’s constant demands for war, and critiques of his policy. Auburn reflected that Alsop’s motivation for “doubling down on Vietnam was partly to do with authority; who was allowed to make pronouncements on great national issues. His sense of identity was so wrapped up in himself and his cohorts by virtue of their education, their place in society, their connections to powerful people. When the challenge came from younger people and younger reporters (including a then-young David Halberstam), he had this investment in protecting his own influence and reputation.” (This and the earlier quote from PBS Newshour, Apr 25, 2012)

For me, a child of the 60s and 70s, a “diplomat brat” who lived in the USSR in the early mid-60s, and in New York City a decade later, at the height of the Vietnam protests, this play brackets my childhood. From the austerity of Soviet Russia where we were followed and monitored everywhere we went (yes, tabs were even kept on us children); where my father, who had occasion to fly from Moscow to Archangelsk on business, wasn’t allowed to occupy a window seat on the airplane for fear he might see something he shouldn’t,

and where my brother had a Russian friend (aged about 9) who was running a lucrative black-market business in Western candy and blue jeans but whose father was a Major in the KGB, to the vitality of NYC where in my Grade 8 year, the Senior class held a moratorium against The War and by my Junior year, I was wearing a POW bracelet (and rolling my school skirt as short as I was allowed), I feel the events of this play in my soul. Moreover, I feel strongly that I am not alone in this, that many of you, our patrons, will also remember these times, where you were when Kennedy was shot, what you thought about Vietnam, how you acted, and what you wore, and you too will find The Columnist living in your hearts and minds.

Sarah Hearn, Director

Production & Design Team

Director.....	Sarah Hearn
Assistants to the Director.....	Gil Winstanley, Ann Scholberg
Stage Manager.....	Barbara Merriam
Set Design.....	Robin Riddihough
Lighting Design.....	David Magladry
Sound Design.....	David Ing
Costume Design.....	Glynis Ellens
Properties.....	Jennifer Barkley
Hair/Makeup Design.....	Andrée Benson
Lighting Technicians.....	Don Douglas, David Hoffman, Jim Mantle, Barry Sims
Sound Technicians.....	Michel Cormier, Miquelon Deller, Rafael De Souza Maia, Ben Langille, Barry Sims, Ian Snelson, Alex Winstan
Costume Assistants.....	Lu Chen, Nancy Hogan, Jeannine Richard, Wanda Sinclair, Paul Washer
Properties Crew.....	Elizabeth Munroe, Ann Scholberg, Gil Winstanley
Book.....	Johanne Cloutier
Volunteer Liaison.....	Amy Kennedy
Front of House Volunteer Coordinator.....	Kevin Schneider
Production and Portrait Photography.....	Christopher Rohde
Construction.....	Tom Pidgeon, David Magladry
Scenic Artists.....	Carolyn Jane Borer, Robin Riddihough

Special Acknowledgements / Thanks

A big thank you to James Baxter for the loan of an authentic vintage typewriter for this production.

Special thanks also to Carolyn Jane Borer for painting the wonderful ground row of Washington's Capitol Hill.

And a shout out to Ann Scholberg for providing some of the special props for the play.

Chris Cottrell – Joe Alsop: Chris is totally *jazzed* about returning to the *outta sight* OLT community after he *split* for a bit to explore other *far out* ventures in the worlds of voiceover, TV and film. Chris was last seen on the OLT stage as the Cardinal in *The Three Musketeers* (2016). He also rocked the stage in *Bedtime Stories* (2015), *Mauritius* (2014), *Pride and Prejudice* (2013), *The Hollow* (2012), and, *And Then There Were None* (2009). Chris is *stoked* to have been given this *twitchin'* role and with such an unreal cast and crew. *Groovy, baby. Yeah!*

Alex Henkelman – Andrei, Philippe: Alex is ecstatic to be making his onstage debut at the OLT in *The Columnist*, after having worked as the assistant to the director on *The Unexpected Guest* in 2017. Alex has been performing for over a decade, with select performance credits including *Love and Human Remains* (TotoToo Theatre), *Treasure Island* (Kanata Theatre), *Something About New York* (Lost Baggage) and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Kanata Theatre), in which he also made his directorial debut! Alex is also currently on the Board of Directors for TotoToo Theatre. He would like to thank his friends and family for their constant love and support, and the cast and crew for an amazing experience!

Paul Williamson – Stewart Alsop: Paul emigrated from the UK to Canada in 2000. Acting-wise, he is a late starter, taking his first lessons with Ottawa's Acting Company in his early 40s. To date he has been in two OLT productions: *Arsenic and Old Lace* (2017), and *Sylvia* (2018). Like everyone else, he has been missing theatre this past couple of years and jumped at the chance to portray Stew Alsop in this excellent production of a fine play.

Kirby Naftel – Susan Mary Alsop: After two years and several changes to cast, crew and the world, Kirby is overjoyed to bring this production to the stage at last. Previous OLT credits include *Waiting For for The Parade*, *Steel Magnolias* and *Clyborne Park*. She would like to thank all members of *The Columnist* team, past and present, for helping shape the production we bring to you today.

Rhea Grace – Abigail: Rhea is very excited to perform in her first show with OLT. Rhea's love of acting developed at the age of 6 after her parents signed her up for a local musical theatre camp. Her singing chops later landed her the role of a cow's butt in her high school's production of *Into the Woods*. Since then, Rhea has acted in other school plays, as a WW1 Canadian Soldier in *Vimy* and as a dead body in *Unity* (1918). Outside of theatre, Rhea is a third-year student of economics and political science at the University of Ottawa.

Kyle Fournier – Halberstam: Kyle is positively delighted to return to the OLT stage after being away for too long. He has acted here twice before, first in *Towards Zero* in 2017 and then *Peter Pan and Wendy* later that same year. He is grateful to work with such a wonderful cast and crew, both familiar faces and new ones alike. Kyle will try his darnedest to make sure he doesn't wait five more years for his next show.

Sarah Hearn – Director: Sarah is more than usually delighted finally to bring this production of *The Columnist* to the OLT stage since it has been sitting fallow in her brain for over two years. We were in the early days of blocking when the lockdown came in March 2020, but now, after a couple of false starts and some recasting since some original actors moved on, Sarah can tell you the story of Joseph Wright Alsop V, the influential journalist and top insider in Washington from 1945 to the late 1960s. Previous directing credits include (for the OLT) *Of Mice and Men*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Towards Zero*, and *Goodbye, Piccadilly*; (for TotoToo Theatre) *Cloudburst* (Best Play (non-professional) Broadway World Regional Awards Ottawa), *Torch Song Trilogy* (Best Director, Capital Critics Circle), and *The Lights of Shangri-La*. Selected acting credits include (for the OLT) Abby Brewster (*Arsenic and Old Lace* - Best Actress nominee, Capital Critics Circle), and Madame Arcati (*Blithe Spirit*), and (for Kanata Theatre) Cora (*Calendar Girls*).

Gil Winstanley – Co-Assistant Director: Gil just recently discovered that she has worked on more than 50 OLT shows since 2009 – in many different roles. That surprised even her! Gil has also worked with other theatres and groups, including TotoToo Theatre, Centrepointe Theatres, The Gladstone, Kanata Theatre and the Ottawa International Jazz Festival. She is thrilled to be back working again at OLT, in her favourite role and with the great “dream team” directed by Sarah Hearn. Many thanks to everyone on the team for their friendship and support! We hope you enjoy this fascinating play, brought to life by an amazing cast.

Ann Scholberg – Co-Assistant Director: Ann is delighted to be writing a bio for this program after so many months sadly missing the friendship and fun involved in working on any OLT show. She has, over the years, been on stage in ten OLT productions and worked backstage for several others. However, this is the first time she has been an assistant director of a show and, thanks to the forbearance of the rest of the crew (especially Gil) and the cast, it has been a most rewarding experience.



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Barbara Merriam – Stage Manager: Barbara has been working on OLT shows since 2010 - designing and assisting with props, helping out as a dresser, and acting as stage crew. She performed similar roles for the former New Edinburgh Players and currently does so for Linden House. Although she is the stage manager for Linden House shows, she is now stepping into the big league with *The Columnist* at the OLT!

Robin Riddihough – Set Designer: Robin began designing sets for university stage productions in the early 1960s in London, England. Throughout, and in spite of, his international career as a geophysicist, he has designed, built, crewed and painted sets for community and professional theatres wherever he was located. Since moving to Ottawa from Victoria in 1985, he has created almost 100 sets for local theatre groups and received four Capital Critics Awards for his designs. His most recent work at OLT includes the sets for *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Of Mice and Men*. His present design moves through many different locations during a tumultuous 14 years of US history, guided by Joe Alsop under the iconic shadow of Capitol Hill.

David Magladry – Lighting Designer: David Magladry is a professional Lighting and Set Designer working in theatre, museum exhibitions, special events and concerts and television and video. Most recently he designed the lighting for Bear and Company's *Shakespeare's Will* and SevenThirty Productions / Three Sisters Theatre Company's *The Secrets of Primrose Square*. He is also designing the new Daytime talk show set and lighting for RogersTV Ottawa as well as three other standing sets for their various productions. He also provides lighting design to Music and Beyond's streaming and live concert series. David also works as the Ottawa Little Theatre's Production and Technical Support person and The Gladstone Theatre's Technical Director.

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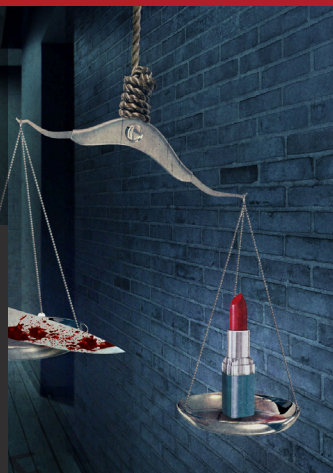
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David Ing – Sound Designer: A computer programmer by day and theatre technician by night. David Ing has done lighting and sound design work for community theatres across the National Capital Region and the Greater Toronto Area. Highlights include *Charlie: Son of Man* (Echo Productions), *Having Hope at Home* (Amicus Productions), *Cabaret* (Suzart After Dark), and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Ottawa Little Theatre).

Jennifer Barkley – Properties: Having spent the last years prior to the pandemic as Head of Props for productions primarily for Ottawa Little Theatre and TotoToo Theatre, Jennifer is excited to be rejoining OLT on this project. The challenge of finding or creating just the right piece never grows old. When not brainstorming new projects, Jennifer keeps busy by volunteering for many local theatre organizations and community events around the city, including Stage Crew(s) at CentrepoinTE Theatres and the Ottawa International Jazz Festival; skating with Capital Ice Synchronized Skating Adult 3 Team; and assisting with the rescue of domestic rabbits. Special thanks to Don for all the love and support and to her parents for their incredible well, and storage, of stuff (er...potential props).

Glynis Ellens – Costume Designer: Since 2003, Glynis has worked on 80 plays: 66 of these were at OLT and 17 were with Sarah Hearn. She loves doing challenging projects with historical costumes and big casts. Her favourites include *The Three Musketeers* (seventy 17th C. costumes!), *It's a Wonderful Life* (1940), *Torchsong Trilogy* for Toto Too Theatre (back to her youth in the '70s!). Her last play was Shakespearean costumes for *The Book of Will* in Ajijic, Mexico in March 2020. After the COVID theatre drought, she is very glad to be back at OLT, returning to the '60's, for this fascinating play with such a great cast and crew. Enjoy the show!

Andrée Benson – Hair and Make-Up Design: For the love of theatre! While studying theatre at Ottawa U, Andrée honed her skill in the application of stage makeup and hair design. Andrée is also an actor and has performed in several plays with OLT, Phoenix Players and Vintage Stock Theatre. It's a true pleasure to be working with the awesome cast and crew of *The Columnist*.



We invite you to take some time to visit our Spotlight Gallery, located in the north lobby on the house-right side of the theatre. We are dedicating this space to showcase the talents of our volunteers, audience members, and donors in mixed media arts. Our goal is to shine a spotlight on someone you

may have been sitting next to as a subscriber, or watching on stage, or been served by, who has some hidden talent you may not have been aware of. We are surrounded by so many talented people here at OLT, we wanted to use this space to exhibit their works. If there are pieces you are interested in purchasing, the details on how to contact the artists directly are included in the exhibit.

During the run of *The Columnist*, we are pleased to display the work of Andrew Michael McCarville. Patrons will know Andrew from various performances including *Unnecessary Farce* and *Pardon Me, Prime Minister*. He is now deep in rehearsals for his role in OLT's next production *Witness for the Prosecution* (July 2022). When not performing, Andrew is busy creating and showcasing his art work in galleries around Ottawa and Gatineau.

Throughout this season we will bring you a selection of works by many more artists from our community. We will be looking for new exhibits to share over the coming seasons so if you have a hidden talent you'd like to share, please contact Venetia Lawless at volunteer@ottawalittletheatre.com to inquire about exhibiting your own works.

In the meantime, enjoy the art!

OLT Staff

While the Ottawa Little Theatre is almost entirely volunteer run, we are fortunate to have a small and dedicated staff committed to maintaining the day-to-day operations of our theatre

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The Columnist production team is thrilled to welcome cryptography expert Richard Brisson to the Ottawa Little Theatre stage to lead a series of Talkbacks following certain performances.

Richard's passion, expertise and in-depth knowledge of the clandestine and enigmatic - which OLT audience's may remember from Enigma-related Talkbacks during OLT's run of *Breaking the Code* in 2015 - will surely bring Joe Alsop's Cold War adventure to life.

**TALKBACKS WILL FOLLOW
PERFORMANCES OF *THE COLUMNIST* ON:**

June 10 | June 15 | June 23

NOTE: There is no charge for Talkbacks, audiences in attendance at those performances are invited to stick around, engage, and enjoy.

Talkback Guest Richard Brisson

Richard Brisson is a graduate from the University of Ottawa with B.Sc. Math-Physics in 1978 and M.Sc. Systems Science in 1980. Upon graduation, he was hired by the Communications Security Establishment (CSE) in Ottawa from which he retired in 2011. His career at CSE largely involved duties that encompassed various fields of Mathematics and Computer Science - he is also a graduate of the National Security Agency's 3-year Cryptologic Mathematics Program. Over the last 30 years, he has been collecting vintage cryptographic and clandestine artifacts dating up to and including the Cold War. He has a bilingual webpage on his collection: campx.ca if you wish to visit. He previously participated in Talkbacks at the OLT for *Breaking the Code* in May 2015 which he found most enriching.



Richard Brisson, alongside an authentic Enigma machine

BURN

by John Muggleton

Edinburgh Fringe Festival Edition

Thank you to all of our incredible patrons for their support to help us bring *Burn* to the Edinburgh Fringe Fest! Through your kind donations and purchases of signed copies of the scripts, we raised over \$1,200! That covers our registration and a small portion of our venue contract.

We leave for Scotland at the end of July but we have a quick stop over in Wakefield, QC where we will perform the Festival version of the show with a different ending. For those who asked about tickets, here is the information:

Centre Wakefield la Pêche

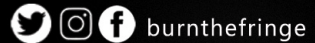
Friday, July 22nd
8pm

Saturday July 23rd
2:30pm and 8pm

TICKETS: (819)459-2025 | centrewakefieldlapeche.ca/Events



Thank you again for supporting live theatre!



Box Office

613.233.8948 | info@ottawalittletheatre.com | Opens at noon daily

Performance Times

Wednesday to Saturday evenings: 7:30 p.m.

Sunday matinees: 2:30 p.m.



Tickets can also be purchased online anytime!

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2022 SEASON!



A CONTEMPORARY THRILLER

BURN

BY JOHN MUGGLETON
DIRECTED BY VENETIA LAWLESS

MAY 4 – 21, 2022



A DRAMA

THE COLUMNIST

BY DAVID AUBURN
DIRECTED BY SARAH HEARN

JUNE 8 – 25, 2022



A COURTROOM MYSTERY

WITNESS FOR THE PROSECUTION

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE
DIRECTED BY GEOFF GRUSON

JULY 13 – 30, 2022

A CONTEMPORARY COMEDY

THE SIEGEL

BY MICHAEL MITNICK
DIRECTED BY GREG HANCOCK



AUG. 17 – SEPT. 3, 2022

A NORM FOSTER COMEDY

ON A FIRST NAME BASIS

BY NORM FOSTER
DIRECTED BY BARBARA KOBOLAK



SEPT. 21 – OCT. 8, 2022

A MYSTERY

HOLMES AND WATSON

BY JEFFREY HATCHER
DIRECTED BY ALAIN CHAMSI



OCT. 26 – NOV. 12, 2022

A CHRISTMAS CLASSIC COMEDY

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

BY MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY THEATRE
DIRECTED BY LISA DUNN & JOSH KEMP



NOV. 30 – DEC. 17, 2022



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