



OBIT

a deathly serious comedy

An ALONE TOGETHER PRODUCTION at the
2017 Vancouver Fringe Festival MainStage

<https://www.facebook.com/obittheplay/>

<https://obitfringe.wordpress.com>

Video trailer <https://youtu.be/y-qV2QUeXLY>

Press Release

August 2017

A DEATHLY SERIOUS COMEDY ABOUT LIFE GETS UNEARTHED AT THE FRINGE

Vancouver - So exactly when do people find themselves passing over the travel section of the weekend paper and skipping straight to the obituaries? Is obituary reading a morbid fascination or just facing up to our own looming exit off the mortal coil?

Writers Cathy Collis and Simon Roberts take a look at life through the lens of that curious cultural oddity — the obituary notice — in their darkly comic new work, **OBIT a deathly serious comedy** playing the Vancouver Fringe MainStage venue, the Cultch Historic Theatre this September. The show opens Saturday Sept. 9 at 7:35 pm and runs for 6 shows over the 10 day festival.

In three, wryly funny, character-rich scenes, Collis and Roberts peel back the public face of the tributes to soccer coach and divorcing dad Derek, suburban Mom Shirley and pillar-of-society businessman Richard now battling Alzheimers, to reveal their real lives and their, sometimes, buried pasts.

The first-time playwrights share some comedy acting and writing credits and awards between them and say they're excited to be part of the "test kitchen" experience of seeing how **OBIT, a deathly serious comedy** resonates with Fringe audiences. "We're writing from some of our own weirdly comic experiences of loss and exploring that, 'how do we get to be remembered?' question that comes up in the face of one's own mortality".

The Collis-Roberts team is also helming this production, working with Vancouver area actors Rich Archer, Dave Campbell, Tracy Jennissen, Marianne LaRochelle, Ray Soden and newcomer Marnie Mahannah.

THE CULTCH HISTORIC THEATRE/1895 Venables St./ September 7-17, 2017 / OPENING NIGHT: Saturday Sept. 9 @ 7:35 pm / Sept. 11 @8:05 pm / Sept.12 @ 7:45 pm / HALF-PRICE SHOW Sept 14 @ 5:00 pm / Sept. 16 @ 12:00 pm / Sept. 17 @8:30 pm /Tickets \$14 available at the Vancouver Fringe Festival website <https://tickets.vancouverfringe.com>

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<https://obitfringe.wordpress.com> for digital poster, post card, video trailer, bios, cast images and media backgrounder

For interviews, more info or to book a reviewer's comp: peg.keenleyside@gmail.com

all photo credits Robert C. New Photography
08.01.2017



Show title:

OBIT

a deathly serious comedy

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778-384-2949

Playwrights: Cathy Collis and Simon Roberts

Directors: Cathy Collis and Simon Roberts

Producers: Cathy Collis, Simon Roberts

obitvancouverfringe2017@gmail.com

Associate Producer: Peg Keenleyside

peg.keenleyside@gmail.com

Production Venue:

Cultch Historic Theatre, 1895 Venables St., Vancouver

Sat. Sept 9 @ 7:35 pm

Mon. Sept 11 @ 8:05 pm

Tues. Sept. 12 @ 7:45 pm

Thurs. Sept. 14 @ 5:00 pm **HALF-PRICE SHOW!**

Sat. Sept. 16 @ 12:00 pm

Sun. Sept. 17 @ 8:30 pm

Google Map link: <https://www.google.ca/maps/place/1895+Venables+St,+Vancouver,+BC+V5L+2H6/>

PHOTO AND VIDEO DESCRIPTIONS AND CREDITS <https://obitfringe.wordpress.com>

1. POSTER - Man standing beside tombstone with newspaper

Photo credit: Robert C. New

Design credit: James Groome

2. HORIZONTAL PUBLICITY SHOT - *Man with newspaper in coffin*

Photo credit: Robert C. New

Design Credit: James Groome

3. POSTCARD (BACK and FRONT) - *Man standing beside tombstone with newspaper*

Photo Credit: Robert C. New

Design Credit: Sjors Liem, James Groome

4. PUBLICITY SHOT

OBIT a deathly serious comedy *writers and directors Cathy Collis and Simon Roberts*

Photo Credit: Robert C. New

5. VIDEO TRAILER - *Man gets out of coffin*

Cinematography credit: Robert C. New

Performer credit: Robin Mossley

Video Edit credit: James Groome

07/28/17 FINAL



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Media Backgrounder

Media contact: peg.keenleyside@gmail.com

THE WRITERS AND DIRECTORS

Writer/directors Cathy Collis and Simon Roberts met while acting in a community theatre production of a Norm Foster comedy and were inspired by their own life events to start co-writing **OBIT a deathly serious** comedy together. Simon is a seasoned actor with many Vancouver area production credits, including having worked with The Comedy Company and in numerous Zone Festivals. Cathy is a new actor and award-winning blog writer who is currently pursuing liberal studies at SFU.

A PLOT SUMMARY

In three wryly funny, character-driven vignettes centred around that strange end-of-life ritual, the obituary, **OBIT a deathly serious comedy** takes a darkly comic look at how we get — or how we want — to be remembered. The play peels back the public remembrances of soccer coach Derek, suburban Mom Shirley and pillar-of-society businessman Richard, now a victim of Alzheimer's, to reveal the lives — and secrets — that never got mentioned in the weekend paper.

WHAT'S UP WITH OBITUARIES ANYWAY?

Obituary notices developed as something of an art form in 17th C. Restoration England amongst the reading public. The 18th and 19th Centuries saw it become THE fashionable way to be recognized and remembered by society; if you were a man that is. Falling out of favour in the 20th C., the obit section is still a must-read for those of us of a certain age who relish the weekend papers.

Director/playwright Simon Roberts has been reading obituaries since he was in his twenties:

"I've been fascinated, (some might say morbidly obsessed), with obituaries since I was a young man. They are a place of solace. A place to find meaning, and contrarily, a place to see the pointless nature of life", he says.

Director/playwright Cathy Collis says, *"We both had the experience of losing a parent and it's tough to go through your parents stuff or hear stories about them and sometimes find out they weren't who you thought they were. And then you still have to write that glowing obituary for them. It's that dichotomy that was our jumping off point for the play: how to reveal something of the true or real person behind the often too glowing obituary. What secrets have our characters kept or revealed before and after death?"*

A CLOSER LOOK AT WRITER/DIRECTOR CATHY COLLIS

Finding her voice as a new playwright, Cathy talks about about the women characters in **OBIT a deathly serious comedy**, Shirley (Tracy Jennissen), Carol (Marianne LaRochelle) and Jessica (Marnie Mahannah), this way:

"I've always been interested in 'real moms' who don't present a perfect front to the world and aren't afraid to tell it like it is. I explored that in my kick soccer mom blog that was nominated for a 'top 30 mom blogger' contest in 2011. I was also keen to write a play that passes the 'Bechdel test' - this is where there are at least two women who talk to each other about something other than a man. It's a test that so many movies or works of fiction don't pass".

A CLOSER LOOK AT WRITER/DIRECTOR SIMON ROBERTS

Simon Roberts, co-writer and co-director, draws on his real life experience of a mid-life crisis to give us the character of Derek, a man who is negotiating the strange new world of on-line dating after his marriage ends.

“I’ve been observing my single men friends and the anxiety of being suddenly thrust back into the dating scene in mid-life. Online dating seems — paradoxically - to create more barriers for people getting together, and I’m completely intrigued by the social tension about older men looking to date younger women. Is it a biological imperative for men to want to date younger women or is it just a socially inappropriate way to stave off the reality of ageing and death?”

A CLOSER LOOK AT OBIT CHARACTERS AND THE ACTORS WHO PLAY THEM

Richard Archer, who plays divorcing Dad and ex-soccer coach Derek who is negotiating the perilous waters of dating as an older man. Richard has theatre credits in Toronto, the Hamilton Fringe and beyond in Ontario. He’s in his first West Coast production with **OBIT a deathly serious comedy**, lives in Yaletown, and says he’s up at the crack of dawn every day the read the newspaper.

Dave Campbell plays Jason, one of two brothers who are coming to grips with the loss of their mother Shirley and a secret she kept hidden from them as teenagers growing up. This is Dave’s second appearance in a Fringe production. Dave is also playing the irascible Richard, a well-heeled property developer who is now in a home, experiencing Alzheimer’s, and trying to write his obituary.

Actor **Marianne LaRochelle** plays Carol in **OBIT a deathly serious comedy**, the one character who appears in all three scenes of the play; making a connection between the different lives and the stories played out. As an actor, Marianne has — among others — community theatre credits with the Deep Cove Stage Society and Vagabond Theatre.

Tracy Jennissen plays Shirley, a suburban Mom on the cusp of an excruciating decision about whether to go forward with a pregnancy or not. Tracy is a Vancouver newcomer with theatre credits in both Toronto and New York.

Marnie Mahannah, who plays Jessica, a young woman who has just lost her father, says being cast in a Fringe show has got her feeling, “Pure and unadulterated EXCITEMENT”. She loves living on Commercial Drive, working at the Commodore and making her way as an actor in Vancouver. Marnie’s hometown is Kelowna, BC.

Ray Soden plays the Director who keeps the wheel of fate turning between the life stories. Who will be next to have their obituary revealed? Ray comes by comedy honestly as one of the founding members of Burnaby’s The Comedy Company.

MORE STORY IDEAS & IMAGES HERE.....<https://obitfringe.wordpress.com>

Playwright Cathy Collis experienced the loss of her father to Alzheimers and has delved into the darkly comic aspects of the disease in the character of Richard (Dave Campbell) and in the scene played out between Richard and Carol (Marianne LaRochelle) his long-suffering nurse. Cathy asks: “Is it OK to laugh in the face of death? I think that’s what we’re exploring here”.

What does it take to co-write, co-direct and co-produce a Fringe show? Cathy Collis and Simon Roberts have been in drafts for almost a year and are thrilled to be part of the “test-kitchen” that is the Fringe creative process. “Being at the Cultch is also a huge opportunity for us as first time directors,” says Simon about the challenge of working in one of Vancouver’s best known theatre venues.

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COMPANY BIOS



Cathy Collis/ Writer, Director, Producer

Cathy has written an award nominated blog and won a humour writing contest at Whistler's Pique magazine. A college instructor, she is pursuing a master's degree from SFU and has written a number of short plays for the Liberal Studies program she's enrolled in. She has also acted in two productions with Sidekick Players (Delta) in recent years, *Here on the Flight Path* and *Looking*.

Simon Roberts/ Writer, Director, Producer

Simon has acted in numerous productions in Metro Vancouver in the last fifteen years and has won awards in community theatre at both Zone Festivals and Mainstage, Theatre BC. He is a graduate of the Atlantic Acting School, Summer Intensive Program, NYC (2008) and has performed with the Comedy Company.

Peg Keenleyside/ Associate Producer

Peg Keenleyside is an actor/writer/director and theatre producer. Co-writing credits include the Canadian plays; *Smoke Damage* (Nightwood Theatre), and *Hockey Wives* (FactoryTheatre). Other theatre credits include the National Arts Centre (Ottawa), Centre Stage (Toronto) and The Blyth Festival. On the West Coast Peg's directing credits include *In Their Nightgowns*, *Dancing* for UBC Brave New Works and the political comedy *Proud* at Capilano University.

Richard Archer/ Derek, Alex

This play marks a welcome return to the stage for Rich, his first on the West Coast. He has previously performed in places such as Harbourfront Studio Theatre, Village Playhouse and Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. In 2003 he was the lead in *Emma Porter*; awarded play of the Fringe for the Hamilton Festival. He has been a lead actor in the TV series *Cold Blood* as well as the independent films *Heartland Son* and *Mya's Normal Night*. A huge fan of the Fringe concept in Canada, Rich is thrilled to be part of this year's Vancouver Festival.





Dave Campbell / *Phil, Jason, Richard*

This is Dave's second appearance in a Fringe production. His first was a one-night-only fill-in for Jacques Lalonde in *Night of the B-Movie*. He expects to do the entire run this time. Other credits include...

Twelfth Night, Comfort Cottages (Western Gold Theatre); *The Country Wife, The Romans in Britain* (Ensemble Theatre Co) *Nuts* (Winn-Winn), *School for Scandal* (Quimera), *Spring Awakening* (Fighting Chance), *The Way of the World, Ivanov, Closure* (United Players), *Pillowman* (Wild Geese Co-Op), *Footloose, Anything Goes* (TUTS), *American Pilot* (Mentors Co-Op), *Our Country's Good* (UBC Players Club), *Socrates on Trial* (Vital Spark)



Tracy Jennissen/ *Shirley*

A recent transplant to Vancouver, Tracy has spent her theatre career in Toronto and New York. She is excited to take part in this year's Vancouver Fringe Festival. Some of her previous theatre credits include *Call Raul/We're Writing You Up* (Alumnae Theatre-Toronto) *Alice Au Pays Des Merveilles* (Soho Playhouse-NYC), *Macbeth* (13th Street Rep-NYC) *Hamlet* (Red Room-NYC), *Machinal* (Wings Zephyr -NYC) and *Brooklyn Best Alexi* (Hudson Guild -NYC). Tracy is a proud member of *Realize Your Beauty*, a New York based not-for-profit promoting positive body image and eating disorder awareness through theatre arts:

www.realizeyourbeauty.org. Tracy is a graduate of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting.



Marianne LaRochelle/ *Carol*

Marianne is a Vancouver native and thrilled to be involved in her first Fringe production. Favourite theatre credits include *Maureen* in *The Beauty Queen of Leenan*, *Sister Aloysius* in *Doubt* and *Sonja* in *Speaking with Tongues*.

Marianne is excited to be back playing again and has missed the stage. In her "other" life, she works for a community newspaper group, rides her bike and practices yoga.



Marnie Mahannah/ *Jessica*

The barely-there film scene in Kelowna wasn't enough for me, and the moment I finished High School, I zoomed over to Van to get my start in acting. After jumping into the crew side of things as a Production Assistant, I realized I was spending all my time and effort on my less preferred side of the camera. I now spend time in various classes, specifically enjoying both Aaron Craven and Ben Ratner's approach, and I love to audition/work on independent films. Participating in the Fringe Festival will be my first time back on stage since the theatre troupe I was a part of during my teen years.



Ray Soden/ *The Director*

Ray is a founding member of The Comedy Company based in Burnaby, BC. The company has been entertaining audiences around the Lower Mainland for a number of years.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Nicky Anderton/ *Stage Manager*

Kate Chubbs/ *Assistant Stage Manager*

Some of Kate's previous credits include ASM for *TITUS: The Light & Delightful Musical Comedy of Titus Andronicus* (Awkward Stage Productions), lighting operator for *Into the Woods, Jr.* (Delta Youth Theatre), and stage manager for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Equinox Theatre). She is excited to be working with Cathy and Simon and on her first production at the Vancouver Fringe!

07/31/2017

