

CHEZ NOUS

A Staged-Reading Series Showcasing
English-Language Drama in Quebec
(1930-1979)



EVENING ONE “A QUESTION OF CLASS”

Director: Micheline Chevrier,
Artistic and Executive Director
of Imago Théâtre

Stage Manager: Grace Bokenfohr



Produced by Professor Erin Hurley (Department of English,
McGill University) in collaboration with Playwrights' Workshop
Montréal and research team members Alison Bowie (Concordia
University) and Alexis Diamond.

***Dealer's Choice* by Mada Gage Bolton** (1937)**

Marta Hamby: Samantha Bitonti*
Bruce Endicott: Alex Goldrich*
Susan Benton: Michelle Rambharose*

*** All efforts were made to locate the rights-holder(s) of Dealer's Choice. The Playwrights Guild of Canada is holding permissions fees in trust for the right to read the play tonight.*



***Jupiter in Retreat* by Janet McPhee and
Herbert Whittaker (1942)**

Ellen Byers: Michelle Rambharose*
Joe Byers: Alex Goldrich*
Paradis: Brian Dooley*
Stuart Gilbert: Eric Davis*
Amy Gilbert: Nadia Verrucci*
Peggy Templeton: Samantha Bitonti*
Cornelius Wood: Daniel Brochu*

Jupiter in Retreat is read with the kind permission of the estate of Herbert Whittaker.

*The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the Dance•Opera•Theatre Policy.

***Dealer's Choice* by Mada Gage Bolton (1937)**

Synopsis: In a small, New York City apartment, Marta receives her former beau to discuss possible futures. Will she return with him to Texas to pursue a “beautiful” life? And what kind of life would she leave behind? In this micro-drama about identity and decisions, Marta must rely on her wits to pursue the happy ending she envisions for herself.

ABOUT Mada Gage Bolton (c.1905-1995)

Mada Gage Bolton was a prominent playwright and director in Montreal in the first half of the 20th century. Bolton studied under George Pierce Baker at the famous “47 Workshop” at Yale University Drama School; among her peers were the famous American playwrights Maxwell Anderson, Philip Barry, and Eugene O’Neill.

The Montreal Repertory Theatre (1930-61) was perhaps the most significant professional relationship Bolton maintained throughout her life. Bolton directed countless productions for the company, and was an associate director of the Montreal Repertory Theatre school where she also taught playwrighting.

Bolton’s one-act play, *Her Affairs in Order*, was the winner of the International One-Act Play Competition in 1936, and was produced in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand.



***Jupiter in Retreat* by Janet McPhee & Herbert Whittaker
(1942)**

Synopsis: A comic melodrama about an irascible mathematician who uses his intellect to bully his household. Stuart Gilbert, a haughty mathematician, is the titular Jupiter who has retreated to a Laurentian cabin for the summer. There, he initiates a cat-and-mouse game with his two servants, a young couple down on their luck, with consequences unforeseen by any of the players.

ABOUT Janet McPhee & Herbert Whittaker

Janet McPhee (c. 1905 - 1995)

Janet Alexandra McPhee was born in Oklahoma City but moved to Montreal as a child where she eventually attended the Strathcona Academy in Outremont. From early on McPhee showed an interest in both Montreal and greater Quebecois culture. She began writing plays independently, including *Divinity in Montreal* about Sarah Bernhardt's visit to the city in 1898. In 1941, she became a member of the executive board of directors for short-lived amateur company, the Lakeshore Summer Theatre, for which *Jupiter in Retreat* was written. Joining her on this board were Mada Gage Bolton and Herbert Whittaker.

In the mid-1950s, Janet McPhee relocated with her family to Toronto, where she headed a children's drama group.



Herbert Whittaker (1910-2006)

Herbert Whittaker attended the Strathcona Academy in Outremont, but dropped out at the age of 16 to help his family make money during the peak of the Depression. On the side, Whittaker had begun to establish himself as a theatre designer and director. In 1935, Whittaker quit this job at the Canadian Pacific Railway and in the same year, became a junior drama critic at the *Montreal Gazette*.

Jupiter in Retreat was co-written by Herbert Whittaker and Janet McPhee in 1942 and was produced in Montreal by the Trinity Players (dir. Myron Galloway) and the Montreal Repertory Theatre (dir. Charles Rittenhouse).

In 1949, this theatrical polymath left his job as a theatre critic for *The Gazette* to take the same post at *The Globe and Mail* in Toronto, where he would work until 1975. Whittaker chronicled Canadian theatre as it shifted from its amateur roots in Little Theatre and the Dominion Drama Festival (1932-1978), through the rise of the Stratford Festival and the Canada Council for the Arts in the 1950s, to the emergence of modern Canadian drama in the years after Canada's Centennial in 1967. After his retirement, Whittaker continued to write about and review Canadian theatre. He wrote a number of books detailing Canadian theatre history, one of which, *Setting the Stage*, published in 1999, documented Montreal English theatre from 1920 to 1949.

Biographies written by Hannah Cheslock.



THANKS to:

Pascale Théorêt-Groulx for designing the posters and programmes;
Marilla Steuter-Martin for preparing promotional materials
and programmes; Hannah Cheslock for researching and writing
the author biographies; and Corinne Deeley for her production
guidance and her supervision of the student stage-managers.

Bon spectacle!



Department of English | Département d'anglais



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

