

AlvegoRoot Theatre

2021 **LIVE** Fall Season at Somerville 630



TALES FOR A **REANEY DAY**

The Bully and The Box Social
By James Reaney

A Note from Adam



Tales for a Reaney is our first live performance since the summer of 2019. But in the meantime we have been creating a virtual season of audio and filmed plays. Thank you for your steadfast support and excitement for the work we have created over the last eighteen months. Thank you for being with us now again in person, it feels incredible to have you in this exciting new space with us. I am very grateful Kathy Navackas has invited us to be part of this space.

It feels right we return with a production of James Reaney's work, someone who inspires us as a company at every turn. As we have worked on this production, I have discovered more and more, how perfect it is that we are performing these two stories in early September, just at the gateway to fall. In both these stories Reaney's writing dances between the tragic and ironic with an intoxicating effect that fits this time of year. These are fantastic Southwestern Ontario Gothic stories, they pack a punch, provoke reflection and provide a thrilling tale. - Adam C-H



AlvegoRoot creates work on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron peoples as well as nations both recorded and unrecorded who have been caretakers of this land for time immemorial. These lands are connected with the pre-confederation London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum.

Cover Photo: Adam Corrigan Holowitz in *The Bully*. Photo by Richard Gilmore.

TALES FOR A REANEY DAY

The Bully and The Box Social

By James Reaney

The Box Social

Performer - Kydra Ryan

Director - Adam Corrigan Holowitz

The Bully

Performer - Adam Corrigan Holowitz

Director - Kydra Ryan

Designer - Kydra Ryan

Music Consultant - Stephen Holowitz



Kydra Ryan in The Box Social. Photo by Richard Gilmore.

More about James Reaney's "neo-Gothic" short stories

Compiled by Susan Reaney

"While an undergraduate at the University of Toronto [BA 1948, MA 1949], James Reaney published two stories, "The Bully" and "The Box Social," that are not only classic Canadian short stories but are the first examples of a modern tradition called Southern Ontario Gothic (having its origin in the novels of John Richardson and some of the stories Susanna Moodie tells) that make use of Gothic elements of the macabre. In the four-page "The Box Social," for example, a young man bids for a prettily wrapped shoe box, from a girl he made pregnant, that contains "the crabbed corpse of a stillborn child wreathed in bloody newspaper." Margaret Atwood has remarked that "without 'The Bully,' my fiction would have followed other paths." (***The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, William Toye, Ed., Oxford University Press, 2011, page 511.***)

"The Box Social" was originally published in 1947 in *The Undergrad* at the University of Toronto, and then in the popular magazine *The New Liberty*. Here's what Reaney had to say about why he wrote the story in his autobiography from 1992:

"Out of the deep past it somehow came to me, I think from my mother talking about the way men treated women in our neighbourhood. They never struck back; well, in my story one of them did." (***James Crerar Reaney, Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series, Volume 15, page 304.***)

"The Bully" was broadcast in 1950 on CBC Radio and later published in *Canadian Short Stories* (1952) edited by Robert Weaver. While at university in the late 1950s, Margaret Atwood remembers discovering "The Bully" in Weaver's anthology. "It made a big impression on me — it seemed a way of writing about Canadian reality that did not confine itself to the strict social realism that was mostly the fashion then." (***Excerpted from Margaret Atwood, "Remembering James Reaney", Brick Issue 82 (Winter 2009), page 160.***)

James Reaney and Southern Ontario Gothic

“James Reaney’s plays — *Colours in the Dark* (1969), *Balloon* (1976), and *The Donnellys* (1974-7) — as well as his short stories “The Bully” and “The Box Social” (reprinted in *The Box Social and Other Stories* in 1996), also assume Gothic elements of the macabre rooted in nightmarish families and uncanny action. [...]

What makes this locale so prone to Gothic tales is the failure of communication between family members or social groups. In the absence of communication, strange projections and psychological grotesqueries spring up and rapidly grow to unmanageable proportions. Malevolent fantasies are the source and sustenance of the Gothic tradition.” (***Michael Hurley and Allan Hepburn in The Concise Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature, William Toye, Ed., Oxford University Press, 2011, pages 593-594.***)

What do you mean by Gothic?

“...It’s the spirit of solitude, the isolated person rattling around, usually in an old dark castle in the early Gothic novels, but then in Faulkner in an old plantation house. In Ontario we can’t afford plantation houses so we have a farmhouse or an apartment building that has a lot of empty rooms in it, as in *The Edible Woman*.... It’s filled with the nightmare of life, but it’s this isolation that is at the bottom of it, I think, because of science. The whole Gothic tradition is already in *Hamlet*.” (***Interview with James Reaney from July 23, 1991 from In the Writers’ Words: Conversations with Eight Canadian Poets, Laurence Hutchman, Guernica Editions, 2011, pages 173-174.***)



May 30, 1996 in
London, Ontario —
James Reaney with
Margaret Atwood, “An
Evening with James
Reaney & Friends”
(Photo courtesy
London Free Press)

More on the tradition of Gothic fiction:

“Gothic fiction is a genre obsessively focused on the house. ‘Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again’ is the famous first sentence of Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca* (1938). In some other kinds of stories, the house is a place of safety, a sanctuary from the world. But not in gothic fiction, where interior spaces become prisons for imperiled heroines or represent a domestic happiness from which the scarred male protagonist is excluded. Naturally the house in question is not just any house but sometimes a monastery, convent, prison, or insane asylum. In the female-centered gothic, the male owner of the castle is an older man with a piercing glance – aristocratic, obsessed, moody, and secretive, with qualities that mark him as a literary descendant of Satan in *Paradise Lost*....”(Catherine Sheldrick Ross, *The Pleasures of Reading: A Booklover’s Alphabet, Libraries Unlimited, 2014, page 65.*)

“The Bully” is included in *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English*, Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1996. It is also collected in James Reaney’s *The Box Social and Other Stories* (1996), published by Porcupine’s Quill.

The Ensemble



Adam Corrigan Holowitz, Founding Artistic Director, 13th Season

2021 Season: Director/Co-Creator of The Bicycle Play, Director/Playwright of Pirates of Long Point, Performer/Director of Tales for a Reaney Day, Dramaturg for Of Gods and Machines.

Adam works as a dramaturg, director and playwrights. Works Adam has directed for AlvegoRoot include: Fools and Lovers, The Wind in the Willows (playwright), The Boy with an R in His Hand (playwright), Welcome to Bon Echo, Sixty-Seven (playwright), Dominion Day, The Cheese Poet (playwright), The Big Lad, The Angel of Long Point (playwright), Running Rude, Press Cuttings, Colleening (creator), Endgame, Beard, Macbeth, Uncle Vanya and Waiting for Godot. For Village Opera Adam has directed: John Beckwith and James Reaney's The Great Lakes Suite, Menotti's The Telephone and Shaw's Village Wooing. For Theatre Aezir he directed Gary Kirkham's Falling: A Wake. He was the dramaturg for David Yee's play rochdale (York University/Summerworks). Adam holds a BA Honours from York University where he studied Dramaturgy. He is the recipient of The Iris Turcott Memorial Award for dramaturgy from York University.



Kydra Ryan, 5th Season

2021 Season: Performer/Creator of The Bicycle Play and Josephine in Pirates of Long Point, Director/Playwright of Of Gods and Machines, Performer/Director of Tales for a Reaney Day.

Past AlvegoRoot credits include: Playwright/Director of Of Gods and Machines (audio play), Writer/Performer in The Manor Park Evening Post, Ratty in The Wind in the Willows, Rosa/Dorothia in Fools and Lovers, Annie Pixely in Shall Not Be Taken, The Boy with an R in His Hand, Welcome to Bon Echo, Elsie: Dreams and Sketches, and Dominion Day. Kydra was Assistant Director for Six Characters in Search of an Author and Timon of Athens both at Fanshawe College.



Adam Corrigan Holowitz in The Bully. Photo by Richard Gilmore

Our Deepest Thanks to Our Donors

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- Special thanks to The Reaney Family.



Kydra Ryan in *The Box Social*. Photo by Richard Gilmore.

Telling Local Stories, Creating Local Theatre

AlvegoRoot Theatre is based in London Ontario. AlvegoRoot produces plays about London and the surrounding area. AlvegoRoot develops new plays based on local stories and people. With one eye to the world and another on Southwestern Ontario AlvegoRoot has created a specific style of theatre that carries on the Souwesto theatre and arts tradition. AlvegoRoot collaborates with Fanshawe Pioneer Village to present a repertory summer theatre season in the village's heritage barn. 2021 marks AlvegoRoot Theatre's 13th Season.

AlvegoRoot Theatre

2021 **FILMED** Season at Fanshawe Pioneer Village

ON NOW!

THE BICYCLE PLAY

By Dan Ebbs, Kydra Ryan
and Adam Corrigan Holowitz

PIRATES OF LONG POINT

By Adam Corrigan Holowitz

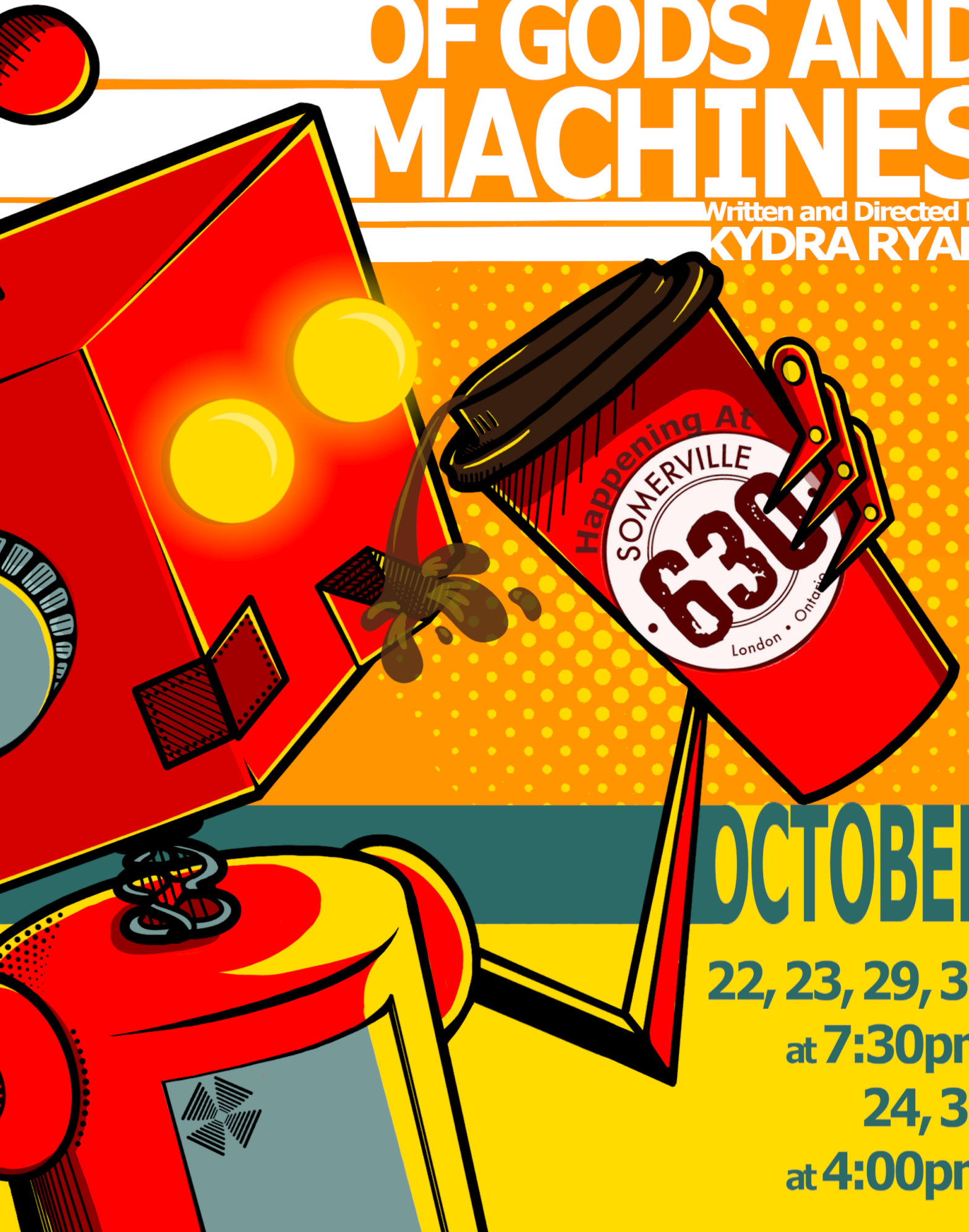
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streamed to your home!**

www.alvegoroottheatre.com

AlvegoRoot Theatre 2021 **LIVE** Fall Season at Somerville 630

OF GODS AND MACHINES

Written and Directed By
KYDRA RYAN



OCTOBER

22, 23, 29, 30

at 7:30pm

24, 31

at 4:00pm



2021 SEASON: THE BICYCLE PLAY PIRATES OF LONG POINT
TALES FOR A REANEY DAY OF GODS AND MACHINES