



Thoughts on Blue Metropolis  
and theatre this week

## Description

# A review of Blue Met, Dramatis Personae's latest, NYC theatre gems and more Kitty Calling

By **Byron Toben**

The Montreal **2021 Blue Metropolis International Literary Festival** ended its 23rd incarnation on May 3. Beset by the COVID restrictions that have limited in-person sports, film, theatre, music events and even corporate AGMs, the Blue Met team did a commendable job in pulling it off as a virtual gathering, "all things considered."

Like all things in life, there are pros and cons. Here are two of the pros:

### MORE WORLDWIDE ATTENTION

The filming of its 50 events involving 100 invitees and this availability apparently until year's end will make it easily accessible for a longer time to a worldwide audience. Perhaps this will draw a large tourist attendance in the future as things return to "normal."

### SAVING MONEY BY NOT BRINGING FAR-FLUNG AUTHORS TO MONTREAL BUT ACCESSING THEM ON ZOOM

This year, I particularly enjoyed two panels – the **Future of Theatre** panel hosted by playwright/novelist **Marianne Ackerman** and the Middle East panel, **Jerusalem of the Mind**, sponsored by **Gabriel Safdie**.

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Although the festival ended on May 3, to quote the eminent literary critic Yogi Berra, "It ain't over till it's over", as there are **six virtual literary walking tours**.

The first, in English, is organized by **Shelly Pomerance** and visits the **Yiddish Circuit haunts** of Montreal

Yiddish writers. The second (in English and French) visits **Montréal Shopping & Livres**. Both are on **May 20** at 10 am. Check out all the tours via the link below.

[bluemetropolis.org/walkingtours](http://bluemetropolis.org/walkingtours)

Despite this year's success, I still feel a nostalgic loss for former years when I visited in person. I miss seeing the sessions hosted by many fine CBC radio personalities – **Michael Enright, Paul Kennedy, Eleanor Wachtell...** I miss the humour injected at eclectic sessions hosted by the *Montreal Gazette's* late **Joel Yanofsky**. And, of course, the occasional spoken word renderings of the inimitable **Catherine Kidd**.

WestmountMag readers are invited to send us their own favourite reminiscences of Blue Met events past.



Dramatis Personae's Zoom in Love – Image: courtesy of Dramatis Personae

## Theatre events coming up this next week

**May 10 and 11** at 8 pm

**Westmount's Dramatis Personae** continues its current three short play run of ***Zoom in Love***, which began on May 7. I enjoyed the kick-off.

The first two playlets are by **Rich Orloff**, who I met years ago on a trip to New York City. I attended a play performed on an open-air Greenwich Village rooftop. He, the author of that play, was by chance seated near me and perplexed as to why I was taking copious notes. Since then, I read excerpts of a number of his many plays on the Internet and became a fan.

His recent one, chosen by Dramatis Personae, is ***Womb With a View***, which features a new kid about to be born (**Ann Elbourne**) but resists leaving the comfort of the womb despite the enticements of the birthing team (**Ann Gamsa, Rashed Chowdhury, Gregory Karpuzas, Ellen Rubin**).

Orloff's second playlet, ***Can This Marriage Be Saved?***, is set in a courtroom where the Judge (**Linda Nourse**) hears the Plaintiff (**Karen Sauter**) on behalf of the human race suing the Defendant God (**Clive Brewer**) for separation while a bailiff (**Christine Dandurand**) and an announcer (**Jenny Chopra**) observe.

The third playlet, by **Jonathan Rand**, is ***Check Please***. This is comprised of 12 really short bits where all ten cast members above are paired in two-handers of potential couples virtually meeting but having doomed results



best shown by the titles of the types involved: Acronym Talker, Self Centered Tool, Rude Cell Phone Interrupter, Phony Linguist, Political Zealot, Cousins, Possible Cousins, Over Eager Guy, Dead Dog, Businessman, Psychic and Cheers.

The evening is ably directed by Linda Nourse with fitting background music by, as usual, **Roger Jochym**.

[theatrewestmount.com](http://theatrewestmount.com)

**May 14** at 7:30 pm

**New York's Bedlam Theater** streams *Anna Karenina* by **Leo Tolstoy**, a **Do More benefit** for the **Loveland Foundation**, streamed from bedrooms across New York City.

Free for those who cannot afford it now, donations appreciated.

[Bedlam.org](http://Bedlam.org)



Lorna Wilson in Episode 5 of Season 2 of Colleen Curran's *Kitty Calling*

**May 17 to 20**

**New York's Red Bull Theater** streams *Sejanus His Fall* by **Ben Jonson**, the second most popular English playwright after Shakespeare during the Jacobean period (1603-25). The name Red Bull, by the way, has nothing to do with the over-caffeinated beverage. It was a popular pub in London attracting playwrights and artists during the Jacobean period.

[Redbulltheater.com](http://Redbulltheater.com)

And now, up and running indefinitely, the 17th edition of **Colleen Curran's *Kitty Calling***. These increasingly popular 3-minute wonders had 12 episodes in 2020 and now 5 in 2021. In this 5th and latest, pandemic do-gooder caller Kitty checks in on (mostly) housebound Bernice, who has written a book that may hit the big time.



Called ***Bernice and Me***, it is ostensibly written by her pet cat.

This marketing ploy reminds me of the popular 1939 book ***Ben and Me***, about Benjamin Franklin as written by his pet mouse and adapted in a Walt Disney animated short in 1956. It was nominated for an Academy Award in that category.

Will Bernice's cat achieve what Ben's mouse didn't? I anxiously wait for episodes 6 and 7 to find out!

[facebook.com/watch/CCKittyCalling](https://facebook.com/watch/CCKittyCalling)

Feature image: courtesy of *Dramatis Personae*

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**Byron Toben**, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.



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