



Every Brilliant Thing plows ahead despite COVID-19

Description

A reminder of the myriad of things that make life worth living

By **Byron Toben**

The audience-friendly play, ***Every Brilliant Thing***, in association with the Hudson Village Theatre, first opened in Montreal at the **Segal Centre** in May 2021 but was suspended after a few performances with the advent of a new wave of COVID-19. It then shifted in July to an outdoor venue in Hudson, battling the odd rain, before surfacing back again at the Segal, from **October 24 until November 14**.



The show must go on despite COVID-19

Ably directed by Hudson's **Dean Patrick Fleming** and warmly performed by **Daniel Brochu**, the piece written by **Duncan MacMillan** with **Jonny Donahoe** has emerged fresh as ever despite the shifting venues.

I saw it on October 30 and was impressed by the safety precautions taken. The building entrance is now limited to the side ramp on Westbury, proof of vaccination there shown, fresh masks provided, distancing required before being handed pre-ordered tickets at the studio entrance.

Mr. Brochu, whose last performance I had seen at the Hudson in the play **Art**, here solos as the narrator of the piece. As such, he first circulates in the audience giving many onlookers a card with a different number and a thing to be called out when he declares that number from the stage. Mine was 577, and the thing was *Tea and Biscuits* (coincidentally, the title of a recent Segal show).

Although the 70-minute event is basically light-hearted, the underlying theme revolves around suicide prevention.

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The narrator recalls the myriad of things that make life worth living eventually reaching (spoiler!) one million. Fear not, after calling out the first six or seven in order, he skips by hundreds to meet the time limit. Some audience volunteers are enlisted for two minutes of fame on the stage.

My internal remembrances as Daniel bounced around the stage, calling numbers and lending background...



Years ago, in another time and city, I chanced to meet a local community theatre actor, that I knew casually, on a street corner where he glumly announced to me that he was considering suicide. "Cheer up," said I, "there are many things worth living for." "Name one," said he. "Well... Italian food... and Chinese food," I answered, eliciting a chuckle. I never saw him again and do not know if my extemporaneous comment staved off his early demise or not.

Anyway, in this play, the narrator, as a 7-year-old, is first introduced to death with the sadly required euthanasia of his dog, Sherlock Bones. His father is a vinyl record collector with a special fondness for Ray Charles. His mother was hospitalized with serious depression. Growing up, he remembers wonderful books, meeting other students and... of course... his first kiss.

So you get the gist. These are all wonderful things, ranging from ice cream to the colour yellow. Appreciate them while ye may.

The Segal Centre has put together a 1:03 minute video on YouTube called, ***What's Your Brilliant Thing?***, where various folk declare theirs. Watch it and feel free to let Westmount Magazine hear yours.

Hard envisioning anyone else in the key role than the ebullient Mr. Brochu, but at the usual **Sunday@the Segal** background panel, which precedes the opening – or here – re-opening of each run, the moderator par excellent, **Sarah Deshaies**, managed to corral four other actors who have performed the narrator role across Canada, to compare their experiences. Here is a [link](#) to the podcast of that panel.

Every Brilliant Thing continues at the Segal Centre until November 14. I highly recommended it.

segalcentre.org

Images: Leslie Schachter

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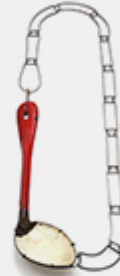
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Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print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

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