



Dear Jax, a moving gem of a play

## Description

# Stephen Maclean Rogers' touching tribute to his mother

By **Julia Ainsworth**



Susan Maclean

***Dear Jax*** is an intimate portrait of grief, written and performed with candour and sensitivity by **Stephen Maclean Rogers**, directed by **Jean-Marc Leblanc**, and produced by **To the Hilt Productions**. In this solo performance, Stephen Maclean Rogers shares his recent experience of losing his mother Susan, after she is diagnosed with aphasia, an impairment of language and memory. Stephen has a natural stage presence and connects easily with



his audience. Between flashbacks and direct address, he builds in moments of levity to breathe and laugh together, despite the challenging subject.

Director Jean-Marc Leblanc is wise to stage this play simply, with the use of lighting and sound to support transitions between past and present. The use of handwritten letters in the design and staging creates a protected space for Stephen to share the harrowing moments of his mother's decline. Though the play centres on loss, it never veers into the realm of self-indulgence. Stephen and director Jean-Marc ensure the focus is on authentic storytelling. Stephen recounts a particularly tender memory about learning to communicate in silence with his mother when language is no longer an option.

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*Dear Jax* is a moving, gem of a play and a beautiful tribute to the playwright's mother, **Susan Maclean**. There is much strength in the vulnerability of this piece. Stephen's love, and respect for his mother, and their transcendent bond resonates powerfully. *Dear Jax* is nominated for two **Frankie Awards**, the *Freestanding Room Award for Making Big Things Happen in Small Places* and *Best English Production (Centaur Theatre)* to be awarded at the Frankie Awards Ceremony this Sunday, June 16.

***Dear Jax* runs until June 16 as part of the St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival.**

For schedule and tickets: [montrealfringe.ca/organizer/dear-jax](http://montrealfringe.ca/organizer/dear-jax)

Feature image: Susan Maclean

Images: courtesy of To the Hilt Productions

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**Julia Ainsworth** is a Montreal based writer, theatre artist and arts educator. She holds a B.F.A in Theatre from York University and B. Ed from Queens.

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Page 2

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1. Performing Arts
2. Review
3. Theatre

## Tags

1. aphasia
2. Dear Jax
3. Jean-Marc Leblanc
4. Julia Ainsworth
5. loss
6. St. Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival
7. Stephen Maclean Rogers
8. storytelling
9. Susan Maclean
10. To the Hilt Productions

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