



Coming soon
to a theatre
near you



Mermaid Theatre of
Nova Scotia
celebrates
Marie~Louise Gay's
endearing

STELLA

QUEEN OF THE SNOW

Canada's acclaimed theatre for family audiences has joined forces with *Marie-Louise Gay*, the award-winning creator of *Stella and Sam*, in a new stage adaptation designed for young spectators aged three to seven.

Stella, Queen of the Snow tells the story of the two children as they spend the day playing in the snow. The forest, snowballs, snow angels and the mysterious white stuff itself provide fuel for Sam's questions and Stella's answers as they discover the world of winter together. First published in 2000, the book (as well as its French-language edition, *Stella reine des neiges*) remains a favourite among Stella's worldwide fans.

The staged versions will enable Mermaid to play an ambassadorial role by celebrating the antics of an endearing duo, and broadening the appreciation of a Canadian literary classic. Both the English and French-language versions will tour extensively in 2014/2015.

The hour-long production features the whimsical puppets, striking scenic effects and evocative original music that have earned international recognition for Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. The company has performed for five million spectators on four continents with productions such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* & *Other Eric Carle Favourites*; Leo Lionni's *Swimmy*, *Frederick*

& *Inch by Inch*; Margaret Wise Brown's *Goodnight Moon* & *The Runaway Bunny*, and Sam McBratney and Anita Jeram's *Guess How Much I Love You*. Mermaid's creative team includes Jim Morrow as director and production designer; Steven Naylor as composer; and Nick Bottomley as projection and special effects designer. The author/illustrator herself will provide the recorded narration for both languages.

Stella and Sam Books are published in English by Groundwood Books and in French by Dominique et Compagnie. For further details about the books please see www.marielouisegay.com.

Text and Illustration © Marie-Louise Gay.

ABOUT MARIE-LOUISE GAY:

Marie-Louise Gay, who is one of Canada's best-loved creators of children books, has published more than sixty titles and achieved international acclaim for her work, now available in more than fifteen languages. She has been widely recognized as both an author and illustrator, earning the Governor General's Award and the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, and has been nominated for the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award and the Hans Christian Andersen Award. Her stories about Stella, her brother Sam and their pet dog, Fred, explore the world around them in the company of countless young fans who eagerly share their delightful adventures. Marie-Louise Gay is a resident of Montréal.

SOME NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR/ PRODUCTION DESIGNER:

Our new show features many of the signature elements that audiences have come to expect and appreciate in Mermaid Theatre's productions. The set is designed to be flexible and will accommodate a variety of stage sizes. It includes fabric and pole, side masking and backdrops as well as a separate fabric projection screen. Cloth snow hills, designed to move efficiently, provide an effective way to change scenes and locations as well as serve as an artist's canvas onto which we project colour, shading and iconic book images using state-of-the-art technology.

General lighting is provided by a compact LED system that, along with the three projectors, offers stunning visual effects. The system tours easily and is quick to set up. All the sound and lighting is controlled backstage by the stage manager, using a laptop computer. The puppets are colourful, three-dimensional carved characters, controlled by two performers who remain hidden from the audience as they manipulate the puppets from below with the aid of rolling boards. Clever use of perspective creates an illusion of distance, and allows us to incorporate many puppets of various sizes.

We are very excited about the opportunity to share this warm, funny, and tender tale of unspoken affection between a brother and his older sister and the bond that is created as they explore their winter world. Young boys and girls will be inspired by Stella's adventurous spirit, and parents will recall nostalgically a time when 'going outside to play' was an experience filled with wonder and possibility. Marie-Louise Gay has perfectly captured this special feeling in her book, *Stella, Queen of the Snow* and its delightful French-language version, *Stella reine des neiges*. It's my hope that our adaptation not only honours the author's intent, but also leaves audiences feeling playful. ~ *Jim Morrow*

SOME NOTES FROM THE COMPOSER:

The music and sound design for *Stella, Queen of the Snow* are directly inspired by the story and the images. We have created special musical themes to highlight each of the main characters, established a strong sense of place conveyed by the natural sounds of the winter environment (including the many birds who populate the pictures)—and added just a hint of Canadian maple syrup in the overall flavor of the music. ~ *Steven Naylor*

Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia

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PRELIMINARY TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Company: two performers and stage manager
- Running time: one hour, including integrated Q & A session
- Staging requirements: Minimum dimensions of stage (unimpeded) 30' wide x 30' deep x 14' high for performing area. Darkened auditorium.
- Set up and strike times:
Set-up: two hours plus half hour house call.
Strike: up to ninety minutes.
- Technical: The company tours with two short-throw front projectors, one short-throw rear screen projector, two LED lights front of stage, four LED lights positioned within the set. All are controlled from our laptop.
- The company will require the use of house sound, two monitors and a microphone.

SOME NOTES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS:

In addition to the pleasures of imaginative language and engaging characters, Marie-Louise Gay's stories offer a helpful approach to curriculum-based topics such as:

- The importance of play
- Strong female protagonist
- Nature and the natural world
- Seasons and winter themes
- Sibling relations
- Family relations

ABOUT THE STELLA AND SAM TELEVISION SERIES:

An animated preschool TV series based on Marie-Louise Gay's best-selling Stella and Sam book series is currently airing on Disney Junior Canada and Disney Junior Canada en français. The show was created by Radical Sheep Productions, and will shortly air on PBS Sprout. See <http://www.radsheep.com>

STELLA AND SAM HONORED BY CANADA POST:

Issued in July 2013 and currently on sale at all Canada Post outlets, the two permanent™ stamps are the second installment in a series dedicated to children's literature. Stella's personality – her enthusiasm, sense of adventure, and delight – shines on the stamp that features her hanging upside down from a tree. The second stamp highlights her relationship with her brother Sam through their shared pleasure of reading together. See <https://www.canadapost.ca/shop/Postage/Stamps/Domestic/p-413912111.jsf?execution=e1s1>

ABOUT MERMAID THEATRE OF NOVA SCOTIA:

Established in 1972, Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia makes its home in Windsor, at the gateway to Nova Scotia's scenic Annapolis Valley. The company ranks among North America's most respected theatres for the young, and its innovative productions serve as a continuous showcase for Atlantic Canada's talented performers, directors, designers and technicians. Mermaid Theatre regularly crosses Canada and the United States, travels abroad frequently with shows in seven languages, and is currently Canada's major exporter of theatre for family audiences.

Closer to home, Mermaid Theatre enjoys a strong local and regional presence as the result of teaching and presenting activities. These include the Mermaid Theatre Loft's artists' residencies; the Mermaid Imperial Performing Arts Entertainment series; the Institute of Puppetry Arts' community and professional-level instructional programs; and the Mermaid Youtheatre's vibrant outreach activities for adolescents.