TOMES OF TERROR



Monday, October 30th, 7:30 рм Tuesday, October 31st, 7:30 рм

First Congregational Church of Somerville 89 College Avenue



PRODUCER'S NOTE

Last Fall I had a chance to realize my nearly life-long dream of producing a radio drama. Without recapping my entire intro to last year's show, let me just say that events and interests from my youth made it entirely appropriate that the first show I should ever produce would be Arch Oboler's *Chicken Heart*. Having cut my teeth on that gem from the Golden Age of Radio, I was eager to tackle more.

This year I wanted to expand our production from a single play to a trilogy. Many of our actors excel at comedy, so it seemed natural to include a re-creation of one of the most popular sitcoms ever made, *Fibber McGee & Molly*. We also wanted something dramatic, as well as something with name-recognition. Adaptations of short stories are the bread-and-butter of many anthology shows, so we chose *The Monkey's Paw*, for the familiarity of its title, and *The Lady Maid's Bell*, for its local author connection, Edith Wharton. Thanks to the generosity of the playwrights and their families, we were able to acquire permission for live performances of scripts for both of these stories from the CBC Radio series, *Nightfall*. We had the makings of a fine show in our hands, but the trick was to put it all together!

The production proved to be a bit more ambitious than I'd anticipated and I am extremely lucky—and deeply grateful—for an enthusiastic Production Team, Cast, and Crew. I am especially grateful to Renée Johnson and Brian Rust for boldly stepping up and asking to direct, and to Production Assistants Nate Gundy and Rob Noyes, who made putting many aspects of this show together so much easier. The support, energy and talent of the entire company has been a great source of strength to me, but if this mammoth endeavor manages to fly, it will be due entirely to them.

Well, I hope you enjoy your visit to The Library. Just remember: you can check out the books anytime you like, but they can *never* leave...

-- Neil Marsh

NOTICE: No smoking inside the building. Flash photography is not allowed during the performance. Please silence your cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices.

THE PLAYS

Host Segments

by Rob Noyes	
The Librarian	Renni Boy

Fibber McGee & Molly: Gildy's Halloween Party

by Don Quinn	
Fibber McGee	Rob Noyes
Molly McGee	Shaunna Francis
Gildersleeve	Michael McAfee
Mr. Wilcox / Announcer	Matt Kimmel
Boomer	Al Sten-Clanton
Old-Timer	Tom Arena
	Michael McAfee
Mrs. Uppington	Masha Sten-Clanton
Teeny	Mindy Klenoff

The Maid's Bell

Based on The Lady Maid's	Bell by Edith Wharton
Adapted by John Douglas	
Alice Hartley	Amy Lee Bennett
Agnes	Jennifer Pelland
Laura Brymtpon	Heidi Clark
Mr. Wace	John Bowker
Mrs. Blinder	Gilly Rosenthol
Mr. Brympton	Michael McAfee
Mr. Ranford	Nathaniel Gundy

The Monkey's Paw

y by W. W. Jacobs
a
Joshua Nicholson
Mare Freed
Nathaniel Gundy
John Bowker
Rob Noyes

STAFF

Producer	Neil Marsh
Stage Manager	Julia Lunetta
House Manager	Chris DeKalb
Publicist	Ari Herzog
Lighting Advisor	Matt Kimmel
Sound Design, Main Board Op	Neil Marsh
Foley/FX Board Op	Renée Johnson
Foley/FX Liaison	Shaunna Francis
Graphic Design	Gilly Rosenthol
Photographer	Jennifer Cseh
Costume Designer	Renée Johnson

Fibber McGee & Molly: Gildy's Halloween Party

Director	Brian Rust
Production Assistant	Rob Noyes
Foley/FX Artists	Mare Freed
	Heidi Clark

The Maid's Bell

Director	Renée Johnson
Foley/FX Artists	Mindy Klenoff
	Alyssa Osiecki

The Monkey's Paw:

Director	Neil Marsh
Production Assistant	Nathaniel Gundy
Foley/FX Artists	Joye Thaller
	Shaunna Francis

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BIOGRAPHIES

Tom Arena (Old-timer) is a long time performer with Revels, Inc., and the Milford Performing Arts Center. Doing sound effects in last year's *Chicken Heart*, this year he decided to channel one of the many voices that whisper to him in the small hours.

Amy Lee Bennett (Alice Hartley) hopes everyone appreciates the dedication shown by her contracting bronchitis to prepare for this role. She has worked on more than 30 stage productions (four with Somerville's Theatre@First), but this is her first radio play. Thanks to Renee and PRMP for the wonderful opportunity.

John Bowker (Mr. Wace, Sgt. Major Morris) has appeared locally, playing lovestruck superheroes and murderous knights with the company at Theatre@First; this is his first foray into the world of radio theater. A professional systems engineer and a semi-professional published writer of odd fiction, he recommends against using your third wish to ask for another monkey's paw. No, really.

Renni Boy (Host) is pleased to participate in her second PMRP production; she was a 'crowd lady' in last year's *Chicken Heart*. A freelance editor, Renni is a member of Revels' Circle of Song and has appeared in several Revels productions. She also volunteers for SCALE (Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences) and BONES (Beagles of New England States—recycle a beagle today!).

Heidi Clark (Laura Brympton, Foley/FX) encountered her first microphone at six years old—singing "Rubber Ducky" at the principal's mic for the entire school. You'd think she'd stop there. Grade school theater bird, college radio DJ, a cappella and chamber singer on nifty little shoestring West Coast and European tours. These days, occasional cabaret performer with the Imperial Court of Massachusetts. But a dramatic role at the mic?—There's a first.

Chris DeKalb (House Manager) is happy to be back for the second Post-Meridian Players production. Last year he got to pretend to be a chicken heart. This year he misses the stage but not the Jell-O. When he's not selling tickets for chicken hearts, monkey paws and other animal parts he's the editor of the Cambridge Movie News (www.cambridgemovies.com). **Shaunna Francis** (Molly McGee, Foley/FX & Liason) is a firsttime participant with PMRP and she is thrilled! In the real world Shaunna is a local Jewelry Artist who is valiantly attempting to start her own business. (I take commissions!) Her hobbies include community theater, skiing, gaming, crafts, and exploring the unknown and paranormal. However, she hopes to never be abducted or probed by aliens. She sends her love to her family, especially to Matty.

Mare Freed (Mrs. Todd, Foley/FX) is a veteran member of Theatre@First, having assisted in its birth by dressing in drag in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. It was the start down a slippery, slimy slope, and since then she has worn many strange hats both onstage and off. She has a vexing desire to someday play a frothingly insane character. For now, she'll settle for a nervous English mum.

Nathaniel Gundy (Herbert, Mr. Ranford) recently received his Bachelors in Theatre Arts from Salem State College. His last foray into audio drama was a half-hour of science-fiction entitled *An Innocent Threat*, which he wrote and performed in. He regrets nothing. Twice.

Renée Johnson (Foley/FX Board Op, Costume Designer, Director, *The Maid's Bell*) appeared on stage in last year's production of *Chicken Heart* with the PMRP. This is her first time directing for live radio; be gentle! A true Bohemian, she costumes, acts, writes, collages, paints, djs, dances, sings (shrieks?) and is an amateur nature photographer. Despite all this, she's still R Jo from the Block, yo.

Matt Kimmel (Announcer/Mr. Wilcox, Lighting Advisor) is having a great time in his first show with PMRP. After all, where else would he get to tell ghost stories AND sell floor wax? He's very happy to be working with friends, new and old, and most of all to be on stage with his beloved Molly McGee (don't tell Fibber!). Matt would like to thank Neil and Brian for giving him the chance, all the cast and crew for the fun and support, Shaunna for everything onstage and off, and, of course, Johnson's Wax.

Mindy S. Klenoff (Teeny, Foley/FX) resists all suggestions of typecasting. Ms. Klenoff has been working behind the scenes for years, and enjoys her rare peeks out from behind the curtain, including her recent featured role on Dateline NBC as "Intern"

(non-speaking). By day, Ms. Klenoff plays a criminal prosecutor in Dorchester.

Julia Lunetta (Stage Manager) is a professional geek and an amateur actress, musician, comedian and human. She arrived in Massachusetts many years ago for college, and repeatedly failing to escape Boston's non-Euclidean roads, made her home there. She can currently be heard voicing the character of Arkahn for the fantasy serial podcast *Second Shift* (secondshiftpodcast.com).

Neil Marsh (Producer, Sound Design, Director, *The Monkey's Paw*) has wanted to produce radio drama since he first heard Bill Cosby's famous *Chicken Heart* sketch on the *Doctor Demento Show* as a child. Now, 30 years and a B.Sc in Broadcasting later, Neil has finally managed to do just that. Granted, it took him a rambling course of studies in Earth Science, Music Education & Composition, and Television Production before he finally got there but hey, nobody said it was going to be easy! When he's not masterminding the PMRP's next live show, Neil is developing series ideas and scripts for their future studio endeavors, composing dramatic music, continuing his research project on the CBC Radio series *Nightfall*, and is the Sound Designer and Webmaster for Theatre@ First, Somerville's most successful community theater.

Michael McAfee (Gildersleeve, Mr. Brympton) has acted in several local productions, and is a member of I Sebastiani, the greatest commedia dell'arte troupe in the entire world. He is also producer, director and co-writer of *The Fantastic Fate Of Frederick Farnsworth The Fifth*, currently in production. Last year he portrayed the reporter in the PMRP's production of *Chicken Heart*. He is also active in the local gaming and science fiction communities.

Joshua Nicholson (Mr. Todd) is excited to play a part not written in iambic pentameter for the first time in five years. His long career with the Boston University Shakespeare Society included such roles as Richard III from the eponymous play and Lord Angelo from *Measure for Measure*. When not acting, he enjoys chuckling over his B.S. degree.

Rob Noyes (Fibber McGee, Mr. Tilbury), a long-time fan of old-time radio, was last heard proclaiming doom for all humanity as Dr. Alberts in the PMRP's 2005 production of *Chicken Heart*. Since then he's lent his voice to other projects for Theatre@First, and was lucky to get it back before tonight's performance. When not travelling the country riding roller coasters or crafting devious plots as a supervillain, he is busy developing a new original series for the PMRP, working on his collection of empty cereal boxes, and writing dialogue for pictures of cats in people clothing.

Alyssa Osiecki (Foley/FX) is happy to be a part of the PMRP's *Thrillogy*. When she is not creating funny noises with various sundry objects she is gainfully employed as a drama teacher in the Cambridge Public Schools.

Jennifer Pelland (Agnes) is a local science fiction writer whose short fiction has appeared in various print and web venues. She's also involved with Wyrd Enterprises and Silicon Theater, two other local radio theater groups.

Gilly Rosenthol (Mrs Blinder, Graphic Designer) is enjoying her first foray into audio drama. She is often seen on the Theatre@ First stage, and has also appeared with Arlington Friends of the Drama in their recent production of *Shakespeare in Hollywood*. She is only sorry that there is no place in *The Maid's Bell* for 10 gallons of Jell-O.

Brian Rust (Director, *Fibber McGee & Molly*) has been involved with the theater ever since his thrilling performance as "Littlest Billy Goat Gruff" in kindergarten. When not writing, performing, walking his dog, or making odd chocolate items, he's the manager of the Cambridge Home for Pawless Monkeys.

Al Sten-Clanton (Boomer) is a veteran audience member who somehow landed on the stage this time. His normal life consists mostly of hanging out with his wife, trying to learn Linux, and hiding in books for long stretches.

Masha Sten-Clanton (Mrs. Uppington) has worked with Theatre@ First as a publicity writer and as clerk of the steering committee. She also appeared in last year's production of *Chicken Heart*. She doubts she'll ever be as well-to-do as Mrs. Uppington, but it's nice to dream.

Joye Thaller (Foley/FX) was voted "Most Likely to Succeed" and "Best Animal Noises" in her high school yearbook. At least one of these came true. You decide which.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

John Douglas (Adaptation, The Maid's Bell) was born in Toronto in 1935 and educated at Victoria University (B.A. 1957). He studied drama production and theater history, wrote plays, and became a freelance actor, then a dramaturge for several large theater companies in Canada. In 1971 he began his CBC Radio production career as a drama producer in Halifax. He became Area Executive Producer for CBC Radio Drama in Toronto in 1976. Co-winner (as director) of the international Variety broadcasting prize in 1979, he went on to produce radio drama at the CBC, including his own creation, "Festival Theatre". In addition to his work as a producer, Douglas wrote radio dramas, program proposals and stage plays. His 1986 script, "The Bruce Curtis Case" for the Scales of Justice series, won the Best Radio Drama Award. He adapted several works for CBC Radio's Nightfall series in the early 1980's, including "Carmilla" by J. Sheridan LeFanu, "The Lady Maid's Bell" by Edith Wharton, and "Young Goodman Brown" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. He also wrote the original episode "Lazarus Rising". He appeared as an actor in several episodes, including "The Maid's Bell" and "Beauty's Beast", and served as producer on Max Ferguson's "Dark Side of the Mind". John Douglas died in 1991.

William Wymarck Jacobs (Author, *The Monkey's Paw*) was born in London in 1863, the son of a hard-working but poor wharf manager and his wife. He was raised on the docks of Wapping, a seaside port district of the city, hearing stories told by sailors and observing life on the docks. Many of his stories are based on sea folklore and the rustic nature of the men and women that he dealt with daily. Educated and employed as a clerk, Jacobs tried to portray the poverty and uneducated lifestyle that he saw around him in a humorous way. His writing style has been compared to that of P.G. Wodehouse, James Thurber and Oscar Wilde, though his stories are very heavily influenced by the colloquial language of his area.

Jacobs, much like Edith Wharton, did not have a full volume of work published until his 30's. In 1896, his first collection of short stories, *Many Cargoes*, was released to great acclaim for its witty look at low-class (and low-brow) seaside life. Among his writings are a handful of ghost stories, most based on legends and tales told by sailors come to port from far off shores that Jacobs himself would never visit. The most famous of these, *The Monkey's Paw*, will be performed this evening. Written in 1901, the story was published in a collection which included several other tales of the supernatural. It was considered, at the time, to be the most gruesome ghost story ever written, yet it was widely accepted and published to this day as a staple of supernatural fiction.

Len Peterson (Adaptation, The Monkey's Paw) has been hailed as Canada's most prolific and versatile playwright. He was born in 1917 in Regina, Saskatchewan, and has produced over 1,000 works for radio, TV and the stage. He has been honored many times by the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA), which he helped form. His plays often focused on social issues, which the CBC would broadcast when commercial networks in the U.S. wouldn't touch them: plays such as Burlap Bags (1946), The Great Hunger (1960), Women in the Attic (1971), and the winner of the Institute for Education by Radio's Best Entry award, They're All Afraid (1944). Peterson regularly adapted short stories as part of his radio work, several of which were done for the supernatural/horror anthology series *Nightfall*. Among these were "The Monkey's Paw" by W. W. Jacobs, "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allen Poe, and "The Stone Ship" by W. H. Hodgkins. Peterson lives in Toronto with his wife, Iris.

Don Quinn (Writer, *Gildy's Halloween Party*) started out as a commercial artist and cartoonist, but noticed that the magazines tossed out his drawings, yet seemed to love his captions. He was the single vision behind *Fibber McGee & Molly*, writing most of the show's content himself, but he and the Jordans were partners in the show. He poured his love of wordplay and tongue twisters into Fibber's character. Quinn's writing style was legendary, putting off a script until the last minute he'd "get a big pot of coffee and two cartons of cigarettes and he'd sit up all night". He loved to toss off-color bits that weren't meant to air into his scripts, just get a rise out of the censors. Don Quinn left *Fibber McGee & Molly* in 1950 to try new things in radio. He died in 1967 at the age of 67.

Edith Wharton (Author, *The Maid's Bell*) was born Edith Newbold Jones into a wealthy family in New York City in 1862. Without formal schooling, she educated herself by reading from her father's expansive "gentleman's library" and working with a private tutor. At the age of 14, Edith wrote her first novella and was introduced to the likes of Emerson, Thoreau, and other influential authors of her time.

In 1885, at 23 years old, Edith married Edward Robbins Wharton, 12 years her senior. The pair had very little in common and Edith was quite unhappy. The marriage ended in 1913 with a divorce.

Edith's female characters, like herself, suffer loveless marriages, seemingly endless social obligations and repressed sexuality. These themes were, no doubt, often on Edith's mind. She herself could only find fulfillment through her writing and it was not until 1905, at the age of 36, with *House of Mirth* that she gained success and recognition as an author.

In 1902, Edith built a country home in Lenox, Massachusetts. Her estate, "The Mount," is testament to her love of architecture, gardening and literature. From 1906 to the end of her life in 1937, Edith spent a great deal of time in France amongst writers, artists and journalists including the love of her life, Morton Fullerton and dear friend Henry James.

With over 40 books published, Edith was a prolific writer with many collections of short fiction, including several supernatural stories, one of which we will perform tonight. Written in 1902, *The Lady Maid's Bell* is considered by many to be one of her finest and most chilling stories.



GLOSSARY

Fibber McGee & Molly

Blue book – A social register published in many cities listing "fashionable addresses" and the names of the wealthy elite.

Check for a short beer — A type of "trade token" – private coins issued by businesses with a set value towards trade or for a particular good, in this case "a short beer" (i.e. a half-mug or 7-ounce glass).

Roosevelt & Early — Stephen Tyree Early (1889 – 1951) was a U.S. journalist and government official. He served as the first-ever White House Press Secretary under Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1937 to 1945.

Pippin — A tart, green apple along the lines of a Granny Smith, but a tad firmer and tarter. Considered ideal for pie-making. During the Jazz Age, "pippin" was also a slang term for a pretty girl.

Seabiscuit - A very popular race horse that rose from obscurity to capture the hearts of Americans and became a symbol of hope during the Great Depression.

Fast track – Horse racing term. The optimum condition for a dirt track – dry, fast and even.

The Maid's Bell

Dogsbody — A term that originated in the British Royal Navy at the time of Admiral Nelson that has come to mean a lowly person who gets all the menial, disagreeable, or boring jobs.

Typhoid — An illness caused by bacteria similar to Salmonella. Between 1860 and 1900, the typhoid mortality rate rose as high as 174 deaths per 100,000 people in the city of Chicago alone. Survivors often exhibited weakened constitutions, pale complexions and other effects for some months after passage of the disease.

 \mathbf{Wop} — A derogatory term for foreigners, particularly of Italian or Southern European descent, commonly used at the turn of the 19th Century.

GLOSSARY

The Monkey's Paw

Stationery Engineer – Someone who looks after machinery such as pumping engines, lifts or hoists.

Chinese Gordon — Charles George Gordon, C.B. (1833 – 1885), known as Chinese Gordon, Gordon Pasha, and Gordon of Khartoum, was a British army officer and administrator. He is remembered for his exploits in China and northern Africa.

John Wesley — An 18th-century Anglican clergyman and Christian theologian, John Wesley (1703–1791) was an early leader in the Methodist movement. His strongly-advocated belief in evangelism had a profound influence on England's Colonial Expansionist era.

FIBBER MCGEE & MOLLY: HEAVENLY DAYS!

Fibber McGee & Molly was one of America's most beloved situation comedies and is considered by many authorities to be the backbone series of the Golden Age of Radio. It starred vaudevillians Marian and Jim Jordan as the titular couple. The show premiered on April 16th, 1935 and ran for an unprecedented 25 years.

Written for most of its run by cartoonist Don Quinn, *Fibber McGee & Molly*'s formula was predictable, yet highly-successful: each week, Fibber would land himself in one strange situation or another and encounter the show's usual cadre of colorful of supporting characters before the dust settled. Each character had a familiar routine and the show's audience grew to eagerly anticipate their gimmicks and catchphrases.

The most popular of these characters was the McGee's neighbor, Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve. Fibber went all-out in his efforts to flummox Gildy, using an array of interesting practical jokes. Despite this, Fibber and Gildersleeve were quite good friends and their exchanges, no matter how intense, were all in fun. Gildersleeve departed Wistful Vista in 1941 for his own, highlysuccessful series.

There were several famous running gags on *Fibber McGee & Molly*. Around the half-way point of every episode, announcer Harlow Wilcox would appear as himself and manage to work a plug for the show's sponsor into the story, much to the chagrin of those present. Then there was Fibber's notoriously over-stuffed closet which, when opened, exploded in a shower of debris, knick-knacks, and other cacophonic clutter.

As television drew audiences away from radio, programs were forced to change to survive. In May 1950, *Fibber McGee & Molly*'s sponsor of 15 years, Johnson's Wax, ended its support. Other sponsors came and went and in June 1953, the last 30-minute episode was broadcast. A daily 15-minute version ran for a few years, but the series eventually faded into a chain of 5-minute segments scattered throughout NBC's weekend programming. The last episode was broadcast on September 6th, 1959.

NIGHTFALL: CAREFUL ... OF THE EDGE!

In 1980, the newly-appointed Head of Radio Drama for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was approached by Bill Howell (producer of the sci-fi adventure series *Johnny Chase: Secret Agent of Space*) with an idea for a supernatural/horror anthology with an edge. When the green light was given for Howell's project, CBC Radio little knew they had given life to what would become their most successful—and most controversial radio drama series: *Nightfall*.

The first episode, "Love and the Lonely One", aired on Friday, July 4th, 1980 at 7:30 PM. The episodes that followed featured sciencefiction, mystery, fantasy, and human drama themes, in addition to the staple of supernatural and horror plays. Adaptations of popular short stories such as "The Monkey's Paw" and "The Tell-Tale Heart", as well as original plays like "Welcome to Homerville" and "Wind Chill", were also produced. Many writers, actors and producers—both the well-known and the up-and-coming—lent their talent to the series.

During its first two years, *Nightfall* was based in Toronto, with Bill Howell as the series' Executive Producer. Episodes made during that time were hosted by "the mysterious Luther Kranst", voiced by actor Henry Ramer. For its final season, production control of *Nightfall* was transferred to Vancouver and a new Executive Producer, Don Kowalchuk, who cast voice-actor Bill Reiter as the new Host, Frederick Hende. Throughout its run, episodes of *Nightfall* were produced by CBC Radio facilities from all over Canada. There was even one American entry, produced by a recording studio in New York City.

Nightfall was a popular program because of Howell's vision of a show that pushed boundaries. Certain episodes were so terrifying that the CBC registered hundreds of complaints, and some affiliate stations dropped the show. Episodes like "The Repossession", "The Blood Countess" and "The Porch Light" contributed to the nightmares of many Canadians. Despite the controversy, *Nightfall* went on to run 100 episodes.

After three years, *Nightfall* was retired, broadcasting its last original episode—"Waters Under the Bridge"—on Friday, May 13th, 1983.

SPECIAL THANKS

Rev. Molly Baskette and all the members of First Church.

Peter Olszowka, for the loan of vitally needed audio equipment.

Ron Brian, for building many of our Foley/FX devices.

Beckie Hunter, for filling in wherever she was needed and always having a solution.

Jenn Cseh, for her endless ability to offer random acts of kindness and assistance.

Andie Stabler, for flying out to be our General Dogsbody.

Len Peterson, for kindly allowing us to perform his version of *The Monkey's Paw*, and Marielaine Church, for letting us use her brother's script for *The Maid's Bell*.

Theatre@First, for their support and flexibility in coordinating rehearsal times and locations, the use of their wardrobe, sound system, concessions, and their generosity in support of our efforts.

The Longwood Players, for accommodating our space needs.

Michael J. Salo at Strange Fortune, Tony Wakeford of Sol Invictus, Night of Procer Veneficus, and Kevin Hartnell of Umbra and The Black Drum, for their gifts of music.

We'd also like to thank our friends, our family, and our audience.

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