

## A note from Our Town Passionate Players participant

### Patricia Golubev

In Act three of *Our Town*, the newly dead Emily Webb, having been given the chance to “relive” a day in her past, laments: *“It goes so fast ... we don’t have time to look at one another. ... do any human beings ever realize life while they live it ... every, every minute?”*

This sad complaint resonates with audiences, of course, for we all know that our lives are so fleeting; so many of us miss the temporary beauty of each minute, struggling as we do, facing challenges and stress, but too often lacking awareness and appreciation of each precious moment of life.

Unlike Emily, however, those of us privileged enough to be part of the Passionate Players have been given a rare gift. Instead of that rushed, deadened existence so bemoaned by Emily, we have been offered a magical escape from everyday reality on many cold, dark winter evenings. Some twenty-nine of us, ranging in age from adolescence to the autumn of life, have spent the last six months immersed in a slower, “make-believe” world, where we have played together, dug deeply into ourselves, taken incredible risks, and, in the process, learned something about acting and performing. We have, I think, savoured each and every minute we have been given to really look at, really listen to, and really understand one another. And all this while being immersed in a kind of upside-down reality.

For, in a very real sense, the experience of being a “Passionate Player” is very much the opposite of the world “out there.” As opposed to the work world of competition, hierarchy and status, the classes and rehearsals have brought us together in a non-judgmental environment of rough equality. Further, there is a basic rule of trust and support: we open ourselves up fully to the rest of the group because we know that we will be cared for and respected. And we will grow together.

How does all this happen? It might feel like magic, but it’s not, not really. There are two key reasons for this magic. First and foremost is the patient, respectful, and brilliant guidance provided by our wise, young coaches and directors, whose unbelievable talent is matched only by their unbelievable humility. (Oh, yes, and unbelievable wit!) Under their expert encouragement and prodding, we have grown internally as actors and as a tightly knit community. I am continually wowed by the mentorship they provide: they treat us bumbling amateurs, so prone to missteps and errors, with total respect, as though we are the professionals they really are. (Some of us occasionally pinch ourselves: are we really being taught and directed by some of the most creative and innovative directors in Canada today?) And, secondly, because of this sterling guidance, we, this mixed group of refugees from reality, continue to nurture and support one another, always ready to really listen to one another, really look at one another, and really learn from one another.

In so doing, we have been given a rare chance to realize life while we live it ... each and every minute. And, at the same time, we have also managed to recreate this timeless community of Grover’s Corners, in our imaginations and in this beautiful old church. And that, I think, is the stuff of miracles. In the words of another great American writer, Willa Cather: *“Miracles ... rest not so much upon ... healing power coming ... from afar, but upon our perceptions being made finer, so that, for a moment, our eyes can see and our ears can hear what there is around us always.”*

**I am so grateful.**