

# Gladstone Hotel headlines for site-specific plays



BY ERIN HATFIELD – THE PARKDALE VILLAGER  
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A Parkdale community social worker stomps her way up the stairs of the Gladstone Hotel. She's there to see Harry Kraft, who 60 years after having first visited the hotel has returned to rent his old room and no-one is quite sure why.

This story of lost love and haunting memories may not be true, but as the actors of Convergence Theatre move about the hotel, seemingly oblivious to the voyeurs that make up its traveling audience, it isn't a stretch to imagine this play actually could have been part of the hotel's history.

Convergence Theatre takes audiences on a journey through the historic Gladstone Hotel with The Gladstone Variations - four interconnected, simultaneously performed half-hour plays. All revolve around the hotel and the building's past. The audience members follow the cast through the Gladstone Hotel at 1214 Queen St. W., to hear these stories and see the hotel's ghosts, all while the hotel goes about its regular business.

Aviva Armour-Ostroff, a resident of Parkdale, is in the variation 'Requiem for a Hotel'. The story is of the hotel's unofficial Karaoke Queen and her encounter with a pair of Queen West scenesters. "For me what is more challenging is when real people, hotel guests walk through," Armour-Ostroff said. "And stop and stare and don't understand that they are standing in the middle of a play." Armour-Ostroff and her fellow actor Richard Greenblatt said they just try to stay focused on the other person they are working with. "It is still a public space," said Greenblatt, who is also a resident of Parkdale. In Greenblatt's variation, 'The Tearful Bride', he plays a concierge in direct address, meaning he can talk to the audience (and the general public when they stumble on his play). "I am really dealing with the here and now in a much more direct way," he said. 'The Tearful Bride' is the tale of a bellhop who encounters a bride as she waits for her impending groom.

The Gladstone Variations debuted at the 2007 Fringe Festival where it was well received. This is a remount of that production, but Armour-Ostroff said it is a little more layered and a little richer this time around. It is four different plays that combine site-specific and promenade theatre. The scripts revolve around the Gladstone Hotel. "The hotel is definitely a character in the plays," Greenblatt said. "It is part of what all four stories are about."

The pieces use all parts of the hotel. 'The Tearful Bride' for example starts in the back alley and proceeds up the back staircase and ends up on the fourth floor and all the other plays flow through different areas of the hotel. All four shows are going on at the same time. There are about 20 people viewing each show. Variation 1 is two shows and Variation 2 is also two shows. So while half of Variation 1 is seeing 'The Tearful Bride', the other half is seeing 'Requiem for a Hotel'. Similarly with Variation 2, with half the audience seeing 'The Card Trick' and the other half seeing 'I Grow Old', and then those audiences switch. "It took a lot of very fine tuning adjustments," Greenblatt said. "It took a lot of trial and error."

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Performances happen at 7 p.m. Sunday to Friday through to August 3. There are Monday matinees on July 21 and 28 at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$25 for shows on Sunday through Thursday and \$30 on Fridays. Tickets to the matinees are \$20. Limited at-door sales are available one hour prior to the shows. For tickets call 416-504-7529 or [www.artsboxoffice.ca](http://www.artsboxoffice.ca)