

PGC
WOMEN'S
CAUCUS
NEWSLETTER

PGC 50th Anniversary
Reflection Piece:

"It's Personal"

By Mary Humphrey
Baldridge



Next year, in 2022, PGC will turn half a century old!!! In celebration of our 50th Anniversary, we are inviting people to write "Reflection Pieces" about their time with PGC. Why did you first become a member? Who or what was important to you then? Has this changed over time? How did your encounters with PGC (e.g. staff members, programs, webinars, etc.) affect your writing, career, skills set, etc.? We would love for you to share your experiences by letting us know what PGC means to you! Here we have a second offering from PGC founding member, Mary Humphrey Baldridge, who wrote this piece in 2016. No recent edits have been made; the work stands as it was written.

"It's Personal"

Sometimes I have felt like a playwright – or a person, for that matter – without a country. Because I married Harold Baldridge and went with him to New York in 1958, right after University (U of A), my life has been different from what it might have been. I had wanted to be an actress. In fact, at the risk of sounding melodramatic, I once thought I would die if I couldn't act! And I thank Walter Kaasa and Elizabeth Sterling Haynes in Edmonton, B. Iden Payne at the Banff Centre, and, of course, Gordon Peacock at the University of Alberta for giving me the chance to be an actress – for a while. But two little children put an end to that. I knew a number of young women in New York and Woodstock (NY), balancing their lives as actresses and mothers, and realized I couldn't do that: put my children second.

Then, when we returned to Calgary, when Harold became AD of Theatre Calgary in the 1970s, I was able to focus on what I wanted to be, to do, to pursue, and that was write plays. Not short stories anymore, not even poetry; although I never did stop writing poetry.

I remember driving back and forth between the Banff Centre and Calgary and thinking: If I can't be an actress, then, obviously, what I should do is write plays. But what? And that's when I wrote *THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MOMENT* (almost all of it in my head). Thanks to Mark Schoenberg, who directed it, the play premiered in 1974 at Theatre 3 in Edmonton, where I was born and raised, as they say; but my parents were both gone by then and both Harold and I were "an only child." My "family" was very small.

It is no exaggeration to say that "the theatre" became my family, people who worked in it, and people I know better than my friends: meaning characters in plays, from Pegeen Mike and Hero (whom I once played) to Hamlet, Ophelia and Gertrude, to Hosanna, the title character in the play by Michel Tremblay, to Walsh and Sitting Bull in Sharon Pollock's *WALSH*, to all the soldiers in *JOURNEY'S END* and, of course, the people I wrote about, the characters in my plays, not just the women but some men, like John Ware, the man and the "myth." As one of my characters says after his death: "We gotta' remember his life and the stories about him. 'Cause his life and his stories are our life

and our stories, too. ...I'm a feared of the future, 'specially without John standing between me and what's comin' next."

So, what has all this personal stuff got to do with PGC? Everything.

PGC has been my lifeline, my connection to my world, my connection to my country; a legitimate part of my "family." It has validated me as well as helped me. Theatre is a communal art and PGC has enabled me to be part of my playwrights' community despite the fact that I have lived in NYC for most of my adult life – not a choice that Harold and I ever anticipated. PGC has always been supportive of my work and the people I have communicated with, unfailingly helpful, even interested. Some have gone out of their way to help me. "I have family."

I am grateful for and appreciate all the different services PGC provides: publishing and making members' plays easily available – including mine – literally world-wide; protecting rights through the creation of contracts; lobbying funding bodies (like CanCopy [now Access Copyright] and Public Lending Rights) to recognize those above mentioned rights and to make money available for creating new work, travel... In short – and perhaps most importantly – not only does PGC provide a high-profile face for playwright who belongs, the institution has every member's back.

We live in a world where kindness is at a premium, unselfishness practically unheard of, success measured in dollars, media hype, tweets. What PGC provides is very special. I'm grateful for its very existence and proud to be a member.



Mary Humphrey Baldridge is a Lifetime Member of the Dramatists Guild of America and a founding member of PGC. Her full-length produced plays include: *Genesis: The Mary Shelley Play* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2019, Winner of Best Overseas Production); *Ruth & Robert & Robert & Ruth*; *The Revenge of the Dinosaur Lady* (Finalist Mountain Playhouse International Comedy Playwriting Contest, 2009); *The Photographic Moment*; *The Sanitation Chronicles*; and *La Bonne Dame* (conceived with Deborah Zall), a dance/drama, using the writing of George Sand. Newer works include *Land Warrier*, an anti-war play (Finalist, Centenary Stage Company Susan Glaspell Contest, 2010); *The Cold House*; *Fata Morgana*; and *The Death of Darcy Sheppard*. Awards received: Canada Council Artist Grant (*Genesis*) and Plum Foundation Grant (*La Bonne Dame*).