

## THE UPBEAT Featherston Drive school custodian sacrifices ponytail to help fight cancer, E10



## STAGED FRIGHT



BRUCE DEACHMAN/OTTAWA CITIZEN

Geneviève Packer, right, as the Player Villain, pours poison into the ear of the Player King, played by Abbey Sugars-Keen, in the *Company of Adventurers'* presentation of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Watching, from left, are actors Maija Merriam, Charlotte MacLean, Lucy Boyd, Morgan Sugars-Keen, Margot Peluso-Pope, Neve Sugars-Keen, Amanda Schrader, Lizzie Thiele and Rachel Lowenberg.

# Young company masters the bard

In a backyard in Old Ottawa South, 11 girls tackle Shakespeare's most difficult play, with ease. **BRUCE DEACHMAN** reports.

It was a bitterly cold winter's night on the ramparts of Elsinore Castle in Denmark and, as sentries Barnardo, Francisco and Marcellus attempted to convince Prince Hamlet's friend Horatio that they had seen a ghost, the very apparition,

not so coincidentally resembling the recently murdered King Hamlet, appeared.

"Speak to it, Horatio," Marcellus urged. "What art thou," Horatio demanded of the spirit, "that usurp'st this time of night, together with

that fair and warlike form in which the majesty of buried Denmark did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee, speak!"

And there, only a minute or two into Shakespeare's longest and most complex play, the 35 or so audience members sat, transfixed in lawn and patio chairs in a small backyard in Old Ottawa South, glued to a performance so well staged that it carried them hundreds of years back in time to the parapets of treach-

ery and bedrooms of incest, to the graveyards of depravity and to the cavernous stone halls of revenge.

The closing Friday evening of September certainly brought with it a measure of cold, but some of the iciness that spectators experienced while watching that Glen Avenue performance surely came from the depth of the tragedy unfolding onstage.

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## Serving up new steak tartare rules

It's still on the menu, but public health working on guidelines



JOANNE CHIANELLO

Steak tartare is just one seeming contradiction after another. It's a hunk of raw, cold, chopped meat, often topped with an uncooked egg — and yet, it's completely delicious.

On a public health policy front, the Old World delicacy presents even more incongruity.

The dish is almost certainly banned, if one was to take the province's regulations literally. Section 33 (5) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act clearly states that anything containing meat "shall be cooked to reach a temperature of at least 74 degrees Celsius for at least 15 seconds." Under those rules, steak tartare does not qualify.

The raw-beef (and sometimes bison) appetizer is outright banned in a handful of provincial municipalities, but served all sorts of other places, including about a dozen restaurants across town.

Indeed, an official at Ottawa Public Health who oversees health protection insists no one at the city department has any intention of prohibiting steak tartare.

"Do I feel that steak tartare can be made safely? Absolutely," says Siobhan Kearns of OPH.

The province's "approach" to enforcing its 23-year-old regulations describes how "many public health units use a risk-based approach to determine if certain food products may be served safely," including raw meat. But nowhere does the Ontario health department publish guidelines outlining how raw-meat dishes should be stored, handled and prepared.

No wonder, then, that a single complaint from a diner who suspected her gastrointestinal illness came from the beef tartare she ate at a restaurant ended in mass confusion.

Public health officials investigated the establishment in question and asked that steak tartare not be served while they figured out what was going on. Over the next day or so, investigators also asked a couple of other restaurants in the same neighbourhood to temporarily stop serving the raw meat as well.

## THE PUBLIC CITIZEN



WAYNE CUDDINGTON / OTTAWA CITIZEN

Jennifer Skuce, her husband, William McCullough, and their daughters Hattie, 8, and Audrey, 5, outside their Irving Place home where the city is planning to cut back six half-century-old mugo pines to widen the street by 30 centimetres.

## Couple dismayed city willing to destroy their greenery

Discussion continues, official says



HUGH ADAMI

So far, so good, Jennifer Skuce and William McCullough thought the other day.

After managing some hurdles to save most of their 56-year-old mugo pines during road and sewer construction on Irving Place, near the

Civic Hospital, the couple is in a showdown with the city over the huge shrubs fronting their home.

The city wants large portions of the pines removed for asphalt and curb work. Skuce and McCullough say that wouldn't be necessary if the city simply looked at alternative methods and smaller machinery for the work.

They also fear massive cutting would cause irreversible damage to the half-dozen pines and ultimately kill them.

They say they are dismayed the city is willing to destroy such greenery that not only enhances their property, but adds beauty to their street. The pines give the house stunning curb appeal, and provide their two young daughters with an enchanted forest where they often play.

"I don't know why the city doesn't have strict guidelines to protect residential property," says Skuce, a real-estate broker. Their neighbour, Peter Milne, lost a two-storey-high mulberry tree as a result of the sewer and water main work over the summer, and says he "will take up whatever needs to be done to save" the couple's majestic pines.

The road project, which involves the same work on Bayswater Place for a total cost of \$4.7 million, is moving into the next phase — paving Irving and installing a new curb on the couple's side of the street. The city engineer overseeing the work has told them that large portions of the mugo pines have to be removed. More room is needed on the couple's side of the street as it is being widened about 30 centimetres (one foot), forcing the curb to be pushed back.

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## \$1M fire displaces at least 35 residents

Four rowhouses on Lees Avenue damaged

MEGHAN HURLEY  
OTTAWA CITIZEN

At least 35 people were displaced after an early-morning fire tore through part of a 14-unit rowhouse complex early Friday, causing more than \$1 million in damage.

The fire at 211 Lees Ave. destroyed four units, heavily damaged two others and caused smoke and water damage to another pair.

The other six units suffered minor water damage.

None of the residents was injured, but one firefighter was taken to hospital with a minor injury.

Firefighters responded at 2:07 a.m. after they received several 911 calls.

When they arrived, the blaze had spread to four units in the townhouse complex, said Marc Messier, an Ottawa Fire Services spokesman.

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## CITY

## Hamlet: Final shows

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And here's the thing: Twelve-year-old Charlotte MacLean played the role of Hamlet. Neve Sugars-Keen, 13 and a regular occupant of the house attached to the temporary stage, performed the roles of both Claudius and the ghost, while her younger sisters, 11-year-old Abbey and eight-year-old Morgan, took on five roles between them: Laertes, Barnardo and the Player King for Abbey, and the player Queen and a messenger for Morgan.

In all, the play — edited and rewritten slightly by the Sugars-Keens' parents, university English professors Cynthia Sugars and Paul Keen to fit into a two-hour window — features 11 girls aged eight to 13 acting 22 characters' parts, as well as playing various musical instruments and a fog machine.

This is not some lightweight production of the Three Little Pigs, say. There are costume changes, a real parapet, and Sugars and Keen came up with the idea of actually sawing a coffin-sized trap door into their deck, to add realism to the famous graveyard scene. And the young actors just eat up the experience like candy.

"I love it," says Abbey. "It makes my brain feel content."

Morgan, meanwhile, eagerly recites her favourite line with the ease of a practised linguist: "Sleep rock thy brain," she, as the Player Queen, tells her husband, "and never come mischance between us twain!"

This year's Hamlet marks the third production for the Company of Adventurers, as the troupe is known. Two years ago, it staged Macbeth, passing a hat after each performance and raising about \$400 for the Humanitarian Coalition. Last year's production of The Tempest netted close to \$1,000 for the Ottawa Humane Society, and they're hoping that, weather permitting, this year's shows will bring in as much for the Ottawa Mission. Two of last

weekend's productions were rained out, however, leaving just three scheduled for this weekend.

The idea to start a drama company was Sugars', and came of the notion that children were capable of — and interested in — staging far more challenging plays than elementary school programs typically offer.

"Stephen Leacock used to direct a kids' theatre group in the summer in Orillia," she says, "and I always thought that sounded like a great idea."

It was Neve's suggestion to mount Macbeth that first year, one of a very few Shakespeare plays she, then 11, had even heard of.

"I liked it for the same reason that everyone else likes it," she recalls. "A lot of people die, and there are witches and ghosts and lots of excitement in general."

Since then, they've alternated tragedies with lighter fare, with the casts so far being made up of the three girls and their school friends, most from Westboro Academy and Hopewell Public School. Sugars and Keen hope to open it up next year, though, to anyone interested and willing to commit the necessary time and energy.

Castings and an initial read-through of the script take place in June, after school ends, with the summer being filled with twice-weekly, three-hour rehearsals and, occasionally, a third, all-day, practice.

"But I don't look on this as work, like I do school," insists Neve, "and we're all kind of sad when it's over."

Unless rained out, there will be two more shows of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, at 5 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday, at 57 Glen Ave.

For more details or information on The Company of Adventurers children's summer theatre program, contact Cynthia or Paul at csugars@uottawa.ca.

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## FAIRLY HUNGRY



BRUNO SCHLUMBERGER/OTTAWA CITIZEN

Teyan, 6, left, with her friend, Isabelle, 5, gaze raptly at cotton candy being made at the 150th annual Carp Fair, which runs through Sunday.

## Chianello: Commotion ensued

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Some communications commotion ensued, where-by restaurateurs were hearing that steak tartare was banned from Ottawa restaurants.

The backlash that ensued has public health officials bent over backwards to take responsibility for the confusion.

"At no point was there any intention to ban it across the city," says Kearns. "I apologize for any miscommunication."

In the meantime, the lab tests on the meat in question came back on Wednesday.

The good news: the meat itself was not contaminated with anything known to make humans sick, such as salmonella, E. coli or listeria.

The bad news: it was found to contain something called "total-gram negative bacteria"; organisms that, according to health officials, "are indicators of poor food handling practices." In regular English, that means that

somewhere along the line, the dish was contaminated with something that could have made the diner sick.

But because the complainant took the leftover steak tartare out of the restaurant, public health can't be sure where the contamination occurred. That's one of the reasons OPH won't release the name of the restaurant — it wouldn't be fair to taint a restaurant's reputation without proof. (Most OPH restaurant inspections — including health violations — are posted online.)

Despite its convoluted progress, this story has a happy ending for gourmands and policy-wonks alike.

Working with some of the area's most respected restaurateurs, OPH is now undertaking to establish real guidelines for preparing steak tartare. The rules are sure to include the cuts of meat allowed, the temperature it must be stored at, that it be hand-cut just before being served (as opposed to

minced in a grinder), as well as other preparation details such as the proper way to clean knives and surfaces. Steak tartare is probably not a great candidate for takeout or a doggie bag.

And OPH plans to add an extra layer onto the routine inspections of restaurants that serve steak tartare, or other raw-meat dishing. Public health officials will soon demand what's known as a "Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point," a procedure whereby the inspector will watch a cook at a restaurant completely prepare the dish from start to finish, ensuring that nothing goes awry in the process.

Establishing these guidelines seems like an eminently sensible idea. And a popular one in public health circles, according to Kearns. In the absence of any formal direction on this front from the province, local health agencies are eager to see what sort of steak tartare protocol Ottawa Public Health comes up with. Why the city is doing

the work of the province is an interesting question, but at least someone is looking to oversee the safety of raw-meat dishes.

And the guidelines had better be well-received by foodies, whose reaction to the threatened steak tartare ban was somewhat over-the-top these last couple of weeks.

Perhaps they were under the incorrect impression that the dish was to be permanently banned from the city. And yes, public health could have communicated its intention more clearly.

Still, we would all do well to remember that no one's going to die from not having steak tartare for a couple of weeks. But you might die from eating tainted meat. Surely we want our public health officials to err on the side of caution, not acquiesce to the precious demographic of diners (in which I include myself) who think nothing of dropping 15 or 20 bucks on an appetizer.

Because good food and safe food should not be contradictions in terms.

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