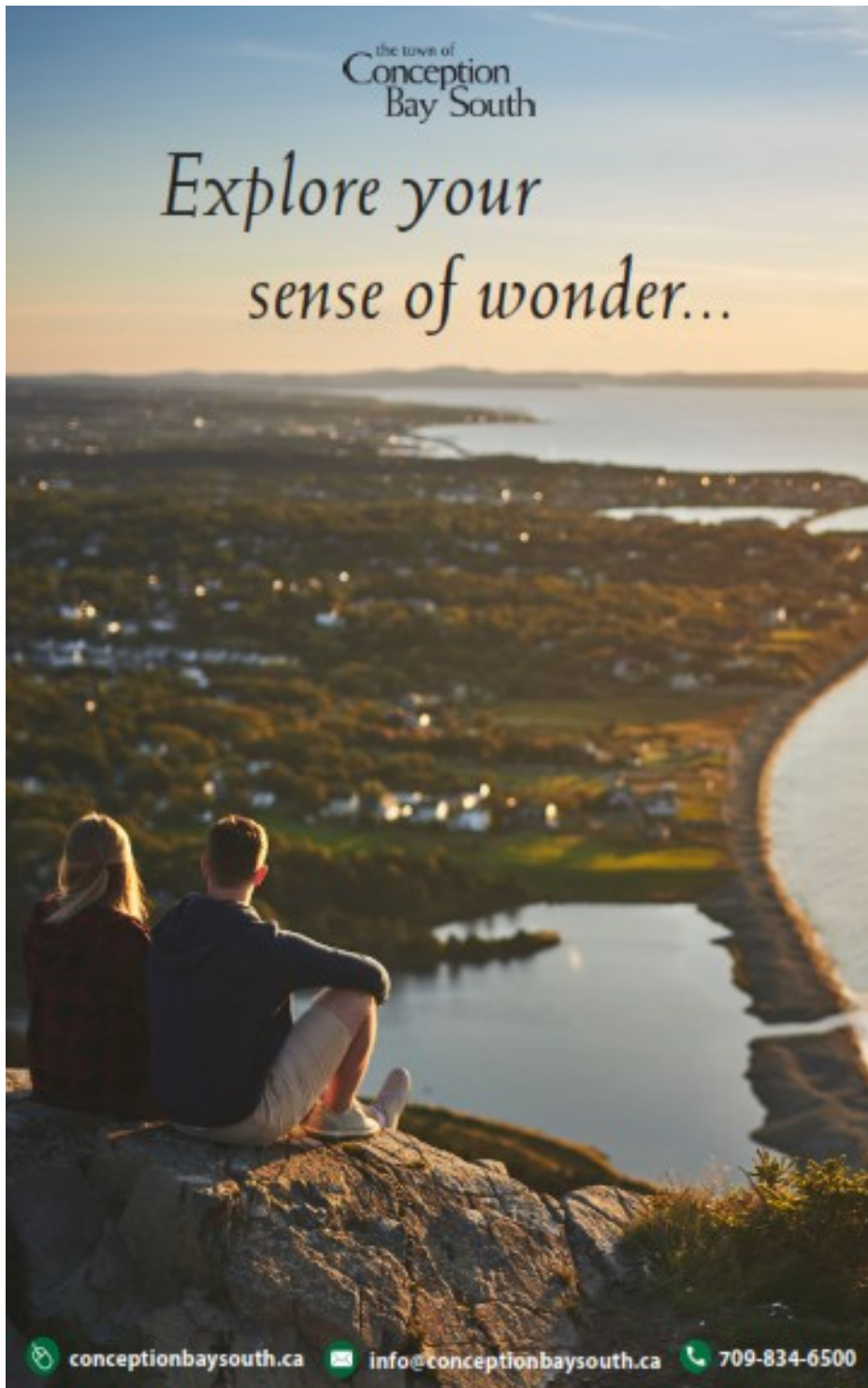




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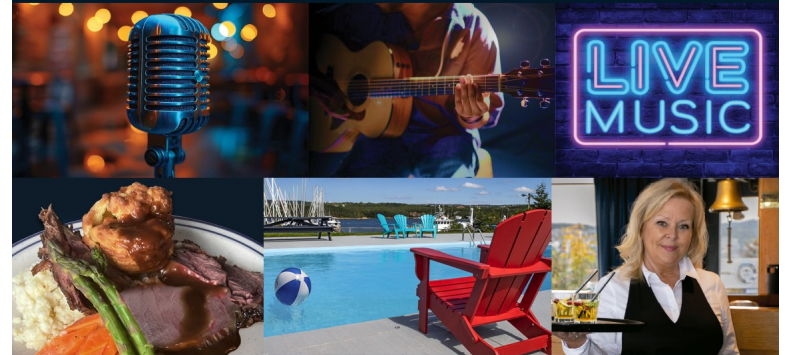
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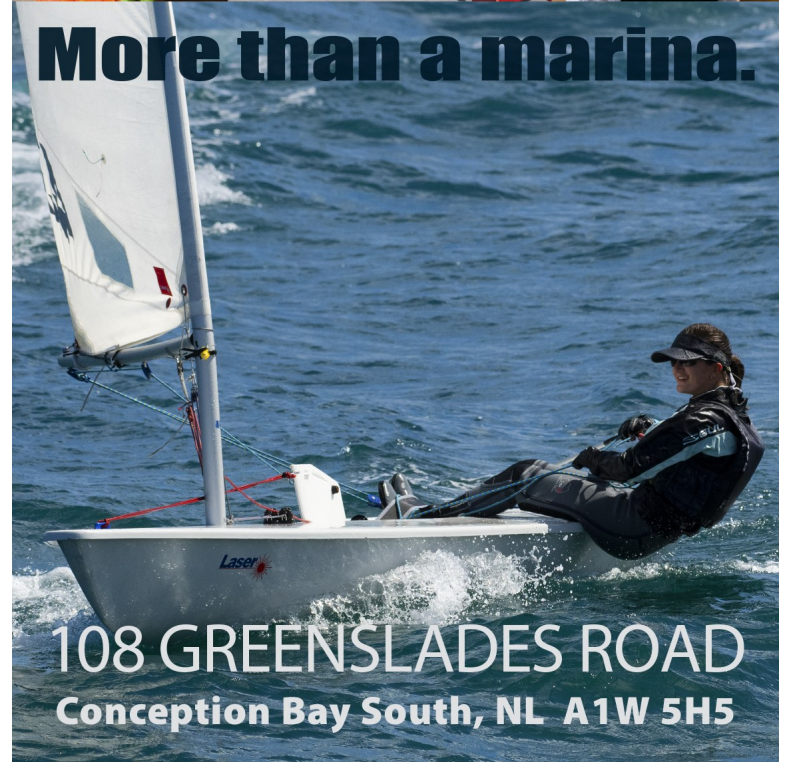


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Theatre CBS and the Royal Newfoundland ~~Yacht~~^{Yacht} Club
present...

Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End

by Alison Engel & Margaret Engel

directed by Chris Panting and
starring Susan Bonnell as Erma

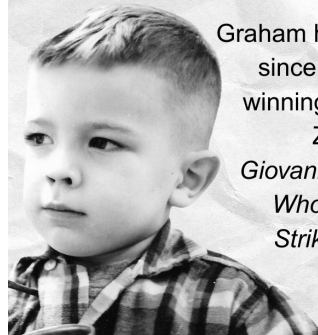
Theatre CBS would like to express special thanks to:

Kathy Evans and the Staff of the Royal Newfoundland Yacht Club
Shaunna Laurence (Wig)
Patricia and Randy Power
Jacqueline Cook
Gord Billard
Phonse King, King's Photography and More

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"Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End" is presented by
arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf
of Samuel French, Inc.
www.concordtheatricals.com

Graham Dillabough: Sound Design



Graham has been working with School Zone Productions since 2013 and Theatre CBS since 2024. His award-winning sound design has backed many of the Twilight Zone productions, as well as *Twelve Angry Men*, *Giovanni's Women*, *Jack Meets the Cat*, Kelly Russell's *Who Knit Ya*, and *IWA - The Newfoundland Loggers Strike of 1959*. More recently, he has contributed to *A Christmas Story*, *Understanding Wonderland*, and now this production

Michelle Lambert: Props

This is Michelle's second time doing props, the first being for a production of *Twelve Angry Men* (School Zone Productions). She is honoured to be a small part of helping to bring this show to the stage and knows you are all going to love it!



Andrea Peddle: Producer



This is Andrea's fourth Theatre CBS production. She is thrilled to be working again alongside this wonderfully creative, innovative, and talented cast and crew. She hopes you enjoy this latest show.

Christine Young: Associate Producer

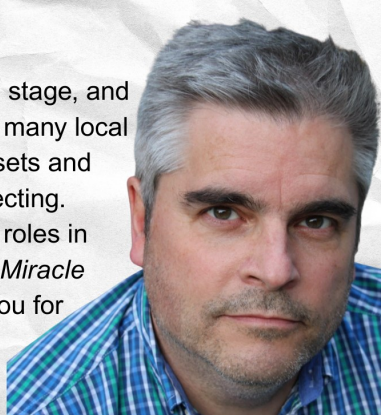


Christine has been involved in theatre since the early 80s and has performed with several companies in various roles. Christine is happy to be involved in another Theatre CBS production(nine and counting). She hopes you enjoy the show.

Creative Team

Chris Panting: Director

Since 2004, Chris has worked on stage, off stage, and backstage on almost forty productions with many local companies; acting, designing and building sets and props, stage managing, producing, and directing. Previous outings with Theatre CBS include roles in *It's A Wonderful Life*, *The Hollow*, *Ageless*, *Miracle on 34th Street* and *Duckish*. Chris thanks you for coming out this evening and he hopes you enjoy the show!



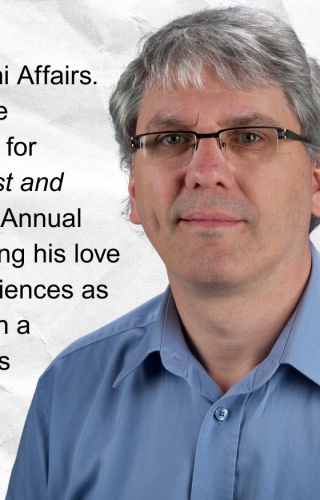
Jaclyn Dimmer: Stage Manager

Jaclyn moved to CBS in 2021 and decided to try something new. She got involved with Theatre CBS, being a stage manager for *The Hollow*, and *Duckish*. She also tried acting in *A Christmas Carol*, *A Christmas Story*, *Miracle on 34th Street* and *Ageless*. She is looking forward to helping with future productions, and hopes you enjoy Erma Bombeck.



John Bonnell: Lights

John is an Engagement Officer with MUN Alumni Affairs. He has been involved with Theatre CBS from the beginning, offering technical support and advice for all our productions, including *Duckish: The Ghost and Fairy Stories of Tom Dawe* (2025 Best Lighting, Annual Provincial Drama Festival). John enjoys combining his love of music and theatre with his professional experiences as a video and television producer. He met Susan in a theatre course at MUN, and for the past 35 years they have collaborated on many productions, including two fantastic children.



Director's Note

On the surface, *Erma Bombeck: At Wit's End* is a short biography of a life and career, presented by sisters Margaret and Allison Engel using Mrs. Bombeck's trademark sarcastic but insightful sense of humour.

As a biography, the play explores themes of life in suburbia, motherhood, the role of women in mid-20th century America, and balancing the responsibilities of a wife and mother with the desire for something of one's own.

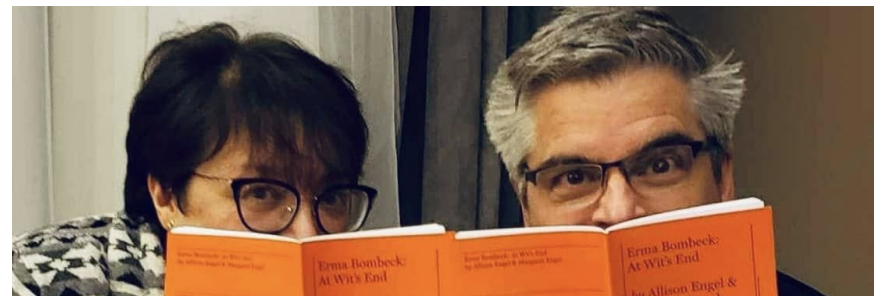
But I doubt you came here tonight to see an exploration of themes. More likely, you're here just to be entertained or because you're lucky enough to remember Erma Bombeck's columns and books. They certainly resonated with my mother, an "ordinary housewife", who used to quote them to me. Her experiences were the same as Erma's and, it turned out, the same as those of millions of other women.

The themes in the play develop in that same way, I think. They start from the everyday, outwardly ordinary experiences of one woman and build into something big, important, and quite often beautiful.

I hope you enjoy the result of all the hard work that has gone into this production.

Thanks for coming.

Chris Panting



Meet the Woman Who Made the World Laugh....

Erma Louise Fiste was born on February 21, 1927. With her parents and half-sister Thelma, Erma lived in a Dayton, Ohio neighborhood filled with hardworking, lower middle class families.

At fifteen, Erma walked into the Dayton Herald and said, "I want to work for your paper." Bill Bombeck worked for the city's morning paper, the Dayton Journal. Sparks flew. After only a couple of dates, he left for the Army and Korea, but when he returned the two - both age twenty-two - got married.

Erma went to college and worked as a columnist, mostly in to the women's section. World War II had created a profound change for American women. With their men at war, millions of women flooded the workplace. Erma's first columns struck a nerve with these women.

When Erma adopted daughter Betsy, she said goodbye to her career without the slightest doubt. Sons Andrew and Matthew followed, but the demands of motherhood amazed Erma. Since no one discussed these feelings in public, Erma thought that she was the only woman in the world experiencing them.



One day in 1964, Erma walked into the office of the editor of the local paper and said, "I'd like to do a column for you." Her popularity grew, and the column eventually appeared in 900 papers. Book deals soon followed, then magazine columns, a regular feature on Good Morning America, and television and movie deals.

Erma was never political, but in the 70s the fight for the Equal Rights Amendment forced her into the arena. It surprised a lot of people when the "voice of the American housewife" came out in support of the ERA. Her support of the amendment did not include its feminist leaders, whom she felt were waging a war using housewives as the battleground.

When asked by a reporter why she poured so much time and effort into the ERA, Erma replied, "I'm doing it for my kids. It will be important to them. It's also a great feeling to be a part of history." The failure of the ERA was one of the biggest disappointments of her life.

Erma survived breast cancer and a mastectomy but kept secret the fact that she had kidney disease, until 1993. On April 3, 1996, she received a kidney transplant. She died on April 22, 1996, aged 69, from complications of a kidney transplant.



At her funeral, friend Phil Donahue eulogized, "She was real and she brought us down to earth — gently, generously and with brilliant humor. When the scholars gather hundreds of years from now to learn about us, they can't know it all if they don't read Erma."

*From the book, **Erma Bombeck: Writer and Humorist** by Lynn Hutner Colwell.*

Susan Bonnell as Erma Bombeck

Raised in Topsail, Susan is proud to be a founding member of Theatre CBS. Mostly writing and directing with TCBS, this is her first full acting role with our company. Select acting credits include Annie in *Calendar Girls* (SJP, 2023); Bemis in *The Twilight Zone* (School Zone, 2022); Ouiser in *Steele Magnolias* (DW, 2020); Julia in *The Christmas Spirit* (SJP, 2018); and Madame Arcati in *Blithe Spirit* (DW, 2018). This performance is dedicated to her mom, Cynthia Gill, who passed away in 2024 just days before this show was originally scheduled, and all the moms like her who manage the "seesaw between work and home."

