

LABRADOR NORTH CREATIVE ARTS FESTIVAL

Jens Haven Memorial School

Nain, Labrador

presents

"The Telephone" was written by the Drama Club of Jens Haven Memorial School. It is a whimsical look at the days when Nain had only one radio phone, and "all-hands" could hear "all things". It is presented into three "conversations":

I. "Just Between Me & You" (a conversation between sweethearts)

Tom - Jacko Jararuse
Liz - Lynn Baikie
Makkovik Operator - Beatrice Hunter
Bertha - Susanna Barbour
Listeners - Katie Henoche
 Kitura Fox
 Greg Ford
 Alfie Winters

II. "It's All in Your Head" (a conversation between a doctor and his patient)

Liz - Lynn Baikie
Grandma - Beatrice Hunter
Doctor - Greg Ford
Gossips - Kitura Fox
 Katie Henoche
 Susanna Barbour
 Alfie Winters

III. "I'll Be Home on the Next Boat" (a lively! conversation between a man and his wife)

Abrah - Alfie Winters
Harriet - Kitura Fox
Leah - Beatrice Hunter
Sybilla - Susanna Barbour
Matilda - Katie Henoche
Operator - Greg Ford
Listener - Jacko Jararuse
Liz - Lynn Baikie

THE TELEPHONE SONG . (Nain '82)

(to the tune of Gordon Lightfoots "Railroad Trilogy")

(Refrain)

There was a time in this fair
When the telephones were one;
When your business really wasn't yours,
It b'longed to ev'ryone -

1. When talking to Makkovik
Meant you talked to Postville too,
And to Davis, and Rigolet
And all the coast - right through...
2. When talking to your sweetheart
Meant your friends all heard it, too
And there wasn't much guesswork left
'Bout who you would woo ...
3. When you asked about your aches and pains
Your messages got crossed,
But to sort it out
'Twould take too long,
So your aches and pains got lost...
4. When private conversation was not possible at all,
For not only did your neighbours....
But the whole coast....
Heard your call.....

"Just Between You and Me...."

SONG. "There was a time, in this fair town,
When the telephones were one

Stage is divided into two: one side represents the home of the Nain Operator (Liz), and the other is a similar set-up in Makkovik. The set would be that of a typical Nain living-room, circa 1950 - a wooden table, the radio-set, a wooden chair or two, chesterfield, etc. Liz is seated in the Nain living-room, knitting. Tom enters, embarrassed. He says nothing. Liz looks up at him, but stands, head down, fingering his cap in his hands. Since he does not speak, Liz returns to her work. Finally, Tom speaks:

Tom: (shyly, quickly) May I use the phone, please, Liz?

Liz: (puts down her knitting, and begins to get up, moving automatically, to start the phoning procedures) Who are you trying to call?

Tom: (stuttering, avoid) Uh....er....ummmm...(fidgets the whole time, looks at his feet, shifts from one foot to the other).

Liz: (pointedly, looking directly at him) Who are you trying to call, Tom?

Tom: (boldly) My aunt. She's in Makkovik. (Silence. More silence. They look at each other.)

Liz: Well??? What's her name? Who are you phoning in Makkovik?

Tom: (Head down, but looks up slightly; mumbles) Bertha.

Liz: What? What's her name? Speak up, boy. I haven't got all day.

Tom: (clears his throat) Bertha! (he shouts, then recoils, embarrassed).

Liz: (backs away a bit) I can hear, I can hear. I'm not . . .
I don't have tiny ears. O.K. Bertha who?
(waits a bit)... Tell me, boy. Let's get this done!

Tom: (bravely, evenly) BERTHA WINTERS

Liz: (knowingly) Oh-h...Bertha Winters. That Bertha!
Bertha is your aunt??? (looks at Tom, who is now blushing)....Oh-h, I see. Bertha is your (clears throat) 'aunt'...

Tom: Well-1, she's not really my aunt...just, sort of...

Liz puts the call through. Others enter, one by one, as she does so. They seat themselves around the room, and chat quietly among themselves, awaiting their turn at the phone.

LIGHTS UP ON 'MAKKOVIK TELEPHONE ROOM'. Bertha is just entering. One customer has just completed a call; as he seats himself with other waiting customers, call comes thru.

MAKKOVIK OP. MAKKOVIK.

Liz: I have a call for Bertha Winters (over).

M.O. Oh, she's right here. How lucky! (over)

Bertha: Hello. (over)

Tom: Hello, is that you, Bertha? ...Aunt Bertha???(over)

Bertha: What? Who's this? (over)

Tom: Tom (over).

Bertha: 'Aunt' Bertha? What do you... oh, yes. Umm, hi, Tommy!

Tom: Aunt Bertha, uh...(looks at Liz to see if she is listening; turns his back to her for more privacy)...uh, Aunt Bertha.. How's Uncle Sidney? (over)

Bertha: Well, umm, Sidney's fine, just fine. How are you? (over)

Tom: I'm fine, just fine. How are the kids? (Nain audience stops chatting, to lean forward with curiosity)...m-my cousins, I mean? (OVER) (They lean back, disinterested).

Bertha: What cousin? (Makkovik audience leans forward). What are you talking about -- oh, they're fine, too. (She looks around and frowns at the nosey audience; turns her back to them; they smile, knowingly, and lean back, innocently. Bertha whispers loudly, directly into receiver).

TOM, COME ON, WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT??? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY? (over)

Tom: (seeing that the Nain folks are now listening intently) Oh, the weather's been cold here, too. (Nain folks lean back). (over)

Bertha: The weather? I don't care about the weath---(Makkovik audience leans forward) -- Oh, I see. Yes, very cold. Hm. Too cold for a trip, I'd say. (she's hinting). Uncle Sidney says the same thing. (Again, whispering directly into the receiver:) TOM, COME ON, WHAT IS IT? Over.

Tom: (whispering loudly); Bertha -- (Nain group forward)
'Aunt' Bertha -- um, do you still -- (over)

Bertha: Still what? (Makkovik group forward). Over.

Tom: Still want one of our new puppies??? (Nain group back). Over.

Bertha: Puppies? (Makkovik group back). What puppies? I didn't know youse had any pupp--- (Makkovik group forward again) ---Oh, puppies. Um, yes, Uncle Sidney said to tell you that we want a black, female pup. (Makkovik group back). When can you bring it down? Over.

Tom: Oh, if you still want the pup, I could bring it as soon as the weather clears up a bit. But are you sure you'll like me -- (Nain group forward) -- it? The pup, I mean. (Nain group back). Over.

Bertha: Oh yes! Bring it along. I'm sure Uncle Sidney will like it too. (directly into receiver) Tom, come as soon as you can! (Makkovik group forward) Bertha notices; and hurries to add) Wee need the puppies real bad -- our team is getting old, and can't go very far. (Makkovik back) Over.

Tom: O.K. Bertha--'Aunt' Bertha. I'm sure I can come fairly soon. (Nain group forward)--hopefully, with the pup. (Can't seem to hang up, or end the conversation; yet can't think of anything more to say) Um-m, see you then - Aunt Bertha...Uncle Sidney, too...tell him I'll be there with the pup...(silence---he doesn't say 'over'... silence...)

Liz: (Breaking in) Tom! Are you finished? Other people want to use the phone too.

Tom: (pops out of a dream, surprised) Whaa? Oh---phone... yeah...finished...yesh...over. Thanks, Aunt Bertha. I mean, Liz. Over. Yeah-h (dreamily hands receiver back to Liz. Liz takes over and finishes up the phone call, Tom stands there, dazed).

Liz: (turning to Tom) That will be \$1.80.

(Tom dreamily reaches into his pocket, hands Liz a \$10.00 bill, without looking at it; dreamily turns and heads out. Liz watches his motion, unbelieving, but is as if frozen, unable to break into his bubble. Finally, she looks down at the bill he handed her, and springs to life.)

Liz: Tom! You gave me \$10.00. Tom! You forgot your change...
(She chases after him, offstage) The others in the Nain group watch the whole scene, intently, and when Liz runs off, they sigh, shrug shoulders, nod to one another as if to say "Who can figure this one out? Oh, well...."

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

(Doctor/Patient Conversation)

Scene opens on an empty stage, divided. An alarm clock ticks away, center. The alarm bell rings; enter Liz, on one side of divider, who begins to set up radio-phone operations. (Her set-operation hours have begun). Also, at bell, enter smartly LISTENERS A, B, C and D, radios under their arms. They stand, briefly, along front of stage; turn to look at ringing clock; when bell stops, they look both ways at each other, nod smartly and knowingly, drop cross-legged to sit on the floor, holding radio out an arm's length in front of them. Once seated, they 'click on' their radios, and begin listening...

Enter Grandma Okkuatsiak, to make call from Liz' operation.

Grandma: (coming slowly, heavily through the door)
Is it time yet, Liz?

Liz: (still busying herself with setting up) Yes, now th'once. I'll just switch on the set, here, and check a few things out. Sit down a bit. Want some tea?

Grandma: (sitting down slowly, painfully) Auca. I'm too tired to have tea. Probably sick, too. If I can sit that's about all I'll be able to do. I wants to phone the doctor - he told me to phone him back after two weeks. He did some tests when he was here last, and I wants to know how my test is.

Liz: (puts through the call to Northwest River).
(Motions to Grandma, when it is time for her to take the set). (LIGHTS UP ON DOCTOR'S OFFICE; Doctor at his own set, on other side of divider.)

Grandma: Hello. Is that the doctor-- the test doctor?

Doctor: This is Dr. Grenfell. Who am I speaking to?

Grandma: Harriet. This is Harriet.

Doctor: Yes, Harriet...Where are you calling from?

Grandma: Liz's house.

Doctor: Oh, Liz's house. Mmm, you must be in Nain. Yes, I see. Harriet...mmm...oh, you must be Harriet Okkuatsiak. And your tests...oh, yes, let me

see (he looks over the files)...oh, yes, here it is: Well, Harriet...

Grandma: (breaking in) What about TB? Do I have TB? They have it in Makkovik.

Listener B: (brightening, looking up towards audience, to declare:) TV! They've got TV in Makkovik? Since when? THEY'VE GOT TV IN MAKKOVIK!! (returns to listening posture).

Doctor: No, No, Mrs. Okkuatsiak, you don't have TB. I think you misunderstood the symptoms,...

Listener D: Underfed?? Hah! The day Grandma Okkuatsiak is underfed, is the day I'll be president! Underfed, indeed!

Doctor: ...(carrying on)... maybe you have a bit of mal-nutrition, but...

Listener A: Ma's condition? What condition? Is she keeping something from me?

Grandma: Don't talk to me about Ma's condition! I want to know about mine! The only trouble with Ma is, she gets too excited...

Listener C: Appendicitis? Whose Ma has appendicitus? A pet inside us? What is this doctor talking about??

Doctor: You wondered about your toe, too, didn't you? If it was developing gangrene...

Listener B: Her toe's gone green! Her toe's gone green! ...

Doctor: I wouldn't go that far. It may be a bit inflamed, perhaps, but.....

Listener D: Insane! She's gone insane! Grandma's gone... (pause)...nuts!

Grandma: Gee, since you were here, my back's really hurting, too. Silpa thinks it's fractured.

Listener A: Her cat's been captured?? Why tell the doctor?

Doctor: Don't listen to Silpa's medication, Mrs. Okkuatsiak; she's always spreading rumours...

Listener C: Tumours?? Poor Silpa, o-oh, poor Silpa. (holding her head, wagging it from side to side in grief) Silpa has tumours.

Grandma: Yes, I s'pose you're right, she has a strange queer sense of humour.

Doctor: No, as far as we can see from your tests, Mrs. Okkuatsiak, there's nothing wrong with you. It's all in your head...

Grandma: My head? My head! (she clutches it with both hands) What's wrong with my head?

Doctor: No, no, Harriet, I said, It's all in your head'...

Grandma: (cutting him off) Nakomek, Dr. "I'll do that right now. (turning to Liz) I've got to get right home. He told me I'm confined to bed! (She scurries out much faster than she entered; Liz signs off the call; lights down on divided stage).

Alarm clock rings. Four LISTENERS pick up radios, tuck them under their arms (choreographed), and join up in pairs, exclaiming, 'Wait til you hear what I just heard on the set!!!' to each other, as they exit, busily.

III. "I'LL BE HOME ON THE NEXT BOAT"

The set is divided into two 'rooms'. Both are dark. The left side is set up as a kitchen, with a table, stove, tea-kettle, (cups, bread, saucers, knives, etc.) As the lights come up, Harriet enters the 'kitchen' set. Sybilla and Matilda are already seated at the table. Leah has just poured their tea, and is in the act of returning the kettle to the stove. Her back is to the audience.

HARRIET: Helloo-o. (as she enters)

LEAH: (turning around, kettle in hand) Hello. I just poured some tea for us - want some?

HARRIET: Don't mind if I do. There's a lot to do at home, now, what with Abram gone, but I set the two oldest ones to chopping some wood, and Bella's minding the fire and puttin' dinner on. The young ones are all out playin' somewheres, so's....I s'pose I got time. (She sits at the table)

SYBILLA: Abram not home yet? When's he comin' back? Been gone long-ug...

HARRIET: Oh, he's on his way back now. He was gonna come back on the next boat, so he'll be back in a day or two.

MATILDA: Oh, will he? (smugly - she knows something Harriet doesn't know...) I don't know how he's going to catch up to it! Must be some good at swimmin'....

HARRIET: Catch up to what? What do you mean?

MATILDA: The boat. He's not on it. (pause - to let her words hit like the thunder-bolts she hopes they are) I was talkin' to my cousin Maggie in Makkovik last night on the set. She said she see him there yesterday, and the boat's been gone from the place two days or more already.

HARRIET: MAKKOVIK??? He promised me! He said he wouldn't stop off, but he'd come straight on back on the next boat! (she is both hurt and angry.. rage is not far away) Osh, that Amos Andersen!!! I could

MATILDA: That's right. Maggie said she see Abram and Amos heading off in boat --- looked like they were goin' after geese.

(Sybilla and Lea are listening intently, but carry on eating mechanically)

HARRIET: and me, here --- I'm waitin' fer him to get here and take me out to the islands to pick berries!

MATILDA: (as if she had not been interrupted) ... said she figured he got off to see Amos when the boat called in, and got drunk, an' the boat went on, of course

HARRIET: ... (as if she had not been interrupted)... an' now he won't be back for another week — Ooh! (she clenches fists) that Amos! Wait till I get hold of them men!

MATILDA: (matter-of-fact, disinterested, as if nothing had ever been said) Pass the bread. (holding her cup up to be served) Any more tea???

FADE OUT. ALL MOVE OFF, TAKING PROPS. SET FOR MAKKOVIK TELEPHONE ROOM.

LIGHTS UP. Left side is Makkovik telephone; right side is Nain. Liz is just getting ready to open the set for business, as Harriet hurries in. She is angry, but trying to control herself, so that her words carry much energy and excitement.

HARRIET: Set open for business yet, Liz?

LIZ: Just ready to start. You want to use it?

HARRIET: You bet I do! I'd rather use my fists, but I guess the phone'll have to do!

LIZ: What's the matter? You're pretty steamed up. You want to call somewhere?

HARRIET: Makkovik. I want to call Abram; he's at Amos Andersen's.

LIZ: Abram in Makkovik? I thought you told me yesterday he'd be back on tomorrow's boat. (she begins to make the call) ... Makkovik? This is ...

(There appears to be trouble getting through, so she stands by and keeps trying)

HARRIET: That is what I told you. That's what I thought, too! But Matilda just told me she was talkin' to her cousin Maggie, ther, and she seen him an' Amos goin' off after geese. An' me here waitin to go pick berries! Ooh, that Amos...!

LIZ: Oh, yeah, I do remember something about that ... Oops! (she claps her hand over her mouth, embarrassed; then explains sheepishly) Well, (shrugs shoulders) you can't help hearing a little bit, now & then ... Yes? Makkovik? This is Nain ... (she puts the call through). I got a call for Abram Ikkusek. He's over to Amos Andersen's. You'll call me back, eh? Right. Over & out.

HARRIET: (taking a seat) They better be back! I'm gonna let him have it!

LEAH: (entering) Set open yet, Liz? I see you have a customer (as if she didn't know!) I'll just wait my turn ... (she sits next to Harriet, who eyes her, suspiciously).

SYBILLA: (entering) Set open yet, Liz? I need to call — Oh, hi, Harriet, Leah. I didn't see you. (sure, you didn't!) Guess I'll have to wait a bit. Lots of time (she sits next to the others; Harriet eyes her even more suspiciously).

- head down, back to audience -

MATILDA: (rushing in, out of breath) Hurh, hurh, hope I'm not too late, I wouldn't miss this for the world! (she whirls around) Oh, hi Harriet. (disappointedly; whines a bit) You're not done already --? (stops short, clapping her hand over her mouth, realizing what she has said).

(Harriet is really glowering now, directly at Matilda, as if to say 'Of all the nerve!', but before she can speak, Liz interrupts...)

LIZ: Nain. This is Nain, etc. What's that? Oh yes, Makkovik, she's right here. (to Harriet) Harriet! It's him - Abram! She motions her over. Harriet reluctantly leaves Matilda, who is much relieved to see she has not missed the conversation, and nods knowingly to Leah and Sybilla. She settles back, contentedly, for a good listen...)

HARRIET: Abram? It that you? (over)

ABRAM: Now, Hettie, don't go gettin' mad with me ---

(Makkovik listener #1 enters, and takes a seat. Ad lib listening; making comment by facial gestures.)

HARRIET: What are you doing in Makkovik? You're supposed to be gettin' home tomorrow, on the boat! (over)

ABRAM: (As Makkovik #2 enters, and joins #1, sitting, ad libbing) I know Hettie, but it was like this ...

HARRIET: Don't tell me. (working up to a scream) The boat called in at Makkovik, and you just thought you'd get off for a bit for a quick one with that good-for-nothing old foz, Amos, an' ...

ABRAM: (As Makkovik #3 enters, and joins others) But, Harriet ---

HARRIET: I ain't said 'OVER' yet, Abram Ikkusek - you just wait your turn! An' Amos had a fresh brew just beggin' to be tried, an' you said, 'Well-I, maybe a little. Not much now, 'cos I promised Harriet I'd be back on this boat ...

ABRAM: But ---

HARRIET: ...but they will take awhile to unload, so, maybe I'll have just a bit more, now --- That's powerful stuff, Amos! Whose socks did you throw in this time? HAH! HAH!, an'

ABRAM: Harriet, don't be foolish, mind the others now - you want everyone to hear you goin' on like this?

(Makkovik listeners sit forward at this, straining. He scowls at them.)

HARRIET: I don't mind if they do, you wasell! (turning to Matilda, motioning) Pull your chair up closer, Matilda! -- an' Amos didn't spare any, just like you asked, and next thing you knowed, you knowed nothing at all, passed out foolish on the floor' an' ...

ABRAM: Harriet, I'm not that bad —

HARRIET: ... an' the boat could a blowed an inch from your ear, an' you'd a thought it was no more 'n' a mosquito buzzin', 'cos you wouldn't be hearin' anything proper for hours ...

ABRAM: Harriet, how do you know it happened that way?

HARRIET: ... an' when you did wake up, the boat was long gone, an' Amos — that weather-beaten old scoundrel says, 'Well, boy! There's nothin' you can do about it now! Might as well enjoy your stay. Let's go get some geese, eh?'

ABRAM: How do you know about that???

HARRIET: ... an' you said, 'Guess you're right. Might as well enjoy myself! And off you went! And here I am, with eight kids to look after, and waitin' for you to get home an' take me to the islands to pick berries ..

(Silence — She has run out ...)

Well? Abram??? Abram??? O-V-E-R !!!

ABRAM: (In no hurry) Are you finished, yet, woman? (Silence)

Hettie (quietly composed), I got seven geese. (Silence)

And, Hettie, (pause), I got 10 gallons of berries — Amos picked most half of them himself — (silence),

And, Hettie, (pause), I'll be home on the next boat. Promise.

(Harriet throws her head back, and rolls her eyes, as if to say: 'What can I say?'; the other ladies nod to each other, satisfied, with finality.)

LIGHTS OUT.