

Artist Bio's

Allen Cole, Composer

Originally from Nova Scotia, Allen Cole has worked variously as composer, musical director, and writer for The Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, the National Arts Centre and many other theatres across the country. He's won numerous awards, including four Dora Mavor Moore awards, six Robert Merritt awards, and a Best Film Score Award from The Atlantic Film Festival. His musical **Rockbound** won five Merritt Awards, including Best New Play, Best Music and Best Production, and was nominated for the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia's Masterworks Award.

His gamelan opera, **How It Storms**, was commissioned and performed by The Evergreen Club. His funk musical comedy **The Bricklin** premiered at the Fredericton Playhouse in 2010, and played in Katowice, Poland in 2013 and 2015. His musical based on **Alice in Wonderland** (created with Peter Hinton) premiered in May 2016 at the Shaw Festival.

Melody A. Johnson, Performer

An accomplished creator, Melody has enjoyed a career of moving between the worlds of comedy and drama. Since 2010 Melody has toured and produced the self penned **Miss Caledonia** throughout Canada, (premiering at the prestigious Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, and National Arts Centre in Ottawa), and internationally to the United Kingdom. The play garnered two Toronto Dora nominations (Outstanding New Play, Outstanding Performance 2013), and Calgary's Betty Mitchell honour was awarded to actor Jamie Konchak for her portrayal of the titular character. Melody was recognized by Ontario Contact with the 2014 Touring Artist of the Year award, and has since 'passed the baton' to many wonderful performers and theatres. The play was recently produced in 2021 at Gananoque's Thousand Islands Playhouse, and spring of 2022 at the Globe Theatre in Regina.

Person of Interest, a light, topical take on neighbourly warfare, has delighted critics and audiences from coast to coast and continues limited runs. An alumna of The Toronto Second City, Stratford Festival, Melody has appeared on stages and voices Agent Nola in Season 3 of Treehouse TV's **Agent Binky: Pets of the Universe Ready for Space Travel**.

Melody offers improv workshops and Allen enjoys to offer vocal and choral workshops while on tour.

Shirley Jackson, Writer

Shirley Jackson's dark, psychological stories rocketed her into the public eye when her short story **The Lottery** was published in 1948 by the New Yorker. Initially highly controversial, it was later recognized as a gothic classic and has been included in more anthologies, freaking out

more high school students than perhaps any short story ever written. Her novels **The Haunting of Hill House** and **We Have Always Lived in the Castle** are also considered two of the greatest psychological thrillers of the 20th century, with recent film adaptations.

Less remembered today are the “domestic comedy” stories that Jackson wrote in the 1950s. Based on her trials and tribulations as a 1950’s housewife, and lampooning the antics of her husband and four children, they were wildly popular, and first published in magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, *Collier’s*, and *Reader’s Digest*. They are the precursors of a genre now referred to as the “MomBlog”.

The fact that Jackson could write so authentically in these two hugely different genres has long bewildered readers and critics alike. Perhaps it’s a true reflection of a dichotomy that challenged many women of that time; a great love of family life on one side, coupled with a deep desire to break free of its limitations.