

## Cathy Jones a big hit at Bancroft Village Playhouse



Cathy Jones, of *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, meets and mingles with her fans after Wednesday's show at the Playhouse. JIM EADIE Special to This Week

**By Jim Eadie**

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"It was truly amazing to see everyone leave the theatre happy," said Barb Shaw, communications co-ordinator for Hospice North Hastings. "Our hope is that people go home, and can't wait to come back."

Shaw was referring to the Feb. 18 appearance by Canadian national treasure Cathy Jones at The Village Playhouse for one show. In fact, tickets for the show were sold out in one week, and those who scored tickets early were treated to some of the best comedy by one of the best known Canadian comedy writers and performers. Many in the full house could hardly stop laughing.

Jones is a founding member of the hilarious satire *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*, and is the only remaining founding member in its 23rd year on CBC television. "Cathy has a two week break from taping *22 Minutes*, so she decided to come to Bancroft," said Shaw to the delight of the audience.

Jones's show, entitled "Stranger to Hard Work," covers experiences from much of her life, with mental health being a key theme. Jones describes her show as the stage version of a self-help book. Following the show, Shaw set up a "get up close" question-and-answer session. Afterward, audience members were invited to meet Jones and to take a selfie or two.

"It is very exciting to be in Bancroft," Jones said. "This is really such a beautiful place, and you have given me a wonderful welcome. You never know in my business where you are going for the night but this has been wonderful."

Jones is a proud Newfoundland native. "In Newfoundland, they would call me a townie, because I am from St. Johns," she said.

"Now I live in Halifax with my daughters and grandsons. Newfoundland is a very beautiful place like another world next door. If you have never been there, you should go."

Jones admits that she learned that she was funny very early in her life. "Yes, I was funny when I wasn't scared. We had nuns for teachers. In Grade 4, my very best friend Mary thought that everything I said was funny. We would talk across the classroom in sign language. I honestly don't know how I passed. One teacher thought I might be a good writer, but I was a rebel most of the time," she admitted.

"There is some incredible Canadian comedy happening these days," she said. "If only CBC had the funding they should have you know, there are a lot of really stupid shows being made these days."

Shaw noted that the Playhouse is now managed by Hospice, and they intend to keep bringing great shows to North Hastings. "When we took over, the building was about to be condemned. It was a disaster, and needed repairs," said Shaw. "We are now trying to breathe new life into it. Money made during the shows creates an additional revenue stream for the needed repairs."

Upcoming shows for the Playhouse include an evening with Canadian comic Lorne Elliott on April 9, and Canadian blues songwriter and guitarist/singer Rick Fines on April 16. "It is best to purchase your tickets now," said Shaw. She noted that the Cathy Jones show had 40 people on the waiting list.