

# Community Arts



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## Seniors Act

### Local acting group GeriActors and Friends to take part in weekend Festival of Edmonton Seniors Theatre



**Jan Vykdyal**  
Examiner Arts

The last thing I expected when I sat in on a rehearsal of a seniors' theatre group was a friendly older lady miming kicking a hedgehog to death.

That sort of thing seems perfectly normal for GeriActors and Friends, though.

The group, which is run by U of A professor of theatre David Barnet, will be performing stories based on the lives of its members as part of the Festival of Edmonton Seniors Theatre, part of the Creative Age Festival.

"I think the concept of creativity in seniors – creativity in retirement – sounds odd to some people," says Barnet, "but I think it's very natural." He says he realized a long time ago that seniors can bring something to acting that young people usually can't.

"I watched some seniors act, and I realized that younger people acting

similar work would be inventing – creating, whereas these seniors seem to look inside to that which they already know. There's a deep-seeded authenticity. They have all these experiences and they want to bring them out."

Barnet says an important part of GeriActors is having fun, making friends, and hearing other people's stories.

"Belonging to the GeriActors gave me an opportunity to do a play for the Korean seniors,"

"So what is it that draws them now?" says Barnet. He thinks many of them have had a desire to perform for quite a while, and there's no sense putting it off any longer. Chips Reid, another member of GeriActors, says this is exactly what got him interested in the group.

"It's a challenge, and then at the same time, it's a lot of fun," he says. "You get a lot of jokes, and we meet different situations, and we energize ourselves."

Reid took a class at U of A at the Edmonton Life-Long Learners Association called

Theatrical Stories before joining the GeriActors. He also enjoys hearing other people's stories.

And where does that hedgehog fit in?

The GeriActors try to keep things lighthearted while also telling serious, personal stories.

Dealing with subjects like death can be tricky, but they don't want to only talk about lighthearted issues, and the hedgehog poses an interesting question: As you get older, do you forgive and forget?

"Obviously there's pain and disaster, but also much hope," Barnet says.

**“ The concept of creativity in seniors – creativity in retirement – sounds odd to some people. ”**

— *David Barnet*

says Helen Klemm, a member of the group.

"I was able to portray their stories, and it gave me a wonderful understanding of what it was like to come to a strange country as a senior and adjust to life, and try to get the language right."

Klemm has been with the group for 10 years. But for many, Friday is going to be their first time on a stage.



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The GeriActors and Friends get silly at one of their previous performances. They tell stories based on their own life experiences, but they try to keep things lighthearted.

### Schedule of Events

The GeriActors will be performing Friday and Saturday at the Timms Centre for the Arts. (112th St. NW and 87th Ave.)

Tickets are \$5 for an event, or \$10 for a full FEST pass.

**Friday 4-5 p.m.** tea and dainties  
5-6 p.m. showcase

**Saturday at noon:** tea and coffee

**1-3 p.m.** comedy improv workshop or performance storytelling workshop

**3:30-5:30 p.m.** rock 'n' roll workshop or introduction to acting workshop

**6-7 p.m.** wine and cheese reception

**7-9 p.m.** performances by Stage Struck Seniors, CLSA Players, New plays by Ken Gough and GeriActors and Friends