

# EQ Flashback

20 years of S.M.Arts



**In the fall of 1995**, Winston Morgan, the stage management community's *éminence grise*, began working on a series of guidelines for stage management, as he found apprentices were unevenly trained and mentored. He hoped to offer advice and encouragement to new entrants in the profession.

The result was a series of guidelines written in an easy and clear style. It also included detailed checklists and forms, which explained everything from prep week to stumble-through, taping a floor and upholding a director's artistic intention.

An active Equity supporter, Morgan agreed to making the guidelines available to all Equity stage manager apprentices, which became the beginning of a 20-year relationship between Morgan, Equity and Stage Managing the Arts (S.M.Arts).

Morgan eventually turned his guidelines into a book, *Stage Managing the Arts in Canada*, which was the first of its kind in English-language theatre in North America, and still a seminal work used in many theatre schools across Canada. Equity proudly sponsored the purchase of the book for all first-time apprentices and the practice continues to this day, as the book prepares for its second incarnation.

Meanwhile, Morgan was also advancing plans for another ambitious project, a S.M.Arts Conference. The first conference was held in Toronto in 1996. It was 10 days long, with instructors from all aspects of stage management sharing their craft with participants in different stages of their careers.

Word of the conference spread across the country and demand mounted for S.M.Arts to go out on the road, with the first such journey made to Vancouver. A pattern soon emerged of annual conferences in Toronto with S.M.Arts going out on the road every two to three years.

S.M.Arts became so successful that Janelle Rainville came on board as co-director in 2006, and Jeff Morris joined the team in 2012.

S.M.Arts benefited from the generous support of many organizations and individuals over the years, including the now-defunct Equity Showcase Theatre and its then director, Christine Moynihan, Pat Bradley from PACT, the Ontario Arts Council, Ryerson Theatre School, and the ongoing support of Equity, which provides not only core funding for the conferences, but offers staff members to teach at each conference.

A portion of the small profits from each conference goes to the Apprentice Trust Fund to provide the kind of learning and training opportunity for apprentices that Morgan envisioned back in 1996. The fund is very close to reaching his goal of \$40,000, and the new board of directors is actively working on the terms of the first awards for two apprentices.

In 2015 S.M.Arts incorporated as a Canadian not-for-profit association and Morgan stepped aside to hand the reins to Janelle Rainville as executive director, Jeff Morris as co-director, and a small board of directors.

The 2017 S.M.Arts Toronto conference will be held April 20 to April 29th and registration will open in early March. Visit [www.stagemanagingthearts.ca](http://www.stagemanagingthearts.ca) for more information.

*Compiled with information from Susan Wallace, board chair, S.M.Arts.*

**Equity member and Larry McCance Award winner Winston Morgan passed away peacefully, surrounded by family and knowing the love of good friends, on December 22, 2016.**