



## **Arnold Johnston** **Science June '59**



### **ARNOLD JOHNSTON**

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**“Theatre can exist in any space with performers and an audience. Theatre can’t exist without playwrights—makers of plays. If pieces aren’t actually written, they may lose their original shape and content in subsequent performances. Some people don’t mind that. I do. When drama is “made up” by people who don’t write or who know nothing about craft, the result may simply be bad writing—or “wrighting.” Technique and practice set talent free. An illusionist’s well-honed technique is what makes an audience believe in magic.”**

Arnold Johnston lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he was chairman of the English Department at Western Michigan University (1997-2007). Long-time faculty member in and co-founder of the creative writing program, as well as founder of the playwriting program, he has now left WMU to concentrate full-time on writing. His plays, and others written in collaboration with his wife, Deborah Ann Percy, have won awards, production, and publication across the country. His poetry, fiction, and non-fiction have appeared widely in literary journals. His books include a collection of poetry, *What the Earth Taught Us* (March Street Press, 1996), *The Witching Voice: A Play About Robert Burns* (WMU Press, 1973), and *Of Earth and Darkness: The Novels of William Golding* (University of Missouri, 1980). Johnston’s *The Witching Voice: A Novel About Robert Burns* was published in 2009—for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Burns’ birth—by Wings Press (San Antonio). Johnston and Percy’s translations (in collaboration with Romanian writer Dona Roșu) of two long one-acts—*Night of the Passions* and *Sons of Cain*—by Romanian playwright Hristache Popescu were published in Bucharest (1999) by Editura HP, as was an English-Romanian edition of his and Percy’s full-length play *Rasputin in New York* (with Romanian translation by Dona Roșu and Luciana Costea). Another Johnston-Percy-Roșu translation of a Popescu play, *Epilog*, will appear in 2009, as will a Roșu-Costea translation of Percy and Johnston’s play, *Beyond Sex. Duets: Love is Strange*, a collection of Johnston and Percy’s one-act plays, was published by March Street Press in 2008.

Johnston is an experienced actor-singer, having performed some 100 roles on stage and radio, as well as many concerts. On his 1997 compact disc recording *Jacques Brel: I’m Here!* (Western Michigan University) he performs his own translations of songs by the noted Belgian singer-songwriter. Four revues featuring his Brel translations have been staged in New York, as well as others in Chicago (recognized by four Jefferson Award nominations) and Kalamazoo; a recent revue—*Jacques Brel’s Lonesome Losers of the Night*—was one of Chicago’s most acclaimed productions of the 2008 season during a five-month run. His new translation of Sartre’s *No Exit* will be staged in Chicago in 2009. A 1986 recipient of Kalamazoo’s Community Medal of Arts, Johnston is also a member of the Dramatists Guild and an Artistic Associate with Chicago’s Theo Ubique Theatre Company. He has been a resident playwright with both the Off-Off Broadway theatre company AAI Productions and Kalamazoo’s Actors and Playwrights Initiative (API). Since 2001 over a dozen of his and Percy’s radio dramas have been broadcast on WMUK-FM as part of the Kalamazoo Arts Council’s *All Ears Theatre* series. Their most recent stage projects are a full-length translation/ adaptation of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Nutcracker* and a historical drama, *Out in the Forty-Five*, about Scotland’s Jacobite Rebellion (produced in 2009 by NYC’s Developing Act Theatre Company). Their edited anthology entitled *The Art of the One-Act* appeared in 2007 from New Issues Poetry and Prose.

**Availability:** Variable, please inquire. **Rates:** Variable, please inquire.