

## **Spellbinders**

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### **KITCHENER**

Have you ever wondered what happened to the old witch in the woods after Hansel and Gretel escaped uneaten?

Care to find out?

A pair of storytellers, Jan Andrews and Jennifer Cayley, would like to escort you back to the gingerbread house in the forest. They would like to take you a lot of places, actually, in their two-woman show, *A Book of Spells*.

They'd like to carry you on a journey -- purely through the power of the spoken word -- to magical places where even the Brothers Grimm didn't dare venture. And they'd like to welcome you into their real-life relationship -- the union of two self-described "little old ladies" who have chosen to spend their lives together.

"This is a pretty big step for ourselves, and for the storytelling community in Canada," Andrews says of the upcoming tour of *A Book of Spells*, which will stop at the King Street Theatre Centre on Feb. 7.

The show will be among the last at the soon-to-close downtown theatre, which Andrews believes will make the performance even more poignant. "Times are pretty intense right now," she says of the economic climate that partly led to the venue's impending demise. "But as an artist in tough times, you have to do more. People need art more."

As practitioners of one of the world's oldest art forms, storytelling, Andrews and Cayley feel they can help audiences re-connect with the past. "Storytelling is an ancient art, but it kind of fell off the map," Andrews says. "It has been in a revival, though. The wonderful thing about storytelling is that it's a very direct connection between ourselves and our listeners."

That connection will be built during their 90-minute show through a series of edgy, peculiar and sometimes disturbing series of poems and monologues. This is not storytime for kids, but rather an imaginative journey for open-minded grown-ups.

The re-imagined tale of the witch in the gingerbread house is borrowed from a collection of short stories by author Sara Maitland. The poetry in the show is taken from a collection called *Gardens of Eden* by Michelene Wandor.

And the rest of the fables in *A Book of Spells* are inspired by the real lives of Andrews and Cayley, who often think of themselves as a pair of witches living in the woods (their house is beside a river, about an hour outside Ottawa).

"We think we each have a broomstick somewhere but can't actually find it," Andrews says. "We weave these stories together with things that relate to our own lives. (The show) is a vivid demonstration of what literature is for -- to show us to ourselves."