



STRATFORD
Shakespeare
FESTIVAL

North America's Leading
Classical Theatre

PRESS RELEASE

45/09

Playwrights arrive in Stratford for Festival's second annual Playwrights' Retreat

October 13, 2009... The Stratford Shakespeare Festival's second annual Playwrights' Retreat is getting underway today. Eight Canadian playwrights from across Canada have assembled in Stratford for a three-week writing residency to work on projects of their own choosing.

"The retreat offers playwrights a rare opportunity to write away from the distractions of home and discuss topics that are important to them with other writers and theatre artists," said Festival Dramaturge **Robert Blacker**.

The writers receive a stipend, as well as transportation to and from Stratford, housing and workspace at the theatre for the three-week retreat. They are offered tickets to Stratford productions and the opportunity to meet Festival artists and staff.

"It is important to create a home for living playwrights here at the Festival," said Artistic Director **Des McAnuff**. "Having living playwrights within our walls reminds us that the great writers of the past also wrote about their times and that classics must be pertinent or risk becoming museum pieces."

The eight playwrights represent a diverse group of Canadian writers with various levels of experience. They were chosen by Mr. Blacker and Bob White, the Visiting Co-Director of New Plays at the Festival.

The 2009 playwrights are:

Tara Beagan

Of Ntlaka'pamux (Thompson River Salish) and Irish Canadian heritage, Tara was born and raised in Alberta. She has found an artistic home in Toronto. Beagan wrote her first play, *Thy Neighbour's Wife* (UnSpun Theatre) in 2004 as a means of enabling her to stretch her acting muscles. The play went on to win the 2005 Dora Mavor Moore Award (Outstanding New Play, Independent) with Beagan receiving an acting nomination for her role in the production. In addition to *Dreary and Izzy*, which premiered through Native Earth Performing Arts at the Factory Studio Theatre, her works to date include: *TransCanada* (also for NEPA) at Harbourfront Centre; *Here, boy!* for halfbreed

productions and the 28th annual Rhubarb! Festival at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre; *Mom's Birthday* for Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell Festival; *Bad As I Am* for the 2006 Tarragon Playwright's Unit; *133 Skyway*, a short film for Big Soul Productions; and *Home Time* for CBC Radio One. Tara also embraces the delicious madness of working on collective creations such as: *Ever Sick* (Tonto's Nephews and NEPA), *Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump* (UnSpun), *Suck and Blow* (Absit Omen), and the ambitious, multi-disciplinary site-specific *Fort York* with Crate Productions.

Lisa Codrington

Lisa's writings include *Opera On the Rocks* (Ambient Opera Society/Toronto Fringe Festival); *The Colony* (Tapestry New Opera's Opera To Go); *Cast Iron* (Nightwood Theatre/Obsidian Theatre); *Skylar* (CBC Radio) and *The Vegas Monologue* in *The Demonstration* (Theatre Direct Canada). *Cast Iron* is published by Playwrights Canada Press and was nominated for a Governor General's Award for Drama. Lisa is currently working on *Jane*, which was recently presented at Nightwood Theatre's Groundswell Festival and b current's rock.paper.sistahz festival, and *Refined*, which was recently presented at Theatre Passe Muraille's Buzz Festival. Lisa was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba and holds a BA in Criminology from the University of Manitoba and a BFA in Acting from Ryerson University. She was nominated for the inaugural Toronto Arts Council Foundation's Emerging Artist Award. She also received the Jack McAllister Alumni Award from Ryerson Theatre School and was co-winner of the 2008 K.M. Hunter Artist Award for theatre.

Paul Dunn

Paul is a playwright and actor based in Toronto. He is the author of *Offensive Shadows* (which was produced by Studio 180 last fall, and which won the Audience Choice award at the Summerworks Festival in 2007), *Dalton and Company* (which was developed through the Tarragon Playwright's Unit), *High-Gravel-Blind* (which opened the Stratford Festival's Studio Theatre in 2002) and *BOYS* (a one man show which he performed for Theatre Direct). As an actor, he has spent six seasons at the Stratford Festival, and has worked at Tarragon (in an ongoing tour/remount of *East of Berlin*), Canstage, LKTYP, Buddies in Bad Times, NAC, MTC, the Citadel, and TNB, as well as in television, radio and film. He is a guest instructor at the National Theatre School, in the Acting Program, and he is a graduate of the Theatre Arts Program at Grant MacEwan College, and the Acting Program at the National Theatre School.

Florence Gibson

Florence was born in Montreal and raised in Cobourg, Ontario. She has an undergraduate degree in biochemistry and genetics and an M.D. She practised in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, Hong Kong and East Africa before returning to Canada to practise and eventually write full time. Her Chalmers Award-winning play *Belle*, premièred at Factory Theatre, Toronto, in 2000, and played in Ottawa, London England and New York at the Juilliard School. Her play *Home is My Road*, also premièred at Factory Theatre and went on to win the Carol Bolt Playwriting Award in 2004. In 2007 she co-created with choreographer Shawn Byfield the Dora Award winning show *i think i can*, a play told entirely in tap dance, for the Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People. Her play

Missing, winner of the Herman Voaden National Playwriting Award in 2005, premièred in March, 2009 at Factory Theatre, where she is playwright in residence. *How Do I Love Thee?* premières at Alberta Theatre Projects in February 2010, and *Augury*, her play about Canada's first woman doctor, premières at Nightwood Theatre in 2010. She is currently working on a new one-woman show, *Love Handles*, her novel *Stout* and a screen play, *A Man Like Me*.

Anosh Irani

Anosh is the author of the acclaimed novels *The Song of Kahunsha*, a finalist for Canada Reads and the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize in 2007, and *The Cripple and His Talismans*. His play *Bombay Black* won four Dora Mavor Moore Awards in 2006, including for Outstanding New Play, and he was nominated for the 2007 Governor General's Award for *The Bombay Plays: The Matka King* and *Bombay Black*. His new novel *Dahanu Road* will be published by Doubleday Canada in 2010, and his play *My Granny the Goldfish* will première at the Arts Club Theatre in April 2010.

Daniel MacIvor

Daniel is originally from Cape Breton and currently lives in Toronto. From 1987 to 2007 he ran da da kamera, a respected international touring company that brought his work to Australia, Israel, Europe, the U.K., as well as to theatres throughout Canada and the United States. Daniel has written and directed numerous award-winning theatre productions including *See Bob Run*, *Wild Abandon*, *How It Works*, *The Soldier Dreams*, *You Are Here*, *A Beautiful View* and *His Greatness*. His work has been translated into French, Portuguese Spanish, Czech, German and Japanese. With his creative partner Daniel Brooks he created the solo shows *House*, *Here Lies Henry*, *Monster* and *Cul-de-sac*. Daniel received the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama in 2006 for his collection of plays *I Still Love You*. Also a filmmaker, he is the writer of the feature films *Marion Bridge* and *House*, the co-writer of *Whole New Thing* and the writer/director of *Past Perfect* and *Wilby Wonderful*. In 2008 he was awarded the Elinore and Lou Siminovitch Prize for Theatre. He is currently working on a screenplay for director Bruce MacDonald and is playwright-in-residence at Tarragon Theatre.

Stephen Massicotte

Stephen's award-winning plays *Looking After Eden*, *Pervert*, and *The Boy's Own Jedi Handbook* series originated at Calgary's Ground Zero Theatre. In 2002, his play, *Mary's Wedding*, premièred at Alberta Theatre Projects' playRites Festival and won the 2000 Alberta Playwriting Competition, the 2002 Betty Mitchell Award for Best New Play, and the 2003 Alberta Literary Award for Drama. *Mary's Wedding* continues to be produced throughout the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. In 2006, *The Oxford Roof Climber's Rebellion* was produced as a co-production between the Tarragon Theatre and the Great Canadian Theatre Company, and was a hit off-Broadway in 2007. The play won the 2007 Canadian Author's Association Carol Bolt Award for the best English-language play and the 2007 Gwen Paris Ringwood Award of the Alberta Literary Awards for best play. His most recent play, *The Clockmaker*, premièred at Alberta Theatre Projects' playRites Festival in 2009 and won the Betty Mitchell Award for Best New Play. Stephen's film writing

credits include *Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning and The Dark*. He has a BFA in Drama from the University of Calgary.

John Murrell O.C., A.O.E., L.L.D. (Hon.)

Renowned nationally and internationally, John Murrell is one of the most frequently produced of all Canadian playwrights, as well as a highly respected arts advocate, mentor and consultant. His plays, which include *Waiting for the Parade*, *Memoir*, *Farther West*, *Faraway Nearby* and *Death in New Orleans* have been translated into 15 different languages and performed in more than 30 countries around the world. He has also translated and adapted Chekhov, Ibsen and Sophocles, as well as the plays of Carol Frechette. With composer John Estacio, he created the librettos for the operas *Filumena* and *Frobisher*. He has worked as Playwright-in-Residence at both Theatre Calgary and Alberta Theatre Projects, as Associate Director of the Stratford Festival of Canada, as head of the Banff Playwrights Colony (1986-1989), as Head of the Theatre Section of the Canada Council For The Arts (1988-1992), as Artistic Director/Executive Producer of Theatre Arts at The Banff Centre (1999-2005), and as Executive Artistic Director of Performing Arts at The Banff Centre (2005 to 2007).

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival also hosts playwright residencies throughout the year. This year **Linda Griffiths**, **Bryden MacDonald**, **Hannah Moscovitch**, **Mieko Ouchi**, **Berni Stapleton** and **Vern Thiessen** were also in residence at Stratford.

The Festival has several new works under commission. In 2010 the first of these works, *King of Thieves*, by **George F. Walker**, will hit the stage, premièring August 12 at the Studio Theatre.

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival's 2009 season continues until November 8, featuring *Macbeth*; *West Side Story*; *Cyrano de Bergerac*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *The Importance of Being Earnest*; *Julius Caesar*; and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

-30-

For more information contact:

Ann Swerdfager

Media Manager

Stratford Shakespeare Festival

519-271-0055 x2297

aswerdfager@stratfordshakespearefestival.com