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**UNDER EMBARGO: FOR TUESDAY'S PAPER, OCT. 16, ONLINE TUESDAY AT 6 A.M.**  
**MEDIA RELEASE**

35/18

## **Stratford Festival announces casting for 2019 season**

*Tickets go on sale to Members beginning November 11*

*The box office opens to the public on January 4*

October 16, 2018... Artistic Director **Antoni Cimolino** is pleased to announce key casting for the 2019 season, including **Michael Blake** as Othello and **Amelia Sargisson** as Desdemona in the season opener, *Othello*, one of Shakespeare's greatest and best-known tragedies.

"Stratford audiences will be delighted by outstanding new talent and brilliant Festival favourites in our 2019 season," says Cimolino. "Filled with variety this playbill has provided opportunities for new growth and development for this extraordinary Canadian company of players."

### **FESTIVAL THEATRE**

*Support for the 2019 season of the Festival Theatre is generously provided by Daniel Bernstein & Claire Foerster*

#### **Michael Blake to play title role in *Othello***

*Othello* / By William Shakespeare

Directed by Nigel Shawn Williams

May 3 to October 27 | Opening May 27

*Production support is generously provided by The Westaway Charitable Foundation*

*This production is sponsored by BMO Financial Group*

**Michael Blake**, currently playing Caliban in *The Tempest*, Cominius in *Coriolanus* and Errico in *Napoli Milionaria!*, will take on the title role in Shakespeare's gripping psychological drama *Othello*, directed by **Nigel Shawn Williams**. Desdemona will be played by **Amelia Sargisson**, returning after her impressive Stratford debut as Eve in *Paradise Lost* this year.

Undeterred by differences in their backgrounds and life experiences, the pair defy prejudice to be united in marriage. But deadly malice lurks where the newlyweds least expect it as Iago, the one man Othello trusts the most, resolves to destroy their happiness at any cost. Iago will be played by **Gordon S. Miller**, and **Laura Condlin** will play his wife, Emilia, with **Johnathan Sousa** as Cassio, Othello's lieutenant.

Also in the cast are **Juan Chioran**, **David Collins**, **Farhang Ghajar**, **Michelle Giroux**, **Randy Hughson**, **John Kirkpatrick**, **Shruti Kothari**, **Josue Laboucane**, **Jamie Mac**, **Michael Spencer-Davis** and **Brigit Wilson**.

**Nolen Dubuc to play Billy Elliot,  
with Dan Chameroy as his dad, Blythe Wilson as Mrs. Wilkinson**

*Billy Elliot the Musical* / Book and Lyrics by Lee Hall | Music by Elton John

Originally Directed by Stephen Daldry

Directed and Choreographed by Donna Feore

April 16 to November 3 | Opening May 28

*Production support is generously provided by the Harkins & Manning families in memory of Jim & Susan Harkins  
and by Riki Turofsky & Charles Petersen*

*This production is co-sponsored by RBC and Union Gas*

**Nolen Dubuc**, a young powerhouse performer from B.C., is heading across the country to join the company as the lead in *Billy Elliot the Musical*, directed and choreographed by **Donna Feore**. Set in a hardscrabble mining town, riven by a bitter national strike, the story focuses on 11-year-old Billy, who, reeling from the death of his mother, discovers a talent for dance that awakens in him a passion that will transform his life and win the hearts of his community.

This moving story filled with breathtaking dance numbers and music by pop legend Elton John inspired young Dubuc to go into musical theatre at the age of four. Since then he has amassed a long list of dance and vocal awards, as well as a number of theatrical credits, including Chip in *Beauty and the Beast* and John Bechdel in *Fun Home*, both at the Arts Club Theatre Company. He won a Joey Award for his debut, playing Michael Banks in *Mary Poppins* at Theatre Under the Stars.

**Dan Chameroy**, who played Miss Trunchbull in the North American tour of *Matilda The Musical* and is currently thrilling audiences as Frank N. Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show*, returns to play Dad.

Audience favourite **Blythe Wilson**, who played Mrs. Banks in the Broadway production of *Mary Poppins*, in addition to Miss Adelaide in 2017's *Guys and Dolls* and Eulalie MacKecknie Shinn in this year's *The Music Man*, will play Mrs. Wilkinson, Billy's teacher.

They'll be joined by **Marion Adler** as Grandma, **Robert Markus** as Tony and **Steve Ross** as George.

Also in the cast are **Eric Abel, Gabriel Antonacci, Devon Michael Brown, Matthew G. Brown, Zoë Brown, Colton Curtis, Starr Domingue, Camille Eanga-Selenge, Gabi Epstein, Henry Firmston, Emerson Gamble, Oliver Gamble, Mark Harapiak, Galen Johnson, Bonnie Jordan, Evangelia Kambites, Evan Kearns, Jordan Mah, Chad McFadden, Wyatt Moss, Marcus Nance, Oliver Neudorf, Denise Oucharek, Trevor Patt, Vanessa Sears, Jason Sermonia, Isabella Steubing** and **Callum Thompson**.

## **Geraint Wyn Davies, Brigit Wilson and Sophia Walker make merry in Shakespeare's rollicking comedy *The Merry Wives of Windsor***

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* | By William Shakespeare

Directed by Antoni Cimolino

May 11 to October 26 | Opening June 1

*Production support is generously provided by Jane Petersen Burfield & family, by Dr. Desta Leavine in memory of Pauline Leavine and by Dr. M. Lee Myers*

**Geraint Wyn Davies** returns to the company to take on the lead role of Falstaff in Antoni Cimolino's production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, to be set in a town not unlike Stratford in the early 1950s. Wyn Davies is one of a very few classical actors to have played Falstaff in all three of Shakespeare's plays featuring the character. Just as Queen Elizabeth I is said to have demanded more of Falstaff, leading Shakespeare to write *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, so too Stratford audiences have demanded more opportunities to see Wyn Davies portray the character. He most recently played the role in 2016's *Breath of Kings*, which includes the two parts of *Henry IV*, and in 2011's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

This rollicking comedy sees Falstaff pursue two married women at the same time, failing to consider that his targets might, quite literally, compare notes. Nor has he reckoned on the mischievous spirit in which the wives will use their wits and wiles to teach him the error of his ways.

The merry wives will be played by **Sophia Walker** and **Brigit Wilson**. Walker, seen this season as Lady Chiltern in *An Ideal Husband* and Calpurnia in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, will play Mrs. Ford. Wilson, currently playing Amalia in *Napoli Milionaria!* and Valeria in *Coriolanus*, will play Mrs. Page.

Their husbands will be played by **Graham Abbey** as Mr. Ford and **Michael Blake** as Mr. Page. Joining them in the delightful role of Miss Quickly is **Lucy Peacock**, with **Sarah Dodd** as the Hostess of The Garter.

Also in the cast are **Ben Carlson, David Collins, Farhang Ghajar, Randy Hughson, John Kirkpatrick, Shruti Kothari, Josue Laboucane, Jamie Mac, Gordon S. Miller, Amelia Sargisson, Mike Shara, Johnathan Sousa and Michael Spencer-Davis.**

## **Ben Carlson and Maev Beaty return for *The Front Page***

*The Front Page* / By Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur | Adapted by Michael Healey

Directed by Graham Abbey

July 30 to October 25 | Opening August 15

Star reporter Hildy Johnson has had it with the newspaper business – until he finds himself harbouring a death row escapee with a tale to tell. Hildy’s challenge now is to outwit corrupt cops and rival journalists to get the scoop of a lifetime – without losing the love of his life. Who better to take on the lead role in this powerful and timely drama of civic corruption and journalistic truth-telling than **Ben Carlson**, whose fine comic and dramatic skills have given Stratford audiences such memorable roles as Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, Charles in *Blithe Spirit* and the title role in *Hamlet*.

Penelope Burns, the editor of Hildy’s paper, will be played by **Maev Beaty**, who in just four seasons has established herself as a leading member of the company. Her roles at Stratford have included Goneril in 2014’s *King Lear*, Kate in 2015’s *The Last Wife*, Sorrel in 2016’s *Bunny* and Elmire in 2017’s *Tartuffe*.

Rival reporters McCue and Murphy will be played by **Michelle Giroux** and **Randy Hughson**.

Also in the cast are **Michael Blake, Juan Chioran, David Collins, Sarah Dodd, Farhang Ghajar, Randy Hughson, John Kirkpatrick, Shruti Kothari, Josue Laboucane, Jamie Mac, Gordon S. Miller, Amelia Sargisson, Mike Shara, Johnathan Sousa, Michael Spencer-Davis, Sophia Walker and Brigit Wilson.**

*The Front Page* will be adapted by **Michael Healey** and directed by **Graham Abbey**.

## **AVON THEATRE**

*Support for the 2019 season of the Avon Theatre is generously provided by the Birmingham family*

**Lucy Peacock, Geraint Wyn Davies, Mike Shara and Sophia Walker  
share the stage in Noël Coward’s romantic comedy *Private Lives***

*Private Lives* / By Noël Coward

Directed by Carey Perloff

April 24 to October 26 | Opening May 30

*Production support is generously provided by M. Fainer*

The wit of Noël Coward is at its cheekiest in *Private Lives*, an uproarious romantic comedy featuring the glorious quartet of **Lucy Peacock** as Amanda, **Geraint Wyn Davies** as Elyot, **Mike Shara** as Victor and **Sophia Walker** as Sybil, with **Sarah Dodd** as Louise, the maid, under the direction of **Carey Perloff**.

Divorced for five years, Elyot and Amanda are reunited by chance – while honeymooning with their new spouses. Succumbing to ex appeal, they run off together to Paris, only to discover all over again – hilariously – that there's more than one way to drive each other crazy.

## **Gabi Epstein and André Morin to play Audrey and Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors***

*Little Shop of Horrors* / Book and Lyrics by Howard Ashman | Music by Alan Menken

Based on the film by Roger Corman, Screenplay by Charles Griffith

Directed and Choreographed by Donna Feore

April 29 to November 2 | Opening May 31

*Production support is generously provided by Mary Ann & Robert Gorlin*

Skid Row florist's clerk Seymour Krelborn is too shy to declare his love for his co-worker Audrey – until a mysterious exotic plant brings him unexpected fame and fortune. There's just one problem: the plant has ambitions of its own, and it thrives on only one food – human blood. Awesome special effects, a tender love story and a fabulous 60s-style score all combine to make this deliciously campy sci-fi spoof a monster hit.

**Donna Feore's** production of *Little Shop of Horrors* will feature the delightful duo of **Gabi Epstein**, making her Stratford debut, as Audrey, and, as Seymour, **André Morin**, who returns for his seventh season having made his debut as Motel in *Fiddler on the Roof* in 2013. This season he is playing Ariel to Martha Henry's Prospero in *The Tempest*.

**Dan Chameroy** will pivot from the transsexual Transylvanian doctor, Frank N. Furter, to the sadomasochistic dentist that Audrey II finds oh so delicious. **Steve Ross**, currently delighting audiences as Mayor Shinn in *The Music Man* and the Narrator in *The Rocky Horror Show*, will play Seymour's boss, Mr. Mushnik.

The cast also features **Matthew G. Brown**, **Starr Domingue**, **Camille Eanga-Selenge**, **Henry Firmston**, **Evangelia Kambites**, **Jordan Mah**, **Robert Markus**, **Marcus Nance**, **Antonette Rudder**, **Vanessa Sears**, **Jason Sermonia** and **Blythe Wilson**.

## ***The Neverending Story* to feature Qasim Khan and Jake Runeckles**

*The Neverending Story* / Based Upon the Novel By Michael Ende | Adapted by David S. Craig  
Directed by Jillian Keiley  
May 16 to November 3 | Opening June 15  
*The 2019 Schulich Children's Play*

*The Neverending Story*, the 2019 Schulich Children's Play, directed by **Jillian Keiley**, follows Bastian, a 10-year-old who, in order to avoid school bullies, hides in a closet reading a compelling book: the tale of Atreyu, a hero on a quest to save the realm of Fantastica from the encroaching terror of the Nothing.

Bastian will be played by **Jake Runeckles**, who has just joined the Festival as a member of the Birmingham Conservatory. **Qasim Khan** will play Atreyu. Khan will be returning for his third season, after playing Adam in *Paradise Lost* and Antipholus of Ephesus in *The Comedy of Errors* this season.

Filled with spectacle and wondrous other-worldly creatures, this beautiful play will also feature **Tim Campbell**, **Laura Condlin** and **Kim Horsman**.

## **Tim Campbell to play John Proctor in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible***

*The Crucible* / By Arthur Miller  
Directed by Jonathan Goad  
August 1 to October 25 | Opening August 16  
*Production support is generously provided by Sylvia D. Chrominska, by Martie & Bob Sachs,  
by Alice & Tim Thornton and by the Tremain family*

**Tim Campbell**, seen this season as Sir Robert Chiltern in *An Ideal Husband*, Heck Tate in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Marullus in *Julius Caesar*, will return for his 11th season to play John Proctor in *The Crucible*, directed by **Jonathan Goad**.

He will be joined by **Scott Wentworth**, as Reverend Parris, in this timeless tragedy of abusive behaviour and its all-consuming consequences.

Inspired by historical events but no less pertinent to our own times, the play is set in the Puritan town of Salem, Massachusetts, where Proctor, a farmer, has been conducting an illicit relationship with a young woman in his employ. His refusal to take responsibility for his actions leads to an epidemic of fear and suspicion that engulfs the guilty and the innocent alike.

Also in the cast are **Rod Beattie**, **Kim Horsman**, **Qasim Khan**, **Alexandra Lainfiesta** and **Maria Vacratsis**.

# **STUDIO THEATRE**

*Support for the 2019 season of the Studio Theatre is generously provided by Sandra & Jim Pitblado*

## ***Henry VIII to feature Jonathan Goad in the title role***

*Henry VIII / By William Shakespeare*

Directed by Martha Henry

May 8 to October 12 | Opening May 29

*Production support is generously provided by Jack Whiteside*

**Jonathan Goad** takes on the title role in *Henry VIII*. Shakespeare's tale of passion, political intrigue and personal faith brings to life the thrilling human drama behind a pivotal moment in history, when the monarch defied papal authority and sought to divorce his wife, Katherine of Aragon, who will be played by **Irene Poole**, in order to marry Anne Bullen, to be played by **Alexandra Lainfiesta**.

The consequences are epochal for the country and calamitous for the king's adviser, Cardinal Wolsey – to be played by **Rod Beattie** – who has been playing a dangerous game of his own.

Directed by **Martha Henry**, the production will also feature **Tim Campbell, Kim Horsman, Qasim Khan, Jake Runeckles** and **Scott Wentworth**.

## ***Mother's Daughter cast to include Irene Poole and Maria Vaccratsis***

*Mother's Daughter / By Kate Hennig*

World Première

Directed by Alan Dilworth

May 18 to October 13 | Opening June 14

*Production support is generously provided by Charles Beall & Karon Bales,  
by Dr. Robert & Roberta Sokol, by Sylvia Soyka and by Catherine & David Wilkes.*

*Support for the creation of Mother's Daughter was generously provided  
by The Foerster Bernstein New Play Development Program and by Charles Beall & Karon Bales*

*Mother's Daughter* is the dramatic conclusion to **Kate Hennig's** Queenmaker Trilogy, a fascinating exploration of women, power and the nature of leadership that began with *The Last Wife* and *The Virgin Trial*.

Directed by **Alan Dilworth**, who also directed the first two parts of the trilogy, the production will feature **Irene Poole** as Catalina and **Maria Vaccratsis** as Susan.

It takes place upon the death of Edward VI, when Princess Mary – daughter of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon wrests the throne from Edward's official heir. But Mary is haunted by her mother's ghost, urging her toward the course that will earn her the nickname of Bloody Mary.

## **Sarah Orenstein to play Daya in *Nathan the Wise***

*Nathan the Wise* / By Gotthold Ephraim Lessing | In a version by Edward Kemp

Directed by Birgit Schreyer Duarte

May 25 to October 11 | Opening June 15

Casting for *Nathan the Wise* is in progress with **Sarah Orenstein** taking on the role of Daya. Directed by **Birgit Schreyer Duarte**, this moving and gently humorous 18th-century masterpiece celebrates the common humanity that unites us all.

Set in 12th-century Jerusalem, it is the story of a wealthy Jew whose daughter loves a Christian. He is confronted by a dangerous question from the Muslim sultan: which is the one true faith? Nathan responds wisely and well – but subsequent surprising discoveries offer an even more persuasive answer to religious divides.

## ***Birds of a Kind* cast features Alon Nashman and Sarah Orenstein**

*Birds of a Kind* / By Wajdi Mouawad | English Translation by Linda Gaboriau

English Language Première

Directed by Antoni Cimolino

July 30 to October 13 | Opening August 14

*Production support is generously provided by Barbara & John Schubert, by Sylvia Soyka and by Catherine & David Wilkes.*

*Support for the creation of *Birds of a Kind* was generously provided by The Foerster Bernstein New Play Development Program*

**Alon Nashman** and **Sarah Orenstein** return to Stratford to take on the lead roles of David and Norah in *Birds of a Kind*, by **Wajdi Mouawad**, in a new English translation by **Linda Gaboriau**, directed by **Antoni Cimolino**.

Nashman played Hirsch in the 2012 production of the same name, inspired by the life of former Stratford Festival Artistic Director John Hirsch. Orenstein will return for her sixth Stratford season, having played such roles as the White Queen in 2014's *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, Penfield in 2015's *Possible Worlds* and Queen Elizabeth in 2016's *Shakespeare in Love*.

Based on *Trickster's Travels* by Natalie Zemon Davis, a book Cimolino first brought to Mouawad to be adapted, *Birds of a Kind* was recently produced in a multi-lingual version, *Tous des Oiseaux*, in Paris to great acclaim. It focuses on Wahida, an Arab-American woman, and Eitan, a Jewish geneticist, who fall in love in New York City. They travel together to Israel to meet Eitan's estranged grandmother. She holds the key to a long-buried family secret, but it takes a terrorist bombing for that shattering secret to emerge.



Casting for the 2019 season continues.

Tickets for the 2019 season go on sale to Members beginning November 11 and to the public on January 4, 2019, online, and January 5 in person or by calling the box office at 1.800.567.1600.

But there's still time to catch most of the Stratford Festival's 2018 season. *The Tempest* runs until October 26; *Napoli Milionaria!*, *Julius Caesar* and *Paradise Lost* until November 4; *An Ideal Husband* and *The Comedy of Errors* until October 28; *The Music Man* and *Coriolanus* until November 3; *To Kill a Mockingbird* until November 8; and *The Rocky Horror Show* until November 25. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *Brontë: The World Without* have closed. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [stratfordfestival.ca](http://stratfordfestival.ca) or call the box office at 1.800.567.1600.

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## **PHOTOGRAPHY: 2019 SEASON IMAGES**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/o79fe26x15776ng/AADHiSfgfMQ0kDgPfHxQA2axa?dl=0>

### **Captions:**

*Billy Elliot the Musical*: Nolen Dubuc

*Little Shop of Horrors*: André Morin

*Othello*: Michael Blake

*The Merry Wives of Windsor*: Brigit Wilson (left), Sophia Walker and Geraint Wyn Davies (on magazine cover)

### **Photo credit:**

Creative direction by Punch and Judy. Photography by David Cooper.

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