MONTY PYTHON’S SPAMALOT 2023

Stratford Festival

Production support for Monty Python’s Spamalot is generously provided by The David & Amy Fulton Foundation and by The William & Nona Heaslip Foundation.
It has been a cliché of the COVID era that we are living in “unprecedented times.” But in fact, little in human experience is without precedent. While history never repeats itself exactly, it does present us with endless variations on recurring themes.

Since the dawn of drama, artists have explored those themes on stage. New plays examine who and where we are at this particular time; the classics remind us that we’ve been here before, that our present experience is part of a larger pattern that can be wonderful or profoundly disturbing.

While spanning different centuries, the works on our 2023 playbill all seem to me to reflect in some way the mood of the moment. In particular, they examine an age-old tension highlighted anew by the challenges of the pandemic era: the tension between duty and desire.

That dichotomy is obvious in King Lear and Richard II, both of which feature monarchs whose personal agendas conflict with their responsibilities to the state—just as we today have had to weigh the desire to follow our hearts against our duty toward our community.

Those who put their responsibilities ahead of their own wishes, as the Princess does at the end of Love’s Labour’s Lost, win our admiration. But sometimes what society demands is unreasonable, inappropriate and even destructive, as in the segregationist Deep South of Wedding Band, where a perverse interpretation of “duty” is enforced by social stigma.

Benedick, in Much Ado About Nothing, rather than dutifully supporting his Prince and his comrades in the unmerited condemnation of Hero, follows his own sense of moral duty, impelled by his desire for justice (and, of course, for Beatrice).

Societal expectations are cheekily and cheerfully flouted in Les Belles-Soeurs and in Women of the Fur Trade, while both Frankenstein Revived and A Wrinkle in Time invite us to ponder the duties attendant upon the scientific pursuit of knowledge. Using the art of illusion as a metaphor, Grand Magic takes a skeptical look at romanticized notions of duty within marriage, while Monty Python’s Spamalot satirizes romanticized notions of knightly duty—along with pretty much anything else it can lay its gauntlets on.

Casey and Diana, a play inspired by the AIDS crisis, speaks directly to the cost borne by the heroic caregivers of today, whose duty once again consists of risking their own lives to care for others. And in our time of housing crisis, the musical Rent once again poses questions about our obligations toward those whose desire is simply for somewhere to live.

Perhaps, as we navigate a world reshaped by the past years of devastation and dislocation, these plays may help clarify for us the importance of finding a balance between pursuing our own wants, needs and dreams and helping others fulfil theirs. Because, to borrow another cliché of our times—and this one surely cannot be denied—we’re all in this together.

Antoni Cimolino
Artistic Director
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(Finns Aint What They Used To Be)

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From an idea by
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Monty Python’s Spamalot

Production Synopsis

In a Medieval England beset by plague, strife and a dearth of shrubbery, the noble King Arthur and his servant Patsy set off on their imaginary horses in search of men brave enough to join the Knights of the Round Table. Arthur recruits Sir Robin, Sir Lancelot, Dennis (whom the Lady of the Lake transforms into Sir Galahad), Sir Bedevere and Sir Not Appearing, who, true to his name, decides not to join Arthur and the other knights at Camelot.

After a rousing Camelot-themed song-and-dance number, God appears to the knights and sends them on a quest to find the Holy Grail. Their journey takes them to a perilous castle where they are taunted by cattle-tossing French soldiers. Later, while in the dark and expensive forest, they are confronted by the Knights Who Say “Nil” and an evil bunny rabbit.

Eventually the Knights decide to stage a musical, not unlike Spamalot, and to settle down with their true loves.

Spamalot is the demented brainchild of Monty Python legend Eric Idle, who penned the score with long-time musical collaborator John Du Prez. Original songs and skits frolic on stage alongside classics from the Python back catalogue, including the crowd-pleasing “Always Look on the Bright Side of Life.” The anarchic musical is a wholly original work that acts as an entertaining tribute to England’s greatest comedy troupe.

Musical Numbers

ACT I
Overture
Fisch Schlapping Song
Monk’s Chant
King Arthur’s Song
He Is Not Dead Yet
Come With Me
Laker Girls
The Song That Goes Like This
All For One
Knights of the Round Table
Find Your Grail
Run Away

ACT II
Always Look on the Bright Side of Life
Brave Sir Robin
You Won’t Succeed On Broadway
The Diva’s Lament (What Ever Happened To My Part?)
Where Are You?
His Name Is Lancelot
I’m All Alone
The Song That Goes Like This (Reprise)
The Grail
Finale

Coconut Migration: From Swallow to Swan

As we all know, European Swallows play a critical role in the annual migration of coconuts to England, but did you know the North American coconut relies on the humble and majestic swan? Here we will swan dive into examining the main differences—from air speed velocity, to the relative grip strength of dorsal guiding feathers.
Monty Python’s parrot sketch saved my life. At least, it felt like it at the time. I was fifteen and had just started a new school. Without any doubt, I was the odd, geeky, bespectacled girl who wore long skirts, did up the top button of my blouse, and knew the answers to every question in English and History. The perfect example of an introvert, I spent lunch hour in the library and was the only female on the chess team. No one talked to me except behind my back and what they said wasn’t nice. Then, two months into the school year, my mother died unexpectedly. So now I was the weird girl who ate lunch in the library, was on the chess team and whose mother had died. It’s hard to go up from there.

“My father saw me struggling and—in his inherent wisdom—had read somewhere that laughter was the best medicine. It was a Friday night, and I was reading Jane Eyre by candlelight (the appropriate atmosphere, I thought, for a Gothic novel) when he called me into the living room.

“Lezlie, I want to show you something.”

I sat next to him on the sofa and watched a Terry Gilliam animation in which a pile of people in a meat grinder are turned into the hair of Venus on a half shell in Botticelli’s painting, “The Birth of Venus.” Her nipple is tweaked, she dances around to jazz, then sinks to the ocean floor, which is replaced by a fish tank in a pet store. A bell rings. A customer enters.

Mr. Praline: ‘Ello, I wish to register a complaint...

Owner: We’re closin’ for lunch.

Mr. Praline: Never mind that, my lad. I wish to complain about this parrot what I purchased not half an hour ago from this very boutique.

Owner: Oh yes, the, uh, the Norwegian Blue... What’s, uh... What’s wrong with it?

Mr. Praline: I’ll tell you what’s wrong with it, my lad. ‘E’s dead. That’s what’s wrong with it!

I laughed. I howled. I fell off the sofa and onto the floor with tears in my eyes.

What makes the sketch so funny is the ridiculousness of the situation coupled with Cleese and Palin’s absolute commitment to their respective points of view. Also, the specificity of the language with words like ‘boutique’ and ‘Norwegian Blue.’ As the sketch continues, Cleese uses euphemisms like: “‘E’s expired and gone to meet ‘is maker! ‘E’s a stiff! Bereft of life, ‘e rests in peace! If you hadn’t nailed ‘im to the perch ‘e’d be pushing up the daisies! ‘Is metabolic processes are now ‘istory! ‘E’s off the twig! ‘E’s kicked the bucket, ‘e’s shuffled off ‘is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin’ choir invisible!! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!!”

I was hooked. I loved that the Pythons themselves were geeky, awkward, silly people who poked fun at everything from religion, to the monarchy, to nudity, to being a Brit. I loved that they had been birthed into comedy from their own pain (Eric Idle’s father died in a freak accident making his way home from the war on, of all days, Christmas Eve) but also how instrumental they were in challenging accepted norms. (In 1972, on a television show hosted by British jazz musician George Melly, Graham Chapman first disclosed his homosexuality publicly, becoming one of the first celebrities to do so.) And while I’m at it, hats off to Carol Cleveland, the unofficial seventh Python who, without saying anything, is smart and witty. In the hilarious “Buying a Bed” sketch, she plays a new bride surrounded by idiotic men. Frustrated by their ineptitude, she finally speaks, “We want to buy a mattress.” This, of course, is the cue word for Graham Chapman to put a bag over his head until everyone sings, “Jerusalem.” When she’s berated, she complains, “It was my only line.”

There is a musicality in comedy. I learned how to understand cadences, rhythms and inflections by memorizing that sketch and others like it. At school, I found my voice in comedy.

“Do the parrot sketch.” Someone would ask, and I would happily oblige them. Not only was I coming out of my own half-shell, but I was funny and a girl. For the remainder of my time in high school, no one ever bothered me, and no one made fun of me. I managed to float from one clique to another, liked in all while remaining a complete outsider. Just the way I liked it.

These days it can be challenging to navigate comedy. By not wishing to offend anyone, we tend to steer clear of the very fact that, as human beings, we are seriously flawed, and it’s these flaws that make us funny. Lenny Bruce knew this. Richard Pryor knew this. Carol Burnett knew this. George Carlin. The list goes on and on.

I don’t know about you, but during the past few years, if I didn’t laugh, I’d cry. And though I may not always look at the bright side of life, thanks to the Pythons, I’m reminded that there is one.
The meaning of farce

The Arthurian legend has become a foundational myth that expresses the values of traditional British society and even Western civilization: “proper” social order, Christianity, righteous violence, manners (defined as “knowing your place”) and the masculine virtues of strength, courage and loyalty. Consequently, Arthur’s quest for the Grail has been the subject of countless paintings, poems, novels, a Wagnerian opera, James Russell Lowell’s enormously popular 1848 poem “The Vision of Sir Launfal,” hip hop artist Jay Z’s 2014 album *Magna Carta Holy Grail* and, yes, the 1975 film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, as well as today’s musical production, *Spamalot*.

Like the 1975 *Holy Grail* film (and indeed the whole *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* TV series that ran on the BBC from 1969 to 1974), *Spamalot* is pure nonsense. It twists and turns and goes madly off in all directions (of course, a musical about the founding myth of Great Britain has to feature the Laker Girls cheerleading squad). However, like all Python productions—and all good farce—it is nonsense with meaning. Meaningful farce always springs from seriousness. Oscar Wilde was able to pillory the manners and superior airs of the British class system only because members of “Society” took those things—and themselves—so seriously. Python’s zany (and, yes, the word applies here) comedy targets all things that “serious” people take seriously, and *Spamalot* is true to form.

A product of the late 1960s, *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* was the creation of John Cleese, Eric Idle, Michael Palin, Graham Chapman and Terry Jones (the latter two now deceased), who were all comic actors coming out of the Oxford-Cambridge elite, along with Terry Gilliam, an American who was responsible for the series’ iconic animations. The team knew British culture, manners, pretensions, snobbery and self-flattery from the inside, and no part of that culture or the institutions that supported it was safe, including—and especially—the monarchy, the class system, the Church, the military and government bureaucracy.

Given the influence of *Monty Python* on comedy today, it is hard to imagine just how innovative and iconoclastic it was when it first appeared. Not everyone “got” its humour. Skits did not have a beginning, middle or end. Characters popped in and out of stories. In fact, the 1971 film, which used the Pythonesque tagline “And Now for Something Completely Different” as its title, originally did not do well at the American box office. It was too different. It was only after PBS began showing the original television episodes that American audiences warmed up to *Monty Python*. The 1974 re-release of the film did better, ironically just as the show was wrapping up in Great Britain.

And then came *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in 1975. Produced in the UK for a paltry £200,000, it would earn at least five times that in theatres and many more times that in video sales. The *Holy Grail* was a send up of everything English society took seriously: royalty, religion, militarism, class, patriarchy, tradition and especially—the myth of national origins in the legends of Arthur. The Pythons’ King Arthur is a deluded and self-important buffoon, and Camelot—that once and future kingdom—is summarily dismissed in the film and labelled as “a silly place.”

Over its long career, the *Monty Python* troupe has given us great musical comedy (or is it comic musical?) with song-skits such as the “Lumberjack Song,” “Bruces’ Philosopers Song” and even “Eric the Half-a-Bee.” Not all of their music was high art! Most was pure high jinx, such as the “Spam Song,” which—while musically silly—still maintained a large enough place in the public imagination to be reprinted in *Spamalot* in a bar of the song “The Knights of the Round Table” (also called the “Camelot Song”). “The Camelot Song,” by the way, includes the immortal line, “We eat ham and jam and Spam a lot,” from which today’s production takes its title.

The Python repertoire includes a number of musical skits that have stood the test of time by combining provocative comedy with original music. For instance, “Every Sperm is Sacred,” featured in the 1983 film *Monty Python’s Meaning of Life*, is a seminal (pardon the pun) musical number that featured great orchestration, Broadway ready choreography and musical and lyrical virtuosity. And, of course, there is...
“Always Look on the Bright Side of Life,” written by Eric Idle and featured in the 1979 film *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*. Forty years later, it is still sung at public events such as soccer matches and even funerals in the UK. And, yes, it makes an appearance in this play. It is this musical heritage that Idle, with the help of John Du Prez, moved to the stage in *Spamalot*.

However, the risk in moving *Monty Python* to the stage was that it could become a parody of itself. Indeed, one of the original Pythons dismissed *Spamalot* as “Python-lite” (although he did, at the same time, admit he enjoyed the contribution it made to his pension fund!). Others chimed in with kudos and criticisms. Idle, who wrote the play without his partners, replied, “I’m making them money, and the ungrateful bastards never thank me. Who gave them a million dollars each for *Spamalot*?” This being *Monty Python*, of course, we can never know how serious or satirical any of these comments are meant to be.

*Spamalot* itself addresses the parody-of-a-parody conundrum by (you guessed it) parodying itself. Characters address the audience with their criticisms, insecurities and frustrations (the Lady of the Lake, for example, comes back on stage after a sustained absence to sing “Whatever Happened to My Part?”). Idle was pleased to take his musical to Broadway and London’s West End while mocking the icons of those legendary theatre districts. In *Spamalot*, *Fiddler on the Roof* and Andrew Lloyd Webber are low hanging fruit for Idle’s satire. You will also see an example of Idle’s self-parody in Act One in his original (but ironically also unoriginal), generic Broadway song, “The Song That Goes Like This.” The singers openly mock the song’s musical and lyrical clichés and Idle brilliantly nails Lloyd Webber and himself to the same cross.

So is *Spamalot* pure nonsense? Well, yes and no. Like all Python humour, it is nonsense with a point. As Jim Holt has argued, just as *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* was an anti-film, *Spamalot* is an anti-musical that deconstructs the tale of Arthur and the Holy Grail while parodying musical theatre. It asks us to challenge all of the serious things that serious people take seriously—including “serious” theatre.

Today, we have witnessed a return of various silly ideas that have somehow been elevated to the plane of serious politics. For example, in the UK, populists have revived elements of pre-1960s nationalism, demonizing immigrants and others in the name of British traditions and institutions, such as the crown and the Church of England (which the British monarch still heads, by the way). The spirit of the Arthurian legends has been revived—without irony. Around the world, toxic mixtures of religion, nationalism, authoritarianism and machismo have found a home in “serious” politics. In the same way that the Pythons’ 1979 film *Monty Python and the Life of Brian* undermines the cruel and doctrinaire elements of Christianity, *Spamalot* holds these serious things up to the sobering light of ridicule and asks us to “always look on the bright side of life.” And, to think.

It may not be pure nonsense, but it is pure fun.

David Seljak is a Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at St. Jerome’s University within the University of Waterloo.

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**BOOK. MUSIC AND LYRICS**

**ERIC IDLE**

Eric Idle has multi-hyphenated his way through life assiduously avoiding a proper job, from a writer and actor in the legendary “Monty Python” TV series and movies, to the creator and director of “The Rutles”, the pre-fab four, whose legend will last a lunchtime. He has appeared on stage in drag singing rude songs at Carnegie Hall and the Hollywood Bowl, as well as performing in two highly successful tours, *Eric Idle Exploits Monty Python* (2000) and *The Greedy Bastard Tour* (2003), for which he journeyed 15,000 miles across North America in a bus. His *Greedy Bastard Diary* of that tour is published by Harper Collins. His play *Pass the Butler* ran for five months in London’s West End; he has written two novels, *Hello Sailor* and *The Road To Mars*, a children’s book, *The Quite Remarkable Adventures of the Owl and the Pussycat* and a bedside companion, *The Rutland Dirty Weekend Book*.

**MUSIC**

**JOHN DU PREZ**

John Du Prez, a Trevelyan Scholar at Christ Church, Oxford, and Associate of the Royal College of Music, entered the film industry in 1978 composing additional music for *Monty Python’s Life of Brian*. This began a long association with Eric Idle, leading eventually to their current writing partnership. He has scored more than 20 feature films including *The Meaning of Life*, *A Private Function*, *A Fish Called Wanda*, *Once Bitten*, *UHF* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles I, II and III*. Other Python projects include the *Contractual Obligation Album*, *Monty Python at the Hollywood Bowl* and *The Fairly Incomplete & Rather Badly Illustrated Monty Python Song Book*. He was musical director for Eric Idle’s two North American stage tours, *Eric Idle Exploits Monty Python* (2000) and *The Greedy Bastard Tour* (2003).
THE CAST
IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

HISTORIAN, NOT DEAD FRED, SIR FRED, MINSTREL
HENRY FIRMSTON
MAYOR, PATSY, GUARD #2 EDDIE GLEN
KING ARTHUR
JONATHAN GOAD
SIR ROBIN, MUD CASTLE GUARD, DEAD COLLECTOR, GUARD #1 TREVOR PATT
SIR ROBIN STANDBY JAMES DALY
SIR LANCELOT, THE FRENCH TAUNTER, KNIGHT OF NI, TIM THE ENCHANCER, MUD CASTLE GUARD AARON KROHN
SIR DENNIS GALAHAD, THE BLACK KNIGHT, PRINCE HERBERT’S FATHER LIAM TOBIN
MRS. GALAHAD, SIR BEDEVERE, CONCORD AIDAN deSALAIZ
LADY OF THE LAKE KIMBERLY-ANN TRuong
SIR NOT APPEARING, FRENCH GUARD, DANCING NUN JASON SERMONIA
PRINCE HERBERT, FRENCH GUARD, MINSTREL, DANCING NUN JASON SERMONIA
MUD CASTLE GUARD, DEAD COLLECTOR, SIR ROBIN, GUARD #1 EDDIE GLEN
MONK, MRS. GALAHAD, SIR BEDEVERE, CONCORD, HISTORIAN, NOT DEAD FRED, SIR FRED MCKINLEY KNUCKLE
KING ARTHUR
AARON KROHN
LADY OF THE LAKE AYRIN MACKIE
PATSY, MAYOR, GUARD #2, HISTORIAN, NOT DEAD FRED, SIR FRED, BROTHER MAYNARD, HERBERT ANTHONY MacPHerson
HEATHER McGUIGAN
HEATHER McGUIGAN
LADY OF THE LAKE AYRIN MACKIE
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MUD CASTLE GUARD, SIR LANCELOT, THE FRENCH TAUNTER, KNIGHT OF NI, TIM THE ENCHANCER, BROTHER MAYNARD AIDAN deSALAIZ

SPECIAL THANKS TO STEVE SPIEGEL AT THEATRICAL RIGHTS WORLDWIDE, AND THE JOHN GRAY.

SPECIAL THANKS TO DR. JENNIFER ANDERSON, MD, MSC, FRCSc, ST. MICHAEL’S HOSPITAL, TORONTO; DARCY TREFIAK, PT, B.SC.P.T., FCAMPT, PHYSIOTHERAPY ALLIANCE, STRATHFORD; MARLYN HOMES, PT; DR. SIMON MCBRIDE, MCISc, MD, LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE - VOCAL FUNCTION CLINIC; POWLER-KENNEDY SPORTS MEDICINE CLINIC, LONDON; DR. BRIAN HANDS, MD, FRCSc, VOC CURA - VOICE CARE SPECIALISTS, TORONTO; DR. LEIGH SOWERBY, MD, MHM, FRCSc, ST. JOSEPH’S HOSPITAL, LONDON; DR. JOH YOO, MD, DEAN OF THE SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY - LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE; DR. THOMAS VERNY, MD, DHL, DPSYCH, FRCPc, FAPA, STRATHFORD; DR. CHRISTINE LY, MD, STRATFORD, DR. P. NEILSEN, GOderich; DR. LAUREL MOORE, MD, DR. SEAN BLAINE, MD, DR. ERIN GLASS, MD, DR. JACOB MATUSINEC, MD, STAR FAMILY HEALTH TEAM, STRATFORD & DR. DAVID THOMPSON, MD, STRATFORD. PIANOS TUNED AND MAINTAINED BY STEPHENSON CONCERT GROUP. CYMBALS AND DRUMSTICKS PROVIDED BY DREAM CYMBALS. ADDITIONAL PROJECTION ILLUSTRATIONS BY PAUL SLOBOADA.
A MESSAGE FROM OUR EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TEAM

The work of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is a collaborative effort from all of us who see the Festival as our home. It is through this work that we open the doors of this home and work to build long-lasting spaces of belonging and inclusion for all those who may enter those doors from their respective communities. This effort is represented on our stages through the diverse programming that showcases stories, voices and experiences that bring all aspects of this world to the forefront and hopefully through this exposure and exploration bring us closer together as people. This work is fulfilled through the representation of our staff as we are committed to ongoing actions to have a diverse array of faces, ages and abilities who welcome you to the theatre. This work extends to our relationship with our hometown. In conjunction with the city of Stratford itself, we are dedicated to solidifying this theatre as a true community partner, working alongside the numerous local organizations and businesses with the goal of creating a welcoming space for everyone—residents and visitors alike.

The effort of creating an equitable and inclusive theatre is a process and it is ongoing. The demands and needs of the patrons we hope to serve through this theatre are constantly at the top of our mind, and it is our mission to meet these demands and fulfill the Festival’s commitment to offering a gathering spot for the world—a place where people from all over can come and share in a communal experience. Through having a consistent focus on EDI we hope to not only enhance the work seen at the Festival on all of its stages but to also enhance the various communities we have the potential to represent.

MONTY PYTHON’S SPAMALOT IS PRESENTED THROUGH SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH AND ALL AUTHORIZED PERFORMANCE MATERIALS ARE SUPPLIED BY THEATRICAL RIGHTS WORLDWIDE (TRW), 1180 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, SUITE 640, NEW YORK, NY 10036 (866) 378-9758 WWW.THEATRICALRIGHTS.COM

Any video and/or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.
AMANDA DE FREITAS (she/her)

BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATORY, 1999
JONATHAN GOAD

EVANGELIA KAMBITES (she/her)
2023: Appears in Monty Python’s Spamalot and understudy in A Wrinkle in Time. Fourth season. Stratford: Little Shop of Horrors, Billy Elliot. You Can’t Stop the Beat! Elsewhere: Gary Coleman in Avenue Q (Arts Club); The Adventures of a Black Girl in Search of God (Centaur Theatre/BTWINAC). I think I’m Fallin’ – The Songs of Joni Mitchell (Belfry Theatre); Lady in Orange in the red for colored girls who has considered suicide/when the rainbow is not enough (Arts Club); Seance on a Marble Floor (Stage West, Calgary Critics nom. Best actor in a Musical), Sherlock Holmes (MTC); Lies My Father Told Me (Segal Centre), Visiting Mr. Green (Harold Green). Training: Toronto Met (BFA - Theatre), Birmingham Conservatory. Awards: Guthrie (Chalmers Apprentice Award). Etcetera: Love and gratitude to Billy and my family.

AIDAN DESALIAZ (he/him)
2023: Mrs. Galahad, Sir Bedevre, Concord in Monty Python’s Spamalot and understudy in A Wrinkle in Time. Fifth season. Stratford: Censor and Cleopatra, The Taming of the Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, Pentecost, Of Mice and Men, Othello, Coriolanus, Twelfth Night, Much Ado… Elsewhere: Into the Woods (Winter Garden, Dora nom. Outstanding Lead Performance in a Musical), The Judas Kiss (Talk Is Free); The Last Five Years (Neptune), The 39 Steps (Chernais); Other People’s Money (Theatre Aquarius); Alice in Wonderland; The Best Brothers (Western Canada Theatre); Having Hope At Home (Neptune); A Christmas Carol (Grand Theatre); Lucky Shift, Spymalot (Drayton, Red, Cabaret, Legally Blonde (Theatre Aquarius), The Wedding Singer (Stage West, Calgary Critics nom. Best actor in a Musical), Sherlock Holmes (MTC), Lies My Father Told Me (Segal Centre), Visiting Mr. Green (Harold Green). Training: Toronto Met (BFA - Theatre), Birmingham Conservatory. Awards: Guthrie (Chalmers Apprentice Award). Etcetera: Love and gratitude to Billy and my family.

JOSH DOIG
2023: Prince Herbert, French Guard, Minstrel in Monty Python’s Spamalot and Swing in Frankenstein Revived. Stratford debut. Elsewhere: The Prince in Cinder-Ellie, Mamma Mia! (Tweed and Co.), Mamma Mia! (Drayton Entertainment), Mamma Mia! (Mayfield); Fender in Hairspray (Theatre Aquarius), LeFou in Beauty and the Beast (Globe Theatre), Pavlo in Kamp (Eastern Front Theatre), Neptune Theatre), Alice in Wonderland; The 39 Steps (Chernais); Other People’s Money (Theatre Aquarius); Alice in Wonderland; The Best Brothers (Western Canada Theatre); Having Hope At Home (Neptune); A Christmas Carol (Grand Theatre); Lucky Shift, Spymalot (Drayton, Red, Cabaret, Legally Blonde (Theatre Aquarius), The Wedding Singer (Stage West, Calgary Critics nom. Best actor in a Musical), Sherlock Holmes (MTC), Lies My Father Told Me (Segal Centre), Visiting Mr. Green (Harold Green). Training: Toronto Met (BFA - Theatre), Birmingham Conservatory. Awards: Guthrie (Chalmers Apprentice Award). Etcetera: Love and gratitude to Billy and my family.

HENRY FIRMSTON (he/him)

EDDIE GLEN

AARON KROHN
GRACIE MACK (she/her) Métis Nation of Alberta
2023: Swing in Monty Python’s Spamalot and appears in Frankenstein Revived. Second season. Stratford: A Chorus Line (Shelia), A Little Night Music (Mrs. Segstrom), Man of La Mancha, Crazy for You, Electra. Elsewhere: Minish; The Wizard of Oz (Toronto & National Tour), Lord of the Rings (Eowyn), The Producers: Citadel/Theatre Calgary: Crazy for You (Polly), and West Side Story. Drayton: LIttely Stiff (Rita), How to Succeed… (Herdy LaRue), Cinderella (Baroness). Other: Technicolor Sky (Shaw), Dracula: A Chamber Musical (Drayton), Anne of Green Gables (Segal Centre). Et cetera: This season is dedicated to my dear Mother, Joyce Mackie. She was the wind beneath my wings and is the joy forever in my heart. My kiddos, Tiaga and Easton, Grandpa Gé Mackie and Thelton, I love you so much.

AYRIN MACKIE (she/her)
2023: Appears in Monty Python’s Spamalot and appears in Frankenstein Revived. Sixth season. Stratford: A Chorus Line (Shelia), A Little Night Music (Mrs. Segstrom), Man of La Mancha, Crazy for You, Electra. Elsewhere: GYM captain and assistant dance captain for Matilda (first national tour, Mirvish); Andrew Lloyd Webber’s The Wizard of Oz (first national tour, Mirvish); Peter Pan in Peter Pan in Wonderland (Ross Petty Productions); five seasons at the Charlottetown Festival including assistant choreographer of Kronborg: The Hamlet Rock Musical; Mammo Ma! and swing in Anne of Green Gables; Mammo Ma! (The Grand), Priscilla, Rock of Ages (Drayton); Elf, Mary Poppins, A Christmas Carol (Theatre Aquarius); West Side Story (Vancouver Opera); Death in Venice (Canadian Opera Company). Choreographer: Assassins, Metamorphoses (Theatre Sheridan). TV/Film: Sullivan’s Crossing (CTV), Washington Block (Disney/Hulu), FROM (EPIX); The Sinner (USA); Sugar Highs (Emotion). Training: Sheridan College. Online: #amaphiemson. Et cetera: Big love and thanks to the Talent House, Flea, Monkey and my family out East.

ANTHONY MACPHERSON
2023: Swing in Monty Python’s Spamalot and appears in Frankenstein Revived. Stratford debut. Elsewhere: GYM captain and assistant dance captain for Matilda (first national tour, Mirvish); Andrew Lloyd Webber’s The Wizard of Oz (first national tour, Mirvish); Peter Pan in Peter Pan in Wonderland (Ross Petty Productions); five seasons at the Charlottetown Festival including assistant choreographer of Kronborg: The Hamlet Rock Musical; Mammo Ma! and swing in Anne of Green Gables; Mammo Ma! (The Grand), Priscilla, Rock of Ages (Drayton); Elf, Mary Poppins, A Christmas Carol (Theatre Aquarius); West Side Story (Vancouver Opera); Death in Venice (Canadian Opera Company). Choreographer: Assassins, Metamorphoses (Theatre Sheridan). TV/Film: Sullivan’s Crossing (CTV), Washington Block (Disney/Hulu), FROM (EPIX); The Sinner (USA); Sugar Highs (Emotion). Training: Sheridan College. Online: #amaphiemson. Et cetera: Big love and thanks to the Talent House, Flea, Monkey and my family out East.

HEATHER McGUIGAN
2023: Swing in Monty Python’s Spamalot and appears in Frankenstein Revived. Second season. Stratford: You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown, Wonderful! Elsewhere: My Fair Lady, The Admiring Crichton, The Women (Shaw); Les Misérables (Mirvish); Mary Poppins (Broadway national tour); Christine in Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (national tour); Annette in Saturday Night Fever (USA); Denyce Graves in The Musical (Segal Centre); Cathy in The Last Five Years (Neptune); Mary, Winifred in Man of La Mancha (Neptune, Aquarius, Capitol); Fiona in Shrek (Neptune, Rainbow); Gloria in Damn Yankees, Sally in Me & My Girl, Gloria in Zanzibar of Oz, Pirates of Penzance (Drayton); Beauty and the Beast (Rainbow); Sister Robert Anne in Nunsense (BCP); Twist and Shout (Champlain), Anne of Green Gables (Charlottetown Festival), Heather’s Garden Variety Concert Series. Online: @dayventurous.heather, heathermcguigan.com. Et cetera: Thank you for supporting live theatre. As always, for James and Galen.

KYLA MUSSELMAN (she/her)
2023: Appears in Monty Python’s Spamalot and Frankenstein Revived. Third season. Kyla grew up in Stratford and is thrilled to be back, working in her hometown. Stratford: Swing in Chicago, Shadow in Wendy & Peter Pan. Elsewhere (selected): Monster (The Monster Collective), Newsies (Drayton Entertainment), Mamma Mia!, Al Shook Up (Globe Theatre), Mary Poppins, Shrek, The Addams Family (Neptune Theatre), Jersey Boys, Legally Blonde, I Love You… Now Change (Stage West), Saturday Night Fever (North American tour, NorthCore Productions), Crazy for You (Capitol Theatre), Anne of Green Gables, Evangeline, Ring of Fire (Charlottetown Festival). TV/Film: Mamma Mia! HERE WE GO AGAIN! (Columbia/UP), High School Musical (Glee). Other: Kyla is a co-creator in the role of the musical theatre podcast, Titts and Teeth, and a founding board member of the CGDC. Et cetera: LOVE to my husband, my family (both chosen and blood) the T-House, and this magical festival! Online: @kymusser @kylasandbeltedpodcast @officialcgb.

TREVOR PATT (he/him)
2023: Sir Robin, Mud Castle Guard, Dead Collector, Guard #1 in Monty Python’s Spamalot and appears in Frankenstein Revived. Sixth season. Stratford: Billy Elliot, Elizabeth Scott in The Rocky Horror Show, The Music Man, Guys and Dolls, HMS Pinafore, Shakespeare in Love, Little Pinks, Martin Guerre, Up From Paradise. Elsewhere: Jersey Boys (TP), Anne of Green Gables, Munschables (Charlottetown Festival); Jumping Ship (NAC), Buddy Holly (Mayfield); So He’s Been (Here For Now), Wizard of Oz, Shrek: The Musical. Royal National. Spelling Bee (Grand Theatre); Billy Elliot (RMTC), Evangeline (Charlottetown/Citadel); Les Misérables, The Little Mermaid, Mary Poppins (Rainbow Stage), The Sound of Music, 9 to 5: The Musical (Drayton Entertainment); Robin Hood, High School Musical! (Theatre Aquarius); Port Hope Capitol, Theatre Orangeville, Theatre St. John’s, Smiley Theatre. Et cetera: Love and thanks to all of the amazingly supportive friends and family in my life.

JASON SERMONIA
2023: Sir Bors, French Guard, Minstrel. Dancing Nun in Monty Python’s Spamalot and appears in Frankenstein Revived. 10th season. Stratford: Chicago, Billy Elliot, Little Shop…, Rocky Horror…, Music Man, Chorus Line, Sound of Music, Carousel, Crazy for You, Man of La Mancha, JCS, Guys and Dolls, Anything Goes. Elsewhere: Miss Saigon, JCS (Broadway); Lion King (Mirvish, Las Vegas); Dirty Dancing (Mirvish); We Will Rock You (Mirvish, national tour); Yoshimi (La Jolla); History Boys (Toronto); Savoy (Drayton); TV: The 56th & 57th Tony’s, 39th Emmy’s, Dancing with the Stars; Live With Regis & Kelly Las Vegas, Marilyn Denis Show. Film: Honey, Chicago. Choreographer: Discover the New Tom Patterson Theatre (Stratford Festival), Great Grand Road Trip and Theatre HSP. Assistant: Chicago (Stratford Festival); The Boys S3E5. Awards: Derek F. Mitchell Artistic Director’s Award (2018), Brian Macdonald and Choreographer Award (2018). Online: @JasonSermonia. Et cetera: Love to my family, friends, T House, Melanie and Léon.

LIAM TOBIN
2023: Dennis Galahad, The Black Knight, Prince Herbert’s Father in Monty Python’s Spamalot. Stratford debut. Broadway: The Book of Mormon. Tours: Elder Price in The Book of Mormon (second national tour); Gerry Goffin in Beautiful: The Carole King Musical (first national tour); Tony in West Side Story (international tour). Film/TV: Sex/Life (Netflix); How to Kill Your Mom (SABC), Sympy Holiday (MUV), Mucha Huy (CBC); Unperfect Christmas Wish (MOW). Elsewhere: The Sound of Music (Mirvish); Link in Hairspray (Charlottetown Fest.); Joseph in Joseph… (Stage West); Lord Farquard in Shrek; Buddy in Elf (The Grand); Gabe in Next To Normal (RMTC); Lancelot in Spamalot; Joe Hardy in Damn Yankees; Cable in South Pacific; Blood Brothers (Drayton), Tony in West Side Story (Neptune Theatre). Online: @lttobes4. Et cetera: Big thanks to the Talent House, my family, Danielle and our sweet little Emmy.

KIMBERLY-ANN TRUONG

SARAH VANCE
2023: Rehearsal swing in Monty Python’s Spamalot. Stratford debut. Elsewhere: Patty Simcox and associate choreographer in Grease the Musical (Winter Garden); Hairspray, Elf, Grease, Al Shook Up, Spamalot, High School Musical (Drayton Entertainment); Anne of Green Gables, Munschables (Charlottetown Festival), Crazy for You (Theatre Calgary/Citadel Theatre), Beauty and the Beast, Music Man (Capitol Theatre). Film/TV: Reacher, American Gods (Amazon), The Next Step (Family), In the Tall Grass (Netflix) Assistant choreographer, The Mobleses (CBC), Warrior (NBC), CARRIE (Spike); Story of Christmas (CTV); Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again! (YTV); SYTYCDC (CTV). Other: NBA Toronto Raptors Dance PArk (Four Seasons), Registered Kinesiologist. Online: #vancerdancer. Et cetera: A dream come true. Love and thanks to my family, David and Hunter.
The Feminist Expansion of the Western Canon

Hannah Rittner was curator-in-residence for the Festival in 2020-2022 with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts. In this role, she read, researched and selected 400-plus plays written by women between the 17th and 21st centuries to create a research project entitled “The Feminist Expansion of the Western Canon,” in which she seeks to transform the Western theatrical canon so that it may include and celebrate the female gaze.
BONI DUNCAN


CORWIN FERGUSON (he/him)

2023: Projection designer of Rent and assistant projection designer of Monty-Python’s Spamalot and A Wrinkle in Time. Stratford debut. Elsewhere: Select video and projection design credits include: Homes: A Refugee Story (Grand Theatre); Brigadoon (Shaw Festival); Sweet, Steel City Gangster (Theatre Aquarius); Much Ado About Nothing (Bard on the Beach); Nobody’s Children, Hannel & Gretel, Robin Hood (Yellow Door Theatre Project); Diving Miss Doe (Theatre Aquarius). Projection design for 23rd St., Enemy of the People (shrew, Tempest, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Fool for Love). Rinaldo (Pacific Opera Victoria); Julius Caesar, Richard II (The Shakespeare Company). Training: Bachelor of Performing Arts (Capilano University), Studio 58. Corwin is a full member of ADC, online: www.CorwinFerguson.com.

ALICE FERREYRA GALLIANI (she/her)

2023: Stage manager of Women of the Velvet Tent and assistant stage manager of Monty-Python’s Spamalot. Seventh season. Stratford: Death and the King’s Horseman, Hamlet, R.J., Henry VIII, Birds of a Kind, Bakhtia. Elsewhere: The Marriage of Figaro, The Magic Flute (Canadian Opera Company); Moammar, My Brother (Blue Bird Theatre Collective); Every Silver Lining (Next Stage Theatre); Magnus & Pierce (Grand Theatre); Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls (Roseway Theatre); The Drowsy Chaperone, Footloose, The Addams Family (Grand Theatre); City of Angels (Theatre By the Bay, The Story Theatre (Columbus), The Test (The Company Theatre). Training: Sheridan College (Technical Production). Et cetera: Originally from Lima, Peru. Loves food, music, dancing. Always looking for a good book recommendation.

FRANK INGER (any/all)


HOLLY KORHONEN


ELIZABETH MCDERMOTT

2023: Production stage manager of the Avon Theatre and assistant stage manager of A Wrinkle in Time. 10th season. Stratford: Production stage manager, Festival Theatre, Tom Patterson Theatre. Assistant stage manager: Billy Elliot, Othello, The Music Man, To Kill a Mockingbird, Shakespeare in Love, The Hypochondriac, The Sound of Music, The Taming of the Shrew, Love’s Labour’s Lost, As You Like It, King of Thieves. Elsewhere: (selected): King Lear, Twelfth Night (Shakespeare in Love), A City, Divisadero (Necessary Angel), Crooked: new light on deroing (UWinnipeg Collective Disruption); Comfort (Red Snow Collective); The Road to Paradise, Night (Human Cargo); Miracle on 34th Street (STC); Bello (HGJTC); Anne of Green Gables, Canada Rocks! (Charlottetown), Falling: A Wake (Blyth), The Barber of Seville (Souppepe); Brian’s Journey, Head & Tôle, Old Man and the River (Theatre Direct); Donny, King of the Basemew (Rosewater); Othello, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Twelfth Night, All’s Well That Ends Well (SLF).

ERIKA MOREY (she/her)

2023: Assistant stage manager of Monty-Python’s Spamalot and Frankenstein Revised. Stratford debut. Elsewhere: Stay Falls From the Sky (Minsight/Past Future Productions); Forgiveness (Arts Club/Theatre Calgary); Anne of Green Gables - The Musical, Mamma Mia!, Jesus Christ Superstar, Kronborg - The Hamlet Rock Musical, Melts Matt, Spinning Yams, Ghost Light (Charlottetown Festival); Rose - A New Musical, The Seagull (Souppepe). The Rocky Horror Show, Stratford debut. Elsewhere: Outstanding Sound Design – Chasing Champions (Ship’s Company); Multiple Betty Mitchell, Jessie Award for Technical Merit from CITT – LeVoyage (Flip the Switch); Robert Merritt award – Chasing Champions (Ship’s Company); multiple Betty Mitchell, Jessie Richardson and Elizabeth Sterling award nominations. Online: www.CorwinFerguson.com.

PAIGE PARKHILL

2023: Associate choreographer of Monty-Python’s Spamalot. 11th season. Stratford: The Who’s Tommy, A Word or Two, Jesus Christ Superstar, Evita, Cabaret, Wanderlust, Don Juan. Elsewhere: Sumner, Dr. Zivago, JCS (Broadway), Madama Butterfly, Whiteley (Opera Australia); Swan Lake (National Ballet), Sideways; Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots (La Jolla Playhouse), Going Home Strong (Trinity) and more (Buddies in Bad Times Theatre); Gounod’s Faust (Metropolitan Opera) Nixon in China (S.F. Opera, Lyric Kansas City; WOO-Dublin, Royal Swedish Opera, Vancouver Opera); A Word or Two (Alhamfront); A Word or Two (Alhamfront); A Word or Two (Alhamfront); A Word or Two (Alhamfront); A Word or Two (Alhamfront); The Seagull (Souppepe). Festival: Stratford: Sound designer of 2023: Monty Python’s Spamalot. Elsewhere: Sound designer of Anne of Green Gables - The Musical, Mamma Mia!, Jesus Christ Superstar, Kronborg - The Hamlet Rock Musical, Melts Matt, Spinning Yams, Ghost Light (Charlottetown Festival); Rose - A New Musical, The Seagull (Souppepe). The Rocky Horror Show, Stratford debut. Elsewhere: Outstanding Sound Design – Chasing Champions (Ship’s Company); Multiple Betty Mitchell, Jessie Award for Technical Merit from CITT – LeVoyage (Flip the Switch); Robert Merritt award – Chasing Champions (Ship’s Company); multiple Betty Mitchell, Jessie Richardson and Elizabeth Sterling award nominations. Online: www.CorwinFerguson.com.

EMILY C. PORTER (she/her)

2023: Sound designer of Monty-Python’s Spamalot. Third season. Stratford: Little Women, Monty-Python’s Spamalot (2020). Elsewhere: Emily has worked on productions across Canada and internationally. Canadian sound designs have been with Globe Theatre, Luminato, Asha Productions, Grand Theatre, Rainbow Stage, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Neptune Theatre, Harold Green Jewish Theatre, Young People’s Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Canadian Stage, Theatre20, Shaw Festival, Canadian Opera Company. She teaches university theatrical sound design and technology. Awards: Robert Merritt Award for Outstanding Sound Design – Into the Woods. Online: emilyporter.ca. Et cetera: I would like to thank my family for their continued support.
JESSE ROBB  

BETH RUSSELL (she/her)  
2023: Casting director for the Stratford Festival. 16th season. Broadway and West End: As Senior Vice President, Casting and Creative Development for Livent, Beth was responsible for productions including Parade, Ragtime, Candide, Show Boat and Kiss of the Spider Woman; as well as productions of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Show Boat, Sunset Boulevard, Aspects of Love and The Phantom of the Opera in the Canada, the United States, and Australia. Elsewhere: Co-producer of CBC-TV’s Triple Sensation, National Casting Director for CBC Radio Drama and Artistic Associate for Toronto Arts Productions (now Canadian Stage). Also, as an agent, Beth has represented actors, directors, choreographers, writers and composers.

GEOFF SCOVELL  

JAMES SMITH (he/him)  
2023: Associate conductor of Monty Python’s Spamalot. Second season. Stratford: Substitute keyboard/accordion for Chicago; Lessons in Temperament (Meighen Forum). Elsewhere: White/Performer of Lessons in Temperament (Outside the March, Souppepper/NYC), Composer/Lyricist of Chasse Galerie (Souppepper, Storefront), Composer/Sound designer for the Importance of Being Earnest, The Threepenny Opera, Town, Dance of Death, Fiddler Healer (Sha Festival), Conductor/Key-Board for Canoada Rocks (Charlottetown Festival), Rose (Souppepper Theatre), Assassins (TIFT); Musical director for Brantwood (Theatre Sheridan), Great Expectations, Guys and Dolls, Darling of the Day (TIFT). As an actor: Marky Ramone in Four Chords and a Gun (Galvanize); Moe in The Golem’s Mighty Swing (Outside the March); De Bris in Le Ble Noir; François in Chasse Galerie (Souppepper). Training: Souppepper Academy, Shaw Festival’s Music Director Internship, BMUS from Queen’s University. Awards: Dora Award for Sound Design/Composition of Chasse Galerie.

ALIA STEPHEN (she/her)  

LEZLIE WADE  
2023: Director of Monty Python’s Spamalot. Eighth season. Stratford: Director: An Ideal Husband, and HMS Pinafore. Assistant director: Jesus Christ Superstar (La Jolla/Bravo), El Chavo, Fuente Ovejuna, As You Like It, A Word or Two. Assistant director: Henry V. Elsewhere (selected): The Twelve Pound Look, The Yalta Game (Shaw Festival), Elegies, A Man of No Importance (Musical Stage Co.). Other: Lezlie’s musical, The Gifted Prince, is currently optioned by an upcoming development works who is in NYC and the Olney Theatre Centre in Maryland. Her musicals Sticky Fingers and Nobody’s Children were recently produced by Yellow Door Theatre Projects. Awards: NYC International Film Award for her movie musical, Red Letter Day, Dora nomination, (Musical Stage Co.), Tom Hendry Award shortlist, The Gifted Prince. Finalist for the Stiles and Drewes best musical song prize in the UK. LezlieWade.com. Thanks to Kevin.

BETH RUSSELL (she/her)  
2023: Casting director for the Stratford Festival. 16th season. Broadway and West End: As Senior Vice President, Casting and Creative Development for Livent, Beth was responsible for productions including Parade, Ragtime, Candide, Show Boat and Kiss of the Spider Woman; as well as productions of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, Show Boat, Sunset Boulevard, Aspects of Love and The Phantom of the Opera in the Canada, the United States, and Australia. Elsewhere: Co-producer of CBC-TV’s Triple Sensation, National Casting Director for CBC Radio Drama and Artistic Associate for Toronto Arts Productions (now Canadian Stage). Also, as an agent, Beth has represented actors, directors, choreographers, writers and composers.

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ALIA STEPHEN (she/her)  

HARIKA XU (she/her)  
2023: Assistant lighting designer of Monty Python’s Spamalot and A Wrinkle in Time and Frankenstein Revived. 25th season. Stratford: (select): Death and the King’s Horseman, Nathan the Wise, An Ideal Husband, Treasure Island, The Breathing Hole. Breath of Kings: Rebellion, Carousel, Man of La Mancha, The Three Musketeers, Taking Shakespeare, Henry V, Hamasaki (Shaw); Much Ado About Nothing, She Stoops to Conquer (Shaw Festival); Elsewhere: Assistant lighting designer for Frankie Drake, Save Me, Designated Survivor, The Man from Toronto, Jack Reacher, FUBAR, See, No Child... (Arts Club Theatre); A Word or Two, Henry V, Frankenstein Revived and Monty Python’s Spamalot (Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre). Training: MA in Lighting Design, University of Lethbridge. Awards: 2012 and 2017 Guthrie Awards. Et cetera: Max runs the e-commerce division of ravenvision.ca; Canada’s leading purveyor of orchid growing supplies.
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With Sincerest Gratitude to our Donors

We truly appreciate the many individuals and foundations that have supported the Stratford Festival, the new Tom Patterson Theatre, the Relaunch Campaign and our Endowment Foundation. We are humbled to acknowledge the cumulative gifts and pledges of a very special group of committed donors whose contributions over the years have truly made a difference and will continue to have a significant impact on the future of the Stratford Festival.

Gifts made through the Stratford Festival of America are marked with an asterisk (*).

Pledges and Gifts in support of Productions and Annual Projects for the 2023 Season

We are sincerely grateful for the generosity and commitment of our Production Sponsors and other Major Gift Donors. These leadership gifts provide a bridge to the future of the Stratford Festival.

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For the safety of the artists and in accordance with the intellectual property associated with the productions, all cameras, audio and video recorders must be turned off during the performance. In addition, please turn off all mobile devices, as their sounds and lights will disturb actors and other guests. If you require access to a mobile device for accessibility needs, please see the House Manager prior to the performance.

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