

# Welcome to the BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATORY at the Stratford Festival

It is a great privilege to gather and share stories on this beautiful territory, which has been the site of human activity – and therefore storytelling – for thousands of years.

This territory is governed by two treaties: the first is the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant of 1701, made between the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy; an agreement to set violence aside and peacefully share and care for the land in the Great Lakes basin. The second is the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, an agreement made by 18 Anishinaabek Chiefs and the Canada Company, an agency of the British Crown. As an organization and a company of artists, we at the Stratford Festival are learning how we can be better treaty partners.

We wish to honour the ancestral guardians of this land and its waterways: the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Attiwonderonk. Today many Indigenous peoples continue to call this land home and act as its stewards, and this responsibility extends to all peoples, to share and care for this land for generations to come.

The Festival acknowledges its history of being a colonizing culture and we are working diligently to understand our complicity in unjust systems that have excluded many from participating fully in the work. We are committed to continuously evolving our understanding of equity, inclusion and anti-racism and we acknowledge that the work of reconciliation is an ongoing journey. The Conservatory seeks to create a respectful environment of learning and exchange where every participant is asked to embrace an inclusive learning experience with an openness of heart and humility and where those who lead are open to feedback.

The program is actively looking to partner with artists, actors and theatre makers whose talent, energy, commitment and creativity will shape the future of theatre at the Festival and across the country. It is devoted to the on-going development of craft required to tackle text and language-based plays through material rich in character, storytelling, song, dance, fights and challenging themes. Shakespeare will be at the centre of the exploration, but not to the exclusion of other culturally rich material. And, in keeping apace with evolving pedagogy, there will be an open engagement with both traditional and non-conventional approaches to the work.

Although training has been part of the Festival since its beginning, the format of a professional Conservatory program has been evolving since its inception in 1999. This one-time 2024 iteration has been designed for artists who are looking for an intensive opportunity to deepen and evolve their craft in a space that serves as both an incubator and a sanctuary.

## THE 2022/2023 PROGRAM is currently underway

### OUTLINE OF THE 2022/2023 PROGRAM

#### First year - 2022

January – February (pre-season)

The program began with a three-week Intensive which included The Binge, an introduction to the Festival and community; combat and intimacy work, led by Fight Director Geoff Scovell; and the Arrivals Legacy Project, led by Diane Roberts and an interdisciplinary co-facilitation team, who engaged members in an exploration of their root cultural voice/bodies drawn from Ancestral sources. In creating an intercultural ensemble, we are called to the question: how do we sound the legacies we carry and those we must leave behind?

March – October

During the first season actors were cast in two shows, with onstage and understudy roles. They received individual and group instruction in voice, movement, Alexander Technique, singing and text. Training goals in these disciplines were driven by the artists. The non-acting participants were given positions in the season according to their discipline.

Focused instruction was given to the understudy responsibilities as it is a vital component of a repertory company and the demands are a learning opportunity within the program.

November/December

At the end of the season, artists returned to the studio (the rehearsal hall) for six weeks, and focused on two small exercises (Neutral Mask with David Latham and Movement with Adrienne Gould) and rehearsed Ted Hughes's adaptation of *Agamemnon* with Jonathan Goad (directing) and Adrienne Gould (movement direction).

### Second year - 2023

January/February

Artists returned to studio training for a six-week period with Yvette Nolan leading the work and directing her adaptation of *The Birds*. The presentation was performed in the rehearsal hall for an invited audience included two groups of local high school Drama and English students.

March – October

In their second season, artists will be featured in a production of Shakespeare's *Loves' Labour's Lost* directed by Peter Pasyk. In addition, they are cast in one of two additional productions and will once again receive individual coaching throughout the repertory season.

November/December

In the final six weeks, artists return to the studio to rehearse a play presented in the Studio Theatre for an invited audience.

## **CIRCLES OF LEADERSHIP**

The Circles of Leadership support, inform and direct the content of the program, the manner in which the program is delivered and the artists in the program.

***Artistic Director*** – Antoni Cimolino

*Guides the artistic direction of the Festival, including the vision and direction of the Conservatory*

***Director of the Birmingham Conservatory*** – Janine Pearson

*In addition to teaching and coaching, the Director serves as a facilitator to the work of the program*

***Directors' Office***

*Work to fulfill the artistic direction of the Festival, including the Conservatory*

Anita Gaffney, Executive Director

David Auster, Producer

Bonnie Green, Associate Producer

Jason Miller, Creative Planning Director

Beth Russell, Casting Director

Ari Weinberg, Associate Casting Director

Jennifer Emery, Casting Assistant

Keith Barker, Director of the Foerster Bernstein New Play Development Program  
Franklin Brasz, Director of Music  
Esther Jun, Director of the Langham Directors' Workshop and Artistic Associate for Planning  
Julie Miles, The Meighen Forum Director

***Director of Human Resources, Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and the Company Manager –***

*Work to create a healthy, safe and inclusive work environment for all Festival members*

Dawnette Baldeo, Director of Human Resources  
Daviorr Snipes, Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion  
Meineka Kulasinghe, EDI Coordinator  
Hilary Nichol, Company Manager

*Work to create a healthy, safe, and inclusive work environment for all Festival members.*

***Artistic Advisors –*** Walter Borden, David Latham, Yvette Nolan

*These artistic elders have tremendous experience and wisdom. They are resources in teaching, directing and leading conversations regarding the work.*

***Associate Artists –*** Raoul Bhaneja, Esther Jun, Thomas Olajide, Lucy Peacock, Steve Ross, Michaela Washburn.

*These artists (from both inside and outside of the company) are involved in advising and supporting the leadership and speaking to the direction of the Conservatory, providing feedback on the work, participating in short-term teaching, and mentoring artists in the program.*

***Developing Teachers and Coaches –*** Lisa Cromarty, Martha Farrell

*These mid-career artists will have the opportunity to develop their pedagogical skills (in specific areas: eg. voice, movement, text) by having the opportunity to work alongside a chosen mentor (who is teaching or directing in the program).*

***Directors, Master Teachers, Teachers and Coaches***

*A great teacher is a facilitator: one who walks alongside, one who nurtures, not one who wishes to mould the artist in their own image.*

Raoul Bhaneja (Associate Artist)  
Walter Borden (Artistic Advisor)  
Francesca Callow (design consultant)  
Brad Cook (movement coach)  
David Chinchilla (assistant to Geoff Scovell)  
Lisa Cromarty (Emerging coach - voice)  
Paul de Jong (Co-Head of Coaching)  
Aria Evans (movement director)  
Martha Farrell (Emerging coach - voice)  
Jonathan Goad (director)  
Adrienne Gould (movement/period dance/movement direction)  
Renate Hanson (PA)  
Lori Holmes (speech language pathology and voice coach)  
Esther Jun (Associate Artist)  
David Latham (Artistic Advisor, Mask teacher)  
Jamie Mac (assistant to Geoff Scovell)  
K. Cathy MacKinnon (Co-Head of Coaching)  
Kelly McEvenue (Alexander coach)  
Pulga Muchochoma (dance/movement)  
Yvette Nolan (Artistic Advisor, director)

Thomas Olajide (Associate Artist)  
Lucy Peacock (Associate Artist)  
Diane Roberts (Rosemary Georgeson, Lopa Sircar, Gerald Trentham [Arrivals Legacy Project](#))  
Steve Ross (Associate Artist)  
Geoff Scovell (fight director)  
Jennie Such (singing)  
Danielle Walcott (PA)  
Michaela Washburn (Associate Artist)  
Tim Welham (text coach)  
Members of the acting company  
Members of the coaching team

***Company –***

*The company (actors, stage managers, crew, artisans, etc.) all play a role in nurturing and supporting the Conservatory artists.*

These actors are not our actors.

They are the youth of the Theatre's longing for itself.

They come through us but not from us,

And though they are with us yet they belong not to us.

We may give them our guidance but not our thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

We may provide space for their work but must not stifle their souls,

For their souls dwell in the theatre of tomorrow, which we cannot visit, not even in our dreams.

We may strive to be like them, but must not seek to make them like us.

For the theatre goes not backwards nor carries with yesterday.

We can be the bow from which these artists as living arrows are sent forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and

They bend us with their might that their arrows may go swift and far.

Let our bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;

For even as the archer loves the arrow that flies, so they love also the bow that is stable.

-adapted from Kahlil Gibran's poem *On Children*

## **Call for Letters of Interest for the 2024 BIRMINGHAM CONSERVATORY**

March 2023

This one-year iteration of the program is actively looking to partner with actors whose talent, energy, commitment and creativity will shape the future of theatre at the Festival and across the country. Shakespeare will be at the centre of the exploration, but not to the exclusion of other culturally rich material.

### **The Program**

The 2024 Conservatory will be from January to December. The Festival will not be holding auditions for the 2024 Conservatory, and therefore participants will be selected from past auditions. The ensemble will allow up to eight actors who can fully commit to the training journey, both in the Festival season and in the studio work. Therefore, participants must be interested and available to make a one-year commitment to the program, as the Festival makes its commitment to their development.

The 2024 Conservatory consists of two parts: in-studio training and in-season training. Artists are paid a weekly stipend for the in-studio training. During the Festival season, artists are paid their negotiated fee. The Festival covers travel but not housing.

- January – a four-week Intensive, prior to the season start which may include classes in voice, movement, Mask, improv, text and combat.
- March to October – actors will be cast in two productions with understudy responsibilities as fitting any company member. In place of a third show they will have a *Training Track* comprised of individual and group coaching in voice, movement, Alexander, singing and text.
- November/December – actors return to the rehearsal hall for six weeks to focus on a play.

### **How to Submit**

If you would like to be considered for the 2024 Conservatory, please submit your photo, résumé and a brief letter sharing the reasons you wish to participate to [casting@stratfordfestival.ca](mailto:casting@stratfordfestival.ca) no later than April 15, 2023.

The Casting Department will notify all those selected for an interview.

The Birmingham Conservatory is only open to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

We welcome applicants of every identity, and encourage artists from Indigenous, Inuit, Métis, Black, People of Colour, Deaf, disabled and 2SLGBTQ+ communities.