

# CASEY AND DIANA

## CASEY AND DIANA

By **Nick Green**

Directed by **Andrew Kushnir**

## GRADE RECOMMENDATION

7+

## CONTENT ADVISORY

Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

## SYNOPSIS

As the Toronto AIDS hospice, Casey House, prepares for the historic visit of Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1991, residents and staff are inspired to beat the odds as a plague continues to ravage a generation. This potent and moving drama by Nick Green, commissioned by the Stratford Festival and premiering at the Studio Theatre, vividly captures the moment when a rebel princess, alongside less famous caregivers and advocates, reshaped the course of a pandemic.

When Casey House opened in 1988 in Toronto, it was the first hospice in the world to provide palliative care and support for people living with HIV/AIDS. The opening was long overdue. Researchers had isolated a deadly virus as early as 1981, but the disease was considered a threat solely to gay men. Because of its association with homosexuality, most authorities were reluctant to endorse public health campaigns targeting the virus. The social stigma attached to AIDS, coupled with fears of contamination and transmission, meant that many victims were even denied proper funerals.



From left to right: Sean Arbuckle and Krystin Pellerin.  
Photography by Ted Belton.

It's easy to forget how far we've come in the struggle for full 2SLGBTQIA+ rights. At the time of Princess Diana's visit, most of those rights were still a dream. Homophobia was such a toxic, potent cultural force that most people simply didn't know—or care about—HIV/AIDS. A wave of grassroots activism was slowly bringing the plight of those living with the virus to the public eye. The first AIDS Awareness Week was held in San Francisco in 1984 and the AIDS Memorial Quilt was displayed on the Mall in Washington in 1987. And yet when Diana made her Casey House visit in 1991, her decision to shake hands with the residents was still considered a dangerous, subversive act.

*Casey and Diana* brings that historical moment to life with a series of dramatic vignettes as the princess tours the hospice greeting staff and residents, including Thomas, who has long fantasized about meeting the world's most beloved Royal. Although those original Casey House residents have since passed, their heartaches, humour and grit live on in a dramatic and witty homage to the lives behind the famous photos. From them we learn how those stricken by the virus found hard-won dignity, community and love in the face of astonishing hardship.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Global Competencies:
  - Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
- Grade 7-8
  - The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
  - Language
  - Social Studies
- Grade 9-12
  - The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
  - English
  - Canadian and World Studies
- Grade 11-12
  - Social Sciences and Humanities

## THEMES

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Love and Life
- Acceptance and Rejection
- Advocacy
- Care and Community
- Chosen Family
- Compassion
- Death, Dignity and Dying
- Expectations
- Friendship
- HIV/AIDS
- Hope
- Humanity
- Illness
- Judgment and Stigma
- Rebellion and Resilience
- Tradition

## DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Have you ever heard of Casey House? If so, what do you already know? If not, what questions do you have?
- What do you already know about HIV/AIDS? What myths are there about HIV/AIDS? What questions do you have?
- How would you define activism? Where have you seen examples of activism throughout history and today? Can you think of any examples of activism in your school and/or community?
- What does it mean to live and die with dignity? How might people change how they live when they know they are dying?

## STUDY GUIDES

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at <https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD>

## BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS

### STUDENT MATINÉES

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- Thursday, May 25th
- Friday, May 26th
- Tuesday, May 30th
- Wednesday, May 31st
- Tuesday, June 6th
- Thursday, June 8th
- Friday, June 9th
- Tuesday, June 13th
- Thursday, June 15th
- Friday, June 16th

### WORKSHOPS & CHATS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



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Tools for Teachers includes Prologues, Study Guides and Stratford Shorts.

## PROUD SEASON PARTNERS



Production support of *Casey and Diana* is generously provided by Alan Rowe & Bryan Blenkin and by three generations of the Schubert family. Support for the creation of *Casey and Diana* is generously provided by The Foerster Bernstein New Play Development Program.