

The Author

VIRGINIA WOOLF (1882-1941) was born Adeline Virginia Stephen in London, England. Her father was Sir Leslie Stephen, an eminent historian and literary critic who was the first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. After his first wife Harriet died (she was the daughter of novelist William Thackeray), Leslie Stephen married a beautiful widow named Julia Jackson Duckworth. Between them they already had four children, and together they had four more: Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia and Adrian. Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* is considered, among other things, a character study of her parents. Her mother died in 1895, and her father in 1904.

The Stephen home was a centre of learning and literature, and there Virginia (who was educated at home) met many of the outstanding literary and intellectual figures of late Victorian England. After the death of their father, the four Stephen orphans moved to a house in the Bloomsbury district of London, where a new generation of artists and intellectuals formed around them, beginning with the brothers' fellow students from Cambridge. Key figures of the "Bloomsbury Group" included artists Roger Fry and Duncan Grant, writers E.M. Forster and Lytton Strachey, critics Desmond MacCarthy and Clive Bell (who married Vanessa Stephen), and economist John Maynard Keynes.

In 1912 Virginia married another member of the Bloomsbury Group, Leonard Woolf (1880-1969); and in 1917, with just a single handpress, they founded their own publishing house, the Hogarth Press. Under this imprint they brought out the early works of T.S. Eliot, E.M. Forster, Katherine Mansfield, and the first English editions of Freud. Woolf herself, who had been writing since childhood, then produced a series of groundbreaking novels that included *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931) and *Between the Acts* (1941). She also wrote a great deal of literary criticism, including *The Common Reader* (as series of editions beginning in 1925) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929), as well as volumes of short stories, diaries and a biography. A landmark of modern literature, Woolf's fiction is best known for its use of "stream of consciousness," a technique of interior monologue that Woolf felt was especially suited to women writers. In her novels, plot is de-emphasized in favour of intricate psychological detail.

Virginia Woolf was plagued by depression and nervous breakdowns for much of her life, beginning with the death of her mother when Woolf was just thirteen. In 1941, deeply depressed by the onset of another war and fearful of another breakdown, Virginia Woolf committed suicide by drowning. Biographies have been written by her nephew Quentin Bell (1972) and more recently by James King (1994) and Hermoine Lee (1996).

FLUSH is generously sponsored by

James & Diane King

* RBC Emerging Artists are sponsored by
the RBC Foundation and RBC Emerging Artists Project.

PREVIEW PROGRAMME

THE HUMENIUK FOUNDATION STAGE, JULY 10 TO AUGUST 6

ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, AUGUST 17 TO OCTOBER 2

SHAW FESTIVAL 21

TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | TIM JENNINGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JULIE LUMSDEN, DREW PLUMMER,
JONATHAN TAN and JACQUELINE THAIR in

FLUSH

based on the novella by VIRGINIA WOOLF
adapted by TIM CARROLL

Directed by TIM CARROLL

Designed by HANNE LOOSEN

Puppetry by ALEXANDRA MONTAGNESE

We acknowledge and honour the land upon which we gather today as the historic and traditional territory of First Nations peoples. In particular, we recognize and thank the Neutral Nation, the Mississauga and the Haudenosaunee for their stewardship of these lands over millennia.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

Director's Note

by Tim Carroll

I've always been a fan of Virginia Woolf's writing, so when my eye fell on *Flush*, a book I had never heard of, I was intrigued. On reading it, I could see why I had not come across it before: it's very unlike her normal style, and she herself felt that it was a bit of a sell-out. It certainly is a much easier read than any of her great stream-of-consciousness novels; and it is also shorter than any of them. But I soon realized, as I read it, that it has a lot in common with her supposedly greater works, particularly its fascination with point of view.

Woolf is always interested in the way the world unfolds to us, moment by moment. Often she tries to capture the thoughts that drift through our minds as we negotiate our day. In the case of *Flush*, she is fascinated by the impossibility of knowing what is going through the mind of a dog. She sometimes tries it, but I suspect the absurdity of her speculations (as, for example, *Flush's* dark night of the soul as he wrestles with his hatred for Mr Browning) is deliberately fashioned to make us realize that, actually, we will never know what it is like to be a dog. Even Elizabeth Barrett, with whom *Flush* has an intense love relationship, has to accept that, as Woolf puts it, "Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another."

We all know, of course, that we can't help ascribing intentions to our pets, without really having any idea what they are thinking. This, it seems to me, is basically what we do when we watch a play. When we watch a puppet, especially, we know that we are watching an object with no consciousness; but we project on to it the whole range of possible emotions. These were the reflections that led me to the idea of *Flush* as a puppet play. I hope that the combination of Woolf's delicious prose with the intensely detailed vocal and physical work of this remarkable team will give you as much delight as we have had in the making of this piece.

Production History

Flush was first published in serial form in the July, August, September and October 1933 issues of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The first edition in book form was published simultaneously in London and New York on October 5, 1933. The 2021 Shaw Festival production is a world premiere of the adaptation by Tim Carroll.

THE CAST *In Alphabetical Order*

Narrator /
Elizabeth Barrett (Browning) **JULIE LUMSDEN***
Narrator / *Flush* Puppeteer **DREW PLUMMER***
Narrator / Robert Browning **JONATHAN TAN**
Narrator / *The Barretts' Maid* **JACQUELINE THAIR**

The play takes place in London and Florence,
in the middle of the 19th century.

Stage Manager **DORA TOMASSI**
Assistant Stage Manager **ANNIE McWHINNIE**
Production Stage Manager **MEREDITH MACDONALD**
Assistant Director **ROB KEMPSON**
Assistant Set Designer **BEYATA HACKBORN**
Assistant Costume Designer **KARA PANKIW**
Voice and Dialect Coach **JEFFREY SIMLETT**

For Artist photo and bio information, please go to shawfest.com/flush

UNDERSTUDIES

JAMES DALY, narrator, *Flush* puppeteer; TRAVIS SEETOO, narrator, Robert Browning;
JENNY L. WRIGHT, narrator, Elizabeth Barrett (Browning), *The Barretts' Maid*

Running time is approximately 1 hour