

The Authors

A former Intern Director at the Shaw Festival, **JOHNNA WRIGHT** has always been drawn to theatre for the chance to tell a story that connects people both to each other and to the storytellers. And after a bruising few years, she still believes in the power of that storytelling to change the way we see the world.

Johnna grew up in Western Canada, where in 1990 she was a co-founder of the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival (now Canada's largest Shakespeare festival outside of Stratford). Most recently for Bard she co-directed, with Rohit Chokhani, a landmark production of *All's Well That Ends Well* set in India. She is a two-time recipient of Vancouver's Jessie Richardson Awards for Outstanding Direction and Outstanding Production, as well as other directing awards. Johnna was also Associate Artistic Director at Blackbird Theatre, Vancouver's classical theatre company.

As Literary Manager at Persephone Theatre, Johnna supported the development and premiere of quite a few new Canadian plays, including Christopher Cook's Governor General's Award-nominated *Quick Bright Things*. As co-Artistic Director of Solo Collective in Vancouver (with Aaron Bushkowsky), she was responsible for the development and premiere of about twenty-five new plays by Canadian playwrights.

Johnna would like to send special thanks to family and friends for their unflagging support, and to Patty for teaming up with her.

PATTY JAMIESON is thrilled to call herself a "first-time playwright" at the Shaw Festival, although her true playwrighting career began in grade three and never stopped as she pursued her busy acting career. With the Rude Players, she wrote numerous plays at the University of Winnipeg, influenced by British director Mike Leigh, under the guidance of actor and director Alan Williams.

Born in Fredericton, Patty grew up a well-travelled "army brat". This was good training for acting work that has taken her to Germany and across Canada before joining the Shaw Festival ensemble in 1994. Favourite roles at the Shaw include Mother in *Ragtime*, Charlotte in *A Little Night Music*, Fraulein Osterloh in *Tristan*, Ilona in *She Loves Me* and The Fly in *Happy End*. These roles provided a rich background and genesis for *Gaslight*, which Patty and Johnna collaborated on over a period of three years, largely over Skype, as they live in separate provinces.

Patty also works with many local arts organizations, as producer, writer and performer, and teaches arts, music and theatre for Brock University, Music Niagara and the Niagara Catholic District School Board. She received her M.Ed in 2015 from Niagara University, and is proud to call Niagara-on-the-Lake home for herself and her son.

PATRICK HAMILTON (1904-1962) was one of the more successful playwrights and novelists of the 1930s and '40s and saw his two greatest plays turned into extremely popular movies. (*Rope*, produced at The Shaw in 2019 is the other.) *Gas Light* (sometimes produced as *Angel Street*) put Hamilton on the map permanently, enjoying a long run in London and becoming the first of his works to reach the screen. Hamilton was inactive during the second half of the 1950s as his health failed. He died in 1962, at the age of 58.

The Royal George Theatre regular season sponsor

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PREVIEW PROGRAMME

ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, MAY 4 TO OCTOBER 8



TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR | TIM JENNINGS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD, ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

JULIA COURSE, KATE HENNIG,
JULIE LUMSDEN and ANDRÉ MORIN in

GASLIGHT

by Johnna Wright and Patty Jamieson

based on the play *Angel Street* by Patrick Hamilton

Directed by KELLI FOX

Set and costumes designed by JUDITH BOWDEN

Lighting designed by KIMBERLY PURTELL

Original music and sound designed by GILLES ZOLTY

IN MEMORIAM,
CHRISTOPHER NEWTON, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR EMERITUS (1936-2021).

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 Kelli Fox

"In broad long streets where the vista of lamps stretches far far away into almost endless perspective; in courts and alleys, dark by day but lighted up at night by this incorruptible tell-tale ... bright, silent, and secret ... not a houseless night-wanderer, not a homeless dog, shall escape that searching ray of light which the gas will lend him, to see and to know." -- G.A. Sala

Gaslight brought illumination to Victorian society. In an article describing its many blessings, journalist and contributor to the *London Illustrated News*, G.A. Sala, wrote of the warmth, and the feeling of security it offered to city dwellers for whom the night was now a time for venturing out and enjoying company and entertainment. I love the way Sala personifies the light, making it an active seeker of truth, from whom no evil can hide. In our modern vernacular the word "gaslight" has changed from a noun describing a form of artificial illumination, capable of shining light into dark and dangerous corners, to a verb describing a specific type of malicious and abusive behaviour. This is largely due to therapists keen to run with a good metaphor, but either not entirely clear on, or not particularly bothered about, the role gaslight actually played in its origin story. I think Sala's idea is nearer the mark, both in the original play, and in Wright and Jamieson's re-imagined version.

We have been absolutely delighted to dive into this world, and to do as Elizabeth advises in the play: to pay attention, to ask ourselves questions about what we see and hear, and to trust our own thoughts about what is what.

This production is dedicated to the memory of my longtime friend and mentor, Christopher Newton.

Production History

Premiering at the Richmond Theatre in London on December 5, 1938, *Gas Light* closed after six months and 141 performances, but it has endured through an impressive list of incarnations, most notably *Five Chelsea Lane* (1941 American play), *Angel Street* (1944 American play) and *Gaslight* (1944 MGM film).

In 1941, Vincent Price saw *Gas Light* performed in Los Angeles as a three-hander titled *Five Chelsea Lane* and secured the rights. Judith Evelyn, the Canadian actress who played the role of Mrs Manningham in Los Angeles, joined the Broadway production. The name of the play changed to *Angel Street* and premiered at the John Golden Theatre the day before the attack on Pearl Harbor. It remains one of the longest-running non-musicals in Broadway history, with 1,295 performances.

MGM's *Gaslight* (1944), a George Cukor film, starred Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer. Their maid was played by 18-year-old Angela Lansbury, making her screen debut. It was a smash hit, garnering a sizable handful of Oscar nominations and a 'Best Actress' win for Bergman, who noted in her autobiography that, for one of her romantic scenes with Charles Boyer, who was shorter than she, he had to stand on a box.

This adaptation of *Gaslight* at the Shaw Festival is a world premiere.

THE CAST *In Order of Speaking*

Bella **JULIE LUMSDEN**
Elizabeth **KATE HENNIG**
Jack **ANDRÉ MORIN**
Nancy **JULIA COURSE**

SETTING:

The sitting-room of a middle-class house in a square in London, 1901.

Stage Manager **AMY JEWELL**
Assistant Stage Manager **LEIGH McCLYMONT**
Production Stage Manager **MEREDITH MACDONALD**
Assistant Lighting Designer **JEFF PYBUS**
Design Assistant **PAIGE PRYSTUPA**
Fight Co-ordinator **JOHN STEAD**
Fight Captain **AMY JEWELL**
Voice and Dialect Coach **JEFFREY SIMLETT**

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

The original music for this production was recorded by Kathryn Sugden (violin 1), Erica Beston (violin 2), Anna Redekop (viola) and Alex Grant (cello).

Props assistance provided by Dana Cornelius, Cheryl Hughes and Blake Wilson.
Wardrobe assistance provided by Nancy Clare Ferreira, Lise St Germain and Nancy Thiessen.

UNDERSTUDIES

MARTIN HAPPER, Jack; GABRIELLA SUNDAR SINGH, Bella; DONNA SOARES, Nancy; ALLAN TEICHMAN, Stage Manager; JORDINE DE GUZMAN, Assistant Stage Manager

Running time is approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes including one intermission