

VILLAGE WOOING

2023 Ensemble



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I WAS TALKING TO A FRIEND OF THE SHAW THE OTHER DAY:

TC: So, Shaw Friend, how do you pick which shows you see?

sF: The first thing I do is to look for the hidden gems I would never get to see anywhere else...

TC: ...by Bernard Shaw, for example...

sr: True enough, these days.

TC: All right, then what?

sF: Well, I always book for the musical, because I know that a Shaw production will always take the piece seriously, like a play set to music.

TC: Nicely put.

SF: Thanks. Then, of course, the famous classics. It's surprising how often I realize "You know, I've never seen that play!" And even if I have, I know The Shaw will blow the dust off it.

TC: So what you're saying is, you basically book for everything?

sF: Well, I do have a Season Pass.

TC: Of course you do. But if you could only pick one play?

sF: Ah – then it has to be the play and the author that no one has ever heard of.

TC: A bit counterintuitive...

sF: Not at all. I think to myself, "Hang on, if TC has programmed this play, knowing full well that it will only get an audience if it is amazing – well, then it probably is."

TC: May I quote you on that?

TIM CARROLL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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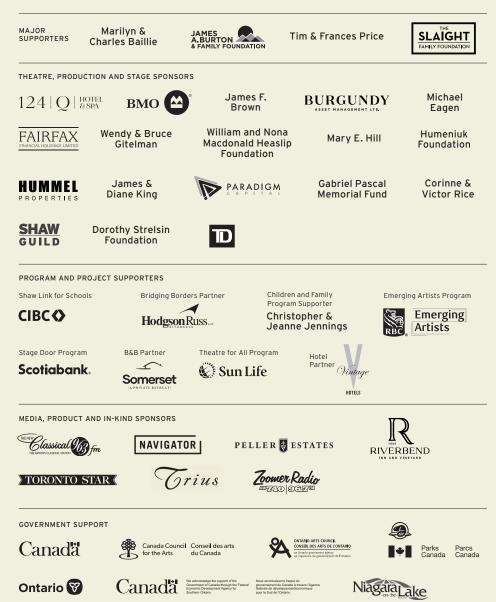
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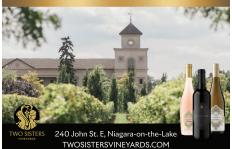
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CELLULAR PHONES, CAMERAS AND RECORDING DEVICES During the performance, there is no photography or filming permitted, and we ask that you turn off your cell phones. We do invite you to take photos when the house lights are on – pre-show, at intermission and post-show. Please ensure that wristwatch alarms and other noisemakers cannot sound during the performance. Alternatively, you can leave them with our staff at the Coat Check.

ASSISTIVE LISTENING DEVICES for the hard of hearing are available at our indoor theatres only. There is no charge, but we do ask you to consider a donation at time of pick up. This donation helps with the cost to repair and replace these devices. Reserve early, limited availability. Please see the House Manager on duty.

IF YOU ARE LATE OR NEED TO LEAVE THE AUDITORIUM during the performance, you will be re-seated at a suitable break in the performance, at which time the seating location will be at the discretion of management.

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FACE COVERINGS are encouraged and may be required of all patrons in conjunction with regional health protocols and internal safety considerations.



ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE, JUNE 8 TO OCTOBER 7



TIM CARROLL Artistic Director Executive Director

TIM JENNINGS

KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD. Associate Artistic Director

VILLAGE WOOING

by Bernard Shaw

with DAVID ADAMS, KYLE BLAIR, JULIA COURSE, MICHAEL MAN, KIERA SANGSTER and DONNA SOARES

Directed by SELMA DIMITRIJEVIC Set and costumes designed by BEYATA HACKBORN Lighting designed by NICK ANDISON Original music and sound designed by JOHN GZOWSKI Movement by ALEXIS MILLIGAN

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

VILLAGE WOOING is generously sponsored by

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Dorothy Strelsin Foundation

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FRONT COVER: PHOTO BY KEY GORDON



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The Cast

Z / Ensemble	JULIA COURSE
Z / Ensemble	KIERA SANGSTER
Z / Ensemble	DONNA SOARES
A / Ensemble	DAVID ADAMS
A / Ensemble	KYLE BLAIR
A / Ensemble	MICHAEL MAN

Scene 1 - The lounge deck of the Empress of Patagonia. Scene 2 - A village shop and post office on the Wiltshire Downs. Scene 3 - The same.



Stage Manager AMY JEWELL Assistant Stage Manager Production Stage Manager

ANNIE MCWHINNIE MEREDITH MACDONALD

Assistant Set Designer Assistant Lighting Designer JEFF PYBUS Voice and Dialect Coach

YIMING LIU JENNIFER TOOHEY

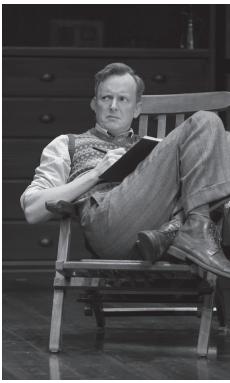
UNDERSTUDIES BEATRICE CAMPBELL, Stage Manager; MEGHAN FROEBELIUS, Assistant Stage Manager

Running time is approximately 60 minutes









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JULIA COURSE AS Z; KIERA SANGSTER AS Z; DONNA SOARES AS Z; DAVID ADAMS AS A; KYLE BLAIR AS A; MICHAEL MAN AS A.



Director's Note

BY SELMA DIMITRIJEVIC

A man and a woman. A chance encounter. She seems to see something extraordinary in him and he is not sure he wants to be seen. Is it too soon? Is it too much? Is it just impossible in this world that is so wrongly arranged.

In some other universe she might have taken another path, gone on a different cruise or a walking tour. He might have stayed buried in his books, or not walked into the right village shop. But in this universe, they will both take a chance and see if maybe, just maybe, this strange, annoying, wonderful person in front of them might be the one they could spend the rest of their lives with.

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"There are couples who dislike each other furiously for several hours at a time; there are couples who dislike one another permanently; and there are couples who never dislike one another; but these last are people who are incapable of disliking anybody."

BERNARD SHAW, GETTING MARRIED



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: A YOUNG COUPLE ON THE BOW OF A FREIGHTER; PASSENGERS ABOARD THE S.S. MANHATTAN, 1932; SHIPBOARD SNAPSHOT.

It Takes a Village

BY DOROTHY HADFIELD

Shaw wrote *Village Wooing* in the first weeks of a round-the-world voyage aboard the *Empress* of Britain – a situation that mirrors the opening setting of the play. Like his character A, Shaw didn't necessarily take great pleasure in travel for its own sake, seeing the upheavals, sightseeing excursions and fellow travellers as getting in the way of his writing work. His wife Charlotte, on the other hand, loved to travel, and increasingly planned trips as much for the change in scenery as for the possibility that Shaw might use the opportunity to take a break from his workaholic pace and get some rest.

Not that it often happened despite Charlotte's best intentions, and the four months aboard the *Empress of Britain* were no exception. While Charlotte spent mornings resting in their staterooms, Shaw could be seen, much like A, seated in a lounge chair remote from the other



passengers, writing incessantly. For someone who insisted "you have to work or go mad," it was the only kind of vacation travel imaginable.

Still, Charlotte wasn't wrong about his need for rest, even if she didn't entirely understand what that looked like for GBS. Seated on that remote deck chair, in a state that Shaw described as "too dog tired for anything but child's play," he dashed out *Village Wooing*, "only a comedietta for two persons" that, uncharacteristically, he had no plans to get performed.

Maybe that state of exhaustion explains why Village Wooing seems made up mostly of ideas that Shaw had already explored in other plays. Anyone familiar with Shaw's oeuvre will immediately recognize Ann Whitefield and Jack Tanner from Man and Superman in the way Z pursues A on the grounds that some force she doesn't understand drives her to insist she must have him: audiences will hear echoes of Pygmalion in Z's claim that fellow passengers mistake her for an aristocrat because of her telephone operator elocution and A's observations that she may speak like a lady but doesn't act like one. They might be reminded of a whole other play centred on discussions about the practicality and price of getting married. And when A pontificates about the difference between sensual and spiritual pleasures, his eloquent comminglings of the mundane with the spiri-

tually transcendent would be equally at home in the mouth of Barbara Undershaft or even Saint Joan. Some viewers might even see a connection between the play's opening setting on a ship and Shaw's earlier masterpiece, *Heartbreak House*, with A's misanthropic, disillusioned, and world-weary resignation giving him the air of a Captain Shotover on a smaller scale.

Yet, seeing *Village Wooing* as little more than a patchwork of recycled ideas doesn't do justice to a play that consistently delights audiences whenever it is performed. One element of

its appeal is surely its lively focus on relationships, a topic that takes on a universal cast in light of Shaw's decision to refer to the characters only as A and Z rather than giving them individual names. But as the play's title makes clear, this is no generic wooing – it's specifically a village one. On the deck of a ship in the middle of the Red Sea, too dog tired to do anything else, Shaw let his mind and familiar preoccupations wander back home where, grounded in the village life that he had unexpectedly come to love, these big ideas take on a sense of humanity and hope that was sometimes absent in their earlier incarnations.

The four months aboard the Empress of Britain marked the longest period the Shaws had been away from "Shaw's Corner," the country retreat they had established almost thirty years earlier in the small Hertfordshire village of Ayot St Lawrence. Shaw famously embraced the location after visiting the local cemetery where the epitaph on a 70-year-old's tombstone declared "Her time was short" and concluding that a village where seventy years was considered a short life was a good place to be. (And he seems to have been right about that, with Charlotte living to 86 and he to 94, both at home in Shaw's Corner to their end.) The villagers initially hadn't been sure what to make of their infamous new neighbour, but the Shaws gradually won them over with their unassuming support of local life, buying goods and services from the village shops and donating generously (and usually anonymously) to local initiatives. Among the local business folk who benefitted directly from Shaw's patronage was Jisbella Lyth, the Ayot St Lawrence postmistress. The Shaws were already local fixtures by the time Jisbella and her husband Ambrose arrived to manage the post office, and were among the first to offer Jisbella their support when Ambrose died suddenly only six weeks later. Shaw appreciated Jisbella's resilience and independence in choosing to stay and keep running the post office and village shop on her own, submitting his stamp orders to her every week and suggesting she could supplement her income by selling the handwritten notes to autograph seekers (she did). When Village Wooing premiered in 1934, it was easy to see Jisbella Lyth, postmistress of Ayot St Lawrence, in the sensible and determined Z, postmistress of an unnamed village on the Wiltshire Downs. (While Shaw never explicitly confirmed the inspiration for Z, he was adamant that A was not a version of himself but a "posthumous portrait of Lytton Strachey.")





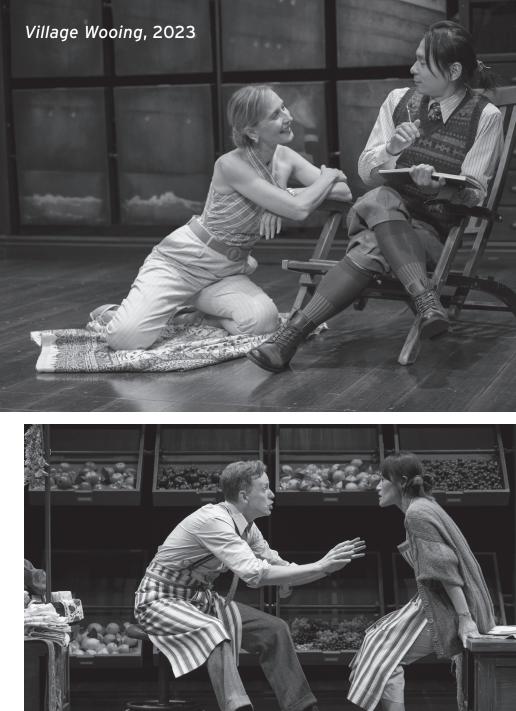


Like the characters, the village doesn't have a specific name, but its presence in the play is no less significant. As the setting shifts from the Red Sea to the English countryside, so do the dynamics of the characters' positions. Attitudes that seemed sensible (or silly) on board ship look different on the Wiltshire Downs. Questions change from abstract musings about language and purpose in life to tangible decisions with practical consequences. Does a quiet country village have anything meaningful to offer an intellectual world traveller like A? What kind of match would a snobbish, disillusioned poet be for a practical, hardworking shopkeeper like Z? In typical Shavian fashion, A and Z convincingly and sympathetically lay out their contradictory visions for the future, each trying to persuade the other - and the audience - how the story ought to end. The only constant that emerges in all the sparring over work, money, social expectations, sexual attraction, the hazards of marriage, and even fresh produce, is the village itself: unlike the Red Sea that turned out not to be red, the village offers a relatively uncomplicated glimpse of a community and what it means to belong there. Literally and figuratively, it takes a village to help the characters understand who they are and what they want.

Exhausted in that isolated deck chair on the *Empress* of Britain, Shaw turned out to be toying with a surprisingly existential question: who understands humanity better, the famous, workaholic writer whose words let others see the world, or the shopkeeper whose whole world consists of one village community? Instead of an easy or definitive answer, *Village Wooing* asks us to make up our own minds as we peel back the layers of this charming comedietta wrapped in a nostalgic love letter from a travel-weary Shaw to the kind of village he called home.

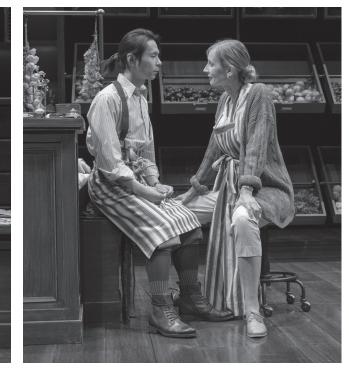
DOROTHY HADFIELD TEACHES IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO. SHE IS ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SHAW SOCIETY AND HAS PUBLISHED ON CANADIAN THEATRE, FEMINISM AND SHAW.

FROM TOP: THE VILLAGE SHOP IN LAXTON, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE, LATE 1940S (HULTON GETTY); BERNARD SHAW ON THE DECK OF A CRUISE SHIP, 1930S (DAN H. LAURENCE COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH LIBRARY).









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JULIA COURSE AS Z AND MICHAEL MAN AS A; KIERA SANGSTER AS Z AND DAVID ADAMS AS A; MICHAEL MAN AS A AND JULIA COURSE AS Z; KYLE BLAIR AS A AND DONNA SOARES AS Z.



Production History

Village Wooing was first produced on April 16, 1934 by the Little Theatre Company of Dallas, Texas. Two weeks later, on May 1, it was produced for the first time in England by the Wells Repertory Players, at Tunbridge Wells, Kent, with a young schoolteacher (and future playwright) named Christopher Fry portraying "A". Sybil Thorndike and Arthur Wontner gave the first London performance some months later, directed by Shaw himself. *Village Wooing* was first shown on television in 1952 with Michael Golden and Ellen Pollock. There was an ITV version in 1979 starring Judi Dench and Richard Briers.

This is the sixth production of *Village Wooing* at the Shaw Festival, following productions in 1964, the very first Lunchtime production in 1979, 1990, 1999, and a touring production in 2007 with Jim Mezon and Catherine McGregor.







The Author

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW (1856-1950) the acclaimed dramatist, critic and social reformer, was born in Dublin where he grew up in an atmosphere of genteel poverty. He attended four schools and was tutored by a clerical uncle, but left his formal schooling behind him at the age of 15. He developed a wide knowledge of music, art and literature under the influence of his mother, a singer and vocal music teacher, and as a result of his visits to the National Gallery of Ireland. In 1876 he moved to London, where he spent his afternoons in the British Museum, and his evenings pursuing his informal education in the form of lectures and debates. Shaw declared himself a socialist in 1882 and



joined the Fabian Society in 1884; soon he distinguished himself as a fluent and effective public speaker and an incisive and irreverent critic of music, art and drama.

Shaw's first play, Widowers' Houses, was produced privately in 1892, for the members of a progressive theatre club called the Independent Theatre Society. It was followed by The Philanderer and Mrs Warren's Profession. Published in Plays Unpleasant (1898), these reflect Shaw's admiration for the "new drama" of Ibsen. More palatable, though still rich with challenges to conventional middle-class values, were his Plays Pleasant (1898) which included Arms and The Man, Candida, The Man of Destiny and You Never Can Tell. In 1897 Shaw attained his first commercial success with the American premiere of The Devil's Disciple, which enabled him to quit his job as a drama critic and to make his living solely as a playwright. In 1898 he married Charlotte Payne-Townshend, an Irish heiress whom he had met through his Fabian friends Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

Shaw's plays first attained popularity in London through a famous repertory experiment at the Royal

Court Theatre from 1904 to 1907. Among his plays presented there were the premieres of *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906). His best-known play *Pygmalion*, was first performed in 1913. During World War I, Shaw's anti-war pamphlets and speeches made him very unpopular as a public figure. In *Heartbreak House* (performed 1920) he exposed the spiritual bankruptcy of the generation responsible for the carnage. Next came *Back to Methuselah* (1922) and *Saint Joan* (1923), acclaim for which led to his receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1925. Shaw continued to write plays and essays until his death in 1950 at the age of 94.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SYBIL THORNDIKE AND ARTHUR WONTNER IN THE 1934 LONDON PREMIERE PRODUCTION (MANDER AND MITCHENSON THEATRE COLLECTION); LINDA LIVINGSTON AND CHRISTOPHER NEWTON IN THE SHAW'S 1964 PRODUCTION (PHOTO BY ROBERT C. RAGSDALE); MICHAEL BALL AND WENDY THATCHER IN THE SHAW'S 1990 PRODUCTION (PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER); CAMILLE JAMES AND NEIL BARCLAY IN THE SHAW'S 1999 PRODUCTION (PHOTO BY DAVID COOPER).



For full biographical information about our cast and creative team, please visit shawfest.com/ensemble.

SELMA DIMITRIJEVIC Director

SHAW 2023: Director for Village Wooing and Mother, Daughter. I am a director, writer and mother. When I was growing up, our house was infused with sports and theatre. My parents were volleyball coaches and my aunt and uncles ballet dancers, and I so desperately wanted to be both. In a way that is exactly what I do. A bit of a coach and a bit of a performer; I am very fortunate that it is still as exciting walking into the rehearsal room as it was when I was eight.

BEYATA HACKBORN Set and Costume Designer

SHAW 2023: Set and costume designer for Village Wooing; associate set and costume designer for The Playboy of the Western World; assistant designer for The Shadow of a Doubt. Like many, I started

out early. I was a sweet, young eight-yearold, enrolled in a children's musical theatre company and partook in all the usual shenanigans of a precocious theatre kid; I took voice lessons, learned to juggle, and spent hours watching YouTube videos of obscure audition songs while memorizing monologues written for women in their thirties. I could also draw, however - which for my AD at the time, meant I was ready to design their spring production of Seussical at age seventeen. A parent volunteer once told me that, in all my years with the company, they had only ever seen me happy while painting a set that I had designed. Bafflingly, I still have photos of that production in my portfolio.

NICK ANDISON Lighting Designer SHAW 2023: Lighting designer for Village

Wooing. I have fond memories of coming to the Shaw Festival with my family over the years. The Mystery of Edwin Drood in the Royal George was a personal favourite when I was young. It has been a pleasure to be involved with numerous productions there, including the seasonal favourite A Christmas Carol. Growing up in the performing-arts world as a dancer, with a keen interest in design and production, I was fortunate to meet, learn from and collaborate with designers, including Graeme S. Thomson and Roelof P. Snippe. Their kindness in sharing their craft, experience and knowledge not only shaped the beginning of my theatrical journey, it also inspires me to collaborate thoughtfully with my colleagues and to illuminate the minds of young aspiring designers as they did for me.

JOHN GZOWSKI Composer / Sound Designer

SHAW 2023: Composer/sound designer for Village Wooing; co-composer/sound designer for Mahabharata. Born and raised in

Toronto, I originally planned to be a guitarist, but kept getting asked to write music for shows, which I fortunately learned is just as fun and interesting. My pandemic pivot has been going back for my masters in composition, studying the application of the predictive mind model to music and creativity. Here at Shaw, The Divine, Dracula and The Hound of the Baskervilles are a few shows that I've worked on that have really made me proud.

ALEXIS MILLIGAN Movement

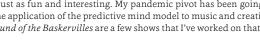
SHAW 2023: Movement for Village Wooing; movement director for The Game of Love and Chance. One of the greatest discoveries I've had as a parent is learning to shrug my shoulders when my children say, "I'm bored." Always within minutes they start a project, or make up a game, far more interesting and fun than any "proactive activity" I could ever come up with. From my daughter defying physics by attempting to climb up the stairs while sitting inside





NICK ANDISON







a cardboard box, to my son reinventing the microwave in a post-apocalyptic Lego world, I witness advancements in science and technology that extend far beyond logic and reason and into the worlds of dreams and possibilities... and how delightful that my work as an artist is also just that. Follow me at alexismilligan.com or transitus.ca.

DAVID ADAMS A/Ensemble

SHAW 2023: Village Wooing and Blithe Spirit; 7th season. I will always be grateful to my English Honours Professor, Errol Durbach, for encouraging me to audition for Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, when he wisely stated that, "dramatic literature is meant to be performed, not just studied academically!" I landed my first role and watched in wonder as guest artist Alan Scarfe, as Faustus, strutted and fretted every night on-stage. I wanted to emulate the power and freedom of expression that so captivated me. I was also inspired at the time by Christopher Newton's Vancouver Playhouse Company of actors and watched in awe the artistry and genius of seminal productions of King Lear, Travesties, Oedipus, Equus, and so

on. Subsequently, I was fortunate to be directed by Newton on several occasions and am eternally grateful for his mentorship and support.

KYLE BLAIR A/Ensemble

SHAW 2023: *Village Wooing* and *Prince Caspian*; 13th season. When the pandemic hit, I returned to school and completed my MA in Theatre Studies. My research focused on identifying underrepresented artists from Shaw's past who had made valuable contributions to the Festival. Following archivist Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, I think of this ongoing work as "social justice through archival repair." I believe that building toward a better future must include looking back as well as forward. To that end, one of the most notable figures I encountered was Percy Rodrigues. Rodrigues appeared to rave reviews in 1963 (Shaw's second

season) and again in 1966. A Black actor from Montreal, he went on to have an astounding career breaking down race barriers by playing an officer of authority on *Star Trek* and a neurosurgeon on the soap opera *Peyton Place*. Rodrigues is one of many actors whose legacy at The Shaw continues to inspire.

JULIA COURSE Z/Ensemble

SHAW 2023: Village Wooing and Blithe Spirit; 14th season. My first theatre experience was on my seventh birthday. I memorized the box office phone number for The Phantom of the Opera and begged my parents to take me. My dad bought Phantom-shaped wine gums, and I can still remember the dress I wore. It was all very exciting and, as I watched the show, I knew that's what I wanted to do. But, it wasn't until my high school drama



class that I truly fell in love with playing pretend. Our teacher, Debra McLauchlan, inspired in us curiosity and creativity. She became a mentor and dear friend, and still inspires the way I approach my theatre work.

MICHAEL MAN A/Ensemble

SHAW 2023: *Village Wooing* and *Prince Caspian*; 3rd season. My family remains a constant source of inspiration. My ancestors who migrated across China, my familial roots in Hong Kong, my immigrant parents, my sister growing up between cultures, and newly, my sister's baby. Holding this newborn gives me a new perspective: their surrender to their environment, and their strength of simply being alive



JULIA COURSE



- powerfully powerless. I am awestruck watching this child express so honestly their needs, and inspired by their insatiable curiosity. I strive to be as open, innocent, non-judgemental, and fearless as this little one, and to be as playful and alive when I am on-stage. I do not take for granted this opportunity to do what I love. We can foster empathy and provoke discourse by the stories we tell and how we tell them. I invite you to engage in ours today.

KIERA SANGSTER Z/Ensemble

SHAW 2023: Village Wooing; 17th season. Raised in Toronto, Ontario, my primary/elementary school, R.J. Lang, was a "project" school for the district... meaning all students were exposed to many unique programs most other schools didn't offer. Our school had a stage, which meant that anytime a cool new song came out (Tiffany's "I Think We're Alone Now" comes to mind), I seized the opportunity to teach my friends something that could be performed during our school assemblies. Mr Cole was a teacher who changed the trajectory of my life. He encouraged my mother to enrol me in an arts-focused school, which I continued throughout my elementary and secondary education. Thankfully it worked out!

DONNA SOARES (陸明慧) Z / Ensemble

SHAW 2023: Village Wooing and Blithe Spirit; 3rd season. I am from Vancouver: the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the x^wmə θ k^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú γ mesh (Squamish), and Sel íl witulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The characters that I play this season fight for love, understanding, and connection in a world that doesn't make sense to them. Their environments shift and they are thrust into new realities. They are outsiders who question how systems are arranged. I can relate to these women and perhaps you can, too. May they teach us to strive for poetry, say what we think, and play with our cards on the table.





AMY JEWELL Stage Manager

SHAW 2023: Stage manager for Village Wooing and On the Razzle; 24th season. While I was growing up in Ajax, my parents used to take my brother and me into Toronto for dinner and a show. I was in awe. The talent I saw on-stage, not only by the performers, but also the set, props and costumes, was outstanding. I was hooked. In high school, I worked on productions both at school and in the community. After graduating, with the support of my family, I decided to pursue theatre as a career. And while I initially began university with an acting focus, I quickly fell in love with the technical side. Although I ultimately chose a career in stage management, my love of building was born, and



in my spare time you can find me in my workshop.

ANNIE MCWHINNIE Assistant Stage Manager

SHAW 2023: Assistant stage manager for *Village Wooing* and *Prince Caspian*; 15th season. Growing up just north of Toronto, I was privileged to see lots of theatre since childhood. Musicals were always my favourite, seeing the talented triple-threat performers create magical worlds with music and dancing. I started stage managing through a co-op program in high school and continued by studying Theatre Production at Humber College. My most influential training came from the many talented stage managers I apprenticed under, some of whom I'm lucky to continue to work with here at The Shaw. I have enjoyed working on many of the productions throughout my fifteen seasons at the Shaw Festival. Some of my favourites include *Sunday in the Park with George, Maria Severa* and *Cabaret*.

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