

**SHAW** 20  
FESTIVAL 23

# THE CLEARING



# 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...

**SF:** *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

FESTIVAL THEATRE MAHABHARATA • GYPSY • Noël Coward's BLITHE SPIRIT • THE AMEN CORNER ROYAL GEORGE THEATRE PRINCE CASPIAN • ON THE RAZZLE • VILLAGE WOOING • THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT JACKIE MAXWELL STUDIO THEATRE THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD • THE APPLE CART • THE CLEARING OUTDOORS @ THE SHAW MOTHER, DAUGHTER • THE GAME OF LOVE AND CHANCE • A GRAND NIGHT FOR SINGING – ONE ACT – IN CONCERT • A SHORT HISTORY OF NIAGARA HOLIDAY SEASON Lerner and Loewe's BRIGADOON • A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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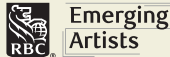
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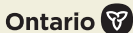
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pour le Sud de l'Ontario.



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For information on sponsorship opportunities and partnerships please contact Cindy Mewhinney, Director of Advancement, at 1-800-657-1106 ext 2339, or [cmewhinney@shawfest.com](mailto:cmewhinney@shawfest.com)

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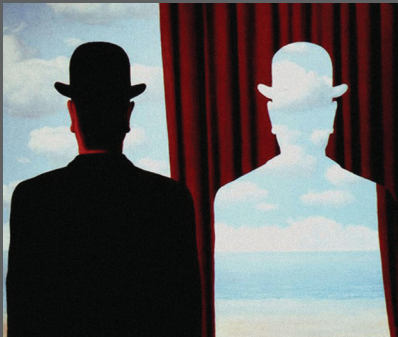
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that things that are bad for me do not tempt me."*

BERNARD SHAW, *THE APPLE CART*



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RENE MAGRITTE, *DECLAMONIA*, 1966 (ALAMY IMAGES).



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Delf Dodge &  
Tim Dodson

Photo by Ken Rowe.

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# SHAW 20 FESTIVAL 23

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# THE CLEARING

by HELEN EDMUNDSON

with DAVID ALAN ANDERSON, SHARRY FLETT,  
JJ GERBER, DANTE JEMMOTT, RYANN MYERS,  
TOM ROONEY, KELLY WONG and BAHAREH YARAGHI

Directed by JESSICA CARMICHAEL

Set designed by MICHELLE TRACEY

Costumes designed by ASA BENALLY

Lighting designed by KEVIN LAMOTTE

Original music and sound designed by CHRIS ROSS-EWART

*The Clearing* is produced by special arrangement with Dramatic Publishing, Woodstock, Illinois.

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

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FRONT COVER: PHOTO BY KEY GORDON

BAHAREH YARAGHI AS  
MADELEINE PRESTON  
AND KELLY WONG AS  
ROBERT PRESTON.



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Dante Jemmott and  
Ryann Myers are  
generously sponsored by  
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# The Cast

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Solomon Winter	DAVID ALAN ANDERSON
Susaneh Winter	SHARRY FLETT
Pierce Kinsellagh	JJ GERBER
Soldier / Commissioner / Sailor / Judge	DANTE JEMMOTT
Killaine Farrell	RYANN MYERS
Sir Charles Sturman	TOM ROONEY
Robert Preston	KELLY WONG
Madeleine Preston	BAHAREH YARAGHI

The play takes place in various  
locations in County Kildare, Ireland.  
1652-1655

Stage Manager	ALLAN TEICHMAN
Assistant Stage Manager	SANG-SANG LEE
Apprentice Stage Manager	LAURA LAKATOSH
Production Stage Manager	MEREDITH MACDONALD
Assistant Set Designer	YIMING LIU
Assistant Costume Designer	EMILY DOTSON
Assistant Lighting Designer	AMBER HOOD
Fight Director	JOHN STEAD
Fight Captain	KELLY WONG
Voice and Dialect Coaches	AUSAR STEWART JENNIFER TOOHEY

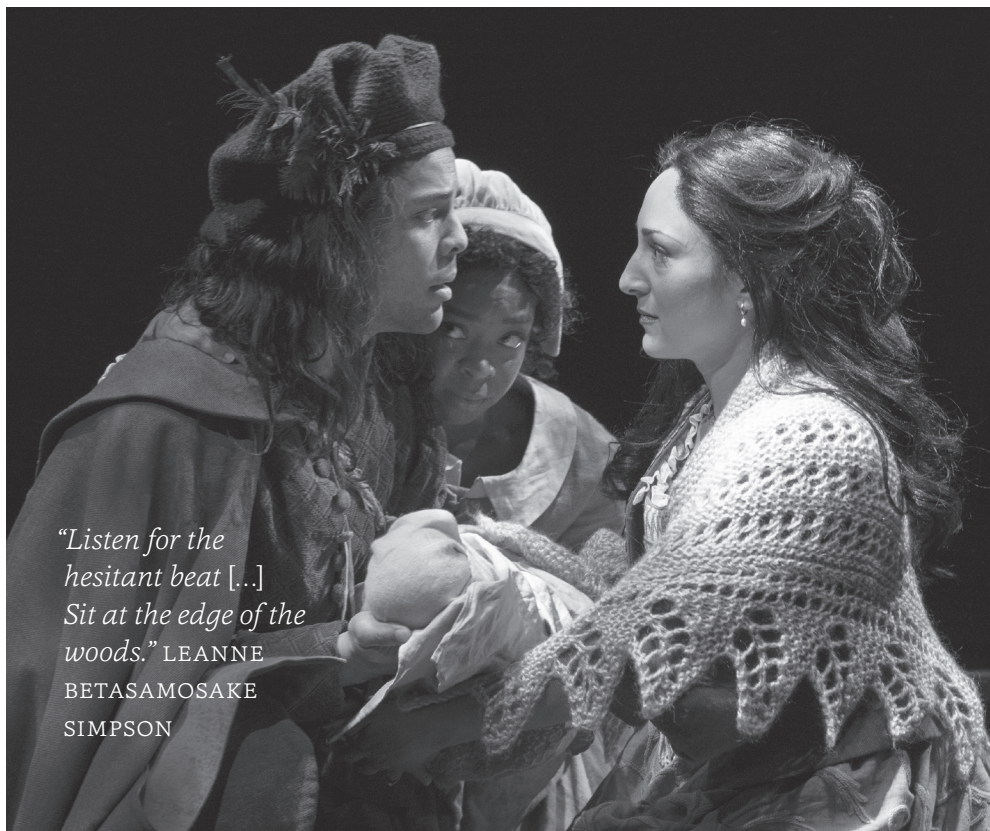
Special thanks to Nuala Mac Lochlainn, Emer O'Toole, Cathy Leeney, Ava Robitaille, Neve Carmichael, and to Blachere Illumination, Felsen Tailors, Hubley Leatherworks and Alexandra's Custom Shirts.

## UNDERSTUDIES

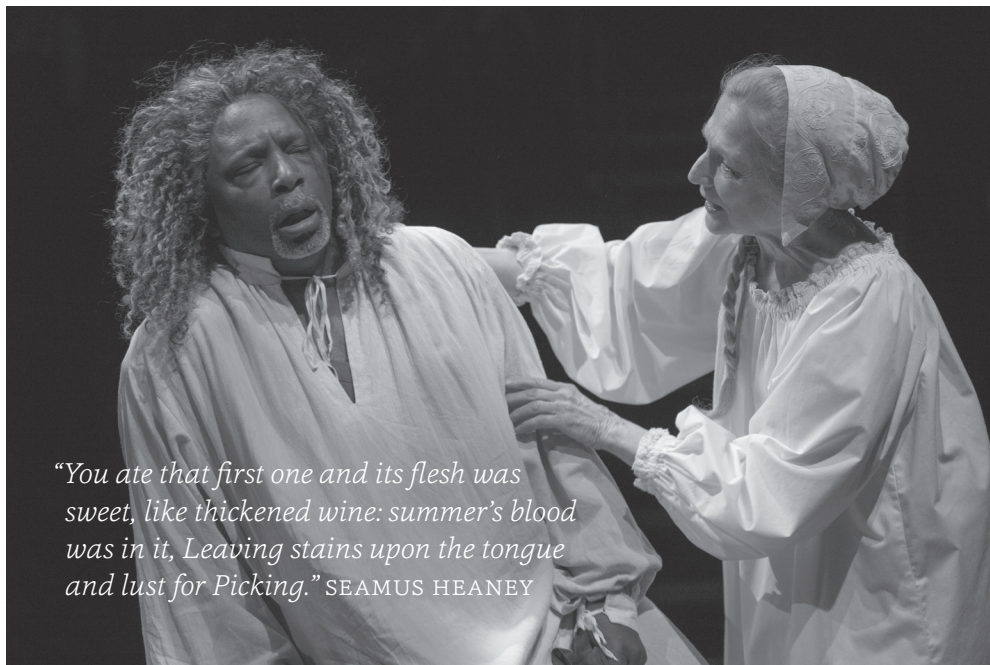
NEIL BARCLAY, Solomon Winter; JANELLE COOPER, Susaneh Winter;  
DANTE JEMMOTT, Pierce Kinsellagh; JAWON MAPP, Soldier, Commissioner,  
Sailor, Judge; ANDRÉ MORIN, Robert Preston; JANE VANSTONE OSBORN,  
Stage Manager; BECCA JORGENSEN, Assistant Stage Manager

Running time is approximately 2 hours and 50 minutes including one intermission





*"Listen for the  
hesitant beat [...]  
Sit at the edge of the  
woods."* LEANNE  
BETASAMOSAKE  
SIMPSON



*"You ate that first one and its flesh was  
sweet, like thickened wine: summer's blood  
was in it, Leaving stains upon the tongue  
and lust for Picking."* SEAMUS HEANEY

# Director's Note

BY JESSICA CARMICHAEL

This play took my breath away when I first read it. Artistic Director Tim Carroll had sent it to me after a lovely zoom chat during the pandemic. We discussed my interest in examining my Indigenous and European heritage from a different theatrical point of view from some of the other works I had recently directed. How that might manifest between my Abénaki and Irish roots specifically, I could not tell. Tim's response was thoughtful – this play that activates breath while it points to such subjects as colonization, fear, hatred, love, family, division, cycles of violence, slavery and the difference between it and indentured servitude, lost land, culture, human limitations and the limits put upon them. It brought me across Ireland – made me consider new complexities in colonization's troubling past and its reverberations to today. How that looks and feels today from diverse viewpoints. I pondered anew: What is lost? What are humans bound to from the violence of the past, and is it possible to consider, like Madeleine, that there are “no limitations? Only those you place on [yourself].” Is that possible? Is that naïve? Is it important as Pierce advocates to be “back at the beginning again” where “you can't change your blood, or your eyes, or your heart?” What does that make way for, and what does it hinder?

Playwright Helen Edmundson asks directors to consider that her plays “think about the world [we're] living in” and that “a director has to recognize that it can't be naturalistic. It has to involve really using the performer's physicality [...] going to a place way beyond reality.” I

have examined this provocation in rehearsal with our company, exploring poetry, language, history, land, and what “beyond reality” means and serves embodied by the actor and production. What does it allow us to see symbolically, poetically, deeply and, perhaps, *clearly*? Some definitions of “Clearing” are: the act or process of making or becoming clear; to elucidate; to be free of obscurity, ambiguity, to be easily understood; in late 1300s to make clean, cleanse, purify; 1590s to free from entanglement; 1690s to clear land of trees and underbrush, in 1791 we have to leap clear over.... People over centuries have cleared wood or brush so that a tract of land contains none. There is a notion

*“Try, as best you can,  
not to let the wire  
brush of doubt scrape  
from your heart all  
sense of yourself and  
your hesitant light.”*

JOHN O'DONOGHUE

that clearing and clarity is a settling of differences...

I am considering all this as I write to you, dear Audience. Loss changes things. Potentially loss illuminates what is right in front of you, worth fighting for... What is worth fighting for? Can the fighting stop? Is a settlement of differences possible? That word “settlement”... How do grace, humility, strength and *goodness* exist in the process of becoming clear? Breathing and being in the process... Taking the wolves...

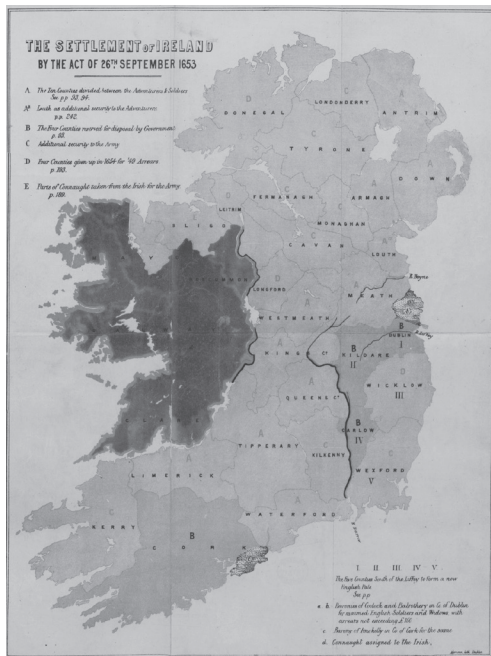
JJ GERBER AS PIERCE  
KINSELLAGH, RYANN MYERS AS  
KILLAINE FARRELL AND BAHAREH  
YARAGHI AS MADELEINE PRESTON;  
DAVID ALAN ANDERSON AS  
SOLOMON WINTER AND SHARRY  
FLETT AS SUSANEH WINTER.

*“When it's over, I don't want to wonder if I have made  
of my life something particular, and real. I don't  
want to find myself sighing and frightened, or full  
of argument. I don't want to end up simply having  
visited this world.”* MARY OLIVER





CLOCKWISE: OLIVER CROMWELL BESIEGES THE TOWN OF DROGHEDA IN 1649-50, ENGRAVING (BRITISH MUSEUM); MAP OF IRELAND, HIGHLIGHTING THE PROVINCE OF CONNAUGHT, 1870; MASSACRE DURING TYRONE'S REBELLION AT PORTADOWN, 1642, ENGRAVING BY WENCESLAUS HOLLAR. OPPOSITE: OLIVER CROMWELL, ENGRAVING BY HOLL AFTER VAN DYKE, 1857.





# "Divide the sorry carcass that is Ireland now."

BY CATHY LEENEY

*The Clearing* – as in the clearing away of old cultures and customs – as in a forest clearing, a space of light and open hearts, edged by darkness, by wolves hunting and hunted. A garden as a clearing, ordering nature to human ends – Oliver Cromwell's clearing away of the indigenous Irish, and, with them, their intolerable identities and religion.

In my 1966 Irish childhood classroom, Oliver Cromwell was a vivid figure of terror in our imaginations: a ruthless and brutal killer, architect of violent colonial submission of the Irish population, whether indigenous or royalist planter. We learnt little of Cromwell's British reputation as anti-royalist poster-boy and instigator of regicide and civil war. 1966 in Ireland was the fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising which was the catalyst for independence from Britain. It celebrated the possibility of closure on the history of Ireland's colonized relationship with England. It was a remembrance that, potentially, enabled a forgetting.

Cromwell's invasion of Ireland began in 1649. One third of the then population was killed. Irish forces and Church leaders attending the General Assembly (a kind of parliament) in Kilkenny were routed; some leaders fled to Europe to raise support from allies. Others, called Tories, stayed and waged intermittent guerrilla war against a new regime of land seizure, and forced transportation of 100,000 people to English colonies in North America. These men and women were used and often abused as indentured servants, held for periods of five to seven years.

By 1652 Cromwell's soldiery needed to be paid and employment found for them; good land in Ireland would be a part of their reward, requiring Catholic and Royalist Irish farmers to surrender ownership and transplant west to Connaught over the River Shannon, to the poorest part of the country, a region of bog, rock and weathered exposure. Ireland was re-mapped culturally and economically. Nothing was ever the same again. Cromwell's genocidal policies of murder, displacement, slavery, hunger and disease saw

Ireland lastingly re-shaped. The religious prejudices central to his campaigns still hover behind contemporary power divisions between Christian and other communities.

Helen Edmundson makes an important decision in *The Clearing*. The play begins in 1652, three years after Cromwell's Irish campaign began. Rather than dramatize the shocking slaughter and mayhem of the first stages of invasion, she chooses to open at the point when the shock and awe of overwhelming attack and bloodshed has morphed into the long haul of ideologically inspired administration, imposed at every level, even the most intimate, personal, domestic. 'Nowhere is safe.' Entangled in the blind enforcement of unjust laws, everyday lives, customs, alliances, economies, environments are destroyed, and power radically restructured. And more deeply *The Clearing* plunges into intense private passions



and relationships, families and friendships, anatomizing the shattering of love, trust and loyalty. Under a leaden ideology of ethnic hate, the future prospects of the characters lurch on through fear and mistrust. Only two years later in 1654-55 abandonment, dispersal, grief and loss may be all that remains?

How powerfully visceral and poetic the language of *The Clearing* works to bring alive the emotions and desires of the people in this story. Extreme situations create intense and impassioned behaviour that is beyond the everyday. Whether out of their fear and vulnerability, or in their iron assurance of being right in their inhumanity, the characters' speech rhythms and fervid expressiveness raise the stakes to evoke atmospheres of profound feeling. Every aspect of each scene feeds a sense of immediacy and risk, in light or in darkness, in sun or storm, in spaces of refuge at home or in gardens, or in the threatening spaces of power, whether political or legal, in places of torture. The women are of their time, yet fully alive as complex individual souls, courageous and tender. The men, torn by pressures to survive and thrive, find themselves overwhelmed and lost in ideology or ambition. And the child, a boy child, becomes a helpless pawn, fought for between two clashing identities. The play faces us with the particularity of wartime abuses of women through rape and childbirth: woman as the prize of conflict, their children, should they survive, vulnerable to being reprogrammed into new and alien identities.

*The Clearing*, firmly based on historical truths, stages an old tragedy that continues to ramify across colonizing movements more widely. At the time of writing the play, the 1990s, ethnic violence was in the news: there was war in the former Yugoslavia. In Srebrenica, Muslim men and boys were murdered *en masse*, women raped, communities broken. While there were Palestinian gains in the disputed lands on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Israeli settlement of the West Bank increased, and by 1995 the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process (revived in 1991), had come to a halt. Although it left a terrible legacy that remains to this day, ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland was close to political resolution. With official British attitudes in mind, Edmundson wished to redefine the "Irish Problem" as the "English-Irish Problem". She set out to expose Britain's failure to come to terms with their long record in colonial power-grabs. In *The Clearing*, by taking Ireland as an example, the theme may be extended to anatomize legacies of colonial genocide as occurred in Canada, Australia, India and other colonies.

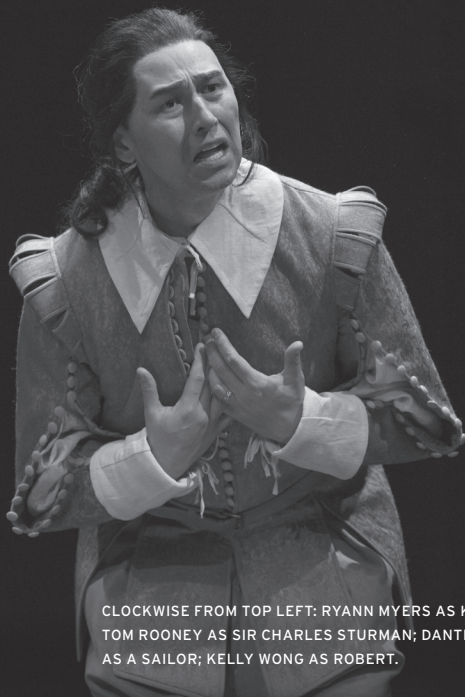
Now, the play steps out of its source contexts, the 1650s and the 1990s, and into the twenty-first century's current colonizing struggles – China, Syria, Iran, Sri Lanka, amongst many others – and their horribly predictable aftermaths – loss of cultures and languages, false histories that are absorbed into propaganda, or withheld in hidden histories of damage to indigenous populations. Belief in the possibility of peaceful co-existence withers.

In collective social memory, folk sayings, rural name places, folk practices and myths, Cromwell is still invoked and the stories associated with him scattered through the Irish diaspora to North America and beyond: the devil from over the sea, threatening "to hell or to Connaught". Historical traumas create crises poised between the necessity to forget and move on, as against the need to remember so as to understand painful roots and complex burdens of experience, to acknowledge what happened, to come to terms with and overcome an old curse now broken.



*"A political scheme that cannot be carried out  
except by soldiers will not be a permanent one."*

BERNARD SHAW, *JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND*



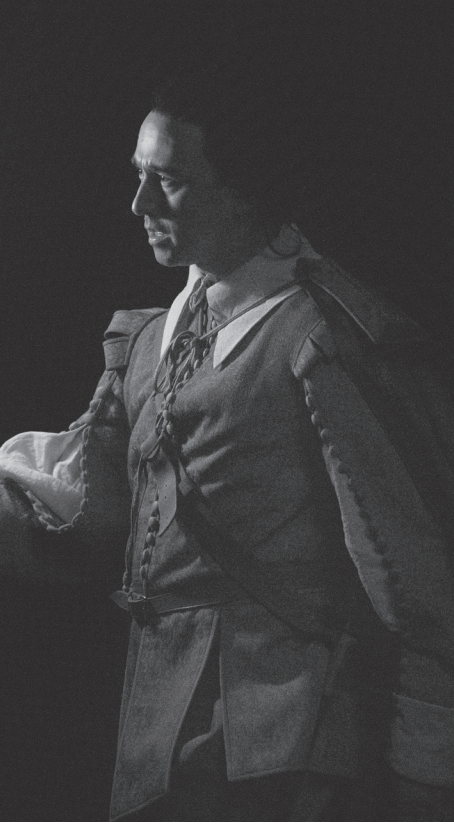
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RYANN MYERS AS KILLAINE;  
TOM ROONEY AS SIR CHARLES STURMAN; DANTE JEMMOTT  
AS A SAILOR; KELLY WONG AS ROBERT.





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: BAHAREH YARAGHI AS MADELEINE; KELLY WONG AS ROBERT; KELLY WONG AS ROBERT AND TOM ROONEY AS STURMAN; RYANN MYERS AS KILLAINE; BAHAREH YARAGHI AS MADELEINE WITH KELLY WONG AS ROBERT; SHARRY FLETT AS SUSANEH AND DAVID ALAN ANDERSON AS SOLOMON.

*The Clearing, 2023*





## Production History

*The Clearing* was first produced at London's Bush Theatre in 1993, five years before the "Good Friday Agreement" that marked the official beginning of the peace process between the Irish Catholic Republicans and the British-leaning Protestant militants. It won the author the *Time Out* and the John Whiting Awards.

Polly Teale revived the play for a Shared Experience production at The Tricycle Theatre in 2002. Its NYC debut was at the Blue Light Theatre Company under Tracy Brigden's direction in 1999 with a production that travelled from Connecticut's Hartford Stage, and before that began at New York Stage and Film on the grounds of Vassar College. There was also an off-Broadway revival of the play at 5959 Theatres in 2016.

This is the first production of a play by Helen Edmundson at the Shaw Festival.

## The Author

HELEN EDMUNDSON (b.1964) came into British theatre during a benign cultural revolution: between the 1960s to the 1990s the work of women playwrights flourished in Britain, staging new understandings of women's lives, experiences and histories. Much of her work is in the genre of history plays, often centred around a strong woman protagonist, and her prodigious output is divided between original scripts and literary adaptations of world masterpieces.

She was born in Liverpool and spent her childhood on the Wirral and in Chester. After studying drama at Manchester University, she gained wide acting, directing and devising experience as co-founder of the agit-prop women's theatre company Red Stockings, and wrote a number of popular successes for the Royal National Theatre and for Shared Experience – whose radical work unites richly text-based theatre together with emphasis on physicality in staging and performance. Rooted in a strong theatricality, her works have adapted writers such as Leo Tolstoy and George Eliot with precision, power and energy, successfully weaving physical expression with the spoken word to create sensual, richly distilled stage imagery.

Her adaptation of *The Coram Boy* (2005) for the RNT starred Bertie Carvel, was named by the *Evening Standard* as one of the fifty best plays of the century, transferring to Broadway in 2007. Edmundson's adaptation of *Thérèse Raquin* was produced by Roundabout Theatre Company at Studio 54 on Broadway in 2015, starring Keira Knightley and Judith Light. Other productions include *The Mill on the Floss* (1994), her widely acclaimed adaptation for Shared Experience Theatre, which won the *Time Out* Award; and *War and Peace* (1996), also for Shared Experience at the Royal National Theatre. Most recently in 2022 the RNT revived her remarkable adaptation of *Small Island*, based on the novel by Andrea Levy, first staged on the Olivier stage in 2019. She was awarded the prestigious Windham Campbell Prize for drama in 2015.







JESSICA CARMICHAEL

For full biographical information about our cast and creative team, please visit [shawfest.com/ensemble](http://shawfest.com/ensemble).

### JESSICA CARMICHAEL Director

SHAW 2023: Director for *The Clearing*. I've been calling Tiohtià:ke/Molian/Montreal home for the past six years and feel lucky to be back after a spell attending the National Theatre School. I grew up under the big sky of Alberta, getting some opportunities to work as a professional actor there, but like many a youngin' dreamed of spreading my wings outside of what was familiar and comforting. Montreal was the right place for that in the early 2000s: The music scene, incredible dance theatre, sipping coffee in the parks – there was so much to take in and absorb. A myriad of memories flood in when I think of the belle city, but one for this anecdote sticks out: a teacher at NTS telling me to hold on to the unknown as a gift. Perhaps one needs to barrel towards the uncharted, undiscovered paths. It's been good advice.

### MICHELLE TRACEY Set Designer

SHAW 2023: Set designer for *The Clearing*. I am a scenographer based in Tkaronto, working in theatre, opera, film and events in between. I enjoy designing sets, costumes, lighting and projections (sometimes all at once) to create theatrical environments and bold stage pictures. I have been honoured by the mentorship of many great scenographers, and I continue to be inspired by the work of Astrid Janson, Teresa Przybylski, Shawn Kerwin and Lorenzo Savoini, among others. My passion for scenography is rooted in its potential to spark imagination. I believe that collective art experience has the power to inspire us to envision new ways of being. I am a founding member of Triga Creative, a collective of designers committed to exploring eco-scenography and sustainable working models. I am also a passionate sewist and I have constructed costumes for numerous professional productions. Visit me at [www.michelletraceydesign.com](http://www.michelletraceydesign.com).



MICHELLE TRACEY



ASA BENALLY

### ASA BENALLY Costume Designer

SHAW 2023: Costume designer for *The Clearing*. I was raised on the Navajo reservation in northern Arizona. My grandmother, a traditional Navajo weaver, and my father, a silversmith, fostered my love and appreciation for art and design. My mother took me to my first show, a community theatre production of *Alice in Wonderland*. She helped foster my love of research and history. I went on to study at the prestigious Parsons School of Design in New York City. In 2016, I completed my MFA in costume design at Yale University. I have recently designed *The Rez Sisters* and *1939* at the Stratford Festival. My design aesthetic is derived from any interest in history and strong individuals.

### KEVIN LAMOTTE Lighting Designer

SHAW 2023: Lighting designer for *The Clearing*, *Mahabharata*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Blithe Spirit*. One of my earliest experiences in theatre was watching *Cyrano de Bergerac* here at the Shaw Festival in 1982. I was considering a career in the arts, and possibly theatre design, which all seemed like a long shot as a teenager. The set and costumes by Cameron Porteous, as well as the lighting design by Robert Thomson, were so inspiring at the time. The design of the show has remained with me.



KEVIN LAMOTTE

*harata*, *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Blithe Spirit*. One of my earliest experiences in theatre was watching *Cyrano de Bergerac* here at the Shaw Festival in 1982. I was considering a career in the arts, and possibly theatre design, which all seemed like a long shot as a teenager. The set and costumes by Cameron Porteous, as well as the lighting design by Robert Thomson, were so inspiring at the time. The design of the show has remained with me.

In 1988, I returned to the Shaw Festival as a lighting designer and had the privilege of working with Artistic Director, Christopher Newton. He said, "I put creative people together and point them in the right direction", but he did a great deal more. Christopher's passion for all aspects of theatre and the arts continue to inspire. Memories of him and his work keep me pointed in the right direction!

**CHRIS ROSS-EWART** Composer / Sound Designer

SHAW 2023: Composer/sound designer for *The Clearing*. I am thrilled to work at the Shaw Festival for the first time this season, eighteen years after my high school theatre teacher let me play Freddy in *Pygmalion*. Thanks Mr Hyde. My work was recently heard in *The Sound Inside* at Coal Mine Theatre. I am also as a mental-health worker at Insite, a safe consumption site, and would love to chat with you about supporting your local harm-reduction organization. Credits and samples of my work are at [www.chrisross-ewart.com](http://www.chrisross-ewart.com).



**DAVID ALAN ANDERSON** Solomon Winter

SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Amen Corner*; 4th season. I was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana, where our house was filled with creative energy – my mother's drawings; music she played on her childhood piano; soul music being played in the family room, coming from the band my dad managed as they rehearsed. I first stepped onto a stage when I was about nine. I attended a wedding reception at the Madam Walker Theatre Building in Indianapolis. While exploring, I got lost. While trying to find my way back, I found the stage.



**SHARRY FLETT** Susaneh Winter

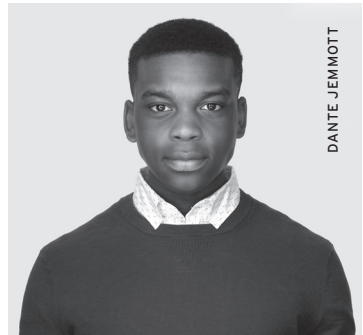
SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Apple Cart*; 31st season. What makes the difference? Mentors, teachers, fellow artists? Curiosity, passion, discipline, relentless faith and happy accidents? All of it helped to carve a profession in the arts. I thought it was going to be medicine, but an elementary school teacher guided me toward music. I picked up an instrument and my high school music teacher became a mentor and friend. Music led me to McGill University and Edith Della Pergola, with her passion, devotion and talent, shared the arts torch. I combined music and theatre through a profession of now more than forty years. Coaching young actors completes the circle and celebrating thirty seasons at the Shaw Festival brings joy.



**DANTE JEMMOTT**

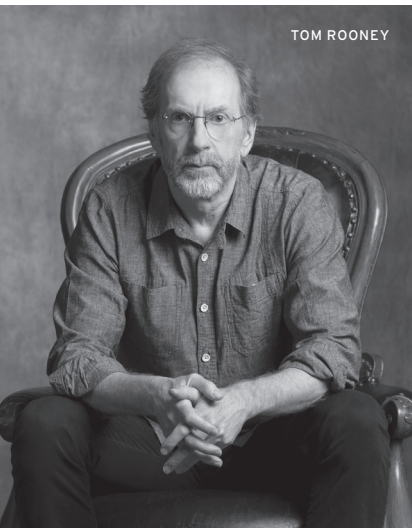
Soldier / Commissioner / Sailor / Judge

SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Amen Corner*; 1st season. My wife and I live in Milton, Ontario. We have frequented the Shaw Festival as patrons before and are extremely excited that we are here now, because I am an actor in the Company. Since I was a child doing small plays in church, I always found the acting process to be one of fulfillment and invigoration. To walk alongside a character, learn who they are and journey with them as they pursue their grandest desires is a deeply industrious, intimate, and imaginative experience. Through this work I discover more of myself and the beauty of creation around me. It is for this purpose that I do what I do.





**JJ GERBER** Pierce Kinsellaugh  
SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Amen Corner*; 2nd season. As a child growing up in Ontario, I always dreamed of performing on-stage. My family would dance, sing and limbo at every family function. My Tobagonian mother brought her island flavour to the church on Sundays, while my Irish and Swiss father clapped along in support. I learned to sing in their cadence. I thought, "I can do that!" and carried the feeling of joy that performing brings since. Recently, I was asked what home is to me and I realized it's not just the people I carry in my heart or the landscape of my childhood, but the sharing of my heart I get to do on the stage as well. I am so honoured to get to share a little home with you this season.



**RYANN MYERS** Killaine Farrell  
SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Amen Corner*; 1st season. I am an American actor from Princeton, New Jersey. My first time in the theatre was at the age of seven, playing Amaryllis in *The Music Man* at my local community theatre. What inspired me to take on acting was simply the playfulness I would see when watching actors on TV. From action movies, to comedies, to dramas; acting always felt like something that kept people being big, playful, expressive and creative. As I am soaking in all that my first year at The Shaw has to offer, I've had the privilege to see some of the productions here and my favourite one, so far, has been *Blithe Spirit*. Not only are the actors hilarious and brilliant, but the set, sound, costumes and lighting designs for the show have blown me away.



**TOM ROONEY** Sir Charles Sturman  
SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Apple Cart*; 3rd season. The year I graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a music degree, I took a six-month trip to Australia with a buddy. We financed the trip by busking in outdoor malls in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, performing a thirty-minute comedy/juggling routine. We weren't brilliant, but we made enough coin to pay for our hostel and pints at the end of the day. It was terrifying and exhilarating; a mix of happy accidents and utter chaos. We would begin surrounded by a group of strangers but would end surrounded by a group of people who had a bit more in common: a few laughs from a street show. I'm inspired by the community-building potential of theatre. We experience a story together, but we also experience each other experiencing that story. By the end, we're a bit more of a community, with a bit more in common.

**KELLY WONG** Robert Preston  
SHAW 2023: *The Clearing* and *The Apple Cart*; 15th season. I'm an introvert. There's a common misconception that all actors must be the life of the party. However, most of the artists I've encountered in this remarkable community are just like me – shy, awkward and introverted. Yet when I step on-stage, a transformation occurs. I'm free to explore all facets of myself, embodying boldness, eloquence and bravery. Let's be real. The world these days is challenging. We're all doing our best to navigate its complexities. The characters you see in our play, like us all, are flawed and simply trying their best. As you leave the theatre, I hope you might consider how you would react if you were in their shoes. That kind of empathy just might remind us of our shared humanity. Flaws and all.





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