

September 4 – 29, 2018

theatre:
CALGARY
Stafford Arima, Artistic Director

World Premiere

Honour Beat

by
Tara Beagan



At Theatre Calgary we strive to create a welcoming, inclusive and safe environment for diverse communities.

To formally open our productions, Theatre Calgary will pay tribute and recognize the Indigenous people of the Treaty 7 region as the past, present and future stewards of this land where our performance takes place.

In response to the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, the act of giving territorial or land acknowledgement has now become best practice across Canada. In our efforts to embrace the language and spirit of reconciliation, we recognize that our practice will evolve as Theatre Calgary strengthens our relationships within local Indigenous communities and with artists. Theatre Calgary is committed to maintaining regular engagement with Indigenous and community leaders for consultation on best practices.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Welcome to Theatre Calgary.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that this performance is taking place on Treaty 7, signed at Blackfoot Crossing in 1877. We are on the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7 including the three Blackfoot Nations: consisting of the Siksika, Piikani, Kainai Nations; the Stoney Nakoda Nations: consisting of the Bearspaw, Wesley and Chiniki Nations; and the Tsuu T'ina Nation. The city of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III.

We are grateful to have the opportunity to present in this territory.

Welcome friends of Theatre Calgary. I am exhilarated to be sharing my very first season with you – **A Season of New Beginnings**. Having experienced, as an audience member, Dennis Garnhum and Shari Wattling’s 50th season was an absolute joy. Dennis and Shari curated a season with a strong thread of nostalgia to commemorate the past 50 years of TC. As I began planning my first season, I decided that TC was primed and ready for its Act II – the beginning of a new chapter with a new focus. That focus being surging forward towards the future with plays and musicals that continue to move, touch, and inspire. Plays and musicals that provoke us to think by telling today’s stories for today’s audience.

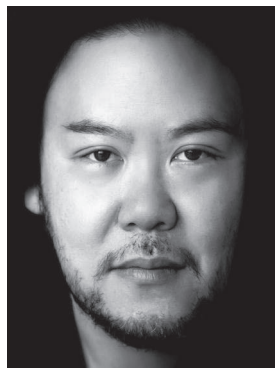
For those of you who might not know, before I came to Calgary in 2017, I spent the last two decades directing theatre in the United States and abroad. I was primarily hired as a director to take on new works. There was, and still is, a rush of excitement when a brand new piece makes its world premiere. There’s something tremendously special about seeing a new work being birthed – nurturing it and developing it, and then watching an audience experience words, stories, music, and characters that have never lived on a stage before. It’s familiar – because theatre is familiar – but the content is fresh, new, and alive.

One of my goals is to bring plays and musicals to our stage that have never been seen before, and to give Calgarians an opportunity to be the first audiences on the planet to bear witness to a new work. Today’s world premiere production is *Honour Beat*. It is, at its core, a story about fortitude, forgiveness, and family. It is moving, funny, and brilliantly thought-provoking. I admire the play, the playwright, the director, the stunning cast, and the entire creative team deeply, and I hope you will as well. I ask that you embrace the magic and mystery of storytelling and open your hearts to this brand new theatrical experience.

I am honoured to be your new Artistic Director at Theatre Calgary, and I look forward to connecting with you during the run of the play (and the rest of the season). Thank you for your patronage, and your continued support.

Stafford Arima

Artistic Director



*"A story of unpredictable
friendship, self-awareness,
and happy accidents."*

- Stafford

Theatre Calgary presents
the World Premiere of

Mary and Max

A New Musical

Oct — Nov
16 — 10

Music and Lyrics Book by
by Bobby Cronin Crystal Skillman

Based on a film by Adam Elliot

Choreography by Jenn Rapp

Directed by Stafford Arima

Orchestrations and Music Supervisor: Anna Ebbesen,
Additional Orchestrations by Joshua Zecher-Ross
Musical Director: Don Horsburgh, Set and Costumes:
Bretta Gerecke, Lighting: Kimberly Purtell, Projections:
Sean Nieuwenhuis, Sound: Peter McBoyle

Theatre Calgary gratefully acknowledges the
generous support of Broadway Dreams.

#tcMaryandMax

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start at \$35**

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**theatre:
CALGARY**

Stafford Arima, Artistic Director

CALGARY
HERALD



Illustration: Andrea Usini

Playwright's Notes

This work is a celebration of women. Women have raised me throughout my life, and continue to do so. Great Aunties Diane and Hazel, dear cousins, innumerable Aunties of the heart, cherished mentors, honoured Elders, my older sister Rebecca, her daughter Diana, and of course - my Mom, Pauline.

We are the ones who carry. Whether we become mothers or not, we share the gift of carrying our children to adulthood. We honour those who birthed the children, and come together to share the responsibility of taking care of the young ones as best we can. Of course other genders help support this undertaking, and I give thanks to them as well. With this play, however, I gently invite everyone to honour those in your own lives who carry. The women.

Women in my circle have given me strength, held me up, illuminated my Creator given gifts, and returned me to myself when I have become lost. My little life is symbolic of how women have carried our nations into this time. When our Indigenous languages and arts were outlawed, women whispered words and songs to babies, keeping these blessings alive. Big sisters passed teachings along to the little sisters, and on we forged.

The deluge of colonization has made sure there are fewer of us than there once was. Those of us who remain and thrive must teach as we are learning, just as Anna-Rae and Rae-Anna must do for one another. Just as Mom does for her “girls.” When we work together we are more powerful, beautiful and complete. Veteran Indigenous theatre artists inspired this work – women, all. With this play I give thanks for every path cut, every stumble along the way, and every story shared.

Tara Beagan

Playwright

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Max Bell Theatre at Arts Commons

September 4 – 29, 2018

theatre:
CALGARY

presents

WORLD PREMIERE

**HONOUR
BEAT**

by **Tara Beagan**

Director **Michelle Thrush**

Set & Projection Design **Andy Moro**

Costume Design **Jeff Chief**

Lighting Design **Patrick Beagan**

Original Music and Vocals **Pura Fé**

Sound Design **Deanna H. Choi**

Dramaturg **Jenna Turk**

Vocal Coach **Jane MacFarlane**

Elder-in-Residence **Marion Lerat**

—

TC Mentors program:

Set and Projection **Imajyn Cardinal**

Honour Beat was commissioned by Theatre Calgary through
the FUSE New Play Development Program.

interACTIVE

Enhance Your Experience

TALK THEATRE THURSDAY

SEPTEMBER 6

Director MICHELLE THRUSH

Upper lobby

SEPTEMBER 13

Playwright TARA BEAGAN

Upper lobby

Get an insider's perspective on the process of making theatre. Meet an artist from the production's creative team before the show, in conversation with a member of Theatre Calgary's staff.

TALKBACK TUESDAY

SEPTEMBER 11, 18, 25

In our theatre

Join us for a lively post-show discussion with members of the cast.

SPOTLIGHT SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 15

ELDER MARION LERAT

(SOFT CLOUD WOMAN)

Upper lobby

Join us pre-show to hear stories from the life of our Elder-in-Residence for *Honour Beat*.

SENIOR SATURDAY

SEPTEMBER 22

Actor PAULA-JEAN PRUDAT

Upper lobby

Before the performance begins, Senior Saturday patrons are invited to enjoy some snacks followed by an engaging chat with a theatre professional or relevant expert, providing insight into the performance.

EDUCATORS CIRCLE

Are you an educator? Do you love theatre and need a break from marking or planning? Join our Educators' Circle. Benefits include: Tickets to all five mainstage shows, Ability to exchange tickets to another date, and purchase additional tickets at 20% off*. Visit www.theatre Calgary.com to register today!

*some conditions apply

GO BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Go beyond being an audience member and see what else we have to explore. Theatre Calgary offers a number of additional theatrical experiences such as Backstage Tours, Skype in Schools, Workshops, Panel Discussions, Industry Nights, and Play Guides.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We are always looking for ways to engage with all citizens of the City of Calgary and surrounding area. If you have a community event, project or initiative that you think Theatre Calgary could partner with, contact us to start the discussion today!

GET ONLINE

Find further details about our programming at www.theatre Calgary.com

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram:

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#tcInteract

#tcHonourBeat



For all of these programs, and any other learning or community engagement inquiries, please contact:

Chris Stockton – Senior Manager of Learning and Engagement

(403) 294-7440 ext. 1122
cstockton@theatre Calgary.com

The Cast

Mom

Paula-Jean Prudat

Anna-Rae

Monique Mojica

Rae-Anna

Tracey Nepinak

Spanish

Bernard Starlight

Stage Manager

Ruby Dawn Eustaquio

Assistant Stage Manager

Sang-Sang Lee

Setting

A palliative hospital room
in Toronto, present day.
4 in the morning.

Honour Beat contains
one twenty-minute
intermission.

Head of Lighting

Catharine Crumb

Head of Sound

Chris Jacko

Head Stage Carpenter

Scott Morris

Head Dresser

Rachel Michelle Sheridan

Honour Beat was originally developed in Moh-kíns-tsis in 2017 at Theatre Calgary's FUSE.

Artists participating in FUSE 2017 included: Cherish Violet Blood (Mom), Charlene Hellson (Rae-Anna), Columpa Bobb (Anna-Rae), Julian Black Antelope (Spanish), Michelle Thrush (director, collaborating dramaturg), Jenna Turk (collaborating dramaturg), and Shari Wattling (acting artistic director).

Theatre Calgary would like to recognize the following artists for their participation in the additional development of *Honour Beat*: Carol Greyeyes, Patti Shaughnessy, Roseanne Supernault, Garret C. Smith, Marion Lerat, Monique Mojica, Bernard Starlight, Jenifer Brousseau, and Valerie Planche.

Cameras and audio/visual recording devices are not permitted in the theatre.
Video and audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

**We ask that you please refrain from using your cell phone,
in any capacity, during this performance.**



Monique Mojica



Tracey Nepinak



Paula-Jean Prudat

Monique Mojica — Anna-Rae

Theatre Calgary debut. Guna and Rappahannock nations actor/playwright Monique Mojica, the third of four generations of performing artists, is dedicated to a theatrical practice as an act of healing, of reclaiming historical/cultural memory, and of resistance. Trained by Spiderwoman Theater (NYC) which was founded by her mother and aunties, Monique embraces her artistic lineage through mining stories embedded in the body and the connection to stories coming through land and place. She wrote and performed *Izzie M.: The Alchemy of Enfreakment* – directed by Andy Moro, dramaturged by Tara Beagan, with a collaborative team of diverse Indigenous artists, *I Lost my Talk* (with the NAC Orchestra), and Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's premiere of *Re-Quickening* choreographed by Santee Smith. Monique is the Artistic Director of Chocolate Woman Collective, founded to explore culturally specific Indigenous dramaturgies. @ChocolateWomanC

Tracey Nepinak — Rae-Anna

Theatre Calgary debut. Ms. Nepinak is a Cree actor from Treaty One Territory (Winnipeg). She is the daughter of a residential school survivor and has two grown daughters of her own. Recent theatre and film credits include: Rosemary in the world premiere of *Weaving Reconciliation* (Vancouver Moving Theatre); Crazy Bone in the world premiere of *A Short History of Crazy Bone* (Theatre Projects Manitoba); Cleopatra in *Antony + Cleopatra*, Lord & Lady Capulet in *Romeo & Juliet* (Shakespeare in the Ruins); Rose in *Burden of Truth* (EagleVision).

Paula-Jean Prudat — Mom

Theatre Calgary debut. PJ Prudat is a proud Métis actor and writer of stories. PJ was a member of the National Arts Centre's English Theatre Ensemble (2015/16) and the Shaw Festival Ensemble (2017), was Playwright in *Rez* for Native Earth Performing Arts (2013/14), and will be Creator-In-Residence at Nightswimming Theatre (2019). Select Credits: *Everything I Couldn't Tell You* (Spiderbones), *Ipperwash* (Native Earth/Blyth Festival); *free as injuns*, *Almighty Voice and His Wife*, *Tombs of the Vanishing Indian* (Native Earth); *Café Daughter* (Gwaandak/Native Earth); *Saint Joan*, *Wilde Tales* (Shaw Festival); *Moonlodge* (Urban Ink); *Beaver* (Storefront); *Reckoning* (ARTICLE 11); *Twelfth Night*, *Copper Thunderbird* (NAC); *Antony + Cleopatra* (Shakespeare in the Ruins). Recipient of the 2017 REVEAL Indigenous Art Award. *Kitatamihinâwâw*.



Bernard Starlight



Tara Beagan



Michelle Thrush

Bernard Starlight — Spanish

For Theatre Calgary: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (TC/MTC co-pro). The son of the Cultural Director Jeannette Starlight at the Tsuut'ina Museum. Bernard Starlight began, with his brother Emil and numerous cousins, making home movies with whatever was around the house, including the family van on many occasion. This annoyed and exasperated his mother to no end but she is now, after many years, seeing her baby boy on the stage at Theatre Calgary for the second time. After a hiatus from the stage, Bernard Starlight is pleased to return for the run of *Honour Beat*. He wants to thank Michelle and Tara for the opportunity.

Tara Beagan — Playwright

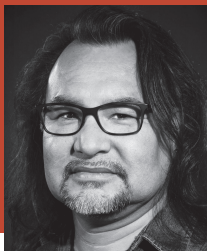
Theatre Calgary debut. Born in Niitsitapi country, Beagan is a proud Ntlaka'pamux and Irish "Canadian" halfbreed. She has written 20+ plays, and also directs and performs. Currently, she co-helms ARTICLE 11 with her most cherished collaborator, favourite artist and true love, Andy Moro. A11, now based in Mohkintsis, has brought Indigenous Activist art works to the NAC, the ROM, Kingcome Inlet, Kamloops, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary's city hall, Edinburgh Fringe, Wellington Aotearoa (NZ) and will take new project *Deer Woman* to the Sydney Festival in 2019. tarabeagan.com article11.ca

Michelle Thrush — Director

Theatre Calgary debut. Michelle is a Cree artist, born and raised in Calgary. She has been in over 60 productions in film, television and theatre and has dedicated her life to telling our stories. Selected acting credits: Theatre – *Inner Elder* (writer/performer), *The Huron Bride* (Vertigo), *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* (Crazy Horse), *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* (Firehall); Television – *Tin Star*, *Blackstone* (Gemini Award winner – best actress), *Arctic Air*, *Mixed Blessings*, *Moccasin Flats*, *North of 60*; Film – *Jimmy P: Psychotherapy of a Plains Indian*, *Red Snow*, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. Selected directing credits: *Making Treaty 7* (co-founder and director since inaugural 2014 performance), *Time Stand Still* (Crazy Horse – at HPR and Ottawa). Michelle believes deeply in the power of breaking down barriers through the beauty of the arts.



Andy Moro



Jeff Chief



Patrick Beagan

Andy Moro — Set and Projection Design

Theatre Calgary debut. Andy Moro is a Euro/Omushkego Cree artist and co-founder/director with Tara Beagan of ARTICLE 11, named for the article in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people, declaring *the right to practise and revitalize, maintain, protect and develop (all) manifestations of cultures, sites, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature*. A11 recently published *Reckoning* on the fallout from the TRC. Their multi-disciplinary installation *DECLARATION: ReMatriation* was at the ROM, NAC, Calgary city hall and Edinburgh Fringe Festival. A11's newest work, *Deer Woman*, premiered at the Kia Mau Festival in Aotearoa and will begin touring at the Sydney Festival, January 2019. Andy and Tara are proud new Calgarians, moving here to be with Alberta family and friends.

Jeff Chief — Costume Design

Theatre Calgary debut. Jeff Chief is Plains Cree from Saskatchewan (Treaty 6). Costume designs include: *Hedda Noir*, *Dreary and Izzy* (Theatre NorthWest); *Le Wild West Show de Gabriel Dumont* (French Theatre of the NAC/New Experiment Theatre/Theatre Cercle Montiere/La Troupe du Jour); *Ipperwash* (Native Earth/Blyth Festival); *In Care* (Gordon Tootoosis Nikaniwin Theatre); *Popcorn Elder* (Saskatchewan Native Theatre Co./Dancing Sky Theatre); *Othello* (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan); *Where the Blood Mixes* (WCT/Theatre Aquarius/Theatre Network); *Migration* (Red Sky/Black Grace); Indigenous Dance Residencies (Banff Centre); *A Man A Fish*, *God of Carnage*, *The Berlin Blues* (Persephone). Jeff has also built costumes at the Stratford Festival, Citadel Theatre, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Banff Centre, Globe Theatre, and Persephone Theatre.

Patrick Beagan — Lighting Design

Theatre Calgary debut. This is only Patrick's second show on a Calgary stage - the first being *William Shakespeare's Land of the Dead* (the Shakespeare Company/Hit & Myth/GZT) five years ago. Based in Edmonton, Patrick works regularly with Concrete Theatre as a designer and an administrator and has an extensive history with Red Deer's Prime Stock Theatre, Ignition Theatre, and Red Deer College. He is glad to be working with Tara and Andy again, having co-directed ARTICLE 11's *Reckoning* in Edmonton in December. Up next, Patrick is lighting Alberta Opera's production of *Pinocchio*. pbeagan.com

Pura Fé — Original Music and Vocals

Theatre Calgary debut. Pura Fé is a Tuscarora/Taino native singer-songwriter, musician, seamstress, teacher, activist, and mother. She is also a founding member of the native



Deanna H. Choi



Jenna Turk



Jane MacFarlane

woman's a cappella trio ULALI. Since 1987 ULALI has been known for creating their own music genre from their native roots and contemporary styles. This led them to performing worldwide and to many collaborations, recordings, movie soundtracks and documentaries. ULALI also inspired the many native women's hand drum groups you hear today.

Deanna H. Choi — Sound Design

Theatre Calgary debut. Deanna is a sound designer, composer, and violinist based in Toronto. Her design credits include *Paradise Lost* (Stratford Festival); *1837: The Farmers' Revolt* (Blyth Festival); *Midsummer* (Thousand Islands Playhouse); *The Monument* (Factory Theatre); *Selfie* (Young People's Theatre); *Mixie and the Halfbreeds* (fu-GEN); *Ipperwash* (Native Earth/Blyth Festival), *Fortune of Wolves*, *The Boat* (Theatre New Brunswick); *Lo, or Dear Mr. Wells* (Nightwood); *Laurier* (TNB/Confederation Centre for the Arts), as well as scoring the short film *Prey*. She is an alumna of Queen's University and the Royal Conservatory of Music. deannahchoi.com

Jenna Turk — Dramaturg

For Theatre Calgary: Adaptation - *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It* (Shakespeare by the Bow). Jenna has been with Theatre Calgary for the past two years in the role of Artistic Associate where she facilitates Theatre Calgary's mentorship program TC Mentors, curates the new work reading series TC Out Loud, assists Stafford with season programming, and acts as company dramaturg. Outside of Theatre Calgary, Jenna is a writer/actor/collaborator with a BFA in Acting from the University of Windsor and a MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph. Originally from Ottawa, she was based in Toronto for eight years before heading west to TC. Most recently her one-woman show, *The Starving Time*, debuted as part of Theatre Junction Grand's Next Stage series, and this winter her play, *Remnants*, will premiere in St. John's, Newfoundland. @jennaturk

Jane MacFarlane — Voice Coach

For Theatre Calgary: More than 45 productions since 2000 including *The Secret Garden*, *Twelfth Night*, *Blow Wind High Water*, *The Audience*, *Skylight*, *Bad Jews*, *The Crucible*, *Liberation Days* (WCT co-pro), *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *The Mountaintop*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Enron*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 7 seasons of Shakespeare by the Bow and 15 years of *A Christmas Carol*. Jane has also worked for ATP, is the Voice & Dialect Consultant for Vertigo Theatre and the Voice & Text Coach for The Shakespeare Company. She has taught at such institutions as York University, Harvard University, Southern Methodist University, MRU, UofC, and UofA.



Nexen invests in the arts so that families, friends and communities can experience performances that enrich our lives. We proudly support Theatre Calgary's Accessible Arts Program so we can all share in the connection and inspiration the arts provide.



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**Ruby Dawn
Eustaquio**



Sang-Sang Lee

Ruby Dawn Eustaquio — Stage Manager

For Theatre Calgary: Stage Manager – *The Humans*; Assistant Stage Manager – *A Christmas Carol* (2007, 2015-17), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Enron*, *Anne of Green Gables – The Musical*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Nine Dragons*, *Wait Until Dark*, *The Big Sleep*, *Shear Madness*, *Sweeny Todd* (Vertigo); *Becky's New Car*, *The Highest Step In The World* (ATP); *Girl Crush*, *In On It*, *Scarlet Women* (Lunchbox); *The Money Shot*, *Evil Dead the Musical* (GZT/Hit & Myth); *Extremophiles*, *Crime Does Not Pay* (Downstage); *A Beautiful View* (Sage). She is also a member of the cast and crew of *Dirty Laundry*, Calgary's only improvised soap opera. Ruby Dawn thanks Aaron for being super dad, and her sweetest little Mili.

Sang-Sang Lee — Assistant Stage Manager

Theatre Calgary debut. *Mamma Mia!*, *Hadestown*, *Sense & Sensibility*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *West Side Story*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Evangeline*, *Avenue Q*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Make Mine Love*, *Clybourne Park*, *Spamalot*, *Private Lives*, *Sound of Music*, *Rocky Horror*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Billy Bishop Goes to War*, *As You Like It* (Citadel); *Hamlet*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear* (Freewill Shakespeare); *Salt Baby* (Globe Theatre); *Antessy* (Concrete); *Don Giovanni* (Centre for Opera Studies in Italy); *Hunchback* (Catalyst); *Six Dance Lessons in Six Weeks*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Mayfield).

Imajyn Cardinal — TC Mentors – Set and Projection

Theatre Calgary debut. One of Imajyn's first shows was as one of the youngest actors in *Making Treaty 7*. She has been a member of the cast since its world premiere in 2014. *Honour Beat* will be her first time working with Theatre Calgary and she is honoured and excited to be a mentee under Andy Moro as part of the first year of the TC Mentors program.

Theatre Calgary gratefully acknowledges the support provided by the City of Calgary through Calgary Arts Development, the Government of Alberta through The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Government of Canada through the Canada Council, Canadian Heritage, and all corporate and private contributors.

Theatre Calgary is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, and operates within the jurisdiction of The Canadian Theatre Agreement. Theatre Calgary employs technicians under a collective agreement with the I.A.T.S.E.



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Theatre Calgary is a resident company of Arts Commons, operating out of Arts Commons Max Bell Theatre.





Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra
28 + 29 September 2018 / 7:30PM
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Special Thanks & Acknowledgements

Alberta Theatre Projects; Pauline Beagan; Helmut Beckmann; Imajyn Cardinal; Indica Cardinal; Jeff Chief; Foothills Nurseries; Margaret & Andrew Grenier; Margo Kane; Tegan Many Wounds; Moonstone Creations; One Yellow Rabbit; Tsuut'tina Museum and Gift Shop.

The playwright was supported by the Leighton Artists' residency, Banff Playwrights Lab, in partnership with the Canada Council for the Arts.



The MNP logo consists of the letters 'MNP' in a bold, green, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white rounded rectangular border.

Putting Culture on Centre Stage

A vibrant arts scene is essential to building strong communities. MNP is a proud supporter of Theatre Calgary and commends you for the tremendous work you do to promote diversity in arts and culture.

Clayton Norris
Vice President, Indigenous Services
T: 403.263.3385
E: clayton.norris@mnp.ca

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The poster features a photograph of Michelle Thrush, a woman with long dark hair, sitting on the floor and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a dark t-shirt and dark pants. To her right is a small, round, light-colored bowl. The background is dark and textured. The text on the poster includes the name 'Michelle Thrush' at the top right, the title 'INNER ELDER' in large, bold, white letters, and '2018 Betty Mitchell Award Winner' below the title. At the bottom left is the 'ONE YELLOW RABBIT PERFORMANCE THEATRE' logo, which is a red circle with a yellow rabbit silhouette. To the right of the logo, the dates 'October 23 – 27, 2018' and the venue 'Big Secret Theatre' are listed, followed by the website 'OYR.ORG' in large, bold, white letters.

Keeping the beat

Interview by Jenna Turk

Michelle Thrush is an award-winning actor – famous for television roles on *North of 60*, *Arctic Air*, and *Blackstone* (for which she won a Gemini award) as well as her theatre work which includes acting in and co-directing the world premiere of *Making Treaty 7* and creating and performing her one-woman show, *Inner Elder*. Thrush, who is Cree, was born and raised in Calgary and makes her Theatre Calgary directorial debut with *Honour Beat*.



Michelle Thrush

When Theatre Calgary first talked with playwright Tara Beagan about developing *Honour Beat*, she had one request: that you be its director. How did you two meet? Could you speak to your relationship?

My respect for Tara goes beyond words. We met a few years ago in Toronto. She is one of those women that will quietly straighten your crown without telling the world it was crooked. I feel honoured and blessed to have been a part of this journey. It is so powerful when women come together to create, and I have had a true warrior by my side throughout.

Honour Beat began its development with Theatre Calgary in May 2017, and the play has undergone several workshops and readings since that time. What has the process been like for you? Were there any challenges?

Watching this process from the beginning has been a joy. Each layer that has revealed itself in Tara's writing has been a gift for the actors, as well as for me as the director – and as a mother and as a daughter. This show has challenged me to look at my own relationship with my mom and how that shaped the way I parent my girls. It is a very real history of disconnection between Indigenous child and parent that has left huge repercussions for so many generations. This is what we are exploring through our art and our lives.

The story features two grown women coming together at their mother's bedside as she prepares to pass on. It also addresses the difficulty in growing up with confusion about one's own identity due to a lack of information and trauma. How did you approach the difficult subject matter in the rehearsal process?

With lots of smudge... I often say as Indigenous artists, we are frontline workers tackling with open hearts the issues that are so difficult to speak. I see my job as finding light in places that have been kept deeply hidden. Being an artist is always profoundly vulnerable. I believe this vulnerability is what creates the portal in which the medicine can be gently transferred from the stage to the audience.

I know you have two daughters of your own. Does *Honour Beat* make you think about them? Does the play have a personal connection for you?

My personal journey in my work has always been to contribute to the solutions so our next generation has less grief to detangle. My daughters are aware of the history of what their grandparents went through in the residential school system. My generation were not given these tools. We just knew something was wrong. It wasn't until the TRC report came out that the schools became a part of the national conversation. It is going to take a huge amount of love and understanding on all sides to find the answers. Everything I do is dedicated to creating a gentler path for my daughters to walk.



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What were you looking for in your cast and creative team? What was important for you?

It was extremely important to both Tara and I that we choose our team very carefully. *Honour Beat* will be the first time a full-on Indigenous/POC cast and crew has taken over Theatre Calgary and we are damn proud. We are excited to have a stellar cast hand-picked from across Turtle Island. Each actor is bringing not only their professional best but their own histories of the impacts residential school has had on their personal lives. It was also crucial to have a safe and nurturing place to bring this story to life and every department at Theatre Calgary was aware and more than willing to provide that space. I truly feel this is a “New Beginning” on so many levels, and I look forward to more inclusion of these stories that are a huge part of this land we all call home.

What do you hope the audience will take away from *Honour Beat*?

I hope the audience will hear and feel a story of human resilience and family love.



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— Spotlight on ADOPT-A-PLAY

With Nikolaus Demiantschuk,
partner at DBH Law

How long have you been coming to Theatre Calgary?

Nearly 30 years. We first started going to the theatre to see *A Christmas Carol* and things progressed from there. Now with our season tickets, we rarely miss a show.

How long have you been making donations to the theatre?

Through the firm, we've been supporting the theatre with some sort of donation for about the last 24 years, but it's been the last 15 with the Adopt-a-Play program. It's a nice way to give to a specific production.

What show did you adopt this season? And how do you go about choosing your play?

This season we adopted *Billy Elliot the Musical*. We like to choose what we think will be a popular show or something with a law theme.

Are there any shows that stand out or were your favourites over the years?

Well, we really like the variety. You present new plays, old works revamped, comedies, dramas and we especially look forward to the big musical at the end of the season. Some of our favourites were *Of Mice and Men*, *Twelfth Night* from last season, it was so much fun, and *Evita*.

What do you think of the quality of work on our stage?

Everything is done so well, from the sets, the costumes, scripts, directing, through to the actors themselves. I've really seen an evolution and a growth in the quality and I look forward to the continuation of that evolution.

Why do you think a thriving performing arts scene is vital to a city like Calgary?

The arts are important to Calgary as it continues to become a modern city and create the "a great place to work, a great place to live" kind of identity. Calgary ranks so highly as a great city to live in because we have a real variety of recreational and entertainment facilities as well as the arts to enjoy. I like being able to tell people our city has all of these things to offer.

By doing this interview you are helping us shine a spotlight on the Adopt-a-Play program and donating to the theatre in general. Why did you agree to do this for us?

It comes down to I like Theatre Calgary and I want to help shine that spotlight on the organization. There needs to be a fair balance between the cost of putting on a production vs what Theatre Calgary can reasonably sell a ticket for. The difference in those figures has to come from somewhere. Doing this interview is a little self-serving because I want to make sure the theatre continues, we recognize that without the awareness and support Theatre Calgary might not survive. The support has to come from everywhere, corporate partners, smaller sponsors like us, through to individuals, all are necessary to keep things running.

What would you say to someone to encourage them to adopt a play or become a donor?

I'd tell someone, if you've enjoyed going to the theatre, and you want to keep doing that for the reasonable amount you are

paying for your tickets, you need to sponsor or donate or give back somehow. People need to recognize it isn't just the price of the ticket that will keep the theatre going. They've got to do that something extra!

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I'd like to encourage everyone to bring someone new to the theatre and help the organization make sure the seats are never empty. There is such a variety of plays to choose from that there's something for everyone.

Adopt-a-Play

Adopting a play is a unique way to commemorate a play that's near and dear to your heart. Adopt one for yourself, one for a friend or perhaps one for someone who has everything.

Adoption rates:

\$500 per play
\$2500 for the entire season

Benefits include:

- A framed show photo autographed by members of the cast of your play(s)
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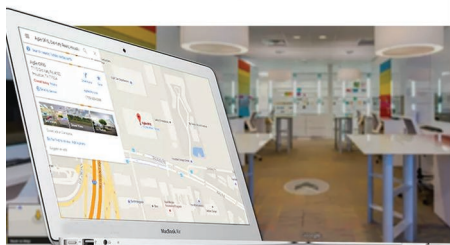
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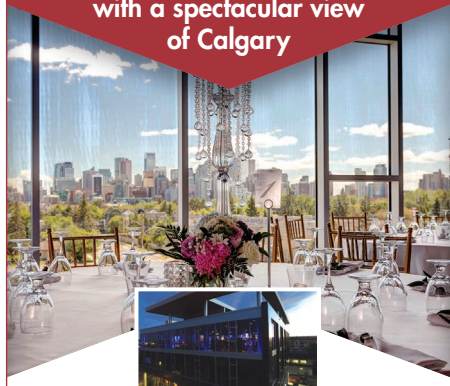
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“Who’s telling whose story?”

– Margo Kane, (Cree-Saulteaux), from Terrie Hamazaki’s article
 “Women in View: Who’s telling whose story?” in Kinesis

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– Marie Clements (Métis), *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*



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