



Park + Picnic + Play

SHAKESPEARE IN HIGH PARK

Measure For Measure + Much Ado About Nothing

Written by William Shakespeare

Directed by Liza Balkan, Severn Thompson

A Canadian Stage production in collaboration with the Department of Theatre,
School of the Arts, Media, Performance and Design at York University

High Park Amphitheatre – July 4-September 1, 2019

Canadian Stage's Shakespeare in High Park, one of Toronto's favourite summer traditions, returns for its 37th season to the High Park Amphitheatre, July 4-September 1. Audiences will enjoy a magical evening of theatre in the great outdoors with two adaptations of Shakespeare's most popular and enduring works — the comedic tale of love and desire, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and the timeless story of morality and power, *Measure For Measure*.

Whether enjoying a performance with family or friends, or a romantic first date with a special someone, each year more than 37,000 people make seeing theatre under the stars a summer staple. A pay-what-you-can event, Canadian Stage's Shakespeare in High Park is an accessible, unforgettable, and convenient theatre experience just steps from the subway.

"Shakespeare in High Park is a crucial element to Canadian Stage's mission of bringing excellent theatre to our city and we are proud that we are able to keep this experience accessible," says Canadian Stage Artistic Director Brendan Healy. "We are also thrilled that these two shows highlight the extraordinary talents of our two York University/Canadian Stage MFA in Stage Direction graduates: Liza Balkan and Severn Thompson. It will be a memorable summer in the Park!"

This year Dora Award-winning theatre creators Severn Thompson and Liza Balkan examine themes of gender, misogyny, patriarchy, feminism, deception, power, and politics and their new new significance today with the rise of #MeToo and call-out culture.

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Measure for Measure, directed by Severn Thompson, is set in a fictional modern-day Vienna. As a puritanical leader attempts to clean up the city using strict laws and brute force, citizens revolt and devise a plan to expose the leader as a hypocrite. With themes of extreme morality, political corruption, sexual harassment, justice and mercy, this dark comedy written over 400 years ago, is extremely relevant today with the rise of right-wing, hard-line, zero tolerance populist movements.

Much Ado About Nothing, directed by Liza Balkan, weaves stand-up comedy and audience interaction into this romantic comedy about love and war and the war of love. Set in the late 1990s — before social media and the dawn of publicly shaming someone and it “going viral” (i.e. Monica Lewinsky’s public humiliation and vilification for the relationship between herself and President Bill Clinton) — in and around the large waterside home of a wealthy government official, in fictional Messina, Ontario (an area not too far from Muskoka), this play about misunderstandings, love and deception, is filled with humour, sexual tension, gossip, plot twists, and hefty helpings of misogyny, privilege and intrigue.

The stellar cast includes: Rose Napoli, Christopher Morris, Jamie Robinson, Heath V. Salazar, Allan Louis, Emma Ferreira, Richard Lam, Natasha Mumba, Emilio Viera, Nora McLellan, Helen Taylor, and Can Komleksiz.

And to celebrate the start of summer, Shakespeare in High Park is supersized for the month of July! On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 6:30 to 7:30 PM, audiences can experience added entertainment with backstage tours, the best buskers in the city (Tuesdays only) and fantastic musical acts (Wednesdays only). Also, on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in July, children can enjoy free face-painting and other fun interactive activities in our Kid Zone tent.

Performances run:

Measure For Measure runs July 4 to August 31 with performances on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8 PM.

Much Ado About Nothing runs July 5-September 1 with performances on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 8 PM.

Gates to the High Park Amphitheatre open at 6 PM. Each performance is pay-what-you-can. Premium seats can be reserved in advance online with a \$30 donation.

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To receive further information or to request an interview, please contact
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ABOUT CANADIAN STAGE

Canadian Stage is one of the country's leading not-for-profit contemporary performing arts organizations. Led by Artistic Director, Brendan Healy, and Executive Director, Monica Esteves, the company produces, presents, commissions, and collaborates with multiple partners on cross-disciplinary work with a focus on performance styles that integrate theatre, dance, film, visual arts and more. Sharing innovative and vibrant performance work from Canada and around the world, it stages performances at three Toronto venues: The Bluma Appel at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts; The Berkeley Street Theatre; and the High Park Amphitheatre.

ABOUT SEVERN THOMPSON

A talented actor, writer and Dora Award winning director, Thompson is the associate artistic director at the Blyth Festival and is currently an MFA candidate at York University. Her directing credits include: *The Pigeon King* (Blyth Festival); *Wing Night at the Boot* (Blyth Festival); *Beyond the Farm Show* (Blyth Festival); *Madam Mao* (SummerWorks/Azure); *Peter Pan* (Bad Hats Theatre/Soulpepper, winner of 3 Dora Awards); and as an assistant director *Silence* (Grand Theatre, NAC). As an actor, Thompson has performed in theatres across the country including several seasons at both the Shaw and the Stratford Festival and is a graduate of the National Theatre School and the Birmingham Conservatory. She will be directing *Always Still the Dawn* for Canadian Stage's 19.20 season.

ABOUT LIZA BALKAN

An award-winning director, actor, writer, librettist and educator, Balkan's recent directing work includes productions at Koerner Hall, Buddies in Bad Times, The Royal Conservatory of Music, The COC, The Theatre Centre, Harold Green Jewish Theatre, Tapestry Opera, and Bicycle Opera Projects. Thompson has acted in multiple productions across Canada and the US and received a Dora Award for her performance in *Still the Night* (Theatre Passe Muraille/Tapestry.) Her documentary show, *Out The Window*, was produced at Toronto's Luminato in June 2018. Her opera works have been performed in Ontario, Vermont and New York City. A guest artist at Universities and Conservatory programs across the country, Balkan is an MFA candidate at York University. She will be directing *Always Still the Dawn* for Canadian Stage's 19.20 season.