Towards a Peaceable Process: Canadian theatre directing after 2014

By

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Abstract

The role of the director in Anglophone Canadian theatre has undergone a transformation. Beginning around 2014, this shift saw the hierarchical model of the position come into question from multiple sources resulting in the development of a suite of new methodologies and creative collaborators that are actively shifting the role of the director into a malleable process structure accountable to both the artistic ensemble and the audience. This new liminal reality reflects a more peaceable sensibility. This study begins with an exploration of the development of professional Anglophone direction in Canada, linking back to the European tradition with a focus on the rise of the professional director, the birth of the Stratford Festival, and the impact of Tyrone Guthrie on the profession. The next six chapters each represent one methodology or position that is functioning to dismantle or re-shape the previously idealized model of the hierarchical director. The first of these chapters, Chapter 4, focuses on decolonization and Indigenization within the process of theatrical direction. Chapter 5 charts significant milestones in antiracist practices in professional directing in Canada. Chapter 6 chronicles the emergence of cultural consultants as new collaborators within the field of professional theatre. Chapter 7 is an inquiry into accessibility practices that inform professional directorial processes while highlighting disability justice frameworks and the social model of disability. Chapter 8 is dedicated to presenting how trauma informed practice/care is changing the way directors are interacting within rehearsal halls and auditions. Lastly, Chapter 9 provides an overview and outline of the profession of intimacy direction and reflects on how this new position alters the role of the director. The conclusion offers examples of how public calls for change within the culture of professional theatre in Canada have reshaped how directors are working. It proposes the new term “peaceable direction” (a liminal process structure that values flexibility over hierarchy) as a container for all these changes, calls attention to two new collaborative artistic

positions, and posits that previously marginalized equity-based artistic practices have become part of mainstream directorial process since 2014.

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Dedication

With love and admiration for Kathleen and Maureen Flaherty.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the Spring 2021 issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* editors Signy Lynch and Thea Fitz-James wrote about two "explosions" that had recently occurred in Canadian theatre: the first being the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced the closure of theatres across North America, and the second being the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police Department. The editors asked contributing artists what they hoped theatre would become after the pandemic. They received a multitude of answers however, the consistent message was that Canadian theatre was deeply shaken and in a state of renegotiation.

Although this article points to a very specific cultural moment that took place all over North America at the height of the pandemic, there had already been an increase in popular awareness in how some professional theatre making practices in Canada were contributing to a culture of intersectional oppression. This is noticed in the National Theatre Centre's first Summit in 2014 focusing on Indigenous theatre in Canada (and then later Deaf and Disability Arts), Canadian Actor's Equity Association's launch of the *Not in OUR Space!* campaign in the fall of 2017, and the allegations of sexual harassment against founding Artistic Director of Soulpepper theatre, Albert Schultz, in late 2017, just to name a few. These substantial moments in professional Canadian theatre have not only impacted the public discourse surrounding the form but also speak to a culture of inequality and oppression within the profession.

The director in professional Canadian theatre often acts as, or is seen as, one of the most influential contributors to the creative culture of any given production. This study is an exploration into how the role of the director has undergone a radical transformation in professional Canadian anglophone theatre, beginning around 2014, which saw the hierarchical model of the role come under attack from a variety of perspectives. What has emerged is a suite

of new ideologically driven methodologies and collaborators that are in the process of transforming the role of the director into something more peaceable—a malleable process structure accountable to both the artistic ensemble and the audience. This study examines new artistic positions, collaboration techniques, and facilitation tools that are shaping how directors are functioning in their choices of material, preparation, rehearsal processes, casting, production spaces, and audience relationships.

It is essential to acknowledge that, in researching Canadian theatre directors, the concept of a cohesive understanding of both the term "Canadian theatre" and the role "professional Canadian theatre director" are born out of a crisis of identity and as such indicate a false stability in both their function and cultural position. The notion of Canadian Theatre as a united entity is in and of itself a concept fraught with contention. In the book *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre* Alan Filewod posits that "'Canadian Theatre' has always been a difficult and problematic term, less definition of a thing than a site of debate and contestation. It summons two historically unstable terms to create a third site of crisis" (X). Filewod notes that both "Canada" and "Theatre" are fluid in their definitions and when placed in relation to each other they further unsettle one another.

To prove this point Filewod begins his exploration into this theme with perhaps the first mention of a theatre director in the newly formed Canada. He cites Marc Lescarbot's production of *The Theatre of Neptune in New France* as "the first European theatrical performance in what is now Canada" (*Performing* XI). He describes the event as taking place

> on the shore of the Bay of Fundy before a small audience of French explorers and aboriginal bystanders on a November day in 1606. On that day, an aristocratic Parisian lawyer staged a theatrical ceremony to welcome Sieur de Poutrincourt, who was

> returning to the French outpost of Port Royal after a voyage down the eastern seaboard. (xi)

The role of the theatre director had not yet been invented in Europe and Lescarbot, not known to be trained in theatre, is presented by as having been engaged with writing and staging the play as well as consulting on the costumes (*Performing* XII), thus playing the role of what would later be considered "director".[1]

Lescarbot's Masque style performance, with elements alluding to classical traditions, was not just entertainment constructed to bolster authority and tame discontent, it also was a symbol attempting to contain this "new" environment within the narrow lens of the French culture (Filewod, *Performing* XII). Filewod explains that Lescarbot's play

> was both a performance and a quotation of a more authentic performance that could never be realized. This was a defining moment that would be replayed for the next five centuries, a moment in which the theatre enacted an imagined authenticity even as it confirmed the extension of empire by transmitting the work of colonialism into spectacle. (*Performing* XIII)

Filewod sees this moment in history as setting the stage for a performance of authenticity that is rooted in an ideology of the colonizer and not of the land (or peoples of the land) it is attempting to represent.

This false authenticity was also demonstrated in the casting of the historic performance. Filewod relays that "Neptune's aboriginal supplicants were probably played by Frenchmen, but, as Lescarbot tells us, they were watched by the settlement's aboriginal neighbours" (*Performing* XIV). Further, Filewod explains that

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[1] Chapter 3 will map the genesis of theatre direction within the European tradition and position Lescarbot within the lineage of Anglophone Canadian theatre directors.

> In this moment of racial impersonation and colonial masquerade, Lescarbot had claimed the new world in a new way by enlisting the spectating bodies and appropriated voices of its inhabitants in his imagined theatre, and he had established the principle that the colonialism of spectacle is the necessary imperial invasion. As an intellectual of humanism, he could not foresee that the colonizing of the cultural imaginary is also a precondition of genocide. (XV)

Filewod uses the theatrics of the budding director, Lescarbot, as a marker of the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples while also claiming them as the birth of "Canadian Theatre." This connection demonstrates the collision of these two developments - the "birth" of "Canadian Theatre" and that of the "Canadian" director. He summarizes then that all "Canadian theatre, and the nation it stages, can be seen as a replaying of *The Theatre of Neptune*, a constant historical citation and recitation of the postcolonial crises of authenticity and displacement" (*Performing* XVII). As Lescarbot is marked as the first theatre director, creating within this construct of an imagined Canada, the role of director in Canada is also born of a crisis of false authenticity, displacement, and colonization.

The work of the professional Canadian theatre director emerges from of this contentious history. This study assumes this history and extrapolates that the role of the director in Canada, born of a false claim to authority leading to misrepresentation and cultural harm, is being called to shift away from the colonial and hierarchical model that has routinely informed the way it functioned and presented itself, and in doing so has entered a state of flux and re-imagining. Since 2014, pressure has mounted to demote the settler director, with roots in the European traditions that reach back to the Duke of Saxe Meiningen, to just another player within a much more complex lineage of directors and theatrical modalities previously perceived as marginal

cultural practices. The increase in profile of these practices has infused the role of the director with many new concerns to support a more equitable process, and a need to understand their work within a much more diverse field of practice. This study narrates some of the lineages and evolutions of practice that have become necessary for contemporary directors in Canada to understand and respectfully engage with as antidotes to the harm caused by hierarchical directing traditions. A big piece of the new work asked of contemporary directors is to know the histories of practices outside the official Euro-centric version that many have been taught as part of their training.

Methodology

Purpose, Research Questions, Objectives

The purpose of this study is to highlight the significant changes to the role and practices of professional theatre directors in Canada working under Canadian Actor's Equity Association (CAEA) contracts since 2014. Engaging with theatre studies scholarship, peace and conflict studies literature, theatre industry governing documents, surveys, popular media, and my own lived experience as a practicing CAEA theatre director for ten years, this project seeks to clarify and uplift the substantial shifts in practice and policy that are currently informing the way that theatre is being directed in Canada. The research is organized into six categories exemplifying changes that have occurred in the way directors are creating work. These sections are supported by a chapter dedicated to examining the development of professional theatre direction in Canada. In investigating each chapter, four main research questions fueled my inquiries:

1. What is the current industry standard for professional practice in relation to the methodology?

2. What is the history of each practice and how did it come to inform the work of professional theatre directors in Canada?
3. Have there been significant cultural events that have influenced these practices or that point to the scale of these shifts in professional practice?
4. Are there any practical guidelines or creative practices that have been documented or created, that have been implemented in professional theatre making processes, and that can be used as resources for other directors? If so, what are the practical steps of implementation?

My goal in pursuing these questions is to discern how each new development in the role of the director came into being, what the genesis of each change was, when and how it began to be implemented, and what the current professional governance considers mandatory practices. These objectives are in the service of deciphering what is becoming consistent and common practice amongst professional theatre directors in Canada and what is not, and what the larger implications of these shifts are for artists and audiences.

Scope and Delimitations

This study has both temporal and geographical limitations. It charts changes in the profession as they relate to Canadian Anglophone directorial process. Although there are significant amounts of scholarship cited that were generated in both the United States and the United Kingdom (included to establish historical relevance, provide examples of professional conduct in emerging practices, and reference theoretical frameworks), all case studies are of Canadian artists and art centres. Temporally, the work is narrowly focused from 2014 to 2024. This time frame was decided upon as 2014 marked a significant change in the Canadian theatre scene with the launch of the NAC's Summit series and, on a personal note, it is the year that I

first directed under an equity contract[2]. The span of time encapsulates the entirety of my professional career as a CAEA director. Although this study is rooted in scholarly research, my lived experience has guided my attention and heavily informed my research questions and topic.

Quebecois Canadian theatre is not included in this study as it has its own rich culture and history. Although there are some practitioners mentioned in the research who work in French Canadian theatre, these artists are included because they also hold significant cultural relevance in Anglophone theatre. Lescarbot is included in this study because the *Theatre of Neptune* is widely discussed as the first European theatre event in both Anglophone and Quebecois theatre. Moving forward from that event the two groups developed quite different ecologies in theatre. Examining the role of professional directors in Quebecois theatre is a valid and important pursuit; however, due to the limitations of this research project, it is beyond the purview of this study.

Positionality

I am a white cis-gender temporarily able-bodied woman of European descent. I was raised in a lower middle-class family in Treaty 1 territory and educated via the public school system. I was fortunate to have been given the opportunities to study dance, music, and theatre all throughout my childhood and into adulthood. I began my post-secondary education as a student at Sheridan College's Musical Theatre Performance program and completed my undergraduate degree in Theatre at the University of Winnipeg. I then worked for several years as an emerging actor and director before completing my MFA in Directing at the University of

[2] It should be noted that I first joined CAEA as an actor in 2011.

Calgary in 2011. From 2011 to 2017 I worked as a freelance actor/director, with most of my contracts being as a director. I worked in regional theatres as well as smaller independent companies and my work spanned several provinces. During this time, I also taught as a sessional Instructor at the University of Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba and worked as an administrator for the Winnipeg International Storytelling Festival. In 2018, I decided to begin my PhD studies. I was curious about why my directorial process seemed to be increasingly at odds with the prescribed timelines and behaviours within the standard Canadian regional theatre model. In 2019 I began a full-time teaching position at the University of Winnipeg as an Assistant Professor and in 2022 I became a mother. These experiences create the lens through which I view the research that has shaped my understanding as an artist/academic.

Throughout this study I present many perspectives that reflect identities other than my own. As a white director and scholar, I acknowledge my race prior to engaging with the greater discourse. In "The Invisible Whiteness of Being: Whiteness, White Supremacy, White Privilege, and Racism," Derald Wing Sue explains the significance of all people, and specifically White people acknowledging their race: "The ultimate hope for change lies in having Whites (a) actively make "Whiteness" visible, (b) explore themselves as racial/cultural beings, (c) take responsibility for defining Whiteness in a nondefensive and nonracist manner, and (d) take antiracist actions aimed at individual, institutional, and cultural levels" (Wing Sue 27). Wing Sue outlines a multi-stepped action for white people to undertake as means of becoming increasingly antiracist. Primary is bringing awareness to the reality of their own whiteness, investigating themselves as racial individuals, owning the responsibility of their positionality, and then taking on antiracist actions.

In following Wing Sue's suggestion, it is also important that I take responsibility for my implicit bias. As such I find Robin DiAngelo's writing about white privilege helpful as a way of expressing my perspective of how I am now attempting to conduct myself within my scholarly work and practice and my responsibility to antiracist practices. She states, "I know that because I was socialized as white in a racism-based society, I have a racist worldview, deep racial bias, racist patterns, and investments in the racist system that has elevated me. … I am responsible for my role in it" (DiAngelo 149). I am in full agreement with DiAngelo in that I am responsible for my role in racism, and it is my intention to consistently incorporate an antiracist perspective in all that I write and create (understanding that I, along with my output, will forever be evolving in the work).

My positionality must also be addressed while engaging in research about decolonizing and Indigenizing theatre in Canada. In the 2021 book, *Talkin' up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Goenpul woman of the Quandamooka people, explains that "middle-class white feminists and Indigenous women speak out of different subject positions. The different knowledges that inform both Indigenous and middle-class white feminists' speaking positions disclose that there are limits to knowing the "Other" (126). My position makes it impossible for me to wholly relate to the lived realities of the Indigenous artists, activists, and scholars that I am referencing in this document. However, it is also my responsibility as a person who benefits from white supremacy and colonialism to work towards dismantling these oppressive structures. It is my task to attempt to understand and investigate decolonizing practices created and practiced by Canadian theatre directors while attempting not to further contribute to upholding oppressive ideologies and practices (DiAngelo; Wing Sue).

Researchers working outside of their cultural position risk causing harm in a multitude of ways, particularly when engaging with research relating to Indigenous Peoples[3]. Personal biases are inevitable in the work regardless of the mode or precision of the methodology (Wilson 16). Another issue, highlighted by Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson in the book *Research is Ceremony*, is that when "outsiders" research Indigenous peoples

> there is always a comparison made between the culture of the 'studied' and that of the 'studier'. The language, tone and focus of research reflects this comparison, with the inevitable consequence of rating one over the other. … It is time for Indigenous peoples and Indigenous research to break free from the hegemony of the dominant system, into a place where we are deciding our own research agenda. (17)

These are problems with this document that I face as a researcher. To ethically fulfill my role as an artist/researcher striving to be an ever more effective ally to Indigenous peoples I must include the work being done by Indigenous theatre makers and scholars within this study. However, my positionality is rife for making missteps and causing harm via misrepresentation, bias, and general lack of knowledge.

Rigidity surrounding which identities can contribute to the close reading of works by Indigenous peoples may contribute to an assumption that cross-cultural understanding is impossible. In the book *Indigenous Women's Theatre in Canada: A Mechanism of Decolonization* Sarah Mackenzie, an Anishinaabe/Métis/Scottish scholar, explains that

[3] Linda Smith Tuhiwai explains that the term "Indigenous Peoples" emerged in the 1970's and it "internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the worlds colonized peoples. The final 's' in 'peoples' has been argued for vigorously by activists because of the right of people's self-determination. It is also used as a way of recognizing that there are real differences between different Indigenous peoples" (7).

> One might ask also how Indigenous texts could be intelligible to their readerships if Indigenous worldviews are inaccessible to non-Indigenous readers. In fact, Indigenous works often address both non-Indigenous and Indigenous audiences. … Furthermore, a refusal by non-Indigenous scholars to look at Indigenous texts or performances could lead to the eventual ghettoization of Indigenous literature and art. (25)

Mackenzie further cites Helen Hoy and Renate Eigenbrod in explaining that although engaging with Indigenous performing arts and literature can be difficult for non-Indigenous scholars, not to do so is both an act of erasure and an abdication of responsibility (25). It is for these reasons that I will attempt to uphold my responsibility to check my bias and positionality as I work toward presenting practices in professional theatre spaces in Canada which actively speak back to the colonial model whether that be through decolonization, indigenization, or biskaabiiyang[4] (Simpson 49).

Theoretical Lens of Analysis

The initial spark that ignited this study was born out of my professional frustrations while directing plays in regional theatres in Canada. As I became aware of existing practices that moved away from the patriarchal, ableist, racist, and sexist models that I had inherited and, in some ways, unfortunately emulated, I was eager to adjust my own practice. Many of the modalities that inspired me to change the way I was working are highlighted in this study.

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[4] Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explains that "[w]ithin Nishnaabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang" means "re-creating the cultural and political flourishment of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural resurgence" (51).

This led to training as an intimacy director. I began my path to certification in 2022 and in the summer of 2024, I completed my training through Intimacy Directors and Coordinators in the United States. Although as a director I had staged many scenes of intimacy in my career, learning about the emerging field of Intimacy Direction and the various techniques and protocols that have been developed provided increased freedom and play in rehearsal. I began to more fully understand how the tools of an intimacy director[5] can easily be applied to directing and how, with the addition of the role of intimacy director in the rehearsal hall, the position of the director had radically shifted. It is through my lens as a practicing theatre artist that this research is processed and presented.

This study is rooted in a theatre studies perspective. Christopher B. Balme explains the development of the field of theatre studies in North America and the United Kingdom as having three distinctive stages of evolution. He states that the first stage involved a narrow focus on dramatic literature. The early degree programs established at the beginning 1900's defined the discipline "as the study of drama, albeit with a strong performative focus" (11). In using the term "drama" Balme is referring to the "form of literature (along with prose and poetry)" illustrating that early scholars were predominately focused on examining the words of theatrical texts, thus placing the focus primarily on the literature (4). Many schools were titled "Drama Departments" highlighting that text-first analysis was paramount (11).

[5] My education in intimacy direction opened the door to understanding practical ways to implement trauma informed care/practice in rehearsal halls as well as in early production and actor meetings. Intimacy director training has substantially shifted the way I conduct myself as a theatre educator and director.

According to Balme the second stage began in the 1970's. He notes that many departments changed their titles to "Theatre Studies" illustrating "a shift in focus towards theatrical performance as the central object of study" (11). Balme posits that the change in title

> signalled a break away from literary studies, of which drama was seen as a part. This did not mean that dramatic texts were no longer studied (on the contrary), but it did indicate that they were just one—and perhaps not even the most important—part of a more complex cultural phenomenon. Scholars studied theatre buildings, the evolution of acting, and the complex dynamics of the performance itself… the central shift, however, concerns the concept of performance and its study. (11)

The movement away from prioritizing the text and towards an examination of other elements of performance such as acting, sets, and direction broadened the field, lending itself to more interdisciplinary inquiries (11).

The third and final stage that Balme identifies is the emergence of performance studies. According to Balme this field is heavily influenced by the work of director and academic Richard Schechner moving it into popularity in the 1980's. Performance studies relayed an investigation into "performance within the broader parameters of the social sciences" and "implied a departure from aesthetic and historical paradigms … In performance studies, one is more likely to study the performance aspects of a church service or a political rally than a dramatic text" (12). The field of performance studies moves away from considering theatre as its primary focus and instead seeks to examine all kinds of performative moments and practices within culture. Through engaging with Balme's breakdown of the various forms of theatre related research perspectives, this study is firmly rooted within the tradition of theatre studies, as

its goal is to examine the role of the director throughout a creative process of staging a dramatic text within the confines of a Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA)[6] engagement.

In addition to my lived experience and theatre studies scholarship, this study also applies a lens of Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS). The field of PACS developed initially from Quincy Wright's war studies in the 1940's (Flaherty 5). Following World War II, theorists Lewis F. Richardson and Anatol Rapoport's research in "mathematical models of the arms race and war" and Game Theory analysing "conflictual iterations as a means of preventing nuclear war" further developed the field (Flaherty 5). Later, the work of Louis Kriesberg, studying "the processes of de-escalating armament acquisitions as one tool in resolving conflict and diminishing the likelihood of further violence" grew the area. PACS scholar Maureen Flaherty notes that together "the disciplines of International Relations and Conflict Resolution eventually gave birth to PACS" (5). Flaherty also cites the work of Karl Marx and Max Weber. She explains that the work of Marx and Weber sought "to even out or flatten hierarchies of power" and that to do so "they looked at social and economic structures and the power related to them" (5). Flaherty completes her brief history of the field with an overview of what it is now. She states that

> As the PACS field grew, it was acknowledged that peace must be built through the involvement of all layers of society, and that lasting peace comes through 'multi-track diplomacy'—using a systems approach to work with people from the grassroots to mid-level elites, to the highest level of government and all of these levels or 'tracks' must be

[6] CAEA is an organization that represents professional Canadian directors, stage managers, performers, choreographers, intimacy directors, and fight directors. The organization supports members with benefit plans and advocacy. They also negotiate and administer "scale agreements" and administrate "engagement policies" for their members ("What We Do").

> involved in education, research, and even activism in an all inclusive, all encompassing approach to addressing conflict and building peace. (5)

This study acknowledges this history and aligns with PACS' current mandate. My research roots itself in the understanding that all layers of professional theatre making in Canada must be engaged in creating lasting change. PACS scholarship is particularly relevant to this study as it does not only examine active states of conflict, but it also examines notions of equity as they relate to peace states. As mentioned above, this study chronicles how the role of the director is changing into a more flexible construct, a process structure rooted in a more peaceable reality prioritizing reciprocity between director, artistic ensemble, and the audience.

The inclusion of PACS scholarship in my research is also inspired by watching the profession of theatre evolve towards more peaceable practices. Sociologist Elise Boulding, whose work is often cited by PACS scholars defines "peaceableness" as "an action concept, involving a constant shaping and re-shaping of understandings, situations, and behaviours in a constantly changing lifeworld, to sustain well-being for all" (1). Boulding's liminal definition highlights the reciprocal and active nature of peace. "Peaceableness" is dynamic and responsive to the ever-changing cultural demands. Fluidity is at the core of Boulding's definition, and it is through this fluidity that the needs of all members of a culture can be met.

Further, Boulding provides a clear framework for considering what a culture of peace entails. She explains that peace cultures promote diversity, including "lifeways, patterns of belief, values, behavior, and accompanying institutional arrangements that promote mutual caring and well-being as well as an equality that includes appreciation of difference, stewardship, and equitable sharing of the earth's resources among its members and with all living beings" (1). Boulding's definition highlights care and collective well-being that recognizes and celebrates

difference, equality, and thoughtful leadership as paramount to a peaceful existence. This definition of peace culture resonates with the shifts of theory, practice, and governance that I have witnessed in the culture of professional theatre in Canada[7].

It is a noted concept in PACS scholarship that the absence of war does not mean that peace is taking place. Noted PACS scholar Johann Galtung writes of "negative peace" as a state of "passive co-existence" that is neither in direct conflict nor in active peace building (174). Similarly, PACS scholar Peggy Chinn writes that "Peace is not merely the absence of war. The two cannot exist at the same time, but if people are not at war, this does not automatically mean that they live and work together in peace" (9). Chinn created an acronym as part of her definition of PEACE including the following five concepts: praxis, empowerment, awareness, cooperation, and evolvement (9). Boulding, Galtung, and Chinn's theories suggest that a constant state of change, reflection, and moving towards new modes of creation are at the root of peacemaking. This study engages with these concepts as a way of framing the work being done by some professional theatre directors and theatre makers to change their working conditions and the culture of the profession. The artists, administration, and theatre practitioners cited in the study may not use this specific language; however, it is clear through their actions that many of the changes that are being made and called for are rooted in a similar sentiment. It should also be noted that, through engaging with a PACS lens, this study considers the fields of critical race theory, disability studies, Indigenous studies, sociology, psychology, and philosophy as well as both provincial and federal governance when the research required definitions that were specific

[7] Although Boulding includes an element of ecological responsibility and reciprocity as paramount to a culture of peace, this study does not focus on the emerging field of eco-dramaturgy and ecologically responsible theatre making as, at the time of writing, these practices have yet to impact the CAEA governance that presides over the field.

to each field. As PACS is rooted in a multidisciplinary approach, as is that of theatre studies, this mode of inquiry is considered common in both fields.

Research Methods

I employ a qualitative methodology to address the questions I am asking in this study. The changes that are occurring to the role of the professional director in Canada are taking place on a variety of levels: personal (individual artists are making changes to their own process), within the culture of the profession (via governing documents and shifts in common practice), and sociological (in reaction to massive global events including the COVID 19 pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and the growing popularity of #metoo in 2017). To embrace this layered reality, I accessed a variety of resources including professional governing documents (primarily the 2021 and 2024 Canadian Theatre Agreements), government policies (both provincial and federal), the mandates and policies of non-profit niche organizations, mass media outlets (including newspapers, online journals, and podcasts), and scholarly peer-reviewed writing across several disciplines. All these research materials are essential to understanding the changes occurring in the profession as perceived by myself, the artists, arts administrators, and theatre scholars referenced in this study.

Qualitative research methodology has been used for as long as "recorded history" (Taylor 15). Steven J. Taylor states that "qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data—people's own written or spoken words and observational behavior…qualitative methodology, like quantitative methodology, is more than a set of data-gathering techniques. It is a way of approaching the empirical world" (18). He then breaks down the methodology into eight points outlining his understanding of the practice:

1. Qualitative researchers are concerned with the meaning people attach to things in their lives.
2. Qualitative research is inductive.
3. In qualitative methodology the researcher looks at setting and people holistically; people, settings, or groups are not reduced to variables but viewed as a whole.
4. Qualitative researchers are concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives.
5. For the qualitative researcher, all perspectives are worthy of study.
6. Qualitative researchers emphasize the meaningfulness of their research.
7. For the qualitative researcher, there is something to be learned in all settings and groups.
8. Qualitative research is a craft. (5-7)

Taylor's breakdown of qualitative methodology highlights the fluidity of the practice in that researchers are encouraged to adapt their process as they proceed through their project and acquire a clearer understanding of the subject matter. It also clarifies that all data is meaningful and all sources valuable. There is no hierarchy of source, and all material should be considered with apt attention and rigour.

Significance

Social and Cultural Significance

The goal of the study is to notate and highlight the changes in the role of the professional theatre director in Canada and document how, why, and on what scale these changes are being implemented. Via my lens as a working professional director and academic, I am providing a

unique perspective into the topic that is both timely and robust. Through my archiving and curating of the research on my subject, I am creating a document that will be useful to professional directors working in the field. Although not meant or attempting to be a guidebook, this study brings to light many practices and conversations taking place globally that are informing the profession in Canada and that may impact the choices that practitioners make in their next projects. It also provides a context for practices that are currently becoming popular and explains their genesis so that directors who have adapted their processes can more fully understand the significance of the changes.

Academic Significance

My identity as a practicing director uniquely positions this study as practitioner-focused while also containing a deep analysis of the current scholarship on the subject matter. It is my intention that this document will contribute to the work of theatre studies scholars who investigate theatre direction in Canada, while also pushing the field forward by considering new writing on the emergence and significance of decolonizing/Indigenizing practices, antiracist direction, cultural consultancy, accessibility practices, trauma informed practices/care and intimacy direction in Canada and their impact on directors. There is currently a dearth of scholarly work on the practices documented in this study. While I was able to access scholarly work on the underpinnings and theory behind these shifts, there is a lack of depth in the scholarly writing on the practical tools of the director. Much of the documenting of these changed practices is anecdotal in media and in short form, general access publications. In the following study I am bringing this topic, and its fulsome consideration, into the academic sphere.

Research Project Overview

The study brings together a myriad of resources to investigate the shift in the role of the professional Canadian theatre director since 2014. Through the compiling of my research and then relating it back to my lived experience I discovered a suite of six ideologically driven methodologies that point to a shift in professional practice and cultural discourse in the field. These methodologies are divided into two categories: Cultural and Social. The cultural chapters appear first in the document and appear as follows: decolonizing/indigenizing practices, antiracist practices, and cultural consultants. The social chapters come next in the following order: accessibility, trauma informed, and intimacy direction. These methodology-based chapters are preceded by a Literature Review (Chapter 2) and a historical and professional overview of the role of the Canadian theatre director (Chapter 3).

The Literature Review presents the scholarship consulted throughout the study. The resources are divided into three categories: the body, the profession, and the social. Demonstrating a progression in perspective, the categories move from the physical realities of the practice of direction to the circumstances that surround the occupation, and lastly the broader social questions that either shape or respond to the work of professional directors. This chapter charts the intellectual journey and pattern of inquiry that I undertook in relation to my research questions and the existing scholarship that informs them from the disciplines represented in this document.

Chapter 3 is devoted to exploring how the role of the professional director emerged in Canada. The chapter maps the genesis of theatre direction in the European tradition back to the Greeks (Innes and Shevtsova 6). It then further extrapolates that these modes of creation have heavily influenced the profession in Canada as the emergence of professional theatre took place,

slowly born out of the flourishing English theatre in 1930's Montreal and the pre-World War II Dominion Drama Festival (Whittaker 29). It considers a dialogue across time between the aristocratic and ensemble models of direction in the country and calls attention to the birth of the Stratford Festival and the work and legacy of Tyrone Guthrie as an archetype of the model theatre director (Hunter 17). The chapter outlines a brief account of director training in Canada and offers the definition of the role as well as the requirements of the profession presented in the 2024 Canadian Theatre Agreement. Lastly, it engages with a study of the population of the profession since 1982 citing the Fraticelli, Burton, and the MacArthur reports on equity in Canadian theatre.

Chapter 4 marks the first of three chapters highlighting cultural shifts in the profession. It examines how Canadian directors and theatre makers are working in ways that dismantle or avoid a colonial model and presents definitions of biskaabiiyang, indigenization, and decolonization. The chapter acknowledges that this work is being led by Indigenous artists who have been working in these ways for many years. The chapter then charts the birth of Indigenous Theatre at the NAC, including a brief history of Indigenous theatre leading up to the launch, presenting the work of Carol Greyeyes, the Debahjehmujig Theatre Group, Floyd Favel, Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska, Lindsay Lachance, Yvette Nolan, Murial Miguel, Yolanda Bonnell, and Carmen Alvis as examples of artists actively engaging in theatrical creation processes that are consciously seeking out methods that create Canadian theatre beyond the colonialized imagination. Further it offers some thoughts about how non-Indigenous artists can participate in decolonization, citing Lynn Gehl's work on responsibilities for allies, and lastly brings forward the now common practice of land acknowledgements prior to theatrical performances in Canada and presents some discourse surrounding that topic.

Chapter 5 chronicles significant milestones in antiracist practices in professional Canadian theatre. It begins with Ibram X. Kendi's definition of antiracism. The chapter then follows two case studies: *Twenty-One Black Futures* and GENesis Asian-Canadian Theatre Conference in May 2010, and the decades of labour leading up to these cultural moments as examples of how directors' work significantly impacted representation in Canadian theatre. Next, the section highlights four antiracist professional theatre companies in Canada: Teesri Duniya Theatre, Cahoots theatre, Why Not Theatre, and The Firehall Arts Centre. Lastly, it presents examples of antiracist directorial practices that are being used throughout North America and the United Kingdom.

Chapter 6 maps the emergence of cultural consultants in the field of professional theatre and how this may impact the role and responsibility of the director. This portion of the study calls attention to a few noted moments of cultural appropriation in Canadian theatre history with a strong focus on Robert Lepage's work on *SLĀV* and Marie Campbell and Linda Griffith's *The Book of Jessica,* both of which underscore the need for cultural consultants. These case studies are surrounded by philosophical theory that attempts to define the term "cultural appropriation" and provides an investigation into intercultural performance, citing the work of Ric Knowles and Rustom Bharucha. The chapter explores the meaning of cultural competency and its use in relationship to theatre direction. It presents the emerging field of cultural dramaturgy and positions it in relationship to current industry standards outlined in the CTA.

Chapter 7 leads the section of chapters outlining social shifts in the profession. It begins with an inquiry into disability justice frameworks as defined by the collective Sins Invalid and the social model of disability. It also examines federal and provincial policies relating to accessibility to provide a container within which professional theatre practices can be

considered. Next, it briefly outlines the differences between Disability Arts and Accessibility Arts as defined by scholars Jessica Watkin and Kirsty Johnson. Further, it presents the NAC's Summit and Republic of Inclusion as a marker of change in the understanding of accessibility in Canadian theatre, referencing its final report findings as an indicator of needed change in the field. It further examines the way that accessibility is presented in the CTA and considers writing by artists Abbie Anderson and Debbie Patterson as examples of accessible practices in theatre creation.

Chapter 8 is focused on how trauma informed practice/care is shifting the way that directors are rehearsing their plays as well as interacting with the audience. It begins with an overview of the history of the study of trauma and then presents current definitions of the term. As well, it calls attention to the vastness of associated disorders and responses. Citing the work of Judith Herman and Bessel Van Der Kolk it offers a sociological and physiological framework to understand the primary questions surrounding caring for people affected by trauma. Citing recent surveys, the chapter calls attention to the public's relationship to trauma post-COVID 19 pandemic. Following this, it tracks trauma informed practices in the theatre and draws connections from artists creating work in the field of applied theatre as examples of possible practical techniques. This study engages with James Thompson's notion of the Aesthetics of Care and then links it to post-pandemic Canadian theatre practices such as content warnings. Lastly, the chapter offers Claire K. Redfield's trauma responsive directorial approach as an example of trauma informed practice/care in action.

Chapter 9 is an outline and overview of the new profession of intimacy direction and considers how the inclusion of intimacy directors into the creative process shifts the role of the director. The chapter maps a history of the field, offers information as to how the CTA refers to

the position, cites multiple professional intimacy directing organizations in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, and notes the variety of perspectives as to the responsibilities of the profession. It also presents various questions surrounding the field such as the requirement of certification, the value of representation, and the creative boundaries that delineate the intimacy director's role from that of the director.

The conclusion demonstrates concrete examples of the how the public discourse surrounding calls for changes within professional theatre culture have started to shape the way that professional directors have been implementing practices that are contributing to increasingly more equitable representation within the field. It further states that the inclusion of cultural consultants and intimacy directors has fostered new creative positions that are in direct response to calls for changes surrounding representation and cultural and social safety. The chapter summarizes how the study brings forward new information by documenting the changes in the field of professional theatre direction in Canada, addressing the scale on which these shifts in professional practice are occurring, and highlighting how this researcher's perspective enriches the study due to the limitations of published material documenting the practicality of the profession. It further notes that there is currently a lack of scholarly writing addressing the practical elements of antiracist direction, cultural consultancy, trauma informed direction, and intimacy direction. It concludes by presenting the next steps for the research which involves a more in-depth investigation into the relationships between intimacy directors and directors, the connection between intimacy direction and trauma informed practices and examining how and if new protocols and practices being implemented by intimacy directors are being adapted by Canadian theatre directors.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I offer an overview of the literature that has informed my area of research. I have concluded that this literature review is important because the interdisciplinary nature of the study requires the blending of academic fields and engages with a wide variety of sources that, at times, brings the practical and anecdotal conversation into scholarly discourse. My goal is to demonstrate how I have synthesized the broad array of sources that have gone into the dissertation. I have divided the scholarship into three categories: the body, the profession, and the social. These categories demonstrate a progression in perspective that moves from corporeal realities that intersect with the practice of direction through to the broader working circumstances of the occupation, followed by the societal discourses that are either shaping the work of professional directors or responding to them. This chapter will present the literature contained within each category as a way of charting this study's academic influences and my thought process as a researcher.

The Body

Scholarship that informed my understanding of the director's relationship to physical practice within the scope of this study is rooted in theoretical and practical writing about intimacy direction, Disability and Accessibility Arts, and trauma research. Intimacy direction is an emerging field and the literature surrounding it is relatively new. The earliest known published book about intimacy direction is Chelsea Pace's *Staging Sex*. Published in 2020, the book is an introduction to techniques for staging scenes of intimacy from a consent forward perspective while providing a brief rational for these practices within educational spaces and in professional rehearsal halls.

Between the years of 2023 and 2024 three books specifically devoted to the practice of intimacy direction were published, thus quadrupling the number of peer-reviewed publications on the topic within the span of a year. *Supporting Staged Intimacy* by Alexis Black and Tina M. Newhauser, *Intimacy Directing for Theatre* edited by Dr. Ayshia Mackie-Stephenson, and *Directing Desire* by Kari Barclay all address the emerging field of Intimacy Direction. Black and Newhauser's publication offers practical guidelines for creating a production infrastructure that supports the work of intimacy directors. It offers a framework for creating a consent forward environment for actors, the creative team, and the production staff and provides a variety of theoretical perspectives on the emerging field by incorporating writing from several working intimacy directors with varying lived experiences and identities. Mackie-Stephenson's publication presents chapters written by several practicing intimacy directors from a myriad of perspectives. Incorporating tools of the craft in both professional and academic settings, the book creates a clear outline for applications of the form and points to the significance of intersectionality and identity within power dynamics when working on scenes of intimacy. Barclays's book provides a substantial theoretical analysis. Beginning with an attempt at creating a history of the profession, Barclay further explores the complexities of the practice as it relates to text, power, identity, and consent. These three publications were instrumental in identifying key questions surfacing around the practice of intimacy direction relating definitions of the practice and its relevance in contemporary professional theatre. Together they formed a substantial base from which all other research I conducted within the field could be understood.

Mainstream media publications about intimacy direction are generally centered around narratives of specific artists or productions that have incorporated the practice. This is particularly true of coverage pre-2019. These articles were useful to the study in that they

provided a clear context for understanding the dynamic and substantial change that occurred in the structure of creative teams for professional theatre with the inclusion of intimacy directors. However, they did not provide much information about the practice itself or the various training bodies or hiring considerations in the field. For this information I relied on articles published in both Howlround and *The Journal of Consent Based Performance*. Both are excellent sources for practitioner perspectives but are not scholarly in their review process. I also found critical information relating to qualification, certification, skills development, industry standards, and protocols in consulting the literature created by training organizations that were active during the time of writing. These were *Theatrical Intimacy Education*, *National Society of Intimacy Professionals*, *Intimacy Coordinators Canada*, *Intimacy Directors and Coordinators*, *Intimacy Coordinators of Color*, and *Intimacy for Stage and Screen*.

This study began its investigation into the intersection of disability and accessibility in the theatre by consulting current Canadian governing documents and policies. The 2013 Accessibility for Manitobans Act as well as the federal 2019 Accessible Canada Act provided context within which to view the changes occurring within the professional theatre environment. Additionally, disability and accessibility theatre scholarship have informed this study's understanding of how bodies with various access needs navigate the creation and consumption of theatre, beginning with artist and scholar Jessica Watkin's writing about Disability dramaturgy and Disability Arts. Watkin's 2022 book *Interdependent Magic* provided clear definitions of key terms used within Accessibility and Disability Arts that created a supportive framework from which I could contextualize other readings on the subject. The co-authored article, "Time Travel and the Portal of Radical Care: A dialogue between mia susan amir and Jessica Watkin" published in 2021 outlining the shifts in mainstream Canadian theatre towards a more liminal

understanding of theatrical creation, provided a definitive temporal guidepost from which to measure substantial shifts in ideology and practice within the scope of the study.

Scholar Kirsty Johnston's writing about the history of Disability Theatre was also a foundational resource as it provided much needed context for understanding the development of accessible practices in Canadian rehearsal halls. I found the 2012 book *Stage Turns: Canadian Disability Theatre* to be a significant resource for charting the development of Disability Theatre in Canada. Johnston describes Disability Theatre "as an intercultural project…in which artists from a range of disability cultures contribute to a polyvalent disability culture" (6). She emphasises that "disability culture is not a monolith that essentializes one world-view or disability experience" (6). Johnston's historical research, paired with the writings of Watkin and amir, offers a substantial base of scholarly writing related to Disability Theatre, Disability Arts, and Accessibility Arts in Canada.

To provide a broader context for the work being done relating to Disability and Accessibility Arts, the study engaged with contributors in the Disability Rights movement. It engaged with the collective Sins Invalid's definition of disability justice framework as a way of contextualizing some of the concepts presented by amir, Watkin, and Johnston within the broader international conversation. Although not cited directly in the study, the 10 principles of disability justice heavily informed my understanding of the network of ideas and practices that intersect in the fight for disability justice. These principles as outlined by Sins Invalid are intersectionality, leadership of those most impacted, anti-capitalist politics, cross-movement solidarity, recognizing wholeness, sustainability, commitment to cross-disability solidarity, interdependence, collective access, and collective liberation (22-26).

Theatre in the United Kingdom is ahead of Canada as far as incorporating accessibility practices for both audiences and artists. For this reason, I consulted the literature being generated by Disability Rights UK to access the language and theory that have supported these shifts within the industry. I found their explanation of the social model of disability to be helpful. They state that

> people have impairments, they do not have disabilities. … the term 'people with disabilities' is said to confuse impairment and disability and implies disability is something caused by the individual, rather than society. As a result, the term 'Disabled people' is used to describe people with impairments who are disabled by barriers constructed by society. ("Social Model of Disability: Language")

This model clarifies that it is the hurdles created by society that hinder the theoretical and physical movement of individuals. The society is the hindrance to people, not the individuals themselves.

This study relied heavily on writing by artists and practitioners who have either documented their experiences themselves or have contributed to reports created by larger institutions. One such document was the Summit report created by Sarah Garton Stanley and Syrus Marcus Ware with assistance from Jesse Strong. In the report they share information gathered from the artists who participated in the 2016 Summit. One voice in this report referenced repeatedly is Alex Bulmer. Bulmer is credited with presenting the idea of a "creative detour" which allows for new and unexpected discoveries in the theatre making process (10). She relays that these moments of revelation are only possible by working and thinking collaboratively and from a place of including all bodies and minds within the space (10). Bulmer's ideas of how mainstream theatres must reorganize their processes to better account for

all access needs is paramount to my understanding of how the director can play a role in changing not only the dynamics of the rehearsal space, but also how the production elements are incorporated and conceived.

The personal experiences of artists Abbie Anderson and Debbie Patterson are referenced in this study as a way of presenting methodologies that are impacting the structure of auditions, rehearsal hall practices, and casting trends. Both Anderson and Patterson write about how small changes in practice can have a large impact on accessibility so long as they are done with attention to specific access needs. Patterson further identifies that shifting the process to ensure all access needs are met can improve not only the working conditions for all involved but also elevate the quality of the artistic outcome (Patterson). Patterson founded Sick + Twisted Theatre whose vision states that "[a]rtists with disabilities have an understanding of the truths of the human condition that can only be arrived at by confronting the challenges and opportunities presented to us by our exceptional bodies. But these truths are universal. We have what the rest of the world needs" ("Sick + Twisted"). Sick + Twisted's statement highlights that the inclusion and celebration of artists with disabilities is not only just, but also paramount to creating theatre that speaks to the universal human experience.

Research relating to trauma and Trauma Informed Care/Practice (TIC/P) has been influential to my research. Judith Lewis Herman's writing about psychological trauma as well as Thompson and Carrello's 2021 study of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of American teenagers offered a substantial grounding in understanding the frequent rate of trauma responses occurring in North America. Further, Marilyn Ford Gilboe, Karen Campbell, and Lisa Heslop's Chapter "Trauma, Violence, Health, and Well-being" provided a clear explanation of how trauma can be individual or collective and how it can penetrate multiple

generations or exist within an isolated time and place. Bessel Van Der Kolk's writing, along with Gilboe et al, outlined the unique physiological trauma response and how this experience may shape the way an individual operates in all elements of their lives as well as how the trauma response may be re-activated at times even when an individual has not experienced a direct trauma. C. Nadine Wathen and Colleen Vacroe's history of Trauma Informed Care or Trauma Informed Practice (TIC/P) was remarkably helpful in understanding the nature of the discipline as well as charting the timeline of development and linking it to practices emerging in theatre spaces. I found the Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care to be a beneficial resource for engaging in discourse outlining how Trauma-Informed Care must be considered in the design of institutions and processes for it to be an effective tool.

Writing relating to applied theatre also greatly informed this study's perspective of how theatre making techniques can be used to serve communities and individuals who have experienced trauma. Augusto Boal's seminal work *Theatre of the Oppressed* offered several examples of theatre creation practices that fell well within the guidelines of TIC/P outlined by the trauma experts cited above. Similarly, Meade Palidofsky and Bradley C. Stolbach's paper highlighting the work of The Fabulous Musical Theatre Program for Incarcerated Girls in Chicago, Illinois provided multiple examples of how theatre aided young women with histories of trauma to process their experience and empower their voices. Bryan Doerries' work with American veterans suggested that theatre may be a healing tool for trauma if the content and audience circumstances support a shared experience that is prime for frank conversations creating enough distance from the subject matter to allow for critical thought (Doerries).

Care for the audience and performers alike is a theme that recurred in the research surrounding TIC/P in theatre. James Thompson's notion of the Aesthetics of Care puts forward

the idea that interdependence should be prioritized over autonomy and independence in a creation process that values care (229). Care is also reflected upon in Sydney Isabelle Mayer's writing about the relevance of content warnings in professional theatre. This trend is then echoed by Blair Cadden in her investigation of the dilemma of including content warnings for immersive theatre. Lastly, Claire K. Redfield's trauma responsive rehearsal process for directors offers a four-pronged approach derived from David Treleaven's *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness* that demonstrates practical applications within the rehearsal hall that give precedence to care for collaborators.

The Profession

Presenting a brief history of the development of the role of the director within a western tradition is necessary to establish how this position has shifted since 2014. Christopher Innes and Maria Shevtsova's writing about the history of direction provided a substantial explanation as to how the role of the director developed over centuries of European theatre. Their work charting developments in rehearsal, staging, and leadership practices is the foundation for this study's understanding of how the hierarchical model of the director was formed. Ric Knowles' writing on the subject bolstered this research as it offered a Canadian lens and drew a clear connection between the Wagnerian concept of Gesamtkunstwerk and the contemporary North American ideal of the director. Knowles's writing also heavily informed this study's perspective on director training in Canada.

Alan Filewod's book *Performing Canada: The Nation Enacted in the Imagined Theatre* has enlightened the research presented in this study. Filewod's perspective that Canadian theatre

is created by two unstable terms which manifest into a site of crises has heavily impacted how this study positions theatrical artistic leadership in this country prior to 2014 (XI)[8]. Additionally, Filewod's research outlining Lescarbot's production of the *Theatre of Neptune in New France* as well as Vincent Massey's influence on the little theatre movement in Canada, the Dominion Drama Festival, and the Stratford Festival lays the foundation for the argument that the role of the director in Canada is rooted in a hierarchical ideal informed by an imperial lineage.

Many Canadian theatre historians have informed this study's understanding of how Canadian professional theatre culture has developed over time. Susan McNicoll's writing about the emergence of professional theatre in Canada provided needed information about how theatre was being created prior to the establishment of the professional theatre scene. Herbert Whittaker's personal accounts introduced this writer to the work of early Canadian directors and offered much needed perspective into the kinds of plays being presented and the working relationships among the mid-century artistic teams in Ontario and Quebec (27). Martha Max and Rex Southgate's writing about the structure and culture of the Dominion Drama Festival as well as the little theatre movement in Canada was instrumental in bolstering my understanding of the movement's impact on the taste and practices of theatre enthusiasts in Canada between 1914 and the 1970's (260). Understanding the impact of Tyrone Guthrie's personality and artistic perspective on the role of the Canadian professional theatre director was heavily informed by Alan Filewod's writing as well as the analysis and research of Martin Hunter and Joe Falocco. Their scholarship foregrounds this writer's perception of the multilayered dynamics of power and influence that have helped to shape the culture of Canadian theatre direction prior to 2014.

[8] See the Introduction for a more fulsome exploration of this concept.

There is a lack of critical writing about director training in Canada. This study incorporates my lived experience as a director trained both in an academic setting as well as through significant mentorship via various professional engagements. Alongside this embodied research, I have consulted *The Director's Lab*, edited by Evan Tsitsias, as a source text that presented a multitude of perspectives on the practice of direction. Annie G. Levy's chapter about director training in Canada was a useful resource in that it breaks down how Canadian director training currently differs from European and Asian models. In addition to Tsitsias' book, Ric Knowles volume, *The Fundamentals of Direction*, proved to be a helpful resource. Knowles asserts in the book that at the time of writing there were two popular models of professional directing in Canada: the "absolute leader" and the "chairperson" (2). He further states that these two styles are not ideal and posits that a third option that positions the director's vision as an initial instigator and guide but not the sole "source of wisdom and inspiration" is preferable (2). The rest of his book supports this theory outlining how to negotiate a balance in practice and leadership.

Professional governance documents have substantially informed this study. I spent a great deal of time with the 2021 and 2024 Canadian Theatre Agreements (CTA), as well as consulting all CTAs dating back to 2012. I also looked at the Drama, Opera, and Theatre (DOT) policies and the Independent Theatre Agreements (ITA) that fell under the temporal scope of the study. These documents chart how the broader social and professional discourse surrounding colonization, racism, and ableism have shaped the polices that govern the field. Noting the shifts in language as well as the eradication of certain practices provided concrete examples of how professional practice have shifted since 2014. Also, the inclusion of the new field of Intimacy Direction within CAEA marked a substantial understanding between performers and producers

alike that the profession was not only necessary but considered a practice worthy of permeant inclusion among the existing suite of creative positions in professional theatre.

In addition to the governing documents, I also considered other published materials created by CAEA during the scope of the study. *The Not in OUR Space!* literature which was crafted to respond to a public call to address workplace harassment in professional theatres in Canada offered examples of language and practical measures being implemented within the profession. I also consulted the 2015 CAEA Census to situate the research within an understanding of the population demographics of CAEA members. Additionally, I considered how CAEA was reaching out to the director members of the organization. This was done by examining 2024 pamphlet "So You're a Director Who's Been Offered a Contract…" which walks members through questions that could arise as they navigate their first production as a CAEA director. This document was heavily informative in that it expands on the CTA a great deal by exploring and exposing the nuanced negotiations that take place between a producing party and a fledgling freelance director.

Findings from the 1982 Fraticelli report, Rebecca Burton's 2006 report, *Adding It Up: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre A Report on the Phase One Findings of Equity in Canadian Theatre: The Women's Initiative*, and Michelle MacArthur's 2014 report from the *Equity in Theatre* study contributed much needed statistics tracking the population details of professional directors (as well as other theatre professionals) from the year 1982 through to 2014. These reports, all created by Canadian women, illustrate a consistent reality that for the decades leading up to 2014 the directing profession was dominated by white cis men. The work of these three researchers is imperative to understanding how the social changes taking place

within Canada, and the western world, may be informing who is being given opportunities to take on the role of director in professional theatres in Canada.

Framing all these practical resources is the literature crafted by Theatre Studies scholar Christopher B. Balme. His writing charting the history and development of Theatre Studies has hugely informed my research questions. His explanation of Theatre Studies as a field that engages with the "complex cultural phenomenon" that is theatre, which includes the many practical facets of the work, legitimizes this study as a Theatre Studies exercise (11). Additionally, Balme's assertion that Theatre Studies is a field that moves away from prioritizing drama as the primary area of inquiry encourages the notion that research relating to the practical and social elements of theatrical direction not only falls under the umbrella of Theatre Studies it is a part of its very nature.

The Social

Writing relating to social issues has heavily influenced the trajectory of this study. Scholarship documenting decolonization, Indigenization, antiracism, and cultural awareness, whether published in mainstream media or via peer-reviewed process, has created a container to contextualize the noted shift in the practices of professional Canadian directors since 2014. The writing of Franz Fanon and Tuhiwai Smith created a clear guideline for understanding the multilayered reality of colonization as well as introduced me to the broader discourse surrounding the vast and delicate realities of decolonization. I also relied heavily on Shawn Wilson's writing about Indigenizing research methods as a caution as well as guide for writing and researching about decolonization in theatre. Further, Aileen Moreton-Robinson's scholarship

surrounding feminism, decolonization, and intersectional oppression grounded my positionality within this study and presented much needed questions for me to address given my own identity. Sarah MacKenzie's writing also informed my understanding of cultural erasure and Indigenous women's impact on the development of dramatic writing in Canada. Her writing also introduced me to the writing of Helen Hoy and Renata Eigenbrod as examples of engaging in respectful and necessary cross-cultural scholarship.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's book *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* was primary to my learning about biskaabiiyang, which is an Nishinaabeg concept and verb meaning "to look back" (Simpson 49). Simpson's writing on the subject enlightened my understanding of how ways of working and engaging with existing process could be renegotiated to reflect ancient ideologies that support and celebrate an Indigenous world view. Additionally, Bob Joseph's writing about the Indian Act (*21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act*) as well as the literature created by his company, Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., provided much needed definitions for terms and policies that recur in much of the research about decolonization and reconciliation in Canada post 2014. Lynn Gehl's explanation and outline for effective allyship influenced the way that the chapter relating to decolonization was structured as well as helped to provide much needed context for discussion taking place within the profession relating to participation in culturally specific work.

Writing documenting the history of decolonizing and Indigenizing theatre practices in Canada has influenced this study. Floyd Favel, Yvette Nolan, Henning Schäfer, Ric Knowles Monique Mojica, Lindsay Lachance, Selena Couture's scholarship provided a clear and detailed production history as well as charted significant moments in Indigenous theatre history in Canada. These scholars' work was significant in establishing that many of the practices now

being adopted by mainstream practitioners have been implemented by Indigenous artists for many years. Nolan's book *Medicine Shows* was a significant resource in providing context for understanding how the Indigenous Theatre at the NAC came to fruition as well as highlighting several specific productions that have shaped the cannon of Indigenous Theatre on Turtle Island.

Theatre scholarship highlighting the importance of Canadian theatre artists understanding the colonial history of our country as part of their artistic and cultural responsibility has greatly informed the context of this study. Jill Carter addresses Canadian theatre directors in "Retreating to/Retreating from 'Irreconcilable Space': Canadian Theatre Workers and the Project of Conciliation" stating that if they "have not been made aware of this history, have not been educated as 'treaty people,' how can you re-story the badly damaged relationships that exist between Indigenous people and settler-Canadians? How will you be able to curate those spaces in which the work of conciliation might be activated?" (192). Carter asserts that for directors to have impact on decolonization they must first educate themselves in the history and that it is only then that they can begin to work to create spaces where reconciliation and change can occur.

Land acknowledgements are one change in professional practice that has become popular since 2018. The writing surrounding this topic demonstrates a split in opinion on the validity of the practice. Janice C. Hill and Selena Couture's scholarship points to the positive impacts of the practice towards reconciliation, if done with care and precision, whereas Garnet Ruffo and Cliff Cardinal problematize the practice for its potential performative nature. This study engages with all aspects of the arguments presented by these scholars and artists and benefits from the nuanced perspectives of their writing.

A great deal of scholarship relating to practical aspects of decolonizing and Indigenizing the art of creating theatre was generated by artists themselves. Carol Greyeyes mapped out

several colonial modes of instruction and creation that Indigenous theatre educators have moved away from which helped to provide context both for how theatre has been consistently taught in Canada as well as how Indigenous theatre educators are creating new pathways. Also, the writing of Johanna Berti and Bruce Naokwegijig outlining the theatre making methods of Debajehmugig Theatre Group offered clear examples of how Indigenous concepts and world view shape their creative process and outputs. Floyd Favel's writing about "artificial trees" (qtd in Mojica 130) as well as his joint writing with Sabina Sweta-Sen Podstawska provided clear examples of land-based theatrical creation as well as offered a way to consider links between western Eurocentric ways of working and elements of Indigenous traditions (Favel 118-119).

Theory relating to power and fluidity in practice has informed this study's understanding of how Indigenous dramaturgy shapes creative processes. Scholar and dramaturg Lindsay Lachance's writing about land-based, embodied, and culturally specific dramaturgy is groundbreaking and enriches this study with clear and tangible methodologies that shift the way theatre is written about, created, and consumed. Lachance's 2024 article "LL's Paddle Down a River: Some Questions to Ask an Indigenous Play" offered the metaphor of a river to demonstrate to the reader that plays can be thought of as perpetually in motion as opposed to stagnant entities that do not shift (3). Liza-Mare Syron's writing relating to identifying "Indigenous plays" informed how I considered authorship in theatre (21). She presents that for a play to be representative of an Indigenous perspective the Indigenous artists involved must have freedom to frame the story and agency over its outcome, regardless of who may be in the director's chair (21).

Artists Muriel Miguel, Yolanda Bonnell, and Carmen Alvis all share how their work links back to their ancestry. Miguel's writing highlighted how her method of "storyweaving" creates

meaning by layering multiple elements of her cultural practices with varying artistic mediums (131). Bonnell relayed how her writing process welcomes in her ancestors and honours their contributions. She also writes about how her cultural beliefs inform her acts of care for the audience. Further, Bonnell's work with artistic collaborator Alvis, via their company manidoons, demonstrated a considered and action-based outline for caring for their collaborators and artistic community when crafting a new piece of theatre.

Writing related to antiracist practices and theory has helped to shape my understanding of the work being done by artists and scholars dismantling racist policies and behaviours within the field of theatre direction. Ibrahim X Kendi's definition of antiracist policy (18) as well as his assertion that "antiracist" is not a permanent label that one can adapt but rather a state one must be constantly striving for through action has instructed this study's perspective of how to understand changes in the field related to racism (23). Examples of active antiracist commitments are noted in Mumbi Tindyewba Otu's writing about *21 Black Futures* and Obsidian theatre's website. Further, other theatre companies writing about their visions, values, and mandates such as b current, Teesri Duniya, Cahoots, and The Firehall Arts Centre provided worthwhile examples of antiracist theatre agendas that have been actively pursued in Canada for decades. Why Not Theatre's many initiatives created to provide more opportunities to BIPOC artists, as outlined on their website, exemplify a pragmatic implementation of antiracist initiatives in theatre.

Theatre historians Robin Breon, Maureen Anne Moynagh, Nina Lee Aquino, and Ric Knowles offered detailed accounts of the development of Black, Asian, and antiracist theatre in Canada. There work is significant as it provides much needed context for identifying how particular practices, individual artists, and artistic communities developed creating a strong

history of antiracist theatre in Canada. This information is of great importance because it frames some of the changes that have occurred in mainstream theatre in Canada since 2014 as part of a long history and not as something that has recently been developed.

The documentation of antiracist shifts in policies and practices within mainstream theatre has been noted by popular media contributors as well as practitioners. Micha Frazer-Carrol's article relating to colour conscious casting, which heavily cites Diep Tran, illuminates the importance of being aware of race in casting and how it impacts story and meaning. Karen Fricker's documentation of #inthedressingroom and its resulting impact on removing "as cast" from the CTA notes a substantial shift in both governance and attitude within the profession. Narda E. Alcorn and Lisa Porter's guidelines for antiracist stage management techniques are an excellent source for documenting practical shifts taking place in rehearsal halls across North America.

Community agreements and artist check-in's have become common practice in rehearsal halls across Canada since around 2020. Peggy Chinn's well-established community process, outlined in *Peace and Power*, provided a contextual framework from which to understand the history and development community agreements which are currently being adapted by theatre professionals. Theatre artist Joseph Recinos' writing about the importance of check-ins within rehearsal process as an aid for crafting antiracist theatre spaces provided a first-hand account of the impact of these practices and the significance of their implementation.

Scholarship relating to defining culture and cultural appropriation has shaped this study's analysis of questions surrounding cross-cultural theatre. Sally Engle Merry's layered definition of culture enriched my understanding of the multiple ways that culture can be determined in various social spheres. Erich Hatala Matthes and the writing of C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew

Strohl opened my mind to debates surrounding how cultural appropriation causes harm and the nature of how harm is enacted. Theatre scholars Ric Knowles and Rustom Bharucha provided historical context relating to issues surrounding cultural appropriation in western theatre. Their criticism of Peter Brook's production of *The Mahabharata* provided ample examples of how the choices and identity of a director can impact the cultural integrity of a theatrical piece, regardless of popular reception. Similarly, Philip S. S. Howard's scholarship critiquing Robert Lepage's 2019 production of SLĀV was profoundly influential as it offered robust historical and social research positioning Lepage's production within a lineage of historical cultural and human rights related harms in Quebec.

Writing by artists themselves about cross-cultural theatrical engagement and the joys and dangers of the enterprise offered unique insight into the intricacy of artistic collaboration. Maria Campbell and Linda Griffiths' offering, *The Book of Jessica*, is a resource unlike any other within the Canadian theatrical cannon. The candour with which both artists relay their struggles, miscommunications, pain, and frustrations while collaborating on a piece of theatre is a gift for researchers and artists alike who seek to understand the nuances of power, identity, and colonial impacts on cultural output (both conscious and subconscious). Additionally, artist and scholar Yvette Nolan's writing about *Jessica* within the broader canon of Indigenous theatre was wonderfully helpful in contextualizing its historical significance as well as the cultural ripples that have occurred since it was produced.

Popular writing about moments in Canadian theatre that grapple with the concept of cultural appropriation have made a remarkable contribution to this study. The arts and news media coverage of how Carmen Aguirre's play *Refugee Hotel* was cancelled due to the producing body and the director Ken Gass' inability to recognize the impacts of casting predominantly

white actors for a culturally specific show portraying the Chilean Canadian refugee experience, presented an example of how casting can have a large impact on whether a story is represented with cultural integrity or not. Similarly, the Québecois news coverage of Lepage's SLĀV offered primary accounts from Lepage, his collaborator Betty Bonifassi, cultural consultant Aly Ndiaye, and reviewers of the premiere which framed the arguments surrounding the production from all perspectives, thus highlighting how identity and perspective play a large role in cultural reception.

Cultural competency is a theoretical thread that is woven throughout this document. This research focus was heavily informed by We See You White American Theatre and in particular the document *BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre*. It provided clear and specific examples of how professional theatres in United States could make changes to policies and practices that were either consciously or unconsciously promoting racism and white supremacy (weseeyouwat.com). Additionally, Sadie Berlin's definition of cultural dramaturgy presented in the 2023 Canadian Theatre Review establishes the practice and position of cultural dramaturg and offers a framework for understanding how cultural dramaturgy can shift the content and presentation of a play as well as the director's authority within the process.

The study considers scholarship from both theatre studies and peace and conflict studies to support an understanding of the shift in the professional practice of Canadian theatre directors since 2014. The research cited above is the container within which my analysis has been processed and presented. The categories of the body, the profession, and the social not only help to contextualize my findings they also function as perspectives through which to understand the layered reality of the work of professional directors whose role negotiates a liminal space between artist, leader, and, at times, employer.

Chapter 3: The Director

In the 2019 book *The Directors Lab*, edited by Evan Tsitsias, there is a section in which participants, predominantly professional theatre directors practicing in Canada, were asked what a director does. The question garnered over thirty-five different responses. This small reference is indicative of the current state of professional directing in Canada and the lack of unified understanding as to what the role and responsibility of the director entails. However, regardless of the lack of clarity as to what the position currently requires, the development of professional Anglophone directors in Canada can be clearly plotted via a colonial lineage. This history is also noted in examining the cultural and social make-up of most artists claiming the title of director in Canada up until 2014. This chapter charts how the role of director was developed (from a predominately western European perspective), engages with a brief history of the profession in Canada, outlines current training practices, examines current industry standards for theatre direction as outlined by the 2024 Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA), and provides a glimpse at the demographic history of the working directors.

The origin of Western theatre has been attributed to evolving from both theatre in Ancient Greece and the religious and royal plays of the Medieval period (Innes and Shevstova 6). Although the title of director did not emerge until much later, the task of being the primary organizer of stage action has been present since the earliest plays greeted Ancient Greek audiences. Innes and Shevstova explain that “the person with the most authority in the actual staging would be the choreographer for the chorus, who might again be the playwright” (8). However, Innes and Shevstova are quick to point out that actors playing the roles held more control over the staging than anyone else (9). Also, the prizes for these works were awarded to the Choragus (the person who sponsored the cost of the chorus) and the poet, placing the importance and prestige on the writer.

More direct lineage to a contemporary understanding of stage direction in Western theatre can be drawn from actor centric performance processes. In classical Roman theatre the control of the storytelling shifted further away from the writer and onto the performer. Innes and Shevtsova relay that "The spectacle of dance and the virtuoso performer was the primary element … the Roman theatre produced 'star' actors" (10). They then draw a direct line from Plautus's texts to those of *commedia dell'arte* that appeared in 16th century Venice. They state that "Improvisation and masking, together with stock routines, are the signs of purely actors' theatre" (11). Innes and Shevstova connect this actor-based theatre to

> plays of seventeenth-century French actor-manager Molière… revered as one of the bases of directorial theatre in the twentieth century, picked up by Meyerhold in his search for a physical and non-individualistic style of acting, by Jacques Copeau in France, and in Italy by Gorgio Strehler at his Piccolo Teatro di Milano and the anarchist playwright Dario Fo. (11)

Innes and Shevtsova tether these roots of practice back to Roman comedy and the power of the actor as a conceiver of stage movement, performance style, and overall aesthetic.

Considering the roots of Medieval theatre, the creation of the role of the director could be derived from the creative practices of liturgical dramas presented outside of the church during the late 1500s. Innes and Shevtsova assert that

> there seems to have been a gradually developing need for an organizing or directorial function focused on theatrical presentation, even if still very much under theological control. … in England the processional staging of Mystery cycles at York or Wakefield certainly needed overall coordination, with their forty-plus playlets covering Creation to

> the Last Judgment on a single day, which toured from ‘station’ to ‘station’ through the town on separate wagons. (11)

Innes and Shevtsova point out that the act of organizing the production differs greatly from contemporary directors, but it does illustrate that the need for a role outside of actor and playwright to facilitate these early theatricals. Further, they explain that “even in the early seventeenth century the director’s function, while controlling the overall shape of the action and instructing the (non-professional) actors, was primarily seen to be repeating and expanding traditions of presentation” (13). The role was a conduit of a larger ideology and not that of an individual artist interpreting narrative from a singular point of view.

There is often a reference to the Elizabethan actor-manager as a precursor to the contemporary director. However, the Masque presenters of the era may be even more aligned with contemporary directors. Shakespeare’s plays provide ample reference to how plays were produced during his lifetime offering up the role of the “actor-manager” portrayed in Hamlet as the “Player King” whose focus is primarily on how the text ought to be delivered, which is congruent with the style of theatre that prioritized the spoken word over visual stimuli (Innes and Shevtsova 14). Conversely, the Masques of the period offered an alternative to the spoken form, centering visual impact and providing ample opportunity for an individual to orchestrate the various elements. Innes and Shevtsova explain that

> the masque required many of the skills and the sort of centralized control of the performance as a whole that we associate with contemporary directors. … for possibly the first time, responsibility for a production, and for coordinating the activities of the other experts, lay with a person whose primary job was neither as playwright nor as actor, but in a separate category: the masque presenter. (18)

The importance of imagery does, however, eventually play a role in the work of later actor-managers. David Garrick, an actor-manager working in the mid-1700's sometimes referred to as the first "Director," and later Henry Irving, the first theatre artist to be knighted, both prioritized spectacle in their productions (Innes and Shevtsova 18-22).

The influence of German theatre artists on the creation of the role of the contemporary director cannot be overstated. The structure of German society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries vastly influenced the type of stories being told and the control over the content being shared. Germany was separated

> into small dukedoms or princely states, which brought the theatres under the control of autocratic rulers. Having been shown the effectiveness of the stage for propaganda by the plays performed to promote the Catholic counter-reformation, these autocratic rulers, feeling the threat of the French Revolution…were as concerned to neutralize the potential radicalism of theatre as to control local newspapers. And the only practical way of ensuring a positive message from the stage (which subsequently led to theatre in Germany being seen as a 'Moral Tribune') was to have the theatre manager as part of their entourage. (Innes and Shevtsova 30)

The theatre manager oversaw the content of each work and the way it was meant to be received by the audience for the propaganda to reach peak effect.

The birth of naturalism and its popularity in Germany, predominately through the works of Ibsen, is also considered an influence on the creation of the role of the theatre director. The popularity of Ibsen's work in Germany has been attributed to the Intendant system. Innes and Shevtsova explain that the Intendants were "superintendants, public bureaucrats appointed in practically all German court theatres after 1815" (30). In 1866, one such intendant was

appointed; Duke Georg inherited Saxe-Meiningen, a small state, and "set out to emulate the meticulous research and detailed accuracy that the famous English actor-manager Charles Kean (1811-68) had brought to his staging of historical drama" (36). In his position, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen's abundant resources and artistic freedom are credited with influencing Adolphe Appia, Andre Antoine, Emile Zola, Gordon Craig, and Konstantin Stanislavsky. These figures were all near contemporaries and were "first to qualify as modern directors," creating and representing "the major lines of stylistic development at the beginning of the twentieth century" (36). The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen' s influence has greatly informed the ways in which contemporary directors in North America have worked for decades.[9]

Extended rehearsal strategies and practices, which had not been the practice in European theatre of the era, have been attributed to development by the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. His ample financial resources "made it possible to develop individual characterization for each of the figures in a crowd, while rehearsals—all conducted in full costume and with complete sets—enabled performers to become so accustomed to the dramatic environment that they could 'live' it" (37). Other major elements of Meiningen staging technique are outlined by Innes and Shevstova as:

- Historically researched settings and costumes for each play (in contrast to the stock scenes and costumes still common at the time).
- Unified harmony in settings, costumes and acting. All aspects of a production should have the same tonal quality.
- The human figure in movement as the primary visual unit in any scene. (38)

[9] Innes and Shevtsova draw a direct line from the Meiningen Company to influential American directors Augustine Daly, Steele Mackay, and David Belasco, marking a development in the role of commercial manager described as being a combination of "producer and impresario" (29).

These concepts and practices are visible in the output of twenty-first century directors working in realism. Innes and Shevtsova explain that naturalistic stage craft would not exist if it were not for Saxe-Meiningen, citing the difference in rehearsal schedules between the opening of *A Doll's House* at the Royal Theatre in Stockholm, which had ten rehearsals (only two of which were blocking) and one dress rehearsal, and *The Enemy of the People* which was produced four years later and received thirty-two rehearsals with a substantial portion of them dedicated to the large crowd scene (39). Meiningen's position allowed for ample resources, financial and otherwise, that made his vision for rehearsal and production possible. Meiningen's aristocratic view of the world, along with his power over his players, supported a hierarchy amongst the artists that placed his vision and methodology as paramount. This structure created a model that was then emulated by adoring European and Western directors, thus defining a form of artistic leadership that understood the role of director as a proxy for aristocratic power.

Another major influence on the field of directing in North America and Europe is Konstantin Stanislavski. Stanislavski's journey from a director, heavily influenced by Saxe Meiningen, who viewed his position as the primary and solitary creator of the imaginary world of the play to a more collaborative and inclusive director is heavily documented. Stanislavski famously began his time directing *The Seagull* for the Moscow Art Theatre (MAT) by retreating

> to the countryside to work in seclusion on what he called *The Seagull*'s 'score' (partiture) … On separate pages adjacent to the those of Chekhov's text, each page corresponding exactly, were his interpretive commentaries on Chekhov's dialogue, imaginary settings for his stage directions, note on how the actors might react, or what they could do, and pauses carefully timed and marked for actors to adhere to. (Shevtsova 186)

As noted by Maria Shevtsova, this early time in his directing practice with the MAT demonstrated a process that was highly insular and prioritized the singular view of the director as the road map for a production. It should also be noted that although Stanislavski was writing these directives alone, in the early stages of rehearsal for this production, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko (Stanislavski's collaborator) relayed the directives to the actors until Stanislavski's arrival.

As Stanislavki developed as a director and pedagogue so too would his approach to working with actors. In later stages of his career his opinion that the director should work in collaboration with actors became one of his lasting legacies in the field of direction. Innes and Shevtsova state that his "focus on the specific role of the director, who is not above, but always active in relation to the actor, can be seen in the modern ensemble director of the twentieth century and the twenty-first, …[t]his newly emerging kind of director… was a catalytic and sometimes even a revolutionary force in the very practice of theatre" (64).
Stanislavski's imprint on contemporary direction in North American cannot be overstated. His collaborative approach to working with actors is significant and indicates ensemble style direction has existed within the practice of European theatre for hundreds of years.[10]

While Stanislavski's collaborative approach created a more active environment it doesn't solve the systemic issue of the hierarchic nature of the position of the director. Stanislavski was not working in a vacuum and the external pressures and societal constructs of the time still heavily influenced his status in the theatre. He was a male director creating in a deeply sexist

[10] I have chosen not to dive deep into the practices Konstantin Stanislavski developed as doing so would garner a large and important study of its own. Seeing as the scope of this study is to examine changes within the role of the Canadian theatre director since 2014, the research did not point to an in-depth examination as to how Stanislavski's terms, preparation techniques, and rehearsal methodologies may or may not be directly affected by the new modalities and positions explored in the research.

society. His gender status alone offers a positionality that garnered more respect in the room than his female collaborators. He also held title, hiring, and curatorial power as the artistic head of the company. These facts point to a massive power imbalance between himself and the performing company. Contemporary directors in Canada who trained in the profession prior to 2014 most likely were trained using many of Stansilavski's principles. I was taught to listen deeply to the actors' impulses and to watch their movements very closely to reflect, process, and respond to their choices with a sharply focused outside eye. However, this training in collaboration was not a balme to mend or a tonic to irradicate the structures within which professional directors were creating. The working conditions that directors create within, such as the financial model, the timelines, and the professional agreements makes extensive collaboration difficult. Stanislavski's method presented a challenge to a completely top-down creation process but it by no means addressed the larger systemic conditions that contribute to how power is divided within and without professional rehearsal halls.

A more succinct summarizing of the emergence of the theatre director as an artist is Ric Knowles' outline of the Western history of the profession. In *The Fundamentals of Directing*, like Innes and Shevtsova, Knowles links to the playwright in Greek theatre and the pageant master in medieval theatre as well as the actor-manager in "early modern through nineteenth-century European and North American theatre" (1). However, he mostly credits the emergence of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the concept created by Richard Wagner and translated to mean "a total work of art," as the genesis for the contemporary director. According to Knowles, Gemsamtkunstwerk, which is "a synthesis of the poetic, visual, musical, and dramatic arts as espoused through a series of essays between 1849 and 1852," came fully into practice with the emergence of the Saxe-Meiningen players. Knowles explains that the theory grew in popularity "through the

influence of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, whose company toured Europe in 1874 winning admiration for its unity of vision, for the careful coaching of everyone involved, and for its focus on ensemble" (1). Ultimately, Knowles relays that the creation of the role of director as a "creative artist" occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as Modernism was birthed in Europe (2). He is careful to point out that along with this theory of the complete work of art and the notion of "genius" came troubling ideological ideals. He states that "unity, generic purity, and individual vision have often been associated with a prescriptive, sometimes even a fascist politics" (2). The two models presented by Innes, Shevtsova, and Knowles point to an understanding of the ideal director as not only a creator with a genius for unifying vision but also someone who embodies, or at least performs, a leadership style in line with aristocratic ideals and hierarchy.

The Emergence of the Professional Canadian Director

Indigenous peoples have been engaged in the performing arts well before contact with European settlers on the lands now called Canada (Favel, Schäfer). However, as Henning Schäfer points out, these practices may not be considered performances by some since they are sacred ceremonies. Floyd Favel further points to the fact that Indigenous performers were not allowed to openly practice some of these ceremonies due to government policy attempting to eradicate Indigenous culture and independence (116). This colonization of performance practices is thus heavily reflected in the literature archiving early theatre making in Canada. Further, as mentioned in the Introduction, Filewod posits that the terms "Canada" and "theatre" unsettle each other and references Lescarbot's production as the birth of this crisis. From this perspective Lescarbot is positioned as Canada's first theatre director (in the Western sense), illustrating the

fraught relationship between theatrical leadership in Canada and that of the politically dominant colonial narrative.

Directors working in a colonial and hierarchical model have been making theatre in Canada for decades. European style performances took place in Canada via "garrison theatre" during the mid-eighteenth century and later touring companies from the United States of America began to offer performances (McNicoll). Very few places in Canada had theatres but most towns had stages that could be used by the mid-nineteenth century (McNicoll). Susan McNicoll explains that by

> the beginning of the twentieth century, resident and travelling companies from Britain, the United States and France were providing most of the professional theatre in Canada. … One successful homegrown enterprise during this period was headed by Nova Scotia-born Harold Nelson Shaw. Shaw's self-proclaimed 'all Canadian' company toured extensively, and successfully throughout Western Canada from 1902 to 1910. (McNicoll)

McNicoll highlights the unusual make-up of Shaw's all Canadian troupe; however, there is no mention of how the company worked together and documentation of the director's role is lacking.

The dearth of information surrounding the development of theatre directors prior to the creation of the Stratford festival in 1952 leaves a gap in deciphering how the role of director in Canadian theatre was developed. McNicoll notes that the "the period of 1898 to 1914 is often described as the 'golden age' of Anglophone theatre in Montreal[11]. Not only was there a growing amateur movement, but there were also numerous professional theatres, and companies … the boom ended with the First World War" (McNicoll). McNicoll relays that theatre in Canada

[11] This study is solely focused on Anglophone theatre in Canada, as an investigation into the culture and history of Quebecois theatre would offer a robust and fruitful study all its own.

during the Great Depression was significantly depleted and cites only one professional Canadian theatre company producing performances during that time. The company, Good Companions, was led by a man named John Holden, who subsequently left to serve in 1941 and disbanded the company.

Herbert Whittaker is one theatre critic and director who has been documented as working during this period. In the foreword to Whittaker's 1999 book, *Setting the stage: Montreal theatre, 1920-1949*, Christopher Plummer describes Whittaker as a "straddler" who "boldly climbed over the footlights, and before you could say 'George Spelvin' had established himself as a first-class director and one of the best set designers in the country" (ix). Whittaker describes learning the art of theatre making first as an audience member as a child, and then as a set designer for Charles Rittenhouse beginning in 1934 (Whittaker 27). Rittenhouse is credited with directing twenty-five productions between 1933 and 1953. It is unclear as to how Rittenhouse was initially trained in theatre. However, he performed at the University of Manitoba while a student there from 1925-1930 and then later pursued graduate studies in theatre at Yale Drama School from 1937-1939 where he performed in seven plays as a well as worked backstage (Neilson). Rittenhouse's directing style was one of the first seen by Whittaker.

Although it is unknown exactly how Rittenhouse ran his rehearsals, Whittaker can provide insight into elements of Rittenhouse's style of direction. Upon watching Rittenhouse direct *The Taming of the Shrew* he states that "Charles excelled himself as a director. The introduction of comic business was his delight and, by retaining Christopher Sly as part of the continuing action, he was at his most inventive. Charles saw Sly as a comical/pathetical Everyman" (29). Whittaker also relays their time together working on a play called *Judge Lynch* that was entered into the Dominion Drama Festival, just three years after the festival's inception.

Whittaker describes the impact of the festival on his own development as an artist, "the sense of wonderment and delight we all felt as part of a great national movement. Even in its earlier primitive days the festival offered the joyous challenge" (31). The Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) was the training ground for many later successful actors[12] and directors and provided learning opportunities that then birthed the first generation of theatre professionals in Canada. ("Dominion Drama Festival").

The Dominion Drama Festival

The Dominion Drama Festival, founded in 1932 at the invitation of Lord Bessborough, proved to be an outlet for emerging and amateur Canadian directors to hone their craft (Filewod, *Performing Canada* 44). Vincent Massey has been cited as one of "a small group of enthusiasts" selected to create the festival whose decisions greatly shaped the culture within which these new directors would develop. Filewod states that Massey

> was the architect of the DDF's structure, and, through the Massey Foundation, its chief benefactor. He had been its first chairman and had presided over its first annual festivals. The ornate pomposity of the DDF's structure, with its annual "General Court" and its long list of Patrons, Honorary Directors, Honorary President, and Vice-President—even its choice to call its directors 'governors'—resonates with Massey's fetish for royal ceremony. (*Performing* 44)

Filewod calls attention to the Masseys's heavy involvement in the creation and structure of the festival both financially and ideologically and points to a culture surrounding the festival that

[12] The festival was founded in 1932 and was created to promote the production of Canadian amateur theatre. The festival maintained a bilingual mandate and "played a role in the construction of a national identity…it fostered a conservative approach to theatre and discouraged the participation of politically or socially disruptive plays. It also favoured productions of foreign plays" ("Dominion Drama Festival").

echoes that of a colonial and aristocratic hierarchy, thus imbuing the emerging Canadian theatre scene with these same principles.

The festival brought together the vast amount of amateur theatre that had been taking place across Canada for decades, actively attempting to create a unified understanding of a national theatrical aesthetic. Martha Mann and Rex Southgate explain that "the story of amateur theatre between 1914 and 1970s is one of vigorous activity and considerable accomplishment" (260). Mann and Southgate present a robust picture of the vastness of Canadian amateur theatre across the country which ultimately populated the festival with theatre enthusiasts. They reference the little theatre movement as an early influence and feeder for the DDF explaining that calling "your theatre group a little theatre was to be vaguely high-minded, to assure yourself that you were interested in the literature of theatre and aware of currents other than the commercial trends…" (265). The movement arose from the American Drama League, which was an organization of little theatres started in 1909 (Mann and Southgate 265) and was an international response to "the mass-produced, coarse, professional theatre presented to the public around the turn of the century." Reaching its height in popularity during the Great Depression, the movement provided theatre that was specifically created within, and for, specific communities (McNicoll).

Directors learned their craft via their work in the little theatres. Mann and Southgate cite Hart House theatre as a prime model of a Canadian little theatre. Founded in 1919, it was located at the University of Toronto in a building that was benefacted by the Massey family (266). Alice Massey, Vincent Massey's wife, is reported to have discovered the potential of the site and the pair played a large role in the furnishing and transformation of the space (265). Max and Southgate explain that although the theatre was located at the University, "membership in the

Players' Club was conferred on those actors invited by a succession of directors to perform on stage. The actors were from the community and not strictly the university. In this sense, not only the physical theatre but its operation was a model for others to follow" (267). Many of the players and directors went on to professional careers in theatre and radio and were also participants in the DDF.

The festival presented awards for the amateur theatre makers. Among awards for best performance of a full-length play (in English and French), best actor and best actress, and best visual presentation, was also the award for best director (Lee 259). Betty Lee recounts in *Love and Whisky* that "everyone connected with the DDF endlessly agreed that the most exciting moments of the Festival were when the winners were announced… As time went by the executive committee also discovered that awards themselves could be used to perpetuate the names of DDF notables and other important theatrical personages" (258). Successful amateur directors were noted and the award attached to the practice demonstrated that the DDF valued the role as a significant part of the theatrical creation process.

The understanding of the role of the director in Canadian theatre was cultivated by Hart House (and other little theatres) as well as the DDF, institutions which were heavily influenced by Vincent Massey. They were the testing ground for his theories about Canadian culture. Filewod argues that the DDF was the foundation on which Massey would eventually plead his case for a national theatre, paving the way for an effective Massey Commission in relation to theatre. Filewod explains that

> The conditions of a federalist theatrical profession had been articulated and demonstrated, but the logic of the pyramid was missing one crucial element: the emergent theatrical company that would earn the honorific "National Theatre". … Massey's argument for

> thirty years was that the mature nation would be known by its artistic achievement, and the Massey Commission had demonstrated to the nation that the conditions of maturity were upon us. (*Performing* 48)

The DDF acted as a catalyst for professional theatre in Canada in that it provided a training ground for artists while simultaneously acting as an exemplary structure for an imagined National theatre. Filewod relays that the DDF brief, a document presented to the Massey Commission in August 1949, "functioned as a dress rehearsal for the commission's final recommendations," and although the meeting about the brief was under ninety minutes, its influence was substantial (*Performing* 47).

Directors in Canada were simultaneously receiving on-the-job training via the newly established Canadian Radio Broadcast Commission (now the CBC) which emerged at the same time as the DDF (Scott 14). Robert B. Scott explains that

> British 'presence', which might be seen as a further act of colonialism, nevertheless contributed immeasurably to English Canadians' quest for a theatre of their own. … the DDF, together with the newly formed Dominion-wide public radio service, constituted the basis of the first truly national theatre, the former producing actors, directors, and other stage artists, the latter offering through radio drama an outlet for their talents on a scale hitherto undreamed. (14)

Scott points out that the development of the national radio coincided with the birth of the DDF and that directors who were trained through the festival then had the potential to work directing radio drama (14). Scott asserts that the radio dramas that were presented during the Second

World War kept theatre artists employed as well as functioning as the training ground for what would become the professional Canadian theatre in the 1950's[13] (14).

Massey, Guthrie and The Birth of the Stratford Festival

The casting of the ideal professional theatre director in Canada and the creation of the ideal model for the role coincides with the birth of the Stratford Festival. Massey and his perspective of what Canadian theatre should be ushered the festival into fruition. Filewod points out that

> It was not a simple coincidence of timing that Massey was the vice-regent at the time his long-held vision of theatrical nationhood came into being. Massey had already, in his Royal Commission and before that in his years of advocacy of a particular idea of Canadian theatre at Hart House and in the Dominion Drama Festival, established the pre-conditions that made the Stratford Festival possible. (*Performing* 50)

Filewod describes Massey as a "dramaturg" organizing the elements of the text so that the drama of what was the emergence of Stratford Festival could become a reality.

Massey's financial and cultural influence was not merely theoretical. His "anonymous" donation saved the festival by paying for the performance tent that was being held in Chicago due to lack of funds, and he held a great deal of influence over the selection of the first artistic director, Tyrone Guthrie (Filewod, *Performing* 52). Filewod explains that Massey's close ally and contributor to the DDF brief, Robertson Davies, may have had Guthrie in mind as a model of

[13] It should be noted that between the years of 1944 and 1954 the national supervisor of drama production in the CBC's drama department in Toronto, Andrew Allen, brought together and trained many talented Canadian radio actors and became an early model for directors in Canada. Scott states that "During the heyday of radio drama, actors and writers from the CBC were integrally involved in nearly every development in Toronto's theatre community, from establishing companies to directing and writing original works for them" (65). It should also be noted that Allen worked as a theatre director as well and went on to run the Shaw Festival in 1963 (Stuart 248).

an exemplary leader of a National Canadian theatre (*Performing* 54). Massey had asked Davies to write a special study on theatre for Royal Commission which was submitted a year prior to Tom Patterson beginning his work on creating the Stratford Festival. In the study, Davies describes the ideal leadership role model for a theatre. Filewod asserts:

> It is not a stretch to suggest that Davies had Guthrie in mind, not as a likely candidate for this hypothetical job, but as a model. Guthrie and Massey had in their own ways served as mentors to Davies, and all three were "Oxford men." They had in common an allegiance to an elite humanist culture organized around the principle of leadership—a principle that subordinates creativity to a clear hierarchy of genius and that replicates the imperial logic of canonicity (which enshrines Shakespeare as the literary summit) in the productive structure of the theatre. (*Performing* 55)

A British understanding of hierarchy that reigned over the creative pursuit of theatrical process was then solidified in the birth of the role of the first professional artistic director in Canadian theatre and embodied in Tyrone Guthrie.

On July 13, 1953, Guthrie directed *Richard III*, the first production at the Stratford Festival, further tethering the British influence, and all the ideological and methodological practices that go along with it, to the emerging "Canadian" concept of professional theatre directing. According to the Stratford Festival website it was "the unlikeliest idea" to create a theatre festival in a small town in Ontario ("Our Timeline"). However, Tom Patterson, a journalist and businessman from Stratford, concluded that Canada was well positioned for a Shakespearian theatre festival. In the book *Romancing the Bard: Stratford at Fifty*, Martin Hunter describes the post WWII culture:

> Five years of singing "There'll always be an England" must have reinforced the notion of British cultural dominance. After all, English Canada began as a reaction to the United States when it declared its independence. Despite the staggering depletion of her political influence, Britain's culture bloomed as soon as the hostilities ended in 1945. (Hunter 17)

The interest in all things British was ripe in Canada at the end of WWII and the emergence of a festival celebrating The Bard appeared to have offered an opportunity for Canadians to revel in one of the UK's most favoured exports[14].

Guthrie brought with him a perspective on leadership and art that was deeply rooted in his British education and upbringing, creating an aura of prestige and artistic genius that garnered support from festival goers. Hunter explains that Guthrie was well positioned to steer a festival in Canada to suit his tastes and ideology. He states that

> Guthrie was looking for new worlds to conquer. … He possessed the instincts of both explorer and general, having been trained at Wellington, an English boarding school that specialized in turning out leaders for the British military establishment. … He brought these attributes to the pursuit of art, specifically the art of the theatre. (Hunter 24)

Guthrie's conquering sensibilities along with his training in British leadership styles paved the road for a successful transition into the position of Artistic Director of Canada's premiere theatrical festival. Hunter further explains how Guthrie's British sensibilities created favour with the Canadian supporters of the festival: "He embodied the idea of an artistic leader as envisioned by the colonial enthusiasts who peopled the emerging arts community in Ontario at the time… He completely fitted people's image of the eccentric aristocratic Englishman…" (Hunter 25).

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[14] Filewod outlines several ways in which Massey aided in this pursuit and further enriches this narrative with details of the government support issued to Patterson as the Festival came into reality (*Performing Canada* 52).

Hunter writes of the perception of Guthrie by the local community and how his Anglo-Saxon appeal[15] contributed to his ability to lead and persuade the Canadian contributors to the festival.

Guthrie's influence on North American theatre has had many ripple effects. As Canada's first publicly acknowledged figure of a director, he embodied all the clichés of artistic leadership in theatre—both good and bad. He functioned as an ideal model for the "genius" brand of director upholding a colonial hierarchy and esthetic. In the book *Reimagining Shakespeare's Playhouse: Early Modern Staging Conventions in the Twentieth Century,* Joe Falocco explains how Guthrie's impact on professional Canadian theatre has been seen critically in Canada. He states that "Guthrie saw himself as an anti-authoritarian rebel breaking down barriers of class and geography" (Falocco 122), but that contemporary scholars, such as Ric Knowles, believed that Stratford used Shakespeare "to serve the interests of cultural colonization by a dominant—and on occasion explicitly capitalist (or anti-communist) elite" (Knowles, "From Nationalist" 26). Further, Falocco asserts that "Instead of enabling Canadian practitioners to find an indigenous means of expression through classical texts, Guthrie's efforts, in this interpretation" prevented Canadian theatre artists "from achieving artistic or political independence" (Falocco 121).

Falocco seems to hold a more centrist view of how Guthrie's influence has informed Canadian theatre history. He states:

> It may be impossible for any representative of a dominant culture to completely rid himself of hegemonic impulses, particularly when dealing with that culture's former colonial subjects … The ideological context of the founding of Stratford Festival, which has long been seen by Knowles and like-minded critics as a prime example of

[15] Although of Scottish descent on his father's side, Guthrie was born in Kent, England ("Sir Tyrone Guthrie").

> Shakespeare's imperialist function, should be similarly re-examined. The positive ideological significance of Guthrie's agenda far outweighs any taint of cultural colonialism that clings to his efforts. (127)

Regardless, of whether Falocco or Knowles are correct, the fact remains that the first artistic director of Canada's longest running theatre festival was a British import who shaped a great deal of Canadian theatre culture[16]. It should also be noted that Stratford Festival was, and still is, a training ground for directors in Canada. With the Langham Director's Workshop, the festival actively engages in training emerging Canadian directors. It is seen as an ideal of training in Canada and those who emerge from the festival go on to teach or direct across the country, marking the festival's influence on leadership style and artistic practice as wholly significant[17].

Paul Thompson and Canadian Documentary Theatre Direction

One example of the Stratford Festival influencing the training and professional trajectory of prominent Canadian theatre directors is the career of Paul Thompson. Although Thompson is predominately known for documentary style theatre making in the 1970's and his leadership of Theatre Passe Muraille, Thompson did receive some of his early professional experiences at the Stratford Festival. Thomspon worked as an unpaid apprentice director to French anti-capitalist director Roger Planchon and this connection aided Thompson in receiving work at the Stratford Festival assisting director Jean Gascon to stage the 1968 production of *Tartuffe* (Nasmith, R et al. 67). Thompson subsequently returned to Stratford for the 1969 season but decided that the

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[16] It should also be noted that, of the eleven past Artistic Directors of the Stratford Festival, five have been of British decent, one from Eastern Europe, four from Canada, and one American. All have been white presenting, and all but one were male. It should also be noted that when there was a women Artistic Director (Marti Maradan) she was only one of three co-artistic directors. The current Artistic Director, Antoni Cimolino is a white-presenting Canadian man. None of the Canadian born artistic directors have hailed from farther west than Ontario or further east than Montreal ("Past Artistic Directors").

[17] An example of the impact of this artistic lineage is that Ric Knowles cites Robin Phillips (former Artistic Director of Stratford Festival 1974-1980) as one of his mentors (Knowles, *Fundamentals* xi)

festival was not indicative of the kind of work he was interested in creating. According to Nasmith et al he was "being prevented from creating theatre about his own and his audience's world (68). This urge led him to experiment with creating documentary collaboratively constructed theatre (Filewod, *Collective* 18).

In *Collective Encounters* Alan Filewod credits Thompson as being one of the "most influential figures in modern Canadian Theatre (Filewod 24). Planchon's theories of populist theatre as well as "the 'jeune théâtré' movement in Quebec" were paramount to the birth of Thompson's aesthetic (Filewod, *Collective* 18). Filewod cites Thompson as being more preoccupied with process than product and highly interested in the magic of actor discovery and it was through these fascinations that a new way of directing blossomed in Canada (Filewod, *Collective* 25). Filewod credits Thompson with "the development of a new acting style" which was "characterized by a combination of dialect realism, improvisation, and presentational storytelling" (24). In this way Thompson is positioned as a counterpoint to Guthrie's top-down hierarchical approach to theatre direction. This is significant as provides one, well documented, example of how professional directors in Canada have always worked in a variety of ways that both support and question a hierarchy within the rehearsal hall. The trajectory of professional Canadian theatre directing prior to 2014 is not being positioned as a binary to the more peaceable and malleable structure proposed in this study. Rather, these historical examples are offered as a framework for understanding the spectrum of practitioners and artists whose work has created the working culture that is now supporting some of the structural changes taking place in the industry.

It is very clear that Thompson and his generation of directors' influence on process and content is substantial in Canadian theatre. However, this "new" way of working does not solve

the problematic power dynamic being addressed in this study. An example of how Thompson's approach neglected to address his own positionality resulting in harm to his collaborators is outlined in Linda Griffith's and Maria Campbell's *The Book of Jessica*. Both Griffiths and Campbell mention instances when Griffith's was improvising for Thompson and Campbell, as means of generating material in rehearsal, where she was encouraged and supported in expressing racist ideas about Indigenous culture as well as relaying dehumanizing language. This practice took place because Thompson's collaborative method encouraged Campbell to share traumatic events from her life with Griffith's who was then tasked with creating scenes from this highly personal experience (30). In the book Maria Campbell tells Griffiths how the creative process, which involved a white women attempting to embody a Métis woman caused harm:

> You were playing back my own self-hatred. I was making a joke about something that really hurt me … And I think about how much I hated myself, and I'd get angry, and then would come the questions, the political analysis: 'how did that happen?' It was those white people that came along and did this to us, made us hate ourselves. Then I'd look up and there you'd be, one of them. (31)

Thompson did not account for the intersectional identities of his collaborators, nor did he create an environment in the rehearsal hall where difficult issues surrounding race, representation, gender, or trauma could be addressed[18]. His positionality and power as a white male director allowed him hierarchical distance and privilege and immunized him from the harm of the creative process from which he benefitted, initiated, and led.

Director Training in Canada

[18] Both Campell and Griffiths relay in *The Book of Jessica* that they never talked about the tension within the hall surrounding race and power in the rehearsal with Thompson (31).

In Canada there is no singular way to go about becoming a professional theatre director. There are undergraduate programs in theatre that offer courses, as well as a handful of MFA programs in Directing, The National Theatre School, apprentice programs at some larger regional theatres and, as mentioned above the Langham Director's Workshop at the Stratford Festival. There is also no definitive pedagogical model. Annie G. Levy explains in the essay "The Pedagogy of Co-Directing: Training the Next Generation of Theatre Directors Using the World Wide Lab (WWL) Model," that in Canada

> there does not exist a single unified technique for training directors. Director training in many German schools is built on a foundation of the theories of Brecht and Reinhardt. In England, directing training often relies on the apprenticeship model. Training in Moscow or St. Petersburg both begin with Stanislavsky but includes his full evolution as a director and pragmatist and places great importance on his proteges and detractors, such as Meyerhold. Many formalized directing training programs in Europe emphasize the director/actor relationship going so far back as to include the actors' training as a tenant of the directors training program. (249)

Levy points out the significant difference in North American training models from their European counter parts. As there is no set ideological or technical pedagogy for artists entering the field there is also no way of fully outlining a standard directorial process in Canadian theatre, amateur or professional.

Ric Knowles observes that there are currently "two dominant approaches to directing in Canada's theatre training" and he perceives both as "problematic" (*Fundamentals* 2). He describes the first approach as "the director as absolute leader, general, visionary, and authority, the sole source of wisdom, creativity, insight, and power" (*Fundamentals* 2). He then describes

the alternative style of director as “the director as chairperson, coordinating a democratic ‘journey of exploration and discovery’” (*Fundamentals* 2). According to Knowles neither are ideal. He offers a third approach to the art of theatre directing and presents it as the optimum. He believes that the director

> is neither absolute leader nor merely chairperson but is responsible for coordinating a process that consists of a series of choices each one of which becomes part of the context within which subsequent choices are made. … The director’s “vision” is what initiates and guides the project, but the director is not the sole source of wisdom and inspiration, which can come from anywhere. (2)

Knowles’s understanding of the director’s role offers up the notion that the director is responsible for the outcome of the work and guiding the artistic process while allowing room for external and internal influences to contribute to the finished performance. Of course, this view is a contemporary understanding of this role in Canadian theatre, which is not at all static or even fully definable. Knowles points to this in the Acknowledgements for his book, *The Fundamentals of Directing*, referencing the handful of professional working directors that consulted on his volume.

The Director’s Lab, first established in the United States in 1995, was founded to create an opportunity for directors to gather, share resources, and learn from one another. Participant in the American Lab and one of the co-founders of the Director’s Lab North (Canada’s equivalent), Evan Tsitsias, described it as directors convening in a

> theatrical crucible to spend three weeks filled with conversation, dialogue, discourse, workshops, master classes, exchanges, technique sharing, frustration, agitation, and passion. They nurture, support, incite, inspire, recalibrate, and renegotiate all they think

> they know about their art and craft, all with one common goal: to explore the art of directing. (3)

The Lab offers directors the time and space to learn from their colleagues and to share practical tips and theoretical knowledge. It also seeks to create a community for individuals who work in a profession that, although somewhat collaborative, is ultimately quite singular in both title and responsibility.

The solitary position of the director often does not allow for the same opportunity as other theatrical professions like actors, who frequently work alongside each other, to be witness to colleagues' techniques and practices. Tsitsias explains the unique challenge posed to directors and how the biproduct of an insular process of theatre making (whether it be positive or negative) leads to a large diversity in styles of creation. He states that

> Directing is a lonely, insular profession. The director's process is even more elusive. Some directors are intensely methodical while others have a completely instinctual and organic way of entering the work. Whatever the approach, each director has their own unique process, utilizing various techniques to achieve their goals. (4)

Although this statement is rather obvious given the culture of director training in Canada and the many ways that artists book work as professional directors, it is important to state that professional directing in Canada is not a homogenous form and attempting to outline a standard process would be an act in futility. However, it should be noted that there are a few Canadian books, including that of Knowles and that of the Director's Lab North's, that breakdown the process into distinctive sections. These "manuals" for training are not at all standard in learning

institutions. It is also important to state that Canadian directing does not exist in a national vacuum and has been influenced by other practices in the Anglosphere.

The Role of the Professional Director (as outlined by Canadian Actor's Equity Association)

Given that this study is focused on the shift in the role of the professional theatre director in Canada since 2014 and that, as established above, there is no set standard for professional practice of theatre directing in Canada, it is important to consider the union standards as a way of establishing what is deemed appropriate in a professional environment. The 2024 CTA agreement defines the role of the director as "an Artist who has been engaged by the Theatre to oversee the mounting of a production (or activity) by unifying the various aspects of the production." (34) The duties of the director are listed as conducting rehearsals and making "themselves available for such meetings and consultations as are required by the Theatre, particularly with designers and the Theatre's production personnel" (168). Other than these two stipulations there is no other information outlined in the duties related to preparation, auditions, or technical rehearsals. The only requirement for a director, according to the CTA is the duty to "unify" the production elements. This is significant as it echoes the Wagnerian ideal of Gesamtkunstwerk and positions its attainment as the primary job of an CAEA director. It should be noted that the CTA does state that rehearsals must be conducted in

> a manner that does not violate any terms of the CTA, and that supports and upholds the Theatre's respectful workplace policy and the Not in OUR Space! Guidelines, abide by particular artistic policies of the specific Theatre to which they are contracted, and generally fulfil the artistic planning and production contributions commonly within the scope of the functions of the Director. (168)

This statement is significant in that it calls attention to the fact that the duties of the director are assumed to be understood as "commonly within the scope of the functions of the Director," which given the fact that there is no national standard for director training leaves a great deal of room for interpretation. It should also be noted that the CTA references their policies that relate to human rights protection, which is a basic requirement for all employment in Canada.

Directors working within the CTA are also not assumed to have complete creative freedom when it comes to their collaborators and technical teams. The CTA states that

> Before agreeing to direct a production, a Director has the right to knowledge of, but not approval of, the following production arrangements: the name of the Stage Manager and plans for crewing of the proposed production; the producing Theatre's arrangements with the author in regard to re-writes and the presence of the author at rehearsals; the proposed production budgetary limitations in some detail, and any change made in these limitations as soon as they are made; planned rehearsal production schedules, and the availability of all Actors to rehearse; the proposed length of the run of the production; any casting, design or production decisions that the Theatre has made regarding the Production, any expectations or policies the Theatre has regarding equity, diversity, inclusivity, accessibility and representation the Director is expected to adhere to in their casting decisions or assembly of their creative team. (168)

Directors are to be privy to these decisions prior to engaging with a contract but do not have overall control. It is commonly thought that theatre directors maintain power over casting and design choices, but as stipulated in the agreement this is not entirely the case. However, it is stated that once a director has been engaged for a particular contract, these decisions must be made in consultation (168). It should be mentioned that Artistic Directors who direct a show

within their own seasons maintain control over these decisions in their role as Artistic Director and as such harbour a great deal more power in the crafting of their creative teams, casting, and technical personnel.

Leadership Stalemate in Canadian Theatre

The nature of directing in Canada prior to 2014 maintained the imprint of the profession's unsavory historical evolution and was ripe for a re-negotiation demanded by developments in the culture around theatre. Although the professional standards and training practices allow for an abundance of variation, the population of artists working within the profession remain remarkably homogenous in both gender and ethnic makeup. An indication of this stagnant reality is the tracking of women's status in artistic leadership roles in theatre. In 1982, the first of three reports about the status of women in Canadian theatre became public. The Fraticelli Report "revealed that women comprised only 10% of the total number of produced playwrights, a mere 13% of the productions' directors, and a paltry 11% of the companies' artistic directors… 'the worst offenders' concerning the employment of women were 'The Group of 18' theatres which received 'the highest level of Canada Council subsidization'" (Burton 2). According to Rebecca Burton, "Fraticelli's report was marginalized, going unpublished… no concrete government assistance or mandated equity resulted …" (2). Burton does offer that the report did galvanize women in theatre to fight for change and "is of crucial importance today, as it provides the one and only national benchmark and point of reference against which to measure subsequent

developments in the status of women in Canadian theatre" (2). The report functioned as an excellent reference point for Burton's own study in 2006[19].

In her 2006 follow-up study the report, *Adding It Up: The Status of Women in Canadian Theatre A Report on the Phase One Findings of Equity in Canadian Theatre: The Women's Initiative*, Burton concluded the following:

- In the Canadian theatre industry key positions of creativity and authority are primarily male dominated. Women currently account for 33% of the artistic directors, 34% of the working directors and 27% of the produced playwrights.
- Men are particularly hired as ADs, directors and playwrights in greater numbers than women at the larger, more established theatres, whereas women are found in greater numbers at smaller companies with modest to mid-size budgets.
- While women constitute one-third of the nation's artistic directors, people of colour comprise only 11% of these positions (6% female and 5% male).
- Women directed 34% of the staged productions overall, men directed the other 66%, and people of colour directed not quite 6% of the plays (less than 3% for each gender). Companies run by men hired female directors 24% of the time, whereas companies run by women hired female directors 55% of the time. (Burton ii)

The 2006 report indicated an increase in representation however it is a far cry from parity.

[19] This study is not addressing gender equity and sexual identity directly because although they are clearly a point of imbalance in the field, within the temporal scope of the study the focus on representation on stage and in the director's chair has been predominately about race and accessibility. This is supported by the changes seen in the governing documents such as the CTA.

The recommendations for the 2006 report consciously echo those of the 1982 report. They are separated into four sections: “Educational and Training Institutions,” “Theatre Companies,” “Arts Councils,” and “The Women’s Initiative” highlighting the multi-pronged avenues for potential change (109). These recommendations are introduced by Burton with the following statement:

> If nothing else, the Initiative hopes that this study will raise awareness about issues as they pertain to women and people of colour in the theatre and arts funding communities (as well as beyond). The intent is to reactivate people’s consciousnesses, to place gender and racialized concerns centre stage, so that entrenched patterns of discrimination can be eliminated once and for all. (Burton 108)

This statement points to an inclination towards equity beyond that of gender and demonstrates an intersectional point of view that is valuable, as the previous study focused solely on gender.

In 2014 another study was conducted in relation to gender equity in theatre. *Equity in Theatre*, “a multi-stakeholder initiative aiming to remedy existing and related inequities in the theatre industry,” was prepared by Dr. Michelle MacArthur examining the 2014/15 theatre season in Canada. In the report MacArthur concludes that during that season Canadian women directors, artistic directors, and playwrights had not surpassed the 35% employment marker noted by Burton in 2006 (MacArthur 6). The study also concluded that there is a “significant need for research” about how artistic leadership roles “break down in terms of other marginalized groups, including people of colour, Aboriginal people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ, who are likely marginalized further…” (“Statistics”). The study also noted that the greatest gender disparity in theatre in Canada was in relation to playwright stating that during the 2013/14 season “63% were written by men, 22% by women, and 15% by mixed

gender partnerships" ("Statistics"). Eight years after Burton's report, the numbers and the calls for increased study into more equitable representation beyond gender in Canadian theatre were echoed indicating that very little systemic change had taken place.

Conclusion

The data from the three reports upholds the reality that directors and artistic directors in professional Canadian theatre were predominately white men for decades upon decades. Tracing the lineage back to Guthrie, and even further to Lescarbot, the image and reality of the theatrical directing profession in Canada is predominantly cis-male and white. The result was a somewhat homogenous work force that reinforced a colonial creative perspective and hierarchy. The history of professional theatre directing in Canada prior to 2014 presents a reality of stasis amongst the make-up of practitioners while training models and definitions outlined in the CTA indicate that the profession has the opportunity for substantial variety and scope in practice. This study posits that the variety in training and the vagueness of the professional governing documents, along with shifting beliefs within the larger culture, created an environment from which the development of new ideologically driven methodologies could emerge, beginning a shift from a hierarchical approach to a more fluid, peaceable structure. One of these methodologies is directing within a decolonial or Indigenous perspective which may shift the power dynamic in the rehearsal space away from a hierarchical model.

Chapter 4: Decolonizing and Indigenization Practices

In the 2024 Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) colonization is only referenced once. It appears under the subheading "Access, Inclusion, and Anti-Oppression" as an acknowledgement on the part of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and Canadian Actors Equity Association stating that "settler artists and institutions have benefitted from colonial structures and systemic racism to the detriment and exclusion of Indigenous artists and art practices" (44). Following this passage there is a section outlining the anti-oppression and inclusion policies. This is significant because although the CTA acknowledges the effects of colonization on professional theatre in Canada it does not offer actions toward decolonizing the practice of making theatre. A growing awareness of the need to decolonize theatrical process has been led by the many innovations of Indigenous theatre artists who are rethinking theatre-based work beyond its Eurocentric, imperialist, and aristocratic origins. This chapter is an exploration of how Indigenous theatre makers whose creative processes include some tasks linked to theatre direction are working in ways that upset, dismantle, or completely avoid a colonial model. It engages with definitions of decolonization, indigenization, and biskaabiiyang, offers an overview of the establishing of Indigenous Theatre at the NAC including a brief history of Indigenous theatre in Canada, and provides many examples of methodologies working outside, or in direct opposition to, colonial models and attitudes that the directorial profession has grown out of.[20] Further, it explores how non-Indigenous artists can participate in decolonization, calls attention to the practice of land acknowledgements which have become commonplace in Canadian theatre, and presents discourse in support and against them.

[20] It should be noted that this study does not mean to suggest that the founding of the Department of Indigenous Theatre at the NAC solves the issue of the national theatre as a colonial institution. The NAC, by its very nature, is still rooted within Canada's colonial history.

What is Decolonization?

Decolonization can be considered a formal act of shifting the instruments of government as well as significantly altering the culture of a society (Tuhiwai Smith 2021; Frantz Fanon 1963; ictinc.ca). In *The Wretched of the Earth* Frantz Fanon explains that "Decolonization never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor…It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity" (2). Fanon's assertion outlines that decolonization is a shift not only in the structure of government but also in the attitudes, outputs, and creations of the people within a community.

Indigenous led organizations working towards decolonization have found language to break down the process into outcomes specific to a contemporary Canadian community. Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., led by Bob Joseph, outlines decolonization three ways, stating that it "restores Indigenous worldview," "restores culture and traditional ways," and "replaces Western interpretations of history with Indigenous perspectives of history" ("A Brief Definition of Decolonization and Indigenization"). Further, they explain that decolonization is a shifting of the way that Indigenous Peoples view themselves as well as how they are viewed by non-Indigenous people.

Decolonization is rooted in the action of individuals and communities and must be recognized in all systems of governance as well as in the aspirations of a society. Sarah Mackenzie explains that

> decolonizing hinges upon not only disciplinary standards but also individual motivation; it is the outmoding and dismantling of colonial hierarchies, the rebalancing of unequal

> power relations between Indigenous Peoples and white settlers and the eventual forging of alternative modes of relations. These new relations must be based upon the acknowledgment of the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples to land and resources. They must be founded upon mutual recognition and the shared desire for formation of a diverse and interconnected society built upon the principle of human equality. (4)

Mackenzie stresses the importance of crafting new modes of communication as well as creating different models of organization that are rooted in communal longing for equitable engagement.

What is Indigenization?

Indigenization differs from decolonization in that it is not only about a dismantling of oppressive systems but also requires the incorporation of Indigenous world view and perspectives (Majumdar et al 3). In "Understanding Indigenous Social Work Education and Practice: Local and Global Debates*",* Majumdar et al explain that

> indigenization discourse came to international attention in the 1970's. It began in Africa before spreading to the other areas of the Global South, while, in North America and Australia, a different discourse was taking place in contexts where Indigenous people constituted minorities and were fighting for self-determination and sovereignty… Starting first as a form of resistance to cultural oppression, it sought radical changes to knowledge development and service delivery responsive to local realities that took account of cosmological beliefs, cultural systems, and traditional wisdom. (3)

The act of indigenizing entails incorporating the expression of indigeneity, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives as well as acknowledging the plurality of Indigenous world views ("A Brief Definition of Decolonization and Indigenization").

Biskaabiiyang

Words and concepts relating to the process of decolonization exist within Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island, outside of a colonial framework. Biskaabiiyang is an Nishinaabeg concept and verb meaning “to look back” (Simpson 49). The Seventh Generation Institute, with the help of Elders, created an Anishinabek process for their Indigenous Thought MA program and engage biskaabiiyang for the first part of this process. In *Dancing On Our Turtle’s Back* Leanne Betasamosake Simpson explains that in the context of the program, Biskaabiiyang

> means “returning to ourselves,” a process by which Anishinabek researchers and scholars can evaluate how they have been impacted by colonialism in all realms of being. Conceptually, they are using Biskaabiiyang in the same way Indigenous scholars have been using the term “decolonizing”—to pick up the things we were forced to leave behind, whether they are songs, dances, values, or philosophies and bring them into existence in the future. (50)

Simpson expresses that Biskaabiiyang is being used in a similar way to decolonization in other academic discourse, however the term/concept also engages with the idea of bringing back practices and artforms from the past to be revisited in the future.

The concept of Biskaabiiyang is presented by Simpson as not only a recalling or harkening of the past but also a way re-engaging with pre-colonial existence to nourish current generations. Simpson elucidates that

> Within Nishnaabeg theoretical foundations, Biskaabiiyang does not literally mean returning to the past, but rather re-creating the cultural and political flourishment of the past to support the well-being of our contemporary citizens. It means reclaiming the

> fluidity around our traditions, not the rigidity of colonialism; it means encouraging the self-determination of individuals within our national and community-based contexts; and it means re-creating an artistic and intellectual renaissance within a larger political and cultural resurgence. (51)

Simpson highlights the nature of Biskaabiiyang as flexible and fluid as a means of supporting shifts within a community or an individual as they create, whether that be artistic, intellectual, or otherwise.

Indigenous Theatre at The National Arts Centre

In March 2016 the National Arts Centre announced the launching of a new Department of Indigenous Theatre and in 2017 Nlaka'pamux theatre maker Kevin Loring took on the position of Artistic Director (The Canadian Press). The theatre is the first National Indigenous theatre department in the world ("How We Got Here"). The National Indigenous theatre stream states that they "aim to foster and preserve Indigenous artistic practices and create a welcoming space of cultural resurgence and inspiration. We humbly and passionately strive to honour the past and present work of indigenous performing artists as we build a future together" (Lachance "How We Got Here"). The establishing of the National Indigenous Theatre marks a substantial shift in the way that Indigenous theatre was being supported and honoured, especially when considering the state of funding, exposure, and producing that was taking place just 10 years earlier.

It is imperative that this study narrate some of the development of Indigenous theatre making on Turtle Island as a way of respectfully bringing forward how practices have evolved and how this substantial shift in the professional Canadian theatre environment came into being. Canadian directors are now attempting to educate themselves in methodologies outside of the

hierarchical and colonial models they are trained in. Educating oneself in the history and evolution of Indigenous theatre in Canada is a necessary lesson in the journey of decolonizing practice. Below is a brief overview of highlights of the history that preceded the founding of the Indigenous Theatre at the NAC.

It should be noted that defining Indigenous theatre is complex. Monique Mojica has commented on the challenges and problems surrounding determining the boundaries of a culturally specific theatre, stating

> We are different and we are profoundly related, from our origin stories and the oral histories of the migration of the people, we are relations. … We are different and we are alike. More different than alike? Or more alike than different? … Are you Indian first or a woman first? What do you do with the non-Native part of your heredity when you identify yourself as a Native person? These questions are an exercise in reducing us to bite-sized pieces that make us more palatable to Western tastes, more acceptable to the foreigner's mindset. (qtd in Mojica and Knowles iv)

Mojica points to the issue of viewing Indigenous theatre in Canada as a monolith as well as clarifies that the notion of defining what theatre or theatre makers belong within the category is in and of itself rooted in a colonized western ideology.

Indigenous performance has been occurring on the lands now called Canada for centuries. In the essay "Waskawewin" Floyd Favel examines how movement from a Cree perspective has informed his body of work as a theatre artist. He provides "cultural and personal background" explaining that the "languages of the Cree, comprised of three main dialects, are of the Algonquin language family" and that "you can hear its beautiful melodic patterns and syntax

in active use in the forests and plains of this land. Within its structure is encoded a way of looking and perceiving the world, a way I feel can be of value to people who are looking at alternative ways of being in the world, in their life, and in their art" (113). Favel clarifies that the culture and language of his community is embedded in his work and life via the movement of the language and the surrounding land. Further his cites the traditional Cree Grass Dance as a form that exemplifies a connection to culture and land while also relaying that he, as a theatre artist is not confined by the form but rather engages with the "technical principles of the form" to create an original piece (114).

Floyd Favel explains that the presentation of Indigenous performance has deep roots in North America. He explains that

> Many of these presentations, primarily traditional song and dance, are the result of the subjugation of the Native peoples by the settler society and these performances remained one of the few places that Native people could openly practice their culture to an appreciative audience…Government policy and intent was for the total assimilation of the Native people into the values of modern society and in order for this to succeed, their culture and independence had to be eradicated. (Favel, Theatre Younger Brother 116)

The genocide of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous culture by the Canadian government forced Indigenous peoples to commodify some of their traditions in Wild West shows to be able to perform them at all (Favel).

The 1970s is when many scholars identify a resurgence of Indigenous performance in Canada. Monique Mojica and Ric Knowles assert that the "first Native theatre companies in what is now North America, the Native American theatre Ensemble and Spiderwoman Theatre,

were formed in 1972 and 1975 respectively (vii). In Canada James H. Buller, a Cree boxer and Opera singer, founded the Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts (ANDPVA) as well as the Native Theatre School (NTS) in 1974 (Schäfer 21). Three years later George Kenny, a Cree poet, collaborated with Dennis Lacroix, a Cree actor, to adapt Kenny's book *Indian's Don't Cry* into a play that was later titled *October Stranger* (1978). Schäfer cites the piece as the first full length play about contemporary Indigenous people by Indigenous people (Schäfer 22). The play premiered in Monaco at a theatre festival representing Canada in 1977 and then was produced in Canada the following year. Both performances were put on by an all-Indigenous theatre company titled Kematewan (Schäfer 22).

The eighties were a great period of growth in Indigenous theatre. In 1980 Buller organized "the first Indigenous People's Theatre Celebration" in Toronto. In 1982 Denis Lacroix and Bunny Sicard decided to develop their theatre company Native Earth Performing Arts (NEPA) into a fully-fledged company (Schäfer 23). Once their first project was completed, *Wey-Can-Nee-Nah or Who Am I*, the company size increased when Murial and Gloria Miguel and Monique Mojica, all members of The Spiderwoman Theatre in New York, joined the company. Mojica then became the Artistic Director in 1983 (Schäfer 23). The following year De-Ba-Jeh-Mu-Jig Theatre Group was founded on Manitoulin Island by Shirly Cheechoo and Blake Debassige (Schäfer 23). Indigenous theatre was also thriving on the west coast with artists Margo Kane, Lynn Phelan, Sadie Worn Staff, and Marie Clements (Schäfer 23).

Monique Mojica and Ric Knowles characterize the emergence of the body of work created by Indigenous artists in Canada as completely unique. They include the traditional forms rooted in Indigenous culture as well as "a long tradition of oration, of pageantry, of auto-performance by figures such as poet Pauline Johnson, of performance in wild west shows,

medicine shows, circuses, and rodeos" (vii). However, they stress that the history is made up of predominantly

> a tradition of contemporary theatrical performance that grew out of the activist Native political, cultural, and spiritual movement of the late 1960's and early 70's, in part a movement of cultural preservation that paradoxically, in the case of theatre, meant creating something that didn't exist before. (vii)

The activism of the first companies such as Northern Delights in Sioux Lookout are presented as heavily influencing a theatre that was entirely new and reflexive of the artists perspectives both personally and culturally (vii).

The late eighties, the nineties, and the aughts brought forward works by Tomson Highway, Drew Hayden Taylor, Yvette Nolan, and many others. Native Earth Performing Arts became an institution and "mainstream" theatres began to produce works by Indigenous artists. However, it should be noted that there was an impairing lack of funding during the 90's for Indigenous theatre. Lachance, Couture, and Schäfer all mention in their writing about this era some of the challenges: the funding did not grow alongside the scene, there was a great deal of pressure on the initial breakthrough artists, the media lost interest, there was less development available for new works, and many promising projects never came to fruition (Schäfer 31; Lachance and Couture 15).

Margo Kane had a profound influence on the development and First Nations performance in Canada beginning in the 1980's and 1990's. A prolific Cree/Saulteaux theatre artist, she "established Full Circle: First Nations Performance (FCFNP), a non-profit society and interdisciplinary performance company" rooted in the territories of the Musqueam, Squamish,

and Tsleil-Waututh Nations in 1992 (Lachance and Couture 11). In 2001 Kane, with Lisa Cooke Ravensbergen, developed a one-night Talking Stick Cabaret. Aiming to "bring disciplines together—poetry, dance, visual arts—all built around a cabaret style with only eight to nine minute performances"(Lachance and Couture 15). The event would later develop into the Talking Stick Festival. Lachance and Couture assert that this festival offers "immense value to the rebuilding of broken kinship networks" through its "love and support for emergent artists as well as staff and volunteers who are mentored in the ever-expanding and continuous building of relations" (10). The festival's impact on theatre in Canada and the promotion and development of Indigenous theatre is substantial.

In 2005 the National Art Centre's newly appointed Artistic Director, Peter Hinton, mandated a shift in programing that ensured that every season would include an Indigenous work. Yvette Nolan asserts that this decision had a large ripple effect. She explains that "Hinton and his team had to be aware of who the Indigenous playwrights and theatre makers were and what work was being developed. … it meant educating the National Arts Centre audience about the seemingly sudden existence of theatrical work by Indigenous artists and inculcating in theatregoers a taste for work that was perhaps alien to their palate" (Nolan 120). This growth in the exposure to Indigenous theatre artists meant an increase in knowledge for the audiences that typically filled the seats at the NAC and forced the programming team to educate themselves about the art that was being made nationally by Indigenous artists.

In 2014 the then Artistic Director of the NAC, Jillian Keiley, undertook in her first two years in the position to organize an initiative called The Summit and The Study. The goal of the exercise was "to both examine the body of work by Indigenous artists and to disseminate the work to the larger Canadian theatregoing and theatre making community" (Nolan 122). The

Summit was held in April 2014 at the Banff Center and was co-created by Yvette Nolan and the then Associate Artistic Director, Sarah Garton Stanley. It included twelve Indigenous arts leaders and eleven non-Indigenous "listeners" (Nolan 122). Nolan explains that over "the course of two and a half days, the leaders spoke about the work, the history of the work, the artists who made the work, and the challenges that had been met over the years. The listeners, people who were used to both power and problem solving, were asked to just listen" (Nolan 122). Nolan points out that this event was a step towards encouraging large, established arts institutions to consider the work of Indigenous artists in their planning and programming.

The Study, which was the second portion of the NAC's initiative, took place from May 5-16, 2015, and was held on Manitoulin Island. The Study was hosted in collaboration with Debajehmujig Storytellers and Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance (IPAA) ("NAC English Theatre/The Cycle/Indigenous Theatre"). Theatre creators, students, and scholars gathered to explore aspects of Indigenous performance. The Study culminated in The Repast which was a two-day conversation and presentation ("NAC English Theatre/The Cycle/Indigenous Theatre"). Sarah Garton Stanley explained that the goal for The Study was "to take inspiration from The Summit conversations… and to steep us in indigenous dramaturgy" (qtd in "NAC English Theatre/The Cycle/Indigenous Theatre"). On the NAC website it states that they believed that the two-day conversation and presentation had the "potential to fundamentally change the face of Canadian theatre" (NAC English Theatre/The Cycle/Indigenous Theatre). It seems that this initiative did in fact have a remarkable impact as less than a year later the NAC would announce the launch of Indigenous Theatre at the National Arts Centre, which brought this separate stream of Indigenous work into the mainstream of Canadian Theatre.

On November 20th, 2024, Indigenous Theatre at the National Arts Centre celebrated five years of storytelling. During those five years numerous plays have been presented employing multiple Indigenous directors as well as other theatre artists. There have also been multiple other projects that promote Indigenous culture. The NAC website states that Indigenous Theatre

> further amplifies Indigenous artistry through integral engagement and educational activities … with community-centered events like beading workshops, powwow life drawing, and the popular Indigenous Women's Art Market leading the way. Online, #ReconcileThis, with support from Meta, invites Indigenous creators to share digital works on social media, sparking meaningful dialogue surrounding reconciliation, and digital projects, like Indigenous Cities and Dancing the Land… (Hobson)

Indigenous Theatre at the NAC is still relatively new but the impact on Canadian directors is significant in that it offers not only opportunities for future productions, but it also has wraparound resources for artists, both theatre and otherwise, to educate themselves in Indigenous cultural practices and timely political conversations. This type of influence has funnelled through in the work being made by directors in Canada and raised public awareness of Indigenous theatre practice and practitioners. It has also promoted the work of Indigenous theatre directors and allowed for several productions that have been created in regional theatres to have second productions at the NAC.

Indigenization, Decolonization, and Biskaabiiyang in Practice

I write these next sections with the intention of holding up each practice as an example of work being done to either dismantle, question, or completely reshape directorial practices that

are rooted in colonial ideologies. I acknowledge that my identity has granted me a great deal of privilege (see positionality statement in Introduction) and it is through this lens that the research is being viewed and processed. In presenting the ideas and practices of Indigenous theatre makers in this chapter I have also purposely included longer quotations instead of paraphrasing the words of the artists and scholars. This is done as an attempt to present their words with as much context as possible. However, as the writer/researcher I do maintain a curatorial perspective that is unavoidable and necessary.

Awareness of the colonial impact on theatre and theatre making has been present among Canadian artists and academics for decades. Artist and educator Carol Greyeyes, a member of Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, explains that

> since the 1960's, in Canada, Indigenous artists and educators, of which I count myself as one, have been creating a new sort of bundle, a conceptual one. We have taken the Eurocentric art form of theatre, and the way it has been taught in mainstream institutions, and made it our own. By borrowing elements and ideas, by collaborating, by adapting various techniques and discarding others, artists and educators have contributed to what we might call an Indigenous Theatre Education Bundle. (51-52)

Greyeyes speaks to the history of Indigenous artists in Canada dismantling colonial theatre making practices and connects this history to theatre educators actively seeking new ways to train emerging artists.

The crafting of a pedagogical bundle through the omission of certain colonial practices while adapting ways of working rooted in Indigenous culture is noticed in the work of the Debahjehmujig Theatre Group. The company is in M'Chigeeng on Manitoulin Island, and their

mandate "is to contribute to the vitalization of culture, language, and heritage of the Anishnabek by creating original work, by and about the Anishnabek, to share with and educate Native and non-Native people" (Berti and Naokwegijig 34). Johanna Berti and Bruce Naokwegijig, both members of the theatre company, relay how at the beginning of creating the group they

> were evolving a culture—and community-based story creation and storytelling process, rooted in the Odawa Foundation Teachings originally mentored by Elder, Knowledge Keeper, and Cultural Educator Eddie King. The Foundation Teachings provide processes for self-care, planning, problem solving, and working together in a way according to the values in the Seven Grandfather Teachings. The Odawa Foundation Teachings trace a pathway between the identity of the individual and their interactions with the world and with everything else that they are connected to. As a theatre company, we were looking for innovative ways to bring Odawa Foundation Teachings and traditional storytelling traditions to the stage. (36)

Debajehmujig Theatre Group sought their artistic roots in the Odawa culture and built their initial artistic practices and processes around these foundational teachings.

Later, they began to explore how Pochinko clown, a form of clowning created by Richard Pochinko derived from European techniques and traditions, could play a role in the development of their plays[21]. Berti and Naokwegijig describe how the clowning technique contributed to the

> the holistic and integrated world-view of the Anishnabe. The Clown through Mask work involves engaging with colour worlds, facing the six directions of one's self by making

[21] It should be noted that scholar Sonia Norris has investigated the roots of Pochinko clown, via interviews with Monique Mojica, Jani Lauzon, Rose Stella, and Gloria Miguel, and discovered false claims that Richard Pochinko learned some of his clowning techniques from an Indigenous man named Jon Smith (Norris).

> six masks with clay, and using the creativity that spans the territories of both the conscious and unconscious mind. … Indigenous spirituality links colours in the natural world with values, thereby creating constant environmental reminders of those values, and encouragement to always interpret the situations we find ourselves in through that lens. (36)

Debajehmujig used the basis of Pochinko clown technique to combine principles and concepts within the Odawa Foundational teachings. In adjusting Pochinko's European techniques they formed their own style and ways of working. Although the group worked collectively and does not specifically name a director in this process, it is important to note the act of watching and reflecting on the work from an external perspective has always fallen under the purview of director (whether specifically named or not).

Both Berti and Naokwegijig also acknowledge the similarities between the Pochinko clowning method and elements of traditional storytelling. They express that

> both highly value and respect the identity of each storyteller/creator. Both acknowledge the 'world within each individual' and how this world interconnects with the other energies in the space. Both believe in the high value and importance of honesty and positive creative subversion as a way of telling the truth to authority in an accessible way. Both highly value the 'conversation with the audience,' the reciprocity and transfer of knowledge and understanding in the process of creation and in performance. Both invite the audience to be affected and in turn to affect the storytellers through their engagement with the story. (36)

In finding the connection between the two art forms, one Indigenous and the other derived from European traditions, the company is merging two practices to create a new way of working that is centred in a contemporary Anishinabek perspective.

Debajehmujig has also created work engaging processes that move beyond clown and Indigenous Storytelling. In the production notes for the play *New World Brave,* they outline the 4D Creation Process. They explain that it

> is a culturally and socially specific process, wholistic in nature; it recognizes the artist as the creation and the performance as the celebration. It recognizes that, as humans, we create with our entire being—our physical, our emotional, our intellectual, and our spiritual selves, and therefore it accepts and specifically supports the artist is all four of these areas. It is adapted to the skills and intuitions of artists who have been strongly influenced by the oral tradition; it is a process that nurtures honesty more than accuracy, and sharing more than starring. It is a process that consciously uses personal resources (physical—like a skill, emotional—a memory, spiritual—an experience, or intellectual—like an object) as key to personal and group creation. The four main components of 4D Creation Process are Clown, Improvisational Theatre, R.S.V.P. Cycle, and Neuro Linguistic Programming. (28)

Here the creators of the work highlight four different contributing influences while also relaying the significance of the individuality of every contributing artist to the project. The 4D Process also focuses on the presentation and creation of the play as a celebration. It is not solely an act of sharing theatre with an audience but rather an activity of rejoicing.

The link between tradition and theatre has been heavily explored in the writings of Floyd Favel, an internationally renowned director, essayist, playwright, and scholar from Poundmaker

Cree Nation. In the essay “Theatre Younger Brother of Tradition” he considers the relationship between western theatre practices and Indigenous traditions from Turtle Island :

> Theatre within the context of aboriginal people simply cannot avoid contact with tradition … Both theatre and tradition inexplicably connect us to our “higher self” in the very moment of action. It is this connection with this “higher self” that makes them brothers. … Generally speaking, theatre has social and cultural functions and it serves the society while tradition is at the service of spirit and spiritual forces. Between these two brothers is a shadow zone where dialogue happens. This is the place where aboriginal people find ourselves when we practice the craft of theatre foreign to us. To successfully navigate this zone, an aboriginal artist needs to have the instincts of a hunter and a stalker to help him/her to successfully navigate the fields of the unknown. (118-119)

Favel points to an in-between place located in the distance between two brothers (theatre and tradition) as the position within which Indigenous theatre artists create.

Another quality of Indigenous performance culture, according to Favel, is the seeking out of rituals and social structures that promote artistic agency. He asserts “that there needs to be a bridge from a ritual and social action to the professional stage. Tradition needs to be filtered and transformed for the objective needs of the theatre. Without this bridge, theatre risks presenting “‘Artificial Trees’ on stage. ‘Artificial Trees’ is the superficial or clichéd presentation of ritual and social structures on the professional stage” (qtd in Mojica 130). Favel connects traditional practices with theatre creation while acknowledging that there must be a link or a transformation for the presentation to resonate as authentic.

In 2018 and 2019 Favel along with Odissi trained dancer, Sabina Sweta Sen-Podstawska, worked together on the Poundmaker Reserve to develop an Indigenous theatre process titled

Native Performance Culture. In 2022, the pair published an article outlining the elements of the form as well as explaining the process. They state that

> the training method which offers a process of healing from the effects of colonisation by a return of wholeness, a reconnection to land, creation of oneself from which the performer has been disassociated. … [and apply] a set of Indigenous performance training modalities based in the community and on/in the land. … with exercises built on Indigenous body culture, ceremonial practices and intellectual spatial structures, such as Winter Counts as a method of body composition and action, pictographs as montage method, Plains Indigenous Sign Language (PISL) as an exploratory tool to impulse, storytelling and its use of gesture and space, Indigenous structures as a use of light, audience placement and sacred or specialised space. Yoga and meditation are an intercultural bridge to translate the Indigenous worldview on body and sacred space and to investigate the internal process. (198)

This intercultural way of working is developed as a healing response to colonization. The creators, Favel and Sen-Podstawska link their work not only to their own cultural realities but also to engaging and reconnecting with the land.

In Canada there are several Indigenous theatre artists working in ways that are land-based, culturally specific, and embodied (Lachance 54). Algonquin Anishinaabe theatre artist and scholar Lindsay Lachance defines land-based dramaturgies "as a theatremaking process whereby individuals or collectives investigate and actually use cultural material, objects, familial teachings, and place as artistic collaborators when creating theatrical works" (Lachance 54). She further defines culturally specific, in this context, as "modes of notation, writing processes, and rehearsal processes that acknowledge the ways in which our bodies, hearts, and spirit(s) interact

with the land, waterways, and skyworld around us" (54). Lachance's definitions point to a creative framework that acknowledges the artists holistically recognizing that the work they create is tethered to their identity, history, and culture, as well as the places they are creating in and about.

Lachance has developed a dramaturgical framework around the practice of birchbark biting. Having learned the techniques from "Algonquin Anishinaabe artist and designer" Mairi Brascoupé, Lachance identified five principles from the practice of birchbark biting that can be used for a dramaturgical model (54). Lachance links these principles to specific moments in the creation process of a new theatrical work:

> *Intention, layering, folding, deep listening, and resurfacing/emergence* act as the composition for script development, actor training, and rehearsal structure. When possible, I invite the collaborators I'm working with to create their own birchbark biting and look to the patterns that emerge to help guide their artistic process throughout the project. … The elements identified are called on throughout the process and negotiated throughout the new play development process. Even if we don't always know what the end result will be, birchbark biting reminds me that we have to let process guide us. (55)

Although dramaturgy is considered a role in and of itself in the field of theatre and performance creation, dramaturgy is often a task that directors take on when working on a new script. These principles, although created from the perspective of a dramaturg, can be applied to a process when a director is functioning as both dramaturg and director (which is often the case when working for small theatres).

Lachance has also written about dramaturgical process that is rooted in Indigenous identity. She describes "Relational Indigenous Dramaturgies" as "self-affirming practices that

encourage us, as Indigenous people, to look to our own laws, practices, governance systems, and world views to create alternative ways to make our art" (11). While developing the play *Kamloopa* with playwright Kim Senklip Harvey at the Banff Centre in 2018 they created a space to welcome other people into the creation. Lachance explains that they

> invited Playwrights Lab participants, Indigenous relations. … to offer a space where we felt safe to be ourselves and to invite others, including our Ancestors, our homelands, and our familial teachings, into the process. One of the guiding principles that supported the creation of *Kamloopa* was navigating how we could bring our whole selves into the process, into the room, while we worked refusing the typical theatre training of "Leave yourself at the door." (vi-vii)

Lachance identifies that importance of allowing collaborating artists to bring their entire identities to the work. As mentioned, there has been a common practice in professional theatre rehearsal halls that has historically demanded that participants sever themselves from their personal realities when entering work. The process that Lachance outlines is the opposite, offering each artist the opportunity to make theatre with their whole being.

Inspired by Elinor Fuchs' 2004 article "EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play," Lachance crafted "LL's Paddle Down a River: Some Questions to Ask an Indigenous Play" (2024). In it she outlines how her work honours the intent of Fuchs's initial essay, which has a large focus on world building, while building on it to include more information "around how to read and understand the cultural offers made in a play and performance texts" (2). Lachance also clarifies that the document is not meant to be strict

> With respect to the diverse cultural backgrounds of Indigenous playwrights and creators, I do not expect, nor wish for these questions to serve as a rigid roadmap to analyze any

> and all Indigenous plays. Instead, I hope it encourages folks to respectfully dive deep into the world of Indigenous plays in ways that best reflects who they are and where they come from. (2)

In acknowledging the plurality of Indigenous cultures, Lachance urges her readers to consider the document as a tool for deeply investigating the work of Indigenous playwrights on an individual basis.

In parallel to Fuchs' metaphor of thinking of the play as a small planet, Lachance offers the image of a river. She explains that she has "come to see that rivers embody flow, textures, and stories. And because of this connection, I try to see the play as a river—as something always in motion, and with many twists and turns" (3). Lachance then guides the reader to consider five categories of questions: space, time, mood, characters, and what changes (2024). In describing each category of questions Lachance engages with the image of the river to carry the reader through the dramaturgical process. Lachance's work is significant for directors or any theatre maker working within or without their culture of origin as it assumes a cultural curiosity and specificity while lifting the reader outside of an assumed homogenous settler North American culture. By acknowledging the significance of the diverse cultures of Indigenous peoples and recognizing that each play is reflexive of some culture, it is made clear that artists engaging with the text must investigate and represent it with care and cultural precision.

Linking to Lachance's dramaturgical questions is Liza-Mare Syron's explanation of what can be considered an "Indigenous play" (21). Syron, an Indigenous scholar and theatre maker with roots from the Biripi clan nations in the "Mid North Coast of NSW from Taree to Barrington Tops," asserts that what qualifies as an Indigenous play is not the style of the piece but rather determined by the amount of agency an individual artist has over the process and

outcome of the work (Syron 21). She explains that "what makes a play Indigenous is where Indigenous theatre makers maintain stewardship of their stories, have a legitimate say in the process of bringing those stories to the stage, and have creative leadership in collaborative developments or presentations" (4). For Syron it is not the theatrical form that the play takes that matters, instead it is how the piece was created and whether the makers of the piece, who are Indigenous, have been influential all throughout the creation and presentation process.

Having agency over a piece of theatre is significant as it can shape the meaning of the performance far beyond the words written on the page. Algonquin theatre artist Yvette Nolan explains how she has incorporated elements of ceremony onto the stage in productions she has directed:

> I think about the small and secret ceremonial bits I have, as a director, inserted into works for the stage. I have frequently included an element of the sun dance, with actors opening their arms and lifting their chests to the sky, as if pierced. In the actual sun dance, the flesh offering is a personal sacrifice, an offering of self for the health of the larger community. Including this highly abstracted movement in the body of a play gives the performers a moment to ground themselves, to remember the reason we do this work, and for whom. I am fairly certain that no audience member has ever actually clocked the movement and thought "Why, that looks like the sun dance!" … It is important to me that the ceremony is left abstracted. The sun dance is sacred, and attempts to show it in popular media have been met with howls of outrage. (60)

Nolan expresses the significance of including elements ceremony even though audiences may not notice the allusion to sacred choreography. This indicates that the inclusion of culture is not specifically significant because of its overt impact on the audience but rather how it impacts the

world of the play for the director and performers in the creation of the work. Nolan also relays that sacredness of the sun dance indicating that the abstraction is necessary to respectfully reference it in a play.

Directors hold a great deal of control over the way that theatre is created, rehearsed, and presented. This is true whether working on new work or established playscripts. Founder of Spiderwoman Theatre, Kuna and Rappahannock theatre artist Murial Miguel, engages with many different forms of art creation to establish her own modes of working. She explains:

> As indigenous people, we see all disciplines as interconnected, with roots in traditional forms of storytelling. As the artistic director of Spiderwoman Theater, I have, over the past 30 years been using a methodology called *storyweaving* to entwine stories and fragments of stories with words, music, song, film, dance and movement, thereby creating a production that is multi-layered and complex; an emotional, cultural and political tapestry" (qtd in Mojica, Chocolate Woman 131)

Miguel's "storyweaving" was crafted from multiple influences with the intention of creating performance pieces that layer meaning through engagement with various artforms and cultures. Through recognizing and engaging with her culture as an Indigenous person her work benefits from a multiplicity of perspectives, thus lifting the performance away from a singular colonial cultural perspective.

Directors craft performances. They create worlds or rivers in which audiences explore narratives, concepts, and imagined realities. This is seen in work done by theatre artists who work across mediums as well. Interdisciplinary artist Kent Monkman actively seeks out ways to free his viewer and himself from colonization. Métis scholar June Scudeler asserts that Kent

Monkman's 2012 performance *Miss Chief: Justice of the Piece* at Washington, DC's National Museum of the American Indian enacts yo-wîcêhtowin. Scudeler describes the Cree concept of miyo-wîcêhtowin as "the principle of getting along with others, good relations, expanding the circle" (Scudeler 198). Scudeler explains that "Monkman clearly wants to share the story of Two-Spirit people with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples… Monkman is helping to bring Two-Spirit people back into the circle" (Scudeler 201). Monkman has expressed that he believes that "to assert our self-determination, to assert our presence in the face of erasure, is to free ourselves from the ghost-making rhetorics of colonization" (qtd in Scudeler 201). This statement demonstrates the necessity to garner freedom in the creation process via modes of creation that ensure the artist's agency and point of view.

Yolanda Bonnell, who identifies as "Bi/Pan/Queer 2 Spirit Ojibwe, South Asian mixed (Scottish & English)" storyteller from Fort William First Nation, engages with her ancestry as part of the play creation process ("About Yolanda Bonnell"). She describes the significance of this practice in her work:

> For me, a big part of it is intentionally inviting the ancestors in. Offering those medicines and space for them to come in and be present. They need to know that they're welcome. … I open myself up, spiritually, and I listen, and then I weave and spin. … threads from my ancestors, threads from my own experiences, and threads from voices who need to be heard. And I think it is important to acknowledge that our ancestors are doing work when we do this, so it's important to let them know that they can go rest, you know? I smudge to let them go. (32)

Bonnell highlights the importance of honoring her ancestors through the creation process and allowing them to create the story with her. Bonnell calls attention to the intensity of the labour of

this process and the rigour of the listening involved. The act of listening and the commitment to taking time for the work to emerge is a significant difference from a play creation process rooted in a capitalist colonial perspective where process is limited due to financial necessity.

The responsibility of creating work that engages with deep ancestral knowledge is apparent in how Bonnell speaks of the audience's relationship to her performances. Bonnell explains that "it means that if I bring this story into a theatre space, I then have the responsibility of protecting it. Ensuring that it's being handled with care. And that when witnesses engage with it, that they understand the space they're entering into and the responsibility we're all sharing to uphold it" (33). Caring for the performance is rooted in tradition and this care is then transferred to the expectations placed upon the audience. The director's role has historically been connected to viewing the work from the audience perspective. Here, Bonnell is relaying that the task of caring for the performance space is shared between both the creators of the work and the audience themselves, thus, expanding the agency of the audience and re-positioning the singularity of the director's power.

Through their work with manidoons collective, Bonnell, along with co-artistic leader Carmen Alvis (Turtle Mountain Métis), has identified thirteen Indigenizing Practices for their creative processes (Alvis and Bonnell 2). Alvis and Bonnell explain some of the background for creating these practices in the article "Practices of Care in Storytelling". They write:
"so many of us, every time we enter a performance space or agreement, have the responsibility to advocate for ourselves in order to have our sovereignty respected by colonial institutions. …The hope is that one day, none of us will have to push back on the structures just to engage in our art. That we will be able to exist with joy and tell stories safely" (4). Alvis and Bonnell acknowledge the labour behind the necessary advocacy that many "Indigenous community members. … 2-

Spirit, Indigiqueer, trans and non-binary artists continue to do in this field" as the foundation for their work in outlining their commitments (4). They have created a list of actionable directives to ensure the safety and pleasure of their collaborators and artistic community.

The list of thirteen practices provides concrete examples of specific actions that manidoons collective is taking on as they work towards indigenizing theatre rehearsal hall culture. They note that they will have a rehearsal schedule with five-hours days five days a week (instead of the industry standard of six eight-hour days per week) (5). They also reference daily check-in circles, transparency for all people working on a production (which includes no exclusive meetings), the ability for any member of the production to leave at any time during rehearsal, offering a wellness table in the room, strict boundaries around trauma exposure and trauma care in the work, and the inclusion of traditional medicine in space, such as sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and tobacco (5). Additionally, Alvis and Bonnell begin each project with a contemporary feast and hold "the Seven Anishinaabe Grandmother/Grandfather teachings of Truth, Honesty, Bravery, Courage, Love, Wisdom, and Humility" with the addition of Patience all throughout the creative process (5).

What Role Can Non-Indigenous Folks Play in These Processes Without Causing Harm?

Many non-Indigenous individuals and communities are attempting to engage with the act of decolonization. People of other cultural descent can engage in decolonization while also supporting indigenization and biskaabiiyang. Algonquin Anishinaabe scholar Lynn Gehl outlines what responsible allies must do in her document "Ally Bill of Responsibilities." In the document she identifies 16 responsibilities that allies should embrace. She begins by outlining that allies should engage from a place of interest instead of guilt and recognize that "they are secondary to

the Indigenous people that they are working with and seek to serve," they should be "grounded in their own ancestral history and culture," openly acknowledge their privileges and in doing so challenge the "larger oppressive structures" present (Gehl). Gehl also states that allies are responsible for reflecting and embracing their ignorance of the oppression that the group they are engaging with faces as well as constantly listening to critical thought (Gehl). According to Gehl effective allies should "ensure that needs of the most oppressed… are served in the effort or movement they are supporting" (Gehl). Gehl further notes that effective allyship is contingent on the understanding of lateral oppression and supportive of a leadership that best serves the people while also not taking up resources or space (Gehl). Lastly, Gehl states that all allies must continuously take responsibility for educating themselves about how to most effectively act as an ally (Gehl).

Acknowledging the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada is paramount for non-Indigenous directors who hope to contribute to decolonization. Jill Carter, an Anishinaabe/ Ashkenazi researcher and theatre-worker explains in "Retreating to/Retreating from 'Irreconcilable Space': Canadian Theatre Workers and the Project of Conciliation" that if Canadian theatre directors "have not been made aware of this history, have not been educated as 'treaty people,' how can you re-story the badly damaged relationships that exist between Indigenous people and settler-Canadians? How will you be able to curate those spaces in which the work of conciliation might be activated?" (192). As Carter points out, directors will not be able to foster working environments suitable for decolonizing processes if they remain ignorant of the reality that Indigenous peoples have faced in the Country since its inception, nor will they be able to tell stories that contribute to decolonization.

The choice of material as well as the way that the material is addressed also offers the potential to help or hinder the process of decolonization. Carter asserts that the

> stories we tell can open up spaces of fruitful encounter between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, or they can engender disaffection, distrust, and disengagement. … I invite you to consider the ways in which you might address yourselves and your audience to the question of what it means 'to rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality,' to 'dream alternative realities,' and finally through story-ing together to create both the 'context and event' out of which a process of re-worlding might begin." (201)

Carter offers that the director is uniquely positioned to craft worlds that can aid in communal imagining, between audience and artist, of an alternative reality that is not rooted in settler colonialism. However, this is only possible if first the director is informed of the current reality of Indigenous relations in the country as well as the history of harm and destruction.

Land Acknowledgments

One practice that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artist have taken on in the last few years is land acknowledgments. Since 2018 the practice has become commonplace in many Canadian theatres. These statements are often played for the audience as pre-recorded announcements or given as in-person speeches by theatre staff prior to raising the curtain. Although not typically the work of a director, unless the director is also the Artistic Director, these statements are often the first official words that come from the stage at the beginning of any performance. These statements can function as a kind of forced awareness of the colonial history of the country. However, the act of making an acknowledgment does not guarantee its effectiveness. Mohawk scholar Kanonhsyonne Janice C. Hill explains that for a territorial

acknowledgement to be respectful and meaningful it "needs to be intentional, and not something done by rote, to check a box. "This is a time to give thanks, consider our individual and collective role in the stewardship of Mother Earth and in building relationships between Indigenous people and communities and the rest of the country" (24). Hill's statement demonstrates that care and intention when creating the acknowledgement is paramount to the success in strengthening relationships between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples.

Another perspective of land acknowledgements in theatrical spaces is that they can be a powerful indicator of colonial failure. Selena Couture states that

> A territorial acknowledgement can be a pointer that indicates there is another world of knowledge and way of being that is other than the one that is currently naturalized in a colonial site. … It is also possible to indicate the *failure* to maintain colonial power (as well as the limitations of colonial thought) when a land acknowledgement involves the speaking of Indigenous languages … The public use of language … demonstrates the failure of the colonial genocidal policies aimed to eradicate Indigenous epistemologies which were attacked through the Indian residential school system. (28)

Couture posits that in the speaking of Indigenous languages within the statement sparks awareness in the listener of the history of colonialism and its failure to eradicate Indigenous culture and language. Couture connects this awakening in the listener as a potential site for disrupted expectations and discomfort amongst settler audience members and institutions implying that when crafted with care, the land acknowledgement may be a catalyst for transformation.

Land acknowledgments have also been criticized as a colonial construct created to assuage settler guilt. Anishinaabe scholar Armand Garnet Ruffo explains that laudable intentions do not mask "an underlying colonial state of mind propelling them" (27). He further explains that "If these land acknowledgments are supposed to function as gestures of atonement by settlers for the wrongs committed in the past, atonement for history of oppression, then, to put it bluntly, action speaks louder than words" (27). Ruffo positions these statements as ineffective due to their lack of action and their roots in a colonial mindset.

Ruffo is not alone in these sentiments. In fact, entire theatrical performances have been crafted to outline the contention surrounding land acknowledgments. In 2021 Cliff Cardinal premiered a solo show at Crow's Theatre. Cardinal explains that his frustration with the practice of land acknowledgements: "it occurred to me that how does someone who has no engagement or connection with Indigenous people or the community whatsoever get to say a few words and accept applause, and walk off the stage like they are John Trudell? I balk at the hypocrisy of that" (qtd in Fricker 2023). The play was originally titled *William Shakespeare's As You Like It: A Radical Retelling by Cliff Cardinal* as a way of luring in audience members. Cardinal explains that he was "concerned at the time that the people who would self-select to see Cliff Cardinal's land acknowledgement would already be on side of the message" (qtd in Fricker 2023). The comedy was ultimately picked up by Mirvish and the title changed to *The Land Acknowledgement, or As You Like It* and has toured across Canada and is in the process of being adapted to film at time of writing. The fact that theatre is now being made about the practice of land acknowledgement, whether in favour of the practice or not, indicates a substantial shift in discourse surrounding colonization in Canadian theatrical culture in the last ten years.

Conclusion

The practices presented in this chapter, led and developed by Indigenous artists, are changing the way that Canadian theatre makers are engaging with creation processes. Although the CTA does not currently demand any specifically decolonizing or Indigenizing methods, there is potential for increased shifts in these governing documents as companies and individual artists working under the agreement increasingly adjust their processes to best dismantle the inherited hierarchical colonial model and replace it with alternative modes of working. Canadian artists, regardless of identity, can engage in acts of decolonization via their modes of creation and dissemination. However, the act of Indigenization, by its very definition, must be led by artists who identify as Indigenous. This does not mean that non-Indigenous theatre artists cannot be supportive or involved in these processes, but they must be aware of their positionality within any given process to avoid causing harm. As Gehl asserts, allyship and intercultural collaboration in the name of justice demands that allies position their needs secondary to the process, ground themselves within their own identity, perpetually educate themselves, are mindful of the spaces they occupy (both metaphorically and literally), and are aware of existing oppressive structures. In listing these qualities, one could argue that these are all ideal behaviours of an effective theatre director and suitable replacements for the qualities often celebrated within the hierarchical model of theatre direction. The methodologies presented in this chapter, created and nurtured by Indigenous theatre artists, indicate changes in professional practice that are uniquely rooted in Turtle Island. They have built a new performance culture that is creating positive pressure on all theatre makers in the country, regardless of their positionality, to reconsider how they are working.

Chapter 5: Antiracist Practices

This chapter highlights significant documented milestones of antiracist practice in Canadian theatre within the temporal scope of the study. Engaging with Ibram X. Kendi's definition of what it means to be antiracist and what constitutes an antiracist policy, these events were selected as indicators of greater systemic change within professional theatre in Canada via written materials, public presentations and collaborations, and the establishing of new institutions.[22] Further, the chapter documents and analyzes some of the practices and principles that noted antiracist professional theatre practitioners are engaging with as a means to understanding what shifts have taken place within the current professional directing process.

What is Antiracism?

Antiracism is a term that has been used for decades but reached new popularity after the murder of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020. Ibrahim X Kendi explains the term antiracism by defining what makes a policy antiracist:

> antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups. By policy, I mean written and unwritten laws, rules, procedures, processes, regulations, and guidelines that govern people. There is no such thing as a nonracist or race neutral policy. Every policy in every institution in every community in every nation

[22] It is important to note that antiracist and culturally specific theatre has been created in Canada for decades and this work is significant as it contributes to the overall societal framework that allowed for the shifts in the professional theatre to take place (Favel, Parameswaran).

> is producing or sustaining either racial inequity or equity between racial groups. (Kendi 18)

Kendi asserts that neutrality is not an option when it comes to governance in any form. Rules, regulations, and ideological structures can be racist or antiracist—there is no in-between.

Kendi further explains that racist and antiracist are not stagnant identities. They are constantly in negotiation as the behaviour of individuals and organizations fluctuate. He states that "racist" and "antiracist" are like peelable name tags that are placed and replaced based on what someone is doing or not doing, supporting or expressing in each moment…. No one becomes a racist or antiracist. We can only strive to be one or the other…. being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination" (23). Being racist or antiracist is determined by any given behaviour or policy. Kendi asserts that impact is at the crux of determining whether an individual, organization, or policy is antiracist.

I have selected two case studies below that demonstrate instances in Canadian theatre where directors have used their influence to promote antiracist theatre making. These two case studies are important examples of how the profession has been impacted by the work of BIPOC directors and artistic directors who have used their position of power to uphold antiracist ideals via programming, community engagement, and artistic practices. Each case study also includes brief histories leading to a cultural moment that exemplified a dramatic shift in the acknowledgement of antiracist theatre in Canada. These histories are important to all Canadian theatre directors as they provide a counterpoint to the narrative of the emergence of the Canadian director as a descendent of the Euro-centric mode of creation (fully explored in Chapter 3 on the Emergence of the Professional Canadian Theatre Director). These studies offer examples of how a director's work can significantly impact cultural representation through their ability to oversee

casting and artistic teams as well as in the development of new works. The cultural impact of Canadian directors is notable, and these case studies speak to how this impact can be swayed towards or away from antiracist sentiments.

Twenty-One Black Futures

In 2021, under new Artistic Director, Mumbi Tindyewba Otu, Obsidian Theatre partnered with CBC Arts to create *21 Black Futures*. The groundbreaking film/theatre project employed more that 100 Black artists from all over Canada and won 4 Canadian Screen awards (obsdidiantheatre.com). Mumbi Tindyewba Otu explains the project:

> I wondered how other Black artists from across the country were doing. Especially when, around the world, the gaze of institutions, individuals, and even politicians had turned sharply towards us. How could I respond and support Black artists from an institutional capacity? …we decided to engage twenty-one writers from different generations and with different levels of experience. … Twenty-one to celebrate Obsidian's twenty-first anniversary in 2021. Each writer was tasked with writing a ten-minute monodrama … in response to the question: What is the future of Blackness? We further engaged 21 Black directors and 21 Black actors to bring these stories to life as short theatrical films. Our goal was to give as many opportunities to as many diverse Black artists as possible and bring new voices together from both film and theatre. (vii)

21 Black Futures centered the voices and experiences of Black Canadian artists. In celebrating the 21 years of Obsidian Theatre's success, it also functioned to develop, call attention to, and highlight the work of both emerging and established artists. Through the collaboration with CBC

Arts, the project engaged with a mainstream cultural institution which led to greater exposure for the company as well as individual artists.

Obsidian Theatre Company was founded in 2000 under the leadership of Alison Sealy-Smith, and it has been noted that The AfriCanadian Playwrights Festival may have also been a catalyst for its creation (Moynagh 5). Initially rooted in "a mission to change the profile of culturally diverse theatre in Canada" it describes itself as currently "Canada's leading culturally specific theatre company" with a three-pronged mission "to produce plays, develop playwrights and to train emerging theatre professionals. Obsidian is dedicated to the exploration, development, and production of the Black voice" ("Mission and Mandate"). In 2007 director Philip Aiken took on the role of Artistic Director and led the company for 14 years. The company offers a season of performances as well as programs for developing artists such as the Young, Gifted, and Black program that offers a six-month intensive to "Black theatre practitioners in non-performance disciplines" ("Mission and Mandate"). The "intensive explores Black diaspora theatre and performance aesthetics through a decolonial and intersectional lens" ("Mission and Mandate"). The company also houses a playwright's unit that supports two or three Black playwrights annually with mentorship and a showcase for their writing. Alongside these artistic in-house initiatives Obsidian has a partnership with the Ontario Arts Council to help fund new works. This "program provides successful applicants with funding that is geared towards the creation and development of new work" ("Mission and Mandate"). Obsidian offers a considerable cultural output through the regular season programming while simultaneously insuring the growth and development of Black Canadian theatre artists.

Black theatre has been documented in Canada since 1849 and may have been occurring for a great deal longer. However, it has not received the recognition, financial or cultural support

as theatre created by white Canadians (Breon 1). One of the earliest known Black theatre companies in Canada is The Toronto Coloured Young Men's Amateur Theatrical Society which was producing work in 1849 (Breon 2). It should also be noted that in Toronto "on four separate occasions in 1840, 1841, and 1843, members of the Black community petitioned the mayor's office to restrict the presentation of travelling minstrel shows" (Breon 2). These shows were coming from the United States and touring across Canada. Breon explains that the minstrel shows "were base and dehumanizing depictions that exploited every racist stereotype of the period. During this pre-American Civil War period, the minstrel show was very popular with the pro-slavery lobby because it justified the South's 'peculiar institution'" (Breon 2). Breon also notes that there may have not been many specifically Black theatrical institutions at the time but there were well known Black Canadian artists that were successful in Canada and the United States, citing actor Richard B. Harrison, in particular (Breon 2).

The Negro Theatre Guild, which was created in Montreal during the early 1940's is cited as being the first professional Black theatre in Canada (Breon 3). In an early program note it is stated that "The Negro Theatre Guild was formed in 1941 by a group of young members from the community, whose creative impulse craved expression. The theatre seemed both a happy and natural medium, providing scope for a variety of talents, yet demanding group cooperation" (qtd in Breon 4). In a later press release that was published in the *Montreal Star*, the company shares their mandate: "To utilize the enthusiasm, sincerity and native talent of coloured youth, in the presentation of plays of social value, is the principal aim of our organization. We feel that in the common struggle against fascism and Hitlerism, the Negro has not only his blood and his labour to contribute, but has a distinct cultural contribution to make" (qtd in Breon 4). It is clear from the mandate that the efforts of this first professional Black Theatre were rooted in Antiracism.

The action of naming those whose ideologies are oppressive and dangerous and connecting this stance to the theatre may make The Negro Theatre Guild the first public antiracist theatre company in Canadian Theatre history. The Negro Theatre Guild took a four-year break during World War II but then returned and continued into the early 70's. It eventually changed its name to the Negro Theatre Arts Club of Montreal (Breon 5).

In the early 1970s the Black Caribbean community in Montreal created the Black Theatre Workshop (BTW) out of a need for a community-based theatre that would represent and speak to the experiences of Black Canadians (Moynagh 4). BTW remains the oldest extant Black theatre company in Canada (Moynagh 4). Originally, it started as "the Trinidad and Tobago Drama Group … but its focus soon shifted to new works by black Canadian artists" (Moynagh 4). The company remains devoted to presenting and developing new works. BTW currently states their mission "is to promote and produce outstanding theatre that educates, entertains and inspires. The company strives to create greater cross-cultural understanding by challenging its audience and the status quo. Expanding the representation of Black Canadian artists, BTW bridges cultural divides—uniting hearts, minds, and communities" (blacktheatreworkshop.ca). BTW's mission of creating theatre that works to promote understanding across cultures while continuously questioning societal structures demonstrates a commitment to antiracism as defined by Kendi.

During the same period that the BTW was established in Montreal, Black Theatre Canada was founded by Vera Cudjoe (Moynagh 4). Maureen Moynagh explains that "Cudjoe's goal was to develop theatre that engaged Toronto communities; accordingly Black Theatre Canada took productions to schools in the area and ran theatre workshops" (4). Black Theatre Canada put up works by Afro-Caribbean and African American playwrights alongside those of Black Canadian playwrights (Moynagh 4). In 1974, Theatre Fountainhead opened by staging a production of

Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* (Moynagh 4). The company was founded by Cudjoe's colleague, Jeff Henry, with the idea that the work of the new company would complement Black Theatre Canada by producing pieces that were "more exclusively devoted to developing the skill and range of black theatre professionals" (Moynagh 4). Fountainhead's mandate went beyond the presentation of the work and towards fostering an even larger community of Black theatre artists in Canada.

Black theatre companies were not limited to Toronto and Montreal nor to a specifically Black Canadian experience. In the 1980's the Caribbean Theatre Workshop was founded out of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg and in the 1990's Voices Black Theatre Ensemble was founded in Nova Scotia (Lewis). It should also be noted that, during the 1990's, Marvin Ishmeal created We Are One Theatre which "sought to develop a specifically Caribbean-Canadian theatre by creating productions that brought together Caribbean story-telling with calypso" (Moynagh 4). Moynagh also references Theatre Wum, which was founded in 1990 by Colin Taylor, which produced works by African American playwrights such as Suzan Lori Parks and Jeff Stetson (4). These companies were developed to present culturally specific and relevant works - works that were not being presented on other stages in Canada. Moynagh argues that although some of the smaller companies eventually closed due to financial demands "they nonetheless laid the ground work for more recent theatrical institutions, and while the newer institutions remain as diverse as their forerunners, they are also marked by an investment in Caribbean and African-American performance traditions" (4).

The 1990s was an important decade for the development of Black Canadian theatre. In 1991 b current was created by ahdri zinha mandiela in connection with a production of her piece *dark diaspora…in dub* (Moynagh 4). In subsequent years the company has presented spoken

word performance, theatre, and dance as well as maintained an annual festival, *rock.paper.sistahs*. (Moyngh 4). b current has adjusted their mandate throughout the last several years stating that they were originally "founded as a place for Black artists to create, nurture, and present their new works, our company has grown to support artists from all diasporas. Over three decades, we have created space for intersectional voices to be heard, always with a focus on engaging communities from which our stories emerge" ("About Us"). The company is also committed to "multi-tiered process of inclusion" ("About Us"). They highlight several steps including challenging "mainstream notions of theatre creation and Eurocentric storytelling" and "mainstream notions of outreach" to "create sincere, ongoing and mutually beneficial engagement" which is demonstrated in their programming by mentorship and training of "emerging artists from the Black and Brown diaspora" and the curation of "a season which aggressively challenges Eurocentric storytelling through its subject matter, the trajectory of its storyline and its innovative structure" ("About Us"). b current's statements demonstrate a recognition that many mainstream companies currently maintain a Eurocentric worldview that governs their art and outreach practices.

Other responses to the issue of the overpowering nature of Eurocentric programing are the creation of AfriCanadian Playwrights Festival in 1997 by Djanet Sears and the founding of the AfriCan Theatre Ensemble in 1998 (Moynagh 5-6). The AfriCanadian Playwrights Festival mandate was to "develop new works and to obtain support for readings and new productions by mainstream theatre companies" (Moynagh 5). Sears explains that "The Fundamental idea underpinning this mandate was that, for Black theatre to have a larger national impact, there must be more Black playwrights writing *and* getting access to those who can produce their work at home and abroad" (qtd in Moynagh 5). The AfriCan Theatre Ensemble was founded by Modupe

Olagun to present plays to Canadian audiences that were either created in Africa or written about Africa (Moynagh 6). It should be noted that although the AfriCan Theatre Ensemble received funding by various arts councils in its' first few years they ran into a funding dead-end in 2002 when they had hoped to produce Reza De Wet's play *Crossing*. De Wet is an Afrikaner and as Moynagh explains the issue

> lay in a 'black' theatre company producing a 'white' play. Given the numbers of 'black' plays produced by 'white' theatre companies in Canada, these misgivings seem especially ill-conceived. … all three arts councils expressed doubt about the Ensemble's ability 'to do justice to the complexity' of De Wet's play… these remarks reveal a surprisingly narrow understanding of Africa as a homogenously black continent, and an equally narrow understanding of the prospective scope of a black Canadian theatre company. (Moynagh 6)

The story that Moynagh relays about the lack of funding for AfriCan Theatre Ensembles' production calls attention to not only the lack of work being produced by Black theatre artists but also the biases and lack of understanding that artists encountered as major roadblocks to producing works.

In 2023 Playwrights Canada Press published an anthology of all the plays written for the *21 Black Futures* project. The foreword was written by Mumbi Tindyewba Otu and highlighted the variety of artists involved and the multiple perspectives visited in the plays. It is also significant to note that the idea for *21 Black Futures* was created and delivered by a director. Mumbi Tindyewba Otu had just begun her role as the Artistic Director of Obsidian when the pandemic struck. The act of soliciting multiple short plays that could be directed by multiple directors was an exciting development for Canadian theatre. Not only did it expose many theatre

directors to a television audience, but it also provided those directors with the opportunity to transfer their theatre direction techniques for camera. The success of the project calls attention to the value of multiple perspectives resulting in a plurality of representation which is counter to the popular narrative that a director's vision, or in this case an artistic director's vision, must be singular and dominant.

GENesis Asian-Canadian Theatre Conference in May 2010

In May 2010[23] fu-GEN theatre produced "the first-ever International Conference & Festival on Asian Canadian Theatre" ("Our History"). The intention of the conference was to "inaugurate a new scholarly field: Asian Canadian theatre and performance studies" (Aquino and Knowles vii). The conference brought together Asian Canadian artists and practitioners with scholars of Asian Canadian studies, Asian American studies, and theatre studies to engage in conversation (Aquino and Knowles vii). Nina Lee Aquino and Ric Knowles describe the term Asian Canadian as "fraught," highlighting that "Asia" is a concept of western devising and that "Asian" is "grouping together of heterogenous and often conflicting peoples who, prior to western imperialism (including scholarship), had not seen themselves collectively" (viii). Aquino and Knowles explain that Fu-Gen Asian Canadian Theatre Company was founded with the understanding that the "Asia" it was referring to was "east Asia" whereas in Britain the term

[23] I have decided to include this conference even though it is outside of the temporal scope of the study because of the large impact it had on the years that followed. It as an important landmark in antiracist theatre in Canada that brought attention to Asian Canadian theatre both in the professional theatre sphere as well as the academic one. It also functions as a marker of how Asian Canadian theatre became much more prominent in mainstream theatre over a less than ten-year period (the majority of which is within the scope of this study).

"Asia" is generally referencing the Indian subcontinent (which is often referred to as South Asia in Canadian discourse) and as such was "excluded from the conference mandate" (viii).

In 2022 fu-GEN hosted a second conference titled Genesis 2022 Innovation and Reinvention. Originally scheduled for May 2020, the conference was postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Artistic director of fu-GEN, David Yee, explains that much had shifted since the first festival and that new goals for the community need to be centered, stating,

> Canada had just awarded its second Governor General's literary Award for Drama to the second Asian Canadian playwright ever. A Korean-Canadian TV show based on a play that fu-GEN had developed was going into its fourth season as the number one comedy in Canada; companies like Hong Kong Exile were gaining international prominence … (qtd in Metzger).

Yee cites an increase in Asian Canadian representation in Canadian media and theatre as an important marker by which to reassess trajectories for his company and community. The festival's call for presenters from June 2022 also references the challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic years ("Call for Proposals"). According to Yee, the ripple effect of the initial 2010 conference has been significant.

It remains clear that the 2010 GENisis festival, along with inspiring the first book about Asian Canadian theatre, may have also inspired the increased production of Asian Canadian plays as well as promotion of Asian Canadian theatre artists within the Canadian mainstream (Aquino and Knowles vii). Nina Lee Aquino, the founding Artistic Director of fu-GEN, was appointed the Artistic Director of the National Arts Centre English Theatre in 2022 and during the 2022-23 season directed the first Filipino Musical to ever be produced in Canada. *Prison*

Dancer, which was first mounted at the Citadel in Edmonton and directed by Aquino, transferred for a second run at the NAC. The production boasted an all-Filipino cast and premiered to critical acclaim ("Prison Dancer").

Yellow Fever by R.A. Shiomi has been cited as the first Asian Canadian play to be professionally produced in Canada. The production took place in Toronto in 1983 and was produced by the Canasian Artist Group (Shiomi iii). However, it is commonly acknowledged that theatre created by Asian Canadians has been taking place in Canada since the early 20th century with references to traditional Cantonese operas (thecanadianencyclopedia.com). The Chinese United Dramatic Society is credited with holding highly produced Cantonese Operas in Toronto in 1933 with regular two-show seasons that featured performers from the United States and Hong Kong. Later, in the 1960's, the Korean community founded Theatre All which went on to produce large-scale Korean dramas in Toronto (Baird).

Filipino Canadian professional theatre has been thriving in Canada for many years. Carlos Bulosan Theatre (CBT) was founded in 1982 in Toronto. Originally titled the Carlos Bulosan Cultural workshop, it was founded by Martha Ocampo, Fely Villasin, Voltaire de Leon, Ging Hernandez, and Bernie Cosnul, all of whom were activists (Knowles, *The CBT Collective* 131). The company began as a tool to raise awareness around a political movement against Marcos and out of a need for the Filipino "community to express itself," acting "as a bridge between home there and home here… It's an outlet for the community to gather, celebrate, or mourn the history and celebrate the future (Aquino qtd in Knowles 131). The company was named after "a blacklisted 1930's Filipino American farm labourer and labour activist, poet, and novelist Carlos Sampayan Bulosan" (Knowles, *The CBT Collective* 131).

In 2003 the company transitioned into a professional theatre company under the artistic leadership of Nadine Villasin. The company changed the name to Carlos Bulosan Theatre and forged a partnership with Kapisanan Philippine Centre of Arts and Culture (Knowles, *The CBT Collective* 132). The first professional production that the company took on was *Miss Orient(ed)* by Nina Lee Aquino and Nadine Villasin (Knowles, *The CBT Collective* 133). The show had a successful run at The Factory Theatre under the direction of Guillermo Verdecchia in 2003 and a second run at Montreal's Teesri Duniya Theatre under the direction of Sarah Stanley in 2005 (Knowles, *The CBT Collective* 133). The company went on to produce many seasons and more recently staged a remounted reading of the 2008 success *People Power*, a play that was created collectively about the "1986 Philippine People Power Revolution that ultimately toppled the violent and corrupt Marcos dictatorship," at Theatre Passe Muraille in 2020 "as a protest against the election of Marcos's son in the Philippines" (Baird). In 2023 the company resumed programing after a three-year hiatus during the COVID 19 pandemic (Ang).

Theatre directors in Canada have benefitted from the development of fu-GEN and Carlos Bulosan Theatre as they have shaped the cultural landscape by broadening the kind of representation seen on Canadian stages and Canadian televisions. As the head of English Theatre at the NAC, Nina Lee Aquino holds an influential role as she curates the season and determines which artists will be engaged by the company. Freelance directors are greatly impacted by the decisions of artistic directors across the country and as the NAC is a pillar of the Canadian theatre scene, the decisions made there will determine which stories are being told and who is granted permission to tell them.

Antiracist Professional Canadian Theatre Companies

There are several professional theatre companies in Canada that are devoted to antiracist practice. Although not all explicitly claim the term in their publications, their mandates and vision statements indicate an antiracist perspective. This next section offers a selection of these companies as examples of professional theatre centres in Canada that engage in antiracist practices and explores their scope and tenure.[24] These companies have shaped the content of Canadian stages and significantly impacted which theatre directors are hired to direct. Their antiracist values influence all that they produce, how they work, and who they work with, thus contributing to the curation of the community of professional directors in Canada.

Teesri Duniya Theatre was created in 1981 by Rana Bose and Rahul Varma in Montreal ("Our Story"). The theatre was created in response to a need for "Indigenous experiences, cultural plurality, and political drama" in professional Canadian Theatre ("Our Story"). The company's vision statement demonstrates a perspective that is rooted in antiracist ideals:

> We regard multiculturalism as a framework to tell stories by, for and about struggling against colonial institutions and practices. By doing so, we aim to bring visible minorities from the margins to the center, uplifting their voices and thus, increasing their representation. Teesri prioritizes BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other minoritized writers in Canada, who advocate social change. Fireworks, our guided play development program, uses intercultural dramaturgy to develop conscious and diverse playwrights. ("Our Story")

The company has been creating work that challenges colonial and racist perspectives for over 40 years. As of the 2024-25 season the company is still actively programming according to their

[24] MT Space and Rice and Beans theatre are both companies, as well as several others, that fall within the category of antiracist theatre companies within Canada but are not directly referenced in this chapter.

vision statement with a production of *Two Birds, One Stone* by Natasha Greenblatt and Rimah Jabr, which investigates the relationship between a person born a Muslim Palestinian and another born Jewish Canadian.

In 1986 another theatre was created in Toronto with the commitment to "the presentation of racially inclusive work" ("About Us"). Founded by Beverly Yhap, Cahoots theatre is the "first professional theatre company in Canada with a mandate dedicated to cultural diversity" ("About Us"). In more recent years the company has expanded its mission statement "and now supports, develops and presents the voice of all marginalized creators, which has materialized in collaborations with Indigenous, POC, Deaf, Disabled, Blind, neuroatypical, and queer artists" ("About Us"). Through mandating the express inclusion and promotion of global majority artists over the last three and a half decades the company has engaged 300 different artists and sold 30,000 tickets, demonstrating a large reach and deep roots within the professional Canadian theatre scene.

The history of, and motivation for, the creation of Why Not Theatre, founded by Ravi Jain, is expressly put forward as a response to racism in professional Canadian Theatre. The website states: "Ravi Jain moved back to Toronto after building a career in theatre in New York and London. After years of growth and creativity, his ambitions came to a standstill when traditional companies wouldn't welcome his voice. When adversity pushed, Ravi pushed back and launched Why Not ("About"). The theatre company boasts five programs that have proven to create change in how professional theatre is made in Canada: RISER Project, ThisGen Fellowship, Space Project, Caregivers Project, and a Deaf Artist initiative.

The ThisGen Fellowship, which began in 2021, demonstrates antiracist practices by creating opportunities for BIPOC artists to be mentored by senior established artists in their field.

On the Why Not Theatre website it explains that “ThisGen Fellowship is a national initiative that supports BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) women and non-binary artists get to the next stage in their careers through paid training, mentorship, hands-on residencies and labs and peer-to peer connections” (“About”). The fellowship was created to ensure a future of professional Canadian theatre where the work of BIPOC women and non-binary people are celebrated and supported within larger cultural institutions and to promote change within these organizations (“About”).

In 2018 the company hosted a meeting of administrators and artists from across the country and during this gathering they established that one of the major barriers that artists faced was access to space. In response to this revelation, the company began the Space Project which involves acting as a broker between artists and property managers to rent out affordable spaces that otherwise would not be in use through the Meanwhile-Use principle. Meanwhile-Use is defined on Why Not’s website as: “the activation of underutilized space on a temporary basis—often of space that sits empty between tenants—for various uses including pop-up retail and cultural use” (“About”). By bridging the chasm between artists who needed affordable space and companies seeking to profit from underutilized space, Why Not’s initiative is working to dismantle the financial barriers for artists and thus allowing for more work to be created.

In 2023 Why Not Theatre premiered their rendition of *Mahabharata* at the Shaw Festival. It has subsequently toured to the Barbican in London, UK and will be presented at Canadian Stage in April 2025 and the National Arts Centre in May 2025. The company describes the project as “a contemporary take on a Sanskrit epic that is more than four thousand years old and foundational to Indian culture. This gripping story of a family feud is an exploration of profound philosophical and spiritual ideas” (“Mahabharata”). The Why Not Theatre production is

presented in two parts: *Karma* and *Dharma* with each section taking over two hours long to perform. When both parts are being performed on the same day there is a meal with storytelling offered titled *Khana* (Fricker 2023).

Why Not Theatre's production is highly significant as a cultural milestone in Canada and the United Kingdom. As mentioned in Chapter 6, pages 134-135 about cultural consultation, Peter Brook's 1985 production of *Mahabharata* experienced rightful scrutiny, particularly from senior scholar and dramatist Rustom Bharucha, as being culturally appropriative. While, according to Bharucha, Brook's production failed to address specific cultural demands, Why Not's has succeeded. Both co-writers of the piece, Ravi Jain and Miriam Fernandez, are "Canadian-born children of parents from India" who grew up with some knowledge of the story, and all of the cast are members of the South Asian diaspora (Fricker 2023). Ravi Jain explains, "To be Indian Canadian in Ontario versus, B.C. versus Winnipeg; to be British Indian, Australian Indian, Malaysian Indian, all these different kinds of Indian and your own journey with your own relationship to your culture … all those nuances are so rich" (qtd in Fricker 2023). The creators of the piece seem to be celebrating the plurality of identity within the community of makers while simultaneously maintaining a tether to the cultural origins and meaning of the piece. Rustom Bharucha also consulted on the process and encouraged the co-writers to seek out their own point of view veering away from a more pointed and didactic approach to a more politicized perspective (Fricker 2023).

Although the theatres listed above are all Eastern Canada focused, there are companies based in Western Canada that have been promoting antiracist creative initiatives since the 1980's. The Firehall Arts Centre has been operating in Vancouver since February 1982. Led by Artistic Producer Donna Spencer, the company is housed in one of Vancouver's first fire stations ("Our

Story"). It is the first company focusing solely on Canadian work with the intent to "produce and present work that highlights and supports Canada's multiculturalism" ("Our Story"). Its Mission and Values statement states that "The Firehall Theatre Society connects communities and encourages a greater understanding of Canada's cultural pluralism through its productions, presentations, exhibitions and artistic practice" ("Our Story"). The Firehall Art Centre continues to produce and present robust seasons that support its mandate and offer a variety of perspective through the stories they nurture.

What are anti-racist directorial practices?

One of the director's primary responsibilities is casting, and the decisions made in the casting process greatly affect the meaning of the story being told. Colour conscious casting is an antiracist practice that has become more prominent since 2020. Micha Frazer-Carrol addresses the significance of colour conscious casting in a 2020 Guardian article. Citing Diep Tran, "an arts journalist specializing in diversity and the ethics of representation," she highlights the shift in thinking from colour-blind casting in film, television, and theatre to colour conscious casting.

Frazer-Carrol points out the dangers of colour-blind[25] casting as it can negate "the very real structural hindrances that block actors of colour from the same opportunities as white actors—like low pay in the theatre industry, a lack of roles that are ethnically specific that actors of colour can play, and unconscious bias on the part of white theatres and casting directors" (Tran

[25] Colour-blind casting is generally considered to be casting a performer within a role without considering the race of the performer regardless of how this reality may inform the meaning of the story being told.

qtd in Frazer-Carrol). Colour-blind casting fails to address the racist reality within which the art is being made[26].

Colour-conscious casting as a practice seeks to stop the act of erasing the race and identity of actors and instead celebrate and incorporate the racial reality of the characters and/or the actors into the overall narrative. Tran explains what is involved in a colour conscious casting practice:

> This could look like lots of different things: from searching for actors from specific ethnic backgrounds, to using race to inject a novel message, to tweaking aspects of the production to acknowledge how race impacts the characters' lives. Colour consciousness tells directors, producers and casting directors to make diversity a part of their consideration when casting … it asks them to make sure they see a wide spectrum of people, not just the people who happen to make it into the room. (Tran qtd in Frazer Carrol)

Through the acknowledgement of the racial realities on-stage, the story becomes more fully situated within the current social and political reality for both artists and characters, thus encouraging the audience to interpret the narrative through a lens of racial awareness.

In the same article Frazer-Carrol points to The Talawa Theatre Company, in the United Kingdom, as a company that engages with colour conscious casting and points to their 2016 production of *King Lear* with Don Warrington in the titular role as an example of successful

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[26] It should be noted that in the 1989 *TDR* article "Race Free, Gender Free, Body-Type Free, Age Free Casting" Richard Schechner posits a style of casting that could, at times, encourage the audience in "an effort toward race blindness" (10). Although the article did not solely advocate for a colour-blind practice, he stated he was arguing for "an extreme flexibility that allows for situation-specific decisions regarding when to use, when to ignore, and when to see race, gender, age, and body type" (10). Schechner's contribution to the discussion surrounding casting is significant and speaks to the complexity of casting and intersectional identity.

colour conscious casting. A spokeswoman for the company explains, “In casting the play—a story about actions speaking louder than words—as we did, and against the backdrop of Brexit and the Windrush scandal, we encouraged audiences to think more broadly about how divisions were being created, at whose expense” (qtd in Frazer-Carrol). Through deliberate casting of Don Warrington, a Black actor, the company was able to call attention to race with the specific purpose of pointing the audience’s attention to the unique connections between Shakespeare’s play and contemporary racism and xenophobia.

Shifts in the ways that casting is being negotiated in Canada have also taken place. In 2020 #inthedressingroom was an initiative created by Black artists at the Stratford festival. This hashtag was used to call attention to the racism and injustice that Black artists had experienced at the festival for decades. One of the changes called for was to address the issues surrounding the practice of “as cast” which allowed theatre directors to cast an actor without expressing what role they would take on at the time of hiring, thus removing agency from the actor and their ability to provide informed consent on any given project (Fricker 2020). The policy of “as cast” was not included in the following 2021 CTA. The #inthedressingroom initiative is a clear example of how Black artists in Canada changed the public discourse ultimately leading to systemic change within the governing documents.

Narda E. Alcorn and Lisa Porter detail several antiracist practices that can be incorporated into professional stage management techniques in the July 2020 Howlround article titled “We Commit to Anti-Racist Stage Management Education.” Citing *Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups* by activist/scholars Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, the pair acknowledge that certain “characteristics like binary thinking, a sense of urgency, and individualism” are white supremacist traits that can be frequently “embedded in a stage

manager's work" (Acorn and Porter). They specifically name the responsibilities of "tracking time, enforcing rules and policies, and reporting information make the stage manager especially susceptible to upholding systems of oppression" (Acorn and Porter). The responsibilities that Acorn and Porter call attention to all demonstrate a connection to the power that a stage manager wields over the theatrical creation space and process. This same power, but with even more agency, can also be attributed to the director. The director not only holds title power but controls the artistic process, which contains not only the ability to enforce rules and time constraints but also oversees actor, designer, choreographer, and stage management behaviors. Due to the overlap in responsibility and the ability to harness agency within the rehearsal halls and during technical rehearsals, many of Acorn and Porter's guidelines for antiracist stage management can be applied to directors.

Acorn and Porter identify six tools as ways of creating a curriculum for antiracist stage managers. They are: Dismantling Perfectionism, Research and Self-Education, Awareness of Language, Active Allyship, Opening Conversations by Acknowledging and Naming, and Compassion, Transparency, and Holding Space (Acorn and Porter). Acorn and Porter share many helpful suggestions to aid in practicing the tools. A few that particularly align with Kendi's definition of antiracist policy and to the director's unique position of power are:

- Recognize and redirect working exclusively to attain the approval of systems and people. Aspiring to be likeable can interfere with anti-racist action.
- Educate yourself about diverse perspectives, refraining from relying on the person whose experience you need to understand. When the play has charged racial content or involves multi-racial perspectives, your research and self-education can inform your choices.

- Establish boundaries when racist language is part of the content of a play, clearly stating how that language will be used by different members of the company.
- Rehearse saying specific racial identifiers aloud as part of anti-racist practice. Fear or discomfort can surface when naming collaborators as Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian.
- Recognize that everyone is impacted when one person is oppressed. White stage managers who are allies might be afraid of other people assuming they are speaking for, or silencing, a marginalized person. However, it is powerful for a White ally to speak for themselves and quickly and loudly name when racist behavior is present.
- Acknowledge the racial composition of the room and explicitly state the racial dynamics in response to the work being produced…. This practice fosters transparency by accepting that our individual racial identities have an impact on the process. (Acorn and Porter)

Acorn and Porter's practical steps for antiracist practice in a professional theatrical setting outline specific actionable behaviours that individual directors can take on regardless of whether they are working in large established theatre centres or on small independent projects.

Acorn and Porter also offer a specific recommendation to directors and members of the creative team to help foster an antiracist project. They suggest that

> the director and creative team open conversations about race, racial identities, code-switching, and racial stereotypes during the early days of the process. For example opening conversations about costumes, hair, and makeup are especially important since,

> even within a multiracial cast, the default might be to white skin colour and hair texture. (Acorn and Porter)

This note, placed under the subheading of "Compassion, Transparency, and Holding Space," calls attention to the necessity to always make space for the acknowledgement of race and racial dynamics. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the erasure of race is a racist act (Frazer-Carroll).

Other new practices surfacing in the work of Canadian theatre directors which have the potential to contribute to an antiracist culture are the creation of community agreements and check-ins. Although not directly an antiracist practice, community agreements are a tool that can be used to address existing inequities in the space relating to race and representation. They also offer a space and time for the artists involved in a project to discuss, early in the process, how they want to address issues of race, racial inequity, charged language relating to race, and culturally specific terms and activities that may be a part of the production. Community Agreements have become common practice in Canadian theatre since 2020. The practice is encouraged by CAEA. In their resource, *The Member Guide to Creating a Community Agreement,* they provide a road map to members stating that community agreements

> can be an effective way to build trust within your group. As a set of values that everyone agrees to uphold as you work together, the agreement provides a common framework for what you collectively consider to be a safe and respectful workplace and serves as a tool for communication, as well as helping to resolve any conflict that may arise. (CAEA 1)

The CAEA guide recommends that the process of creating the agreement be led by either the director, stage manager, or a company member with a great deal of experience (3). Anecdotally, I can report that most commonly these types of agreements are predominately being led by

directors. Community Agreements offer the potential to off-set a hierarchical power dynamic in the creation process as they allow for a collective imagining of how the group can work together and offer collaborating artists opportunities to voice their needs early in the creation process thus unsettling a singular leadership voice within the room.

The process of creating communal governing documents for processes in creative and community work has been occurring for decades outside of theatre settings. The book *Peace and Power: New Directions for Building Community*, originally written by Charlene Eldridge Wheeler in the 1970's with the latest editions authored by Peggy L. Chinn, presents the Peace and Power method of crafting a community agreement that rejects the "power over" hierarchical model and shifts to a "PEACE power[27]" structure.

The *Peace and Power* model also heavily suggests that gatherings working under this model begin with checking-in. This is described as making time and space for every member of the community to speak at the beginning of a meeting to ensure that everybody's concerns are considered fully throughout the gathering. Chinn suggests that during the check-ins participants may "Share circumstances or events that are likely to influence your participation during discussions" and "Reflect briefly on what you integrated or gained from the last gathering" (46). Although, this process outlined by Chinn is suggested for use when working in community collectives, check-ins are now commonplace in professional theatres. It should be noted that check-ins are linked to community agreements in that they are generally discussed in the crafting of the community agreements and then instituted all throughout the rehearsal process.

[27] "PEACE power" as defined by Chinn as "the capacity to be in harmony with others and with the earth to join with others in directing your collective energies toward a future you seek together" (18).

In “A Lesson in Creative Disruption: A Note for Directors from a BIPOC Creator” theatre director Joseph Recinos explains the value of check-ins as they relate to creating increasingly antiracist rehearsal spaces. He states that in working with collaborators across race, particularly when there are fewer BIPOC creators in the room than white ones, recognizing and “supporting this marginalized voice: checking in, being present, and acknowledging truths, no matter the size, and providing and accommodating space and needs will greatly impact how this person will navigate their marginalization” (205). He expresses further that the “intention of the check-in is to do just that: check-in with your group about where they are sitting mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually… To check-in is to speak with one’s heart wide open, to share our feelings with our peers which should allow us to delve into the work with minimal anxieties or stress” (207). Recinos demonstrates that the act of checking-in is a tool for constructing rehearsal spaces that acknowledge multiple perspectives and world views and in doing so creates a working environment that is more welcoming and potentially more productive.

Conclusion

There is a shift taking place in the discourse surrounding how to more effectively enact antiracist initiatives into theatre direction, whether that be through casting, audience engagement, or practical rehearsal hall initiatives. Although no hard data can be found to answer this question, it does appear that there has been an increase in the amount of BIPOC theatre artists who are speaking out against racist practices in professional theatre in Canada. There has also been an increase in the number of BIPOC theatre directors and actors working across the country on a variety of stages. This shift in representation is anecdotal, however it is substantial as it speaks to a change in public awareness of representation on and behind stages. The history of Black and

Asian antiracist theatre in Canada laid the groundwork, articulated the inequities, and developed the techniques that are now being adopted more widely in the profession. The credit lies with BIPOC artists and practitioners for bringing these methods to fruition. It wasn't until the mainstream theatre was made aware by the dynamic shift in consciousness after the murder of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020, that the larger, predominantly white, theatre community began to pay attention, looking to these existing models as ways to adapt and change.

Chapter 6: Cultural Consultants

Since 2020 the role of Cultural Consultant has emerged as an advisor to the Director on projects that require specific cultural knowledge. With the list of *BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre* issued in 2020, a great deal of focus was placed on creating culturally competent productions and workspaces due to the many injustices and misrepresentations that have taken place in professional theatre in North America ("BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre"). Canadian directors have historically had an immense amount of freedom in how they choose to present culturally specific work, whether they identify as being from that specific culture or not (this is particularly noted in the work of "auteur" directors[28]). The increase in public consciousness surrounding cultural appropriation has informed the public reception of their works but not necessarily their creative outputs as the governing bodies (CTA) and producing theatres seem to continue to support high profile theatre directors regardless of whether they cause harm. In this chapter I will attempt to define culture and cultural appropriation and then will map out some instances that highlight the culturally inequities that have led to the necessity for increasing cultural competency in professional theatre while also pointing to the gaps in governance that continue to allow for culturally appropriative work to be produced in Canada.

What is Culture?

[28] An auteur director is often thought of as a director who has a singular vision and approach to a piece of theatre. It is thought that this perspective is more important than the text itself and that the "vision" for the play lies solely with the director. All other contributors on the project (designers, actors, choreographers) are to serve this singular vision.

Culture is referred to frequently in discussions surrounding ethical representation in theatre. However, the definition remains somewhat elusive. Sally Engle Merry presents several explanations of the usage of the term in the introduction to the book *Human Rights and Gender Violence* (2005). She begins with one definition that states that culture

> is often seen as the basis of national, ethnic, or religious identities. Culture is sometimes romanticized as the opposite of globalization, resolutely local and distinct. It sometimes refers to rural villages and minority communities where life is understood to be governed by fixed traditions. Within white settler states such as the United States and Canada, it offers an apparently benign way of describing immigrant minorities, racializing these populations while appearing to describe differences in terms of values and beliefs. (10)

Engle Merry explains that culture is often defined by the barriers of nationhood, ethnicity, and religion. She further outlines that this definition leads to establishing a binary between groups perceived to be demarcated by prescribed conventions and, as such, are rigidly contained stable entities verses an ever-fluid global community. Engle Merry also points out that it is via this false binary that white settler states, such as Canada, utilize this oppositional stance to racialize these 'distinct culture groups' under the guise of attempting to define their boundaries.

Engle Merry further explains how culture can be pervious and is in constant renegotiation. She asserts that culture

> consists of repertoires of ideas and practices that are not homogeneous but continually changing because of the contradictions among them or because new ideas and institutions are adopted by members. They typically incorporate contested values and practices. Cultures are not contained within other cultural systems, although not all borders are

> equally porous. Cultural discourses legitimate or challenge authority and justify power relations. (11)

Engle Merry suggests that culture is in a state of flux and that it is reactive to the views and values of the members. There is no fixed culture. Also, exchanges within a culture determine the systems of power within the group, thus positions of authority within a group are also malleable and indeterminant.

The most fulsome definition of culture that Engle Merry presents is one that is reflective of the changing nature of any specific group. She posits that cultural

> practices must be understood in context, so that their meaning and impact change as their context shifts. … This conception emphasizes the active making of culture, society, and institutions and the grounding of this action in specific places and moments. Culture consists not only of beliefs and values but also practices, habits, and commonsensical ways of doing things. They include institutional arrangements, political structures, and legal regulations. As institutions such as laws and policing change so do beliefs, values, and practices. Cultures are not homogeneous and "pure" but produced through hybridization and creolization. (150)

It is the interaction within and without any given culture that contributes to the culture itself or the creation of new cultures. Culture is made up of ideologies as well as practical exercises and events. Engle Merry also demonstrates that culture cannot be understood outside of its context and given that context is constantly being redefined, so is culture.

Much significance is also placed on how to determine who exists within a culture and who does not. Engle Merry explains how this question plays out in forums of international justice:

> NGOs working in various countries hold panels in which the activists speak for their countries, … The setting reinforces the idea that they are speaking for national "cultures" and that these national cultures are homogeneous. Thus, the holistic image of culture is smuggled into international discussions even as participants themselves recognize the dangers of over generalization. Just as the concept of culture needs to be interrogated and destabilized, so do assumptions about who speaks for culture. (19)

The idea that definitive authorities exist as they pertain to any given culture is a falsity. Here, Engle Merry explains that this assumption is detrimental to human rights activism and justice.

Establishing the boundaries of any given culture is an exercise in futility. Engle Merry asserts that "[in] practice, these boundaries are fluid and shifting. Is a person born in one country who has been educated and works in another country an insider in the nation of his or her birth? Does the person born in one country who has been educated and works in another have less right to speak in her adopted country? The boundaries around cultures are never clear and unambiguous" (16). Engle Merry's questions elucidate one of the most pressing issues surrounding representation at the time of writing: the determination of who can speak for a culture. As she points out, it is not an effective question to ask in the arena of international human rights as it offers a flawed sense of authority and upholds the false notion of an essential definition of culture.

Defining the meaning of culture is a problem noted by many theorists. Kevin Avruch offers what he determines as "six mutually related ideas about culture that [he] calls inadequate" (14). They are

1. Culture is homogenous
2. Culture is a thing.
3. Culture is uniformly distributed amoung members of a group.
4. An individual possesses a singular culture.
5. Culture is custom.
6. Culture is timeless. (Avruch 14-16)

Avruch's six insufficient concepts about culture that he presents as common are helpful to consider when addressing issues surrounding cultural appropriation. Similary to Engle Merry, his perspective points to the many challenges surrounding defining the term. However, he does offer that culture is "to some extent always situational, flexible, and responsive to the exigencies the worlds that individuals confront" (20). His assertion offers a spacious understanding of the term that allows for a nuanced and fluid interpretation of the term that is highly informed by context.

What is Cultural Appropriation?

The question of cultural appropriation has been addressed in the discourse surrounding art and theatre for decades. However, the term is somewhat elusive in much of the literature. Erich Hatala Matthes offers a concise definition in the article "Cultural Appropriation and Oppression" (2019). He states that for the purposes of his article he "will treat cultural appropriation as a descriptive term that refers to the use of the stories, styles, motifs, etc. of a

particular cultural group by outsiders of that group …" (1004). Matthes' brief definition outlines the crux of the term which is when an outsider avails themselves of an element of a specific culture to which they do not belong.

Matthes further explains how and when cultural appropriation can be wrongful. He states that "what ultimately makes particular instances of cultural appropriation wrongful, and thus what grounds objections to them, is the way in which they manifest and/or exacerbate inequality and marginalization. … In other words, what makes cultural appropriation wrong, when it is wrongful, is the way it interacts with the oppression of certain cultural group members" (1005). Matthes is quick to point out that it is the power imbalance that makes cultural appropriation objectionable and not that act itself. He further asserts that when members of a marginalized cultural groups adapt styles from the dominant cultures that is "best described as assimilation rather than appropriation" thus concluding that both could be considered cultural appropriation, given his definition, but only the example that exacerbates a power imbalance is wrongful (Matthes 1005).

Like Engle Merry, Matthes also addresses the issue of determining who is inside or outside of a culture. He explains that

> the logic of cultural appropriation … risks embracing forms of cultural essentialism that can exclude individuals on the margins of cultural groups. I have previously argued that this is an especially significant concern because harms of cultural essentialism are similar in kind to the harms of wrongful cultural appropriation—by excluding marginalized group members on the basis of dominant understandings of cultural group membership, appeals to cultural essentialism can have the same kind of silencing function as wrongful cultural appropriation. (1006)

Matthes points out that the damage that can be done by adapting a perspective of cultural essentialism is akin to that of cultural appropriation. Matthes also asserts that the problem of determining cultural insiders from outsiders is inherently unsolvable. However, he does offer that individual cultural groups should have the agency to authorize the appropriate use of their heritage and posits that this authorization process is a way of securing cultural autonomy (1010).

The objection to cultural appropriation has also been framed via an exploration of the meaning of intimacy within a particular cultural group. In this case, the term "intimacy" is not being used in the same way as it is addressed in the chapter relating to Intimacy Direction but instead is pointing to a familiarity between individuals that constitutes a shared lived experience and closeness. Scholars C. Thi Nguyen and Matthew Strohl explain that in

> many cases, members of a group engage in shared practices that contribute to a sense of common identity, such as wearing a certain hair or clothing styles or performing a certain style of music. Participation in such practices can generate relations of *group intimacy*, which can ground certain prerogatives in much the same way that interpersonal intimacy can. One such prerogative is making what we call an *appropriation claim*. An appropriation claim is a request from a group member that non-members refrain from appropriating a given element of the group's culture. Ignoring appropriation claims can constitute a *breach of intimacy*. (Nguyen and Strohl 983)

Nguyen and Strohl use intimacy, or rather the breach of intimacy, as a way of explaining the harm that is done when cultural appropriation occurs. Unlike Matthes who relies on the belief that harm is a result of a power imbalance thus leading to further oppression of already marginalized groups, Nguyen and Strohl attribute the harm to a rupture in confidentiality and

closeness. Regardless of the theory, both arguments lead to a similar end which is that cultural appropriation can be harmful and an abuse of power.

Intercultural Performance and Cultural Appropriation in Canadian Theatre

Working across culture has been a practice acknowledged within the Western dramatic cannon for centuries. The terminology surrounding this type of work has shifted as the social context has changed. In the book *theatre & interculturalism* Ric Knowles explains why the usage of the term intercultural is best suited for examining the complexity of this type of theatre making. When describing his thought process, he writes that he prefers "'intercultural' to the other terms available… because it seems to me important to focus on the contested, unsettling, and often unequal spaces between cultures, spaces that can function in performance as sites of negotiation. Unlike 'cross-cultural', 'intercultural' evokes the possibility of interaction across a multiplicity of cultural positionings, avoiding binary codings" (4). Knowles's definition addresses the binary problem outlined by Engle Merry, while also acknowledging how the chasms between two or more cultures, when in an exchange, can be places for discussion or mediation.

Knowles presents a history of intercultural theatre making in the West that highlights the birth of the European modernist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century (*Theatre & Interculturalism* 11). Further, he presents the case of Peter Brook's 1985 production of *The Mahabharata* and its critical reception by scholar Rustom Bharucha as an example into how intercultural playmaking and cultural appropriation can be dangerously related, if not the same thing. He explains:

> In *Theatre and the World*, Bharucha calls *The Mahabharata* 'one of the most blatant (and accomplished) appropriations in recent years' … Bharucha's critique includes the important observation that although Brook gathers together actors from an impressive number and range of cultures, they work in English, and under the control of Brook himself; 'once he places his mark on his materials, they no longer belong to their cultures. They become part of his world'… Bharucha's argument is lengthy and detailed, but at heart it represents a fundamentally materialist critique from the position of a colonised culture of Brook's unwaveringly appropriative and idealist universalism: 'one cannot separate the culture from the text' … or the performance. (*Theatre & Interculturalsim* 24)

Knowles presents Bharucha's criticism that the power dynamic between Brooks and both the material and his collaborators make for an unbalanced and oppressive processes. He also highlights that Brooks' attempt to remove the original text from the context of the culture and delivering it through Brooks' colonial lens is an act of cultural appropriation. This critique is in line with the more contemporary view of the harms created by cultural appropriation and cultural essentialism as outlined by Engle Merry, Matthes, Nguyen, and Strohl.

Knowles' 1985 example references an international conversation that was academic and public. It is beneficial to examine how these same considerations were present in less high profile, specifically Canadian, collaborations of the time. In 1980, Maria Campbell, Linda Griffiths, and Paul Thompson met for the first time as a trio to begin work on a play about Maria Campbell's life titled *Jessica* (Griffiths and Campbell 9). This collaboration is now infamously known as an intercultural creation process that was fraught with hurt and exposed many questions surrounding cultural appropriation and intercultural collaboration. Maria Campbell

explains in *The Book of Jessica* (which was co-authored by herself and Griffiths) the genesis of the project: "We'd do a play together—no he couldn't teach me what he knew, but that was okay, I was never a good student. Instead, we'd exchange. I'd learn from taking part in 'the process,' and in return I'd give my bag of goodness knows what. The play would be about being a woman and the struggle of trying to understand what that meant" (qtd. in Griffiths and Campbell 16). Here Campbell engages with the concept of exchange as it pertained to her early conversations surrounding the project with Thompson. It is important to note that Campbell identified as a Métis woman, and both Thompson and Griffiths identify as white.

Adding to the complications of the intercultural exchange was the fact that Griffiths would be playing the role of Campbell in the show and would also be improvising material for the script based on Campbell's life. These improvisations would then be curated by Thompson (with feedback from Campbell) and subsequently made into the first production of the play *Jessica,* which premiered in Saskatoon in the fall of 1982 (Griffiths and Campbell 10). Although all members of the project were on board for the process, Campbell explains how the intentions of equitable collaboration did not manifest in the process:

> Our elders teach us that we don't own, can never own the land, the stories, the songs, not in the way that the outside views ownership. Our culture believes in giving, potlatches and give-aways are all part of the sacred circle. To grow spiritually, to be healthy physically, you have to let go, give away. But it's bloody hard to live that outside, in a society that takes and takes, a society that changes, rearranges, interprets and interprets some more, until there's nothing but confusion. There isn't any sense … any real sense of preservation or of keeping anything intact, not even what is sacred. Sure, we have traditional copyrights on songs, stories composed by people, and there's a different kind

> of copyright on the songs and stories that are sacred, it's all oral and those copyrights are respected, and no one would dream of breaking that. But when outsiders come in and are included in the sharing of these things. They think it's alright to claim them because no one said, 'You can't,' or because there's no contract. But the very sharing of those things is a contract, and there has to be respect for the sharing. (91)

Campbell is clearly outlining how the different cultural expectations and understandings of sharing can cause harm. She acknowledges the entitlement of outsiders who perceive the invitation to take part in exclusive cultural practices as an authorization by the community to disseminate or even replicate their cultural practices and artifacts.

It is undeniable that the process of making *Jessica* caused harm to Campbell. It is also important to state that *The Book of Jessica*, the document that contains both the script of the finished play *Jessica* as well as the reflection on the process by both Campbell and Griffiths, has made an enormous impact on Canadian and Indigenous Theatre. Prolific theatre artist and scholar Yvette Nolan highlights this notion in the book *Medicine Shows*. She begins the chapter titled "Survivance" with a reference to the play and the play making process of *Jessica.* Nolan states that "The play in many ways is the beginning of an Indigenous theatre in this country, even though it was created with two non-Native artists and produced by non-Native theatres in Saskatoon and Toronto. It is what I refer to as an 'eighth fire production'—one created by a group of Indigenous and settler artists in an attempt to create understanding and forge a new and healthy way forward" (21). Nolan's assertion that the process of creating and presenting *Jessica* brought on a new movement in Canadian theatre should not be overlooked. It is a profound statement to the power of working cross culturally and the impact that this work can have over time.

Nolan also acknowledges the immense personal cost to Campbell. Nolan explains that *The Book of Jessica* is a manifestation of the heartbreak of Native theatre in this country: "Maria entered the project because she believed so profoundly in the power of theatre, and the process, the product, and the aftermath cost her and co-creator Linda Griffiths so much" (Nolan 22). Nolan highlights the price the artists paid in the making of the piece of theatre. However, she also explains how their choice to archive the fraught process led to the creation of a document like none other. Nolan states: "Instead of publishing the script, the two women agreed to publish the story of making the play, and the conversations about the process became the book. I do not think there is a more honest, painful, illuminating chronicle of the abyss between First Nations and settler descendants than *The Book of Jessica*" (22). The choice not to publish the play on its own and instead surround the script with the unique and frustrating details of the creation process not only provided readers with a map of the cultural landscape of the time of creation but points to the way both Griffiths and Campbell found value in the work. By publishing the story of the making of the script alongside the text they are demonstrating that the process and the reflection on the process remain just as important as the play itself.

The Book of Jessica birthed a new way of examining the creation process. It also highlighted the resilience of the makers and provided a new arena for the creation of work by and for Indigenous artists (even despite the harms the play making process caused). Nolan explains that the

> act of resistance that was *Jessica* opened a door that future generations of storytellers pushed through to occupy the stages that had heretofore disappeared them … For people who have refused to disappear in spite of hundreds of years of occupation, refused to be assimilated in spite of an active policy to take away their languages, traditional lands, and

> cultural practices, the telling of these stories and speaking of these languages in public is a political act, an act of resistance. (31)

The act of sharing the collaborative process and Maria Campbell's remarkable fortitude in navigating an artistic journey that took from her without proper consent or consideration led to manifesting a space in Canadian theatre for future Indigenous theatre makers to further develop. It was a powerful way of pushing back that welcomed many future acts of the same nature.

It should also be noted that the book, which focused primarily on the relationship between Campbell and Griffiths, paid little attention to the role of Paul Thompson, the director of the play. It is known that he contracted both women and facilitated the process that was ripe with racism and appropriation. In this instance, the responsibility of the director to create a safe working environment for the collaborating artists was clearly a failure and yet, Thompson appears to have benefitted from a highly successful production in Toronto without being held accountable for his role in the harm.

Similarly, there have been well-publicized incidents that occurred in Canada within the last twenty years that point to a growing shift in the way cultural awareness is being discussed on professional stages where the director seems to have made out without being held to account. In 2003 The Factory Theatre, led by Ken Gass, programed Carmen Aguirre's play *The Refugee Hotel*. However, the production was cancelled "amid allegations of racial and cultural insensitivity" (Conlogue). The play is derived from Aguirre's lived experience. Her family fled Chile under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Upon entering Canada, they were forced to stay in a cheap hotel along with other Chilean refugees. The play follows eight refugee characters and three Canadian characters at the hotel (Conlogue).

The issues arose around casting the production and director Ken Gass' understanding of what would be appropriate. Ray Conlogue quotes Aguirre in a 2003 Globe and Mail article and explains the scenario:

> 'I certainly didn't expect Ken to find eight Chilean-Canadian actors who happened to be perfect for the roles.' She had suggested that he try to locate non-white actors, especially native Canadian actors, who would look appropriate onstage and sympathetically portray Chilean culture. She was also prepared for "perhaps two of the eight" Chilean characters to be played by white actors. On the first day of auditions all the actors, with the exception of Chilean-Canadian Marilo Lopez, were white. Only a few other actors were scheduled to be seen during the following five days of auditions, and a workshop reading of the play on the final day had seven white actors and Lopez. (Conlogue)

Subsequently, Aguirre withdrew the rights to her play from the theatre and the play did not see a full production for six years, eventually being produced in 2009 by Toronto's Alameda Theatre. The production featured several members of the cast who had "first-hand experience of the tumultuous political life of Central and South America" (Posner). Here it is clear again, that the playwright was the person to experience the negative effects of the cancellation. She had to wait another six years before the play was produced in a culturally appropriate manner while Gass was able to reschedule his season with few professional or personal ramifications.

Perhaps, the most publicized and openly debated incidents of cultural appropriation in recent Canadian theatre history took place in the summer of 2018 in Quebec. Robert Lepage's productions of both *SLĀV* and *Kanata* garnered back-to-back critical attention from both press and community groups. Robert Everett-Green of *The Globe and Mail* summarized the criticism of the two productions, stating that

> those who protested *Slāv* and *Kanata* weren't angry about the content of the shows, which they had not seen, but about the exclusionary process with which they were made. They didn't demand control over what the show said, just a recognition that those particular stories could no longer be told while shutting out the voices of those who had lived them. (Everett-Green)

Everett-Green points out that the critique of Lepage's work during this time is not about the result but is mostly related to process. In both cases, the public discourse surrounding the productions became quite heated. For the purposes of this chapter, the exploration of Lepage's productions during the summer of 2018 will be limited to the *SLĀV* controversy. Although the events and discourse surrounding *Kanata* differ from that of *SLĀV*, both productions faced similar criticisms rooted in cultural appropriation.

SLĀV, which was hosted by the Montreal International Jazz Festival, opened in June 2018. Philip S. S. Howard describes the premise of the show as a

> musical stage play directed by Quebec playwright, actor, and stage director Robert Lepage, and produced by his company Ex Machina. It is based on songs from two albums recorded by French-cum-Quebecoise singer, Betty Bonifassi, who stars in the production. Bonifassi's albums compose her re-interpretations of African American music created under the most antiblack conditions, that is, work songs written by enslaved and incarcerated African Americans, and sung as they laboured under, and resisted, the conditions of slavery and its afterlife. (Howard 129)

The show was cancelled by the Jazz Festival after three performances when the pressure from the protests by the *SLĀV* Resistance Collective, a "group of visual artists, musicians, writers,

academics, community organizers, and journalists" and "concerned Montréalers" (*SLĀV* Resistance Collective), a petition with more than 1500 signatures surfaced, "several high-profile African American artists expressed their support for the resistance on social media, and … singer-songwriter Moses Sumney cancelled his scheduled performances at the Festival, citing in a detailed letter his concerns about *SLĀV*" (Howard 142). However, it was reported that Bonifassi had broken her ankle, and that the cancellation may have been related to her injury (Dunlevy). It should also be noted that scheduled regional tour of *SLĀV* was not cancelled (MacPherson).

T'Cha Dunlevy reviewed the opening night performance 2018. In it he calls attention to the first few moments of the piece:

> The opening number was a modern a cappella hymn, conducted by Bonifassi and sung by her six backup singers in what sounded like an Eastern European tongue, against a starlit backdrop. Bonifassi then spoke, tracing the origins of the word 'slave' back to the 10th-centruy Ottoman Empire… Sharon James, one of Bonifassi's two chorists of colour, began to sing Early In the Morning, … On stage, James and her fellow backup vocalists, wearing scarves in their hair and flowing skirts, mimed picking cotton: and that's where things began to fall apart. Accepting the image of white women picking cotton requires a significant degree of cognitive dissonance. It was but the first of many such instances. (Dunlevy)

Dunlevy goes on to point out several other moments in the production that miss the mark. He attributes these failings to the fact that "[attempts] to talk about oppression on a broader scale come off as cursory, at best, and at worst like a smoke screen for the fact that this is a show about black slave songs, written and performed by (mostly) white people" (Dunlevy). According to

Dunlevy, the absence of cultural awareness hindered not only the public reception of the piece but also the quality of the art.

Historian and Hip-hop artist Aly Ndiaye was approached by Robert Lepage's production company during the summer of 2017 to discuss the historical context of *SLĀV*. He had functioned as a kind of cultural consultant on the production but was ignored (Ndiaye).In an article written for CBC news Ndiaye explains that he was excited by the idea of the production but upon learning more and viewing footage of a preliminary iteration of the show as well as seeing a preview of the show in April 2018, he was disappointed (Ndiaye). He explains,

> Right at the first meeting, as well as in correspondence after the first video, I stressed the importance of hiring black actresses to play slaves. … The creators approached me to answer questions about the history of slavery, but others should have been consulted to make sure the subject of slavery was treated with sensitivity, to ensure it would be universally accepted… Unfortunately, it seems to me that this is another missed opportunity to highlight Quebecers of African descent. For once, members of this community could have felt heard and represented in a cultural space. (Ndiaye)

Ndiaye asserts that Lepage's choice to hire a predominately white cast is inexcusable and that the Lepage's decision not to listen to Ndiaye's advice as well as his choice not to consult with more members of the African Quebecois community was an opportunity lost.

Ndiaye further explains that it is impossible to talk about slavery in the Americas without addressing racism. Ndiaye states that

> We are told we must go beyond a 'racial' interpretation of this work, but these songs are born of racism. When Betty Bonifassi performs these songs in concert, I take pleasure in

> hearing her and seeing her perform. That is not the problem. The problem lies in the staging and visual interpretation of this history which is so sensitive for black people… However, celebrating slave songs—the medium of resistance and resilience of enslaved blacks—by ignoring current issues (namely, our underrepresentation in Quebec culture) is problematic. The problem is, in a way, the refusal to take the responsibility that comes with the baggage, to take the songs out of the context in which they were created, to make their singing a simple cultural event devoid of their original meaning. (Ndiaye)

Here, like Engle Merry, Ndiaye points out the significance of context as it relates to understanding culture. He addresses the problem of engaging with sensitive cultural material without acknowledging the history as well as the current cultural ramifications. Ndiaye also relays how it is not the singing of the songs that is appropriative but rather the attempt to interpret them through a visual medium that fails to accurately reference the history.

Just as Bonifassi and Lepage ignored the contemporary context for the play, so too did they overlook the historical context of slavery in Canada and Quebec. Howard outlines this history briefly:

> Though largely elided in official narratives, slavery occurred in the territories now known as Quebec, laying the foundation for antiblackness in the settler colonial society that has descended from it (Austin 7; Maynard). In the French colony of New France, both kidnapped Africans and members of nations indigenous to the territory were enslaved. … Slavery in New France and the rest of Canada differed from the large-scale plantation form typical of other slave societies. However, scholars of Canadian slavery have insisted that this difference is not to be imagined to mean that Canadian slavery was less cruel that its analogues elsewhere. (130)

As Howard relays, the history of slavery in Quebec is substantial and brutal. He also explains that the fact that Bonifassi and Lepage neglected to include this history in their production is an act of erasure.

Both Lepage and Bonifassi made public comments about their perspective of the play and how they viewed their positions. Everett-Green states that

> they made statements about universality and 'not seeing' colour. 'We don't talk about black and white in the show,' Ms. Bonifassi told The Montreal Gazette, as if race wasn't an essential element of black slavery … They talked about diversity, while saying that it was up to the paying public—which in most theatres is mostly white—to decide whether what they did with the songs was okay… 'Letting the audience decide' sounds democratic, but a vote in this case costs at least $60, and deferring the matter to the judgement of others is a polite way of shutting down the discussion. (Everett-Green)

Everett-Green's critique of Lepage and Bonifassi points to a lack of responsibility on the part of the artists to acknowledge their privileged perspective. As established white artists they can fill a theatre and receive financial backing regardless of their inability to consider the ramifications of their artistic choices or the harm they may cause. Also, they stood to benefit financially from the sales of all tickets (whether they be to those converted to their cause or the undecided).

Howard, Dunlevy, Ndiaye, and Everett-Green's writing, all reflect a critical perspective of Lepage and Bonifassi's show; however, at the time, there was also a great deal of support for *SLĀV*. Brendan Kelly outlines these arguments for the Montreal Gazette in the article "Why *SLĀV* debate is misunderstood by some francophones." In the article Kelly asserts that a large portion of the white francophone media offered support for Lepage and Bonifassi stating "many

in the francophone media and entertainment milieu" say the criticism of *SLAV* is "the latest example of political correctness gone crazy" (Kelly). He goes on to reference other noted incidents of cultural appropriation within francophone media and entertainment and cites the *SLĀV* controversy as yet another offense amongst a long list. It should also be mentioned that Lepage received a public endorsement from the Parti Québecois leader at the time, Jean-François Lisée (Lapierre).

Howard explains that, at the time, it was assumed by Lepage and others that the protesters would be anglophone and this assumption was incorrect; "while the resistance to *SLĀV* was homegrown and led by Francophone Black people, it was presumed to be coming from hostile Anglophones. Thus, when Lepage does finally agree to the protestors' request to meet with him, he confesses to being shocked that the members of *SLĀV* Resistance were Francophone" (141). Howard further explains that the markers of "Anglophone" and "American" are used to identify "Black people who testify to antiblackness in Quebec" thus further othering the experiences of Francophone Black people while simultaneously attempting to erase their existence from the public narrative created both within the play as well as in the discourse surrounding it (141).

After *SLĀV* was cancelled, Lepage released his own statement outlining his perspective. In it he attempts to justify his and Bonifassi's actions, claiming that the act of playing another person is at the heart of theatre and that there should be no boundaries around this exploration. He states that

> theatre has been based on a very simple principle, that of playing someone else. Pretending to be someone else. Stepping into the shoes of another person to try to understand them and, in the process, perhaps understand ourselves, better. This ancient

> ritual requires that we borrow, for the duration of a performance, someone else's look, voice, accent and, at times, even gender. … But when we are no longer allowed to step into someone else's shoes, when it is forbidden to identify with someone else, theatre is denied its very nature; it is prevented from performing its primary function and is thus rendered meaningless. (qtd in Lapierre)

Lepage claims that to explore the human condition, or perhaps simply just himself, it is necessary to take on elements of other cultures and identities. As Matthes states, this alone is cultural appropriation (which in and of itself is not harmful). However, Lepage fails to acknowledge his positionality as a white male who is an internationally established artist. It is through this massive oversight that he misses the mark. He does not reference the power imbalance between himself and the people he is attempting to represent. He causes harm with his decision to appropriate the culture of enslaved African peoples and their descendants as well as the larger Black community. It should also be mentioned that, as Maria Campbell so beautifully put it, to take from someone else's culture without consent is an act of thievery. Through engaging with the record of the public discourse of the time it appears as through Lepage and Bonifassi ignored the calls from the community that they stated they were attempting to empathize with and in doing so caused a great deal of harm rendering their efforts not only meaningless artistically but also an act of dangerous cultural erasure.

Howard explains how Lepage's explanation of taking on another culture without any form of meaningful engagement with members of that culture is a flawed premise. He states,

> By speaking of slipping into the other's skin in the context of the *SLĀV* debate, Lepage admits an attempt to inhabit Blackness as a vehicle through which to understand himself and others who are not Black. He rightly concludes that he is being asked to consider the

> limits of 'recogniz[ing] oneself in the other' (Ex Machina, my translation) by this means, and to reconsider his sense of entitlement to such a methodology. Black objection is to the conceit of using one's non-Black experience as a lens through which to represent Black experience which is, by definition incommensurable with one's own. It is also to the concomitant illusion that doing so counts as genuine engagement with Blackness that allows non-Black people to understand themselves differently, when in fact they have avoided meaningful interaction with Black people and their knowledge. (135)

Howard asserts that Lepage's premise of engaging with Black identity to understand his experience is in and of itself is false because Lepage's experience is not supported or informed by members of the Black community and as such his exploration is in fact solely informed from his white perspective.

SLĀV had a brief second life during January and February of 2019 (Dunlevy). Ex Machina toured a revised version of the production in towns around Quebec. Dunlevy reported in March of 2019 that "Ex Machina issued no statement on the show's termination, but acknowledged that *SLĀV* will no longer be performed, in an email to La Presse" (Dunlevy). It appears that both Lepage and Bonifassi have no plans to revisit the show in the future.

Cultural Competency

Since 2020 there has been a great deal of change in the way that cultural appropriation is being addressed within professional theatre. One of the catalysts for this shift was the launch of *We See You White American Theatre* on June 8th, 2020 ("About"). Alongside the initial statement, which "received 80,000 unique visitors and 50,000 signatories" within 24 hours, another

document titled *BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre* was also presented ("About"). The writers explain the genesis and purpose of the document:

> This is a living document. It is an omnibus declaration of interlinked strategies, comprehensive but by no means exhaustive, and remains subject to amendment. It is culled from years of discussions between members of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) theatre communities immersed in the dynamic of which they speak, and bears the contradictions of our many concerns, approaches, and needs. … Racism and white supremacy are cultural formations constructed to rationalize unjust behaviour for economic gain, and eradicating them requires radical change on both cultural and economic fronts. We also wish to underscore that our emphasis on antiracism should not be taken as an excuse to overlook sexism, ableism, ageism, heteronormativity, gender binarism, and transphobia, as our identities are intersectional. ("BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre)

The statement highlights the interconnectedness of the strategies that are being called upon to be employed within the professional American theatre as well as the plurality of the authorship. It also asserts that the cultural formations of white supremacy and racism are utilized to justify harm being done within the industry. There is also attention paid to the acknowledgement of intersectionality, spotlighting that antiracism is not to override other forms of oppression.

The first demand listed in the document is that of Cultural Competency. Although, the document does not offer a definition of the term, it is made clear that it is paramount to the work that needs to be done. It states, "We begin with cultural competency to lay the groundwork for all our antiracist measures. Codes of conduct, regular trainings, and the respect, recognition and protection of our differences are all immediate requirements for workplaces without harm"

(“BIPOC Demands for White American Theatre” 1). Cultural competency is presented as being the basis for which all the other demands emerge and that it is paramount to acknowledge the need for cultural competency prior to the addressing of other demands.

The specific demands relating to cultural competency include references to cultural consultants. There is no specific definition as to what a cultural consultant is; however, it is implied that it would be an individual with substantial training in matters related to BIPOC identities, antiracism, disability advocacy, and gender awareness. The following demands highlight specific scenarios and requirements:

- When producing/programming BIPOC stories to be directed by someone from outside of the cultural context of the story itself (especially if the director is white), a cultural consultant must be hired at the expense of the institution.
- Implement mandatory hiring of credible cultural consultants for culturally specific shows.
- Employ mandatory hiring of intimacy directors with BIPOC training for every show. (“BIPOC Demands For White American Theatre” 9)

In these examples it is made clear that the credibility of the cultural consultant is paramount and that white directors working on productions that are outside of their culture must be supported by a suitable cultural consultant. It is also stated that intimacy directors (regardless of whether they are telling specific cultural stories, or not) must have completed culturally specific training.

In Canada the professional standards are moving towards clarifying language as it relates to cultural competency. The 2021 CTA Agreement addresses these issues under clause 10:00

Access, Inclusion, and Anti-Oppression. The document states that in incidences where artists may be working on

> identity-specific content, or characters outside the lived experience of the creative team, the Theatre shall make best efforts to consult with appropriately knowledgeable Elders or individuals from those cultures or communities to ensure informed and respectful choices relating to representation. Such consultation should be conducted with sufficient lead time to enable useful integration of any learning into pre-production, rehearsal and production, and shall be compensated appropriately. (CTA 17)

The language surrounding the use of cultural consultants remains vague. There is no stipulated fee for cultural consultants nor any binding language clarifying that the Theatre must comply with the consultant's recommendations and what the recourse would be should they ignore the consultant's recommendations altogether. There is also no definition as to what makes an individual a reliable consultant and no indication that there be any community consultation with the group being represented in the production. This perspective then defaults to relying on an essentialist view of culture which, as noted by both Matthes and Engle Merry, may be harmful in and of itself.

This section of the CTA also addresses culturally specific casting and the hiring of artistic staff. The document states that

> PACT and Equity recognize that casting against the indicated or implied ethnicity of a culturally-specific role, or outside the lived experience of a character with a disability or underrepresented gender identity, may have a discriminatory or distressing impact on those artists and communities. When casting such roles, the Theatre will make best

> efforts to audition and engage Artists of appropriate identity… Application of the principle of Inclusive Casting will extend to the engagement of all artistic personnel…Theatres are also encouraged to actively solicit the participation of underrepresented identities in all areas of theatre creation and production. (CTA 17)

The language here is related to intention and not necessarily practice. It is also not made clear how artists will determine what is appropriate for any casting notice or artistic staff hiring. Who determines, in these instances of identity-specific engagement, what makes someone in or of a specific cultural group? It is implied that it is the Theatre, but what is any theatre's authority as it relates to determining membership within individual cultures or protected identities? As mentioned previously, this notion of definitive cultural identity is flawed and in the best of times should be determined by members of that specific community themselves, thus demonstrating the absurdity of having a definitive cultural outsider in charge of determining who may or may not be part of an underrepresented group.

Cultural Dramaturgy

The role of cultural consultant, although mentioned in the CTA, is not an official equity title and as such there is no professional pay scale or model as to how and when a consultant may or may not be involved within preproduction, rehearsal, or technical rehearsals. This lack of clarity and power in the role has led some artists to consider alternative ways of imparting specific cultural knowledge for theatre. In a 2023 article published in *Canadian Theatre Review* Sadie Berlin includes a definition of cultural dramaturgy that appears to address many of the

questions that arise from engaging with the CTA's current policies surrounding cultural competency. Cultural Dramaturgy is described as an approach that

> aims to create a higher quality of theatre by focusing on cultural intimacy, specificity, and authenticity for every performance. … [there are] three components to cultural dramaturgy: the aesthetic, the political, and the humane. This approach suggests that when a company is producing a culturally specific play or a play that portrays members of a particular community, people from that culture or community need to be in the room and involved in the process from the beginning. … By ensuring that specific cultural voices have power and agency through the production process, a safe supportive environment can be fostered where potentially difficult material can be worked through with as little apprehension or harm as possible. (44 Berlin)

Berlin's definition speaks to the creation of a new way of engaging with culturally specific work. Cultural dramaturgy links the notion of creative collaboration with that of culturally competency as opposed to the idea of a cultural consultant who is seen as outside the artistic team. However Berlin does mention that if no one on the artistic team is able to perform cultural dramaturgy then a consultant should be present for the entire artistic process. The intention of cultural dramaturgy is to weave cultural knowledge into all aspects of a production.

Conclusion

With the movement in the professional theatre community to consider better practices for engaging in culturally specific material, it remains paramount that directors remain accountable to the communities they are attempting to represent or serve. The emergence of cultural

consultants and cultural dramaturges may be a partial solution to reducing cultural appropriation in professional theatre. However, for these new roles to be effective they must first be acknowledged by theatre's governing forces. They are currently not listed with in the CTA, ITA, or DOT agreements as professionals and as such have no scale for pay or suggested engagement practices. For these new positions to have an impact currently, directors and artistic directors must choose to listen to these advisors and as noted in the above research, that is not always the case[29].

[29] An example of how certain directors maintain great power within the industry regardless of their history of cultural appropriation is the fact that Robert Lepage is directing *Macbeth* at the Stratford Festival in 2025.

Chapter 7: Accessibility Practices

In 2013 the Accessibility for Manitobans Act became law, marking Manitoba as the second province in Canada, following Ontario, to engage in accessibility legislation. In 2019 The Accessible Canada Act became federal law with the goal to "create a Canada without barriers by 2040" ("About the Accessible Canada Act"). In 2021, mia susan amir and Jessica Watkin collaborated on an article for *Canadian Theatre Review* titled "Pandemic Forum: Reflections from Canadian Theatremakers" in which they express that "[i]n the face of the pandemic, mainstream theatre communities are belatedly arriving to the in-between spaces of living and making that Crip artists have inhabited for so long" (46). This shift in the public consciousness surrounding accessibility has impacted the way the mainstream professional theatre companies in Canada, including the directors that engage with these institutions, are creating work and sharing it with the public. This chapter examines the shifts in processes that directors are making to increase accessibility for theatre practitioners. The chapter will engage with a brief definition about access needs, outline the federal and provincial regulations and definitions surrounding accessibility, consider the relationship between disability arts and accessible theatre, and lastly, examine some of the steps of a professional directorial process and how artists are reimagining these steps to best serve all artists no matter how they identify or the specifics of their access needs.

All humans have access needs. As a temporarily abled person, my access needs are generally met by the society I live in. In *Skin, Tooth, and Bone: The Basis of Movement is Our People* Sins Invalid define Access needs/accessibility as "those things that are needed in order for someone to fully participate in a space or activity, which can include wheelchair access, scent-free space, ASL interpretation, etc. In a disability justice context, access needs are seen as

universal – every bodymind has needs, not just disabled people" (143). Accessibility issues effect all members of society regardless of how they identify or what their access needs may be. The Manitoba Accessibility Office explains that Manitoba accessibility legislation "affects all Manitobans—people who confront barriers every day, as well as those in a position to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility" ("The Accessibility for Manitobans Act"). Directors in professional theatre in Canada hold a great deal of power to "identify, remove and prevent" access to the theatrical creation process ("The Accessibility for Manitobans Act"). It is through this lens that I approach the research of accessibility practices in the directorial process.

A disability justice framework provides a structure to aid in imagining how and what an accessible directorial process may be comprised of. Sins Invalid, a collective, describe a disability justice framework as understanding that

- All bodies are unique and essential
- All bodies have strengths and needs that must be met.
- We are powerful, not despite the complexities of our bodies, but because of them.
- All bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion, and more, and we cannot separate them. (19)

Just inclusion is not solely about ensuring that the access needs of every individual are met but also acknowledging the power and unique contribution of each human. This model also calls attention to the intersectional identities of each person and specifically celebrates their distinctness.

Further to the acknowledgement of the individual, the collective experience is also paramount to Disability Justice. Sins Invalid explain that

> Disability justice holds a vision born out of collective struggle, drawing upon legacies of cultural and spiritual resistance. Within a thousand underground paths we ignite small persistent fires of rebellion in everyday life. Disabled people of the global majority—Black and brown people—share common ground confronting and subverting colonial powers in our struggle for life and justice. There has always been resistance to all forms of oppression, as we know in our bones that there have also always been disabled people visioning a world where we flourish, a world that values and celebrates us in all our beauty. (20)

The movement is described as created from a series of paths that work together towards change and empowerment. It is noted that the disability justice movement is linked to the freedom of all people and is not separate from decolonization and anti-racism movements demonstrating, via a call to celebrate and value difference, that the systems and processes in place that are either knowingly or unknowingly exclusive serve those in power and alienate individuals whose unmet access needs create barriers to opportunity.

This chapter engages with the social model of disability, defined by Disability Rights UK, as a way of investigating how to address accessibility in a directorial process. The social model of disability

> was developed by Disabled people and describes peoples as being disabled by barriers in society, not by our impairment or difference. … barriers are identified as being the physical environment, people's attitudes, the way people communicate, how institutions and organizations are run, and how society discriminates against those of us who are perceived as 'different'. Removing these barriers creates equality and offers Disabled people more independence, choice and control. ("Social Model of Disability: Language")

The social model of disability calls attention to societal barriers and by doing so highlights the need for creating structures, physical or theoretical, to address the access needs of all members of society.

The social model of disability also preferences language that calls attention to societal barriers. Disability Rights UK explains that

> people have impairments, they do not have disabilities. … the term 'people with disabilities' is said to confuse impairment and disability and implies disability is something caused by the individual, rather than society. As a result, the term 'Disabled people' is used to describe people with impairments who are disabled by barriers constructed by society. ("Social Model of Disability: Language")

By placing the focus on society as the problem and not the individual with an impairment it is made explicit that access is the responsibility of all members of a community and not the sole responsibility of any individual. This chapter engages with this theoretical framework as it supports the necessity of inquiring about modes of directorial practice that best serve all members of society, whether they identify as disabled or not.

Accessibility for Manitobans Act 2013 was established to create processes for removing barriers for Disabled people. It is made up of five standards which are labelled as the building blocks for effecting tangible change. These standards are outlined as Accessible Customer Service, Accessible Information and Communications, Accessible Built Environment, Employment Accessibility, and Accessible Transportation ("The Accessibility for Manitoban's Act"). In examining these standards, professional directorial process interacts with the standards of Accessibility to Employment and Accessible Built Environment. Directors in Canada often

hold hiring power as well as control over the creative process, within the boundaries of the company that is engaging them. Although they do not have control over the physical infrastructure of the spaces they work within, they do have agency over the set designs for their individual productions and may hold sway over how the rehearsal hall is organized within the existing physical properties of the creative space.

The federal government provides language through which to consider accessibility practices. The Accessible Canada Act outlines seven principles that govern the implementation of the act. These principles are:

- everyone must be treated with dignity
- everyone must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the life they are able to wish to have
- everyone must be able to participate fully and equally in society
- everyone must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire
- laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the ways that different kind of barriers and discrimination intersect
- persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures, and
- accessibility standards and regulations must be made with the goal of achieving the highest level of accessibility (“About the Accessible Canada Act”)

These principles make explicit the requirements for an increasingly accessible Canada. It is clear through examining this list that many theatres in Canada are meeting the requirements of this list to varying degrees of success.

Accessibility and Disability in Theatre

Accessible theatre practices have been taking place in Canadian theatre for decades. Much of this work has been done by artists in the Disability Arts Community. In *Interdependent Magic: Disability Performance in Canada*, Jessica Watkin defines Disability Arts as "Art, theatre, and performance that is created by (and possibly for) Disabled artists. This could be an integrated team of Disabled and non-disabled artists, but overall Disability Art refers to the Disability-centred, created pieces" (13). As Watkin points out, Disability Arts centers the experience of and is created by Disabled artists. Further, Kirsty Johnston adds that Canadian Disability Theatre is best

> … understood as an intercultural project, one in which artists from a range of disability cultures contribute to a polyvalent disability culture. In this reading, disability culture is not a monolith that essentializes one world-view or disability experience. Rather, its chief presumption is a sense of shared and open-ended identity rooted in disability experience that 'rejects the notion of impairment difference as a symbol of shame, and stresses instead solidarity and a positive identification'. The implied preference for pride over shame, solidarity over isolation, and positive identification over negative illustrated disability culture's connection to other human rights and minority movements of the twentieth century. (Johnston 6)

Citing Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer, Johnston explains that Disability theatre is not a monolith but instead a movement that prioritizes difference while being rooted in solidarity. The implied interconnectedness is paramount to the field as a guiding principle in creating art for, by, and with Disabled people.

It is necessary to make the distinction between Disability Arts and Accessibility Arts. Jessica Watkin defines Accessibility Arts as "Pieces of art that incorporate accessibility measures, but do not necessarily contain Disability content. Access measures may include (but are not limited to): Relaxed Performance, Audio Description, American Sign Language (asl)" (13). Accessibility Arts focuses on creating art that does not inherently centre a Disabled perspective but rather incorporates accessible infrastructure and processes to ensure that all members of the creation team, as well as the audience, are able to freely participate in the creation and consumption of the art. By incorporating elements of Accessibility Arts directors can better meet the needs of their colleagues as well as create processes that welcome artists with a variety of access needs.

The history of accessible theatre making in Canada is inherently tied to the history of Disability Theatre. Although this chapter is not focused on examining the history of the Disability Theatre it is imperative to state that accessible theatre practices have and continue to be developed by Disabled artists (Johnston). Kirsty Johnston relays the growth in the field within the last few decades, stating that in the 1980's the "term disability theatre would have been unknown and confusing. … In the intervening period, disability culture and politics in Canada have been transformed and the disability arts and culture movement, through festivals and other networking forums, has forged links between artists" (45). Recognizing the genesis of these practices is important and a valuable study unto itself.

A milestone within mainstream Canadian theatre that called attention to Disabled theatre artists was the National Arts Centre's Summit and Republic of Inclusion. In 2014 The National Arts Centre began a series of three research initiatives, led by Associate Artistic Director Sarah Garton Stanley in collaboration with various artists. The first was focused on Indigenous Performance and the second was "Deaf, disability, Mad arts and inclusion", which took place over the years 2016 and 2017 ("Inclusion: Deaf, disability, Mad Arts"). Each cycle was divided into three phases. The first phase, "The Summit," involved a gathering between "inspirational leaders and empowered institutions". The second phase was "The Study" which was a "larger gathering where artists, scientists, leaders of all kinds and students come together to develop and explore theme-based performance practices". The Final phase was a public event that differed for each project. In the case of the cycle focusing on "Deaf, disability, Mad arts and inclusion" this was called the "Republic of Inclusion" ("Inclusion: Deaf, disability, Mad Arts").

Co-curators Sarah Garton Stanley and Syrus Marcus Ware created a list of goals for the 2016 summit. They were to create a space for the artists to share their experiences of working in theatre and to help find "possible ways forward" (9). Another stated goal was to provide "institutional respondents from various major theatre organizations an opportunity to sit in the middle of a conversation" about accessibility with artist/leaders that have been engaged in the work for decades and to create an exchange of ideas in the hopes of fostering change in the industry while taking care "to avoid duplicating what is already happening" and working "together towards strengthening and supporting one another" (9). These stated goals were drawn up with the anticipation of bringing even more artists together for The Study and The Republic of Inclusion which took place in 2017 (9).

The Summit report, written by Stanley and Ware (with support from Jesse Strong), outlines several items that were raised by the artist/leaders. Importance was placed on "the need for advanced planning in theatre processes, and the need for artist input (and workshopping) in the design of theatre spaces, sets, props and costumes," in collaboration with artists who have lived experience of disability (17). Also, the artist/leaders shared information regarding "a stigma around hiring that manifested in worries about the financial implications of creating fully accessible processes" since access needs were often outside the primary budget (17). Artist/leader Alex Bulmer explains that a re-examination of the order in which theatre is made is paramount to making change that will substantially alter the experiences of Disabled theatre makers. She states that "Our challenge and opportunity is to re-order the way theatre is created. Often the set is designed first and the performers come in later, but I've worked on projects where the opposite is possible… a set created for a performer's specific needs" (16). Inverting the process and prioritizing the needs of the artists involved over the esthetic vision of the director and designer can result in a more accessible playing space for the actors and a more collaborative process for the director and designers. This shift in authority over the playing space is another indicator of the renegotiation of the role of the director that has been taking place since 2014.

Time also played a large role in the discussions. Stanley and Ware highlighted the tight timelines involved in production and the high level of stress for all parties. They explain that this led to discussing "how to imagine theatre which allows for our humanity—and all of our physical and emotional needs leading up to opening night" (18). The sense of time scarcity in the professional theatre was also heavily linked to capitalism in the report. Stanley and Ware

introduce the notion of "cripping[30]" the model to subvert the external demands. They explain that the

> presence of a crip lens in theatre environment offers an opportunity to disrupt the capitalist machine and the fallacy of 'independence'. It disrupts the notion that art should be made quickly and with little expense, disrupts the grant cycle and the set of regulations of reporting and timelines. … It was said that ALL theatre practitioners need to be able to take more time doing the work. In this way, disability and Deaf arts can serve as an intervention in a world moving way too fast. (19)

The artist/leaders identified that this shift in thinking would benefit all artists, not just those who identify as Disabled, linking this change in the mode of working to a larger systemic issue. The presentation of perceived disruption, in the form of an access issue, could potentially function as a catalyst for shifting professional standards that benefit theatre makers regardless of how they identify.

The content of the stories being told on Canadian stages was also addressed. Stanley and Ware recount that the artist/leaders stressed the importance of ensuring that "that we are telling stories about the brilliant magic that disability, madness and Deaf identities afford us as artists. We need to change the ableist script that requires a 'triumph over suffering' narrative about disability. And yet we need to be able to present the lived reality of some of our struggles with disability" (21). The need to reevaluate existing narratives that misrepresent and belittle the experiences of Disabled people moves beyond access in a physical sense and points towards a

[30] Jessica Watkin defines "crip" as "a reclamation of the negative term, cripple, Crip can be a verb or a noun. Noun: an identity that aligns a Disabled person with the politics of Disability, Disability Rights/Justice. Verb: to *crip* is to disrupt or intervene in a non-normal, Disability-centred way" (10).

moral responsibility on the part of theatres and directors who choose to tell stories about Disabled people without meaningful consultation.

The artist/leaders also mentioned the need for more recognition for the work they do as consultants. They relayed that the theatres bring them in as individual artists but then they are forced to take on a secondary role as accessibility consultant for their appropriate access measures to be met (23). The artists stated that they had rarely been remunerated for this untitled work. It was also made explicit that theatres need to include a budget line "to pay for consultations before the artists arrive to work. It should be assumed the consultation is part of the artistic project" (23). Consultation early in the process is paramount to ensuring that all access needs will be met. Consultation processes are additional labour on the part of the engaged artists and should also be remunerated. Artist/leader, Alex Bulmer is quoted in the report explaining that organizations "need to do an audit on disability regularly. If you get public money… disabled people are the public. You have to work with the public and make your resources and spaces accessible to the public" (23). This point further calls attention to the fact that all processes and physical structures should be accessible regardless of whether an artist that identifies as Disabled is participating in the work or not. Theatre is not excluded from following provincial and federal legislation.

The CTA and Accessibility

In the 2024-2027 Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) new language has been included under the heading "Access, Inclusion, and Anti-Oppression." The document states: "PACT and Equity further recognize that D/deaf and Disabled Artists … have been excluded from and

underserved in Canadian theatre. Both associations acknowledge their respective obligations to support and provide Accommodations… in accordance with Federal and Provincial Human Rights legislation" (17). The document addresses that both PACT and Equity

> recognize that measurable progress towards truly inclusive participation in our theatre ecology requires urgent, systemic, and sustainable shifts in both practices and infrastructures. Both associations are committed to ongoing training and dialogue with their respective memberships to advance inclusion, and to engaging with Underrepresented Groups to redress systemic oppression, exclusion, and accessibility barriers. (17)

The CTA further outlines that a joint committee (Article 10 Committee) on anti-oppression initiatives will be made up of three to five members from both PACT and Equity that will serve for the term of the agreement (2024-2027) with the stated goal of establishing "a shared Library of Resources to support the work of Theatres and Artists in advancing social justice" (17).

The CTA also includes a section outlining the new expectations of the theatres in response to the anti-oppression initiative.[31] The document states that each theatre will be required to "annually articulate their organization actions addressing anti-oppression and inclusion, according to their needs and circumstances. … These actions will be publicly posted at the Theatre and made available to the Artist upon request prior to contracting" (17). The impact of this statement is that theatre companies are encouraged toward increased transparency with the artists they are engaging as well as the communities they serve. However, it is not made clear in the CTA how and if these documents will be adjudicated or overseen and what the standard

[31] This article was first introduced in the 2021-2024 CTA.

will be for “actions” that the theatres are taking in the name of anti-oppression. It is stated that if questions arise from members of CAEA or PACT surrounding the theatre’s statements that they would be addressed by the Joint Article 10 Committee but the process of how this is would be done is not made explicit.

All regional theatres are now required to make annual public statements outlining the actions they have taken in the name of addressing anti-oppression. These statements are readily available on regional companies’ websites. An example of the type of statement can be found on the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre website. Their 2024 statement lists their commitment to change and then calls attention to a few specific shifts that have taken place throughout their past season. It is significant to note that in previous iterations of this type of statement they had outlined not only what they had done but what their intentions were for the future, however for the last four updates their future plans have been omitted (Thornton and Holland). As there is no specific way of adjudicating these documents or even ensuring their impact on the communities they are supposed to be serving, they risk purely signalling an intention for change or perhaps even a shallow representation of change without any accountability.

New language has also been added to the 2024 CTA in relation to communicating with artists around access needs. Under the heading “Accessibility Opportunities” the document states that

> The Theatre commits to identifying and removing barriers that might hinder the equitable participation of D/deaf and/or Disabled Artists, and to embracing a creative, responsive, and flexible mindset to improve accessibility. Artists are encouraged to discuss with the Theatre any accessibility needs, requests, or requirements at any point in the process, from auditions through to the end of the contracts. (18)

This statement implies that it is the responsibility of each individual artist to disclose any impairments prior to beginning rehearsals as well as to relay all access needs. It does not place responsibility on the theatres to work towards audition processes that are inherently accessible without having been directly addressed by artists seeking specific accommodations.

Accessibility within the Professional Directorial Process

Canadian Actor's Equity Association created a resource for directors in 2024 that is meant to be used as a guide for working under an equity contract. The document titled "So You're a Director Who's Been Offered a Contract…" stipulates that the work of the director begins prior to signing the contract and securing the job (2). The document is intended as a check list for directors as they move through the stages of engagement. A great deal of work occurs prior to signing the contract. Relating to issues surrounding accessibility, the director must consider their relationship to the play's content. As mentioned in the chapter about cultural consultants, the CTA includes language stating that when there is "identity-specific content, or characters outside the lived experience of the creative team," consultation is necessary (19). The CTA supports and encourages directors to consider how their own lived experience may or may not provide them with enough expertise to ethically put together an appropriate concept, creative team, and performance ensemble. This encouragement from the CTA is new and reflects the many social changes that have been occurring over the last ten years (the span of this study). Meaningful consultation, if necessary, should begin well before casting, design conversations, and research.

The audition process has historically been an area where there has been a substantial lack of accessible practices in professional Canadian Theatre. The 2024 CTA states that PACT and CAEA "recognize that D/deaf and Disabled Artists have been excluded from and underserved in Canadian theatre. Both associations acknowledge their respective obligations to support and provide Accommodations in accordance with Federal and Provincial Human Rights legislation" (18). Auditions are the gateway for actors to become working professionals in the field and the way auditions are promoted, structured, and organized can directly hinder or help access.

Abbie Anderson, an actor and musical theatre performer, who identifies as invisibly and physically disabled describes how the act of establishing an audition process for local disabled actors granted equitable priority appointments and provided much needed access. Citing the Boston Area Theatre Auditions (BATA), she explains that the process involved prioritizing audition sign-ups for performers from underrepresented groups as well as providing auditionees with the opportunity to request, in advance, necessary accessibility measures and accommodations (Anderson). Anderson relays her experience with the process:

> The simple step of making a Google form and reaching out to the disabled acting community made a huge difference: it felt like the most accessible audition I had ever been to and was clearly led with a disability first mindset. Equitable auditions can come in many forms, including earlier sign-ups for disabled actors to guarantee that they are seen, holding separate audition days specifically for disabled actors, and/or making sure theatres are equipped to take care of accessibility requests actors may have on the day of auditions. (Anderson).

Anderson notes the small amount of labor as well as the lack of cost to the theatre for setting up a more inclusive and equitable casting process. However, the scenario that Anderson relays is not

the case in many places. At times accommodations can be time and cost heavy if the organization seeking to make the changes does not already have or maintain accessible infrastructure or resources. The successful process that Anderson references demonstrates that forethought and community engagement appear to be paramount to succeeding at incorporating new casting procedures that are accessible to more artists. As mentioned above, the CTA places a large portion of the responsibility surrounding accessibility on artists whose access needs are not inherently met by the practices in place at most mainstream Canadian theatres instead of encouraging the theatres to make the processes inherently accessible while welcoming to Disabled artists. Directors can play a large roll in bridging the gap by actively demanding audition processes that model Anderson's experience.

Anderson also calls attention to the importance of inclusive casting. She highlights "eight transformative avenues that aim to rectify the inaccessibility, underrepresentation, and unacceptance that so many disabled actors face (Anderson). Of these, three of the suggested avenues relate to casting. The first is the necessity of casting physically disabled performers in disabled roles. Anderson explains that actors "living with a disability can draw from their lived experience and create a disabled character based on authenticity" (Anderson). Further she asserts that the quality of performance is also enhanced by casting actors with lived experience of disability stating that the "reality of disability being authentically shown through a disabled body must artistically overrule the realism of pacified disability portrayal that relies on sterilized, untruthful, or offensive stereotypes (Anderson). Anderson cites Claudia Alick's idea of "disability drag," the practice of casting non-disabled actors to play characters living with a disability, as harmful, inaccurate and perpetuating myths or stereotypes of people living with disabilities.

Anderson stresses the importance of casting physically disabled actors in a variety of roles. She states that audiences "are so used to seeing a range of non-disabled bodies onstage—bodies that are elated or breaking down, buttoned up or naked, at ease or fearful—and we must see physically disabled bodies in the same way. Only then will physically disabled bodies be viewed with the same respect, compassion, and regularity that non-disabled bodies are" (Anderson). However, Anderson does point out the complexity of casting across disability stating that disability is vast and diverse. She presents her own positionality as an example; "I am an actor with a certain type of physical disability, but that doesn't mean I should play a character who is blind or paralyzed" (Anderson). Anderson clarifies that casting involves a nuanced understanding of the story being presented as well as how the identity of the actor in the role either hinders or helps it. When casting, knowledge of the community you seek to represent whether fictional or otherwise is paramount to presenting theatre that celebrates difference as opposed to falsely representing communities and in doing so perpetuating stereotypes, harmful myths, and untruths.

Under the heading "Inclusive Casting and Engagement" the CTA seems to align with Anderson's sentiment (18). It defines "Inclusive Casting… as the casting of Artists who self-identify with Underrepresented Groups in roles where identity characteristics are not prescribed. This practice shall extend to all roles in a production, including principal and ensemble roles" (18). Although this policy is in place, if barriers to audition are still in present for many Disabled artists the opportunity for "Inclusive Casting" remains less likely.

Often the design process begins either simultaneous to the casting process or just after. As Alex Bulmer relayed, for a set to be functional for artists with access needs that are not generally

met in traditional theatre houses meaningful and consistent consultation is necessary. The 2024 CTA does account for such instances. It states that when

> an Artist engaged on a production is solicited by the Theatre or Director to assume a role of formal consultancy or to provide broad expertise related to their culture or identity beyond the customary parameters of their contracted duties in the production, the Artist and Theatre will negotiate mutually agreeable terms for credit and financial compensation for those services. (19)

The CTA requires that if artists are being consulted outside of their typical role, for example an actor consulting on set design, then they must be appropriately compensated.

Theatres have much to gain from collaborating and consulting with Disabled artists. In a 2020 article for Howlround titled “This is How We Cripped it”, theatre artist Debbie Patterson asserts that there is healthier and more dynamic way to create professional theatre in Canada and this is done through “cripping it”. She explains that

> … the philosophy of “the show must go on” is ableist, the hours we work are punishing, the expectation that we will show up for work even when we’re sick is inhuman. We are asked to be vulnerable and open, but in the hierarchies of traditional theatre practices this can lead to exploitation and abuse. We claim to be exploring and honoring the human condition, and yet the way we make theatre demands that we deny our own human condition. There is a better way. (Patterson)

For Patterson, deconstructing traditional hierarchies and naming exploitative processes are at the roots of the contemporary mainstream theatre making processes. In dismantling them, as a means

of creating more accessible practices for Disabled artists, new forms can emerge but only if Disabled artists are fully engaged in the work.

Patterson relays that the genesis of this idea came about when working on a piece of theatre that wasn't written to be performed by a person who uses a wheelchair and the concept for the play needed to shift to tell the story. She relays that the team "had to crip our visioning of the production, working from the assumption that my disability is a rich source of artistic innovation and risk. This wasn't about compromising or accommodating or making do, this was about unearthing opportunities for deeper truths to emerge" (Patterson). Patterson asserts that these shifts made the production stronger. In meeting her access needs the production design and storytelling process became more robust and interesting. This points to the creative richness that directors and collaborating theatre makers can tap into when recognizing the realities of their creative team's lives as opposed to ignoring them or seeing diverse physical realities as a hinderance to creative success.

Patterson is also a playwright, director and producer who founded Sick + Twisted Theatre in 2016. The vision for Sick + Twisted Theatre states,

> Artists with disabilities are grossly underrepresented in the creation and presentation of theatre in Canada. Yet all performance is rooted in the body and the exploration of the human condition. Artists with disabilities have an understanding of the truths of the human condition that can only be arrived at by confronting the challenges and opportunities presented to us by our exceptional bodies. But these truths are universal. We have what the rest of the world needs. ("Sick + Twisted")

The vision statement communicates the necessity of inclusion as a means of creating better art. It asserts that artists with disabilities experience the world through a lens that inherently confronts the “challenges and opportunities” of living in bodies whose access needs are not consistently met by an ableist society. This world view is then incorporated into all the work the company produces.

In a 2025 artist talk with the Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba Patterson relayed nine agreements for living that she has developed. She expressed that these agreements would not have been developed had she not been living with a disability. They are

1. Your body is the earth. This is not a metaphor. It’s a fact. Remember what you are made of.
2. There is no such thing as individual achievement. We all succeed or fail based on the strength of our connection to others.
3. Unearned profit is the theft of other people’s time. Hold only what is rightfully yours.
4. Cultivate curiosity especially about other people. Assume you know nothing of their story. Let kindness and curiosity flow from unknowing.
5. Choose to grow in ways that nurture rather than consume. Resist the urge to reach for more in everything but your own imagination.
6. Sharing will make you happier than hoarding. Let go.
7. When you benefit from an unjust system you compromise your integrity, self-respect and capacity for wisdom. Use your privilege in the service of Justice.
8. Your vulnerability is as important as your strength in building a web of interdependence. Ask for help as easily as you offer it.

9. Remember you will die, and the story will carry on without you. (“Debbie Patterson Artist Talk”)

These nine agreements were written as part of a larger art project, however Patterson shared that these statements function a guideline for the way she creates art as a writer, director, and producer. Patterson’s agreements highlight the value and necessity of interdependence, vulnerability, and awareness in the creation of art that serves all members of a community regardless of how their bodies and minds exist in the world. Although not guidelines for a specific rehearsal or creation process, these agreements demonstrate a world view that is upheld in all that she creates in theatre and beyond.

Consultation is also required when the content of the play relies on an actor’s identity as a means of provoking a socio-politically charged atmosphere. The CTA states that when

> the content of a production involves Underrepresented Groups or deals with issues of violence or trauma, or where it may be reasonably anticipated that an Artist’s identity may intersect with or reinforce harmful or demeaning stereotypes, the Theatre will make every effort at the time to offer to provide Artists—regardless of background or identity—with all available information about the production’s concept and/or context so that the Artist may make an informed decision about acceptance of the offer. (20)

The call for care and transparency is noted in the CTA’s language and it is made explicit that the sharing of information is to take place prior to offers being accepted.

The values of care and transparency should be present not just prior to contract signing but all throughout the creation process. Patterson explains how a shift in thinking related to communal experience benefits all members of the creative team:

> When a culture of interdependence is established, suddenly everyone's vulnerabilities can be given space: the stage manager whose kid has a fever and can't go to daycare, the insomniac who needs a quiet space to nap on breaks, the service dog who needs to go out for a pee, and all the invisible conditions that we theatre makers spend our professional lives hiding in order to get through the twelve-hour cue-to-cue days. (Patterson)

Patterson brings to light the fact that all artists in the theatre have needs and that in bringing these truths to the surface the creative process can flourish in a more holistic way. Patterson connects this to the notion of interdependence which links back to Sins Invalid's definition of accessibility, which is a concept that works towards freedom and agency for all people regardless of how they identify.

In her writing Patterson also celebrates disruption as a valuable component of "cripping" the theatrical creation process. When theatres companies work with Disabled theatre artists, they "gain access to the opportunities that can only be found by "cripping" the work: embracing the disruptions created by disability to open up previously unimagined possibilities. Cripping the work can manifest in any number of ways, but it can only be achieved by working with crip artists" (Patterson). It is through these collaborations that the opportunity to seek out alternative paths to rehearsal and performance emerge. She explains further that "cripping" the creative process is the act of embracing disability and exploring "the possibilities that could only be revealed through disruption" (Patterson). She states that the "crip principles of inclusion, access, and interdependence" are what is needed to make a radical transformation in the way that theatre is produced in Canada.

Conclusion

In the 2015 CAEA census only 8% of members identified as “D/deaf and/or had a disability” (Turk et al). Of these 8%, 80% of them “indicated that they have had a negative work-related experience due to their disability or impairment” (Turk et al). It should be noted that according to Canada Disability Benefit report to the House of Commons in January 2025, “27% of Canadians aged 15 years and older… had one or more disabilities that limited their daily activities” (Employment and Social Development Canada). Comparing this data, there is an underrepresentation of Disabled people working in professional theatre in Canada and although there is not a statistic to cite to confirm, there is also a real deficit of theatre directors in Canada that identify as disabled. Clearly there are barriers in place keeping Disabled theatre directors from working under CAEA and PACT agreements. Real accessibility is reliant on meaningful dialogue about how to address access needs that are not being met by the current hiring systems and theatrical infrastructure (both physical and otherwise). Directors who do not wield the additional title of “Artistic Director” are often met with pre-set budgets, performance venues, and timelines which can all prove to be barriers to accessibility for either themselves or their imagined collaborators. As the culture surrounding disability shifts, so too must the resources prescribed by producers.

Chapter 8: Trauma Informed Practices

Theatre practitioners explore, present, and provoke human experience through works shared with audiences: people who have lived experiences that vary across a huge spectrum. In parallel fashion, the creators of this work have their own experiences. This chapter focuses on how the practice of trauma informed care/practice is being applied to professional theatrical directorial process. It provides a brief review of key concepts related to trauma informed care/practice, examples of situations in which harmful traumatic events have occurred under the guise of theatrical practice, and shares how some practitioners are engaging with trauma informed care/practice within theatrical creation processes. In the 2024 CTA the word trauma is mentioned twice. In both instances it relates to providing artists with prior knowledge of traumatic subject matter (48, 103). This shift in practice is indicative of a world which is recovering from the collective trauma of the COVID 19 pandemic. It has become increasingly clear that theatre makers need to address the concept of trauma in new ways and that this change is directly affecting the way that directors are managing content, collaboration, and audience interaction.

Psychological trauma is a fairly new topic of discussion generally. Even in therapeutic communities, the topic has fallen in and out of favour over the past century. Judith Lewis Herman attributes the sordid history of the study of psychological trauma to the fact that even though there is a vast amount of scholarship proving the existence of psychological trauma, there has been much debate around the question as to whether it is real (Herman 17). She attributes the constant discrediting of psychological trauma to the fact that to believe the victim of trauma one must also see the social and political conditions that created the environment within which the traumatic event(s) occurred. This reckoning has forced bystanders (whether they be health

professionals or otherwise) to acknowledge that the systems of power may be condoning a culture that allows for trauma to occur.

Herman's well-tested hypothesis has been made even more apparent in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic. Since March 2020 there has been an increase in popular discussion surrounding trauma response and trauma informed care. This surge is most likely related to some of the statistics surrounding mental health that were gathered during and directly after initial world-wide lock downs. In studies based on American students conducted in Spring 2021, "91 % said their stress and anxiety had increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, 30 percent said they'd sought help for mental health, 26 percent said they considered suicide, 12 percent said they'd self-harmed and 5 percent said they'd attempted suicide" (Thompson and Carello 2). Although this study is solely focused on students, it provides an example of a shift in the mental health of a unique population during the pandemic. It also points to interest in the popular discourse surrounding decreased mental health post pandemic.

What is Trauma?

Trauma can be an exposure to an event as well as a response to an event (Ford-Gilboe et al 11). In the Chapter "Trauma, Violence, Health, and Well-being" Ford-Gilboe et al. explains that trauma

> can result from exposure to a single event, such as a sexual assault or the sudden death of a loved one, or through exposure to repeated or enduring events such as intimate partner violence, child abuse, or war. Situational traumas include the often unpredictable events that happen to individuals (such as being a victim of a crime or being in an accident), but

> they can also affect entire communities, such as with gang violence or natural disasters (the latter are also referred to as collective or historical traumas). The enduring harms inflicted by colonialism on Canada's Indigenous peoples are an especially poignant example of collective trauma. (12)

Trauma can be a solitary or collective experience and can manifest in a multitude of responses. It can penetrate communities for multiple generations, in the case of intergenerational trauma, as well as appear as an isolated response to an individual event or set of circumstances. There are many trauma related disorders including developmental trauma, acute trauma, complex trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and vicarious trauma (Poole et al). For the purposes of this chapter, I will not define each of these disorders but bring them forward as a way of indicating the breadth of the trauma response as well as demonstrating the complexity of trauma and trauma response.

Traumatic events are exceptional in that the body of the person involved experiences phenomena like nothing else. Herman writes that traumatic events "overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations of life. Unlike commonplace misfortunes, traumatic events generally involve threats of life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe" (Herman 44). Herman acknowledges that traumatic events force the individuals involved into a state that exists beyond stress and that the physical and psychological response is unique to moments of trauma, whether they be single incidences or prolonged ongoing scenarios.

During a trauma the body has a unique response. In the book *The Body Keeps the Score* Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. explains the initial physiological response to a traumatic experience stating that

> the sympathetic nervous system takes over, mobilizing muscles, heart, and lungs for fight or flight. Our voice becomes faster and more strident and our heart starts pumping faster. … we will activate the ultimate emergency system: the dorsal vagal complex (DVC). This system reaches down below the diaphragm to the stomach, kidneys, and intestines and drastically reduces metabolism throughout the body. Heart rate plunges, … we can't breathe, and our gut stops working or empties. This is the point at which we disengage, collapse, and freeze. (84)

This specific response is not only a movement towards fleeing or fighting but can also be a complete removal from the present situation and a shutting down. Once an individual enters a state of collapse or disengagement the individual no longer registers themselves, those around them, the situation, or even physical pain (Van Der Kolk 85).

Trauma can alter the way the brain functions. After periods of great stress, and some forms of trauma, the body will restore itself to a state of equilibrium (Gilboe et al 17). However, in the case of ongoing or complex trauma the body's response to stress no longer functions in an optimal way and

> the brain's alarm system (amygdala) responds to traumatic experiences (threats) by flooding the brain with stress hormones, especially cortisol. However, the system that is responsible for signalling that the threat has passed (hippocampus) has been damaged by the chronic exposure to trauma. No longer does the body return to a pre-threat state; but instead, its stress response remains activated, resulting in a chronic state of arousal. … In this state, the body is on high alert and easily triggered, and higher-order thinking, attention, memory, and processing emotions are affected by the flooding of stress hormones in the brain. (Gilboe et al 17)

In these instances, individuals are moving through the world in a state of self-protection and stress. The body remains in a state of activation that informs all that they do and how they engage with the world around them.

Who is Affected by Trauma?

It is estimated that three out of four adult Canadians will experience one traumatic event during their lifetimes (Ford-Gilboe et al 11). According to a 2008 survey of 10,000 Canadian youth 21% of girls and 31% of boys reported physical abuse and 13% of girls and 4% of boys reported sexual assault (Poole et al 5). Since 2020 there has also been an increase in violence and trauma globally. Vacroe and Wathen assert that in "the wake of COVID-19, racial violence intensified and violence against women spiked globally. Mental health is worsening, with the ongoing toxic drug overdose crisis providing horrendous evidence of the impact of trauma, violence, and social inequities" (3). Vacroe and Wathen's study demonstrates that the current Canadian population has collectively experienced a trauma that may be impacting the way that we interact with each other and the institutions that govern us. Vacroe and Wathen further explain that trauma is inherently linked to structural and interpersonal violence, claiming "that violence is always an abuse of power" and that "[s]tructural violence refers to how societies are organized, or structured, in such a way that they do harm" (3). Vacroe and Wathen stipulate that it isn't solely individuals causing harm to each other that causes trauma, but that processes, put in place by governing bodies, can also inflict trauma on communities and individuals.

What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma informed strategies are starting to flow into professional theatre from two sources: the mental health infrastructure (in the form of trauma informed care) and applied theatre. According to Wathen and Vacroe, Trauma Informed Care or Trauma Informed Practice (TIC/P) was established in connection with American Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration in reference to women, substance use, and violence (73). The stated goals of TIC/P are to "create safety for people seeking care by understanding the effects of trauma and its close links to health and behaviour. Unlike trauma-specific care, it is not about eliciting or treating people's trauma histories but about creating safe spaces that limit the potential for further harm for all people" (Wathen and Vacroe 73). TIC/P is not the treatment of trauma. It is dedicated to creating environments where those affected by trauma are at less risk of experiencing re-traumatization and further injury.

The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care, based out of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work defines Trauma Informed Care as

> an organizational change process that requires all individuals, practices and protocols, and environments to engage in universal precaution for trauma. … Organizations that use a trauma-informed approach fully integrate awareness of individual, historical, racial, and systemic trauma into all aspects of functioning to provide environments for everyone in the organization that intentionally reduce the likelihood of further harm and allow opportunity for healing and growth. (Institute on Trauma Informed Care)

The organization also outlines five principles for creating a trauma informed environment. They include safety, choice, empowerment, collaboration, and trustworthiness (Institute on Trauma Informed Care). This definition and set of principles highlight that the structuring of an organization or environment must be created with the acknowledgement that individuals who

have experienced trauma have specific needs that must be addressed within all interactions. Trauma informed practice is not something that can be added into an already established setting or process but rather something that has informed the initial creation.

Responding to Trauma Through Theatre

There is a great deal of literature about applied theatre practices that have documented working with communities who have experienced, or were in the process of experiencing, trauma. Augusto Boal's 1979 treatise *Theatre of the Oppressed* documents several theatre exercises used during the Operación Alfabetización Integral (ALFIN) in Peru (120)[32]. In many of the cases brought forward in the book, participants shared details of their traumatic experiences as part of the creative, and as argued by Boal, liberation processes. One case involved a literacy agent from Otzuco who had lived through viewing the public castration of an imprisoned rebellion leader (Boal 135). During an exercise of Image Theatre, which involves the participant creating an image representing their individual perspective of an event or theme by using the bodies of their fellow artistic collaborators, the literacy agent, according to Boal, created a "terrible, pessimistic, defeatist image, but also a true reflection of something that had actually taken place" (Boal 136). Next the literacy agent was asked to create how she would like her village to be, and she created an image of "people who worked in peace and loved each other" (136). Lastly, she was asked "how can one, starting with the actual image, arrive at the ideal image? How to bring about the change, the transformation, the revolution?" (136). Through the

[32] This study is focused on professional theatre and applied theatre does not fall underneath this umbrella, however, it is important to recognize that trauma informed practices, which are now gaining popularity in Western professional theatre, have roots in applied theatre practices, such as the work of Augusto Boal.

image theatre exercise Boal describes transforming the perspective of the participant from one of passive bystander to a solution focused activator within their community.

Although the terms trauma and trauma informed practice are never used in the description of this study, Boal's technique of Image Theatre is nonetheless crafted with a knowledge that some form of emotional distance is required when dealing with potentially re-traumatizing content. Image Theatre removes the need to speak and instead deals with images that are created, not within the body of the individual who is leading the image building (the person who in this instance has directly experienced the trauma) but through the bodies of arguably less emotionally activated participants. As described in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Image Theatre upholds at least three of the trauma informed principles outlined by The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care: choice, empowerment, and collaboration.

The Fabulous Females Musical Theatre Program for Incarcerated Girls was developed in 2003 by Storycatchers Theatre company based in Chicago, Illinois (Palidofsky and Stolbach 248). This program, which was conceived after the company had spent twenty years working with incarcerated youth, is a long-term immersion program in which girls who are incarcerated work together with theatre professionals to write, rehearse, produce, and perform a fully staged musical (Palidofsky and Stolbach 248)[33]. According to Meade Palidofsky and Bradley C. Stolbach, "50% to 60% of incarcerated girls have suffered sexual abuse or assault … the theatre company's experience, however, puts the percentage at about 95%" (245). Knowing that the community of incarcerated girls includes an incredibly high percentage of survivors of complex

[33] Unlike professional theatre whose focus is to create work for general consumption, this applied theatre project's mandate is to care for the community and participants. Although, these two streams of theatre differ, it is significant that professional theatres are now engaging in work that utilizes some of the same theory.

trauma, the theatre company designed the program to support trauma recovery during all stages of the creative process and artistic training.

Palidofsky and Stolbach note that the Fabulous Females Musical Theatre Program incorporates all the components for the intervention for complex trauma, as defined by The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (248). According to Cook et al., they are: "Safety, Self-Regulation, Self-Reflective Information Processing, Traumatic Experiences Integration, Relational Engagement, and Positive Affect Enhancement" (qtd in Palidofsky and Stolbach 248). Palidofsky and Stolbach explain how the components for intervention are practically delivered throughout the creative process:

> the program has developed rules and rituals, including daily goal setting and evaluation, which serve to create a physically and emotionally safe environment for participants. Participants practice self-regulation skills and dialogue. Self-reflective information processing is clearly evident in the process of writing, … and examining links between past and present. Through this process, participants engage in integration of their traumatic experiences, and thanks to the use of poetry, song, dance, and movement, that integration can occur not just at a cognitive level, but also at a physiological level. (248-249)

Palidofsky and Stolbach point out that relational engagement takes place as participants form significant bonds with the educating artists, each other, and ultimately, the audience (249).

In 2008 American director and writer Bryan Doerries organized a reading of Sophocles' *Ajax* for "five hundred marines in San Diego" which received a stunning reception (Van der Kolk 334). Subsequently, Doerries developed the project further, titled it *Theater of War*, received

financial support from the U.S. Department of Defense, and produced the reading upward of two hundred times in the United States as well as globally to "give voice to the plight of combat veterans and foster dialogue and understanding in their families and friends" (Van der Kolk 334). After each performance a community discussion is held. Van der Kolk outlines his experience of being present during one of the *Theater of War* events that took place in Cambridge, Massachusetts after a 27% increase in veteran suicide had been publicized. He highlights the community response to the performance:

> Vietnam veterans, military wives, recently discharged men and women who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan—lined up behind the microphone. Many of them quoted lines from the play as they spoke about their sleepless nights, drug addiction, and alienation from their families. The atmosphere was electric, and afterwards the audience huddled in the foyer, some holding each other and crying, others deep in conversation. (334)

Van der Kolk's description calls attention to the community bonding and healing that took place after witnessing a story of war ending with the act of suicide (334). He claims that this phenomenon, which he perceives to be healing, is not new and likens it back to ancient community rituals, including Greek theatre, that were created to process "powerful and terrifying feeling" (334).

Doerries views the primary value of the work he does as communally sharing in trauma with the benefit of healing trauma. Doerries links this back to the original circumstances of Greek theatrical performances. He states that the

> Purpose was to communalize trauma … the word 'amphitheater' in Greek means 'the place where we go to see in both directions. 'Amphi'—I see you, you see me, both

> directions. 'Theatron'—seeing place. So we go to the amphitheater in the fifth century B.C., to see each other, to see ourselves; to see that we are not the only people to have felt this isolated or this ashamed or this betrayed—not just because it's being enacted onstage, but because people around us in this semicircular structure are all validating and acknowledging the truth of what we're watching. (Doerries 2021)

Doerries views the act of seeing and being seen while consuming traumatic narratives as fundamental to the success of the Theater of War performances and discussions. In an interview, Doerries is clear to separate this phenomenon from the idea of catharsis. He states that he "doesn't know what it means, so I don't even know how to be interested in it" (Doerries 2020). Instead, he offers that he attempts to generate performances that force a disavowal, kin to Brecht's alienation effect, on the part of the audience and that it is from a place of distancing that audiences enter conversations that are deeply uncomfortable and highly communal, which he deems as ultimately healing and enlightening (Doerries 2020).

Van der Kolk asserts that theatre gives survivors of trauma the opportunity to connect with other survivors by engaging deeply with their shared human experiences (337). In *The Body Keeps the Score*, he highlights three programs that use theatre to treat trauma (Urban Improv in Boston, the Possibility Project in New York City, and Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts) to call attention to a common foundation that roots their processes. He describes this foundation as "confrontation of the painful realities of life and symbolic transformation through communal action" (337). It is through the direct act of acknowledging the pain of the lived experience among community that healing can begin to take place. This type of healing requires community and some sort of public airing, and theatre is a form that can meet these needs. Van der Kolk's understanding of theatre that heals trauma is, of course, tied to all theatre.

All theatre provides a public airing of story and community viewing. Sometimes the stories include traumatic content and sometimes they do not; however, the difference is that the projects that Van de Kolk cites are specifically designed with trauma informed processes whereas many professional projects do not currently consider trauma informed practices even when the subject matter being addressed may be potential activating for the artists and audience alike.

For the healing to take place within a theatrical process the artistic leaders in the space must take initiative to insure a slow and thoughtful approach to both the participants and the material (Van der Kolk 338). Van der Kolk explains that it is paramount for the director to steward the performers in a manner that allows time for performers to connect to their bodies while also considering new patterns of thought and movement:

> The job of any director, like any therapist, is to slow things down so the actors can establish a relationship with themselves, with their bodies. Theatre offers a unique way to access a full range of emotions and physical sensations that not only put them in touch with the habitual "set" of their bodies, but also let them explore alternative ways of engaging with life. (339)

The act of sharing space with others via the engagement of embodied storytelling can be an antidote to trauma. However, this "medicine" must be administered in a manner that is responsive to the specific needs of those involved and not pressured by a scarcity of time. The creation of a working environment that allows for a slow and step by step immersion into the storytelling is paramount (Van der Kolk 338).

The Aesthetics of Care

The notion of care in performance and performance making (introduced by James Thompson in 2015) has also become prominent in discussions relating to applied theatre and disability theatre (Thompson). Thompson relays that the aesthetics of care is "a counter to the valuing of autonomy and independence. … rehearsals, demonstrations, performances and workshops where these care aesthetics are realised become places through which more care-filled social relations and just interdependencies are experienced" (Thompson 229). Thompson extrapolates that the care within the rehearsal hall can be a catalyst for increasing the amount of care experienced by a potential audience thus reaching out to the wider community.

Thompson details some of the components of an aesthetics of care by presenting three separate projects that demonstrated elements of care during the creation process, the presentation, or both. He presents a workshop done during the creation of *The Grandchildren of Hiroshima*, by the London Bubble Theatre in 2015, in which half the participants would close their eyes while the other half led them about the space, first individually and then communally (222). This game was introduced via a series of steps and allowed for a scaffolded process of shared trust. Thompson asserts that this exercise shifted the responsibility for care in the space from a

> one-to-one caring relationship (for example, parent to child) to more social models of caring … there is an important move in care ethics from the assumed ground of a primarily private set of interpersonal relations, to the social and ultimately political implications of a broader vision of a more caring social order. (222-223)

This shift of responsibility from an individual to the group and then potentially to an even larger implied community outside of the direct exercise (i.e. social political community) highlights a

significant change in power as it relates to the caring for and responding to the needs of artistic collaborators.

The second project Thompson presents is Peggy Shaw's UK touring performance of *Ruff*. The piece was developed in response to Shaw's 2011 stroke and was directed by long-time collaborator Lois Weaver (Thompson 223). Shaw and Weaver created the piece so that technological memory aids were incorporated into the performance and made visible to the audience (Thompson 224). Weaver was also present in the audience for all performances and would respond directly to Shaw when she would need aid in remembering where she was in the text or sought out assurance that she was in the correct place on stage or within the storytelling (Thompson 225). Thompson explains how this obvious act of care delivered from Weaver in the audience became both part of the aesthetic of the piece but also a sort of call to action for the audience:

> Lois' care for Peggy … became part of the moving, care-filled beauty of the piece, and spoken from within the audience, it brought those of us watching into the relationship of care that she expressed. … While there was a singular relationship here between performer and director, her position within the audience seemed to share that responsibility with the group of spectators who were then, in turn, called upon to care. (226)

The responsibility of care in *Ruff* extended beyond that of the director for the performer but to the audience as well. Shaw and Weaver created a community of caring beyond themselves that

was entirely unique to this project as it matched the specific needs of Shaw's post-stroke reality[34].

Lastly, Thompson offers another project by London Bubble Theatre titled *Speech Bubbles* which took place in schools across the UK and involved working with children five to seven years of age who were experiencing communication issues and speech delays (Thompson 226). The exercise/performance that Thompson calls attention to involved a highly structured semi-improvised communal storytelling that incorporated a clear delineating of performance and spectator spaces and was repeated consistently over several sessions. The exercise also offered a specific way of "washing off" the story at the end of each presentation/exercise as a closure practice (227). Thompson explains that

> [t]he case to make is that *structure as care* provides an alternative, perhaps more productive, register … a structure that was repeated with almost ritualised elements actually provided a framework of care that held, maintains and made possible the play and delight of the children… far from being a constraint, structure enabled the performance of care to emerge and this is what made possible the young people's creative success. (227)

The repetition and rigid patterns of the exercise/performance created a familiarity for the children that built trust and inspired increased risk taking and creative play (Thompson 227). The "structure as care" was the container that allowed for adventurous storytelling to take place.

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[34] This project echoes that of Sam Shepard's and Joseph Chaiken's 1984 play, *The War in Heaven*. The play was written in collaboration both prior to and post Chaiken suffering a stroke resulting in a diagnosis of "Broca's and Wenicke's aphasia. Wernicke's aphasia denotes an impairment of receptive speech whilst Broca's area of the brain controls the memory of motor patterns of speech." (Creedon 80). The play, which was originally intended for radio, was performed live by Chaiken in 1984 in San Diego and then toured for a decade both nationally and internationally (Creedon 80).

Content Warnings

Content warnings, which have grown in practice since 2020, are not specifically the work of the director (they are most often a tool used by the producing theatre to communicate with audiences prior to performances). However, they do inform the audience's relationship with the director's work and occasionally, directors are asked for input as to what should be included in a content warning. Sydney Isabelle Mayer explains the purpose of content warnings, stating that they "aren't about treating audiences like they are incapable of handling material a play presents. Instead, warnings are about giving an audience the appropriate information needed to make a choice about what they want to be exposed to. They are often placed on show page for a theatre's website, posted outside the ticket booth, or even in programs. Ultimately, this is about respecting audience agency" (Mayer). Mayer views content warnings as a pillar of responsible theatre making and a signal to the audience that care is being paid to their interactive experience with the play even prior to sitting in the audience.

In immersive theatre the need to clarify and establish consent with the audience may become more specifically the work of the director, as it can be woven into the content, blocking, and soundscape for the piece. Blair Cadden explains the unique dilemma surrounding consent in immersive theatre productions. She states that it

> requires its practitioners to engage in conversations around consent well beyond basic content and trigger warnings. After all, in many immersive works, individual audience members witness different scenes from one another, and in different sequences. In an event with this many possible permutations, it is insufficient (and maybe even

> impossible) to pre-emptively inform participants about every scenario they may encounter. (Cadden)

Cadden references performances such as *Sleep No More* as having been a site of harm and suggests that theatre makers use tools from BDSM communities (as presented by law professor, Dr. Theodore Bennett) as a starting place for practical tools to help establish clear and revocable consent in a theatrical setting. Ultimately, what Cadden is arguing for is more flexibility on the part of the performing artist to read vocal and physical cues from audience members to best interpret their consent within any given immersive performance.

What is a Trauma Informed Directorial Process?

There is no known standard for a trauma informed professional directorial process. However, as readers will see in the chapter dedicated to Intimacy Direction, there is a growing dedication in trauma informed practices within the training programs for Intimacy Choreographers working in both theatre and film. Kari Barclay explains why trauma informed care is necessary for scenes of intimacy:

> a connection between bodies on the surface of the skin—can *touch* psychic vulnerabilities in ways that challenge the boundaries between self and other. … Intimacy knits together gender and sexuality with race. Crafting culturally competent intimacy, including intimacy foregrounding joy and solidarity, may require a cognizance of the foundational traumas that went into crafting definitions of race and nationhood. (Barclay 117)

The act of physical touch, whether the circumstances be real or imaginary, can activate trauma responses, while the identities of those involved play a role in the way that a moment of staging

is digested by the actors creating the work. To create a supportive space for theatre artists, Barclay suggests that an understanding of personal trauma, institutional trauma, and intergenerational trauma must be applied to the modes of creation within the rehearsal hall and the theatre (117). Barclay's theory echoes that of the leading trauma researchers. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, trauma informed care must consider "individual, historical, racial, and systemic trauma into all aspects of functioning" (Institute on Trauma and Trauma Informed Care).

It is imperative that trauma informed care/practice be designed to suit the specific needs of any given community or working environment (Vacroe and Wathen 73). Trauma researcher and theatre director Claire K. Redfield explains that "trauma-responsive rehearsal tools must be both flexible and sturdy, while also holding space for complexity to flow. There are no easy answers for directors seeking to build trauma-responsive rehearsal spaces…" (Redfield). Redfield chooses to call her way of working "trauma responsive" as opposed to trauma informed because it calls to mind the "action of responding" which she believes takes a more active stance in creative process (Redfield).

Redfield's trauma-responsive directorial process is rooted in the 4 Rs, as defined in David Treleaven's *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness*. Redfield's article was written in 2021, during lockdown, and references many techniques specific to working virtually over Zoom. However, she is clear that the concepts being presented were researched prior to the pandemic and that she sees application for in-person theatre practice as well. The 4 Rs are :1) Realizing the Foundation; 2) Recognizing Through "Mind the Constellation"; 3) Responding Through Opt-Out Space; 4) Resisting Re-Traumatization Through Refilling Your Cup (Redfield).

The first R, “Realizing the Foundation,” involves taking account of, and responsibility for, the space within which you are inviting others to create. Redfield suggests this be done by verbalizing that intention in the community agreements and leading exercises at the beginning of rehearsal to help artists ground themselves within the rehearsal environment. The second R, “Recognizing Through “Mind the Constellation,” Redfield encourages daily check-ins with collaborators at the beginning of rehearsal to assess the individual needs and realities of all members of the team and allowing that knowledge to be a community reality. Engaging with mediation teacher Ruth King’s metaphor of a constellation Redfield explains that “recognition is key to responding to trauma more effectively: instead of as an individual director catering to each person’s needs, the response can come from everyone in the space—the collective—each bringing their diverse strengths. The phrase is also about paying attention to the full picture: trauma-responsivity includes attention to trauma but also to joy” (Redfield). The re-positioning of the director as not the primary holder of the space and the choice to include and name the company as custodians of the rehearsal space allows for an even more robust dynamic of care. This also relates back to Thompson’s theory of care and the role of community when considering the aesthetics of care.

In describing the third R, “Responding Through Opt-Out Space,” Redfield explains that it is paramount the director makes it explicit that actors “already have the right to space and agency, and encourage them to exercise that right” (Redfield). She suggests building an “opt-out space” where actors can enter at any time during rehearsal to regroup (Redfield). Redfield’s fourth R, “Resisting Re-Traumatization Through Refilling Your Cup” calls for the director to look inward and consider how they are taking care of themselves (Redfield). She references Layla F. Saad and Aisha Harris’s writing on self-care and its roots within the American civil

rights movement, the women's liberation movement, and the Black Panther Party to illustrate that "emotional resilience for enduring revolution" can be attained through compassion for the self (Redfield). To hold space for others, Redfield posits that one must first hold space for themselves.

Conclusion

Not yet a mainstream practice, trauma informed theatre creation is beginning to inform the work of professional theatre directors. The fallout from the COVID 19 pandemic as well as centuries of systemic trauma have created a population that is experiencing layers of intergenerational as well as acute traumatic responses. Creating trauma informed creative spaces requires a commitment from all collaborators on any given project and can, in the case of content warnings, move beyond the responsibility of any one director. The influence of the mental health field as well as applied theatre techniques is starting to change the way that theatre directors are structuring the creative process. The case studies referenced in this chapter demonstrate that theatre can be an antidote to trauma (Van der Kolk) while the process of making theatre has also shown to be a cause/site of trauma (Nestruck). It is not necessarily the job of a director to assess whether the content they are sharing is trauma inducing or not. However, it may fall within their responsibility to ensure that all the members of their creative team and those that consent to view the work are prepared and informed about the content with which they will be engaging.

Chapter 9: Intimacy Direction

The role of the theatre director is undergoing a radical re-think as the inclusion of intimacy directors has become common practice. Within the 10-year scope of this dissertation, the emergence of intimacy directors marks the largest shift in the function of the director in Canadian theatre. This chapter attempts to define the role of Intimacy Director while examining the professional standards that inform current hiring and creative practices. Using a variety of professional sources, the chapter discusses the history of the profession while investigating potential strengths and problems that have arisen for directors in their job of interpreting a script for production. As the field of intimacy direction continues to define itself, its practices, and practitioners, the position of the role of theatre director in Canada is being renegotiated.

What is intimacy in a theatrical context?

The definition of intimacy, as it relates to professional theatre in North America, is in a state of flux. The definition outlined in the Canadian Theatre Agreement 2021-2024 (CTA) states that staged intimacy

> may include but is not limited to: prolonged kissing, heavy petting, implied genital contact, acts of a sexual nature, physical contact between a minor and an adult as determined in consultation with the parent/legal guardian, instances, or direction where an Actor feels that additional consideration is required, and may also be an element in certain scenes of violence. (34)

This same language is used in both the Independent Theatre Agreement (ITA) and Equity's Multidisciplinary Policy for Dance, Opera, and Theatre (DOT). Although this definition focuses primarily on the corporeal elements of an interaction on stage, there is mention that an Actor may

determine, based on their own criteria, whether a particular bit of staging falls under the category of intimacy. The use of this language leaves the definition open to include any number of staging elements and ensures that actors hold power to initiate a discussion around what is considered intimacy either prior to or during the staging process.

In the book *Supporting Staged Intimacy: A Practical Guide for Theatre Creatives, Managers, and Crew*, published in 2023, Alexis Black and Tina M. Newhauser (both American practitioners) define staged intimacy "as scenes with intimate physical contact, such as sex scenes and kissing, as well as scenes that contain nudity. This can be expanded to include familial and platonic intimacy, sexual tension, and 'chemistry' where no touching occurs. It often is an element in scenes of sexual violence" (32). Here the authors include moments of staging where no physical action is taking place, implying that intimacy, within the context of theatre, may be considered psychological as well as of the body. In both the CTA and Black and Newhauser's definitions there is a mention of violence. In the case of the CTA the type of violence is left unspecified unlike Black and Newhauser who have indicated sexual violence. It should also be noted that the CTA, ITA, and DOT agreements all define intimacy as separate from nudity and offer no definition of what constitutes nudity in a professional theatre setting.

The CTA, ITA, and DOT agreements also include language that further defines what intimacy is and how it should be notated and rehearsed separately from all other existing blocking. The document stipulates that

> intimacy should always be considered choreography and, as such, should be recorded in detail in the Stage Manager's prompt book. Intimacy Choreography, including the placement of backstage crew and any cover-ups, must be rehearsed with the consent of all

> Artists involved and must be locked and repeatable by opening night. (CTA 64, ITA 62, DOT 21)

With this language the agreements further clarify that intimacy is not only a moment, or series of moments, of storytelling, but rather a defined, well-documented sequence of repeatable movements that warrant special treatment outside of the typical blocking notes. Here it is made clear that any staging deemed intimate is also considered choreography and should be treated as such.

According to some theatrical intimacy training organizations the meaning of intimacy in theatre has been expanded further to include theatrical representations that may capitalize on a performer's identity. Theatrical Intimacy Education, which is a driving force of consent-based performance in the United States, claim, that they "have expanded the narrow definition of intimacy beyond sex to include leveraging an artist's characteristics to stage heightened race, gender, pregnancy, disability, religion, national origin or age-related content" ("About TIE"). This definition illustrates a change in understanding of how intimacy may encompass more than an interaction between two actors, whether that be physical or emotional, and indicates that any moment in which an actor's protected identities are being intensified within a production could be considered intimacy on stage. Given the nature of certain plays, this could mean that entire scripts could fall under the definition of staged intimacy.

What is an Intimacy Director?

The first time the role of the intimacy director is mentioned in any Canadian Theatre Agreement is in the 2021-2024 edition (the same language is also included in the ITA and DOT

Agreements of the same time). The 2021-2024 CTA defines an intimacy director as "the person engaged for the purpose of choreographing a scene(s) and/or moment(s) of intimacy in production" (33). As noted previously, the CTA does not include nudity as part of its definition of intimacy and does not stipulate that an intimacy director would be called upon to handle the staging of performed nudity outside of a corporeal interaction between two performers, a moment involving a physical interaction with an underaged performer, or staged violence (CTA 34). This definition is narrowly focused on the act of choreographing physical movement thus positioning the role of the intimacy director as a collaborator whose work is tied to a specific moment of tangible staging.

Although the CTA's definition of the role of intimacy director currently tethers the position solely to choreographing moments shared between performers, the National Society of Intimacy Professionals (NSIP), which at the time of writing is the sole Canadian society of intimacy professionals[35], offers a much broader definition of the role. They stipulate that intimacy professionals "are trained specialists within the performing arts fields whose expertise supports developing and creating intimate scenes and moments. They have movement, acting coaching, choreography, and non-violent communication expertise. They support the workflow with administration and facilitate established protocols within a production" ("What is an Intimacy Professional"). Not only does this definition point to a specific skill set beyond choreography, including training in non-violent communication, it also includes language stipulating that the position requires collaboration with the producing theatre company's administration while facilitating existing protocols for any given production. The National

[35] It should be noted that Intimacy Coordinators Canada also exists but solely represents Intimacy Coordinators who are intimacy professionals that only work in film (Intimacy Coordinators Canada).

Society of Intimacy Professionals represents intimacy directors as well as intimacy coordinators and this definition is used as a blanket term to include both positions.

The National Society of Intimacy Professionals further expands their definition of intimacy director to include a variety of responsibilities outside of what is stipulated in the CTA, ITA, and DOT agreements. NSIP states that

> Intimacy Directors work in live performance (theatre/opera, etc.), and they are
>
> - specialized movement choreographers,
> - acting coaches for scenes and moments of intimacy,
> - resources for intimacy-related research (dramaturgy, etc.),
> - consultants for content warnings for audiences,
> - can support the production in establishing and maintaining practices for mental/physical health and safety, including assisting individuals with their own practices.
> - a liaison between production and performers,
> - accountable to the producer, director, actors, and engager. ("What is an Intimacy Director (ID)?")

Intimacy director, as defined by NSIP, is a far more expansive role than outlined in the CTA, ITA, and DOT. NSIP's inclusion of dramaturgy, mental/physical health stewardship, and production liaising, including elements of audience relations, demonstrates a chasm between how current professional standards in Canada understand the role of the intimacy director and how the intimacy directors themselves view the position.

American intimacy directors as well as leading American professional training societies also see the role expanding beyond the act of staging. According to Intimacy Directors and Coordinators, an American organization that defines themselves as "the premier organization for consent and intimacy training in the industry" ("Get to Know IDC"), an intimacy director "is a choreographer, an advocate for actors, and a liaison between actors and production for scenes that involve nudity/hyper exposed work, simulated sex acts, and intimate physical contact in live performance" ("What is an Intimacy Professional (Intimacy Director/Coordinator)?"). This definition, like NSIP's, includes language stipulating that the intimacy director is an intermediary between actors and production while also including advocacy as a primary task of the role.

Unlike NSIP's and IDC's definitions of intimacy director, which omit language relating to the direction of the remainder of the performance piece outside moments of intimacy, Black and Newhauser include language linking the work of the intimacy director to the director's vision for the larger performance piece. Like IDC they define an intimacy director as "a choreographer, an advocate for actors, and a liaison between actors and production for scenes that involve nudity/hyper exposed work, simulated sex acts, the intense physical contact in live performance" (32). However, they include additional language stating that "IDs work to achieve the vision of the director while respecting the boundaries of the actors" (32). With the insertion of this sentence, Black and Newhauser assert that it is a primary function of the intimacy director to serve the vision of the director. This notion of being primarily of service to the director is not mentioned by either the Canadian or American organizations that are led by intimacy directors themselves. Black and Newhauser also clarify that the title "Intimacy Director" is fluid. They clarify that "Intimacy Direction may also be referred to as intimacy choreography, intimacy design, intimacy movement, intimate storytelling or other descriptors" (32). This fluidity of title

points to the newness of this role and how the terminology is still being negotiated via various stakeholders.

It should be noted that in recent years, within North America, there has been some clarification in terms outlining the difference between artists staging moments of intimacy in theatre verses those working in film. In the introduction to her book, *Intimacy Directing for Theatre: Creating a Culture of Consent in the Classroom and Beyond*, Dr. Ayisha Mackie-Stephenson explains that "Intimacy directors are advocates. Intimacy directors work in live performance (i.e., theatre), while intimacy coordinators work in film. Both advocate for actors—both are leaders in helping directors and actors tell stories authentically and safely. Intimacy directors and intimacy co-ordinators are also thought of as intimacy choreographers" (4). Here Dr. Mackie-Stephenson outlines that although there are separate titles for each industry, the term choreographer may also be used as an umbrella term to encompass both specialties.

Intimacy Coordinators of Color, whose mission is to "support and promote decolonized intimacy education and inclusive hiring practices in the entertainment industry" uses the title of "intimacy choreographer" to refer to artists staging moments of intimacy in both stage and screen (Intimacy Coordinators of Color). They explain that intimacy choreographers are "responsible for the consensual crafting and staging of sex, race, disability, religion, or age with appropriate cultural context and competency. They consult on scenes with loaded, heightened, or charged content that draws on the actor's identity" (Intimacy Coordinators of Color). This definition of an intimacy choreographer, like the definition of intimacy as outlined by Theatrical Intimacy Education, stipulates that moments of staging that call upon an actor's identity should be considered intimate. However, they expand further to include language that indicates that an intimacy choreographer is also responsible for creating staging that is also culturally competent,

contextually accurate, and consensual. Although the other definitions of intimacy director/coordinator imply that consent should be a part of the process of creating scenes of intimacy, it is only in the definition outlined by the Intimacy Coordinators of Color that it is explicitly stated.

Intimacy Coordinators of Colour also explain that the producing body must work in collaboration with the intimacy choreographer to create an environment around the work that will support it. They state that

> Intimacy Choreography does not, and cannot, exist in a vacuum. For an intimacy specialist to be successful, a producing organization must actively support a culture of consent from season selecting to casting, through production. As an additional responsibility, an intimacy specialist may also be contracted to serve as a consent or policy consultant for an organization or production. (Intimacy Coordinators of Color)

It is noted that the practices of the company, whether they be directly related to the work in the rehearsal hall or not, must be rooted in a culture of consent.

Intimacy directors outside of North America are also organizing to create communities for individuals working in the field. Intimacy for Stage and Screen is a British organization, originally founded in 2016 under the title “Theatrical Intimacy” which has subsequently become a “branch of Intimacy Directors International”, a “network for Intimacy Directors and Coordinators in the UK” who “also offer training pathways to Certification in both Intimacy Direction for live performance and Intimacy Coordination for screen” (“About us”).

Like the definition provided by the American Intimacy Coordinators of Color, Intimacy for Stage and Screen includes language referencing consent in their definition of intimacy

director. In their *Guidelines for Engaging Intimacy Directors for Live Performance* document they state that an intimacy director is an

> intimacy-movement specialist trained to oversee consent and to facilitate safe intimacy choreography for the stage. Their role involves advocacy, liaison, choreography and safety. The Intimacy Director serves as an advocate for the Performers and Stage Management Team during intimacy scenes. They also help to oversee intimacy related safety along with the Company Manager and/or SM. … The Intimacy Director liaises with departments to ensure that the Performers are provided with what they require for intimacy choreography. The Intimacy Director collaborates with Performers, Director/Choreographer and Stage Management Team to create intimacy choreography rooted in the storytelling. ("Guidelines")

Along with elements of the position included in North American definitions, such as liaising, advocacy for actors, and choreography, Intimacy for Stage and Screen stipulates that the intimacy director advocates for stage management as well as the actors, thus broadening the reach and power of the role leading to potentially more professional engagements as the need for the role is expanded.

When is an Intimacy Director needed?

The inclusion of stage management advocate and production liaison, being a part of the intimacy director's scope is not surprising given the nature of the tasks that are highlighted in the definitions of intimacy direction made by intimacy directors themselves in both North America and the UK. However, in Canada the language defined in the 2021 CTA and ITA remains directly

related to the work that intimacy directors do choreographing scenes safely. The document states that on "occasion, a production may contain scenes and/or moments with Intimacy that the Theatre may determine require special expertise to ensure the comfort, well-being and safety of the Artists involved. When this expertise is required, an Intimacy Director shall be contracted" (190). However, the CTA does point towards an evaluation of how an intimacy director would be engaged, stating that "Due to the evolving provisions around the practice of staging Intimacy, guidelines for the engagement of Intimacy Directors will be evaluated as the standard continues to mature and the number of individuals who meet those standards keeps pace with the growing demand" (190). These guidelines, which took effect on January 11th, 2021, point to a fluidity in the understanding of the role of an intimacy director as well as what qualifies an individual to claim the position of an intimacy director, leaving the door open for further development of the position.

It should also be mentioned that the CTA and the ITA do not currently require the presence of an intimacy director for scenes of staged intimacy. The current language states "The Theatre will determine if staging requires an Intimacy Director. If, following consultation with the Theatre, an Artist in a production wishes to have an Intimacy Director made available to them, their request shall not be unreasonably denied" (ITA 184, CTA 190). Both documents leave the decision with the presenting theatre but do allow for an individual artist to advocate for an intimacy director should they see fit. However, in the case of violent intimacy, slightly more forceful language is applied. Both the CTA and ITA assert that "[i]t is strongly recommended that an Intimacy Director and a Fight Director are engaged for scenes of violent intimacy, whether the scene depicts these acts to be consensual or not" (CTA190 and ITA 184). Here they have urged

engagers to hire an intimacy director but have not demanded it, still leaving the power with the producers and as such not making it a right of the artist physically engaged in the storytelling.

The language in the DOT agreement, which was enacted March 1, 2022, and terminates January 5th, 2025, is considerably more rigid as it relates to the need to engage an intimacy director, stating "An Intimacy Director will be engaged for productions/activities that involve intimacy" (26). This differs from the language used in the CTA. The CTA gestures towards the engagement of an intimacy director whereas the use of the word "will" in the DOT agreement denotes that if moments of intimacy, as defined within the agreement, are to be staged then an intimacy director is expected to be engaged. The DOT agreement does not leave room for a company to use their own discretion as to whether they require the position in the creative process.

Negotiating a history of Intimacy Direction

The origin of intimacy direction, like the role itself, is still being negotiated amongst practitioners and scholars. It is commonly accepted that intimacy direction became an occasional practice in 2017, with the hiring of Tonia Sina at the Stratford festival, and moved into more common practice post-pandemic. The liminal history of intimacy direction pulls from several points of creation and demonstrates how the scholarship surrounding intimacy direction is developing at a similar pace to the field. In Kari Barclay's chapter about the history of intimacy choreography in *Directing Desire: Intimacy Choreography and Consent in the Twenty-First Century* they highlight the problem of crafting a history of a field in the early stages of development:

> crafting a history of intimacy choreography is entangled with crafting its future. The history one tells about a field affects its shape. As performance studies scholars following Jacques Derrida have emphasized, a written archive too often serves to calcify a living practice, to attempt to fix it into a perceived permeance. For that reason, I frame this chapter as *rehearsing* a history of intimacy choreography. In the same way that a rehearsal is always an in-between space between the creation of a script and its final performance, I tell a history of intimacy choreography as the field develops in multiple directions in real time. (33)

Barclay points to the conundrum of attempting to solidify something that is intangible and the precarity of how the act of documenting through written materials can be dangerously misinforming.

Barclay explains how in the case of intimacy choreography many elements come together that may lead to an inaccurate and harmful understanding of the birth of the field should an attempt at a definitive history be presented. According to Barclay, the first known mention of the term "Intimacy choreography" is in Tonia Sina's 2006 MFA Thesis in Theatre Pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University. Barclay also asserts that "four main influences: fight choreography, movement direction, sex and relationship therapy and Black theatre practices" have greatly informed the development of the practice (24). However, Barclay notes that to begin the story of the creation of intimacy direction with a single point of origin is to overlook work being done prior to the coining of the title. Barclay asserts that

> As Black intimacy choreographers including Kaja Dunn, Teniece Divya Johnson, and Sasha Smith suggest, to begin the history of intimacy choreography with its development as a named practice is to overlook the work of black theatre-makers including Barbara

> Ann Teer and Douglas Turner Ward who attempted to advance actors' self-advocacy and autonomy before the language of consent gained cultural traction. At the same time, in reaching back to claim forebears of color, to what extent might contemporary intimacy choreographers mask the continued whiteness of the field? (Barclay 33)

It is for this reason that this chapter will continue to investigate the history of intimacy direction with Barclay's notion of rehearsal. The presentation of the following information is a draft of an ever-changing negotiation of what may or may not be the genesis of intimacy direction in the hopes that this document plays a role in keeping this investigation open and in development so as not to cover the current difficult realities and challenges in the field.

Honoring intimacy direction's connection to Black artists, activists, and theorists is essential to an investigation into the origins of the field. Dr. Mackie-Stephenson explains in the book *Intimacy Directing for Theatre: Creating a Culture of Consent in the Classroom and Beyond* that "intimacy direction's foundation in Black feminism and Black critical theory—the basis for intersectional justice in the U.S. and beyond" is at the root of much of the work being done by intimacy directors (2). Further, Mackie-Stephenson provides an example of how this work informs the training of intimacy professionals:

> It is no coincidence that some of the best ID trainings have connected intimacy work with other callings for justice. For example, according to Colleen Hughes, 'Kimberlé Crenshaw has informed much of IDC's curriculum.' Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black professor and attorney whose work is based in U.S. law, third world feminism, and Black critical theory, coined the term "intersectionality" over 30 years ago in 1989. (3)

Here Mackie-Stephenson illustrates how the work of Kimerlé Crenshaw is being taught to intimacy professionals noting that movements for racial and gender justice in the United States are informing the pedagogy of emerging institutions in the field.

The connection between justice activism and the emergence of intimacy direction cannot be overstated. Mackie-Stephenson explains that

> The history of intimacy directing certainly calls upon this human rights legacy. Intimacy work is inspired by the Me Too Movement, which was created by Tarana Burke. In 2006, Burke began using "me too" to help other women with similar experiences to stand up for themselves and other women began using it to tell their stories. Intimacy direction and coordination are based upon this international movement to end sexual violence against women. Intimacy direction became a way to advocate for women in film and live performance and protect them against sexual assault and violence. (24)

Here Mackie-Stephenson brings forward the impact of Black activist Tarana Burke's Me Too Movement as an important cultural shift that allowed for intimacy direction to become more widely acknowledged.

Professional intimacy training organizations and societies also acknowledge the roots of social justice as part of the framework for intimacy direction and coordination. In the second edition of the IDC Resource Guide, it is acknowledged that

> The discipline of intimacy direction would not have been possible without the work of Black women and trans/nonbinary activists and Global Majority intimacy practitioners, scholars, and artists, whose theories and work on power, agency, and consent built many of the foundations for the professionalization of intimacy direction/coordination.

> However, these voices are not proportionally reflected in the media's representation of the popularization of this field. These practitioners have and continue to contribute to this industry while experiencing more resistance and violence when challenging social and industry constructs than their white/cis counterparts and also often simultaneously being erased from any narratives surrounding the positive impact of their contributions. (4)

IDC recognizes the work of Black women, trans/nonbinary and Global Majority individuals whose work has greatly informed the field while also stating that representation of intimacy directors and coordinators in the media has not highlighted these individuals or their labour. They also point to the negative impact the media's lack of inclusivity has had on practitioners.

Queer justice movements are also being credited for influencing or creating some of the practices employed by intimacy directors and coordinators. Dr. Joy Brooke Fairfield sees

> intimacy choreography as already itself a part of queer and genderqueer interpersonal technology and lineage. And this is very evidenced in the use of, like, we say "self-care cue" versus "safe word," but obviously "safe word" coming from queer kink communities this turn of the century putting forward ideas of safer sex. Even sort of "safe spaces" coming from LGBTQ and AIDS activism. (Fairfield)

Fairfield links terminology and consent practices to queer kink communities as well as LGBTQ and AIDS activism illustrating that language and techniques currently being employed by intimacy directors and coordinators can be credited to social justice initiatives relating to the liberation of 2SLGBTQIA folks.

There is also a connection to the development of intimacy choreography and disability justice. Maya Herbsman, who is an Intimacy Director and Coordinator, Educator, Director, Anti-Racism Facilitator, and Activist, asserts that

> Intimacy work is deeply intertwined with disability and disability justice. The first person to coin the term intimacy direction, Tonia Sina, is a person who lives with chronic illnesses—and that's no coincidence. Living with disability has so much to teach about consent and trauma-informed work, and there are so many parallels in the work we do as intimacy professionals with the fight of disability justice. (51)

Herbsman ties the development of Tonia Sina's work to her experience of living with a chronic illness while linking the practices of consent forward and trauma-informed work to the tools of an intimacy director or coordinator. She also expresses how the work of intimacy directors and coordinators echoes that of work being done by activists in the disability justice movement.

What are the Qualifications of an Intimacy Director?

The language used in the 2021-2024 CTA is vague as it relates to what constitutes a CAEA Intimacy Director. However, less than a year later, Canadian Actor's Equity took steps to clarify what makes an artist an Equity Intimacy Director. In the Bylaw Amendment Council Motions made on November 22, 2021, CAEA further defined the requirements an individual must meet to work within the union. The document outlines that to qualify as an CAEA Intimacy Director an artist must have "at least three engagements as an Intimacy Director, one of which must be an equity contract" and have "completed no less than (30) thirty hours of intimacy training, in person or online, or in a workshop or classroom setting" (13). The document also

stipulates that in cases where “work and/or contract was not done under any of the titles of Intimacy Director, Coach or Captain, for the purposes of this bylaw, letters of agreement, programs, playbills, or other forms of verification of participation in production will be accepted"(13). It is also stated that an “artist who is already a member of Equity and wishes to be recognized as an Intimacy Director shall be required to demonstrate proof of the same criteria” (13).

The update to the bylaw clarifies that there is specific training needed to qualify as an intimacy director but does not stipulate where and with whom this training should be completed, leaving this open to interpretation. The language also allows for past contracts, done under other titles, as acceptable for qualification but does not outline how the involvement in a past production should be assessed. Does directing a show that involved intimacy in the past then qualify as a credit towards equity status if the director staged the scenes of intimacy themselves? Could the same be said for choreographers? If so, how does this shift the field of potential Intimacy Directors in Canada? And what constitutes professional training that would be deemed acceptable by CAEA and by whom is it given?

At the time of writing, there is only one organization training Intimacy Directors in Canada. Principle Intimacy Professionals offers a program titled “Launchpad Training Program” which “is a four-phase program designed for individuals looking to become an intimacy professional” (“PIP’s Launchpad Training Program”). To be accepted into the training program applicants must demonstrate training within the last five years in the following areas: “Mental Health First Aid certification, Non-Violent communication, Anti-harassment and bystander intervention, Mediation and conflict resolution, Anti-racism/EDI practices, Gender Identity + sexual orientation training” (“PIP’s Launchpad Training Program”). Once accepted, the training

consists of four phases with each phase being the prerequisite for the next. The first phase consists of 65 hours of online training, the second involves 24 hours of in-person training, the third phase is made up of "30 days of practical on-set work" which is suggested would take six months, the final phase is sparingly described as "review and certification" ("PIP's Launchpad Training Program"). The cost of the training appears to be a sliding scale stating that applicants "will be invited to offer a financial investment and an energy exchange they feel confident making for each phase of training; please pitch something that is sustainable for you" ("PIP's Launchpad Training Program"). This training program is structured to lead participants towards being certified within the organization. However, it is important to mention that given the current professional standards outlined by CAEA an Intimacy Director is only required to have 30 hours of either online or in-person training and certification is not mentioned at all.

In the United States there are several organizations providing training in Intimacy Direction. One of the leading organizations offering certification is Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC). IDC's "path to certification" is made up of four levels. The first two levels are taught online, available to the public, and do not require a formal application ("Path to Certification"). The first level is a four-week course and the second is six weeks. The third level requires an in-depth application and interview process and takes place both online and in-person over a period of four months. Level four is described as providing "professional support and mentorship as you begin working professionally. Participants are paired with a mentor who is a professional in the industry. Successful completion of the fourth level results in certification with IDC" ("Path to Certification"). Unlike the Canadian training, the American training offers specific costs for each course (with the potential to obtain scholarships). Level One costs $399 USD, Level Two Costs $549 USD, and Level Three costs $5999 USD. The cost of training and

certifying with this organization is considerable, especially given the fact that in Canada there remains no requirement for any specific certification to work as a professional Intimacy Director. However, it should be noted that specific training is required for the position and although certification is not a requirement, much of the hands-on training for intimacy direction work is often not taught in preliminary levels, thus requiring individuals to take further courses to access some of the more practical elements of the work.

Certification and Gatekeeping

There is currently a debate among Intimacy Directors as to the validity of certification within the field. In The Journal of Consent-Based Performance, Chelsea Pace published an article titled “The Certification Question.” In it she explains that the

> existence of “certification” leverages systems of power that promote inequity, exclusion, and the dynamics of deep problematic master-teacher models to capitalize, financially or otherwise, on gatekeeping access to knowledge and opportunity. Intimacy work—or more broadly consent work—should shine a light on the long-established hierarchies of power in our industries—not perpetuate them. … In an ecosystem where certification exists at all, qualified people will be overlooked because they have not invested time and money into paying for access to a certification that they do not need to effectively do their work. (83)

Pace notes that the notion of certification calls upon power structures that have historically led to issues of disenfranchisement and offers that systems of certification can lead to the exclusion of

qualified individuals from working in the field. The cost of the certification process currently outlined by IDC as well as the travel requirements may pose a hindrance for many individuals.

The act of certification suggests a definitive set of skills and techniques that one must master to perform the role of Intimacy Director. Intimacy Director Danielle Rosvally explains how certification in either Intimacy Directing or Coordination "implies that there's a concrete body of knowledge here when, in fact, both these fields are constantly evolving. Moreover, they both involve implementing protocols that depend entirely upon human elements to work." (Busselle and Rosvally). Rosvally explains that the field is in a state of development with no set criteria for implementation. The work is done in collaboration with other artists and does not exist within a vacuum while certification points to an individual expert entering a creative process and controlling it within a certain set of boundaries to achieve a guaranteed outcome.

In January 2022 Acacia DëQueer, Kristina Valentine, Mx. Chelsey Morgan conducted a census of 64 Intimacy Professionals working in the United States. The data pointed to "gatekeeping" as a common barrier. (52). The census report stipulates that

> gatekeeping was strongly associated with comments about qualifications, certification, cost of training, and freedom of information. It also seems because there is no singular organizational body, training institution, or union that represents intimacy professionals as a whole… the social power of those perceived to be more experienced was amplified. … Racial homogeneity among those intimacy professionals who were perceived as having more power, visibility or experience was also a frequent complaint when discussing gatekeeping, with multiple respondents feeling the need to receive approval from their white peers to pursue work in the field. Half of all Global Majority

> respondents identified gatekeeping as a barrier in the industry. In comparison, only 22% of Non-Global Majority respondents identified gatekeeping as a barrier. (51)

The census report highlights a connection between gatekeeping and the existence of white supremacy within the field while linking both to questions of certification, networking, and power among intimacy professionals. For a field with roots in justice-based activism it is striking how current professional practices seem to be upholding oppressive structures relating to race and white supremacy.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the representation of Intimacy Directors in popular media has been predominately white cis women (Barclay). Founder of Intimacy Coordinators of Color Ann James has asserted that "intimacy direction is still very much about white feminist culture" (James). The census put together by DëQueer, Valentine, and Morgan also points towards a large population of white practitioners in the United States. They report

> nine different races/ethnicities were indicated in responses, 79% of respondents lists "white" as at least one of their races when asked "What is your racial identity." This was slightly higher than the national average of 76% … Global Majority made up 27% of the overall responses from intimacy professionals compared to the 39% of the United States population they represented. (39)

There is clearly an underrepresentation of Intimacy Professionals Representing the Global Majority in the field.

The history of theatre in North America is rife with white supremacist culture and narratives. Dr. Mackie-Stephenson explains how this history also informs how moments of intimacy are portrayed. She asserts that

> Black love, Black bodies, and Black sex matter because sexual rights are human rights. Theatre has a White supremacist history of oppressing Black sexuality, and it needs to stop. Black people's sexual rights are affected by the way theatre artists represent Black bodies. Black sexuality is portrayed as a moral violation, while White sexuality is portrayed as natural and normal. But the sex and love we see on stage and on the big screen is not natural or 'normal;' they are shaped by a White supremacist paradigm that determines how everyone's sexuality gets presented. … With racial justice intention, intimacy directing can resist White supremacy in the choreography. (25-29)

Mackie-Stephenson demonstrates that the crafting of moments of intimacy on stage and screen is a deliberate practice that can either support white supremacy or work to dismantle it and offers that white supremacist narratives can be interrupted with proper intervention by an intimacy director who is culturally informed.

The value of lived experience is one that repeats in the literature surrounding intimacy direction and intimacy coordination. Raja Benz, "a transgender, Filipina-American theatre maker, educator, intimacy professional and cultural consultant" explains that,

> lived experience more than anything teaches me how to navigate the oppressive system that didn't want me in the room. And that's really the value of hiring somebody with lived experience, is I don't get to just step away from this when it becomes difficult. So my resiliency to tell this story is just something that I've worked on for a long time, and that's when we get a lot of questions about, like, 'when do we call the queer person to do this intimacy or when do I do it?' and I'm like that's not necessarily the question. … And sometimes it's a resiliency to work within the system that is the thing that you need in the room… (Benz)

Benz points out that it is not just the technical knowledge that can benefit the storytelling but also the resiliency of an individual who has experienced life through a lens that is more closely related to the characters being presented. It is important to place value on skills that are not solely tied to the task of choreographing moments of intimacy. The identity of the individual choreographer carries a great deal of weight in navigating the cultural realities of the stories being told.

Acknowledging the value of culturally competent collaborators has become more common practice in recent years. Newhauser and Black offer a guideline in their textbook directed towards professional theatre creators, producers, and crew as to how to seek out the most appropriate artist for the task, stating that

> when planning to bring in specialists, those hiring may need to ask how culture-based elements within the show will be supported and how identity-driven stories in intimate moments will be negotiated. This discussion is imperative when team members involved do not have the lived experience, research, or knowledge necessary to support narratives linked to identity in the show. Our responsibility as contemporary storytellers is now to prevent reducing characters to a cliché or propagate racist, classist, ableist, or other anti-diversity messaging. (48)

Black and Newhauser assert that seeking out Intimacy Directors with a connection to the identities being presented is a responsibility of producers and collaborators. They point to hiring individuals with lived experience and with ample research to craft moments of intimacy with accuracy and care.

Conclusion

Until 2017 it was standard for directors to stage all acts of performed intimacy that took place in front of the audience. Some did so with care and precision and others did not. The inclusion of intimacy directors into the creative process has shifted the role of the theatre director. As the definitions of intimacy and intimacy direction remain in negotiation so too does the job of the director. The act of interpreting a script for production has become increasingly collaborative. There are strengths in this transformation as it may generate increased physical, emotional, and cultural safety for actors and directors alike while introducing the potential for more nuanced and dynamic storytelling in moments of staged intimacy or simulated sexual acts. The inclusion of intimacy directors into the creative process provides a new opportunity for collaboration and shared responsibility for the director, while at the same time the relationship may also be a site for conflict if the two artists disagree over how a moment should be choreographed. The emergence of the intimacy director as a mandatory collaborator in the professional theatre may also uphold the very systems that the position endeavors to dismantle. Should due diligence not be paid to the nuanced power structures inherent in any given script, theatre company, or community, intimacy direction may function as yet another tool of white supremacy, ableism, cis-gender hetero bias, and intersectional oppression.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

This study has presented six ideologically driven methodologies that indicate a shift in the way that professional Canadian theatre directors have been working since 2014. The changes that are occurring in practice point to a transformation in the role of the professional director from that of a leader functioning within an assumed hierarchical power generated from a Eurocentric colonial lineage to that of a malleable process structure that is increasingly more accountable to both the audience (community) and the artistic ensemble. This move towards a more peaceable process is primarily rooted in the strong history of decolonial, Indigenous, antiracist, accessible, Disability centred, and trauma informed practices that had been previously marginalized in professional Canadian theatre. This chapter will briefly summarize the study's findings, present discoveries within the research, note the limitations and challenges, acknowledge what new knowledge has been developed, and lastly offer ideas for next steps within this area of research.

This study demonstrates that prior to 2014 much of the population of professional theatre directors in Canada were cis white men. This reality can be partially explained by the model for Canadian theatre directors crafted via the development of professional theatre in this country, a process that cannot be separated from the emergence of the Dominion Drama Festival and the Stratford Festival. Both institutions were created to uphold a national identity rooted in a colonial ideology, a crisis of identity, and an aristocratic ideal (Filewod, *Performing Canada*). Simultaneous to the development of this lineage of the hierarchical model, other modes of working and creating theatre were being developed by artists either actively dismantling the hierarchical structure or purposefully engaging in other modes of creation. However, prior to 2014 much of this work was relegated to niche theatres and not commonly or consistently

practiced within the larger houses of professional theatre. This study presented these separate histories as a framework to understand many of the practices that are now becoming commonplace in rehearsal halls across the country.

Alongside directing processes that are rooted in cultural identity, social awareness of trauma and Disability have also contributed to the shift in creation modalities for professional directors. The study offered examples of how processes rooted in the mental health field, applied theatre, Disability arts, and accessibility arts are influencing professional directorial processes in Canada. Noting key practitioners and significant events that have come to the forefront since 2014, the study called attention to how and where processes that are more frequently appearing in the work of professional directors were initially generated.

The study also presented two new positions that heavily impact the role and power of professional theatre directors in Canada: one related to cultural shifts and one rooted in social developments post 2014. Cultural consultants and intimacy directors are both named in the 2024 CTA. Although intimacy direction has been more substantially developed within the professional theatre strata, having fees that are standardized and specific language outlining the position within CAEA governance, both positions are suggested as necessary supports to the director under specific stipulations. Also, both positions function to unsettle the director as the unique authority within any given rehearsal space, offering alternative models of creation as well as a potentially less hierarchical and more collaborative leadership structure.

I felt compelled to research how professional theatre directors could work in ways that did not inherently reinforce toxic structures. This compulsion was born out of a personal experience that left me filled to the brim with frustration and shame. At the beginning of this work, I had just completed working on one of the largest professional contracts of my life,

directing a co-production for two major regional theatres that required an immense amount of cultural and social expertise. I was aware of this when I took on the project and I thought my tools, collaborators, and support from the engaging theatres were enough. They were not. I failed the project in my ability to tell the story I was hired to tell. In my role as the director, I caused social and cultural harm. I write this because it was during that process that I learned that intentions, although very good, were not enough to protect myself, my collaborators, or the audience. This study is born out of a desire to do better as an artist and to somehow put together a road map for myself and other directors for how we can remain artists while also staying in line with our ethics. Instead, I discovered that, similar to how the role of the director is evolving to become a flexible process structure, so too are the tools and practices that are being developed to account for cultural and social awareness. One cannot create a roadmap for equitable and harm adverse direction as there is no finite destination. The practice and the role are in a state of flux and hopefully will continue to remain that way for it is in this renegotiation of the profession that there is room for reflexivity, consultation, and listening. The unsettling of the role provides a flexibility within the professional field which can then potentially make room for theatre-making practices that develop to suit the needs of any given project. Crafting an updated roadmap would be insufficient in that it would have the potential of creating another idealized “director” that would inevitably, in its rigidity, function in much the same way as its predecessor. For directors who, like me, are struggling to work in a less harmful way, experimenting with including the new ways of working described in this study into their process is the best way forward. This will likely not be easy, but offering these tools to artistic ensembles, knowing the history of those tools, and giving credit where credit is due, is the best recipe that we have for avoiding harm.

There are examples of public discourse surrounding calls for changes within professional theatre culture have started to shape the way that professional directors, across the various sized stages in the country, have been implementing practices that are contributing to increasingly more equitable representation within the field. Some of these examples are described within the body of this study, Additionally, in tracking the CTA agreements since 2014, the shift in language and protocols has been significant. The 2024 CTA acknowledges the effects of colonialism, racism, and ableism on the population of theatre artists, and it has also done away with policies like “as cast” which functioned as a potential site for intersectional oppression. The inclusion of cultural consultants and intimacy directors, as noted above, has fostered new creative positions that are in direct response to the call for much needed change surrounding cultural and social safety and representation.

As much as there has been a significant cultural shift in North America, and parts of Europe, since 2014 to promote equity seeking behaviours, there has recently been a substantial trend in opposition to many of the processes described in this study. This is noted in the disallowing of DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) policies in employment and academic admissions in the United States as well as the April 2025 federal ruling denying a motion to bar the American National Endowment for the Arts from stopping funds for all artists whose projects engage with gender ideology. Undoubtedly, similar agendas are being pursued in Canada. While it feels like we are going in a certain direction (a more peaceable one) that can easily turn and start to track backwards. Progress is never continually forward, and these are examples of pressure to make the profession go in reverse.

In presenting the changes that are noted in this field of research it is also clear that my study is heavily limited by the lack of specific scholarship on the practical work of theatre

directors in Canada. Much of the documentation of practical elements of the job are relegated to popular publications that often rely on practitioners explaining their own processes. These documents can be useful in that they provide the reader with a sense of how an artist theoretically conceives of their working behaviours, however they are unreliable in that it is impossible to determine exactly how and in what frequency they executed their intended methodology. There is always the potential for a substantial difference between intention and delivery in all theatrical performance work. Additionally, this study was challenged by lack of documentation of the clear lineages of certain practices. I was able to anecdotally determine that community agreements and check-in practices had experienced a massive uptick in popularity during the temporal boundaries of the study but found very little scholarship or even populist writing or interviews connecting how and when these niche practices catapulted into mainstream Canadian theatre. My unique perspective as a professional director informs the research with lived experience that is key due to the limitations of published material documenting many practical demands and realities of the profession. While scholarship exists within Canadian theatre studies relating to the history and practice of direction, there is a dearth of scholarly writing addressing the practical elements of antiracist direction, cultural consultancy, trauma informed direction, and intimacy direction. This study presents an overview of the history of these emergent practices while also providing examples of implementation, creating a tool for other directors and scholars to reference in their attempts to understand the significance and scope of these broad professional shifts.

Further, this study demonstrates a paradigm shift in the culture of professional theatre making in Canada since 2014. This change is indicated by the new ideologically driven methodologies and artistic positions which disrupted the hierarchical model of theatre direction

that plagued Canada's playhouses since the inception of western professional theatre in the country. The evolution of these practices marks a transition from the role of the director as a leadership position which has been plagued by preconceived hierarchical values to a liminal process structure that prioritizes a reflexive praxis which acknowledges that the well-being of the community (within the rehearsal hall as well as the audience) cannot be separated from the artistic outcome. One might consider viewing a directing style that uplifts this ethic as Peaceable Direction. This term implies a flexible process that values care and seeks to manifest leadership which uplifts collaborators while carving out a clear artistic path for any given project. I consider this a change in the culture of the profession where well-being can no longer can be separated from artistic output and where the conscious crafting of community, with each new creation process ,must be deliberate and specific to the needs of that group. This practice also points the inclusion of more discussion around how any given creative process will go, with all members of the production, prior to engaging in rehearsals. These actions are an attempt to balance, and stay aware of, the tension between creativity and power. I also offer this term as an inspirational container for the many changes that are coming to define the forward trajectory of the profession.

Next steps for this research stream are to delve more fully into the working relationships between intimacy directors and directors to consider how the roles intersect. I hope that others will further examine the connection between intimacy direction and trauma informed practices and consider the ramifications, both positive and negative, of working on stories that contain elements of trauma. I am also curious to discover if the newly developed protocols and practices that are being implemented by intimacy directors are being adapted in any way by Canadian theatre directors. As a director who has trained as an intimacy director, I have experienced first-hand how my own language has begun to shift in reference to actor movement and consent. As

directors and intimacy directors increasingly collaborate within the professional setting, is this new way of relating to moments of heightened emotion and physical proximity being brought into other moments of staging that are solely the work of the director? I can also see value in investigating the overlap between decolonization theories and consent forward practices as they relate to artistic leadership in Canada.

In the opening remarks to the 2020 book *The Director's Lab,* director Evan Tsitsias asks a series of questions that he suggests have become increasingly prominent amongst Canadian theatre directors:

> Do we have the right to tell stories of cultures outside our own? Why do we choose to tell these stories? … we as Canadians, understand that we are telling a "Canadian" story on Indigenous land? Do we acknowledge this? How do we acknowledge this? How does that history affect and reflect the stories we are telling? I'm sweating even typing this. (6)

Tsistsias' statement demonstrates a series of questions that professional Canadian directors have been asking themselves. It also points to a sweaty discomfort in acknowledging the vulnerability of asking questions about culture, colonization, and representation while holding a position of artistic leadership. Many directors, me included, were trained to believe that we needed to be seen as the authority. To falter in this was to fail at garnering respect, and perhaps more importantly, compliance from our actors and creative team. Since 2014, the belief that effective directors are infallible pinnacles of taste and cultural knowledge who can and should control their collaborators has been slowly eroding. The replacement for this belief is a budding understanding of the role of the director as a malleable process structure whose flexibility renders it prone to frequent change, marking its vulnerability as its strength, not its weakness.

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