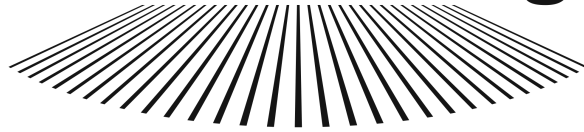


The Western Stage



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Written by Jeffrey T. Heyer

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Emilia

by Morgan Lloyd Malcom

tagline: The amazing, speculative, true story of the “Dark Lady” of Shakespeare’s sonnets

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAY:

Æmilia Lanier née Bassano (1569 - 1645) was one of the first English female poets to be published. This all-but-erased historical figure is the subject of Morgan Lloyd Malcolm’s Olivier Award-winning play, which was first commissioned for Shakespeare’s Globe before heading to London’s West End. What little we know of Æmilia Bassano Lanier is that she is rumored to have been the “Dark Lady” of Shakespeare’s sonnets, the mistress of the Lord Chamberlain; a mother, a teacher who founded a school for women, and a radical feminist with North African ancestry. From these few facts, Shakespeare’s sonnets and a knowledge of the time, Morgan Lloyd Malcolm created an imaginative and colorful life for Æmilia Lanier with a great deal of relevance to our own time. Living when women had very limited opportunities, Æmilia’s story represents women everywhere whose voices have been sidelined.

In a neat inversion, just as Shakespeare was obliged to have his female roles played by boys, all roles, including the male roles in *Emilia*, are played by female/female-identifying/nonbinary actors, with Emilia herself portrayed by three different actors. Lovers of Shakespeare will also recall that in addition to the Dark Lady of the sonnets, he included a character named Emilia in *Othello*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *Comedy of Errors*.

BACKGROUND OF EMILIA:

Emilia was commissioned for Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre in 2018 after which it moved to the Vaudeville Theatre in the West End for 2019. It was nominated that year for the Mousetrapp Awards for Best Play and Best Power of the Ensemble. Unfortunately, the run was cut short by the pandemic, which limited the number of productions since. It is, therefore, very new and seldom seen. There was, however, a New Zealand production in 2020, which won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Entertainment or Comedy Play, Best Costume Design and Best Sound Design.

*** MORE ***

THE AUTHOR:

Morgan Lloyd Malcolm was born into a theatrical family, her father being actor and West End producer Christopher Malcolm and her mother being actor Judy Lloyd. Malcolm's first play, *Fanny and Madge*, was produced in 2002 at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, winning her a Fringe First Award. Her first major stage production was 2011's *Belongings*, followed by *The Wasp*, *Mum*, *When the Long Trick's Over* and *Typical Girls*. Malcolm wrote the book for *Cake*, a musical life of Marie Antoinette. Her screen-writing work includes *Killing Time*, a BBC3 pilot about life in a women's prison, the Netflix erotic thriller series, *Obsession* and a screen adaptation of her play *The Wasp*, which is now in post-production. She is also adapting *Emilia* for the screen. Malcolm, playwrights Abi Zakarian and Sampira co-founded and co-run the horror-story theatre company *Terrifying Women*. Malcolm won the Total Theatre Award for Innovation and Experimentation and the Smiffie Award for Best Comedy for Edinburgh Fringe Festival shows, along with a nomination for the Edinburgh Writing Awards for Best Comedy. *Emilia's* New Zealand production won the 2020 Olivier Award for Best Entertainment or Comedy Play, Best Costume Design and Best Sound Design.

WHY THIS PLAY WAS CHOSEN:

This Fiftieth Anniversary season of The Western Stage is an homage to its four Artistic Directors and a celebration of its history as reflected in a series of titles not previously produced at Western Stage. *Merrily We Roll Along*, TWS' season opener, was a nod to Jon Patrick Selover, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, celebrated Tom Humphrey's artistic directorship, and this production of *Emilia* harkens back to Ron Danko's Shakespeare canon but from a modern, feminist twist.

Emilia serves to represent TWS' history on multiple fronts. The title character is played by three different actors representing the poet Emilia at different ages a device written into TWS's original stage adaptation and cornerstone production of John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, in which more than one actor portrayed principal characters, and in various scenes are shadowed onstage by the others. This constantly reminds the audience how the present flows out of what was, on the way to what is to come. *Emilia* also casts a new light on Shakespeare's classics, bringing the audience full circle to the Ron Danko years when TWS began. And finally, it creates opportunities for women and BIPOC actors, as is the direction toward which TWS' current Artistic Director Melissa Chin-Parker steers.

ARTISTIC TEAM:

Directed by: Kristin Kusanovich and Rebecca Haley Clark.

Kristin Kusanovich, a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, is a modern/contemporary dancer and theatre artist who has directed, choreographed and produced over one hundred solo and ensemble works in dance, drama, musical theatre, opera, film, and video. Kusanovich was artistic director of Kusanovich Dance Theatre of Minneapolis for a decade. She has been a curriculum developer, teacher, mentor, movement and vocal coach, and master teaching artist for 30 years in the professional sector as well as in PreK-12 grades at over 50 diverse school sites. Kusanovich publishes and presents on embodied knowing and teaches courses in dance, theatre and pedagogy at Santa Clara University. She also presents, performs, and gives master classes at prestigious conservatories locally, nationally and internationally. As President of the California Dance Education Association, she works with a state-wide team to advance the quality of dance arts education in the state through legislation, advocacy, and professional development offerings.

Rebecca Haley Clark is a theatre director and practitioner who has worked in New York, Brazil,

and Scotland. She completed the Masters of Classical and Contemporary Text directing course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2019. Haley Clark received her undergraduate degree in Drama and Comparative Ethnic Studies at Columbia University and a Fulbright research grant to study Shakespeare and race studies in Rio de Janeiro. She returned to her hometown to become the Education Programs Manager at Santa Cruz Shakespeare. Past work included *Cycle-Logical*, *The Aliens*, *The Roaring Girl*, *Shakespeare is Brazilian*, *King John*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Owl Answers* and *Exit Pursued by Bear*.

Director: Rebecca Haley Clark
Director-Choreographer: Kristin Kusanovich
Music Director-Composer: Rosie Quintana
Stage Manager: Zalissa Ré Johnson
Costume, Hair & Makeup Designer: Maegan Roux
Lighting Designer: Derek Duarte
Scenic Designer: Heather Kenyon
Sound Designer: Natalie Margaret Houle
Props Designer: Tiffany Decker

CAST:

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| EMILIA 3 | Desiree M. Rogers* |
| *member of Actors Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States | |
| EMILIA 2 | Amber Patton |
| EMILIA 1 | Alexis Makayla Williams |

The Ensemble:

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| SUSAN BERTIE, MARY, BOB | Jani Davis |
| LADY CLIFFORD, MIDWIFE, MAN 1, COLLINS | Denisha Ervin |
| THOMAS HOWARD, JUDITH, PRIEST | Donna Federico |
| HELENA, LORD CAREY, EVE | Maria |
| ALPHONSO, EMILIA in Othello | Nadja Mark |
| SHAKESPEARE, MAN 2 | River Navaille |
| LADY KATHERINE, DESDEMONA in Othello | Rosie Quintana |
| CORDELIA, FLORA, LADY ANNE | Sienna Michelle Tyler |
| MARGARET JOHNSON, MARY SIDNEY, HESTER, DAVE | Reina Vazquez |
| Understudies for the Emilias: Nadja Mark, Denisha Ervin, Sienna Michelle Tyler | |

Musicians:

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|--------------------|-----------------|
| Conductor/Keyboard | Rosie Quintana |
| Cajon | Chloe Cavallaro |
| Guitar | Jeddy Grant |

WHEN:

Oct 19, 20, 26, 27, Nov 2, 3, 9, 10, 2024
Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

WHERE:

The Mainstage Theatre on the Hartnell College Main Campus, 411 Central Avenue, Salinas, CA.

TICKETING INFORMATION:

Adult \$30; Seniors/Military/Teachers \$24; Hartnell Students FREE; Other Students \$16; Youths (5-15) \$12; Hartnell Faculty/Staff \$15; Student Rush \$5; Group tickets available by contacting the TWS Box Office.

Online tickets and more information: westernstage.com or call (831) 755-6816.

TWS Box Office is open Wednesday-Saturday 5:00-8:00pm. and Sundays with performances 12-3pm. Leave VM to get callback within 24 hours.

ACCOMMODATIONS:

This event is wheelchair accessible. Individuals requiring other accommodations should contact the ticket office at least one week prior to the event.

CURRENT COVID-19 INFORMATION

The Western Stage is not requiring masking or proof of COVID-19 negative test result or vaccination at this time. Ticket holders are asked to not attend if they have temperature or other symptoms, or have been recently exposed to COVID-19, or have recently tested positive for COVID-19. This policy is subject to change based increase infection rates and or Hartnell College policy updates.

ABOUT THE WESTERN STAGE – ESTABLISHED 1974:

The Western Stage (TWS) is a professionally managed, community-based theatre company and educational program that provides opportunities for the creative process and high-level artistic experiences. Led by its educational mission and believing that strong arts experiences are important for building innovative, creative, and resilient communities, The Western Stage endeavors to offer a robust variety of programs designed for personal growth and skill development that address the need for a safe space where students and theatre enthusiasts may engage in theatre production while working side-by-side with theatre professionals. Through its annual production season, The Western Stage endeavors to provide strong pathways and development for artists throughout the continuum of a career in theatre and its related performing arts. The Western Stage develops new works that speak to the history and culture of the Salinas Valley and provides educational opportunities for students of all skill levels to explore and develop their unique talent. www.westernstage.com

ABOUT HARTNELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT – ESTABLISHED 1920

The Hartnell CCD serves more than 17,000 students annually through its main campus in Salinas, the Alisal Campus in East Salinas, and education centers in King City, Soledad, and Castroville. Hartnell College is a Hispanic Serving Institution that provides associate degrees and certificate programs. It prepares students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities and to enter the workforce with necessary skills. Hartnell College is known for its innovative public and private partnerships that support world class education for STEM, career technical education, fine and performing arts, humanities and social sciences, nursing and health sciences, and athletics. We are proud to be winners of the 2015 Innovation Award for CSin3 –a Computer Science collaboration with CSU Monterey Bay that leads to a bachelor's degree in three years. **We are growing leaders through opportunity, engagement and achievement.** For more about Hartnell CCD, visit www.hartnell.edu.

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