20 FESTIVAL Annual Report





We moved to the Niagara area five years ago from Northern Ontario. I love the theatre and we have patronized many theatre companies since and Foster Festival is our absolute favourite. Love the plays, the venue, the staff and volunteers. Thank you.

Mary W. - St. Catharines 2024

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

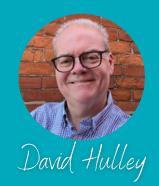
- Two Norm Foster World Premieres Those Movies and Whit's End.
- 40th Anniversary production of The Melville Boys by Norm Foster.
- World Premiere of Time & Tide by Jody Stevens McCluskey.
- Staged Reading of A Niagara Christmas Carol, adapted by Jamie Williams.

Norm Foster writes plays about people and situations to which we can all relate, and they are very funny. His plays are full of characters with foibles, insecurities, strange notions, kindness, and humour. Bravo to Emily Oriold, the founder and Artistic Director of the Foster Festival for programming plays that show us characters and situations we can all recognize.

Lynn Slotkin, slotkinletter.com

WELCOME

A MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR



On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Emily, Jamie, and the passionate Foster Festival team that includes our staff, volunteers, actors, and production professionals on yet another successful season.

We are still here, and we are certainly the mouse that keeps roaring. We have faced many adversities and challenges over our growing history, and I must note that last year was no exception. Still, we continue to fight in deliberate, disciplined, and artistically creative ways to forge our path to seasonal profitability. Certainly, we are not quite there, but through tenacity and yes, remarkable, personal sacrifice from the executive of the Festival, we are making definite strides towards that important goal. Again, I emphasize that we are still here, and I am truly distressed to say that many dedicated companies like us in our industry are not. They simply could not withstand the blows that keep coming and we mourn their absence. Still, our stalwart team always finds a way to dig deeper and keep optimistic as our mission is true, worthy, and needed. We are advancing, and although progress might seem slow at times, important pieces continue to fall into place and our future looks bright.

This is an enviable place to be as we launch forward into our 10th season. Think of that milestone for just a moment and consider the demanding and stupefying environment in which that feat has been accomplished.

Remarkable!

Onward mighty mouse!

- David Hulley, Board Chair (2024)

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



2024 was a season of firsts: our first annual Fostered Playwrights Festival; our first non-Foster production; and our first full season in the Mandeville Theatre at Ridley College with two Norm Foster world premieres and the 40th Anniversary production of **The Melville Boys**.

In April 2024, we held our first annual Fostered Playwrights Festival at Cave Springs Winery in Niagara. Featured at this festival were **Time and Tide** by Jody Stevens McCluskey (NS), **Mechanically Inclined** by Steve Ross (ON), and **Go for Gold, Audrey Pham** by Camille Pavlenko (AB). After receiving audience feedback and consultation with both Norm and Jamie, I chose **Time & Tide** by Jody Stevens McCluskey to receive its world premiere production at The Foster Festival in October 2024 - our very first non-Foster production!

But we didn't stop there...because of the positive feedback we also received about Steve Ross' play, **Mechanically Inclined**, it was chosen to receive its world premiere production in August 2025. Now we can confidently claim that The Foster Festival is committed to **fostering** homegrown Canadian comedies from across the country!

When I founded The Foster Festival, it was my mission to build a company that celebrates our nation's most prolific playwright, Norm Foster. We are not very good at celebrating our own - at celebrating the success of Canadian artists. But, the winds are changing and we are more committed than ever to creating a space where established and emerging Canadian writers can develop their work. Hence, the Fostered Playwrights Festival was born. Jamie and I spend months working with these playwrights, sometimes longer, which is not an opportunity that is often afforded to Canadian playwrights.

Our new play development program offers writers the time and resources they need to refine and showcase their stories, helping to bring their voices to the forefront of Canadian theatre. It's about nurturing talent, fostering creativity, and building a community that champions Canadian art and storytelling. The Foster Festival is more than just a theatre festival — it's a platform where Canadian playwrights and artists can thrive and be recognized for their contributions to the cultural fabric of our country.

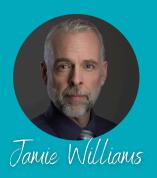
Art cannot be created in a vacuum. That's why we are grateful to our audiences and patrons for supporting our efforts. Hearing an audience's overjoyed reaction to what we do only confirms and validates our mission. We guarantee our Foster Friends will feel better leaving than when they arrived!

Last year, we were still faced with lower than desired visitor attendance and the instability within the economic climate caused us to incur another deficit at year-end. That said, we are staying on mission, preparing for our 10th Anniversary Season - 10 years of lifting people's spirits and enriching their lives through laughter. Spread the word near and far. Shout loud and proud that The Foster Festival is a fully Canadian company from top to bottom and that is to be celebrated!

Thank you to our staff, audiences, donors, partners, volunteers, and Board of Directors for your continued support of The Foster Festival. I look forward to sharing the next leg of the Festival's journey together. In closing, I offer my deepest gratitude and thanks to Norm Foster for trusting me to run a Festival that bears his name.

ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE

REPORT



2024 was a groundbreaking year for The Foster Festival. We presented our first annual Fostered Playwrights Festival, produced our first world premiere by a playwright other than our namesake, and developed our very own adaptation of *A Christmas Carol - A Niagara Christmas Carol -* in partnership with The St. Catharines Museum and Welland Canals Centre.

It was the largest programming schedule the Festival has offered since its inception and the first year we produced our full Mainstage Season in its entirety at The Mandeville Theatre, establishing it and Ridley College as "The Home of The Foster Festival."

We welcomed John McHenry as our first Development Manager - an incredible addition to the team who comes to us with a wealth of experience. And our fundraising goal of \$75,000 was achieved with a final push during the holidays!

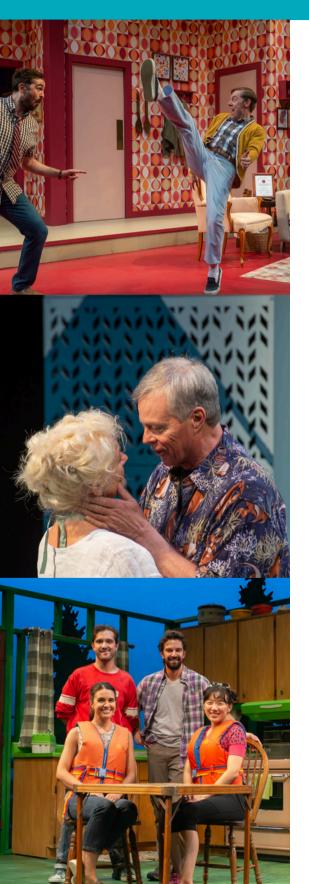
2024 was a year in which we set goals, creatively and financially, that we were able to meet successfully, ultimately setting us up to head into 2025 and our biggest season ever in our 10th Anniversary Celebration Season.

It continues to be my great privilege and pleasure to be a part of this team as we forge ahead and continue to break new ground with exciting new projects that feature the best of what Canada has to offer.

- Jamie Williams, Artistic Associate (2022-present)



2024 PROGRAMMING



THOSE MOVIES BY NORM FOSTER | WORLD PREMIERE JULY 4-14, 2024 | MANDEVILLE THEATRE

Creative & Cast

Lisa Horner, Director Jamie Cavanagh as Patrick Dana Fradkin as Chelsea Heather McGuigan as Millie Tyler Lionel Parr as Harry

Beckie Morris, Set Designer Alex Sykes, Lighting Designer Alex Amini, Costume Designer

Crew

Michael Panich, Stage Manager Sarah Flanigan, Apprentice SM Zakk Milne, Technical Director Abby Malcolm, Production Assistant Frankie Turco, Scenic Carpenter Serena Atallah, Board Operator Navpreet Brar, Wardrobe Coordinator

WHIT'S END BY NORM FOSTER | WORLD PREMIERE JULY 25-AUGUST 4, 2024 | MANDEVILLE THEATRE

Creative & Cast

Jamie Williams, Director Melanie Janzen as Nikki Peter Krantz as Whit David Rowan as Steven Caroline Toal as Erica

Beckie Morris, Set Designer Alex Sykes, Lighting Designer Alex Amini, Costume Designer

Crew

Caroline Mackenzie, Stage Manager Shannon Fletcher, Apprentice SM Zakk Milne, Technical Director Abby Malcolm, Production Assistant Frankie Turco, Scenic Carpenter Serena Atallah, Board Operator Navpreet Brar, Wardrobe Coordinator

THE MELVILLE BOYS BY NORM FOSTER | 40th ANNIVERSARY AUGUST 15-25, 2024 | MANDEVILLE THEATRE

Creative & Cast

Emily Oriold, Director Isaiah Kolundzic as Lee Emily Lukasik as Mary Daniel Reale as Owen Kelly J Seo as Loretta

Beckie Morris, Set Designer Stacy Graham, Lighting Designer Alexa Fraser, Costume Designer

Crew

Michael Panich, Stage Manager Laura Lakatosh, Apprentice SM Zakk Milne, Technical Director Abby Malcolm, Production Assistant Frankie Turco, Scenic Carpenter Serena Atallah, Board Operator Navpreet Brar, Wardrobe Coordinator

2024 PROGRAMMING



TIME & TIDE BY JODY STEVENS McCLUSKEY | WORLD PREMIERE OCTOBER 4-13, 2024 | MANDEVILLE THEATRE

Creative & Cast

Jamie Williams, Director Donna Belleville as Nan Raquel Duffy as Kathleen Rahul Gandhi as Jarrod Stephen Guy-McGrath as Will Evelyn Wiebe as Rose

Beckie Morris, Set Designer Stacy Graham, Lighting Designer Alexa Fraser, Costume Designer

Crew

Michael Panich, Stage Manager Abby Malcolm, Apprentice SM Zakk Milne, Technical Director Benoit St-Aubin, Production Assistant Frankie Turco, Scenic Carpenter Clare Padgett, Wardrobe & Props Coordinator

A NIAGARA CHRISTMAS CAROL -A STAGED READING

ADAPTED BY JAMIE WILLIAMS | STAGED READING DECEMBER 6-8, 2024 | ST. CATHARINES MUSEUM & WELLAND CANALS CENTRE and MANDEVILLE THEATRE

Creative & Cast

Emily Oriold, Director
Molly Atkinson as Mrs. Cratchit/Jenny
Jasmine Case as Belle/Annie/Kate/Caroline
Edmond Clark as Lawyer/Private Johnson/Robert/Dick
Claire Jullien as Mrs. Merritt/Mrs. Dilbert/Charlotte Trottier McGill
Emerson Keay as Christmas Past
Isaiah Kolundzic as Fred/Young Scrooge/Robinson
Patrick McManus as Marley/Cratchit/Captain
Graeme Somerville as Merritt/McGill/Christmas Present
Jamie Williams as Ebenezer Scrooge
Paul Ewan Wilson as Josiah/Billy/Chace

With Ridley College Students
Faith Nickel as Martha Cratchit/Fanny
Markus Onclin as Tiny Tim/Young Ebenezer
Jonah Tredway as Peter Cratchit/Mud Rat

Frances Johnson, Stage Manager Zakk Milne, Technical Director

2024 FOSTERED PLAYWRIGHTS FESTIVAL



TIME & TIDE BY JODY STEVENS McCLUSKEY (NS)

Creative & Cast

Jamie Williams, Director Lynne Griffin as Nan Krista Skinner as Kathleen Edmond Clark as Jarrod Darren Keay as Will Hilary Scott as Rose

MECHANICALLY INCLINED BY STEVE ROSS (ON)

Creative & Cast

Jamie Williams, Director Stuart Dowling as Mason Matthew Lazaris Brunner as Jacob Brian Young as Robert Rachel Jones as Abby Emilio Vieira as Ben Mark Weatherly as Terry

GO FOR GOLD, AUDREY PHAM BY CAMILLE PAVLENKO (AB)

Creative & Cast

Jamie Williams, Director Michael Chiem as Patrick Melanie Janzen as Birchwoman Paul Ewan Wilson as Mr. Farris

2024 FUNDRAISING EVENTS



NORM'S 75TH BIRTHDAY BASH FEBRUARY 11, 2024 | CLUB ROMA

Featuring the talents of past Foster Festival performers: Kirsten Alter, Lisa Horner, Melanie Janzen, Darren Keay, David Leyshon, Sheila McCarthy, Nora McLellan, Emily Oriold, Eliza-Jane Scott, Helen Taylor, William Vickers, and Jamie Williams, with musical accompaniment by Steve Thomas.

SHIP TO SHORE BY NORM FOSTER WORLD PREMIERE

MAY 22-26, 2024 | ST. CATHARINES MUSEUM & WELLAND CANALS CENTRE

Starring Emily Oriold and Jamie Williams.

CANADIAN COMEDY NIGHT AUGUST 20, 2024 | MANDEVILLE THEATRE

Featuring Joanne O'Sullivan (host), Evan Carter, and Arthur Simeon.

TOTES & TASTES AT THE WINERY SEPTEMBER 26, 2024 | NIAGARA COLLEGE

Led by artist and vice-chair of The Foster Festival board, Rhiannon Barry and fellow board member, treasurer Jenifer Cass.

All levels of visual artistic ability were in the room and Rhiannon made everyone feel like intuitive creatives.

2024 STATISTICS

2024 ATTENDANCE BY EVENT	TOTAL CAPACITY FOR ALL EVENTS = 16,822	
	NO. OF PERFORMANCES	ATTENDANCE
Ship to Shore SOLD OUT!	5	507
Those Movies	12	1,261
Whit's End	12	1,596
The Melville Boys	12	1,543
Time & Tide	10	903
Total 2024 Season	51	5,810
Outreach & Special Events	08	1,355
Total Attendance Reflected as a Percentage (%)		43
2024 ATTENDANCE BY REGION		
	NO. OF AUDIENCE	AS %
Local to Niagara	3,679	51
40+Km (Tourist)	3.162	45
International	314	4
Total 2024 Season	7,155	100

In 2024, our total Economic Impact was \$2.8 million in visitor spending (TREIM) up from \$1.8 million in 2023.





We are deeply invested in our community here in St Catharines and Niagara. We believe that everyone deserves to have access to the arts and feel welcome at The Foster Festival – this is our Commitment to Community.

LOCAL HERO PROGRAM

The Foster Festival believes that through the communal experience of live arts we can offer not only an afternoon or evening's entertainment but also a great sense of wellbeing, uplifting the spirits of all who attend. Shared laughter is a balm for the soul. In fact, we will be rebranding this program in 2024 to better reflect its purpose and its deeper meaning to all of us here at the Festival.

The Foster Festival has joined with **Bethlehem Housing and Support Services**, **Walker Family Cancer Centre**, **Pelham Cares**, **Community Living St. Catharines**, **Hospice Niagara**, and **Project Share** to make seats available to their clients for all our productions. A donation or sponsorship to our Local Hero Program ensures complimentary tickets are made available to our partner agencies to distribute to their clientele. With increasing support, we plan to expand our program to include transportation to and from our partner agencies to our shows.

EMERGING ARTS WORKER PROGRAM

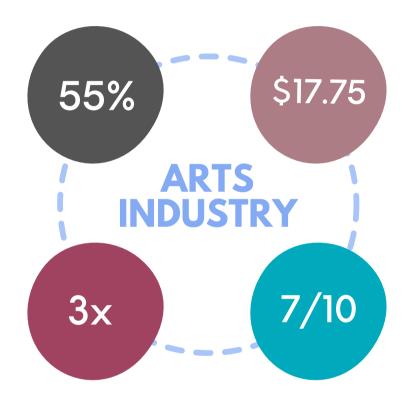
Emerging Arts Workers and Post-Secondary Dramatic Arts Students are given the opportunity to be mentored by one of The Foster Festival's Senior Artists or Technicians, giving program participants their first professional experience in theatre. These experiential learning opportunities and skills gained through the program help the emerging artists find the confidence to advance their careers in theatre. Program participants have often secured full-time, technical positions within the Festival itself or in other professional theatres upon program completion. In 2024, we provided mentorship to four Emerging Arts Workers through this program.

IMPACT OF THE ARTS



At over **\$27 billion** the Ontario Performing Arts economic impact exceeds the province's mining, forestry, agriculture, fishing, oil and gas industries combined.

- More than 55% of Ontarians attend plays or musicals every year
- Every \$1 invested generates \$17.75
- The average Ontario arts & culture tourist spends 3x as much per trip as does a typical tourist
- Seven in ten Canadians attend live performing arts events



Perhaps even more impactful than numbers, our shows are deeply funny and lift people's spirits which supports the wellbeing and mental health of our community.

The presence of arts is linked to increased neighborhood livability, community identity, and social wellbeing. Research ties the benefits of arts participation to the informal education and empowerment of the community, and to a sense of pride and community ownership.



CONDENSED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2024 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	REVIEWED	AUDITED
ASSETS	Dec 31, 2024	Dec 31, 2023
	,	
Cash		11,192
HST Recoverable	3,216	11,684
Funding & Grants Receivable	5,357	17,459
Prepaid Expenses & Deposits	3,683	4,822
Capital Assets	20,139	22,643
	32,395	67,800
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
Bank indebtedness	17,282	
Bank Line of Credit	40,000	50,000
Accounts Payable	102,633	59,706
Employee deductions payable	3,639	2,386
Due to Related Parties	64,250	16,500
Deferred Income	56,820	80,203
CEBA (Canadian Emergency Benefit)		25,000
Total Liabilities	284,624	233,795
NET ASSETS		
General Fund	(252,229)	(165,995)
	32,395	67,800

In 2024, overall earned revenue increased by 20%. However, tickets sales remained to be lower than projected as we needed sales to increase by 40% in order to match the pace of inflation on expenses. With larger theatre companies continuing to deeply discount their tickets, The Foster Festival is finding it harder and harder to compete for consumer attention. Because The Foster Festival's shows have shorter runs, deeply discounting prices any lower than they already are makes it difficult for the organization to see a return on hard production costs (such as the fees to hire professional artists). Overall revenue was up by 17% in 2024 over 2023, but inflation continues to drive up both material and labour costs at a rate that outpaces our current ability to bring in revenue. We continue to keep costs down as much as possible and are finding new and creative ways to bring in contributed income and increase sales, which includes investing more into our advertising budget in 2025.

CONDENSED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2024 STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

REVENUES	REVIEWED Decr 31, 2024	AUDITED Dec 31, 2023
Earned Revenue	229,889	184,095
Other Income	68,785	68,647
Donations	90,101	53,269
Grants	110,909	106,918
Total Operating Revenues	499,684	412,929
EXPENSES		
Production - Artistic	257,568	220,463
Production - Technical	172,086	133,195
Administration	116,544	113,384
Marketing & Advertising	27,273	27,165
Fundraising	7,181	8,078
•	7,101	•
Touring		8,115
Total Operating Expenses	580,652	510,400
OPERATING REVENUES OVER		
EXPENSES BEFORE CAPITAL	(80,968)	(97,471)
Amortization of Capital Assets	5,266	4,760
DEFICIENCY OF REVENUES OVER EXPENSES	(86,234)	(102,231)
Reflected as a percentage (%)	(17)	(25)

EXPENSES BREAKDOWN BY PERCENTAGE (%)

2024 EXPENSES BREAKDOWN AS A PERCENTAGE

EXPENSES BY CATEGORY	REFLECTED AS \$	REFLECTED AS %
Staff (5) FT & PT	151,554	26
Artists	186,210	32
Crew	51,042	9
Venue Rental	81,707	14
Production Materials	15,181	3
Administrative	60,504	10
Marketing & Advertising	27,273	5
Fundraising	7,181	1
Total Operating Expenses	580,652	100

We continue to invest the majority of our funds into company personnel which accounts for a total of 67% of our overall operating expenses. The next highest expense is our venue rentals. The Mandeville Theatre at Ridley College accounts for \$67,502 of our venue expenses, the remaining \$14,205 is split between our construction shop rental at Brock University and rehearsal hall rental at St. John's Anglican Church in Port Dalhousie.



2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMPANY

COMPANY

Staff

Emily Oriold, Artistic Director Jamie Williams, Artistic Associate John McHenry, Development Manager Kim Cota, Business Manager Lou Bradley, Groups Sales & Front of House Manager

Creative Team

Lisa Horner, Director Emily Oriold, Director Jamie Williams, Director

Designers

Beckie Morris, Set Alexa Amini, Costumes Alexa Fraser, Costumes Stacy Graham, Lighting Alex Sykes, Lighting

Production Team & Stage Management

Zakk Milne, Technical Director Michael Panich, Stage Manager Carolyn Mackenzie, Stage Manager Shannon Fletcher, Apprentice SM Abby Malcolm, Apprentice SM Laura Lakatosh, Apprentice SM Sarah Flanigan, Apprentice SM

Emerging Arts Workers

Zakk Milne, Technical Director
Abby Malcolm, Production Assistant
Benoit St-Aubin, Production Assistant
Frankie Turco, Scenic Carpenter
Serena Atallah, Board Operator
Navpreet Brar, Wardrobe/ Props Coordinator
Clare Padgett, Wardrobe/Props Coordinator
Wyatt Hoskin, Theatre Technician

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Annalisa Medina, Chair (to Mar 1)
David Hulley, Chair (Mar 1-present)
Rhiannon Barry, Vice-Chair
Jenifer Cass, Treasurer
Alison Buchanan, Secretary

Directors

Josie Faccini, Director (to Apr 23) Carol Oriold, Director

Committee Volunteers Fundraising & Development

Rhiannon Barry Jenifer Cass Deb Levere

Special Events

Carol Oriold Catherine Oriold Deb Levere



DONORS & SUPPORTERS

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

FOSTER FRIENDS CIRCLE DONORS

Top Billing | \$2,000-\$5,000+

Anonymous Carol & George Oriold Fiona Price Maureen Walker

Supporting Role | \$1,000-\$1,999

Carol Baggott-Forte Guillaume Chapman Robin Frost Colleen Geiger & Ernst Vegter

Ensemble | \$450-\$999

Lou Bradley
Sean Dolan
Jeremy Dutton
Arthea B. Lucas in memory
of Daniel Lucas
Catharine McCann
Catherine Oriold
Paddy & Brian Parr
Douglas & Ann Reilly
James & Judy Westell
Patricia Yeatman

Quarter | \$250-\$449

Alison Buchanan
Anne Brown
David Eke
Betsy Keay
Edna & Derek Laming
Ian Macmillan
Margaret Matyus
Edward Monaghan
Nature's Corner
John Shaw
Monica Simmie

SEASON SPONSORS

Producing Laughter

Bridgman & Durksen

Play Development

Cellar Door

Lead Producer

Sullivan Mahoney

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Alexanian

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Vineland Estates Winery Nature's Corner Cake Cafe

Communications

Ridley College Your TV The Lake Report

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Appliance Angels
The Grand Canal Retirement
Residence
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Niagara College Canada
Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine
& Performing Arts - Brock
University

The Foster Festival would like to say a big **THANK YOU** to all of our Sponsors, Supporters, Foster Festival Members, and Volunteers.

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Help Keep The Laughter Going Campaign.

20 *foster*24 FESTIVAL

The Norm Foster Theatre Festival

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PHOTO CREDITS

Front Cover: WHIT'S END by Norm Foster | David Rowan, Melanie Janzen, Peter Krantz, Caroline Toal.

Page 2: (top) THOSE MOVIES by Norm Foster | Heather McGuigan, Tyler Lionel Parr; (bottom) THE MELVILLE BOYS by Norm Foster | Kelly J Seo, Emily Lukasik.

Page 5: TIME & TIDE by Jody Stevens McCluskey | Evelyn Wiebe, Raquel Duffy, Rahul Gandhi, Stephen Guy-McGrath.

Page 7: A NIAGARA CHRISTMAS CAROL, adapted by Jamie Williams | Claire Jullien, Graeme Somerville.

Page 6: (top) THOSE MOVIES by Norm Foster | Jamie Cavanagh, Tyler Lionel Parr; (centre) WHIT'S END by Norm Foster | Melanie Janzen, Peter Krantz; (bottom) THE MELVILLE BOYS by Norm Foster | Isaiah Kolundzic, Daniel Reale, Emily Lukasik, Kelly J Seo.

Page 7: (top) TIME & TIDE by Jody Stevens McCluskey | Donna Belleville, Raquel Duffy; (bottom) A NIAGARA CHRISTMAS CAROL | Jamie Williams.

Page 9: Emily Oriold and Norm Foster.

Page 11: Alex Plato and Emily Oriold.

Page 15: THOSE MOVIES by Norm Foster | (back) Zakk Milne, Frankie Turco, Navpreet Brar, Michael Panich; (middle) Emily Oriold, Sarah Flanigan, Alex Sykes, Lisa Horner, Jamie Cavanagh, Dana Fradkin; (front) Heather McGuigan, Abby Malcolm, Serena Atallah, Tyler Lionel Parr.

Pages 16 & 18: Lucky.

