Richard Smith-Jones: Businessman of the Year

The CEO of the New Burbage Festival has been voted Businessman of the Year by the Downtown Business Association. Mr. Smith-Jones responded cautiously, "I sense some people have a conditional response to this honour. Often in business, you're called upon to rectify situations of your own making. Having a deficit at the beginning of the season, it was time for a gamble and I took one."

The 'situation' leading to the deficit was the loss of Festival sponsor, Cosmopolitan Lenslax (CL) after Mr. Smith-Jones' involvement in a sex scandal with CL VP Canadian Operations, Holly Day. "I've been advised by my lawyer to make no comment," he said.

Actress Ellen Fanship recalled with disdain how once there was an Artist of the Year award, but alas, no more. "That demonstrates the priorities in this cave-dwelling society." With quick grace, she added, "The Festival's been in a hideous slump and if Richard has the chops to hire (PR firm) Frog Hammer, then good for him. It's no secret he wants his own crown, so good for King Richard." She pauses, "King Richard the Turd."

Mr. Archer, a member of the Festival's Board of Directors reacted differently. "I'd change that to Moron of the Year. I gave him good advice and he ignored it. If this campaign ultimately fails, his head's coming off and I'm the one wielding the axe."

Winning this award was an uphill battle for Mr. Smith-Jones, whose colleagues are less than supportive. Artistic Director, Geoffrey Tennant exhibited uncharacteristic diplomacy, stating he is still unclear about Richard's function at the Festival. Darren Nichols, last minute replacement for Nadine Perola, the original director of Romeo and Juliet (who broke her neck in a freak accident at the Rose Theatre), said Mr. Smith-Jones "has long suckled on the successful tit of my productions." Henry Brecklove, the headliner for Macbeth, quipped that it must have been a short list of contenders, while veteran actors Cyril and Frank quipped, "The only competition would have been two fudge shops and a bed & breakfast."

Only one man, calling himself Sanjay Rainier, from Frog Hammer, defended Mr. Smith-Jones. Calling collect from a payphone in an undisclosed location, Mr. Rainier said, "Richard takes risks others would shy away from. It's his very boldness as a business man and a lover of the arts that make him the success he is. It's my job to seek out potential and Richard is a gold mine of it."
NEW BURBAGE FESTIVAL - THE ROSE THEATRE

Starring
PAUL GROSS
STEPHEN OUIMETTE
MARTHA BURNS
GERAINT WYN DAVIES
LUKE KIRBY
SUSAN COYNE
LEON POWNALL
MATT FITZGERALD
GRAHAM HARLEY
MICHAEL POLLEY
CATHERINE FITCH
ROTHAFORD GRAY
JONATHAN CROMBIE
OLIVER DENNIS
DAVID ALPAY
JOANNE KELLY

Special Appearance by
COLM FEORE
Special Appearance by
RACHEL MCADAMS

DON MCKELLAR

with
MARK MCKINNEY
as Richard

Special Appearances by
JENNIFER BAXTER
JACKIE BURROWS
DIANE D'AGUILA
GRAMHAM GREENE
ARSENE KHAJJAN
EREK PETERS
VERONICA TENNANT

Costume Designer
LEA CARLSON

Production Designer
KATHLEEN CLIMIE

Editor
CHRISTOPHER DONALDSON

Director of Photography
RUDOLF BLAHACEK

Created and Written by
SUSAN COYNE
BOB MARTIN
MARK MCKINNEY

Creative Producer
BOB MARTIN

Producers
NIV FICMICH
SARI FRIEDLAND
DANIEL IRON

Directed by
PETER WELLINGTON

THE PRIDE OF THE NEW BURBAGE FESTIVAL
(In Alphabetical Order)

David Alpay
Martha Burns
Susan Coyne
Jonathan Crombie

Oliver Dennis
Colm Feore
Catherine Fitch
Matt FitzGerald

Rothaford Gray
Paul Gross
Graham Harley
Joanne Kelly

Luke Kirby
Rachel McAdams
Don McKellar
Mark McKinney

Stephen Ouimetet
Michael Polly
Leon Pownall
Geraint Wyn Davies
Geoffrey Tennant (Paul Gross), now firmly installed as Artistic Director of the New Burbage Festival, inherits the problems of the late Oliver Welles' (Stephen Ouimette), plus a few of his own making. Labouring under the now glorified shadow of his predecessor, Geoffrey is forced to stage Macbeth, the cursed play, which Oliver had obsessively researched for years. Working from Oliver's notes, Geoffrey chafes at the bit, particularly with the casting of seasoned theatre actor, Henry Breedlove (Geraint Wyn Davies), as Macbeth being a foregone conclusion. Geoffrey rebels and Oliver reappears.

Breedlove, an actor marinating in his former triumphs, engages in a major ego clash with Geoffrey, which intensifies the ongoing battle with Oliver, and pushes Geoffrey, once again, to the edge of sanity. Meanwhile, Ellen Fanshaw (Martha Burns), whose brief attempt at living with Geoffrey flounders, is thrown under a financial microscope when subjected to a brutal tax audit.

The Festival, now without its major sponsor, Cosmopolitan Lenstrx, is in financial crisis. CEO Richard Smith-Jones (Mark McKinney) seeks the advice of savvy businessman Mr. Archer (Peter Keleghan), and successfully solicits $2.2 million from the abrasive Minister of Culture (Diane D'Aquila). Taking a risky step, Richard engages Frog Hammer, a hip, young communications company headed up by Sanjay Rainier (Colm Feore), to cure the Festival's image problem. Sanjay believes the Festival, which stages 400 year-old plays, has to rebrand itself to appeal to a younger audience, since their current subscribers are dying off, literally. The rebranding campaign ends up being so insulting and alienating that it sends the Festival into a spiral of financial chaos.

Adding to the madness is Darren Nichols (Don McKellar), back from Berlin to helm the season's new production of Romeo and Juliet after the original director, Nadine Perola (Arsinée Khanjian), breaks her neck - perhaps a result of the curse of Macbeth. Darren's interpretation of the romantic play is a witless modernization which leaves his lead actors, Sarah (Joanne Kelly) and Patrick (David Alipay), bereft of support, exaggerating the distance they already feel from their characters because of Patrick's off-stage inclination towards a "Romeo and Romeo" line of romance. But as they start rehearsing, a startling change of motivation takes place.

Love is indeed in the air and even Anna Conroy (Susan Coyne), bureaucratic to the bone, is unable to resist the affections of writer/director Lionel Train (Jonathan Crombie), who is staging the first production of his new Canadian play.

Part 1 - Season's End
Geoffrey's first season as Interim Artistic Director wraps up with a permanent posting and the cast decide they miss Oliver terribly. The Festival is in severe financial crisis without its sponsor Cosmopolitan Lenstrx, and Richard goes to wannabe board member and savvy businessman Mr. Archer, begging for a financial infusion. Jack, leaving to star in his next blockbuster film, proposes to Kate - an offer she is inclined to refuse in favour of her acting career. And Ellen's boyfriend, Sloan, also proposes, an offer she refuses after she and Geoffrey argue their way into their first kiss in seven years. The new season's programme is announced which includes, much to Geoffrey's dismay, Macbeth - a mandated tribute to the late Oliver Welles.

Part 2 - Fallow Time
Christmas comes to New Burbage and so do the interns who are part of Richard's new austerity program at the Festival. Geoffrey moves in with Ellen who tries to make a go of domestic bliss, while he is all work. First, Geoffrey rejects Oliver's written notes on Macbeth, then concedes to their wisdom, then contends with the ego of Henry Breedlove, the veteran actor recommended by Oliver as Macbeth. This is Oliver's cue to return from the grave. Richard raises begging to new heights which earns him government cash for rebranding the Festival and for this, he hires Sanjay Rainier, the soul of the hip and edgy marketing firm, Frog Hammer.

Part 3 - Rarer Monsters
The curse of Macbeth kicks in and the director of Romeo and Juliet breaks her neck, which brings Darren Nichols back from Berlin to direct. Juliet meets her Romeo and sparks do not fly. Frog Hammer's well orchestrated campaign of alienation falls flat, but Richard falls under Sanjay's spell. Ellen finds out she is being audited which complicates her already complicated life. This involves competing for Geoffrey's attention - and losing out to a ghost. Ellen and Geoffrey's brief experiment in domesticity ends. Badly.

Part 4 - Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair
With subscribers canceling en masse as a result of the rebranding strategy, Sanjay counsels Richard to embrace the left side of his brain by taking up the clarinet. Darren plays gender games with Sarah and Patrick which wreaks havoc with their motivation for performing Romeo and Juliet. Lionel Train arrives to direct his new Canadian play and turns to Anna for support. Ellen's audit causes her to turn to her sister's accountant husband for solace as Geoffrey, now living in the storage room with Oliver as a roommate, reaches a breaking point with Henry Breedlove.

Part 5 - Steeped in Blood
Ellen confuses her auditor with a confessor, but graduates to adulthood with the final tally of her taxes. Anna inspires Lionel to the point that their private life becomes excruciatingly public. The police have developed a keen interest in Sanjay whose name isn't really Sanjay. And with Henry dismissed from the company for having a bloated ego, his understudy prep for the spotlight. The collaboration between Oliver and Geoffrey is such a brilliant success, Henry crawl back to give Geoffrey the chance to eat humble pie.

Part 6 - Birnam Wood
Youthquake - the magic of rebranding kicks in. Geoffrey works his own brand of magic and leverages a stellar performance out of Henry - but at a cost. Oliver can't resist the call of the stage, while Darren rediscovers his inner romantic. Richard upgrades his dream quest to include Gilbert and Sullivan. As the season draws to a close, love conquers all: Anna and Lionel find common ground and Ellen and Geoffrey do not necessarily give up the ghost, but they certainly work around him.
"To be or not to be; what was the question??"

"From the beginning, Slings & Arrows was conceived as a set of three," explains Executive Producer Niv Fichman. Season I concentrated on disillusioned youth. Season II tackles the conflicts of middle age and rebranding - in other words, the process of giving new meaning to an old image, both personal and corporate. Season III will move on to the wisdom of old age and, finally, rebirth.

As the second season took shape, Fichman was very pleased with the vitality of the storylines and the trajectory of the characters. "We've created characters who have become our friends: we love them, we hate them, they can be irritating as hell and still fantastic - just like all of our friends. They are evolving naturally, like Richard who is redeemed after the end of the last season and becomes the hero of the Festival. It would make sense if this leads him to take over the reins next time. Even the New Burbage Festival has taken on its own life. We are not dependent on emulating any pre-existing theatre festival. In fact, New Burbage can take its rightful place alongside Stratford and Shaw."

"The strength of the second season is the romantic fantasy of youth has passed and the reality of living together as a couple sets in. Everything is reality in middle age," explains Martin. Coincidentally, as the second season was in production, newspaper headlines announced the engagement of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker, the current icon of mid-life romance. "We'd all like to believe the romantic ideal as espoused by Disney, the belief that your prince will indeed someday come. Like Ellen, you may have to wait until he's released from the asylum, or like Camilla until he has diverted attention away from himself with regard to the suspicious death of the former princess, but he will come."

In addition to Geoffrey and Ellen, couples in crisis abound this season: Geoffrey and Henry Breidlove, Geoffrey and Oliver, Richard and Sanjay, Ellen and her accountant, Anna and Lionel, Sarah and her gay Romeo, Patrick, and of course, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

"Rebranding factors in, ostensibly with Richard who hires Sanjay and his marketing firm, Frog Hammer, which Susan Coyne calls, "...the most insane story in the whole script. Rebranding, as a theme, contributes to every other part of the story. Richard rebrands himself as an artist, following his dream of playing the clarinet and then deciding to sing."

The inspiration may well be based on Coyne's feeling that the forties are such a 'hinge decade.' "You reach a point where you think, is this who I'm going to be for the rest of my life or should I change and try new things. You get tired of trying to be young. It's a place where strange alchemy starts to happen."

Mark McKinney, the third member of the writing team and the actor who plays Richard Smith-Jones, the CEO of the Festival says, "These scripts set themselves apart because it's character-driven comedy as opposed to situational comedy or gag writing. If the characters are three dimensional, the laughs automatically shift over from written jokes to the character being observed. For instance, Richard, my character, is a man cursed to learn everything the hard way."

Bringing everything together on the screen is Peter Wellington, Directors Guild of Canada nominee for his direction on the first season. Wellington returns to helm the second season with renewed vigor and a keen sense of what he wants to see. "This season the comedy is more far reaching than last time which was very bright and sprightly and occasionally polite. Last year was more heart; this year is more heady comedy."

Coming back to the series, Wellington says, "I feel a great responsibility to make sure that we get this right because the scripts are that good and the actors are that good. Wrong is not an option. The originality of the ring is a powerhouse of motivation every day it generates its own energy for me. This season is darker, more caffeinated, almost a cocaine nastiness. The characters are more self-absorbed than the first year and it comes across as a clenched jaw nervousness. It's fantastic. We run much closer to the line than before, without crossing it. You don't know how you're going to get there, but you know in your gut when you have arrived at the right point of humour and performance. It means letting the actors get more out of character - and remember we are dealing with actors of an incredible calibre in this cast: Paul, Stephen, Martha, Mark, Geraint, Don and Colm. This season has been a test of precision."
The Die is Cast - But It's Loaded in Our Favour

In Coyne's mind, Slings & Arrows is three versions of madness. Then again, Coyne also thinks it's madness to go on stage. That, however, has never stopped her or the rest of the cast and writers.

Paul Gross plays Artistic Director Geoffrey Tennant. "Geoffrey is more at ease with his psychosis this season, but in all respects, he is fully functional - he just happens to be collaborating with a dead person," says Gross. "I mean, he knows this is a dead person. The twist is Geoffrey argues with Oliver over core elements about staging Macbeth and they return to their previous artistic relationship when Oliver was alive. So in a sense, he has made peace with his psychosis."

By the end of the first season with the scattering of Oliver's ashes and the grand good-bye, one would have thought Oliver was gone for good, but in the second season whenever Geoffrey is in psychological turmoil, Oliver returns. "I think it's more interesting for Oliver this year," says Stephen Ouimet, "because he's in more of a predication understanding his purpose in the afterworld or the living world. Without Geoffrey, where does he go? He becomes more passionate about his work than he ever was when he was alive. At first Geoffrey uses Oliver's ideas and then decides not to, and then the battle begins and ultimately they do collaborate."

Ellen Fanshaw, played by Martha Burns, is experiencing her own madness which takes the form of denial. Season II has Ellen being audited. She thinks taxes do not apply to her. "There's a naiveté to Ellen which is not dissimilar to someone who's spent her life in the theatre. She's never had a family to worry about. Although in the second season, there are glimpses of her other life; she does have a sister and she should be responsible about her family, but she isn't."

Being part of Slings & Arrows has brought Burns enormous satisfaction. "I feel like the luckiest actress in Canada. It's a fantastic part and it keeps growing. Ellen's life is so wonderfully grim and she's so awful and yet quite wonderful. I think there's something magical about awful people who are wonderful. Besides, there's a big diva inside me just waiting to break out. I was an ingenue for so long, being a diva was not an option. Ellen's my big chance."

Also returning to the cast is the inimitable Don McKellar as Darren Nichols, who has returned from Berlin to direct Romeo and Juliet. "Berlin is a city of rigour and contradiction and Darren comes back, rigorous and contradictory. It shows in my wardrobe, don't you think? It's brighter, more jaunty. The glasses are the key Berlin discovery, whereas last year, it was all about the leather pants." But Romeo and Juliet as a post-modern love story? It made sense to McKellar. "It's about tension as much as about love and this is a post-Brechtian production so it is supposed to have that post-nuclear winter feel to it - a big serving of post-nostalgia to it." A Don McKellar/Darren Nichols Brecht-fest.

The New Kids on the Block

Newcomers to the cast include Colm Feore as Sanjay, the con artist/imag consultant. Feore's long time association with Stratford afforded him the pleasure of "taking the piss out the idea of a theatre festival and the innumerable ad campaigns which, as an actor, I'd scratch my head, wondering, "What were they thinking? Have they not seen us on stage delivering truth and beauty? Why are they doing crappie, gauzy ads with models who don't look anything like the ugly actors we are?" So I thought this role is perfect for me."

Feore is an actor who made his name on stage and film doing roles not readily associated with comedy. "Look at my face" he says evenly. "I don't do comedy; I do tragedy."

As luck would have it, veteran actor Geraint Wyn Davies, cast as veteran actor, Henry Breedlove, was offered the role when he was visiting Feore in Stratford, which is why they first read the scripts together, more accurately, he read them over Feore's shoulder. "As only really serious great actors do, you only look for your part. We had a good laugh. The decision was a no-brainer - it was very easy to say yes," recalls Wyn Davies. "All I knew was Susan Coyne, along with Mark McKinney and Bob Martin were writing it, Rhombus was producing it and that was a good enough pedigree for me."

His character, Henry Breedlove, who takes umbrage with direction from Geoffrey, is a familiar figure in theatre. "He's based on anyone I know? Why, yes! Myself. Actually, it's based on Paul Gross, Colm Feore, Stephen Ouimet, Christopher Plummer, Leon Pownall and myself. And it's very funny that I am playing across from Leon (who plays Brian) because we think we're very similar to our characters except slightly less obnoxious."

As for the truthfulness of the material, Wyn Davies confesses, "For sure I've encountered everything that's happened in this miniseries and that includes being decked at the Oxford Playhouse in Great Britain. I was clocked by Claudius. But this Henry, he thinks he's coming to save the Festival. Still, he's scared that people will see through his facade. Are not all actors afraid? Oh god, most of us know we are complete wankers. But when you are aware of yourself, you are a much better actor, but not all actors are aware of themselves."

Rounding out the roster of new cast are Joanne Kelly and David Alpay, playing Sarah and Patrick, cast as the leads in Romeo and Juliet. New to the Festival, Sarah and Patrick are left without direction from Darren and struggle to convey the romance of this love story. The illicit love in Romeo and Juliet echoes through the relationship between Sarah and Patrick as he finds himself unexpectedly attracted to his co-star - a revelation given his sexual orientation would ordinarily be directed elsewhere. Kelly and Alpay, having recently worked together on the CBC miniseries, Whiskey Echo, were delighted to be brought on as key players on the Slings & Arrows team. The wit and sophistication of the scripts made themselves clear during the first table reading when both actors found themselves laughing too much to deliver their own lines properly.

Completing the cast are Rachel McAdams, Luke Kirby, Peter Keleghan, Diane D'Aquila, Sean Cullen, Jacob Tierney, Eric Peterson, Jackie Burroughs, Tracey Wright, Graham Greene, Jennifer Baxter, Graham Harley, Michael Polley, Catherine Fitch, Jonathan Crombie, Joanne Boland, Matt FitzGerald, Rothaford Gray, Oliver Dennis, Veronica Tennant and Arsinée Khanjian and you have a second season of excellence.
ABOUT THE CAST

PAUL GROSS as Geoffrey Tennant
Paul Gross, one of Canada's most popular actors, is internationally known as 'Constable Benton Fraser' on the multi-award winning drama television series "Due South," which earned him two Gemini Awards for Best Actor. In October, 2004, he starred in the CBC miniseries, "H2O," the political thriller which he co-wrote. In feature films, Gross co-wrote, directed and starred in the hugely successful comedy, "Men With Brooms" and starred in "Will You Wonderful, Paint Can, Married To It, Whale Music, Aspen Extreme, Cold Comfort, and Buried on Sunday." His television credits include: "Getting Married in Buffalo Jump, Murder Most Likely, 20,000 Leagues Under The Sea, Tales Of The City and Chasing Rainbows." On the stage, Gross played the title role in the Stratford Festival's 2000 production of "Hamlet" to record-breaking audiences. He received a Dora Award nomination for his performance as Romeo in "Romeo and Juliet" and another Dora Award for Best Performance for his role in the critically acclaimed North American premiere of "The Son Of Ulster Marching Toward The Somme," which played at Toronto's Canadian Stage. Gross won a 2005 Gemini Award for Best Actor for Season 1 of "Slings & Arrows.

STEPHEN OUMETTE as Oliver Welles
Stephen Ouimet returns to "Slings & Arrows" for a second season having recently directed the slicker hit of the season at Stratford, "Timon of Athens" starring Peter Donaldson and Tom McCamus. He returns to Stratford this season to star in productions of "The Tempest," "As You Like It" and "The Lark." He has served as Associate Director at the Stratford Festival for the last six years and for the last nine seasons there, his roles have included the leads in "Hamlet," "Richard III," "Amadeus," "Waiting for Godot," and "Julius Caesar," five productions of the international hit comedy 'B-Movie: The Play'; three stints for Mirvish Productions: 'Three Men On A Horse, 'Art,' and most recently 'Flea In Her Ear,' a co-production with Soulpepper Theatre. Mr. Ouimet has worked extensively across Canada, at theatres including the Citadel, Tarragon, National Arts Centre, and Passe Muraille, as well as appearing in "Endgame" at the Yale Repertory Theatre. He has played leading roles in many television and film productions, including: "Mentors" (for which he received a Gemini nomination), "I Was A Rat, Heater, Murder Most Likely, After Alice, Conspiracy of Silence, The Adjuster, and Firing Squad." He can be heard in many animated cartoons, including: "Babar, Maggie and the Ferocious Beast, Dog City, Bob and Margaret," and as the voice of Beeflejuice in the long running series.

ABOUT THE CAST

RACHEL MCADAMS as Kate McNab
Several years ago, Rachel McAdams was living in Canada trying to launch her acting career. Practically overnight, this talented actress captured the attention of Hollywood landing the starring role in a major studio comedy, "The Hot Chick," in which she holds her own opposite Rob Schneider. Since that film, she has starred in many other studio films including New Line Cinema's "The Notebook" with Ryan Gosling, Gena Rowlands and James Garner, in Paramount's "Mean Girls," New Line Cinema's "The Wedding Crashers" (due in theaters this summer) with Vince Vaughn and Owen Wilson as well as the Dreamworks film, "Red Eye." McAdams is currently in production on the Fox 2000 feature, "The Family Stone" with Diane Keaton, Sarah Jessica Parker, Claire Danes, Luke Wilson and Dermot Mulroney. McAdams won a 2005 Gemini Award for Best Supporting Actress for Season 1 of "Slings & Arrows.

LUKE KIRBY as Jack Crew
Luke Kirby attended the country's most respected conservatory, the National Theatre School of Canada. After graduation, he found himself with major roles in two separate, prestigious projects: the CBS/Alliance miniseries, "Haven," and Director Lea Pool's award winning, "Lost and Delicious." This was followed by "Halloween 8: Resurrection, Shattered Glass," the lead in "Manolo Italiano," the lead in "Luck," the miniseries, "Traffic," that aired in the fall of 2004, the lead in the miniseries, "Northern Town" shot in the Yukon and he recently wrapped the feature, "The Greatest Game Ever Played," directed by Bill Paxton.

On the stage, he performed in Toronto at the Factory Theatre's production of "Geometry In Venice" which garnered him a nomination for Best Actor at the Dona Major Moore Awards. This was quickly followed by the role of Patroclus in Theatre for a New Audience's production of "Troilus and Cressida" directed by Sir Peter Hall in New York City. He returned to act in Judith Thompson's premiere of 'Habitat' at Canadian Stage followed by Daniel Brook's premiere of 'The Good Life' at the Tarragon Theatre, both in Toronto.

LEON POWNALL as Brian
For over fifty years, Leon Pownall has been a professional actor, writer and director and has worked in many of North America's major theatres including the Stratford Festival and the Shaw Festival. Mr. Pownall's stage credits include: "Henry VIII," "Antony in Cleopatra," "Falstaff," "Dunstan Ramsay, King Lear, Feste, Joseph Stalin, Elvis Presley, The Father, Da, Matthew Cuthbert in 'Anne of Green Gables', Sheridan Whiteside in 'The Man Who Came To Dinner', Pseudolus in 'A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum', Romeo, Hamlet, Hotspur, Dylan Thomas, The Boss in 'Coronation Voyage' at the Vancouver Playhouse, Tom in 'Skylight' at the Manitoba Theatre Centre/The Citadel/ National Arts Centre, the title role in 'Uncle Vanya' and Orson in 'Tartuffe' at the Atlantic Theatre Festival.

Acting in film and television Pownall earned a Gemini nomination for Best Actor for his role of Dr. Ewen Cameron in the mini-series "The Sleep Room. Audiences may also recognize him from his roles in movies such as "Dole Poet's Society, Beyond, How The West Was Fun, Love & Hate, Million Dollar Babies," and the title role in "Handel's Last Chance," which won a Gemini Award for best film in Children's Programming. He has made guest appearances in such television series as Side Effects, The Road To Avonlea, Forever Knight, E.N.G., "Kung Fu: The Legend Continues," Street Legal, Hitchcock Presents, Ackerly, and The Beachcombers. Pownall has played leading roles in movies made for television, such as: "Dirty Pictures, The Day Reagan Was Shot, Shattered City, The Halifax Explosion, Bailey, and They Built The Railway."
DON MCKELLAR as Darren Nichols
To connoisseurs of Canadian cinema, Don McKellar is best known for his collaborations with Bruce McDonald. McKellar wrote Roadkill and Highway 61, co-wrote Dance Me Outside, and appeared in Roadkill and Highway 61. He also co-wrote (with Francois Girard) the Genie-winning Thirty-two Short Films About Glenn Gould, which won the Genie Award for Best Picture.

Feore first gained prominence as one of Canada's premier stage actors through thirteen seasons with the prestigious Stratford Festival, playing virtually all of Shakespeare's leading men, from Richard III and Iago to Romeo and Hamlet. He was recently on stage as Claudius in the Public Theater production of 'Hamlet' in New York. He made a return to Stratford for its 50th Anniversary season playing Professor Higgins in 'My Fair Lady'.

GERAINT WYN DAVIES as Henry Breedlove
An acclaimed actor, he has an extensive list of stage credits during four seasons with the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada, five seasons with the Shaw Festival and leading roles on many of the other stages across the continent. In the U.K., highlights include two seasons spent as an actor and Associate Director of Theatr Clwyd, the Welsh National Performing Arts Company, Stockmann in ' Enemy of the People' at the Lyric Hammersmith in London and Hamlet on the stage of Chichester Festival. Mr. Wyn Davies has also worked extensively in television and film, as a leading actor in such continuing series as Forever Knight, Black Harbour, Tracker, Airwolf, To Serve and Protect among a few others. Also, guest appearances on many other shows and work in both film and TV movies both in North America and abroad. He has directed short films and numerous episodes for television.

Recently he appeared as Henry Higgins in 'My Fair Lady' and Dylan Thomas in the new one man play, 'Do Not Go Gentle' at Stratford, The Chicago Shakespeare Theatre and at the PPAC in California, he directed the World Premiere of American playwright Oliver Mayer's 'Joy of the Desolate' at the Apple Tree Theatre in Chicago, and other recent projects include (for film and television), Some Things That Stay, 1-800 Missing, Robocop, Prime Directives, One of the Hollywood Ten, American Psycho 2, Hypercube, Truede, and The Wild Dogs. As a film and television director he has just started work on his 27th project, a film on Sumo and Sushi. He has recorded a CD of original music entitled 'Bar Talk' and is midway through his second effort. He also has enjoyed participating in many performances for charity.

JOANNE KELLY as Sarah
Joanne Kelly was born in 1980 in Bay d'Espoir, Newfoundland and attended Acadia University in Nova Scotia. Her performances include roles in films: The Bay of Love and Sorrows, and Crime Spree, and on television: the miniseries Whiskey Echo, starring across from Callum Keith Rennie, SolarStrike, Selling Innocence. Maria Doctor, Going the Distance, The Newsroom, 2, and the TV series, Jeremiah. She has also had guest appearances on Mentors, Snakes & Ladders, Mutant X and Trackers. Sarah is currently in production as the lead in the ABC pilot, The Catch.
NIV FICHMAN, Executive Producer

Niv Fichman is a founding partner of Rhombus Media, renowned as one of the world’s most respected producers of high quality feature films as well as films on the performing arts. Mr. Fichman has produced most of Rhombus’ output, which now amounts to more than a hundred and thirty films over the past twenty-five years. He is responsible for several highly renowned feature films, the most recent of which are Don McKellar’s Childstar and Olivier Assayas’ Clean, a French/Canada/UK co-production starring Maggie Cheung, Nick Nolte and Beatrice Dalle, and for which Maggie Cheung won the best actress Palme at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. Mr. Fichman also produced the academy award winning The Red Violin, Last Night, Long Day’s Journey Into Night, Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould and September Songs. For television he produced Yo-Yo Ma: Inspired By Bach, a six part series, which was broadcast around the world to great acclaim. Over the past twenty-five years Rhombus productions have received literally hundreds of awards including an Academy Award, several International Emmys, Primetime Emmys, numerous Gemini’s, Genies, a number of Golden Pragues and Golden Roses.

Currently, he is working on a feature film adaptation of Nobel Prize winning author Jose Saramago’s book BLINDNESS with Don McKellar, as well as an adaptation of the renowned book SILK by Italian author Alessandro Baricco with Red Violin director Francois Girard. In addition to this, he has just completed principal photography on Snowcake, a UK/Canada co-production with Welsh Director Marc Evans and starring Alan Rickman and Sigourney Weaver.

Aside from his producing responsibilities, Niv Fichman has directed a number of Rhombus productions including Crossing Bridges, Struggle for Hope, Marcello Alvarez: In Search of Gareul and World Drums. Most recently, he co-directed (with Barbara Willis Sweete) and produced a performance special featuring international singing sensation Aselin Debison. Recently released were Slings & Arrows Season I, a six-part comedic mini-series, adaptations of The Firebird and Elizabeth Rex as well as The Saddest Music in the World, a feature film by Guy Maddin starring Isabella Rossellini, Mark McKinney and Maria de Medeiros.

Away from Rhombus, Fichman is co-chair of the Canadian Feature Film Advisory Group, and serves on the board of the Toronto International Film Festival. Niv Fichman received a Doctor of Letters degree (honoris causa) from York University in June, 1998.

SARI FRIEDLAND, Producer

Sari Friedland has been integral in the production of some of Canada’s most successful series television during the past two decades. She produced the one-hour pilot, An American in Canada, for CBC, which took top honours at the 2002 Gemini for Best Comedy Program or Series, setting a precedent for the first pilot to ever win in that category. Friedland was involved in the multi-award winning original Degrassi television series (90 half-hour episodes), which is one of the highest-rated shows in Canada and has sold to more than 70 countries, including the United States, Israel and Australia. After a very rewarding relationship with Executive Producer/Creator Linda Schuyler on the Degrassi series, Friedland went on to work with Schuyler as the Supervising Producer on 26 half-hour episodes of Liberty Street and 42 hour episodes of Riverdale, the first prime time soap opera in Canada.

Friedland volunteers a great deal of her time to the Canadian Film and Television Producers’ Association (CFTPA) sitting on the industrial relations committee representing the interests of independent producers. She has been part of the CFTPA Producers’ team that negotiates various union and guild agreements including ACTRA and the DGC and has chaired the committee through the last two WGC negotiations. In 2001, Friedland produced the Gemini-nominated feature film, Red Green’s comedy, Duct Tape Forever. In 2002, Friedland hooked up with Niv Fichman and Rhombus Media Inc. to produce Slings & Arrows. Between the first and second season of Slings & Arrows, Friedland worked with Rhombus on the feature film, Clean, written and directed by French filmmaker Olivier Assayas, starring Maggie Cheung and Nick Nolte. Clean premiered at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival in official competition, earning Maggie Cheung the award for Best Actress, followed by its North American premiere at the 2004 Toronto International Film Festival. Currently, Friedland is developing three feature films, two adapted from novels and one from an original screenplay as well as beginning work on the third season of Slings & Arrows.

DANIEL IRON, Producer

After graduating from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto in 1987, Daniel Iron was legal counsel at Telefilm Canada for five years after which he joined and eventually became a partner at Rhombus Media where he produced the acclaimed feature film, Long Day’s Journey Into Night, directed by David Wellington, as well as co-producing the Oscar-winning The Red Violin from Francois Girard, and producing the award-winning Last Night, directed by Don McKellar. For television he produced, among numerous other programs, The Four Seasons and Don Giovanni Unmasked, two performing arts films, as well as the Gemini-nominated Foreign Objects, written and directed by Ken Finkleman. Other producing credits include the feature, Perfect Pie directed by Barbara Willis Sweete, Stormy Weather: The Music of Harold Arlen, a performance/documentary directed by Larry Weinstein, Elizabeth Rex, a television film based on Timothy Findley’s play, Guy Maddin’s The Saddest Music in the World, Slings & Arrows, a six part comedic television series, and Beethoven’s Hair, a documentary directed by Larry Weinstein.

More recently Daniel produced Don McKellar’s Childstar and was a co-producer on Clean the most recent feature from Olivier Assayas. Independently, Daniel executive produced Jennifer Baichwal’s acclaimed documentary, Let it Come Down: the Life of Paul Bowles, Luck, Peter Wellington’s second feature film which won Best Fiction Feature at Austin’s 2004 SXSW Festival and Death and the Maiden, a performance film by Laura Taler.

In January 2004, Daniel left Rhombus to create his own production company, Foundry Films Inc. Foundry has produced Northern Town, a CBC series, and is developing Out of Rapture, an original screenplay by Barbara Gowdy and Marni Jackson. He is in production on a documentary on acclaimed photographer, Edward Burtynsky, directed by Jennifer Baichwal and shot by Peter Mettler, and It’s Me Gerald, a six-hour series for Showcase. Daniel is also executive producing Fido, a large budget feature by Anagram Pictures in Vancouver. In association with House of Films, Daniel is executive producing the feature, The Pornographer’s Poem, and with Barma Alper Productions, the feature, The Bang Bang Club. On the slate for the upcoming months are Last Exit, a TV movie with ITV directed by John Fawcett, and, with Ilana Frank (The 11th Hour), The Odds, a six-hour series for TMN, Movie Central, and Showcase written by Semi Chellas and Adam Peddle.
ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

BOB MARTIN, Creative Producer
Bob has been working as an actor and writer in theatre, film and television since 1981. He has had a long and fruitful association with the Toronto Second City, where he co-wrote and performed in four Second City revues, and directed three, including the critically acclaimed ‘Sordido Deluxo’, and has had a stint as Artistic Director. He is a co-creator of the cult-hit, post-modern musical ‘The Drowsy Chaperone’, which set a box office record at the Fringe of Toronto Theatre Festival before it was picked up by Mirvish Productions and included in their 2000/2001 season. He performed in its Toronto Fringe, Theatre Passe Muraille and Winter Garden incarnations. ‘The Drowsy Chaperone’ will open at the Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles in November, 2005, and in New York in 2006. Bob will perform in both productions. He is the head writer of the sketch comedy group Scippis’ and ‘The Good Life’ and ‘An Awkward Evening With Martin & Johnson.’

SUSAN COYNE, Writer and Actor playing Anna Conroy
Susan Coyne’s acclaimed childhood memoir, Kingfisher Days, was published in 2001 by Random House Canada. The following year she adapted it for the Tarragon Theatre, where it enjoyed a sold-out run. This spring, the Tarragon is producing her second play, ‘Alice’s Affair.’ She has also adapted Chukov’s ‘Three Sisters’ for the Shaw Festival. As an actor, Coyne has played leading roles in theatres across Canada, including four seasons at the Stratford Festival, where she played Juliet in Robin Phillips Young Company production, as well as Portia, Regan, and Olivia in ‘Twelfth Night.’ Other recent stage credits include ‘Helen’s Necklace,’ ‘An Acre of Time’ (Tarragon Theatre), ‘A Chorus of Disapproval,’ ‘The Winter’s Tale,’ ‘A Christmas Carol,’ ‘Betrayal,’ ‘Platonov,’ and ‘Don Carlos’ (Soulpepper Theatre). Susan is a founding member of Toronto’s Soulpepper Theatre Company.

PETER WELLINGTON, Director
Peter Wellington returns to direct the second season of Sling’s & Arrows, having been nominated for Best Direction from the Directors Guild of Canada for his work on the first season. Wellington wrote and directed the feature film, Luck, starring Luke Kirby and Sarah Polley, which won top prize at the 2004 SXSW Film Festival as well as a nomination for Best Original Screenplay at the 2004 Genies. His first feature, Joe’s So Mean To Josephine, won the Claude Jutra Award for Best Feature Film at the 1996 Genies and was an audience favourite at the Sundance International Film Festival as well as numerous other festivals around the world. Wellington has contributed five teleplays for the award-winning dramatic series The Eleventh Hour (CTV/Alliance), two of which were nominated for Gemini awards in 2003 and he directed several episodes. In 1996, he was nominated for a Best Screenplay Genie for The Boys’ Club, a psychological thriller produced by Alliance Communications starring Chris Penn. As well, Wellington wrote the short film, Scratch Ticket, which won Best Short Film at the 1994 Montreal World Film Festival.

MARK MCKINNEY, Writer and Actor playing Richard Smith-Jones
Mark McKinney’s most recent feature films include Guy Maddin’s Saddest Music In The World and Scott Smith’s Falling Angels, which garnered him an Actra Award nomination for Best Actor. Other features include The Ladies Man, Superstar, Out of Towners, with Goldie Hawn and Steve Martin, Spiceworld, Dog Park, which earned Mark the Gemini Award for Best Supporting Actor in 2000 and Kelly Makin’s Kids In The Hall: Brain Candy. On the small screen, McKinney was a creator, writer and principal cast member in the hit comedy sketch show Kids In The Hall. In 1995, McKinney received a Cable ACE Award for Best Actor and in 1994 Kids In The Hall received the Golden Rose of Montreux (Internat) Award for Best Comedy Series and Best Overall Series. After completing Kids In The Hall he joined Saturday Night Live for three seasons as a principal cast member. He just finished shooting Robson Arms in Vancouver for CTV. Over the years Mark has received six Gemini Awards for writing and acting for his work in Kids In The Hall.

RUDOLPH BLAHACEK, Director of Photography
Rudolph Blahacek’s ability as Director of Photography spans television and documentary shooting styles. His credits include the first season of Sling’s & Arrows, Death and The Maiden for Rhomus Media starring Tom McCamus and Michelle Monaghan for which he received a Gemini nomination for Best Cinematography. Celeste in the City, Crown Heights, directed by Jeremy Kagan, Cyberman, the documentary on Steve Mann, and Dem Bones both directed by Peter Lynch, Do or Die, the sci-fi thriller directed by David Jackson, The Pilot’s Wife and The Big Heist, both television movies directed by Robert Markowitz. His feature film credits include Daniel MacIvor’s Wilby Wonderful, Past Perfect, The Hero and Garage.

CHRISTOPHER DONALDSON, Editor
Christopher Donaldson’s work as an editor spans an extensive variety of both dramatic and documentary features and television. His credits include Peter Wellington’s Luck, (Winner Best Feature Film SWSSX Festival 2004), Agshar Massombagi’s Khaled (Special Mention FIPRESCI Award TFF 2001), Jim Allodi’s The Uncle (TFFG Top Ten of the Year 2001), Alan Zweig’s Vinyl and I, Cumulonimbus (Silver Hugo Award, Chicago International Film Festival 2004), and Kevin McMahon’s McLaughlin’s Wake (The Chris Award, Columbus International Film Festival 2002). Christopher received a Gemini nomination for his work on the first season of Sling’s & Arrows.

KATHLEEN CLIMIE, Production Designer
Kathleen Climie is returning for a second season as production designer for Sling’s & Arrows. Her most recent credits include Lie With Me, a feature for Canadian director Clement Virgo and the YTV series, Dark Oracle. Kathleen was also the production designer for director Peter Wellington’s feature, Luck. Other credits include television movies, Time of the Wolf, The Impossible Elephant and Chasing Cain.

LEA CARLSON, Costume Designer
Lea Carlson has worked four times with maverick director Bruce McDonald; on the feature film Picture Claire, on both seasons of the television mini-series, Twitch City and on his live-to-air television feature, American Whiskey Bar. Her efforts were rewarded with a Gemini nomination for Best Costume Design in 1998 and 2000. Other feature film credits include the Award-winning feature, I, Claudius, John Fawcett’s Ginger Snaps, Don McKellar’s Last Night and she was the Assistant Designer on John L’Ecuyer’s Curtis’ Charm and Patricia Rozema’s When Night Is Falling. For television Carlson has costumed the cast of The Bowen Murder Mysteries and External Affairs, as well as for the series, The Res. The New Ghostwriter Series and Grounding Marsh. She designed for George Bloomfield’s television movies, Deadly Appearance and Love and Murder. On the stage, her designs for Ken Gass’ Claudius earned her a Dora Mavor Moore Award nomination for Costume Design in 1994. Carlson is currently designing the set and costumes for a new opera, ‘The Salome Dancer’, which is part of the Young Ears Festival in Kitchener.
The Ghost

Charles Dickens said, "An idea, like a ghost, must be spoken to a little before it will explain itself." So what about rumours that the ghost of the late Festival Artistic Director Oliver Welles has returned to explain himself? Answers abound, but the only hard fact is current Artistic Director Geoffrey Tennant has been witnessed speaking to thin air. Many chalk that up to his personality. Mr. Archer, speaking for the Board of Directors says, "Oh, lunatics are running that asylum. The Swan Theatre haunted? By ghosts of incompetence past, maybe. I don’t believe in ghosts. I believe in money. Success. Taking credit and assigning blame."

Haunted theaters are as commonplace as ghost lights, a light on a pole left on-stage while nobody is about. Practically, ghost lights ensure that the last person out and the first person in don’t fall into the orchestra pit, but historically, they also keep ghosts happy - or away, as the case may be.

Long time company members, Frank and Cyril, who have seen Geoffrey’s strange behaviour, debate the possibilities. "I've certainly felt strange drafts around here," says Frank. Cyril suggests this could be the result of wardrobe malfunctions. Then again, Cyril defers authority, noting that due to his advanced years, Frank is actually closer to being a ghost.

New company members have various responses. Patrick, who plays Romeo, doesn’t care if the audience is alive or dead, so long as they’ve bought their tickets. Internationally renowned actor, Henry Breedlove, is more critical. "A ghost? Superstition! As for Geoffrey talking to himself? You mean, Geoffrey Tennant? He’s just having us on. Him and his little ghost—that’s just his way of releasing tension about directing. We’re working from Oliver’s notes and it’s nice that someone is there, like Geoffrey, to read them out loud. The ghost is just his glass of sherry."

Director Darren Nichols says, "I’ve been to Berlin and it’s my job to disallow the possibility of ghosts. Look at my set for Romeo and Juliet - minimalism to the point that it obliterates the afterlife."

If haunted, perhaps the New Burbage Festival might put the ghost to work on the rebranding campaign. This motivates Frog Hammer image consultant, Sanjay. "A ghost would create excellent buzz and attract new audiences. We’d have to ensure the ghosts are coming to us, not other theatres. Sure, they don’t buy tickets, but there’s caché. Maybe with a little gothic redesign... kind of Phantom of the Opera-ish... anything to create a warm, welcoming environment."
In the folklore of the New Burbage Festival, Geoffrey Tennant, Ellen Fanshaw and Oliver Welles were a force to be reckoned with: Geoffrey and Ellen were the darlings of the stage and Oliver was the director who orchestrated their talents. But just as the treachery in Hamlet’s court drove him to madness, so too, did the uncertainty of love and loyalty at the New Burbage Festival cause Geoffrey Tennant to become unhinged. An artist to the last, Geoffrey departed from sanity in the middle of a performance of Hamlet. Not only was it his best performance, it was also his last.

Fast forward seven years to the Theatre Sans Argent where Geoffrey has resurfaced as Artistic Director. Down on its Shakespearean heel, he is failing to make ends meet. At the New Burbage Festival, Oliver Welles is faring much better financially as the Festival’s Artistic Director who is mounting a soulless production of Midsummer Night’s Dream where actors are actors and stage sheep are nervous. Ellen, Geoffrey’s former paramour, is also comfortably ensconced in her role as the prima donna. Ellen is still talented enough to hang onto the ‘prima’, but the passing years are taking their toll on the ‘doma’.

In a freak accident where a pork truck meets the pavement, Oliver Welles dies. As the theatre company adjusts to Oliver’s death, Geoffrey quickly discovers he has to adjust to the occasional reappearance of Oliver’s ghost offering the kind of sage advice only dead men with an axe to grind can bring.

Oliver’s memorial service quickly dissolves into chaos. The day’s work, thanks to May Silverstone and the Board of Directors, Geoffrey is embraced as the prodigal son, made Interim Artistic Director and acquires a new enemy: Holly Day, of Cosmopolitan-Lensotre Corporation, the Festival’s biggest sponsor. With visions of a Shakespearean theme park dancing in her head, Holly, a human raptor disguised as an executive, recruits the assistance of Richard Smith-Jones, New Burbage General Manager-turned-corporate boy toy.

Geoffrey bulks at directing the Festival’s upcoming production of Hamlet and appoints Darren Nichols, a director who embodies the Siegfried and Roy theory of Shakespeare. Ellen is to play Gertrude when she isn’t playing Mrs. Robinson to her new inamorata, dirt-biker, Sloan, holding him up as a shield to keep Geoffrey at bay. Playing Ophelia is Claire, an actress of negligible talent, who budes up with her understudy, Kate, an actress with legitimate talent and the attention of Jack Crew, a most unprincipled Hamlet plucked from Hollywood by Richard Smith-Jones and dropped onto the Festival like a slacker bombshell.

Geoffrey soon learns that you can run from your past, but you can’t hide. Despite a bitter leading lady, a clueless leading man, and a scheming General Manager, he manages to stage a remarkably personal production of Hamlet; the play that drove him mad.

**Part 1 - Oliver’s Dream**

Theatre Sans Argent is in deep financial trouble. Former actor and now Artistic Director Geoffrey Tennant, is forced to give his greatest performance since walking off stage in the middle of a production of Hamlet seven years before - to his landlord, Oliver Welles. Geoffrey’s former best friend and current Artistic Director of The New Burbage Festival, has sold his artistic soul for commercial success. Ellen Fanshaw, his aging leading actress and Geoffrey’s former inamorata, reluctantly takes on the role of Oliver’s nagging conscience. After the Festival’s opening night of Midsummer Night’s Dream, a heavily inebriated Oliver sees Geoffrey on the television news and drunkenly calls from a phone booth. Oliver passes out on the road and the New Burbage Festival loses its leader to a pork truck.

**Part 2 - Geoffrey Returns**

Richard Smith-Jones, the Festival’s General Manager, orchestrates Oliver’s memorial service, a ruse for auditioning for the vacant Artistic Director position, while visiting dignitaries confuse the memorial with a Friar’s Roast. Kate, a wide-eyed acting apprentice, sneaks off to Toronto for a commercial audition and meets Jack Crew, Hollywood-star-cast-as-Hamlet. When Geoffrey pays his respects to Oliver, he discovers death has given his old colleague a new loquacious vitality. Ellen takes up with Sloan, a local stud-muffin, but is less than delighted when Geoffrey is announced as the Festival’s new interim Artistic Director.

**Part 3 - Madness in Great Ones**

Geoffrey’s first official act is to pass the helm of the Festival’s flagship Hamlet production over to show-dog stage director, Darren Nichols and he takes over supervision of the “Shakespeare in Business Seminar” – the Festival’s new cash cow scheme. Kate and Jack spend an afternoon together as ambitious board member Holly Day spirits Richard off to Toronto for a performance of Mamma Mia, laying the groundwork, and Richard, for a new Festival business plan. Geoffrey alienates the entire cast with a scathing interview with theatre critic, Basil, and then, crashes a party at Ellen’s and challenges Darren to a sword fight of honour.

**Part 4 - Outrageous Fortune**

In the wake of Ellen’s party, Geoffrey bides his time in jail where Oliver drops by to counsel him on the dangers of suppressing his feelings for Ellen. Kate and Jack’s friendship develops well past the point of friendship. As Holly and Richard work toward their dream of a Shakespearean-themed retail village, Sloan, Ellen’s dirt bike-knight in shining armour, rides off to defend her honour against Geoffrey and Darren. Unable to avoid the inevitable, Geoffrey fires Darren, a turn which plays into Holly’s hands. Board chair May Silverstone, Geoffrey’s only champion, collapses under the strain of Holly’s plotting and ends up in the hospital.

**Part 5 - A Mirror Up to Nature**

Now that Geoffrey has taken up the reins of Hamlet, the only thing stopping Richard and Holly’s corporate wet dream is the possible success of the production. At first it seems that problem will take care of itself with Jack Crew’s unavoidable butchering of the text, but when his performance improves, Richard and Holly take matters into their own hands. The only thing they didn’t count on was Ellen’s pet chameleon who saves the day by scaring Ophelia, played by Claire, who breaks her leg, clearing the path for Kate to take over the role.

**Part 6 - Playing The Swan**

High noon in the Shakespearean Corral. The opening day of Hamlet - Jack has disappeared and Oliver questions Geoffrey’s directorial skills. Ellen comes clean about that fateful night seven years ago, and Richard suspects he had been duped into loindancing with Holly to facilitate her corporate maneuvers. Kate rescues Jack from the abyss, and Oliver, a man of seemingly infinite jest, makes his last stage appearance. As Frank Sinatra said, the best revenge is massive success.
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