"We haven't seen anything so original since Season II!"
- Basil Cruickshank
What Becomes A Diva Most

By definition, a diva is a performer of legendary status, worshipped by the public and revered by her peers. But definitions are the last resort of the creatively impotent. Actors know better. A diva is the one with top billing and the throwing arm of Roger Clemens.

Once upon a time, the diva was a Goddess of the Opera. Then the celestial gatekeepers let in the prima ballerina assoluta. The divine Sarah Bernhardt was the first actress among the pantheon. From Dietrich and Garbo, to Crawford, Davis and Elizabeth Taylor, all was well until the mid-80s, when the term took a hard right at the Top 40 Countdown Chart and any female with an entourage, a dressing room and a cell phone began to act diva-like - regardless of talent.

“Divas are born, not made,” the late Oliver Welles used to say, “It has to be in your blood. When wannabe divas scream, your ears don’t bleed you only get a headache.” Oliver regarded himself as an expert diva wrangler, mercenary enough to install ‘fat’ mirrors in a dressing room. “The insecure diva is eminently more manageable,” he’d say. “The worst kind! Oh! Television divas - by far.”

Which brings us to Barbara Gorman, the legendary TV star cast in this year’s production of King Lear. “Ellen is my oldest friend in the world,” Ms. Gorman emphasized during a recent press interview. “She is unquestionably the diva-in-residence... I’m just visiting.” Her arrival prompted this observation from Artistic Director Geoffrey Tennant. “Divas eat up too much oxygen,” he says, “and there’s not enough on a stage. When a show is working at its peak, you have to share oxygen.” His solution? “Fire them - or light them on fire.”

Director Darren Nichols piles them. “They have to work so hard, scratching and biting their way to the top. It’s so labour intensive, so... obvious.” This last remark seems out of character for a man wearing an inordinate quantity of lace.

Frank and Cyril, seasoned veterans, have had their fill of divas. “It’s always MY life, MY career. MY name should be the first thing that hits your frontal lobe,” explains Cyril. “Mind you, Barbara is traveling light for a diva - no coat carrier, no corpulent pooch, and no demands for flowers in her dressing room.”

The subject causes Frank to reminisce, “I was once kidnapped by a diva...” Cyril rolls his eyes. “He doesn’t hear half of what we say.” Snapping back to the present, Frank notes, “I can spot a diva at 40 paces. I used to be a marksman in the army. Ellen, Barbara and Oliver? The nicest three divas I’ve ever known.”

Sophie, this year’s ingénue, finds them magnetic, glamorous and a little like wild animals when cornered. She likes the jingly jewelry, the smudged makeup, and stilettos flung at a dressing room door. “It’s the moment when a woman finally gets to experience being a drag queen,” she says.

Executive Director Richard Smith-Jones divides divas into two groups: the scary ones who throw knives, forks, and glass, and the less threatening, but messier “liquid divas” who opt for water, wine and the legendary martini. Would the world be a smaller, darker place without divas? “Yes, absolutely,” he says.

But what of EllenFanshaw? True, tantrums have long been associated with Ellen, but does that make her a diva? “Ellen would like to be a diva,” says the one person who knows her best, Geoffrey Tennant. “She tries to be one, but in the end Ellen is an actress and the actress will always win.”
NEW BURBAGE FESTIVAL - THE ROSE THEATRE

Starring
PAUL GROSS
STEPHEN QUIMETTE
MARTHA BURNS
SARAH POLLEY
SUSAN COYNE
GRAHAM HARLEY  MICHAEL POLLEY
CATHERINE FITCH  ROTHAFORD GRAY
AARON ABRAMS  JANET BAILEY
DAMIEN ATKINS  MELANIE MERKOSKY
JEANIE CALLEJA  CHRIS LEAVINS

Special Appearance by
WILLIAM HUTT

DON MCKELLAR

with
MARK MCKINNEY

as Richard

Special Appearances by
DIANE D’AQUILA  DAWN GREENHALGH  TERI HART  PETER KELEGHAN
ANN-MARIE MACDONALD  LOUIS NEGIN  FIONA REID  KENNETH WELSH

Costume Designer
LEA CARLSON

Editor
CHRISTOPHER DONALDSON

Production Designer
KATHLEEN CLIMIE

Director of Photography
RUDOLF BLAHACEK

Created and Written by
SUSAN COYNE
BOB MARTIN
MARK MCKINNEY

Creative Producer
SUSAN COYNE

Producers
NIV FICHMAN
SARI FRIEDLAND

Directed by
PETER WELLINGTON

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

Aaron Abrams  Damien Atkins  Janet Bailey  Martha Burns

Jeanie Calleja  Susan Coyne  Diane D’Aquila  Catherine Fitch

Rothaford Gray  Paul Gross  Graham Harley  William Hutt

Peter Keleghan  Chris Leavins  Don McKellar  Mark McKinney

Melanie Merkosky  Stephen Quimette  Michael Polley  Sarah Polley
**Slings & Arrows III** continues the story of legendary theatrical madman Geoffrey Tennant (Paul Gross) as he struggles with the egos and eccentricities that populate the New Burbage Theatre Festival. With last season’s Macbeth the toast of Broadway, Geoffrey is overwhelmed by the pressure to deliver another hit production. Turning once again to his ghostly mentor Oliver Welles (Stephen Ouimet), Geoffrey finds him too preoccupied with trying to “cross over” to help. As is Ellen (Martha Burns), Geoffrey’s on again/off again lover, who can’t help taking his current state of psychological disintegration personally. So, Geoffrey finds spiritual comfort in helping Charles Kingman (William Hutt), an aged Canadian actor, overcome his demons and realize his dream of playing King Lear. What Geoffrey doesn’t know, is that Charles is harbouring a secret that will jeopardize the entire production, and with it, Geoffrey’s future at the festival.

Elsewhere, Executive Director Richard Smith-Jones (Mark McKinney) is exploring his bohemian side by immersing himself in the Festival’s feel-good junkie musical, *East Hastings* - the latest offering from Geoffrey’s nemesis, Darren Nichols (Don McKellar). Anna (Susan Coyne), Richard’s assistant, is overwhelmed by the plight of a group of refugee Bolivian musicians who’ve taken up residence in the theatre. And a behind-the-scenes battle is raging between the Festival’s musical and drama companies, with two young lovers, Paul (newcomer Aaron Abrams) and Sophie (Sarah Polley), caught in the middle.

This final season of *Slings & Arrows* asks – is it possible to make peace with the ghosts that – sometimes literally – haunt us? Can we ever truly know ourselves? And is it crazy to dedicate one’s life to that most fabulous of invalids, the theatre? The answer is (in order): “good luck”, “probably not” and a wonderful and overwhelming “yes”.

1. Divided Kingdom

With last season’s Macbeth the toast of Broadway, Geoffrey is under pressure to deliver another hit. The play he has chosen is an even greater challenge: King Lear. Terrified to climb this Everest alone, he seeks out his ghostly mentor, Oliver Welles. But Oliver is nowhere to be seen (or felt). As for Ellen, Geoffrey’s on again/off again lover, she is too busy taking Geoffrey’s panic (and its accompanying physical deficiencies) personally to be of any help. So Geoffrey turns to his boyhood mentor Charles Kingman, who he coaxes out of retirement to play King Lear. At Ellen’s insistence, Geoffrey agrees to seek professional help, and finds it in Andrew McTeague, a family therapist and Anglican minister. Elsewhere, Executive Director Richard Smith-Jones immerses himself in the Festival’s feel-good junkie musical, *East Hastings*, directed by Darren Nichols. And a battle royal rages between the musical and drama companies, with a threesome of young lovers, Paul, Sophie, and the beautiful but dimwitted Megan, caught in the middle.

2. Vex Not His Ghost

Richard discovers a kindred spirit in Nigel, the talented young writer of *East Hastings*. With Nigel’s encouragement, and a few tips from Geoffrey, Richard takes on Darren’s musical dictatorship. Meanwhile Anna, Richard’s overworked assistant, adopts a group of refugee Bolivian musicians visiting New Burbage. Lear rehearsals begin well, but soon go downhill. Charles, weakened by illness, lashes out mercilessly at the cast, especially young Sophie. Ellen’s friend Barbara, a TV star returning for the season to her theatrical roots in New Burbage, is appalled at Charles’ behaviour and urges Ellen to take a stand with Geoffrey. Oliver reappears at last, depressed at being unable to “move on”, and joins Geoffrey on the therapeutic couch.

3. That Way Madness Lies

While Oliver looks on smugly, Andrew forces Geoffrey to confront his feelings about his one-time collaborator and ghostly nemesis. The bond between Sophie and Paul is weakened by Paul’s increasing fascination with Megan and her angelic singing voice. Richard forces Darren to accept a new idea for the floundering musical, which proves to be the show’s salvation. Geoffrey is forced to lie to the cast of Lear about Charles’ health, causing further tensions with Ellen at home, where Barbara is now a roommate. The crisis comes to a head when Ellen chooses the meddling Barbara over Geoffrey and he moves out.

4. Every Inch a King

As Charles’ condition deteriorates, Anna tries to involve Richard in the growing crisis, but he is too wrapped up with the admiring young cast of *East Hastings*, who fully credit him with the musical’s enormous success. Geoffrey, now living with Charles, feels out of his depth caring for the frail and elderly actor. He is deeply alarmed when Charles appears able to see and talk to Oliver. Ellen grudgingly agrees to meet with Barbara’s New York agent, who tempts her with the lead in a TV series. Opening night for Lear arrives, Charles goes AWOL, causing Richard to finally step in and take drastic measures.
5. All Blessed Secrets
Anna joins forces with Geoffrey to help Charles rally his strength to play Lear. Sophie, depressed by the situation in rehearsal, suffers another crushing blow when she finds Paul in bed with Megan. Seeing her distress, Ellen and Barbara decide to take her under their wing. East Hastings runaway success causes Richard’s ego to balloon out of control. Charles forces Geoffrey to sacrifice everything for his art, including Ellen. The Lear opening is aborted a second time, bringing Richard’s wrath down upon Geoffrey. The rising tension affects the whole company and leads to a bar brawl, and an actor being rushed to the hospital.

6. The Promised End
The cancellation of King Lear and Richard’s discovery of Geoffrey’s duplicity has made Geoffrey’s future at the New Burbage Festival untenable. Richard searches for a new Artistic Director and finds one surprisingly close at hand. Ellen finally gives Barbara her marching orders. Geoffrey and Charles find salvation on a stage in a church community centre, and Oliver resolves the puzzle of his (non)existence. Our series ends, as all Shakespearean comedies do: with a wedding and a song.

“Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more.”
King Henry V, Act 3 scene 1

Welcome to the last season of Slings & Arrows, the third part of our trilogy, which has spanned the ages of man: youth and Hamlet, middle age and Macbeth, and finally the twilight years and King Lear. As with the first two seasons, life in the theatre echoes life in the real world - albeit with the volume turned way up.

King Lear is a play about many things: age and infirmity, loss and transformation, blindness and self-knowledge. In our series, it is also a parable of life upon the wicked stage. Like Lear, actors and their egos have occasion to be the architects of their own destruction, or redemption.

Closings out Slings & Arrows after three seasons has always been part of the creative design of the series. ‘Bittersweet’ is the word used by everyone involved to describe their reaction to the final curtain, but the energy of the characters and the drive of the plot, not to mention the praise of the critics internationally, causes cast and crew to consider the future. “We did structure the life cycle of the series to run three seasons, so it is coming to a natural end, but you never know,” offers Executive Producer Niv Fichman.

The strength of the initial scripts attracted a core cast of exceptional quality, and the reputation of the show has made additional casting easy. “It’s not hard for us to pick up the phone and get almost any Canadian actor interested in doing the show. Last season we had Colin Feore; this season we have Sarah Polley and William Hutt.” The addition of Hutt closes the circle on an event which took place three decades ago for both Fichman and actor Paul Gross. “When I was in Grade 7, I saw Bill Hutt do Lear at Stratford,” recalls Fichman.

“Coincidently, Paul Gross saw that same performance. His experience at the time was that he wanted to be an actor; my experience was that I wanted to produce that guy.” Not only have both their wishes come true, but this season will mark the first and only filmed version of Hutt’s Lear.

Producer Sari Friedland is delighted with the success of the series in Canada and abroad. “The achievement of Slings & Arrows is the result of actors who are genuinely invested in their characters, and a proud production team which knows good television when they see it being made. Each successive season has brought greater polish to the series, to the nuanced scripts which go in directions not customarily addressed in television drama, and to the performances which are tempered with compassion.”

The working relationship of the three writers has evolved over the years. As Coyne puts it, the team is “a creaky, badly oiled machine. We come at it from very different directions. It absolutely should not work. But, somehow, it does. I think because we have learned to respect each other’s different strengths.”

Coyne, the series creator, and Creative Producer of the third season (while Bob Martin performed in the pre-Broadway run of ‘The Drowsy Chaperone’ in Los Angeles), is particularly satisfied with this season’s wild ride of conflicting storylines. “First there is the dark comedy that comes from Geoffrey’s determination to stage Lear with Charles at all costs, despite Charles’ increasingly unstable condition. This, combined with the profound inanity of the musical, is a contrast that pleases me a lot.”

“I don’t think there’s anyone in North America who knows as much about speaking verse as Bill Hutt does,” says Coyne, who played Regan to his Lear in a Robin Phillips production at Stratford.

“When he performs, there’s no need to explain why Shakespeare matters.”
Eighteen episodes, while comprehensive, are not enough to plumb the depths of potential material, according to Mark McKinney. “There are big parts of life in the theatre that we haven’t told. But for Slings, this shorter (miniseries) format is perfect. Volume can dilute a story and this format gives us the chance to make genuine advances from season to season; it keeps the writing richly concentrated and gives the story its crucial momentum.”

“Each season has allowed us to examine the stages of our own lives: youth, middle age and now old age,” said Bob Martin. “While we aren’t old yet, we wrote it from Geoffrey’s perspective, as he witnesses someone - Charles - battling the process. Frankly, it has aged us all. The process of creating the three seasons has been a purging experience for the writers. We’d have long meetings over wine and coffee and cookies, talking about the petty humiliations and minor comedies in our own lives and all of that went into the series. We became very open and very close, Mark and Susan and I, and that was the biggest gift of this whole thing.”

Director Peter Wellington is unable to make up his mind which season he likes best. “At any given moment, I change my opinion. They are all equally good, yet, all different. Our show gives you the sense of hope for the future of our culture. When things are done with sensitivity and a certain measure of compassion for the human condition, then people’s intelligence is being flattered and that feels good. This season, being about death and decay, has an oblique comedy that collides jarringly with the sadness and I like that a great deal. It feels like a particularly sweet way to go out. Also, it’s very sweet to be working with Hutt. He has used his 57 years of experience well, really put his back into becoming a better actor. He’s like an aircraft carrier of technique.”

“Ultimately, Geoffrey Tennant has been very liberating for me because he has no restrictions to his behaviour,” says Paul Gross. “He has a zillion imperfections and he’s not even close to being a nice person, but he’s after something quite pure and that’s increasingly rare in the midst of the gaudy stuff that passes for entertainment today. I don’t mean all of it, but it’s nice to be reminded of the people who are after a crystalline level of purity.”

When working on great texts, such as Hamlet or Lear, Gross finds that the play is vastly more important than the actors performing them. “You, the actor, are in service of the play, and if the best way to do it is not in a 2000 seat theatre, but in a community centre or a church basement, then so be it. There is something mysterious about that and it separates theatre from film where you never do the great texts. What also makes theatre different is that in the course of a person’s life, one can see four or five Hamlets. You never see four or five versions of Gone With The Wind. Even with King Kong, it’s not the same text, reinterpreted for a modern time. It’s a new movie.”

As for working with William Hutt for the first time, Gross says, “I’ve had the great pleasure of knowing Bill over the years, and now, finally, working with him has been terrific. He’s an amazing actor and I don’t think we’ll see his like again. He’s the last of his kind.”

Stephen Ouimet plays Oliver Welles, the late Artistic Director of New Burbage. Oliver returns again in season three, because you can’t keep a temperamental dead man down. His angst has grown to such uncomfortable proportions that he joins Geoffrey on the therapeutic couch in counseling. “The key for Oliver is Charles, who is the only other person who can see him, and through their new friendship, Oliver comes to understand how to move on,” explains Ouimet. “Last season Oliver languished in limbo, but this season he picks up velocity as he heads for the exit in the home stretch. He loses that smooth veneer he gained in death, and he is able to ask himself the hard questions that he avoided during his life. It’s sad to end this series, but I prefer to go out by design rather than by default.” This is a sentiment with which Oliver would undoubtedly concur.

For two seasons, Ellen Fanshaw (Martha Burns), has been the lone she-wolf in the New Burbage wilderness, but that situation is remedied this season with the arrival of her old friend, American TV star Barbara Gorman (Janet Bailey). Cast as Lear’s daughters Regan and Goneril, Ellen and Barbara support each other and develop a nurturing relationship with ingénue Sophie Dunbar (Sarah Polley), who is playing Cordelia. “This season, the underpinning of Ellen is her Broadway success which should have satisfied her professionally, allowing her to focus on her relationship with Geoffrey,” says Burns, “but nothing is working out that way. At first, Barbara is a well-intentioned ally, but becomes the shrill voice of ambition, eventually turning into someone with highly questionable motives. Ellen’s diva status also comes into question when the Manhattan variety of diva muscles in on the spotlight. The main difference for Ellen this season is her reaction - less explosive, more (relatively speaking, for someone like Ellen) compassionate, which means I’ve had to develop an entirely new layer to her personality.”

Lear was unquestionably the draw for William Hutt who plays Charles Kingman, the retired actor who has one more performance left in him and many obstacles sitting between him and the stage. While actors around him accuse Charles of diva behavior, Hutt refers to his character’s antics as fear-based bitchiness fuelled by the bond between him and Geoffrey that grows from their quest for purity in the play. “I’ve played Lear four times before, once as the Fool to Ustinov’s Lear,” explains Hutt. “Without a doubt, Shakespeare uses the English language
better than anyone else alive. The difference between performing on stage and for the camera is just dialing down what you do on stage. The camera is an audience of one. I don't have to fill a whole room." His close association with Stratford raises the inevitable question of approval of the miniseries and to that Hutt says that after 50 years, Stratford ought to have a sense of humour about itself. "Besides, unlike Stratford, Slings & Arrows is about a young theatre company struggling to find their place in the sun. It's charming. It's endearing. And the ham truck [which kills Oliver in season one] relates to no one I know."

Sarah Polley, who plays the young actress Sophie engaged to play Cordelia in the production of King Lear, makes no bones about the fact that she went after this role. "Some of my favourite actors in the country are in this, the writing is unbelievably good, and it has that mix of being hysterically funny and extremely moving, playing with complex ideas. I'm honoured that they let me be a part of it. The reason I really wanted to get in here and do this is because I knew Lear was the play and Cordelia was the part I've most wanted to play in Shakespeare, but I have debilitating stage fright which means I haven't been able to do it on stage, which has broken my heart because the role has been offered to me before and I had to turn it down. Of course, never having done Shakespeare outside of school, I wasn't expecting to start, right out of the gate, playing Cordelia to William Hutt's Lear. I can think of things less terrifying than that, but it was an astonishing experience."

Season three's other main storyline concerns Executive Director Richard Smith-Jones (Mark McKinney), who has cast himself as a creative consultant on the Festival's production of the new musical, East Hastings. Inevitably, he butts heads with director Darren Nichols (Don McKellar), but gains the support of the cast. The show becomes a huge success, and Richard's familiarity breeds contempt. "At first, Richard wants to be king," recounts McKinney. "Then he comes close to ruin and through luck and design, he is resurrected and nearly succeeds at becoming a human being."

Slings & Arrows would be incomplete without the presence of Darren Nichols, played by Don McKellar, who along with Bob Martin wrote The Drowsy Chaperone, a little Toronto originated musical that this spring took Broadway by storm, winning both McKellar and Martin a Tony Award for Best Book. This season, Darren returns from Holland to direct a New Burbage originated musical - East Hastings. "Holland is an appropriate inspiration for Darren," McKellar says. "It's progressive and the Dutch are giddier than the Germans. It's Berlin-lite. Plus, they are less existential than the French, which is refreshing." So it makes sense Darren comes back to direct a musical which, as a form of entertainment, has evolved into something pompous and self-important - much like Darren. The reaction to that pompousness has been Broadway musicals like The Producers', Spamalot and our very own Drowsy Chaperone.

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, H20, the political thriller which he co-wrote, and for which he won Best Actor at the Monte Carlo International Television Festival. In feature films, Gross co-wrote, directed and starred in the hugely successful comedy, Men With Brooms and starred in Wilby Wonderful, Paint Cans, 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 "Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Toward the Somme," which played at Toronto's Canadian Stage. Gross won a 2004 Gemini Award for Best Actor for Season 1 of Slings & Arrows.

MARTHA BURNS as Ellen Fanshaw

Martha Burns is one of Canada's most distinguished stage actresses. She has performed leading roles at the Stratford and Shaw Festivals, and at theatres across the country. Winner of the 2005 Barbara Hamilton Award for "excellence and professionalism in the performing arts", she has also received two Dora Mavor Moore Awards for her work in "Innkeepers" and "The Miracle Worker", and been nominated for three more. Last season, she appeared as Alice in the Tarragon Theatre's production of 'Alice's Affair', by Susan Coyne.

A founding member and Resident Artist of the acclaimed Soulpepper Theatre Company (where she recently appeared as Winnie in Samuel Beckett's 'Happy Days'), Martha created numerous ground-breaking educational programs for youth at Soulpepper, including the Youth Mentorship Program, the Opening Night
ABOUT THE CAST

Club and Soulpepper in the Schools. Soulpepper artists have just completed a three year pilot program exploring 'Hamlet', 'King Lear' and 'Macbeth' with children in grades 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Martha is the recipient of a Genie Award for her work in Rhombus Media's production of Long Day's Journey Into Night and a Gemini nomination for Best Actress for her work in the first season of Slings & Arrows. Most recently, Martha appeared in David Weaver's feature film Siblings; Gerry Cicoriti's Life Before This; Susan Shipton's short film Hijidsight; and Francois Girard's Silk, produced by Rhombus Media.

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, The Red Violin and wrote, directed and starred in his latest feature, Childstar. McKellar is a prodigious writer for the stage (The Drowsy Chaperone; '86; 'An Autopsy') and television (Twitch City). His role in Atom Egoyan's Exotica won him a Best Supporting Genie and his directorial debut, Last Night, earned him the Prix de la Jeunesse at Cannes. He also appears in Atom Egoyan's new feature Where The Truth Lies, Olivier Assayas' Clean, The Tommy Douglas Story, The Event, Rub & Tug, The Art of Woo, Waydowntown, and David Cronenberg's existerZ, as well as Peter Wellington's Joe's So Mean To Josephine and Patricia Rozema's When Night Is Falling.

WILLIAM HUTT as Charles Kingman

During Mr. Hutt's 39 seasons at Stratford, his roles have included Feste in Twelfth Night; Henry Drummond in 'Inherit the Wind'; Prospero in The Tempest; Benjamin Hubbard in 'The Little Foxes'; Falstaff in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'; James Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night; Harry in 'The Stillborn Lover'; Thomas More in 'A Man for All Seasons'; Lady Bracknell in 'The Importance of Being Earnest'; and the title roles in 'King Lear'; 'Volpone'; 'Tartuffe'; 'Richard II' and 'Titus Andronicus'. Directing credits include 'Oscar Remembered'; 'Much Ado About Nothing'; 'As You Like It'; 'Saint Joan' and 'Waiting for Godot'. Mr. Hutt's extensive career has included appearances on Broadway, in London's West End and in theatres across Great Britain, Europe, Australia and the U.S. For four seasons he was Artistic Director of the Grand Theatre (London, Ontario).

In film and television: James Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night (Rhombus Media/Genie Award); Sir John A. MacDonald in The National Dream (CBC/Genie and ACTRA Awards); and Bernard Shaw in The First Night of Pygmalion (CBC/Prix Anik Award). Other appearances include: The Wars; The Statement; The Fiddler; Macbeth; Much Ado About Nothing; and Emily of New Moon. He was invested as a Companion of the Order of Canada (1969) and received the Order of Ontario (1992). He was the first recipient of the Governor General's Lifetime Achievement Award, English Stage (1992) and received the Shakespeare Globe's Sam Wanamaker Award for outstanding contribution to the world of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre (1998). He holds honorary doctorates from six major Canadian universities.

ABOUT THE CAST

Chicago Societies of Film Critics for The Sweet Hereafter. The buzz continued at the Sundance Festival, where her starring role in the film Guinevere was showcased, and appear in unusual, independent films such as Michael Winterbottom's The Claim, Kathryn Bigelow's The Weigh of Water, David Cronenberg's Existenz, Hal Hartley's No Such Thing, Thom Fitzgerald's The Event, and Isabel Coixet's My Life Without Me as well as Dawn Of The Dead, based on George A. Romero's original script. By the end of 2004 she had filmed two additional projects, Wim Wenders' Don't Come Knocking with Sam Shepard, Jessica Lange and Tim Roth, which premiered at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival and Isabel Coixet's The Secret Life of Words; opposite Tim Robbins. Both films were shown at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival.

Sarah has been writing and directing in Canada for the last six years and has just completed production of her feature film directorial debut, Away From Her, based on the short story, The Bear Came Over The Mountain, by Alice Munro, starring Julie Christie, Gordon Pinsent and Olympia Dukakis. She maintains a home in Toronto.

AARON ABRAMS as Paul

Born and raised in Toronto, Aaron is a graduate of America's top acting conservatory, The Goodman Theatre School in Chicago. Since then, Aaron has appeared in numerous films and television. His credits include Cinderella Man, The In-Laws, Ice Bound, The Gospel of John, Sabah, Resident Evil: Apocalypse, Kojak, Tarzan, Kevin Hill, and This Is Wonderland. Along with playing recurring buddy Kanayo on Stargate Atlantis, Aaron can also be seen in many upcoming projects such as Zoom starring Tim Allen, Firehouse Dog starring Bruce Greenwood, and Breach starring Chris Cooper.

JANET BAILEY as Barbara

In Deepa Mehta's screen version of The Republic of Love, Ms. Bailey plays the quirky ex-wife of Bruce Greenwood's Tom Avery. Later that year she played opposite Greg Kinnear in the feature film Godsend starring Robert DeNiro and can be seen guest starring in UPN's drama Kevin Hill as Judge Linda Gower.

A graduate of The Neighbourhood Playhouse where she studied under the tutelage of Sundford Meiniser, Ms. Bailey's career spans theatre, television and film in both Canada and the United States. She played Sarah in Atlantis Films' Race to Freedom: The Underground Railroad and her performance, opposite Courtney B. Vance, earned a Best Actress Gemini Award nomination. In episodic television she played Susannah Marks on Traders, which garnered Ms. Bailey her second and third Gemini nomination for Best Supporting Actress. Other significant roles include a sweet, but streetwise prostitute in the television movie Spencer Ceremony, an HIV infected mother in the feature film Survivors, the supportive friend of Wendy Creswonn's Jane Doe in the CBC drama The Many Trials of Jane Doe, and Irene Garrison, the mother fighting for the custody of her child, in CTV's Eleven Hour. In 2004, Ms. Bailey received her fourth Gemini nomination for her portrayal of Harriet in Global Television's Blue Murder.

AST HASTINGS
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.

Niv 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 Marc Evan's Snow Cake, Don McKellar’s Childstar and Olivier Assayas’ Clean, a France-Canada-UK co-production starring Maggie Cheung, Nick Nolte and Beatrix 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 Geminis, Genies, a number of Golden Pragues and Golden Roses.

Currently, he is working on a feature film adaptation of Silk by Italian author Alessandro Baricco with Red Violin director Francois Girard, starring Kiera Knightley, as well as an adaptation of Nobel Prize winning author Jose Saramago’s book Blindness with Don McKellar. Fichman is also producing Passchendaele, Canada’s first war epic written, directed and starring Paul Gross.

Aside from his producing responsibilities, Niv Fichman has directed a number of Rhombus productions including Crossing Bridges, Struggle for Hope, Marcelo Alvarez: In Search of Garedel, and World Drums. Most recently, he co-directed (with Barbara Willis Sweete) and produced a performance special featuring international singing sensation Aselin Debison.

The second season of Slings & Arrows, the comedic mini-series in six parts, is currently being aired across Canada and on the Sundance Channel in the US, and the third season has just wrapped production. Another production currently in release is 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 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 an integral part of several of Canada's most successful television series during the past two decades, including the original Degrassi series (90 half-hour episodes). A multiple award winning series and one of the highest-rated shows in Canada, Degrassi has been sold to more than 70 countries, including the United States, Israel and Australia. After a very rewarding relationship with Degrassi's Executive Producer & Creator Linda Schuyler, Friedland assumed the role of Supervising Producer on 26 half-hour episodes of Schuyler’s Liberty Street and 42 one-hour episodes of Riverdale, the first prime time soap opera in Canada. For S & S Productions and CBC Friedland produced the one-hour pilot, An American in Canada, which won the 2002 Gemini for Best Comedy Program or Series, the first pilot to ever win in that category.

In 2001, Friedland produced the feature film, Red Green's Duct Tape Forever, which was nominated for a Gemini. With Rhombus Media, she produced the feature film Clean, written and directed by French filmmaker Olivier Assayas, starring Maggie Cheung & Nick Nolte. Clean premiered at the 2004 Cannes International Film Festival in official competition, earning Maggie Cheung the award for Best Actress, and had its North American premiere at the 2004 Toronto International Film Festival.

Friedland volunteers a great deal of her time to the Canadian Film and Television Producers Association (CFTPA), where she sits on the Industrial Relations Committee, representing the interests of independent producers. She has also been part of the CFTPA's negotiations with unions and guilds including ACTRA and the DGC and has chaired the committee through the last three WGC negotiations. In recognition of her volunteer work, Friedland has - somewhat prematurely - just received the Kodak/CFTPA 2006 Lifetime Achievement Award.

Friedland has produced all three seasons of Slings & Arrows. In its first season, it was nominated for nine Gemini awards, including Best Series, and won two (Best Actor for Paul Gross and Best Supporting Actress for Rachel McAdams). Slings & Arrows airs on TMN, Movie Central and Showcase in Canada and all three seasons have been sold to the Sundance Channel in the United States – the second season premiered on February 19, 2006. Currently, Friedland is developing three feature films: two adaptations and one original screenplay.

SUSAN COYNE, Creative Producer, Writer and plays Anna Connolly

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. Last spring, the Tarragon produced her second play, Alice’s Affair. She has also adapted Chekov’s Three Sisters for the Shaw Festival. She was nominated for a Gemini and is the recipient of two Writers Guild Awards for her work writing Slings and Arrows (with Bob Martin and Mark McKinney).

As an actor, Coyne has played leading roles in theatres across Canada, including several seasons at the Stratford Festival, where she played Juliet, Portia, Regan, and Olivia, among other roles. Other recent stage credits include: Helens 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 and is a writer-in-residence.
PETER WELLINGTON, Director

Peter Wellington returns to direct the third season of Slings & 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 contributed five teleplays for the award-winning dramatic series The Eleventh Hour (CTV/Alliance), two of which were nominated for Gemini awards in 2003. In 1996, he was nominated for a Best Screenplay Genie for The Boys’ Club, a psychological thriller produced by Alliance Communications starring Chris Penn.

BOB MARTIN, Writer

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 had a stint as Artistic Director. He is the co-creator of the musical The Drowsy Chaperone and has performed in all its productions; The Fringe of Toronto Festival; Theatre Passse Muraille (Toronto); Winter Garden (Toronto); Ahmanson (Los Angeles); and the Marquis (Broadway) where it was nominated for 13 Tony Awards (one for every eligible category). Martin (with Don McKellar) won the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical. Martin is also the head writer of the sketch comedy group Skippy’s Rangers, which has performed extensively on CBC Radio, CBC Television, CTV and The Comedy Network. Recent theatre credits include: The Drowsy Chaperone, Daniel Brooks The Good Life and An Awkward Evening With Martin & Johnson. Recent film and television credits (acting) include Burnt Toast, Slings & Arrows and the films Last Night, Torso, Clablun and Childstar. He also plays “Cuddles” on the twisted black comedy Puppets Who Kill. Recent television writing credits include Twitch City, Made in Canada, and Northern Town. Bob has been nominated for four Gemini’s, and won five Canadian Comedy Awards and an LA Drama Critics Circle Award. Bob won the 2004 and 2006 WGC Canadian Screenwriting Award for Slings & Arrows.

MARK MCKINNEY, Writer and plays 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 1990 McKinney received a Cable Ace Award for Best Actor and in 1994 Kids In The Hall received the Golden Rose of Montreal (Intern’l) 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. You can catch Mark in the series Robson Arms on CTV. He recently completed shooting Hatching Matching Dispatching on the East Coast for CBC. Over the years Mark has received six Gemini Awards for writing and acting for his work in Kids In The Hall, as well as two Writers Guild of Canada awards for Slings & Arrows.

RUDOLF BLAHACEK, Director of Photography

Rudolf Blahacek’s ability as Director of Photography spans television and documentary shooting styles. His credits include: all three seasons of Slings & Arrows; Death and The Maiden for Rhombus Media starring Tom McCamus and Michelle Monet 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 Don 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 Herd and Garage.

CHRISTOPHER DONALDSON, Editor

Christopher Donaldson returns to Slings & Arrows for the third season. His 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 SWX Festival 2004), Asghar Massombabi’s Khaled (Special Mention FIPRESCI Award TIFF 2001), Jim Allodi’s The Unseen (TIFFG Top Ten of the Year 2001), Alan Zweig’s Vinyl and I, Curmudgeon (Silver Hugo Award, Chicago International Film Festival 2004), and Kevin McMahon’s McLaughlan’s Wake (The Chris Award, Columbus International Film Festival 2002). Christopher received a Gemini nomination for his work on the first season of Slings & Arrows.

KATHLEEN CLIMIE, Production Designer

Kathleen Climie is returning for the third season as production designer on Slings & Arrows. Her most recent credits include: Sarah Polley's feature film directorial debut Away From Her; Lie With Me, directed by Clement Virgo; Full of It, directed by Christian Charles; and the YTV series, Dark Oracle. Kathleen received a 2005 Gemini nomination for Best Production Design for Dark Oracle and the series was awarded the International Emmy for Best Children's Program. 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 I.

LEA CARLSON, Costume Designer

Lea Carlson returns for the third season of Slings & Arrows, having designed the first two seasons. She has also worked many times with maverick director Bruce McDonald: first on 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 Gemini nominations for Best Costume Design in 1998 and 2000. Other feature film credits include the Award-winning feature I, Claudia, John Favcett’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 Gordon Pinsent’s CBC movie Heyday, The Bowen Murder Mysteries and External Affairs, as well as for the series The Rez, The New Ghostwriter Series and Grounding Marsh. She designed for George Bloomfield’s television movies Deadly Appearances and Love and Murder. On the stage, her designs for Ken Gass’ Claudia’s earned a Dora Mavor Moore Award nomination for Costume Design in 1994. Carlson designed the set and costumes for a new open, ‘The Salome Dancer’, which was part of the Open Ears festival in Kitchener.
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 end, 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 resurfaces as Artistic Director. Down on its Shakespearean hee, 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 partner, 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 ‘donna’.

In a freak accident where a pig 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 next day, 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-Lenstrx 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 balks 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 buddies up with her understudy, Kate, an actress with legitimate talent and the attention of Jack Crew, a most unprincely 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 better 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 him from a phone booth. Oliver passes out on the road and the New Burbage Festival loses its leader to a pig 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 production of Hamlet over to show-dog stage director, Darren Nichols. Geoffrey then 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 Crouchshank, 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 the 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 that Ellen’s pet chameleon would save 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 has been duped into lion-dancing with Holly to facilitate her corporate maneuverings. 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.
SEASON II SYNOPSIS

Geoffrey Tennant (Paul Gross), now firmly installed as Artistic Director of the New Burbage Festival, inherits the problems of the late Oliver Welles’ (Stephen Ouimet), 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 rebelled 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 upon a financially microscopic when subjected to a brutal tax audit.

The Festival, now without its major sponsor, Cosmopolitan Lenstrax, is in financial crisis. CEO Richard Smith-Jones (Mark McKinney) seeks the advice of savvy businesswoman 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 wistful modernization which leaves his lead actors, Sarah (Joanne Kelly) and Patrick (David Alpay), 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 Lenstrax, 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 boytoy, 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 exotically 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 blunted ego, his understudy preps for the spotlight. The collaboration between Oliver and Geoffrey is such a brilliant success, Henry crawls 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.
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