



SERVING ELIZABETH

by MARCIA JOHNSON



PRAIRIE
THEATRE
EXCHANGE

PTE.MB.CA

NOV 11 – 23, 2025

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Welcome

TO PRAIRIE THEATRE EXCHANGE

Recently, I've been reflecting on the significance of the word "**exchange**" in PTE's name.

First, it's a nod to our original location in the old Grain Exchange Building on Princess Street.

But *exchange* can also mean a conversation; or a place where roads from different directions cross paths (a traffic *exchange*); or an *exchange* of gifts. And it can mean trading in one thing for something better.

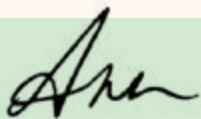
In *Serving Elizabeth*, playwright Marcia Johnson invites us to do all of these things: cross paths, share gifts, have conversations, and maybe trade one idea for another.

Marcia, like so many of us, was captivated with *The Crown* when it aired. But the episode about Princess Elizabeth's visit to Kenya made her ponder how the story could have been told differently, and what conversations Canadians might have about storytelling. The result was *Serving Elizabeth*, which we are thrilled to present to you.

Though we've all arrived here today from different directions, we can gather together in this beautiful theatre and receive the gifts of the actors and creative teams as they tell the story of Tia, Mercy and Faith. Together we can share Marcia's play, which will make us laugh, think, and maybe have a conversation about trading in one idea for another.

And gathering from different directions, sharing gifts, and having conversations is what we love to do — because we are Prairie Theatre **Exchange**.

Let's have a conversation!



Ann Hodges
Artistic Director



PRAIRIE THEATRE EXCHANGE IS PROUD TO PRESENT

SERVING ELIZABETH

by Marcia Johnson

FEATURING:

BOLA AIYEOLA	<i>Mercy/Patricia</i>
AVA DARRACH-GAGNON	<i>Elizabeth/Robin/Ashley/Woman</i>
CAMERON GRANT	<i>Montague/Steven</i>
REENA JOLLY	<i>Faith/Tia</i>
TOM KEENAN	<i>Talbot/Maurice/Man</i>
CHERISSA RICHARDS	<i>Director</i>
RACHEL FORBES *	<i>Sets, Props & Costume Designer</i>
ANIKA BINDING *	<i>Associate Designer</i>
SCOTT HENDERSON *	<i>Lighting Designer</i>
PAUL DE GURSE	<i>Sound Designer/Composer</i>
ZAHRA LARCHE	<i>Stage Manager</i>
SAMANTHA SAGE	<i>Assistant Stage Manager</i>
PETER N. BAILEY	<i>Dialect Coach (Kenyan)</i>
TOM SOARES	<i>Dialect Coach (British)</i>
MŪKONZI MŪSYOKI	<i>Kenya Cultural Consultant</i>
EMMA WELHAM	<i>Production Dramaturg</i>

RUNNING TIME: 2 HOURS, 10 MINUTES, WITH ONE INTERMISSION

* Indicated designers on this production are represented by the
Associated Designers of Canada, IATSE Local ADC659.

Produced by permission of the Creators & Marquis Literary (Colin Rivers) www.MQlit.ca

Serving Elizabeth was developed in 2017 in the
Thousand Islands Playhouse Playwrights Unit and
was later co-commissioned with Western Canada
Theatre. Both theatres funded a workshop in 2018.

Serving Elizabeth received a world premiere in
co-production between Western Canada Theatre
and Thousand Islands Playhouse in 2020/2021.

Prairie Theatre Exchange is a not-for-profit theatre and an active member
of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), and engages,
under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement, professional artists
who are members of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association.

Canadian Actors'
EQUITY
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Director's Notes

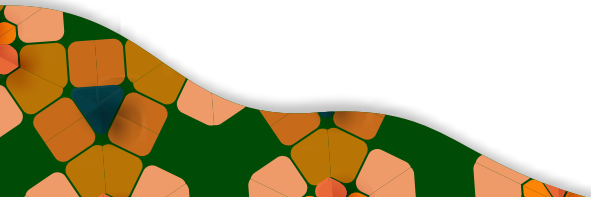
There's no way to talk about Queen Elizabeth without talking about the British Empire. Marcia Johnson's captivating play, which has had multiple productions in Canada and the US, draws us in through the famed TV series *The Crown* which was set against six decades of the British Empire. *Serving Elizabeth*, however, challenges our relationship to colonialism, affirms the right to tell our own stories, and includes an unlikely friendship between two women: one at the heart of British Imperialism and one from the Kenyan working class.

I love how this play jumps between stories and timelines, illuminating the parallels between characters and how the past informs their present. As the play's charming central figure Tia Mwangi embarks on "a grand adventure", she contends with her conflicting feelings about the Royal Family, authorship, and "selling out". Ultimately, she embraces the resister within and fights for her own story to be told.

Johnson's sparkling script delivers us dynamic, fierce characters, passionate debates, some classic historical figures and even a few cheeky belly laughs along the way!

It has been such an honour to be part of Ann Hodges' exciting season at PTE and a real privilege to work, play and imagine with this incredible cast and team. I hope you enjoy this play as much as we have working on it!

- Cherissa Richards



We create and gather on Treaty 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg (Ojibway), Ininewuk (Swampy Cree), Anishininewuk (Oji-cree), Dakota Oyate, and Dene peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Metis. As we gather to tell stories today, we so appreciate the original storytellers and stewards of this land.

Meet the Playwright



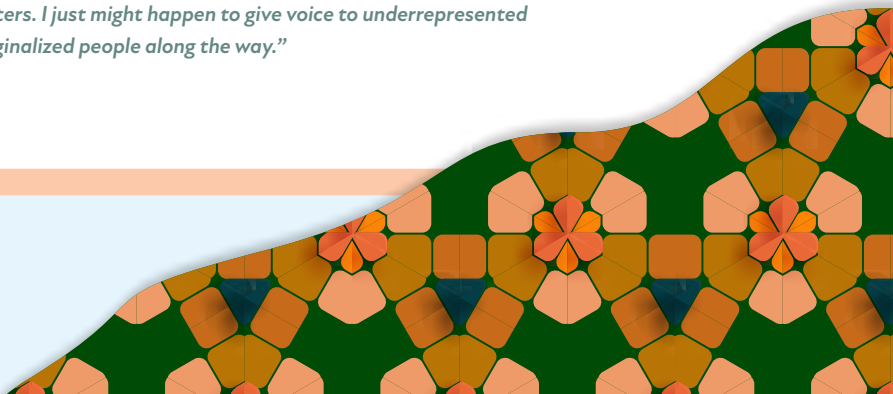
Marcia Johnson is an actor, writer, dramaturg and audiobook director/narrator based in T'karonto.

She originated the roles of Mercy and Patricia in *Serving Elizabeth's* world premiere at Western Canada Theatre (co-produced with Thousand Islands Playhouse) in February 2020. The TIP production was pandemic-delayed by a full year. Other productions played at the Stratford Festival, Belfry Theatre, Theatre Aquarius and New Hampshire's Peterborough Players. The podcast version is available on CBC Radio and PlayMe Podcast (Expect Theatre). The script is published by Scirocco Drama.

Other plays include *Binti's Journey* based on *The Heaven Shop* by Deborah Ellis, *Perfect on Paper* at the Toronto Fringe Festival and *Talk is Free Theatre* and *Say Ginger Ale* at the SummerWorks Festival. The latter two plays also had radio drama adaptations on CBC.

Marcia has performed in theatres including YES/Sudbury Theatre Centre (*Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*); Blyth Festival (*New Canadian Curling Club, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt*) and Factory Theatre/GCTC (*The Real McCoy*). She performed in her ten-minute plays *Get Out of Jail Free* and *Another Word for Single* at the Port Hope Arts Festival and also makes brief appearances in TV and Film (*American Gods*, *American Gothic*, *Diggstown*). You can catch Marcia in two shorts making the festival circuit (*The Comics* by Veronika Gribanova and *Memento Mori* by Andrew Moodie and Emily Hurson).

"My goal as a playwright is to create entertaining stories with engaging characters. I just might happen to give voice to underrepresented or marginalized people along the way."





Outside Joke's

Holiday

Musical

Extravaganza

DEC 9 – 21, 2025

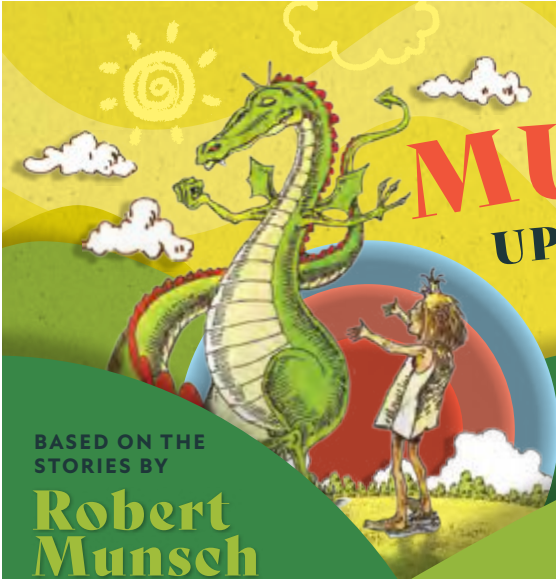
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Munsch**

ADAPTED BY

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DEC 19, 2025 – JAN 3, 2026

Five Munsch stories brought to life.
A beloved PTE tradition returns!

Meet the Artists



Bola Aiyeola

Mercy/Patricia

Bola Aiyeola was born in Nigeria and moved to England. She immigrated to Canada as a young adult. Theatre: *Table for Two* (Soulpepper), *Hedda Gabler*, *Les Belles Soeurs*, *Death and the King's Horseman* (Stratford Festival), *The Container* (Canadian Stage), *Petra* (Theatre Direct). Theatre UK (selected): *Death and the King's Horseman/Medea* (Royal Exchange, Manchester), *The Beatification of Area Boy* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Everyman Theatre, Liverpool). Film and Television (selected): *Clarice*, *Coroner*, *Damien*, *Da Kink In My Hair*. Training UK: Academy of Live and Recorded Arts. Dedicated to Elizabeth (mum) and Tania (niece), forever in our hearts.



Ava Darrach-Gagnon

Elizabeth/Robin/Ashley/Woman

Ava Darrach-Gagnon is a bilingual artist and graduate of the University of Winnipeg's Acting: Honours program. She has worked professionally in Manitoba for over a decade, with appearances in theatre, commercials, television, and film. Theatre credits include *Little Women*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Unnecessary Farce* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); *The Winter's Tale / Conte d'hiver* (Shakespeare in the Ruins / Cercle Molière); and *Joe Job* (Imaginary Productions). Earlier this year, Ava was assistant director for *Blue Beads & Blueberries* (Manitoba Theatre for Young People) and will assist on *Murder on the Orient Express* (RMTC) and *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Prairie Theatre Exchange) later this season. She is thrilled to make her first appearance here at PTE.



Cameron Grant

Montague/Steven

Cameron has worked across Canada as a theatre creator. Recent acting: *Scorpio Moon* (Imago Theatre), *Controlled Damage* (Neptune Theatre/NAC & The Grand Theatre), *The Fiancée* (Persephone Theatre), *Kim's Convenience* (Thousand Islands Playhouse), *1851: Spirit & Voice* (Soulpepper), *Serving Elizabeth* (Stratford Festival, Expect Theatre/CBC), and 4 seasons at the Shaw Festival. Directing includes: *The Assembly* (Crossroads Theatre) and *Twelfth Night* (Theatre Erindale) and will be directing *The Fiancée* at Western Canada Theatre in 2026. As a playwright, Cameron's first play *Meet Chloe*, received its premiere at Carousel Players in 2021. Cameron is excited to return to *Serving Elizabeth* here in Winnipeg!

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT



Set Design by Brian Perchaluk and Lighting Design by Dean Cowleson Photo: Joey Senft



Ann Hodges, Artistic Director and Katie Inverarity, Managing Director welcome Colin Jackson to the stage.

Perfect Time to Make Your Donation

The opening night of *Liars at a Funeral* was memorable. Prairie Theatre Exchange co-founder Colin Jackson surprised the audience with a \$100,000 donation over two seasons and challenged Winnipeg theatre lovers to raise another \$50,000 by December 31.

Colin explained that his donation supports Ann's vision for PTE, which carries the company into the future while honouring the past. Colin also wanted to honour Kim McCaw, PTE's Artistic Director from 1983 to 1992,

who passed away in September. Kim brought warmth, courage, passion, artistry, and kindness to everything he did. PTE wouldn't exist without him. Kim is deeply loved and will be missed.

Donors have stepped up to Colin's challenge, raising over \$30,000 in less than a month!

We are so grateful for Colin's generous gift and Kim McCaw's legacy, and are excited about the future of this beloved company.

**If you love PTE too, join Colin in his challenge.
Help us reach \$50,000 by December 31.**

All gifts of \$25 or more will be matched up to \$50,000, this year.
Go online or contact us at 204-925-5263 or carm@pte.mb.ca



GIVE TODAY!

Meet the Artists



Reena Jolly
Faith/Tia

Reena Jolly is a Winnipeg-based actor and graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's Acting program. Her recent theatre credits include *Clue* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre/The Grand), *Trouble in Mind* and *Network* (RMTC/ Citadel Theatre), *Perfect Wedding* (Thousand Islands Playhouse), *Hamlet* (Shakespeare in the Ruins), and *Torn Through Time* (Manitoba Theatre for Young People). Reena is thrilled to be making her Prairie Theatre Exchange debut in *Serving Elizabeth*. Enjoy the show :) @reenajolly



Tom Keenan
Talbot/Maurice/Man

Tom is ecstatic to be back at PTE, having last been here with Heavy Bell's live music/dance theatre piece *By Grand Central Station*. Other recent stage credits include SIR's *Waiting for Godot* and *Macbeth*, RMTC's *Little Women*, MTYP's *Snow White*, and Theatre Projects Manitoba/RMTC's *among men*. He is also a singer-songwriter, and his music can be found on all streaming services under the obscure pseudonym "Tommy Douglas Keenan." He will be releasing an album this spring; for more info, go to tommydouglaskeenan.com



Cherissa Richards
Director

For the past decade, Cherissa has been directing theatre across the country from coast to coast. She is thrilled and honoured to be directing in her hometown in Ann Hodges's spectacular 1st season at PTE! This past year, Cherissa directed *Controlled Damage* (Neptune/NAC), *Shedding a Skin* (Nightwood/Buddies in Bad Times) and *Stag and Doe* (Thousand Islands Playhouse). Next up, Cherissa is directing *The Lightning Thief* at MTYP, *Primary Trust* at The Grand/Crows Theatre and *The Last Wife* at RMTC. Cherissa has won directing awards with Toronto's Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Director and Outstanding Production (*Red Velvet*/Crow's Theatre 2023), and was the Crow's Theatre RBC Rising Star Emerging Director recipient in 2021. Cherissarichards.com

Special thanks to Lennard Taylor for providing a special addition to Patricia's wardrobe.

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT



**Every donation over \$25 will be matched
by one of PTE's founders - Colin Jackson!**

Colin believes in and supports the future of PTE and so can you.

DONATE TODAY AND HELP US CONTINUE TO BRING ENGAGING
THEATRE LIKE *LIARS AT A FUNERAL* TO YOU.



Donation deadline is December 31, 2025

All gifts of \$25 or more will be matched up to \$50,000, this year.

Go online or contact us at 204-925-5263 or carm@pte.mb.ca.

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Meet the Artists



Rachel Forbes

Sets, Props & Costume Designer

Rachel is an award-winning set and costume designer, creating for theatre, dance, opera and film. Recent credits include: *Slave Play*, *Topdog Underdog*, *Fairview*, *Choir Boy*, *New Monuments* (Canadian Stage); *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Controlled Damage*, *The Bridge* (Neptune Theatre); *Treemonisha* (Volcano Theatre); *Of the Sea* (Tapestry Opera/ Obsidian Theatre); *Calpurnia*, *The Mountaintop* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); *Da Kink in My Hair*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Brothers Size* (Soulpepper Theatre); *Death and the King's Horseman* (Stratford Festival); *Harlem Duet* (Bard on the Beach); *The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Trouble in Mind*, *Victory, 1837: The Farmers' Revolt* (Shaw Festival).



Anika Binding

Associate Designer

Anika Binding is a multidisciplinary theatre artist born and raised in Winnipeg. She works primarily as a Lighting and Costume Designer, secondarily doing Stage Management and Directing whenever possible. She is a member of the ADC. Selected recent credits include: production design for *Afterlight* (The Keep Theatre), costume design for *Macbeth* and *Waiting for Godot* (Shakespeare in the Ruins), lighting design for *Prophecy* (Theatre Projects Manitoba), lighting design for *Women of the Fur Trade* (Magnus), lights and costumes for *Miss Shakespeare* (Winnipeg Studio Theatre), costume design for *Liars at a Funeral* (Magnus).



Scott Henderson

Lighting Designer

Scott is a Winnipeg-based Lighting Designer who has worked from Victoria to Ottawa. Scott has designed 50 productions for PTE, including *Post Democracy*, *Butcher*, *Lawrence and Holliman*, and *Godspell*. Most recently, Scott designed *Gather* for Manitoba Theatre for Young People, and *Frozen* for Rainbow Stage. Currently, Scott is the Lighting Director for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Scott is a member of ADC659 and IATSE Local 63. Special thanks to Karen, Sean and Alex for love and support.

Meet the Artists



Paul de Gurse
Sound Designer/Composer

Paul is a Winnipeg based musician. Recently he was music director for the Canadian premiers of *Frozen* (Neptune Theatre) and *The Band's Visit* (Winnipeg Jewish Theatre), as well as the second production of the Winnipeg-born musical *Afterlight*. Paul is a member of local musical improv company Outside Joke, and is the Managing Director of the Village

Conservatory for Music Theatre, an arts education organization with a focus on creating new work located in Winnipeg. This show and all shows are for Tom.



Zahra Larche
Stage Manager

Originally from Gatineau, Quebec, Zahra is a 2017 graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's Production Program. Recent Credits include, as Stage Manager: *The Outside Inn* (PTE); *Indecent, The Recipe, Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* (MTC); *Rock of Ages, Mary Poppins, The Hockey Sweater* (Rainbow Stage); Resident Stage

Manager 2017 and 2018 Season (Gros Morne Theatre Festival). As ASM: *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Segal/MTC); *The Sound of Music* (Citadel/MTC); *Volare* (PTE); *Into the Woods* (MTC); *Network* (Citadel/MTC); *Calpurnia* (National Arts Centre/MTC). Endless gratitude to the *Serving Elizabeth* team and our PTE staff. Love to my family from Gatineau to Tasmania, Ilana, Jenna, Brooklyne and Paul!



Samantha Sage
Assistant Stage Manager

Samantha is a Winnipeg-based artist who is thrilled to be back at Prairie Theatre Exchange after her first engagement in 2023, *Space Girl*. As a graduate from the University of Winnipeg, she has worked all over the city as a stage management apprentice. As a bilingual artist, Samantha has stage managed productions at Théâtre Cercle Molière including: *La Liste*

(2019), *Inédit* (2021) and *Cet été qui a chantait* (2023). Other credits include Shakespeare in the Ruins productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Iago Speaks* (2024), *Waiting for Godot* (2025), and finishing her summer at Rainbow Stage's production of *Frozen* (2025).

Meet the Artists



Peter N. Bailey
Dialect Coach (Kenyan)

Peter N. Bailey is an actor, playwright and dialect and voice coach. His voice and dialect coaching credits include: *Serving Elizabeth*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Wedding Band*, *Get That Hope* (The Stratford Festival), as well as with The National Theatre School of Canada, Canadian Film Centre, and Sheridan College.



Tom Soares
Dialect Coach (British)

Tom Soares is a professional actor and a voice, dialect, and text coach with an MFA in Acting (voice specialization) from York University. For over a decade, he has taught introductory to advanced courses in performance and voice for the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of Winnipeg and has coached for RMTC, Theatre Projects, SIR and PTE.



Mũkonzi Mũsyoki
Kenya Cultural Consultant

Mũkonzi is a theatre scholar, writer, director and dramaturge. He is currently a PhD student at the University of Alberta in Performance Studies. He has worked with many theatres across Canada, Kenya, and Uganda and continues to work as a dramaturg for Ignite Afrika Trust back in Kenya, collaborating with local artists from Kisumu.



Emma Welham
Production Dramaturg

Emma is delighted to be working at PTE once again! Her previous dramaturgy credits include: *Orlando* (Production Dramaturg; Royal MTC) and *Whatever Happens After?* (Dramaturg; Winnipeg Fringe). Emma has worked at theatres locally and across the country including Shakespeare in the Ruins, Theatre Projects Manitoba, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Dry Cold Productions, Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan, The Arts Club, Citadel Theatre, and Vertigo Theatre. Currently, she is in her final year of the directing program at the National Theatre School of Canada. emmawelham.com



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To donate an endowed gift to the foundation trust, and support the future of PTE, call Carman at 204-925-5263.

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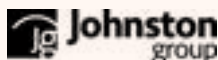
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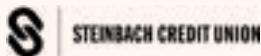
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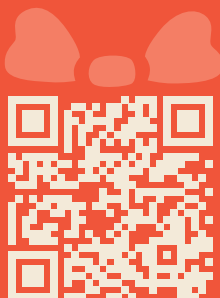
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Kim McCaw PTE Artistic Director, 1983-1992

We lost Kim on September 25, 2025. He put PTE on the map – locally, nationally, and internationally. PTE would not be here without his vision, passion, creativity and love.

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