

THEATRE NEWS

THE METAMORPHOSIS OF AN ARTIST'S LIFE



ARC President Gordon Bolan

The actor's life has always been a tenuous and uncertain one, but the past decade has been especially challenging as more and more actors chase fewer and fewer jobs.

However, George Brown graduates are a resourceful lot and many have evolved with the times. Many performers have branched out into other areas; writing, directing, producing, filmmaking, voice-over and other areas of the industry in order to continue their artistic journey.

Actor-director-producer-fundraiser **Gordon Bolan**, who graduated in 2001, has just completed his fourth year as President of the Actor's Repertory Company (ARC). "After graduating from George Brown," Bolan says, "I did



George Brown grads Soo Garay and Andy Velasquez in Cahoots Theatre Projects' production of *The Sheep and the Whale*. Photo by Guy Bertrand

the usual things – sent my packages out to theatres, agents, went to auditions. I got quite a bit of work in regional theatres but it was a shock to my system to have so much time on my hands. At school the schedule is so full, you're doing so much and then bam – you've got all this time. Even when I got work, the time between getting hired and actually doing the work was long."

Not one to sit around and wait for the phone to ring, Gord produced Chekhov's *The Bear* at Equity Showcase Theatre. "The contacts I made at school were invaluable. I hired Sasha Lukac, who I had worked with at the school, to direct, and cast two fellow GBC grads (**Michaela Bohunicky** and **Kurt Smeaton**) to act with me."

Shortly after that experience, another teacher who had worked with Gord at George Brown, Brenda Bazinet, invited Gord and classmates **Brett Christopher** and **Janet Porter** to join the Actors Repertory Company. They revitalized the company and recently produced *36 Views* which garnered 3 Dora nominations.

Marjorie Chan is another person not willing to wait for work. "I had quite a successful run of shows (after graduation) and toured Canada from coast to coast. It was while I was doing a show in Vancouver, that I started writing. I submitted to a program at CBC radio, and was commissioned to write a radio drama out of that program. That was in February of 2001. For a few years, I wrote primarily for radio. My first play produced (*China Doll*) was in February 2004. My first opera in April 2004. My first play on the mainstage will be in February 2008."

Unfortunately, there was another industry hurdle that fueled Marjorie's self-initiative. "The biggest shock after leaving George Brown was, to be absolutely honest, becoming aware of the limitations that the industry would place on me as an artist of colour. I was not naive in thinking that the colour of my skin would not be an issue, but I was surprised to the extent that it was."

Undeterred, Marjorie pushed on. "Because I wear so many hats, it means that I am never waiting for the phone to ring. I stay active and engaged in what is happening in the industry, whether I am an actor, director, writer, librettist,



The multi-talented Marjorie Chan

teacher, administrator, curator... It also gives me multiple perspectives, increasing my respect for others' work and keeps me honest as an artist." As Associate Artistic Director at Cahoots Theatre Projects, Marjorie has worked on new play development and educational programs for youth including Crossing Gibraltar, the theatre's training program for refugee youth. She's also co-ordinates Cahoots' outreach and staged readings, with tours to Hong Kong and Macau, China. Last summer she was at the Banff Playwrights' Colony workshopping her new play, *A Nanking Winter*, which had a staged reading at Groundswell (Nightwood Theatre) in September 2007 and is slated for production in 2008. She wrote the libretto for *Sanctuary Song*, a new opera for young people produced by Theatre Direct Canada and Tapestry New Opera Works which is slated for the stage in 2008 as well. She programs a site-specific multidisciplinary arts festival at the Todmorden Mills in the Valley, called DARK and has directed *Majishkaa* (Native

Earth Performing Arts - Weesagachek Festival), *A Dream Called Laundry* (Diaspora Dialogues) and *Late* (Obsidian Theatre - CrossCurrents).

Company Theatre's Co-Artistic Director Philip Riccio made an indelible mark during his time at George Brown, especially with his stunning performance in the George Brown/Equity Showcase co-production of *The Bewitched*. "I think the biggest shock after school was how alone I felt," says Philip. "There is constant feedback on everything you do at school but professionally there is way less. That feeling intensifies as time goes on because during your time at school your classmates and teachers are watching all your work and create a context to give praise or criticism, but in the outside world no one follows your career that closely. You alone know if you are challenging yourself, fulfilling your potential, or working as hard as you can. No one else is going to



Dora-award winning actress and George Brown grad Sarah Dodd with Joseph Ziegler in Company Theatre's production of *A Whistle in the Dark*. (Photo by Rick O'Brian)

monitor that for you. Every actor needs to recognise that training is a life long process. Your technique needs to be continually changing and growing. You have to be ferocious about getting better."

Philip's desire to grow and evolve as an artist drove him to create Company Theatre. "I thought I could contribute to the theatre community in more ways than just acting. I was passionate about what I believed good acting and good theatre was, and wanted a platform to share that vision."

Company Theatre's inaugural production, *A Whistle in the Dark* had two successful runs in Toronto and one in St. John's Newfoundland. In his review of Whistle, the Toronto Star's Richard Ouzounian wrote, "Superb acting from a powerhouse cast and taut, economical direction combine with a tough-minded script to create the most muscular piece of theatre we've seen in Toronto in some time". Recently, Company Theatre produced GBC grad Daniel MacIvor's *Marion Bridge* with equal success.

"I think a lot more emerging actors are recognizing the need to promote themselves," says Marjorie, "and produce work themselves. This is good. As much as it is more work, it also empowers artists to take their own careers in their own hands."

Says Bolan, "I remember Peter Wyld telling us 'you are the future of Canadian theatre - just get out and do it!'"

Every year at George Brown Theatre School we tweak, nudge, and shift the program to address the demands of the industry. We are vigilant and fierce in keeping the program current and relevant.

At the core we remain a classical theatre training program, with a strong emphasis on text, but we also respond to the industry, and theatrical landscape, as it exists TODAY. Many of our graduates have gone on to

produce their own work. They have not been content to wait at home for the phone to ring. They are developing, writing, producing, directing and, of course, acting. In this issue of Theatre News, we celebrate that work. In today's artistic world, where the work is so scarce, our graduates need to take responsibility for their own careers. In the Business of Acting, we address that need with an emphasis on self-producing, writing, grantsmanship,

fundraising, etc. What has become clear over the past ten years is that young actors have to get out there and do it on their own. I believe an artist needs to create. It is our responsibility at George Brown to facilitate that need, and give our students the tools and knowledge to create their own work. Here's to our graduates, who are out there "doing it". Bravo to you all.

James Simon, Artistic Director

GEORGE BROWN THEATRE 2007/2008 SEASON OF PLAYS

THE MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT

BY JEAN GIRAUDOUX
 ADAPTED BY MAURICE VALENCY
 DIRECTED BY JASON BYRNE
 November 7 – 17, 2007

TALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

BASED ON THE STORIES OF 1001 ARABIAN NIGHTS
 DIRECTED BY BRENDA BAZINET
 November 28 – December 8, 2007

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

BY WILLIAM CONGREVE
 DIRECTED DIANA LEBLANC
 February 6 – 16, 2008

A SPRING REPERTORY SEASON

APRIL 8-19, 2008

BLOOD WEDDING

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BY JOHN GUARE
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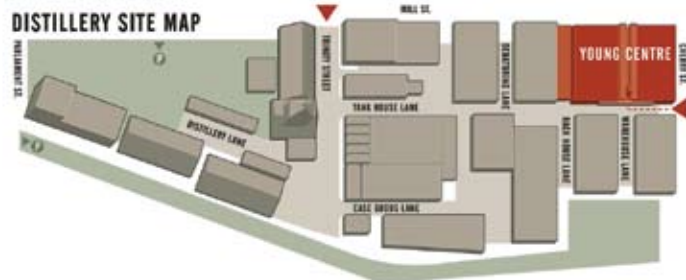
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AREA MAP



THEATRE BURSARY AWARDS 2007

Marie-Claire Marcotte
The Edna Khubyar Acting Award

Marie Jones
The Thomas White Memorial Bursary

Wade Bogert-O'Brien
The John Bannerman Memorial Bursary

Roger Bainbridge
The Second City Encouragement Award

Zach Apostoleris
The Timshel Challenge Bursary Award

Lise Maher
The George Brown Seniors' Association
Fellowship Bursary

Rick Jongejan and Laura Schutt
The A.C. McDonnell Memorial Award



Marie-Claire Marcotte and Dorothy Ward



Marie Jones and Larry LaForet



Wade Bogert-O'Brien and Maureen Loweth



Brenda Bazinet and Roger Bainbridge



Zach Apostoleris and James Simon



Emma McBey, Lise Maher and Colin Brown



Laura Schutt and Rick Jongejan

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James Simon,
Artistic Director*

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GEORGE BROWN GRADS AT WORK



Adam Brazier (left) as Dr. Frank 'N' Furter in CanStage's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (photo by Bruce Monk), and (right) the cover of his new CD *Reflect* (Robert Cook Photography).

Jana Abrams traded in her acting career to work as a talent agent. After assisting at several agencies she said, "It was a huge learning experience for me. The biggest lesson I learned was what I didn't want to do as an agent. I wanted to treat (my clients) the way I wanted to be treated as an actor." Jana now has her own agency with many George Brown grad clients including Marc Aubin, Steve Blaxall, Kelly Bolt, Cora Kennedy, Dylan Taylor and Robert Watson.

>Karl Ang was in *The Magic Toyshop* at Stage West Mississauga, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Dream North in the Yukon, and this fall will appear in *Dying To Be Sick*, a new translation of *The Imaginary Invalid* for Pleiades/National Arts Centre.

>Esther Arbeid is the Film and Theatre Program Coordinator at the Miles Nadal JCC at Bloor and Spadina. She programs a year-round film subscription series, the 30 year-old Toronto Jewish Film Society, which has 400 members. Esther also plans the Greenhouse Theatre Development Series at the Al Green Theatre and the Between Stages Playwright's Reading Series which is in its 12th year.

>Grads Geoffrey Armour, Marie Jones, Lise Maher, Craig Pike and current student Jan-Michael Weir spent the summer working in Goderich with the Gairbraid Theatre Company. They wrote plays based on their own research of Goderich and the surrounding area, then performed in various locations of

historical relevance. A highlight included a play about the last man publicly hanged in Canada which was performed in the very goal of the hanging. Then they stretched their classical muscles with *Romeo and Juliet* and *Ring Around the Moon* by Jean Anouilh. Geoffrey was accepted into the very prestigious Jaques Lecoq School in Paris, France and begins his training there this fall.

>With barely time to catch his breath, Derek Arnold went from finishing the year at George Brown to acting in *Treasure Island* at Theatre Aquarius. He spent the rest of the summer teaching young people at Theatre Aquarius' Theatre School.

>Aviva Armour-Ostroff directed a new play, *Flin Flonning* at the Diesel Playhouse and was featured in the Fringe show *The Gladstone Variations*. In September she produced the second annual Lab Cab Festival, a two day multi-arts festival at Factory Theatre. *The Gladstone Variations* also included directing by Rebecca Benson and Aaron Willis, writing by Brendan Gall and Julie Tepperman and performances by Brett Christopher and Athena Lamarre.

>Marc Aubin and fellow GBC classmate Jeremy Harris have been writing together ever since they graduated from George Brown Theatre in 1990. Recently, their short film *R.U.U.* ran on the Turner Movie Network. As a performer Marc has appeared on TV's *Jeff Ltd.* and in the CBC movie *Victor (The Victor Davis Story)*. Jeremy is the voice of CBC Radio 2.

>Richard Beaune appeared as The Friar and Conrade in *Much Ado About Nothing* for the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival in Prescott, ON, won the Canadian Comedy Award for his show *Trapped in Taffeta* and directed *Macbeth* for Shakespeare in the Square as part of the Flower City Festival in Brampton (GBC grads Tim MacLean, Dana Fradkin and Mark Purvis were in the cast). He also teaches acting at Ryerson for Act II Studio.

>Adam Brazier received a Dora Award (Male Lead in a Musical) for his performance as Frank 'N' Furter in CanStage's wildly successful production of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Adam's new CD, *Reflect*, has just been released. To check it out go to www.adambrazier.com



Kris Bruun surfed the Fringe circuit with *Dickens of the Mounted*. (Photo by Brad Lepp)

>Kris Bruun was in the UK premiere of Canadian playwright Jason Hall's *GBS* at Theatre 503 in London then moved to Berlin for a year where he worked with the English Theatre, did voice-over work and Improv Comedy with Laugh Olympics Berlin. He and director Brad Lepp adapted Eric Nicol's novel *Dickens of the Mounted* into a one-man show which Kris performed at Fringe Festivals in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Edmonton and Vancouver this past summer.

>Evan Buliung is living out a rock-star fantasy with a lead role in the musical *We Will Rock You*, based on the music of Queen.



The incredible Brett Christopher in *I Am My Own Wife*. (Photo by Lydia Pawelak)

> **Ben Carlson** played Hamlet at the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre in the fall. This past season he was back at the Shaw Festival with lead roles in *Saint Joan* and *The Philanderer*.

> **Lara Cotnam** is the voice of four characters on the animated series *Lets & Go* which airs in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. This past summer she performed in *Expiry Dating* at the Toronto Fringe Festival. In January Lara will be moving to Australia for a year to pursue her Bachelor of Education.

> **Christopher Darroch** has been performing fairy tales and Shakespeare adaptations for kids with Dufflebag Theatre. He recently organized and performed in a very successful fundraiser to remount *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Abridged) in Toronto. In addition, he does voice work for the animated kids' series *Lets & Go*, voicing several main characters (Ryo, Kai, Gen and others).

> **Catherine Bruhler** recently guest starred on *Angela's Eyes* for Lifetime/NBC and starred in the pivotal film *For Lease* directed by former *Due South* co-star Daniel Kash. *For Lease* is based on a real life incident Catherine suffered in Los Angeles. When she told the story to writer/producer Hayley Tyson, he decided to make it a film, asking Catherine to relive the event.

Due South has gained new popularity in its reruns on ITV3 in the UK so Catherine and other cast members were interviewed for two UK documentaries on the making of the Canadian series. *Ride Forever* and *Southbound* which can be seen online at youtube.com

> In addition to his work on *The Gladstone Variations*, **Brett Christopher** work-shopped Ted Hughes' *Oedipus* (with GBCers **Julie Tepperman** & **Aaron Willis**), wrote and directed Theatre By the Bay's Shakespeare School Tour (featuring **Morgan Jones**), appeared with **René Kratka** in last summer's Shakespeare in the Rough's *Antony & Cleopatra* and won rave reviews for his phenomenal work in the Pulitzer and Tony award-winning one-man show *I Am My Own Wife* at the Saidye Bronfman Theatre in Montreal.

> **Ben Clost** appeared in the CanStage/Theatre Calgary co-production *Of Mice and Men*, played Mozart in *Amadeus* at Theatre Aquarius and then traveled all the way to Nunavut to star in Theatrefront's production of *Night*.

> **Alison Deon** work-shopped *The Finger* with Paul Lampert's Theatre PANIK, was the voice of Syd in the animated series *G2G* and has become one of Nightwood Theatre's "Emerging Actors". She will be involved in play development and appear in the Groundswell Festival.

> **Sharmila Dey** work-shopped Marjorie Chan's *Sanctuary Song* with Tapestry New Opera and shot the movie of the week *Why I Wore Lipstick to My Mastectomy*.

> **Sarah Dodd** was in Company Theatre's remount of *A Whistle In The Dark* and won a Dora Award (Performance by a Female, Independent Theatre Division) for her work in the Toronto premiere of *Marion Bridge* directed and written by graduate **Daniel MacIvor**. This past summer she was in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in High Park and in the fall appeared in Linda Griffith's new play *The Age of Arousal* for Nightwood Theatre.

> **Madeleine Donohue** performed with Odyssey Theatre in Ottawa this summer in *The Curious Mishap*. She also appeared in two productions with the Stirling Festival

Theatre (the pantomime *Pinnocchio* and a new farce called *The St. Pugnacious Bingo Murder Mystery*). She has a principal role in the upcoming CBC movie *Celine*.

> As a member of Souleppper Theatre Company, **Patricia Fagan** appeared in *Our Town*, *Time of Your Life* and *Three Sisters*. Trish is also a member of *The Elastocitizens* (with former GBC student **Jason O'Brien**) – a groove-funk band which has gained an avid following for their highly theatrical stage shows and infectious dance music (www.elastocitizens.com).

> **Jacklyn Francis** was in *Fallen Angels* at the Red Barn Theatre, *Danny King of the Basement* at the Lorraine Kisma Theatre for Young People and *Private Lives* in Waterloo.

> GBC grad **Brendan Gall** is generating a lot of buzz as a writer. His play, *Alias Godot*, was translated and produced in Florence, Italy last fall, and in Teatro Della Limonai's Toronto edition of their InterCity Festival, directed by David Ferry. *Alias Godot* will be remounted in Italy this fall as part of the InterCity Festival's 20th anniversary, and will receive its North American/English-language premiere at Tarragon Theatre in spring of 2008, directed by Richard Rose. In addition Brendan performed in Sam Shepard's *Action* (SHAM Collective/Equity Showcase Theatre), performed/co-created *I Keep Dropping Shit* for the Toronto Fringe, contributed *The Card Trick* to Convergence Theatre's *The Gladstone Variations* for the Toronto Fringe, performed in *In Full Light* and *Mexico City* for SummerWork and *East of Berlin* for Tarragon Theatre in the fall.

> **Eli Ham** spent the summer as a member of the Stratford Festival with roles in *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *An Ideal Husband*. He was also a member of the Festival's 2006/07 Birmingham Conservatory. Other Stratford Company members included **Ron Kennell** and **Andre Sills**.

> **Falen Johnson's** one woman show (*Salt Baby*) went up at Native Earth's Weesageechak Festival with dramaturgy by Judith Thompson. Falen recently became an associate artist in the Turtle



Ruth Lawrence

Gals Performance Ensemble and has a show coming up at the Tarragon in December called *The Only Good Indian*. The piece was written by the company. Another show created by the company *The Triple Truth* will be touring next May. Next February she'll appear in an adaptation of *Julius Caesar* called *Death of a Chief*, a Native Earth production, which will run at the National Arts Center in Ottawa before returning to Toronto. She was also in *The Place Between*, a Native Earth produced dance piece.

>Recent grads **Rick Jongejan** and **Tim Walker** performed at 4th Line Theatre near Peterborough this past summer. >**Tricia Lahde** was named an Associate Artist with UnSpun Theatre. She performed in and co-wrote *Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump* (Version 2) with them. This fall, she and her colleagues will rework and remount their 2006 Fringe hit *Minataur*, before making a film version. She also provided one of the voices for a stop-motion short film of the JD Salinger story *A Perfect Day for Bananafish*.

>**Athena Lamarre** brought her Toronto Fringe hit *Cognac and Sausages* to Shanghai last fall. Former GBC professor Mark Ceolin produced Fringe Shanghai, the first festival of its kind on mainland China. Also on hand was **Jonathan Geenan** who directed and starred in *Impromptu* for the festival.

>Writer/actress **Ruth Lawrence**, is the Artistic Associate at RCA Theatre in St.

John's, Newfoundland. White Rooster Productions produced her latest play, *St. John's: The Rancid*, this past June. Another play she co-wrote, *The House Wife*, was the only play east of Montreal to be included in the national anthology *Two Hands Clapping* (Signature Editions). Ruth also won the 2006 Rhonda Payne Award for a woman in theatre from the Newfoundland & Labrador Arts Council and co-hosted the televised awards show on CBC. This past summer she made a short film called *Bark*.

>**Christian Lloyd** wrote, directed and starred in the short film *Getting Lucky*, based on his own play. The riveting, disturbing and brilliantly acted film had its Toronto premiere in June and is currently being screened at film festivals around the world.

>**Claudette Mink** appeared in the feature film *Firehouse Dog* directed by Todd Holland, *Butterfly on a Wheel* with Pierce Brosnan and *Case 39* with Renee Zellweger.

>**Brendan Murray** filmed the TV docu-drama *Jonestown: Paradise Lost* in South Africa. On stage he acted in *Art is a Cupboard* at the 2006 Toronto Fringe (directed by **Geoffrey Pounsett**), *Much Ado About Nothing* at Theatre By The Bay in Barrie (with **Kyle Horton**), Tom Walmsley's latest play *Descent* at Theatre Passe Muraille and the world premiere of Damien Atkins' play *Lucy* at CanStage. This past summer he traveled to Charlottetown to star in *Salt Water Moon* directed by the play's author David French.

>**Bridget Norris** was a cast member for *The Bacchae* at the Fringe.

>**Tiffany Lyndall-Knight** wrote, "I have a recurring role on *Battlestar Galactica* as the Hybrid (very fun - I get to lie in a coffin shaped vat of glowing water and spout Shakespearean non-sequiturs). Other recent highlights include a supporting role in *Fido*, which went to Sundance; a recurring role as Billie Sims on *Da Vinci's City Hall*, and recently, most amusingly, I got to play an experimental off-Broadway actor performing for Sir Ben Kingsley as the theatre reviewer (*Elegy*). I continue

to be busy with teaching, recently co-creating and directing two productions for young people at the Richmond Academy of Performing Arts. I also work with Bard on the Beach's education department, teaching workshops at schools around Vancouver and have taught an Acting Shakespeare program for Langara College."



Lovely Krystal Meadows and her alter ego Abby Archer of *Grossology*. (Photo of Abby copyright of Nelvana Ltd., 2007)

>**Krystal Meadows** just finished recording the first season of the animation series *Grossology* - episodes are now airing on YTV and US Discovery Kids. She is the voice of lead character Abby Archer and Abby's brother Ty. She filmed an episode of CTV's teen drama *Instant Star* and just began recording a new animation series called *World of Quest* for the KIDS WB & Teletoon. She voices the character Anna Maht, a twelve year old inexperienced apprentice sorceress who helps the Prince regain his kingdom from the forces of darkness and evil.



Lisa Norton (centre) does battle with Claire Coulter (left) as Sarah Manninen looks on in George F. Walker's *Better Living at the Factory Theatre*. (Photo by Ed Gas-Donnelly).

> **Lisa Norton** appeared in *Of Mice and Men* at CanStage and Theatre Calgary and *Better Living* and *Escape from Happiness* at Factory Theatre (with fellow GBCer **Sarah Manninen**). Lisa is also gaining quite an audience for her blog *The Skeptical Tourist* (www.skepticaltourist.blogspot.com). Sarah also filmed the feature film *Never Forget*.

> Before traveling to Africa last winter, **Chris Ratz** appeared in the CBC miniseries *The Englishman's Boy*. He is set to film an episode of *The Murdoch Mysteries*.

> During her summer break between 2nd and 3rd year, **Laura Schutt** was at the Blyth Festival in *The Eyes of Heaven* directed by GBC guest director Gina Wilkinson.

> **Michael Spasevski** is using his actor-training in a unique way as a member of Toronto's Playback Theatre, a company dedicated to listening to people's stories

and transforming them spontaneously into theatre. Their mission is to provide organizations with dramatic, audience-interactive performances and programs that build trust, deepen dialogue and generate opportunities for personal and professional development.

> **Camille Stubel** is an ensemble member with the BC based Theatre SKAM and last performed with them in Colmar, France **Sarah Manninen** (fellow grad of '98) was also in the show. This past summer she was in *The Finger* directed by Paul Lampert. Camille is also a certified Yoga instructor and has facilitated a theatre-in-education program at Montgomery's Historical Inn.

> **Alexandra Thomson** is teaching secondary school Drama, Dance and Art in Edmonton. She wrote, "Life changed when I became a single mother of two (boys, ages 7 and 9). A little more security was needed. Now I can hardly believe I get to participate in all of my greatest passions everyday and be a witness and support to emerging creative talents. I can honestly say that, in my teaching of drama and dance, I have used every shred of everything I learned at George Brown."

> **Lezlie Wade** directed *Elegies* at the Berkeley Street Theatre, *Waiting for the Parade* at U of T Erindale, and Smile Theatre toured her musical play *Queen of the Mist*. This past season she was at the Shaw Festival Directors' Project where she

assistant directed *Mack and Mabel* and *Summer and Smoke* and directed a one-act play.

> After a nationwide search, **Sarah Wilson** was invited to join the inaugural Soulpepper Academy, a two-year training program for mid-career artists. She appeared in the company's productions of *The Threepenny Opera*, *Time of Your Life* and *Three Sisters*.



Sarah Wilson with Soulpepper Artistic Director Albert Schultz in *The Threepenny Opera*. (Photo by Cylla von Tiedemann)

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