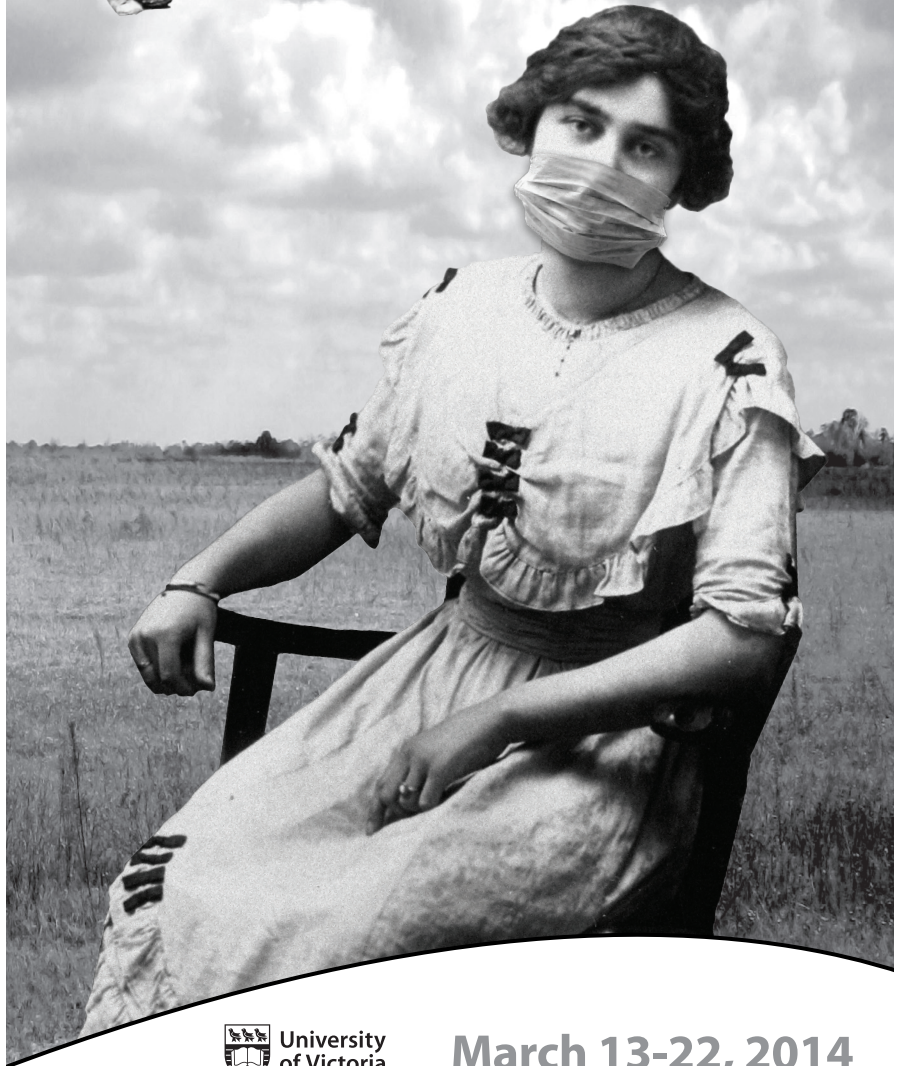




Written & Directed by Kevin Kerr

UNITY (1918)

PHOENIX



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AUTHORITY

Unity (1918)

by Kevin Kerr

CREATIVE TEAM

Director	Kevin Kerr
Set & Lighting Designer	Allan Stichbury
Costume Designer	Halley Fulford
Music Director & Composer	Francis Melling
Sound Designer	Colette Habel
Stage Manager	Kristen Iversen
Production Dramaturge	Leah Callen
Assistant Lighting Designer	Freya Engman
Assistant Director	Melissa Taylor
Movement Consultant	Conrad Alexandrowicz

CAST

Tristan Bacon	Michael / Glen
Amy Culliford	Beatrice
Sean Dyer	Stan / Fred
Danielle Florence	Doris
Haley Garnett	Sissy
Gillian McConnell	Mary
Francis Melling	Mr. Thorson / Ted
Logan Mitev	Hart
Marisa Nielsen	Rose
Keshia Palm	Sunna

There will be one 15-minute intermission during the performance.

Unity (1918) was developed as part of Touchstone Theatre's Playwright in Residence Program during the 1999/2000 season, and was originally produced by that company in March 2001 at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre.

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Director's *Notes*

Returning to Unity: For my mother, Carol Rose Kerr (Markusson) 1940 – 2013

I wrote this play over the course of a few years at the turn of the century when doomsday cults were committing group suicide in advance of anticipated end-times and even everyday folks were considering stocking up on water and supplies in the event of a global systems crash from the dreaded Y2K bug, which seems so silly in hindsight. But those same concerns just take on new forms whether it's the threat of a wayward asteroid or the running down of the Mayan calendar; we've always got an imminent doomsday to watch for.

There's something about the apocalypse that attracts us humans – maybe we're just worrywarts, a species of Cassandras, wringing our hands with visions of the worst-case scenario. Or maybe we're just strangely comforted by the idea that the whole of history, of all human civilization might end with us. That we are the ultimate generation and that after us, there simply can be no more. The end of the world might be scary, but maybe the world carrying on without us, long past us, until we are no longer even a memory is scarier still.

Fear is part of the backdrop in *Unity*, but in the foreground is desire: desire for love, for intimacy, for understanding and for home.

My mother came to the coast as a young woman from a small farm town in Saskatchewan (not *Unity*, but the less poetically named Foam Lake), and it was often a summer or Christmas destination as I was growing up. When writing the play I returned to Saskatchewan and my aunts and uncles hosted me as I researched. They knew everyone (as everyone does in a small town) and set me up with interviews with old timers who could remember the flu and even arranged a "working tour" of the funeral home, which had been run by the same family since the early part of the century.

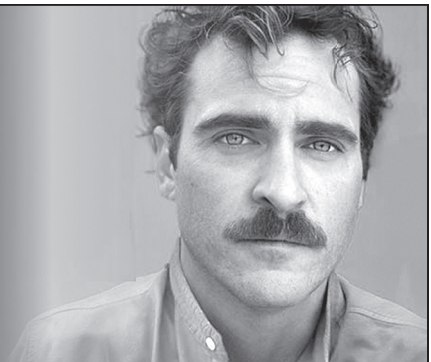
My time there reminded me of the power of community, of the strength in having those close connections found in the smaller towns. Those of us who spend our lives in theatre are lucky, as that sense of community is inherent in the art form. It requires risk, collaboration, intimacy and trust. And I'm excited for these young artists that are emerging into the practice and who will quickly discover how the theatre community is like a small town – people have your back here (even if sometimes they're also talking behind it). I'm honoured to have this opportunity to work with the team at the Phoenix Theatre, who have welcomed me like family. And I've been blessed to encounter such amazing bright new talent in the cast, crew and artistic team. Thank you for making this strange homecoming to *Unity* so sweet.

Kevin Kerr

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Historical Background of *Unity* (1918)

by Leah Callen

From 1914 to 1917, the First World War slashed the world's population like a scythe, but in 1918 another grim reaper joined its ranks – the Spanish Flu. The character Sissy is not exaggerating when she calls it a biblical plague, since the flu killed over fifty million people in one year alone – the worst pandemic recorded in human history. Both conscription and the Spanish Flu cut the population down in its prime like wheat. This human harvest surely seemed a vision out of the Book of Revelation. War and Pestilence were in fact working hand-in-hand as the spread of troops likely carried the contagion across the globe. Between failing crops, the war, and the flu, farmers in Saskatchewan must have felt they were facing the end of the world.

One small-town newspaper claimed "Influenza Worse Than Hun Bullets." A person could come down with symptoms and suffocate to death within hours; people saw their neighbours dropping in the streets. Life halted in towns that came down with the flu. Traffic in and out was often shut down and sick neighbours were quarantined, their front doors marked like medieval plague houses with signs. People were legally required to wear gauze masks outside at all times for protection. Funerals were cancelled and burials of the dead were quick to avoid contamination. The public was warned to keep to itself and avoid all contact. Thus, Kevin Kerr's play *Unity (1918)* takes place in a time when intimacy was impossible and a kiss could kill.

With the invisible enemy invading the air, paranoia spread as people feared the Germans had concocted the flu, a biological weapon as deadly as mustard gas. Every tragedy needs its scapegoat and this proved to be no exception as innocent outsiders like the characters Sunna and Hart also fell under suspicion. Perhaps the irony of the play is that in a time when human comfort and contact was most needed, it was forbidden. Though the war in Europe came to an end victoriously for Canada, the medical and psychological war continued at home and even the greatest hero returning with a Victoria Cross could be blamed for bringing back the enemy in his lungs. Perhaps now, early twentieth-century Canadians seem lost in a mass historical grave, but this production highlights the epic struggle of individuals, when the bravest act is reaching out to another human being no matter what the cost. *Unity (1918)* seems to say we cannot let the fear of dying keep us from living and loving.

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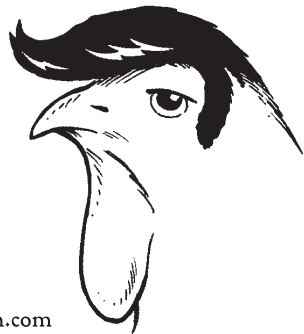
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Creative Team



Kevin Kerr *Playwright & Director*

Kevin Kerr is a founding member of Vancouver's Electric Company Theatre where he has been working as a playwright, director, actor and producer since 1996. He's collaborated with Electric Company on the creation of numerous plays including *The Wake*, *The Score*, *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*, *Flop*, *The Fall*, *Palace Grand*, *Initiation Trilogy*, *You Are Very Star* and *Brilliant! The Blinding Enlightenment of Nikola Tesla*. He also wrote Electric Company's acclaimed *Studies in Motion*, which toured nationally and recently was adapted into a feature film, and co-wrote their film/theatre hybrid *Tear the Curtain!* (with Jonathon Young and Kim Collier), which premiered at Vancouver's Arts Club Theatre and recently toured to Canadian Stage Company in Toronto. Other works include *Skydive* and *Spine* (Realwheels Theatre), *The Secret World of Og* (Carousel Theatre), the screenplay for *The Score* (CBC Television/Screen Siren Pictures), and *Unity (1918)* (Touchstone Theatre), for which he received the Governor General's Literary Award in 2002. Recent directing credits include *In Arms* (Edmonton Poetry Festival), *Precursor* (University of Alberta) and *Palace Grand* (PuSh Festival). He was the Lee Playwright in Residence at the University of Alberta for three years and he recently joined the faculty at UVic's Department of Writing in 2012 where he teaches writing for stage and screen.



Allan Stichbury *Set & Lighting Designer*

Recent productions at the University of Victoria include set designs for *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*; *Inside*; *Twelfth Night* and *Yerma*. Beyond the university, recent credits include set designs for *The Rake's Progress* and *Flying Dutchman* at Pacific Opera Victoria, *The Barber of Seville* at the Vancouver Opera, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* at Theatre Calgary and The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, set and lighting design for *Communion* at Alberta Theatre Projects and lighting design for *God of Carnage* at Theatre Calgary. He has been working with Bangkok University to establish a Student Exchange Agreement and Memo of Understanding with UVic. The first exchange students are now in Bangkok and working on projects. Allan is a past president of Associated Designers of Canada.



Halley Fulford *Costume Designer*

Halley Fulford is a theatre and English honours student at the University of Victoria. She was born on the Caravan Farm Theatre in Salmon Arm, and spent her childhood pilfering dresses from the designery while impersonating circus cats, evil fairy queens, and Clydesdales. Her family moved to Salt Spring Island when she was five, where Halley obligingly learned to enjoy the smell of skunk cabbage instead of camomile. Select theatre credits include *Reasons to be Pretty* (Costume Design), *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Costume Design), *Threadless* (Costume Design), *Arabian Nights* (Design), *No Exit* (Inez), *Arms and the Man* (Louka), and *Criminals in Love* (Gail).



Francis Melling *Music Director, Composer, Mr. Thorson / Ted*

Francis is a fourth-year student in the third year of the acting specialization at UVic and a local Victoria musician. Previous Phoenix credits include: Musical Director/Composer/Sound Designer for *Good Person of Setzuan*, and actor in *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* and most recently *The Skin Of Our Teeth*. Francis is also the proud co-founder of Silent Zoo Theatre Productions Theatre Company, which brought his original play *A Play, Or Something Like One* to Victoria's Fringe Festival last summer. You can look forward to seeing Francis at this year's Victoria Fringe Festival in Ian Simms' original production, *The Stephen Harper Play*.

Creative Team



Colette Habel *Sound Designer*

Colette is a third-year theatre and writing student. Previously at the Phoenix Theatre, she was the sound designer of *Picnic*, assisted the sound designer of *The Skin of Our Teeth* and was a sound board operator for *Peter N' Chris and the Mystery of the Hungry Heart Motel*. This past year, Colette directed and sound designed her adaptation of *Goblin Market* (SATCo) and performed in *Beyond the Clouds* (SATCo). Colette is a founding member of AmpersandTheatre. She would like to thank her Phoenix family (and real family) for their unwavering and frighteningly optimistic support.



Kristen Iversen *Stage Manager*

Kristen is a fourth-year production and management specialist in the Department of Theatre. *Unity (1918)* is her final project at the Phoenix and she is thrilled to conclude her time here with such an excellent production. Favourite credits include: *Inside* (Assistant Stage Manager), *Ray Frank: The Girl Rabbi of the Golden West* (Stage Manager) and *The Good Person of Setzuan* (SM) for Phoenix Theatre; *Rope of Sand* (SM) for workingclasstheatre; *Marilyn Forever* (ASM) for Aventa Ensemble; and *on the edge* (Student Apprentice Stage Manager) for Belfry Theatre. Kristen looks forward to pursuing a career in stage management upon graduation this spring.

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Cast



Tristan Bacon *Michael / Glen*

Tristan is a performer, director and writer from Vancouver in his final year in the directing program at the Department of Theatre. Previous acting credits include *The Stephen Harper Play* (SATCo), *You Are Here* (4th year directing project), *Romeo & Juliet*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare by the Sea). Tristan is also the Artistic Director at workingclasstheatre, a non-profit theatre organization founded in 2009.



Amy Culliford *Beatrice*

Amy is a fourth-year acting specialist who would like to thank the cast and crew of *Unity (1918)* for making her last Phoenix mainstage an amazing experience. She would also like to thank her family and friends for their ongoing support and love. Previous credits include *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Phoenix).



Sean Dyer *Stan / Fred*

This is Sean's second production at the Phoenix Theatre. He most recently played one of the lovable drunken conveners in Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of our Teeth* last fall. Sean is excited to be back up on the stage as Stan in *Unity (1918)*. He hopes you enjoy the show!



Danielle Florence *Doris*

Danielle is in her final year of the acting specialization. Credits include *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* (Phoenix), and *A Play or Something Like One* (Silent Zoo Productions). Thank you to the citizens of Unity, to Rose for giving convalescing a new meaning, and Nate for keeping her head in the clouds and her feet on the ground.



Haley Garnett *Sissy*

A second-year student in the acting program, Haley is honoured to play Sissy in her first Phoenix production. Most recently, she has been in *Trunk!* (Kerploding Theatre) where she excelled at curling up in small, dark spaces. Haley is thrilled to be working with such an incredible team. Don't forget your flu shots!



Gillian McConnell *Mary*

Unity (1918) will be Gillian's first appearance in a Phoenix mainstage. She feels very privileged to have had this experience with such a supportive and talented group of people. She hopes you enjoy the journey just as much as she has.



Logan Mitev *Hart*

Logan is a third-year acting student in the theatre department and is eager to be part of the amazing *Unity* team. Originally from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Logan trudged his way across snowy mountaintops in hopes of finding a better way of life. Recently his hobbies include hearing, smelling, touching and tasting.

Cast



Marisa Nielsen *Rose*

This is Marisa's final production at the Phoenix. She is thrilled to finally have the opportunity to pay homage to Lily Tomlin's operator, "one ringy-dingy...". Thanks to the entire *Unity* family, to her Doris, and to the director for this once-in-a-lifetime role.



Keshia Palm *Sunna*

Working on *Unity (1918)* has been a complete joy, and Keshia is ecstatic that her mainstage premiere is set 40 minutes from her hometown. She is a third-year actor, or, science student gone rogue. Recently, she has been in two Victoria Fringe productions, a Victoria Operatic Society production and two SATCo productions.

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Assistant Stage Manager (Costumes)
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Assistants to the Costume Designer
Coordinating Wardrobe Supervisor
Wardrobe Supervisors
Dressers
Hair and Makeup Coordinators
Hair Cuts
Costume Cutter
Head Electrician
Electrician
Lighting Board Operator
Assistant to the Sound Designer
Sound Operator
Props Coordinator
Scenic Carpenter
First Assistant Carpenter
Second Assistant Carpenter
Scenic Painting Crew

Crew

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Kristen Iversen
Alexa D'Archangelo, Elliot Lupini
Nick Postle, Rebecca Waitt
Aidan Correia, Grace Le, Fahad Al Suwaidi
Amy Culliford, Cecily Day, Kristen Iversen,
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Nick Postle, LJ Tresidder
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* guest production artist

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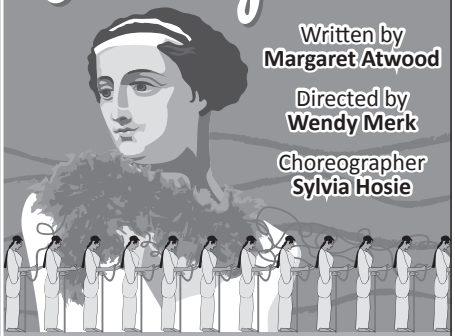
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Phoenix *Phacts*

Internationally renowned lighting designer **Michael Whitfield** (BA'67) was honoured by UVic in February with the Distinguished Alumni Award for his lifetime achievements. Michael, one of our very first graduates in theatre, recently retired from Stratford Festival as the Resident Lighting Designer. He returned to his Alma Mater last year to instruct our Phoenix students. Congratulations Michael!

Blue Bridge's *The Glass Menagerie* received fantastic reviews and a hold over! We're proud of all the Phoenixers involved, with **Victor Dolhai** (BFA'07), **Sarah Pelzer** (BFA'09) and **Matthew Coulson** (BFA'10) in the cast and **Patricia Reilly** (BFA'11), **Bryan Kenney** (MFA'12), professor emeritus **Giles Hogle**, and professor **Brian Richmond** in the creative team. Up next, **Chelsea Haberlin** (BFA'07), **Sebastien Archibald** (BFA'07) and **Colby Wilson** (BFA'07) of ITSAZOO Productions will be presenting *The Flick* at Blue Bridge's Roxy Theatre. In January, **Peter Balkwill** (BFA'97) and the Old Tout Puppet Workshop were also at the Roxy with their acclaimed play *Ignorance*. This February, **Jeff Leard** (BFA'10) performed his one-man show *The Show Must Go On* at Intrepid Theatre while **Celine Stubel** (BFA'02) and current student **Kieran Wilson** were featured in the Belfry Theatre's production of *Proud*. It's been wonderful to have so many alumni back in town.

Alumni **Sam Mullins** (BFA'08) and **Chris Wilson** (BFA'08) are recent additions to the comedy writing team on CBC Radio's *The Irrelevant Show*. Recently, Sam also had his stories broadcast on National Public Radio programs *The Moth Radio Hour* and *This American Life*. He will be returning to Victoria for Intrepid Theatre's UNO Fest with his one-man play, *Weeksauce*. **Kate Braidwood** (BFA'03) is also attending with her award-winning company Wonderheads. Look forward to seeing them both in May!



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Alan Hughes, Professor Emeritus

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The family classic, adapted from the novel by C.S. Lewis, with Kaitlin Williams (BFA'09) & Mack Gordon (BFA'08).

A Midsummer Night's Dream

NOVEMBER 6 – 22, 2014

William Shakespeare's most poetic and magical play set in Greenwich Village. Directed by Fran Gebhard.

Lion in the Streets

FEBRUARY 12 – 21, 2015

Canadian playwright Judith Thompson explores the dark side of humanity and our capacity to forgive. Directed by Conrad Alexandrowicz.

Amadeus

MARCH 12 – 21, 2015

Tony Award-winning play by Peter Shaffer that inspired the movie. Directed by MFA candidate Chari Arespacochaga.

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