



## HISTORY TELLS A BLOODY TALE OF WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

*"Gut Girls" cuts to the heart of women's continuing struggle for independence*

### Mainstage Season

#### Gut Girls

February 9 – 18, 2017

By Sarah Daniels

*Five brash, unrefined women find friendship as they toil together in a Victorian-era slaughterhouse, but are forced to choose between how they make a living and how they want to live. With sharp dialogue and dazzling humour, this historically inspired play cuts to the heart of women's struggle for independence.*

Director	Alix Reynolds (MFA Candidate)
Set Designer	Laurin Kelsey
Costume Designers	Emma Bozoian & Clara Van Horn-Foy
Lighting Designer	Eryn Griffith
Sound Designer	Michelle Fortier
Stage Manager	Brendan Agnew

#### The Inspector

March 9 – 18, 2017

Written & Directed by Linda Hardy

Inspired by the play "Government Inspector" (also called "The Inspector General") by Nikolay Gogol

*A hilarious 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian satire about greed and corruption that is no less funny – or relevant – when adapted to today's political landscape.*

The story of gender inequality in the workplace is no period piece. Despite struggles for emancipation and various waves of feminism, women today are still striving for equity in the workplace.

Sarah Daniels' play, **Gut Girls**, running at the University of Victoria's Phoenix Theatre from February 9 to 18, 2017, gives a historically inspired look back at the Deptford slaughterhouses of the late 1800s, where women as young as 14 found friendship and freedom in one of the lowest, disreputable jobs in society.

The play follows the friendships of five brash and unrefined young Victorian women who make a decent living gutting cattle under horrific slaughterhouse conditions. The well-meaning Lady Helena is intent on helping the 'gut girls' find work as proper house maids when the gutting sheds are shut down – but at what price? The young women are forced to choose between how they make a living and how they want to live.

Written in 1988, **Gut Girls** is one of Sarah Daniels' most produced plays – perhaps because its messages still speak volumes to today's audiences. According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, the average Canadian woman makes just 66.7 cents to the man's dollar (based on all annual earnings, 2011 Census), and women of colour make even less. Daniels' play gives a fascinating insight into the history of devalued women's labour.

The play was commissioned by Albany Empire Theatre in Deptford to draw working-class Londoners to the theatre by telling the real-life stories surrounding the 'gut girls' who worked in the Deptford sheds and referring to the "philanthropic efforts" of the Duchess of Albany. "One consequence of this is that the play is as close to a true story as theatre usually gets", says Pamela Bakker who wrote a book on Sarah Daniels' many plays, which all center around the struggles and exploitation of women.

Director and MFA candidate Alix Reynolds is also not a stranger to tackling feminist issues through her art. Reynolds hails from St. John's, Newfoundland where she founded Joint Productions, a theatre company committed to blending comedy with thought-provoking and innovative theatre. Since she began her Masters at UVic, she has explored several challenging contemporary plays including *Crave* (Sarah Kane), *Mud* (Maria Irene Fornes) and *In on It* (Daniel MacIvor). **Gut Girls** marks her thesis production for her MFA in Directing.

*"Gut Girls was a script to which I instantly gravitated," said Reynolds. "This distinctly feminist work spoke to me with its relevance to current issues – the advocacy for women's reproductive rights, equal pay, and domestic recognition – presented through the historical period of the 1890s. Gut Girls is constantly reminding me to question what we deem 'acceptable' and to redefine the gender binary. It is a piece of theatre that lives in 1899 and breathes in 2017."*

Working with her design team, Reynolds aims to present the two contrasting worlds of **Gut Girls**: the bloody slaughterhouse work environment and the pristine Victorian parlours of the upper class. Guest set designer and Phoenix alumna, Laurin Kelsey, presents us with slabs of beef and ornate furnishings. Fourth-year student costume designers Emma Bozoian and Clara Van Horn-Foy capture the tawdriness of lower-class hats in comparison to proper ladies' fashions. MFA student and lighting designer Eryn Griffith contrasts the dim and dingy warehouse atmosphere with the light-filled, lace-curtained home of Lady Helena. Third-year student and sound designer Michelle Fortier recreates the sounds of this industrial era as well as Victoria parlour music. Third-year student Brendan Agnew stage manages his first production with the Phoenix.

The public are encouraged to join us for our free **Preshow Lecture, Friday February 10 at 7pm** with director Alix Reynolds in conversation with Linda Hardy to discuss the themes and process around **Gut Girls**. Performances for **Gut Girls** are as follows:

**Public Previews @8pm:** Tuesday and Wednesday, February 7 & 8

**Evenings @8pm:** (Monday - Saturday) February 9 (opening), 10 (preshow lecture), 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

**Matinee @2pm:** Saturday, February 18

**Preshow Lecture @7pm:** Friday, February 10 with Director Alix Reynolds in conversation with Linda Hardy  
**Single Tickets:** \$15 Student, \$20 Senior, \$25 Adult, \$26 Weekends@8pm, (Preview: \$8.00 after 5pm on day)

**Phoenix Box Office Opens:** January 31 for sales in person, or over the phone at **(250) 721-8000**. Open Monday through Saturday from 12:00 pm to 8:00 pm.

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