

SAKURA

— AFTER CHEKHOV



CENTAUR
THEATRE



September 17 — October 6, 2024

Montreal is an incredible place in which to have the privilege to make theatre. It has such a rich and unique story of its own.

Long before Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence and encountered a nation of Iroquoian people in a place called Hochelaga, the island that the European settlers chose to call Montreal had been a point of conflict, conference, creativity and exchange since time immemorial for many Indigenous peoples including the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabeg, Huron-Wendat, and Abénaki Nations. The people of the Kanienkéha:ka Nation — known in English as the Mohawk — are now considered the caretakers of the unceded land and water around Montreal. In their language, this island bears the name of Tiohtià:ke, which means “broken in two,” because of the way the river breaks around it.

It is striking how the Kanienkéha language identifies the island as part of the river because it reminds us that we are all in the flow of a much larger story. This mighty river has for centuries carried people here from all over the world in search of new opportunities and new lives, and the Lachine Rapids that sit just off the western tip of this island have given pause to many of those journeys. The river has made contemporary Montreal into a vibrantly diverse city. We find that diversity inspiring because it is by telling each other our stories that we build bridges between our different cultures and languages.

Centaur Theatre

Centaur Theatre Company presents

SAKURA

- AFTER CHEKHOV

By **Harry Standjofski**

Directed by **Eda Holmes**

CAST

Freya - Deena Aziz

Annie - Ravyn R. Bekh

Vania - Stefanie Buxton

Marc Lowe - Marcel Jeannin

Peter Tee - Marc-Antoine Kelertas

Guy - Howard Rosenstein

Firs - Paul Van Dyck

CREATIVE TEAM

Set & Costume Designer - James Lavoie

Lighting Designer - Tim Rodrigues

Composer & Sound Designer - Torquil Campbell

Video Designer - Charlotte Baker

Stage Manager - Trevor Barrette

Assistant Director & Intimacy Coordinator - Cara Rebecca

Assistant Lighting Designer - Aurora Torok

Assistant Stage Manager - Kate Hagemeyer

Apprentice Stage Manager - Abi Sanie

Production Effects Advisory: loud sounds. Runtime: 2 H 15 MINS (with intermission)

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SAKURA

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A nostalgia-filled comedy that reimagines Chekhov for the 21st century, following a down-and-out family as they face the impending sale of their beloved orchard.



Based on Anton Chekhov's masterpiece *The Cherry Orchard*, this is the story of an upper-class family who are forced to sell their estate, including a beloved orchard, to pay off debts that have accumulated from years of mismanagement and decadence. This witty comedy with a hint of nostalgia brings the richness of the Chekhovian original right into our own backyard along the Saint Lawrence River. Montreal playwright Harry Standjofski's urgent and clever new adaptation of this timeless classic deftly captures the existential angst we all experience in the face of an uncertain future.



PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

There was a sakura tree in the backyard of our family home in suburban Montreal.

I have had the deepest love, admiration, and awe of Chekhov since I began my studies and career; he is the playwright with whom I have spent the most time in so many ways – writing, directing, acting, teaching.

I identify as a Modernist – the Early Moderns are my greatest heroes and most of my writing has been the adaptation of works from the past into something new about my world.

The questions the 1904 play asks – about our responsibilities (both ecological and financial) to the land which we inhabit, about what stops us from expressing ourselves honestly to our loved ones and family, and about the difficulty of dealing with one's own personal demons – all these questions are as immediate to us now, 120 years after *The Cherry Orchard* was first produced. I merely reframe the questions to our contemporary days to point out the similarities and, of course, what has changed (for better or for worse).

I would not have written this play had I not been working on Chekhov, in a totally different context, on another show with le Théâtre PàP, *Pendant que les champs brûlent*, which coincidentally opens one week after our opening here at Centaur.

We began reading and working on the play in 2021, and I owe le PàP much love and thanks - for many things but mostly here for refreshing my love for *The Cherry Orchard* and sending me on my way to writing this piece.

And tons of my love and thanks to Eda, the actors, the design and production teams for putting my words on stage to dance for you.

Harry Standjofski

Playwright, *Sakura - After Chekhov*

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

"They want something to fill the emptiness that their very freedom has created."

-Donald Richie, from the film *The Inland Sea* by Lucille Cara

Harry Standjofski's adaptation of Anton Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* brings the story of the last generation of a once-wealthy family to the shores of the St. Lawrence in the heart of modern-day Quebec. After the death of the family matriarch, they discover a massive tax bill that has put the ownership of the land at risk. Who among them is willing to pay and what is the land really worth? The characters all have a deep-seated nostalgic connection to the property that in some cases they have inherited or in other cases merely worked on all their lives. Whether they are "summer people" or locals they are all looking for the land itself to give their lives meaning. However, as Freya says after looking out over the mighty river, "nature is indifferent to our money problems".

Despite the dramatic set-up, this adaptation is filled with humour and joy. In that respect it hews close to the tone of the Chekhovian original. Harry Standjofski has had a life-long love affair with Chekov's writing, and he has captured the wonderful high-wire act where comedy and drama live side by side. Harry is also a wonderful actor in his own right and has given each character in this play a wide arc of emotions from the tender to the absurd, which this cast has taken up with brio.

Both Chekov and Standjofski are writing with a sense of watching from the future the mistakes we made in the past. They are writing about the people they know and the world that they live in with a combination of candour and love.

Eda Holmes

Director, *Sakura - After Chekov*

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HARRY STANDJOFSKI

PLAYWRIGHT

Harry the playwright has primarily created contemporary adaptations of the early moderns since 1982. He was Centaur's playwright-in-residence in 1985-86. His play *Anton* was another adaptation of one of Chekhov's plays. Other plays include *Here & There* (2005), adapted from Odon von Horvath; *Gull* (yet another Chekhov adaptation); and *2 Stories for Joel Miller*, in honour of his late friend and mentor. He has written four plays for young audiences for Geordie Theatre and for twelve seasons he curated, directed, created, performed music, translated over 20 pieces from the French, wrote a dozen stories and performed a few for

Urban Tales with Yvan Bienvenue's *Urbi et Orbi*, presented at Centaur. He is currently completing more modernist adaptations of Kafka, Strindberg, and Ibsen, as well as two pieces from the Greeks. Harry the actor has appeared in over 150 plays, innumerable films and television episodes, as well as voice work in both English and French. Recently, he performed the solo show *Bloodshot* at the Hudson Village Theatre, *Vous êtes animal* at Quat'sous, and *Docteur* at Duceppe. His upcoming performances will be in *Pendant que les champs brûlent* with PàP and *Une fin* at le Théâtre d'Aujourd'hui.



EDA HOLMES

DIRECTOR

Eda has been the Artistic and Executive Director of Centaur Theatre in Montréal since 2017. Her productions of *The 39 Steps*, *The Last Wife*, and *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* are among the many successful offerings of her tenure. She has also crossed the traditional language barrier in Montréal to direct the world premiere of Michel Marc Bouchard's *Embrasse* in French at le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. She was the Associate Artistic Director at the Shaw Festival from 2010-2017, where she directed *The Apple Cart*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *Grand Hotel*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and *Arcadia*, among others, all of which garnered

critical acclaim in both Canada and the United States. She works regularly with the Orchestre Classique de Montréal and directed chamber versions of *Carmen* and *As One*. She is currently working as a dance dramaturge with American choreographer Val Caniparoli on a new production of *Coppelia* for the National Ballet of Canada. She is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada and teaches there regularly as well as at Toronto Metropolitan University and George Brown Theatre School. Prior to becoming a director, Holmes was a soloist with San Francisco Ballet, the Dutch National Ballet and William Forsythe's Frankfurt Ballet.

DEENA AZIZ FREYA

Based in Montreal, Deena has worked across Canada, in the US, and internationally for 30+ years. Stage credits include projects with Vancouver's Arts Club Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects, Pittsburgh Public Theatre, the Stratford Festival, Canadian Stage, GCTC, Geordie Productions, Imago, Repercussion, and Tableau d'Hôte Theatre. Screen credits feature a smattering of episodic sci-fi and a chorus of variously ethnic docs and shrinks. Away from stage and camera, Deena works as a dramaturge, coordinator, and producer and is an advocate for equity and reform in the performing arts.



RAVYN R. BEKH ANNIE

Dawson Dome-raised, Ravyn R. Bekh is a multi-disciplinary creator based in Tiohtià:ke (mtl). Inspired by the likes of Hansberry and Parks, Ravyn aims to bring to life those homegrown stories of grime and grit — with a dash of soul and poetry. She hopes to do so with the optimism and natural beauty she has found life to be full of.

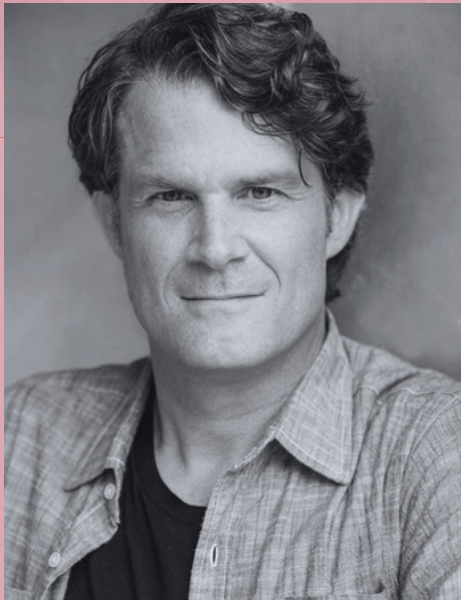


STEFANIE BUXTON

VANIA



Stefanie is an actor, theatre creator, and faculty member of the Professional Theatre department at Dawson College. Some of her previous theatre credits include Harry Standjofski's *ElliValliOttia* (La Porte Rouge/Théâtre Urbi et Orbi), *Marion Bridge* and *Private Lives* (Hudson Village Theatre), and on the Centaur stage, *On This Day* and *The Madonna Painter* (Centaur), *If We Were Birds* (Imago), *Province* (Talisman/The Other Theatre), *Rock, Paper, Jackknife...* (Talisman), *Medea* (Scapegoat Carnivale). Stefanie has also performed at the Montreal Fringe Festival in AlexisDiamond's *Angel's Share* (Composite Theatre) and Greg MacArthur's *girls!girls!girls!* (Teatro Comaneci), which was invited the following year to the Festival TransAmériques (FTA). Love and thanks to Harry, Eda, everyone at Centaur, this wonderful company, and our beloved community.



MARCEL JEANNIN

MARC LOWE

Marcel has performed in theatres across Canada, the U.S., and France, and is a former member of both the Stratford Festival and National Arts Centre acting companies. Past Centaur credits include Jon in *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, God in *Paradise Lost*, and Alan in *God of Carnage*. Elsewhere in Montreal, he has appeared as Trigorin in *The Seagull* (Segal Centre) and Marc in *Art* (HVT). Film projects include *300* and *Taking Lives* (Warner Bros.), Paul Schrader's *Affliction* and Richard Attenborough's *Grey Owl*. Television credits include *Tokyo Vice* (Max), *Three Pines* (Amazon) and *Barkskins* (Nat Geo). A prominent voice actor, he has worked on hundreds of video games, documentaries, and animated series, notably as Lucky Luke in *The New Adventures of Lucky Luke* and the audiobook narrator of *Shake Hands with the Devil*.

MARC-ANTOINE KELERTAS

PETER TEE



Marc-Antoine Kelertas is happy to be back in Montreal for his Centaur debut. He is a graduate of Concordia University and the prestigious Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in England, where he played the role of Townley in Edward Ravenscroft's restoration comedy, *The London Cuckolds* (The Tobacco Factory, Bristol). He spent 8 years in both Toronto and Western Canada where he worked as an actor, editor and director for the stage and screen, notably appearing in the CBS series *Ghosts* and *Indéfendable*. While in Northern BC, he split his time between farming, teaching, acting, and directing plays at the Kiwanis Performing Arts Centre. Harry was his first acting teacher, and Marc-Antoine is thrilled to be appearing in one of Harry's plays alongside a fabulous cast directed by the incredible Eda Holmes.



HOWARD ROSENSTEIN

GUY

Born and based in Montreal, Howard has appeared in over a hundred professional film, television, web, animation, and theatre productions across Canada, the United States, Germany, Scotland, China, and Japan; most notably as Redpeter in Infinithéâtre's production of *Kafka's Ape. Tribes! (No Matter What)*, produced by Theatre Esperance, marked his professional debut as a director in June 2023. In *Sakura - After Chekhov*, Howard feels privileged to work with most of these exciting local artists, including Eda Holmes, for the very

first time. Please visit howardrosenstein.com for demos and more detailed credits, or to make contact.

PAUL VAN DYCK

FIRS

Paul is a Montreal based actor, writer, director, and producer who holds a Masters in Creative Writing from UBC. Over the past twenty years, he's had the pleasure of performing on the Centaur stage many times, as well as directing a main stage production and several Wildside shows. Paul has received numerous awards, including The Playwrights Guild of Canada Comedy Award, The Montreal English Critics Circle Revelation Award, and a META for Outstanding Direction. His work has been presented across Canada and around the world, including New York, Edinburgh, Beirut, and Singapore. Paul is a past participant of the Neil Munro Intern Directors Project at the Shaw Festival, a past National Forum Representative of Quebec for the Playwrights Guild of Canada, and the founding Artistic Director of Rabbit in a Hat Productions.



JAMES LAVOIE

SET & COSTUME DESIGNER

James is a Montréal-based set and costume designer who has designed over 100 productions of theatre and circus. He has collaborated with theatre companies such as Centaur Theatre, The Shaw Festival, the National Arts Centre, Canadian Stage Company, Productions Juste Pour Rire and Buddies in Bad Times, among many others. He is also a regular collaborator of the Cirque du Soleil, designing costumes for several productions including *Joyain Riviera Maya*, *Mexico* and *Twas the Night Before* at Madison Square

Gardens. Through his work with the Cirque and other international companies, such as Les 7 Doigts de la Main, his work has been experienced by live audiences in over 20 countries across 5 continents.



TIM RODRIGUES

LIGHTING DESIGNER

A former dancer/choreographer-turned-lighting designer, Tim Rodrigues has worked with an array of companies on creation-based projects and international tours. Notable lighting designs include *Serving Elizabeth* (Theatre Aquarius), *English* (Soulpepper / Segal Centre), *Paint Me This House Of Love* (Tarragon Theatre), *The River* (Magnus Theatre), *Marjorie Prime* (Segal Centre), *How Black Mothers Say I Love You* (Black Theatre Workshop), *From the Stars in the Sky, To the Fish in the Sea* (Geordie Theatre). Tim is a four-time Montreal English Theatre Awards nominee for Outstanding Lighting Design, winning in 2023. In addition to his designs, he proudly serves on the Board of Directors for Mainline Theatre and Parts+Labour_Danse.



TORQUIL CAMPBELL

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Torq is a musician. He plays in bands like Stars and TFD, he writes music for plays and films, and he also writes personal songs on commission for individuals. Some of his sound design work for theatre includes *Angels in America: Parts One and Two* for the Arts Club in Vancouver, and *Hamlet* for Bard on the Beach. He also has performed his one-man play *True Crime* at Centaur. If you're interested in a commissioned song by Torq or any of his other music, please contact him at bardhamletmusic@gmail.com. This machine kills fascists.



CHARLOTTE BAKER

VIDEO DESIGNER

Charlotte is a passionate theatre creator specializing in video and projection design, whose heart beats for people and art. With a keen eye for aesthetics and a love for storytelling, she weaves digital imagery into the fabric of live performances. In addition to projection design, she is also a lighting designer and technical director. Her projection design works include *Lux Naturae* (Sonia St-Michel Productions), *Extra/Beautiful/U* (Infinithéâtre), *Metamorphoses* (NTS), Assistant Projection Designer for *Hamlet 911* (Stratford Festival).



TREVOR BARRETTE

STAGE MANAGER



Trevor Barrette (he/him) is a queer theatre maker, director, writer/composer, performer and stage manager. For the Centaur Theatre: *alterNatives* (stage manager), *Mob* (assistant stage manager), *Captain Aurora* (Wildside Festival, creator and director) and *Innocence Lost* (performer). He has stage managed for the Segal Centre, Scapegoat Carnivale, Infinithéâtre, among others. He has performed with the National Arts Centre, Repercussion Theatre, Geordie Productions, among others. Most recently he's directed the

Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre productions of *The Sages of Chelm* and *The Great Divide* and assistant directed the Stratford Festival production of *Les Belles Soeurs* directed by Esther Jun. This Pride Month he will be directing the world premiere of his latest piece *Max and Aaron Write a Musical*, presented by the Segal Centre. www.trevorbarrette.com

CARA REBECCA

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & INTIMACY COORDINATOR



Cara is a queer artist, administrator and teacher whose creative practice spans acting, fight and intimacy coordinating, and direction. Her expansion into direction has been supported by her recent participation in the Canadian Guild of Stage Directors and Choreographers Mentorship program, the QDF Directors' Intensive. She is an Apprentice Instructor in Movement for Actors at the National Theatre School, and a co-founder of the Ragtag Collective. Select fight and intimacy credits include: *POTUS* (Segal), *The Flood* (Imago), *Bone Cage* (Assembly), *Ladies Day* (New Stuff), *Sugar Baby* (TMU), *When We Meet Again* (Timescape).

An award-winning and META nominated actor, Cara has performed for theatres across the country. You can see her in Talisman's upcoming production of *Still Life*, running this Fall at La Chapelle. Cara is a graduate of the NTS Acting program, McGill, and is accredited with the Academy of Dramatic Combat. A big thank you to Eda Holmes for the opportunity to work with this fantastic team. Merde to all!



AURORA TOROK

ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Aurora Torok (she/her/by name) is a queer and hard-of-hearing (using hearing aids) artist currently living on Tio'tia:ke (Montreal). Her experience in the live arts is primarily in theatre after graduating from the National Theatre School of Canada in Production Design and Technical Arts, as well as from Concordia University with a BFA - Specialization in Design for the Theatre. Other disciplines include contemporary dance, outdoor art installations, comedy and visual arts. Aurora was nominated for Outstanding Contribution to Theatre by the METAs in 2022.

KATE HAGEMEYER

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

For the past decade, Kate has largely focused on stage managing new theatre works while occasionally lending her expertise to dance, opera, film, and web broadcasting. Her work has taken her around the globe, but she is happily based here in Tio'tià:ke/Montreal. Recent shows include *Battements de rêves* (Youtheatre), *Every Day She Rose* (Black Theatre Workshop), *The Flood* (Imago), *Other Worlds* (Geordie), and *Tribes!* (Theatre Esperance/Teesri Duniya). Up next: *The Wolves* (Geordie/Imago).



ABI SANIE

APPRENTICE STAGE MANAGER

Abi Sanie (she/they) is a stage manager, director, educator, and theatre maker currently based in Tio'tià:ke/Montréal. A graduate of Concordia University's Theatre program with a specialization in Performance Creation, Abi's work focuses on queerness, protest, love, and liberation. Stage Management credits include *Caravan* (Tableau D'Hôte), *The Flood* (Imago), *Cymbeline* (Repercussion), *Many Colors Make the Thunder King* (Black Theatre Workshop), *Taking Care of Maman* (Black Theatre Workshop), *Therapy Was a Mistake: A One*

Woman Cabaret (Penina Productions), and *AfterGrim* (PlaceHolder Productions). Abi is also a proud Puppeteer at the Bread and Puppet Theater in Vermont. She is grateful to be surrounded by beautiful collaborators and hopes to be a continued facilitator for artistic expression and joy in her community. Love especially to Jack and Sean for being the perfect people to move through this life alongside. More info at abisanie.com .

CENTAUR STAGE

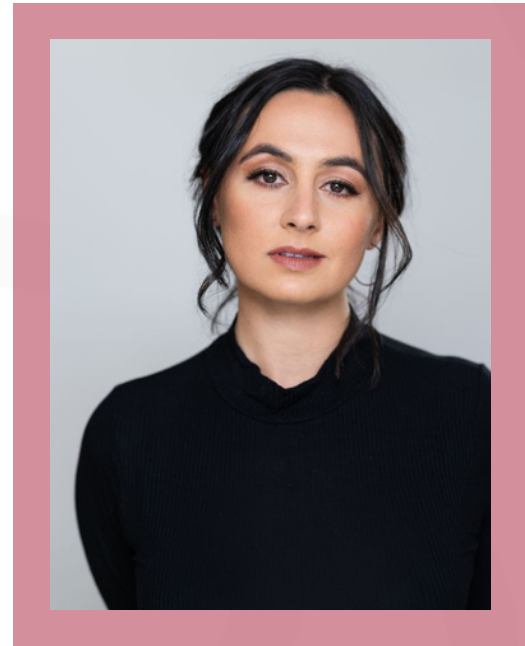
AN INTERVIEW WITH CARA REBECCA ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & INTIMACY COORDINATOR

Are you excited to be back at Centaur after performing on-stage here last year in *Infinithéâtre's Extra/Beautiful/U?*

Yes, yes, short answer: yes. I am definitely excited to be back at Centaur. I love performing in this space, and I'm super happy to be here in another capacity as assistant director and intimacy coach on this. I love the Centaur and the people in it. A decade ago, I was an usher and a bartender here. It's just a really amazing opportunity to be back in the same space.

How was the transition between studying at NTS and working in the industry?

When I graduated from NTS, I had only ever lived my life as a student. I had never been out of school before – I was in high school in Toronto and then I went to McGill and did my undergrad. Then I went to NTS right afterwards, so it was a shock to the system. NTS prepared me really well for working in the industry and I met Eda there. It introduced me to many beautiful artists and people that I've gotten to work with since. Being prepared to not always find work or figure out life in another way... that was something that was a bit of a challenge. Really, I just discovered that I love learning and once I figured out how I could perpetuate my own learning and growth, then that's really when I began to enjoy myself and find my stride.



Why did you choose to stay and work in Montreal?

I was born in Toronto, but I've always had family in Montreal, so I've lived my life going back and forth. I spent all my coming-into-adulthood years here in Montreal. I did try going back to Toronto for a little, but my heart's home is in Montreal, and I learned that really quickly. I really love the sense of freedom, collaboration and exploration within creativity that Montreal has to offer – the culture in the streets, the expansiveness, the life in the parks. There's an essence of Montreal that is inherently creative.

CENTAUR STAGE

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARA REBECCA ASSISTANT DIRECTOR & INTIMACY COORDINATOR

What drew you to directing?

As an actor, when I'm in a room, I notice that I typically am thinking outside the scope of what my actor's job is. I'm often like, "Oh wait, why is the set like that? Maybe if we have a light shining over here, then that could really facilitate this transition, and the point of focus will be over there." Doing enough productions as an actor where I was thinking about stuff that's well beyond my purview made me realize that maybe I have an interest in being outside of this picture and helping to craft it. Another reason that I want to direct is to tell stories that give witness to people and parts of life that we often shy away from or don't want to believe can happen. That's a huge driving force for me – to really allow ourselves to acknowledge the totality of human experience.

You are also Intimacy Coordinator for *Sakura*. What drew you to intimacy coordination and what has that process been like?

Well, I came to it from a fight director's and stage combat standpoint. For me, all that interest is really driven by a desire to give agency to actors, to empower actors and ensure that they have their physical, mental, and emotional safety considered.

What else are you working on lately? Do you have any other projects lined up for this season?

Yes! So, the next thing I'll be working on after *Sakura* is called *Still Life* with Talisman Theatre. It's a play about a woman in her 30's who is experiencing the world and exploring the effects of anxiety, which I feel a lot of people can relate to. Later this season, in 2025, I'll be working with Trevor Barrette again, on his musical *Max and Aaron Write a Musical*. It'll be really fun doing intimacy coordination for that.



Cara Rebecca & Eda Holmes at the first rehearsal of *Sakura*

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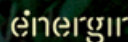


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JACYNTHÉ CARRIER



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Judith Mendelsohn, In Honour

of Eda Holmes and Howard Mendelsohn*

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Art in the Centaur Gallery

Cowley Abbott is thrilled to be collaborating with Centaur Theatre this fall alongside the run of *Sakura - After Chekhov*.

To complement the play's local setting and story surrounding an estate headed for auction, we are presenting a special preview of artwork from our October online auction entitled "The Art of Quebec".



The paintings depict the diverse scenery of the province by historical and contemporary artists, and will be open for bidding from **October 8th to 22nd.**



COWLEY ABBOTT
CANADA'S ART AUCTIONEERS

Music Series: Left and Leaving

feat. Sam Krüger

Curated by Sarah Segal-Lazar

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Friday Sept 27 & Saturday
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453 St-François-Xavier St

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By Jovanni Sy

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