

***Shaking Up Shakespeare* Episode 6: Adaptation and the Politics of Language**

PJ Prudat: There's this, you know, this 400 year history of adaptations that Shakespeare did himself. So I think the understanding of what's possible and the heart of something and being able to tell these stories in different ways over many different aspects of time is really fascinating and thrilling.

And I also love the idea of taking a nugget of one of these stories and then really morphing it into something else. There's something really powerful in the heart of these stories, but also the characters and the many layers of what people do to each other that's really at the heart of what these stories are.

And I think why they keep being performed and being, you know, seen as, classics or, you know, stories that live on.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Hello everyone, and welcome back to *Shaking Up Shakespeare*, the podcast where we acknowledge, investigate, and query Shakespeare's enduring presence on 21st century Canadian stages, taking a critical perspective on Shakespeare's work and influence. I'm Liam Lockhart-Rush, and I host this podcast alongside Dr. Marlis Schweitzer, and Hope Van Der Merwe.

This podcast was written and recorded in Tkaronto, the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit. We would like to acknowledge the ways in which Shakespeare was used as a tool for colonialism and genocide, and encourage all listeners to continue to be critical of this enduring presence in so-called "Canada." This episode will contain discussion and mentions of residential schools, colonialism, racism, and white supremacy. Listener discretion is advised.

This is the second of two episodes dedicated to unpacking the relationship between Shakespeare and colonialism. This episode will spotlight a few specific artists that have written and produced Shakespeare adaptations that complicate his colonial legacy and challenge his power, grappling with the usage of his plays and the man himself. This episode will contain excerpts from interviews we have conducted, as well as excerpts from the *(Re)casting Shakespeare in Canada Symposium*, which took place on April 30th and May 1st, 2023. This symposium was held at York University, and was co curated by Keira Loughran, Jamie Robinson, Marlis Schweitzer, Jeff Ho, Hope Van Der Merwe, and myself.

The excerpts are from two roundtables, the first one being "Recasting Shakespeare Through Adaptation," where moderator Jeff Ho spoke with playwright and director of Inuvialuit, Cree, and Dene descent, Renelita Arluk, about her play *Pawâkan Macbeth*, alongside Erin Shields with her play *Queen Goneril*, and Kaitlyn Riordan with her play *Portia's Julius Caesar*. In this episode, Kaitlyn will be speaking about her play *1939*, which she co-wrote with Jani Lauzon. The second roundtable, "Grappling with Shakespeare's Colonial Legacy," saw moderator Keira Loughran in conversation with three playwrights about their respective adaptations, including with Trinidadian-Canadian actor and playwright Joseph Jomo Pierre about *Shakespeare's N-Word*, a play that you might know by a different name.

This is a point of conversation later in the episode where the playwright speaks to the importance of that title. This panel also included Chinese-Canadian playwright and actor Jeff Ho's *Cockroach*, and playwright and actor of Irish and French descent, Kaitlyn Riordan, who co-wrote *1939* with Métis multidisciplinary artist Jani Lauzon. These plays were discussed briefly in the previous episode, though we will take a deeper dive and their interaction with Shakespeare and language in this episode.

The clip you heard at the beginning of the episode was by Métis/Cree actor, playwright, and member of the creative leadership at Shakespeare in the Ruff, PJ Prudat. PJ's play, *Otihêw*, her Indigenous reimaging of Shakespeare's *Othello*, was recently produced this past August by Shakespeare in Action in Toronto. Yvette Nolan and Cathy Kennedy McKinnon's *Death of A Chief* began development in 2005 under Native Earth Performing Arts in Toronto. It officially premiered in 2008, produced by Native Earth and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Here are Yvette Nolan and Jani Lauzon to speak briefly about the history and experience of producing this play.

Yvette Nolan: You know, the big one for me was *Death of A Chief*, which was Native Earth's all-Indigenous adaptation of *Julius Caesar*, which of course was my first Shakespeare. So there you go. We keep coming around again to it. But when we were looking for something to do, a Shakespeare, in an Indigenous theatre company, *Julius Caesar* made sense to us as a play, as a story 'cause it's about power, it's about community. It's about how we choose our leaders and how our leaders fail us and how cyclical that is. And the power of, you know, populist power. So it spoke to us as Indigenous theatre makers.

So it was an easy adaptation, in a bunch of ways. The things we did to it, like it's all - it's mostly Shakespeare. It's like 99% Shakespeare text. There's some language in it, there's some English in it. What we did, the adaptation part was move the scenes around and make scenes happening simultaneously. We changed the gender so Caesar is a woman, Mark Antony's a woman, Cassius is a woman. 'Cause we were also talking about what we've lost in our communities in terms of matrilineal power. We were talking about land because so much of Shakespeare is about land, right? They're always fighting over land. So that speaks to, you know, the Indigenous experience of course is like power and land.

Jani Lauzon: Yeah. You know, I've had a chance to do Mark Antony with Yvette Nolan and Cathy Kennedy McKinnon. Cathy's been such a big champion of inclusion in Shakespeare on so many levels that, you know, *Death of A Chief* was such an incredible experience because we were, we were solely looking at the experience through an Indigenous lens, and it was just, you know, it was hard. It wasn't easy, it was very challenging, for me anyway, playing Mark Antony and being able to really dive deeper into exploring what that meant for me was a really fantastic experience.

Yvette Nolan: And we, you know, when we were adapting it, I wanted to stop after "Cry havoc," after that speech. And Cathy, my co-adaptor and co-director Cathy McKinnon was like, "No, no, no, no, we can't, we, that's not the whole story. We have to, you know, come around again." And she convinced me that we did. But I was like, but it's the same story now, we just elevate a different leader. And she's like, "Yeah, kind of the point."

So we did do it, but it was great. And it was something we made together. We had workshops over three years with different groups of actors coming in and playing with the text and talking about what we wanted. And then even in the process of rehearsing it, we had to stop the rehearsal process to talk about the values of this place that we had made, this Rome, Ontario, cause we had placed it kind of in, you know, Six Territory. And we stopped and talked about, if we could be healed, what would the values of this community be? And that was really fruitful and really useful and informed the thing that we were aiming at in *Death of A Chief* and the thing that we had felt we lost.

I mean it was interesting because during the development process, we all played the roles like women played, you know, Caesar and et cetera, and guys played everything, but we hadn't made a choice about whether they were women playing men or whether they were women playing women in those roles until very late in the process. And then when we decided it was like, no, they're women. So we're talking about the matriarchy, we're talking about rematriation in a bunch of ways. And that changes everything because women's experience in the world is different from men's experience in the world, and especially, you know, we started making this... well we premiered in 2008, so we started making it like 2005, so it's almost 20 years ago. And, you know, this is all pre-Me Too movement, but not Me Too, not the reason for Me Too.

We had all grown up in this world with the power structure as it is, and putting women in charge was a kind of power, but then it's also like what have we learned? Would we be better leaders than the men or would we fall into the same traps because power corrupts?

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Here is Yvette's response to a question around radical directing in Shakespeare.

Yvette Nolan: I think radical is the key word, and I don't mean - I mean radical at the root. So I think the best productions are the ones, this seems so self-evident, but I'll say it anyway, where people know what they're saying. So the trick is, and the reason we ever did *Death of A Chief*, the reason we did the adaptation of *Julius Caesar* was because the actors wanted the tools, they wanted the text tools. They wanted to know how to use the language the way it was laying on the page. And so we did an intensive with Cathy McKinnon where they learned, where they, you know, they sharpened their Shakespeare tools so that A, they could get auditions for Shakespeare. B, they could, you know, book the parts and then C, they could be on the deck knowing what they were saying and having everybody know that they know what they're saying.

So for me, that is the most important thing, is understanding what it is you're saying. Because once that is clear, then however you position it, then you can actually be in conversation with your audience as opposed to just being like a cute production that, you know, where the Indians are fairies or whatever the, you know, whatever the cute thing is. Like it is so much, it is the words, right? It's like the words are the way, and so you have to know what you're saying and I think we do ourselves a disservice if we put people into Shakespeares for stunt purposes or for diversity purposes, for affirmative action purposes, you know, without actually supporting them with the tools that they need, which is to understand what they're doing in the - to understand what they're saying, to be communicating with everybody in their moments on the stage. That's radical. But radical at the root, right?

Liam Lockhart-Rush: For more information on *Death of A Chief* or any of the shows mentioned later in the episode, please see our show notes for a collection of articles and reviews. This next section is a recording from the “Recasting Shakespeare through Adaptation Roundtable” from the (Re)casting Shakespeare in Canada Symposium, featuring Erin Shields speaking about her play *Queen Goneril*, and Reneltta speaking about her play *Pawâkan Macbeth*.

Erin Shields: I guess maybe in the past five or six years I maybe entered my Shakespeare phase where for some reason I have been in the process of working on three different pieces that have to do with Shakespeare in some way. And that is part of my ongoing project as a playwright, has been to examine our foundational texts in our modern Western civilization and really examine them and think about how they are part of the building blocks of the systems in which we operate and thinking about what it means that so many people aren't present in those texts because they were written by mostly dudes from European countries a long, long time ago.

So, for me, the draw to work on the project of what is Shakespeare to us now, comes from a frustration and a desire. A desire because I do love the world he creates, and the language and the characters, but I'm profoundly frustrated that, particularly in terms of the female characters, that it wasn't even written with women in mind to perform. You know, we know it was performed by men and written for that. And so there are three female characters to every nineteen male characters in every Shakespeare play. So if it is cast, if these plays are cast with that intentionality, then you always have this weird imbalance on our stages.

And because these are the plays that are most performed in the English-speaking world, you have this very bizarre sort of thing where the world on the stage that we're introducing high school students to, as their first point of entry, does not reflect the world in which we live at all.

And I start from the point of it as looking for female characters because that is, I bring my lived experience and my own personal rage to that. But then also in my work, try to look for all the many other people that were/are in our world and invite those characters into my plays. So that we can populate our stages and invite other people to encounter this language and these worlds.

Reneltta Arluk: Reneltta speaking. So *Pawâkan* is my first foray into Shakespeare. Um, *pawâkan* means “dream spirit” in Plains Cree language. And, the big question - it was inspired by - I was invited to go into a small Indigenous community called Frog Lake First Nation in Treaty Six territory, and to work with the students there, grade 6 to grade 12 in their English drama class to adapt, uh, in three weeks, *The Tempest*. And I was like, sure, I'll do that. And these are just to bring students into the world of Shakespeare other than just reading it, right, like inserting themselves into the story and what does that look like?

And so I was like, sure we could do *The Tempest*, not something that I'm really interested in. I haven't done so much of a deep dive into it, but I just felt like the character of Caliban is a bit complex and probably problematic from an Indigenous perspective. And I just was like, okay, how do I talk to a bunch of Rez kids about the problem of Caliban? Maybe that's not the right process.

Thankfully they came back to me and said, we don't wanna do *The Tempest*. We don't relate to it. Which I was like, thank you. But we do wanna do *Macbeth* and we wanna use the cannibal spirit as *Macbeth*, because of the greed aspect. And I went, okay, we've just presented two problems for ourselves - not problems, potentials - is that the power of the word, you know, "M" and then the power of the cannibal spirit, "W." And I can't say it because there's no snow on the ground and I'm just recognizing, honoring Elder teachings that I got with this work. And so it's the cannibal spirit that you see in *Game of Thrones*. It's the cannibal spirit you see in *Antlers*. You know, it's the cannibal spirit that you see that's highly appropriated in non-Indigenous culture. So when we went there, I reached out to the Elders and the community and I asked, I offered tobacco, and I said, could you come into the school and talk to the students about this creature? Because we're going to explore it for three weeks. And I just want you to know what we're doing, and if you have any thoughts about it, you can share it with us.

But it ended up being a highly positive experience. The Elders shared lots of stories about it, and in turn, the youth shared lots of stories with the Elders, and it became this beautiful cultural exchange of stories within that area. And then I went, oh, okay. And so we dove in. And of course it never really actualized itself because you only have three weeks and you're dissecting Shakespeare with students that, you know, haven't been exposed to it as in depth. Usually that's their only engagement with Shakespeare. But what it was was 75 members of the community came out.

The young women wore ribbon skirts and the Elders came in and brought ribbon shirts for the young men to wear. And I always say this, you'll never see a better costume than a full length eagle headdress being worn by *Macbeth*. It's not *Macbeth*, it's Mahcikosisan. But I said, I'll never see that anywhere on any stage as amazing as that was.

And it was so positive. So then I thought, well, I'm gonna see if this can translate into a professional perspective. What if I do this with actors in a space? And we bring in, you know, we bring in knowledge keepers. Actually we didn't bring them on purpose - as I started talking to Elders about it.

Cause I was like, well, I should probably talk to them if I made these young people talk to them. So I talked to Jerry and Jo-Ann Saddleback, who are wonderful Cree Elders. And they said, oh, right, we're not gonna gatekeep you, but you have to smudge before every gather, and at the end of every gather.

Just because if you want to honor and recognize that spirit, you have to honor and recognize that spirit well, and you have to keep your people safe. And I was like, okay, we'll do it. So we do that now it's just in the show. And so as I started working on it, I looked at it and I - now this is like a helpful visual from Dr. Lindsay Lachance, an Indigenous dramaturgy perspective: Say I had a trap line in the north, it was winter. And I went and I went with my shoes and I went to check my traps, and in it I found a frozen coyote. Then I take the frozen coyote home and I let it thaw. And then I take my knife and I skin it open and I pour out the guts, and then I slowly take off the entire fur.

And then I'm just looking at skin bones and muscle and tissue. And then I let it dry out and allow it to be malleable. And then I break every single bone of that creature and I lay it on in

front of me and then I go, okay, let's do Shakespeare. And then I start grabbing little pieces of bone. And when I put it together, I got a mangled - I call it a Wiyoyowak, which is Cree for "the Howler." And the Howlers are the witches, but they're more than that. They're called "the Howlers."

So in this process, some of the questions that came towards me were, why this creature, why this negative energy? Why not do a Cree story? We can give you so many Cree stories to do. And I said, because I'm not compelled or guided to do this. I'm guided to tell this story and I'm not sure why, but I have to explore it. And so I started putting it together. And then it came to me that there's this book called *The Wihtiko Complex* or *The Wihtiko Psychosis*.

And that's the "W" word, but it's the title of a book. And, and in there it basically whittled down Indigenous fears and understandings and imbalances and balances of our culture through a mental illness. And it minimized this incredibly powerful appropriated creature to a mental illness in our community. And I thought that that was so deceitful and hurtful. And then I went, Eff you, colonialism. I'm going to write this play. And so the Wiyoyowak exist because if we're looking at a sort of hierarchy of power, the "W" is a big power and Coyote is like a different power. But the Howlers are in between the real world and the spirit world.

And actually Darlene Auger, who's our knowledge keep- one of our knowledge keepers and language translator or language adapter said: Renelitta, the Wiyoyowak don't exist in our Cree cosmology. And I was like, yes. She's like, so I'm gonna just interpret them as half spirit, half earth. I was like, they're mangey. And, and so they come out as scavengers and pitiful and really poor looking, but they're doing that to create this space for the "W" to come. And as the "W" gets more and more powerful within the play through these two main characters they get richer and shinier. Like they're wearing shinier things. And to me it was like if we look at a Cree culture, you know we're always - or Indigenous perspective, we're always celebrating the great and the good and the positive.

But we never lived in that world. We lived in a very balanced world where one had to work with and engage with the other. And I went, well, that's why it works. Because it doesn't, it doesn't glorify anything. It's really deep. And if we're looking at our own history, *Pawâkan* is set in the late 1800s in Treaty Six territory.

When Cree were agents of their own selves, they were sovereign. They were allied with the Stoney Nakoda, they were battling with the Blackfoot. And Métis were just forming a form of rebellion. Sir John Franklin existed, Ontario had already Indian agents, but they were coming, they were coming for us. And this was their, like the HB existed, of course, the church existed, but this is where people got to live in their full selves. And I just wanted to create that conflict within our own cosmology without putting a hyper lens of colonialism on it. And the other big purpose of it was that I think we have to create space for Indigenous youth and school systems to see themselves in these stories because these stories aren't going anywhere. Right? Shakespeare is not gonna leave the education system, and that's okay. I have a - I think Shakespeare is prolific.

But we have to create other avenues of access. And on Rezes, you know, you see such poverty in the education support because they don't get as much money as urban centers do.

So you're asking, but they don't get a lesser, they don't get more support to help them be successful.

So they're expected to rise to the same level as an urban center when they don't have paper towel in their bathroom, when they don't have doors in the bathroom 'cause of violence or whatever. They're giving food to help because they're, you know, they're not, they're not wealthy nations, right? And so how are we helping elevate these, these stories to become accessible? And so that was just another, that's another driving force. You know, I get bombarded with all the reasons why, but in truth it, it's a need.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Responding to moderator Jeff Ho's question about the different labels that adaptations can take on, like “reimagining” or “takeover,” Reneltta responds with her perspective.

Reneltta Arluk: “Takeover” just made a lot of sense. I know it's bold and, you know, sometimes you're supposed to be real humble, but I think it is a takeover because it's de-centering the narrative through an Indigenous, specifically Plains Cree perspective. And I went, that can't be an adaptation. It shouldn't be an adaptation, it's a takeover. It's a total like, give this, it's mine and now - not mine, but like, it's not ownership - but it's something that we're gonna explore as a community, you know, and, and dissect and put together as a community. And that to me, can't be an adaptation.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: This next section is a recording of the “Grappling with Shakespeare's Colonial Legacy” roundtable from the (Re)casting Shakespeare in Canada symposium, featuring moderator Keria Loughran, Joseph Jomo Pierre, Jeff Ho, And Kaitlyn Riordan.

Keira Loughran: I was interested in finding out more about your personal relationship to the canon and this idea of colonialism that is inherently for many in the canon. What did Shakespeare and his work mean to you when you first conceived of these specific plays? So where were you at with, where were you at with Shakespeare?

Joseph Jomo Pierre: Yeah. Well, It's very interesting that this studio space in the rehearsal hall right beside it is really where the genesis for the play took place.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: The symposium took place in the Joseph G. Green Studio Theatre at York, with the acting studios Joseph is referring to right across the hall.

Joseph Jomo Pierre: We were doing our Shakespeare studies. I had an opportunity to play Aaron, who I had never heard of before as a young Black man coming up in theatre, in the fine arts, Othello is the Black man that you hear of, right? It's, you want to be Othello, you want to perform *Othello*. So I was kind of hoping that I would get to be Othello. And then I got this character named Aaron and I had no idea what he was about, what his story was. So I approached a teacher and I asked him like, what would be a nice take? Like what take should I take on this character? And he said, “Well, he's pure evil.”

And right there I understood that there was a disconnect between us as much based on his experience as my experience, that the things that I saw in this character was not as much, the

connection wasn't as strong. I envisioned the character that said in a white world "is black so base a hue?" And for me that was such a political statement. It was a statement I could envision James Baldwin having a debate and asking someone directly in front of him "is black so base a hue?" The connection for a Black man to ask that sort of question meant to me. It was someone who was saying, "Do you not see me on a human level as your equal?"

And I said, I don't care what the hell this man does the entire play, he is speaking from the heart and there's people that don't understand how that heart beats. And I said, I'm gonna write that play. I'm gonna write his voice. I'm gonna give him a chance to explain what's happening in that play. And it didn't happen for years and years and years 'cause the form and structure, I didn't get it, but I knew that I had to write that play because there was this separation between experiences.

Keira Loughran: Great.

Kaitlyn Riordan: You know, when you asked me to be on this panel I was a little like, huh. You know, I, as a white settler, is this space I want to take? And that's a question that I asked myself a whole lot when Jani and I were writing *1939* and Jani's not available to be here today, otherwise I know she would be. But I feel honored to speak with her because we spent so much time together mind melding to write a play together and to be on a panel with you two. Both of your plays, I admire so much.

And also just to say that question that I asked myself throughout the process is this a topic that I should be engaging with? Do I have a right to be here? Am I doing harm? What is my responsibility? Ultimately where I landed was that I have to be at the table as well when we talk about reconciliation, when we talk about the impact of colonization, because I am a part of it because I am very much an embodiment of settlers or "newcomers" as Bev Sellers calls us. And so I just wanted to put that out there because there are a lot of people in this room who could be speaking to this topic, and who I would love to hear speak about this topic, but I also accept the offer to be here and speak about it because I believe that we all need to be a part of this conversation. So, yeah. Thank you.

Keira Loughran: Thank you. Jeff?

Jeff Ho: Thanks, Kaitlyn. Thanks Joseph.

So *Cockroach* started as a different play entirely, and it was a complete mistake. It was through this commission, through Repercussion Theatre 2017, I don't remember. Oh, quite a while ago. And for this pitch, for this commission, I had talked about how I would love to approach Shakespeare as music. What would it be like to offer multiple multilingual translations of say, a speech or a sonnet and just have the languages be inter-layered or harmony. It was completely conceptual for me.

I always approached language as a native Cantonese speaker, even with English. So I was like, oh, Cantonese is so staccato, and then something like a French translation can flow. So it was great. We went into workshops with these diverse and bilingual, trilingual artists, and they so gently prodded me towards, before looking at our tongue, look at yours. And so that night I was just like, oh my goodness, that's so true. And I typed up the whole like, third part

of *Cockroach*, which was the boys chapter, and it really became a conversation around language, around Shakespeare's prominence in my education to become an English speaker, but also the way that I wrestle with it and wrestle with English as a whole, as a tool of colonialism. I'm from Hong Kong. We can get into that history at another point, but the conflict between Cantonese and English that exists just by me existing and that's how *Cockroach* came to be.

Keira Loughran: I was tracking a bit my, I was like, when did I first hear the term “decolonizing?” What is decolonizing? And I believe it was my partner who told me about *Decolonizing the Mind*, the book by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a Kenyan writer and theatre maker. And the premise of the book was all about language. And the question there looking at the colonization of Africa by both French and English of, can you engage in decolonization without looking at language, which is a theme that runs through all of your plays.

And maybe before just you could just touch on that in context. Even as we were talking about - I'd asked Joseph before the panel, like, what should I call your play? Because it's not called “*Shakespeare's N-word*,” but that was the language that I was comfortable to start from in 2023 in this room today in conversation with you. And similarly just that the role of language, the fact that you are writing in English. But that you're coming from these diverse relationships through these projects to that.

Joseph Jomo Pierre: So interestingly enough, the idea of saying the name of my play in 2023 as opposed to when I wrote it originally, I would have no idea that this is where we would be, that there would be...

In some ways we haven't moved as much. And the title is a character for me, my titles are the first thing you see before you actually get into the words of the play, it sets the tone. And there, at that time, there was a very heavy movement to stop using that word. But I come from a culture, a hip-hop culture where it's not that clean or clear-cut, how we use that word with each other. And for me, there was something wrong about trying to suppress a word and the power that a word had. And then I was using that with these two male characters who sat on different parts for me. There was Aaron, who I sometimes feel like I am within the theatre community, and then there's Othello where my tongue gravitates to when it comes to art.

Right? So the title spoke on two different levels. It was about the relationship that you're gonna enter within the play, but it was also about the power of a word. I envisioned originally, that as everyone went to the front of house, as you enter the theatre, you'd be watching a screen and watching people have to order their tickets. That was theatre. Their relationship to the language and the word and what they were bringing to the theatre as they sat. Not a lot of people realized, noticed that I was the writer back then. So if I go to the front of house and I hear someone saying the name like 50 times, like, “Can I have tickets to *Shakespeare's Nigga*? That'll be two for *Shakespeare's Nigga*.”

And like *really* saying it, that was interesting to me. For me it was like, as a community, this is something to explore. Someone like yourself being afraid to say it says something about our time. I think as creators, as much as we write plays, we are really speaking about our time and our work doesn't just happen just out there in nowhere land. It's here. And if we are grounded in what we're writing, we're actually saying something deeper than just what's what

in the play as it pertains to the language. If English becomes my mother tongue, that is my mother tongue. But the rhythms of my heart is a completely different thing. So I may use English, but my passion is somewhere else.

I'm a child of hip-hop culture. There's a rhythm to us. I'm West Indian. We speak in a rhythm. So the language is the language, but that does not mean that we can't own the language that's taken over as our main, mother tongue.

Jeff Ho: I agree and have similar experience for me and also in a lived experience kind of way. Language has been power. It's been utterly transactional. I immigrated to Canada in 2001, and the rest of my family still holds an accent. The way we traverse our lives are very different experiences for that reason alone. The sound of language, the sound of your competence with English is transactional and an indicator of status.

And that's something that in Hong Kong being raised to try to outdo the other kids in your class, in English class. It was something that I discovered that I internalized, I internalized my own perception of others based off English. And so with *Cockroach*, it became an attempt to just wrestle with that ugliness within of just saying, what are the things that made me me, the beautiful stuff of the Cantonese and the “Chinglish,” which is amazing, the colloquialisms, but also the ugly parts where I have learned that for the longest time at theatre school, at NTS - National Theatre School, I had such a hard time with Shakespeare and I felt like if I could do this as an actor, then I'm something.

And for a long time I think that something was, I'd be more white or I'd be more palatable. I'd be normal, or whatever it is. I think that was a different time. But now coming into this age and writing *Cockroach*, it really was to wrestle with those internalized perceptions of language, of these things that we all grow up in as in a culture through a very personal lens.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Similar to Joseph and Jeff's reflections on how they grappled with language, Reneltta shares her experience of writing parts of *Pawâkan Macbeth* in Cree, and the effects this had on the team as well as the play. Then, Erin shares how casting and language have played a significant role in projects she has worked on, including *Queen Goneril*.

Reneltta Arluk: When we think about community and, and conversation in every development of the script to *Pawâkan* we've always had Indigenous actors in the room, and they've, you know, I can't even, I've never played Shakespeare on any professional stage, like FYI. I got to play Queen #2 in my second year of theatre school, uh, for *Two Noble Kinsmen*, which actually wasn't even really written by Shakespeare. So, that's a reality. So when you invite a whole bunch of Indigenous professional actors with great careers in the room, they also have had 0% to 1 [to] 2% opportunity of playing Shakespeare on these stages.

So to be able to bring the text together, even, before I even started really delving deep into it, there were tears, there was anger, there were all these feelings, and then it transformed into, but how can we say that in Cree? How can we do that from a Cree perspective? What if we talked about the widowed, the widowed husband who lost his wife as he talks to his son? What if we looked at those perspectives from a Cree perspective and how does that change?

And all of a sudden there's just words being flooded into the script that aren't mine. And the thing is, none of us are fluent Cree speakers, right? We're so effing colonized.

And, and then you bring in Darlene Auger who is a fluent - she's actually Woodlands Cree but she speaks Plains Cree. She has acting experience. And so then you give it to Darlene. And Darlene just - she makes everything Plains Cree. She looks at all the tenses of it, all the timelines of it. And she's been, she's part of *Pawâkan* in the way that - she has the actors - so you do that and you do that again and again and again and again. And everyone is transformed every time 'cause they feel seen for the first time in a language that they've never been invited to. And that's powerful to witness. It's powerful to be a part of.

And then Darlene started getting frustrated because they don't say the words properly, but it was more than that. She was getting frustrated with a script every time we came together. She was like, that's not the right word. That's not the right word. Because Cree is an active base as most Indigenous languages are. 'Cause Cree is an active-based language. Every time an actor changes the context of the word, it doesn't exist anymore in the context that it was written. So then she has to, she changes it. So we call it a living document.

And what also helps with that is like when you talk about how do you build a room for inclusion and accessibility? Darlene gets the actors for three days before I even do anything with that script. She comes in, she talks to all the actors, she gets them to pronounce all the words properly, but then she talks about the 31 Plains Cree value system. She talks about where language originates. She talks about the solar systems. She just really delves them into the world so deeply you know, and she's there with us. It's not that she comes in that she leaves, right? She's with us for as much as all, if not as much of the rehearsal as she can be.

And then they just have that, they have that connection to her. And if you talk to, like I was, we were talking about Sheldon Elter, you know, Sheldon is very accomplished. He has got to do Shakespeare on stage many times in your show. He's very good. And so he's Métis. And so he was part of one of the workshops we did at Stratford a number of years ago. And Sheldon had never spoken an Indigenous language on a black floor stage. And he left out of that. He must have called me three days later or two weeks later, and for like a full hour and a half, just talk to me about how transformed that experience was for him. And I thought Sheldon Elter was transformed by our little workshop that we did out of like the breadth of experience that he's had with this.

And I was very humbled. I was humbled, but also again, just like what? We're in 20-whatever we are now, right? And we need to be doing more of this. And so conversations and rooms.

Erin Shields: Yeah, absolutely. This is Erin speaking. The conversations in the rooms. You know, I said at the beginning, the place where I've sort of started and start a lot of my projects comes from this sort of desire for female representation. But particularly in the past five, six, seven years, I'm like, and what else? So conversations about race, conversations about gender identity, have been so transformative for me as a playwright trying to figure out how to welcome with the text, people to bring their full selves into the room.

So I'll just talk a little bit about casting. That's the name of the name of the whole thing, right? I think we're in a moment now where this sort of, the status quo for casting Shakespeare is sort of "colourblind." Put that in quotation marks.

When I was like 11 going to Stratford, it didn't really clue in for me that everyone on stage was white cause I was white. And as time has gone on at Stratford and other places, it has become sort of the, the practice more and more to sort of, just populate the stage with lots of people who have different backgrounds, which is great, of course. But if you don't - I have watched in the past, with past shows - *Much Ado* I'm working on right now. We started that in 2019 and were about to put it on stage in 2020. And then - and in that play that was the case. There was sort of colourblind casting. And then you get to moments where you're like, because nobody has actually considered what it means to have, Black bodies, white bodies, Asian bodies, different bodies saying these, these words.

You get into moments where you're like, wow, that, that's, that's not working. So for example, there was one scene where, André Sills and Kaleb Alexander who are both Black actors were being yelled at by two older white men and being called "Boy, boy, boy" over and over again. And nobody had read the script beforehand with those actors in mind to go, whoa, all of a sudden there's these whole other connotations that are being brought and put upon this moment in the play.

And of course those actors were the ones that pointed it out. I was like, wow, okay, great. So now three years later, we're revisiting that, play, that scene. And as part of my job, I have sort of gone back through that text and really tried to examine it particularly in terms of racism and sort of changed the word "boy."

But now there's an older Black actor who's speaking that text and he goes, "Why do we change the text?" I'm like, oh, okay. Right. And so, Because the casting had changed, the context had changed. Looking at it again the first time we did it, there was a white actress playing Hero. Now there's a Black actress playing Hero, and I hadn't realized how many references, first of all, Hero is described all the time and almost always described as fair.

Sometimes meaning, you know, sometimes it's very clear that it means beautiful, fair means beautiful. And often it's like, no, fair means white in this circumstance. So that has been really illuminating, for me as somebody who's trying to write for lots of people. So with *Queen Goneril*, I really was thinking about this notion of casting and this notion of creating a script where people can bring their full selves to it.

So, I wrote a trans character into the play, and it was absolutely necessary that there was a trans actor playing that role. And, of course in the room, he gave so much information that affected the text, obviously. With the three daughters, you know, even earlier on in the, the writing process, I was talking with the director, Weyni Mengesha, who's a Black woman, about, you know, there could be the choice that they're all have like different racial backgrounds, the actors, or what if they were all Black?

What does that do? And, and we made that decision and it did a number of really, really amazing things. Number one, it conjured a mother, an absent mother. So, rather than having

sort of this vague notion of who this mother was to these three girls, it was like this mother was welcomed into this space.

And the three sisters really became three sisters. And then there was a point in the play - a point in the process where I remember Virgilia Griffith said, "I want to bring even more of myself to this. How can the text reflect that?" And I was like, oh, wow. It was, it was complicated cause as a white woman trying to write for Black women and wanting to do that well and wanting to do that authentically, and being challenged by the actors and by their director to do that, was, both scary and vulnerable and amazing because what it required was a lot of conversation and time, going through scenes, working together, finding out what language would help these women, these actors bring their full selves to these roles. And then, what it also did to the play was make it something that wasn't just about barriers in terms of gender, but also barriers in terms of race for these characters to get power in their world.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Kaitlyn speaks about how central language is to *1939*, and the significance of adapting Shakespeare into Indigenous languages, and speaking those languages on Stratford Festival stages.

Kaitlyn Riordan: Just to connect it to *1939*, the play that Jani and I wrote is set in a residential school and one of the missions of residential school was to disconnect young people with their language. And it was part of the mission of assimilation, of colonization. And it was unfortunately a very successful act. And it's so complicated to think about in the context of Shakespeare because Shakespeare does represent something very specific language wise. So in our play, one of the things that the students end up doing as they adapt *All's Well That Ends Well* is, the students who do speak their language - because not all of them do - put it into the play and, and end up translating.

One of the characters is Mohawk and they translate their text into Kanyen'kéha. So there's a section of Shakespeare translated into that language. And, I think as Renetta was saying in our last panel, like, we have to hear these languages on, on these stages. And it felt significant that that language was being spoken on the studio theatre stage in Stratford and, as far as we know, maybe the first time that that language is being spoken as an adaptation of Shakespeare.

And there was also Anishinaabemowin that ended up in the play. And that also came from Elder Liz Stevens, who talked about "language is culture." And that was a new one for me. We learned a lot working with elders and doing the research that we did, but that idea, that language is culture, and I guess in some ways I always thought of translation as just, you know, you translate one thing and there's an equivalent in another language, and that all language structurally works the same, which, because I speak English and French and, and there's a lot of that in these romance languages.

But what I began learning about certain Indigenous languages was how differently structured they were, how gender worked in a different way. How, how action-based as Renetta was saying, you know, you change an intention and suddenly the translation doesn't make sense anymore. And it was a fascinating thing to discover because it gives you insight into the way people who speak that language think about the world.

My dad had a Latin teacher growing up, and she always said, “You translate thoughts, not words.” And that's something I've thought a lot about. I think it even goes beyond that, but language is so vital in the reclamation of culture in this country. And, you know, you see, folks really fighting to reclaim that language.

And unfortunately, some of those, many of those languages have been lost. But many of them are coming back with a vengeance too.

Keira Loughran: I was wondering if you knew how you wanted Shakespeare to play a role in each of these plays when you set out to write them. Was he part of your initial conceit for Jeff and Joseph where he's actually a character? How clear were you on the role that Shakespeare or the language of Shakespeare's works of his canon would play in your piece?

Kaitlyn, do you want to start us off?

Kaitlyn Riordan: Sure. Yeah. I'd like to take a slightly deeper dive because, I think what I discovered, or what we discovered in the research around, kind of Shakespeare's role in the mission of colonization in this country, it was a real eye-opener. So as Keira said, the plot of the play is, is this, uh, teacher who wants her students to put on a Shakespeare play for the King and Queen visiting North America for the first time.

And her idea of how to do that is, you know, there's only one way to do Shakespeare. And as Lisa [Karen Cox] said earlier this morning, that way is essentially performing whiteness, right? It is in her mind a very upper crust, British accent. There's a stiffness to it. It is declamatory, it is very posh.

And ironically, Shakespeare probably wouldn't have recognized that as a way of his plays being performed or sounding like the actors of their time, either. It's actually a Victorian version of it. And it was brought over by the touring companies in England who toured North America, and we all got imprinted like, oh, that's how you do Shakespeare, right?

So what ends up happening in the play, the journey of the play, is that the students are being kind of boxed in by this notion and trying to teach them to do it this way. And ultimately what happens is that, they end up embodying their living culture through the adaptation, bringing their worldview, their language, song, and dance and that's done kind of through the magic of theatre. You know, there's a little kind of help in that. But the way that Shakespeare really played out in this time and why Jani and I were so curious about exploring it in this setting was realizing that the question, can Shakespeare be used as a tool of colonization? And at the same time do the things that he did for us, which is we found breath, we found humanity, we found empowerment, we found life.

Joseph Jomo Pierre: Very early on, I think there was a need for me to have Shakespeare in the play. Partly because it had to do with the relationships of, between the Othello character and the Aaron character, and that it came from the same mind, right? But before that, there's a reality and a realization that I have made as an artist, as a person of colour in this field. And you have to accept the fact that these things were not made for me. I wasn't going to turn this play platinum because a whole bunch of Black people were, it was written for us to go and do

sales and do numbers. So it wasn't written for me. The perspective wasn't mine. Nor can I say that the audience receiving it actually cared what I would feel about seeing myself on stage.

So if I can, that has to be the framework that I see a work and that feel like, well, why doesn't he speak more about like, like, where's the disconnect here? It's 'cause I wasn't important, but that doesn't need to be what holds me down. As a creator, that became the question that Aaron had for Shakespeare.

If you can show me in the light of someone who has heart and passion, someone who would do anything for a child, for progeny of myself, then within the compass of just humanity itself, you could have asked more or demanded more. And that's what the character was doing, right? He was saying, don't tell me because I'm this and you are that, that you can't speak of my experience.

You can speak of a human experience. And that's really what it was that I was really going after for an audience, right, is for the audience to not be defensive of Shakespeare and his work, right? But to question it, right? And realize that the work that we, right now that we present to each other is our interpretations.

It's a commentary on what we are experiencing, right? If a different director, a different artistic director, is reading the words from possibly where I'm sitting, they're gonna see things that you may not see. But that does not mean that you can't be challenged as an audience by those things.

So to have him there meant that that discussion could occur. Right? And it might be the framework of the play, but it's a bigger societal question, which is our, the understanding that we don't have with each other. It's literally a discussion. It's literally self-exploration.

Jeff Ho: Thank you. I really agree and hear about the questioning part of it. The role of Shakespeare in *Cockroach* is he's literally the entire second part of the play he speaks, and my questioning around it is the immortality of it. So much of the cultural currency or the way that Shakespeare's used as a meter stick for other things. Like Ibsen's, *Hedda Gabler* is... *Hedda Gabler* is Ibsen's *Hamlet*, for example. The way that we use Shakespeare and his works as the point of comparison for so much. And writing that part, it was just doing these lines, these words, that it was a whole like, I don't know, 10-page monologue about all the phrases that we take for granted or don't even, aren't even aware of that comes from Shakespeare.

I actually can't even quote any right now though I wrote it. And the ways that in research, I found out, like in mainland China, Shakespeare was banned for a long time and the first translations of it were actually quite recent, within the last hundred years. And the first one being *Lear*, and now the Royal Shakespeare Company has commissioned like, I'm not gonna put a specific number, I'm gonna get it wrong, but millions of dollars for it, for Shakespeare to be translated in every single language possible.

And so we're seeing a surge currently in China, in Hong Kong where these translations are taking place. So *Cockroach*, the Bard in the middle - I just named him the Bard, but it's really clear it's Shakespeare - grapples with that, the idea that "just let me die." And he can't, the question of immortality of "just let me go" and while trying to be let go, he's rifling through

the same language that he invented and what a qualm that would be to, you know, and the ways that we interpret it post the fact, like in this trial, you know, things that we don't intend, or do intend and that, and so I'm rambling here, but the profundity and the, again, the prominence of it.

When *Cockroach* was opening at Tarragon, I was in New Jersey opening *Prince Hamlet*. The same night that in *Cockroach* "to be or not to be" as a refrain was being said, I was Ophelia. And so some moments of fate and destiny like that, how do I articulate that as an artist? All I can do is, as a creator, is to ask those questions. Shakespeare's paid my bills, but he's also been a huge thorn on the side of my ass. But he's also paid my bills in this pandemic. So how do I wrestle with that as a person of colour, as a queer person, as someone playing Ophelia? And I'm, you know, of a different gender. It is through this constant questioning and part of it, I've played around or had mischief with the concept of immortality that we place on Shakespeare, this pedestal, so to say. But that's the role he has in my play.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Back to Reneltta to speak about what she has learned through the process of adapting Shakespeare and Erin, who shares her perspective on the conversation her work has with its source material

Reneltta Arluk: Yeah. I think it's giving yourself permission because, you know, Shakespeare shared other people's stories as his own, right? There's a permission to destroy and rebuild his work and not to feel bad about it. Don't let academics make you feel bad about it. Don't make your professors make you feel bad about it. Don't make actors make you feel bad about it. Just just give yourself permission to explore the work as you feel compelled. I mean, I'm coming up across this right now - it's glaringly in my face right now as I'm going through this new draft and I asked a really good friend of mine to like dramaturge it for me.

And as we're going through, I just like, oh my god, this is so clear for me right now. And so just what I've come to realize is that when you start taking the work and shifting and moving, elements of what you loved and admired and respected so deeply about Shakespeare is actually irrelevant to what you are doing. It's so I'm just like, oh my god, my head is exploding right now. So as you move and shift, it's like a ripple of water, right? As you ripple the water, the water can't go back into the system that it was in. The water becomes your water, uh, like energy change. And so just allow yourself to, to, uh, let go of what doesn't need to be there as much as you love it, that it's there or that you think you're honoring it, 'cause you're not.

Erin Shields: I often think in contemporary playwriting, and when we're encouraging younger or playwrights who are just starting out, we talk a lot about like, what do you wanna write about? What is the content? But we don't talk a lot about how are you going to write, what is the container, what is the form? And in theatre as we all know, we're all theatre lovers. There's so many different ways to do a thing. So for me it's maybe the label itself isn't, uh, like choosing whether it's, you know, with *Queen Goneril*, it was billed as a prequel because - and that in part was a publicity thing because it's, it's, "Seven years before Shakespeare's, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah!"

But actually it's a conversation. My play is a conversation with it. I'm stealing some of it. Stealing the storm. I'm stealing relationships. I'm interacting with the play *Lear*, not to just simply write an origin story, but for me to talk about something I really want to talk about, which is about power, generational power, how older generations are holding onto power and making it very difficult for the next generation to take the power or to step into their own. I wanted to talk about, you know, the structure, these structural things in our world, in our patriarchy, that prohibit certain people from getting power.

They're just built into the whole structure of it. And, Shakespeare can be like that too, because Shakespeare is in everybody's season all the time, it takes up room from all the other playwrights and contemporary playwrights who want to say a thing and get their work out there. So yeah, but choosing a form, choosing a five act structure, for me it was important with *Queen Goneril* to say, okay, if I'm gonna write this play, I want to do it in a five act structure.

I'm going to identify what that is in terms of Shakespeare, and then I'm going to mess with it for my own, you know, for my own purposes. So act four gets very, very messy, I suppose, as it does in *Lear*. And in terms of language, I like to have a conversation with the writer that I'm stealing stuff from and whose work I admire. So for me, the language, the register of the piece goes from, very kind of colloquial everyday language when the characters are in intimate relationship with one another and then it's more heightened when they're in public. Then when they have moments of complete crisis, then they need to access a larger register of language and vocabulary. So all of a sudden they go out into the storm and they're speaking like Shakespeare. They're speaking in a Shakespearean way. So for me, finding sort of an elasticity between the then and the now, is, I find it just really exciting and a way to engage an audience and have a conversation about this tension between a thing that was written forever ago and a thing that we're trying to grapple with now.

Renelitta Arluk: I think it's a form of reclamation. And I say that because Canada's getting older. And so as we get older, we want, you know, we're seeing this in all of the theatres. We're seeing more Canadian playwrights, we're seeing more out, we're seeing it in our education system.

We're seeing it in all our systems. We're seeing Canadian, Canadian driven. We're seeing less British and more what is Canadian? What is Canada? What is Canada 150? What is Canada? Who are we? And so there's a, there's a real opportunity of reclamation in the way that there's a real opportunity for us to define our own stories. And Shakespeare is a part of that. I never, I don't, when I see articles or titles going, "Do we still need Shakespeare?" I'm like, I don't, I'm not even reading you. It's not an interest to me. But we do need Shakespeare, but we do need adaptations. We need to see ourselves in these stories. And Shakespeare has gifted us with a deep sense of humanity.

And so no matter who you are, where you come from, what kind of society or system that you work in, when you read a Shakespeare, you actually see yourself in those stories, whether you like it or not. And so how are we seeing ourselves in this country? And that is only gonna grow more, right? We're only gonna do more Canadian stuff as we go on because we are growing together as nations. And I think, you know, earlier, it was being shared like, we can't do this alone. We have to talk to each other, work with each other, understand each other, and provide space for each other that aren't siloed. And we have to challenge each other's

narratives. And as we continue to do that, even using Shakespeare as that form, then we're only gonna help define each other for each other. And that's highly important now and in the future.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Back to moderator Keira Loughran.

Keira Loughran: So if you're on this sort of constant questioning, playing with dialogue, with this idea of Shakespeare as it is, has your relationship to the cannon changed through the writing of these plays? Are you kind of done with it? Is it sort of those things that's like, okay, I gotta deal with it.

Okay, it's done. Now I want to write about something else. Or where are you at with it now? In context of where you come from?

Jeff Ho: On a real personal lens, most of my adaptations have been of the Greeks, *Cockroach* being the first one around Shakespeare. And then I realized that, oh my goodness, I know so much more about the Western canonical works than even of my own culture, so I want to amend that. So my relationship has been through reclamation looking into my own place, and part of that is asking my own mother who can read and write Cantonese and Mandarin to share in that experience of finding community in these stories again, or finding the stories within the community. So that's what's evolved.

And even in *Cockroach*, there's a battle where Shakespeare's like, "I've lived for 500 years, I'm gonna live forever." And then *Cockroach* comes out, it's like, "I'll outlive you cracker-ass," something like that, because the Chinese language has existed for thousands of years and the plays are thousands of years yet we so often quote the Greeks like, oh, the creation of Western theatre. And so part of the interrogation of that is to go back to my own mother tongue. And yeah, so that's where it's evolved is that I have fallen in love again with what I was raised to hate.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: Here is Kaitlyn Riordan reflecting on the process for *1939* and the leadership at the Stratford Festival.

Kaitlyn Riordan: If I could jump on that idea of leadership. So at Stratford *1939* is in a lineage of plays led by Indigenous leaders including Dean Gabourie and Renelitta Arluk and Jessica Carmichael, who have helped pave the way for the acceptance of things like smudging in the room, ceremony, bringing in Elders and knowledge keepers and working in a different way.

And so we were entering a very white space, that also has for a long time upheld that idea of there's only one way to do Shakespeare, you know, with British accents and a certain stiffness. And that has certainly evolved. But that was a big part of what that institution was for a long time. And so we came in with a sense of, okay, uh, we know we can do certain things and, and then Jani fought for other things. So beyond that, one of those things that Jess had done with *The Rez Sisters* the year prior was a reflection space. And Tom Wilson has a visual art piece about his family, his ancestors going to residential school that was a part of that space.

We had an incredible facilitator Kelly Fran Davis there, after every single performance, there was a circle of chairs. People were invited to come and talk and reflect. Those things all cost money and a place like Stratford is able to do that. But you know, the fact that people have had those conversations before we got there was really helpful and it allowed us to have the next conversation.

And, and I say us, I should say Jani because Jani was leading this and I was just cheering her on and supporting her however I could. And you know, that's also not just the Indigenous leaders, but a lot of different leaders who have been at Stratford over time, the BIPOC leaders who have made space at that institution. So, Stratford did commission the play eventually, but the play was already in motion when they commissioned it and people are like, oh, I see why you wrote this play for Stratford and Jani - Jani and I are like, no, we wrote this play for ourselves. Like this is the same play we would've written without the support of the Stratford Festival because this is what we were drawn to.

But you know, we always talked about like, who's the audience? And, and we didn't want it to just be a white audience and we didn't want an "Indigenous night" where all the Indigenous audience members came on one night. We wanted people sitting side by side because that was our experience of writing the play.

And so, you know, with the help of the marketing team they brought on Summer Brissette, who is based in London and who helped bring in Indigenous audiences. There was a school board, a local school board that instead of teaching Shakespeare that year, they decided all the grade tens, I believe, no, the grade elevens would study *1939* instead. And they came to a preview with their Elders, and the Elders were there and they came to the reflection space. We talked about it, and then those elders went into classrooms and had discussions with the students. And like, my mind just kept being blown by the conversations. And I think just one last point is that the reflection space, whenever I was there, I sat in and just listened as much as I could.

And what I heard a lot was, white audiences were really uncomfortable with the humor in the play because there is humor in the play. And the two white characters, neither of them are abusers. They uphold white supremacy and they uphold the mission of residential schools. But they are, they do it sort of, in a way that I think a lot of Canada did, which was in a very uneducated way. And, and they were on the mission of Christianity and colonization, and they, perhaps were not aware of all the amount of harm that they were doing. And that made audiences uncomfortable too. White audiences, 'cause they're like, well, what do you mean? You know, like, why wasn't there violence in the play, for example? You know? And that was a really interesting question to have and one that we grappled with in the room also as the creators and the cast. And for me, as a white writer in this play, I really wanted white audiences to see themselves in those characters and go, oh shit like that could have been me.

That is me. You know, like, what am I doing to be anti-racist today? How am I supporting Land Back? How am I contributing to change in this country and to justice and equity? And by making those characters more nuanced in a way, I hope that it did that and I think it made people really uncomfortable. And so that having the reflection space allowed some of those conversations to happen and there's no answer. Like it was, it was messy. But the support of Stratford and those extra parts of the play, those extra textual things that were in place really made for fruitful conversation.

Liam Lockhart-Rush: When my co-hosts and I were compiling the episodes for this series, we knew that we needed to include some of these fantastic excerpts from the *(Re)casting Shakespeare in Canada* symposium. The excerpts included in this episode provide crucial context for the conversation around adapting Shakespeare, and the importance of centering language in the process of adapting and presenting these crucial stories.

This episode also provides examples of excellent plays written by some of the leading artists in Canadian theatre. For more information on these artists and their plays, visit our show notes.

In our next episode, Hope takes a deep dive into the play *Hamlet*, looking at different ways of casting and examining the female characters in the play, Gertrude and Ophelia, to grapple with the sexism and misogyny that often runs rampant in Shakespeare's works.

Shaking up Shakespeare!

Marlis Schweitzer: This podcast is part of resetting the stage, a five year project that seeks to situate debates about theatrical representation and the politics of casting in Canada within a broad historical context, advancing dialogue with directors, playwrights, actors, educators, students, and other creators who are actively transforming professional Canadian theatre and university level theatre training.

For more information on other aspects of the project, please visit castingcanadiantheatre.ca. Interviews for this podcast were conducted by Marlis Schweitzer, Jeff Ho, Liam Lockhart-Rush, and Hope Van Der Merwe. All episodes written and edited by Marlis, Liam, and Hope, with dramaturgical input from Jeff. Sound mixing and levels by Maddie Batista. ASL Translation by Dawn Jani Birley. Original Music by Faith Andrew. Special thanks to Charles Ketchabaw and Will Innes at FIXT POINT for support with training, development, audio equipment, and software.

Shaking up Shakespeare benefits from the following support: a Connections grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, an Exchange grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, funding from the York Research Chair and the York Research Support Grant.

Many thanks to the wonderful people we've interviewed for sharing their important insights and perspectives. We could not have done this without you. Special thanks to our early collaborator Why Not Theatre. And at York University, Thanks to Dean Sarah Bay-Cheng, Mary Pecchia, Aimée Mitchell, and many colleagues, students and friends.

Thanks for listening to *Shaking Up Shakespeare*.