UNCLE VANYA

Written by Anton Chekhov Directed by Chris Abraham

SEPTEMBER 6 TO OCTOBER 2, 2022

CROW/S

A CROW'S THEATRE PRODUCTION

UNCLE VANYA

WRITTEN BY ANTON CHEKHOV DIRECTED BY CHRIS ABRAHAM ADAPTED BY LIISA REPO-MARTELL WORLD PREMIERE

CAST and CREATIVE TEAM

CAROLYN FE Marina dtaborah johnson Maria ALI KAZMI Astrov ERIC PETERSON Alexandre ANAND RAJARAM Telegin TOM ROONEY Vanya SHANNON TAYLOR Yelena BAHIA WATSON Sonya The role of Sonya will be played by Liisa Repo-Martell for the performances of September 15-17, 2022.

CHRIS ABRAHAM Director LIISA REPO-MARTELL Adaptor and Assistant Director JULIE FOX Set and Props Co-Designer JOSH QUINLAN Set and Props Co-Designer MING WONG Costume Designer KIMBERLY PURTELL Lighting Designer THOMAS RYDER PAYNE Sound Designer LISA NIGHSWANDER Head of Props KATHLEEN JOHNSTON Head of Wardrobe JENNIFER PARR Stage Manager MICHAEL BARRS Assistant Stage Manager POLLY PHOKEEV Russian Translator and Consultant MARIO MORELLO Music Consultant ARIANE JANISSE Directing Intern

Crow's Theatre is a proud member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA). We engage professional artists under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) with Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA).

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM CROW'S THEATRE

Welcome back to Streetcar Crowsnest for the launch our 39th season and our two season openers, Uncle Vanya and The Shape of Home, Songs in Search of Al Purdy. After a thrilling and emotional return to live theatre last season we feel very fortunate to be back doing what we love most. We are ready to take you on a wild ride, beginning with two immersive and radically different trips to the country–each with their own glorious secrets and seductions to behold.

Our 2022.23 season has something for everyone: new takes on classic works from Homer, Chekhov, Shakespeare, Ovid, and Handel; prolific, international dramatists Lolita Chakrabarti, Rajiv Joseph, and Lloyd Suh will have Toronto premieres side by side with world premieres by Canadian playwrights Alex Bulmer and Paolo Santalucia; the works of CanLit heroes Al Purdy and André Alexis are transformed into unmissable theatrical experiences for fans of their work, and for those about to discover them. Three signature musical experienes are peppered throughout the year, with music also taking centre stage at Crowsnest Corner in the lobby post-show.

Audiences will be treated to a performing arts space that is constantly transforming, something we take pride in at Crow's Theatre. With each production, you will be immersed in a new world: a country estate in Ukraine at the end of 1890s, the dreamily surreal streets of Iraq after the fall of Baghdad, backstage on opening night at Covent Garden Theatre in London 1833, and the contemprary streets of Toronto from a dog's- eye view, to name a few.

This year, we want to give Torontonians 12 unmissable reasons to plan a great night out. With 12 shows in our two venues, our fabulous restaurant Gare de l'Est offering the best pre-show prix fixe menu in town, and our bar (open pre- and post-show) featuring music, comedy, and cabaret, the theatre will be full of delights all year long.

This is the season to rediscover the collective experience of theatre. Subscribe and take a journey with us. For more information about each of our 12 shows please visit our website at crowstheatre.com.

Chris Abraham, Artistic Director Sherrie Johnson, Executive Director

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR AND ADAPTOR OF UNCLE VANYA

Chekhov received a diagnosis of tuberculosis at age 26 and knew, earlier than most of us, that his days were numbered. He didn't know when he would die, but he knew his life would be significantly shortened. This reckoning with his own mortality shaped his relationship to work, to love, to the world around him, and most importantly, it shaped his relationship to time. This deep preoccupation with the ticking clock of our lives is on full display in *Uncle Vanya*.

Emerging from a global pandemic, this 'blip" of nearly three years has shaken our perceptions of time and our sense of how we should spend that time. A feeling of pivotal change, moving underfoot, is felt in our workplaces, in our families, in our national and global politics. It has led to an abundance of private and public questioning of how new approaches to the pursuit of happiness, meaning, and purpose could/should/might guide our lives.

While Chekhov does not offer any answers to the problems of the finitude of life, he does offer an incredibly timely rendering of the fiery (re)awakening of desire for new life. In Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, the new life arrives, unbidden, to a group of people who have long ago accepted their destinies; for better or for worse. The arrival of the new life brings with it a heady mix of desperation, abandon, joy, and danger. This opening up of dormant dreams, passions, and ambitions is risky; because sometimes we must risk everything to get something new.

In his day, Chekhov's approach to art was radical in its simplicity; tell how things are, not how they should be. His art represented a shift in Russian literature from the idealized to the real. If Tolstoy had at his core an essentially Christian moral philosophy, Chekhov was content to tell the truth about the details of our lives–just as they were.

Chekhov's plays are now the second most produced next to Shakespeare and for nearly a century have been a mirror for us to examine societies poised at moments of critical social, political, and moral transformation. They show us as we confront the end of one way of life and the birth of another. They show us in all our foolishness and frailty and sometimes in our unexpected heroism. Chekhov invites his audience into a space where there are no answers, no truth, only truths, lives lived in all their contradictions and complexity. In this time of intense polarization where we are increasingly pressured to see the world in unhelpful binaries, urging us to pick a team or join a side at the risk of being left out in the cold, we hope Chekhov's wisdom, wit, and knowledge that "one night awaits us all" can help us soothe our hungry hearts and troubled minds.

Chris Abraham, Director Liisa Repo-Martell, Adapter

COMPANY BIOGRAPHIES

CAROLYN FE

Marina

Carolyn Fe is a Filipina Canadian actress, singer-songwriter, and former contemporary dancer and choreographer. Carolyn adds new instruments to her creative portfolio as a published writer and emerging playwright. Credits include: 2022 Dora Award Nominee for Outstanding Performance in a Leading Role *Three Women of Swatow* (Tarragon Theatre), *Calpurnia* (Nightwood Theatre/Sulong Theatre), *Through the Bamboo* (Uwi Collective), Lola in Nickelodeon's *Blue's Clues & Youl*, Madame Z in the



French series *Meilleur Avant*, voices on animated series such as DreamWorks' *Pinecone & Pony* and PBS' *Work It Out Wombats*. Awards include: 2022 Louise Garfield Award for "*Later-in-Life*" Emerging Creator, Nightwood Theatre (Toronto, Ontario), 2018 Best Supporting Actress by The Toronto Theatre Critics Award, 2018 Best of Albums Sugat Ko, Toronto Blues Society's John Valenteyn (Canada), 2015 Filipino-Canadian Artist Award recipient, North American Filipino Star Newspaper (Canada), 2014 Jimi Award for International Album Release of the Year for *Bad Taboo*, Blues 411 (USA), 2012 Award for Best Blues Album & Associated Styles for *Original Sin, Le Lys Blues* (QC, Canada).

dtaborah johnson

Maria

To the theatre born, dtaborah spent the first 50 years of her career as tabby. Turning 62 and moving to Tuscany to work with The Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards and being invited to work/study/ perform with Mario Biagini's downstairs Open Program travelling the globe with an international group of under thirties. Here she learned how to hone those 50 years most effectively, from Toronto's original Hair cast as the 16-year-old virgin to working with Mike Nichols in NYC with the late Ken



Walsh's Standup Shakespeare. Her hit digital Fringe 2021 The Adventure of that nice Canajun Gurl to Aunty MacCasser on the Big Comfy Couch to backing up Aretha, Ray Charles, and Rick James, dtaborah is both delighted and humbled to be part of this esteemed team.

ALI KAZMI

Astrov

A Pakistani Canadian, trained multilingual, multifaceted, and experienced, professional creative powerhouse of an actor/director and producer. Born in Karachi, Pakistan, Ali lives in Toronto, Canada where he went to Toronto Film and Drama school and restarted his career from scratch. Hailing from a family of creative juggernauts, it is inherent within him. He has been working successfully both on and off camera in Pakistan, India, Canada,

and the USA for over 20 years in theatre, television, and film. He has amassed a portfolio, peppered with multi-layered, diverse characters. This October, Ali will appear in the powerful play *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* (Crow's Theatre), and in February 2023 he can be seen in the moving *Behind the Moon* at Tarragon Theatre. His



film *Funny Boy*, by the avant-garde director Deepa Mehta, was Canada's submission in the Oscar race for Best picture and best adapted screenplay. Ali has just wrapped Pakistan's first superhero/adventure flick *Umro Ayaar*.

ERIC PETERSON

Alexandre

Eric Peterson has appeared in Crow's Theatre's productions of seeds, The Watershed, The Seagull, and Orphans For The Czar. He has worked in most major theatres across Canada, as well as on Broadway, London's West End, the Edinburgh Festival, and the Melbourne International Theatre Festival. His work in Canadian film and television includes many guest star appearances and as a series regular on Street Legal, This is Wonderland,



and *Corner Gas.* He holds honorary doctorates from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, is a recipient of the Governor General's Lifetime Artistic Achievement Award in Theatre, and is a member of the Order of Canada.

ANAND RAJARAM

Telegin

Anand is an improviser, actor, playwright, director, musician, teacher, and puppeteer. Most recently, he appeared in *Buffoon* by Anosh Irani and *Mustard* by Kat Sandler (Tarragon Theatre), winning the Dora award for outstanding performance for each show; adapted and performed in Rohinton Mistry's *The Scream* at SummerWorks, winning Best Production; and has performed at Second City, Stratford, Canadian Stage,



VideoCabaret, and others. He is an accomplished film and tv performer as well as voiceover artist for video games and cartoons. You may sometimes hear Anand as a panelist on CBC Radio's Because News. He is artistic director of @N@f@N@, currently creating augmented reality digital content for live streams under the banner of his company, Cardboard Dreams. He recently directed *As You Like It* for Canadian Stage's Dream in High Park, and two audiobooks by Shyam Selvadurai; *Swimming in the Monsoon* and *Mansions of the Moon*, with Penguin Audio.

TOM ROONEY

Vanya

Crows Theatre: Someone Else (Dora Award), The Seagull, The Wedding Party.

Recent: Cyrano de Bergerac at the Shaw Festival. Elsewhere:

Twelve years at the Stratford Festival; Cyrano de Bergerac, Victory (Shaw Festival 2019); Rice Boy, My Mother's Feet, Homechild, Tartuffe (Canadian Stage); Hairspray (Toronto and Broadway); Benevolence, Courageous



(Tarragon Theatre); *Hamlet* (National Arts Centre); Robert Lepage's, *Romeo et Juliette* (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan); *I Am My Own Wife* (Vancouver Playhouse); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (Citadel Theatre-Sterling Award); *Angels in America* (Alberta Theatre Projects); *The Seagull* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre). Film/ TV: *This Is Wonderland, The Gilda Radner Story, The Day After Tomorrow, Strays, Transplant, Coroner, Under the Banner of Heaven, Guillermo del Toro's Cabinet of Curiosities.* Upcoming: *Fifteen Dogs* (Crows Theatre).

SHANNON TAYLOR

Yelena

Shannon is thrilled to be making her Crow's Theatre debut! Theatre credits include: six seasons at the Stratford Festival; *I Am William* (Mary, Queen Elizabeth I), *The Crucible* (Elizabeth Proctor), *Twelfth Night* (Olivia), *The School for Scandal* (Lady Teazle), *Shakespeare in Love* (Viola), *The Hypochondriac* (Angélique), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Margot Frank), *Oedipus Rex* (Priest), and *The Sound of Music* (Liesl). Other selected



theatre credits include: *Room* (Grand Theatre and Mirvish); *Mother's Daughter* (Soulpepper and Stratford Festival), *A Doll's House* (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); *King Charles III* (Mirvish Productions and Studio 180); *The Road to Mecca* (Soulpepper); *Pride and Prejudice* (National Arts Centre and Theatre Calgary); *The Jones Boy* (Surface/Undeground); *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Little Women: The Musical* (Citadel Theatre); and *The Madonna Painter* (Factory Theatre). Film and TV: *Don't Hang Up, Private Eyes, MayDay*. Training: Birmingham Conservatory; Ryerson Theatre School (BFA). Awards: Mary Savidge Award; Dora nomination for Outstanding Performance. Thank you for supporting live theatre.

BAHIA WATSON

Sonya

Bahia Watson is an award-winning actor, writer, and director. Theatre credits include: *The Virgin Trial; Bakkhai, The Last Wife*, (Stratford Festival); *The Seagull* (Crow's Theatre and The Company Theatre); *Someone Else* (Crow's Theatre and Canadian Stage), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Soulpepper); *The Penelopiad* (Nightwood Theatre) and *pomme is french for apple* (paul watson productions). Film/TV credits include: *The*



Handmaid's Tale (Hulu/MGM); The Expanse (Amazon); Star Trek: Discovery (CBS). Bahia is an award-winning voice actor starring in animated series including: *My Little Pony* (Netflix); *Big Blue* (CBC); *Strawberry Shortcake: Berry in the Big City* (Wildbrain). She is the creator of the new digital radio initiative PROGRAM SOUND FM and a frequent contributor for Intermission Magazine. Bahia is the playwright, composer, co-director, and performer for *MASHUP PON DI ROAD*, and has been commissioned by The Public Theatre's 2022 NY Voices program to create a new cabaret show: *MASHUP ting!*

CHRIS ABRAHAM

Director

Artistic and General Director, Chris Abraham has been the driving force of Crow's Theatre since the 2008.09 season. He has successfully led the company through two major milestones: the 25th and 35th Anniversaries of the company; as well as building Streetcar Crowsnest, a pioneering, state of the art facility with three venues in the East End of Toronto, including the newly built Nada Ristich Studio Gallery on Dundas Street



East. This season, Chris will launch the 2022.23 Crow's season with his production of *Uncle Vanya* and will tour Crow's Theatre productions of *MixTape*, and Cliff Cardinal's *As You Like it*. Chris is also developing a television adaptation of *Stars: Together* (based on the hit Crow's stage production) with Sienna Films/CBC. Chris' artistic practice spans the spectrum of solo work, documentary, highly lauded Stratford and Shaw productions,

hybrid music theatre concerts, opera, and filmmaking. At Crow's, he has directed numerous award-winning plays including *Julius Caesar, Stars: Together, The Wedding Party, True Crime, Boy in the Moon, The Assembly, The Watershed, The Seagull, Winners & Losers, Someone Else, Eternal Hydra*, and *I, Claudia*. In 2003, Chris directed the film adaptation of Kristen Thomson's award-winning hit *I, Claudia* for which he won a Gemini Award. A graduate of the National Theatre School's renowned directing program, Chris later served as co-director of the program from 2006 to 2010. In 2013, Chris was awarded the Siminovitch Prize in Theatre for Directing. Next spring, Chris will be directing *Much Ado About Nothing* at the Stratford Festival.

LIISA REPO-MARTELL

Adaptor and Assistant Director

Liisa Repo-Martell is an award-winning stage and screen actor. She is, also, one the founding members of ARCA - Artists for Real Climate Action. And now, an adapter of plays. Theatre acting credits include: *Towards Youth* (Crow's Theatre), *A Beautiful View* (Festival Players), *What a Young Wife Ought to Know* (2b Theatre), *The Boy in the Moon* (Crow's Theatre), *The Watershed* and Seeds (Porte Parole), *Other Desert Cities* (The Citadel



Theatre), *The Creditors* (Coal Mine Theatre), *Happy Place*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Antigone*, The Lesson, School for Wives, Top Girls (Soulpepper) Eternal Hydra (Crow's Theatre) *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear* (Stratford Festival). For film/TV: *Happy Place* (Sienna Films), *The Umbrella Academy*.

JULIE FOX

Set and Props Co-Designer

Julie Fox has been a production designer for theatre, dance, and opera in Canada for over 20 years. Crow's Theatre credits: *Mixtape, A&R Angels, The Watershed, Seeds, The Seagull, Someone Else, I, Claudia.* Other theatre credits include Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Canadian Stage, Electric Company, Soulpepper, Tarragon Theatre, Buddies in Bad Times, Why Not Theatre, Necessary Angel, Volcano, Centaur, National Arts



Centre, Segal Centre, Citadel, Theatre Junction, and Manitoba Theatre Centre. She has received four Dora Awards for outstanding set design, the Virginia Cooper Award for costume design, and has been nominated for Sterling and Meta awards. She is a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada, where she also teaches.

JOSH QUINLAN

Set and Props Co-Designer

Design: Costumes for *Every Little Nookie* (Stratford Festival), *The Music Man* (Thousand Islands Playhouse), *Stupid F*cking Bird*, *Spring Awakening* (Ohio State University). Set and costumes for *All My Pretty Chickens*, *The Last Five Years* (Langham Directors' Workshop). Set and props for *Beauty and the Beast, Love and Information* (University of Windsor); *My Hero*, *Giving Up the Ghost, Book Club, The Drawer Boy* (Port Stanley Festival



Theatre); An Enemy of the People, Don Giovanni (Ohio State University). Associate set and props for Swan Lake (National Ballet of Canada); No Change in the Weather

(Terra Bruce Productions, Mirvish Productions). Associate set and costumes for *Bed and Breakfast* (Globe Theatre, Blyth Festival). Six seasons as an assistant designer at the Stratford Festival. Training: MFA Theatre – Design, The Ohio State University; BA Honours Drama, University of Windsor; Off the Wall Theatre Production Arts Program. Awards: 2021 Siminovitch Protegé Designer, 2019 Tom Patterson Award, 2017 Ian and Molly Lindsay Design Fellow.

MING WONG

Costume Designer

Ming Wong is a Toronto costume designer, stylist, and wardrobe technician. She has worked on a variety of projects ranging from dance, theatre, film, and television. She has designed across the city and beyond for companies such as Crow's Theatre, Canadian Opera Company, Shaw Festival, Stratford Festival, Citadel Theatre, Canadian Stage, Ross Petty Productions, Nightwood Theatre, Factory Theatre, Obsidian Theatre, and



Modern Times Stage Company. Ming is a four-time Dora Mavor Moore Award nominee, as well as the winner of the 2021 Virginia & Myrtle Cooper Award in Costume Design.

KIMBERLY PURTELL

Lightning Designer

Kimberly is a Toronto based lighting designer for theatre, opera and dance. Her designs have been critically acclaimed across Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Prague, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Moscow and Mongolia. Previous selected credits with Crow's Theatre include *The Wedding Party, We Are Not Alone, The Seagull, A&R Angels,* and *The Boy In The Moon.* Kimberly has designed for Mirvish Productions,



Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Canadian Stage Company, Soulpepper Theatre, Arena Stage in DC, National Arts Centre, National Arts Centre Orchestra, Pacific Opera Victoria, Opera Philadelphia, Edmonton Opera, Theatre Calgary, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Citadel Theatre, and Place des Arts, among others. Kimberly is the recipient of three Dora Mavor Moore Awards, the Pauline McGibbon Award, a Montreal English Theatre Award, a Toronto Theatre Critics Award, an Ottawa Critics Circle Award, and an Elizabeth Sterling Award. Kimberly is the Vice President of the Associated Designers of Canada.

THOMAS RYDER PAYNE

Sound Designer

Thomas Ryder Payne is a composer and sound designer for theatre, dance, and film. Select past work includes designs for Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Mirvish Productions, Soulpepper, Canadian Stage, Tarragon Theatre, Factory Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Young People's Theatre, Crow's Theatre, Modern Times Stage Company, Aluna Theatre, Buddies in Bad Time Theatre, Nightwood Theatre, Toronto Dance Theatre,

National Arts Centre, Theatre Calgary, Great Canadian Theatre Company, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, and many others. Thomas has received four Dora Mavor Moore Awards and 25 nominations.



JENNIFER PARR

Stage Manager

Jennifer is delighted to be working on her first show at Crow's Theatre and to be wearing her stage manager's hat once again. She has stage managed for Fringe shows and Symphony stages, from classic to new operas and plays, to a six-month run of the musical *Forever Plaid*. From 2011 to 2016 Jennifer was the Canadian production stage manager, and de facto resident director, for the Chicago Symphony's Beyond the Score



shows as presented by Canadian orchestras around the country including in Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal, and Quebec City. A versatile theatre artist, Jennifer is also a director and dramaturge–with credits including the world premiers of the operas *Pandora's Locker* (Dean Burry) and *The Last Wife* (Dunleavy and Alexander)–developing and directing new plays, including *Waiting for Odysseus*, and directing all-female productions of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and *Richard III* (her own adaptation).

MICHAEL BARRS

Assistant Stage Manager

Michael makes his Crow's Theatre debut with *Uncle Vanya*. He recently completed *The Magic Flute* as part of his thirteenth season at the Canadian Opera Company. Other selected credits include a summer of Shakespeare in High Park (Canadian Stage); *Oraltorio: A Theatrical Mixtape* (Obsidian Theatre Company/Soulpepper); a cross-country tour of Mark Crawford's *Bed and Breakfast* (Blyth Festival, Belfry Theatre,



Centaur Theatre, Thousand Islands Playhouse); the North American premiere of *Arrabal* (BASE/Marquis Entertainment); *Matilda, Rock of Ages,* and *The Sound of Music* (Mirvish Productions); *Jersey Boys* (Dancap Productions); and productions with Canadian Stage, Yonge Street Theatricals, Opera Atelier, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Drayton Entertainment, and Just For Laughs.

POLLY PHOKEEV

Russian Translator and Consultant

Polly Phokeev is an award-winning playwright, born in Russia and based in Toronto. Her plays include the critically-acclaimed *How We Are*, *The Mess*, and *Seams*. She was a finalist in the 2019.20 Ellen Ross Stuart Awards, a member of Driftwood Theatre's inaugural Playwrights Unit, and the recipient of the Jon Kaplan Legacy Fund's 2019 Young Canadian Playwright Award. Her short stories have been shortlisted in the Writers'



Union short prose competition, received second place in the 2021 Toronto Star Short Story Contest, and have appeared in Accenti Magazine and House of Zolo's Journal of Speculative Literature. She is currently translating/adapting Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* into a new musical (with Mikaela Davies and Hailey Gillis, in collaboration with Crow's Theatre. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of British Columbia.

ARIANE JANISSE

Directing Intern

Ariane is a Montreal Concordia intern from the performance creation program. During the summer term she took the opportunity to be a part of the creation process of *Uncle Vanya* and learn directorial tips from the great Chris Abraham. Ariane has directed original pieces with her work as a special educator. She has also directed scenes from *The Crackwalker* by Judith Thompson and an online version of *Mud* by



Maria Irene Fornés. "Crow's Theatre has been a refreshing experience with such kind, welcoming professionals. It's an honour to be a part of such an amazing experience. I'm hoping to be back one day to direct a piece at Crow's."



The cast, creative team, and Crow's Theatre would like to express our deep gratitude to the following:

Soulpepper Theatre Company, Props and Production Departments Seán Baker Alex Grozdanis Heather Landon Alexander Alphonzo Andrew Kushnir Fruitful Market

A SPECIAL REQUEST

In honour of our 2022.23 season, Crow's Theatre will be making a donation to <u>The Centre for Indigenous Theatre</u> and <u>Help Us Help Ukraine</u>. We invite you to consider supporting these worthwile organizations as well.

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