

THE R♥MEO INITIATIVE

BY TRINA DAVIES



February 4 – 15, 2026 | Main Stage

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Persephone Theatre is located on the beautiful lands of Indigenous peoples who have lived here since time immemorial, including the Nêhiyawak, Nêhithawak, Anishinabek, Nakawe, Nakota, Nehinawak, Lakota, Dakota and Dene peoples.

This place is also the homeland of the Métis. At Persephone, we also like to acknowledge the contributions of the Whitecap Dakota and Round Prairie Métis peoples in establishing our city of Saskatoon. Persephone Theatre is located on Treaty 6 territory and is committed to living in good relations with our Indigenous neighbours, in the spirit with which the Treaties were intended.



THE ROMEO INITIATIVE

BY TRINA DAVIES

PRESENTED IN THE



Persephone Theatre is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and engages under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement.

Professional artists are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association.

Production staff are members of I.A.T.S.E. Local 300.

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CAST

Jenna "JB" Berenbaum Lena
Kristi Frank Karin
Mackenzie Dawson Markus

CREATIVE

Trina Davies Playwright
Jonathan Seinen Director
Xander Scribante** Assistant Director
Rachel Walliser Intimacy Director
Hanne Loosen* Set and Costume Designer
Judith Schulz* Lighting Designer
Jordan Perry Sound Designer
Ricardo Alvarado Stage Manager
Katie Blackburn-Dust Assistant Stage Manager
Nathaniel Morin** Apprentice Stage Manager

*Designer represented by the Associate Designers of Canada (ADC), IATSE Local 659.

** Participant in Persephone Theatre's RBC Artist Mentorship program.

*This production runs approximately 2 hours
plus one 20 minute intermission.*

"I Will Survive" performed by Gloria Gaynor used courtesy of University of
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CONTENT ADVISORY

Recommended Audience: 12+
Mature Themes, Non-Toxic Haze



ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Everyday, it gets harder and harder to tell what is real, and what is not; who is trustworthy and who is not; even what is a fact and what is not. This is largely driven by how much time we all now spend online and how much trust we put into what we see there – but it has become so easy to fake a voice, an image, a video; to not tell the whole truth. In the real world, when actual people stand right in front of us, recognizing what is true, and what is not, feels a lot easier – usually. But is it? *The Romeo Initiative* is no usual story, and yet it is all based on truth.

As people, we are constantly driven by a need for human connection – to feel seen, heard, loved, and valued. Having a shared emotional experience with another is one of the truest human experiences we can have. Even in this story full of deception, there is still the truth of human connection.

Remarkably, this is also what I think makes theatre so special. We sit down in the dark to watch a play unfold, knowing what is happening in front of us is not real, and yet, somehow it is still true. As an audience we connect with the artists, the story they are telling, and with each other – we have a shared emotional experience and through the artifice of theatre, experience human connection. I love that the truth of our humanity is not altered by deception.

Much of what remains now of history, which we learn from and carry forward, exists because someone choose to express it in an artistic form. I am so glad playwright Trina Davies chose to capture this fascinating bit of history in *The Romeo Initiative*. Trina has woven together a tale which is both true, and not, with threads of drama, comedy, romance, mystery, intrigue, danger, and historical record, into an extraordinary script. This production has been brought to life by an exceptional team of artists, and I want to thank you for choosing to spend time at the theatre, watching something you know you can trust to be true.

Thank you for being here and supporting Persephone Theatre, and the live arts in Saskatoon.

Enjoy the show!

Heather Cant
Artistic Director



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I am delighted to welcome you to the first show of the new year, the second half of Persephone Theatre's 51st season, with this enticing play, filled with romance, intrigue and espionage. Half romantic comedy and half spy-thriller, *The Romeo Initiative* is a bold, exciting work which examines trust, personal agency, manipulation, and love. This play is unique, as it does not offer easy answers; instead, it asks us to sit with its complexity.

It is always a joy to share Canadian plays with our patrons, and even more meaningful when the playwright is from Saskatoon! This is the first time Persephone has produced a play by Trina Davies, and it is an absolute pleasure to welcome her back home.

I am also thrilled to share with you another special event coming up on February 21st, where we welcome another Saskatoon local back home for a one night only fundraising event for Persephone Theatre. Saskatoon's own Kim Coates joins us for a rare "Inside the Actor's Studio" style evening. Hosted by CTV's Jeff Rogstad and media personality Caitrin Hodson, the event will touch on Kim's humble beginnings at USask, his professional acting debut at Persephone Theatre in the early 1980s, to his rise in Hollywood, with such shows as FX's hit series, *Sons of Anarchy* and the Netflix series *Bad Blood*. We invite you to join us for an unforgettable evening for a great cause!

We want to thank you for choosing to spend your time with us, and for supporting local, live Theatre right here in Saskatoon.

Breanne Harmon
Executive Director



PLAYWRIGHT'S MESSAGE

I'm very happy to be able to share this story with Saskatoon audiences. I was born in Saskatoon and grew up here until my family moved to Edmonton half-way through high school. I have deep roots in Saskatchewan on both sides of my family, back three to five generations. While I now make my home in Vancouver, I return often to visit family. It has always been on my list of 'some day' to have a production at Persephone, and now as you sit in the audience I can say that it has happened.

The Romeo Initiative began with a reaction. My father was visiting and we caught the last part of a documentary on tv during 'spy week' on the History Channel. A woman, surrounded by a multitude of small dogs, was emoting over the betrayal she experienced under the East German initiative. My father, perhaps spurred on by the tears and number of small animals, expressed his belief that the woman was delusional. I reacted differently. It seemed to me anyone who had been through a relationship which had failed to live up to its early expectations, especially those that had involved some kind of deception, would ask similar questions to those that this woman was posing.

That simple musing turned into years of reading and research, from German texts translated by a friend, to speaking with a German journalist accessed through the BBC. I dug into the latest research about the bio-chemistry of romantic love. It led to a critically-successful world premiere during another February 15 years ago, publication, and numerous productions across Canada and the United States. The play was translated into Italian. Through this play, I won the National Enbridge Award for Established Artist and was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama.

It's been along road from that first discussion about a tv documentary and the spark of an idea. This play is for anyone who has ever fallen in love, and for anyone who has ever had their heart broken. Which, I expect, is all of us.

Trina Davies



MAYOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the 2025/26 season at Persephone Theatre, on beautiful Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis.

Now in its 51st season, Persephone Theatre continues to be a vital part of Saskatoon's cultural landscape, offering audiences the shared joy of experiencing stories brought to life on stage. Theatre, at its heart, is storytelling —which constantly reminds us of the enduring power a great story has to connect, heal, and inspire.

From its roots in 1974 to its permanent home at River Landing, Persephone has remained committed to enriching lives through the performing arts. Whether exploring timeless classics or bold new voices, each season contributes to building a stronger, more vibrant community.

A great story draws us in, invites reflection, and stays with us long after the final curtain. It brings us together in laughter, in empathy, and sometimes in challenge —always reminding us of our shared humanity.

Congratulations to Persephone Theatre on more than five decades of storytelling excellence. We look forward to another season of unforgettable performances and the continued positive impact of theatre in our city.

To everyone bringing this year's productions to life —on stage, behind the scenes, or in the audience —may the transformative power of live theatre continue to inspire and uplift you.

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Mayor

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DAVID EDNEY COMMUNITY LIBRARY

The Edney Community Library is a collection of plays and theatre-related books, hosted at Persephone Theatre, for community use. The Library includes a wide array of items, including: technical books, theory books, contemporary and modern playwrights, Canadian playwrights, Indigenous playwrights, Queer playwrights, playwrights from the Global Majority, and European, British and Greek classical theatre, among others.

All books from the Edney Community Library are free to borrow. You are welcome to stay and enjoy the Tier 2 Lounge while you read, or take the book with you. All we ask is for all books to be returned to the library when finished.

The Library launched in the fall of 2022. It was made possible by an initial donation from David Edney, which was supported with further donations from Phillip Adams, Derek Butt, Heather Cant, Grahame Kent, Yvette Nolan and the Sask Playwrights Centre. It has continued to grow with support and donations from other members of our community. We are so grateful to these folks for helping us bring this resource to our community.

Do you have plays or theatre books you would like to donate to the library? Please contact Anika Caswell, Social Media & Marketing Associate at anika.c@persephonetheatre.org.

We gratefully accept both books and monetary donations to keep the library well stocked each year with fresh titles.



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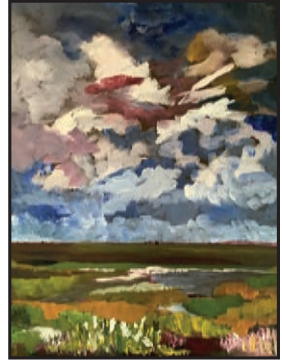
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IRIS COLLECTIVE



Iris is a collective of four artists working in the Saskatoon area. Named after the Greek goddess of the rainbow—and the part of the eye that regulates light—Iris invites viewers of “Iris at the Pomegranate” to walk with us here, considering the play of light, line, and colour in the surrounding world.

Blanche Johnston works from her studio near Beaver Creek, expressing the energy of the environment and a curiosity about place and time. She creates with acrylics and oils, using glazes or impasto, on canvas or paper mounted on panels. blanchejohnstonart@gmail.com

Bev Brenna paints from her studio in Saskatoon and her cabin at Emma Lake as well as en plein air in the Battlefords area, using watercolour and acrylic media. Her voice is influenced by impressionism and poetics. bev.brenna@usask.ca

Bonnie Conly is a rural multi-disciplinary artist with Ukrainian ancestry. Her work investigates themes of place, identity, and immigration. She has had solo and group exhibitions in numerous public galleries. b.a.conly@shaw.ca

Michelle Plett was raised in northern Saskatchewan and grew up with an appreciation for the beauty of nature and a fascination with plant life. Since discovering painting with encaustics (beeswax), she has shared her works with many collectors. michelleplettart@gmail.com



CAST & CREATIVE TEAM



RICARDO ALVARADO | Stage Manager

LOCAL ARTIST

Previous Persephone Stage Management Credits: *A Christmas Story*, *The Woman In Black*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Native Gardens*, *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, *The Revolutionists*, *The Mountaintop*, *The Birds & The Bees*

Ricardo is a SATAward-winning multidisciplinary theatre artist, and they are proud to be part of Saskatoon's vibrant theatre community. They are the co-founder of Ppl r Ppl Productions, and advocate for ppl first in this industry. Select Credits: *Evita*, *The Crooner* (SM, Drayton Entertainment); *Luna* (Puppet Designer, 25th St Theatre); *Die Harsh* (SM, Grindstone Theatre); *Hamlet, Romeo & Juliet*, *As You Like It* (SM, Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan); *Spring Awakening*, *Hand to God*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Avenue Q*, *The Rocky Horror Show* (Director, Ppl r Ppl Productions). Up next: *Othello* (ASM, Stratford Festival), *Sexy Laundry* (SM, Drayton Entertainment).



JENNA "JB" BERENBAUM | Lena

LOCAL ARTIST

Previous Persephone credits: *18 Jews Order Chinese Food* (playwright), *Treasure Island*, *Shape of a Girl*, *Invisible Girl*, *Incredible Speediness of Jamie Cavanaugh*

JB is an award-winning actor and writer based in Saskatoon. Select acting credits include: *The Reel Whirled* (Sum Theatre), *Hand To God* (Ppl r ppl productions), *Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan), *Bad Hats Peter Pan* (Globe Theatre) and many more. Their play, *18 Jews Order Chinese Food*, premiered last year as part of Persephone Theatre's 50th season. They are thrilled to be back on the Persephone stage. Enjoy the show!



KATIE BLACKBURN-DUST | Assistant Stage Manager

LOCAL ARTIST

Previous Persephone Apprentice Stage Management Credits: *Million Dollar Quartet*, *This Is How We Got Here*, Lighting Design Apprentice: *The Herd*, *Stones in his Pockets*

Katie Blackburn-Dust is a Stage Manager, Lighting Designer, and Arts Administrator based on Treaty 6 territory in Saskatoon. Katie holds a BFA with Honours in Acting from the University of Saskatchewan, but is happy to have found her home in the theatre behind the scenes - more specifically, in the booth! Katie is proud to be a recipient of the SATAward for Outstanding Emerging Artist and a nominee for the SATAward for Excellence in Design.



TRINA DAVIES | Playwright

VISITING PLAYWRIGHT FROM VANCOUVER, WHO GREW UP IN SASKATOON

Trina Davies is a playwright based in Vancouver, who grew up in Saskatoon. Trina's award-winning plays include *Shatter*, *Multi User Dungeon*, *The Auction*, *The Bone Bridge* and *Waxworks*. Her play *The Romeo Initiative* was a finalist for Canada's top literary prize the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama 2012 and was the winner of the National Enbridge Prize for Established Artist. Her plays have been performed across Canada and in a number of other countries including the United States, Germany, Italy, and India. Her work has been translated into Italian and German. She has participated in artist residencies at the Stratford Festival in Ontario, Banff Centre for the Arts, the Playwrights Theatre Centre and the Bella Vita Playwrights Retreat in Italy.

Trina is a member of the Alberta Playwrights Network and the Playwrights Guild of Canada. Learn more about Trina at <http://www.trinadavies.com/>



MACKENZIE DAWSON | Markus

LOCAL ARTIST

Previous Persephone Acting Credits: *Miracle on 34th Street*, *The Fiancée*, *Jabber*, *For Art's Sake*

Mackenzie is proud to call Saskatoon home. A graduate of the University of Saskatchewan's Acting program, and Artistic Director with SUM Theatre, much of his practice focuses on original devised creations and adaptations of well-known stories. Mac can often be seen running the Meewasin Trail, venturing into the mountains, and presenting plays in neighbourhood parks. His work as an actor, director, and producer has enabled him to collaborate with many of Saskatoon's theatre companies. Special thanks to Megan, who dares him to dream big.

Upcoming for Mac: Directing Theatre in the Park 2026 (SUM Theatre). Find us in a park near you!



KRISTI FRANK | Karin

VISITING ARTIST FROM ONTARIO

Persephone Debut

Kristi Frank is a singer, dancer, actor, teacher, and mentor. She hails from North Battleford and has enjoyed a career that has taken her across Canada and abroad. She is thrilled to be coming home for this production. ELSEWHERE (selected): the Arts Club; the Grand Theatre; Tokyo Disney; and 13 seasons at the Shaw Festival. Upcoming: Constanza (Amadeus), Shaw Festival. Thank you to my family, fabulous hubby, and lifelong Battleford Beauties.



HANNE LOOSEN | Set and Costume Designer
VISITING ARTIST FROM CALGARY

Previous Persephone Credits: *Bright Half Life* (Set Design)

Hanne is a set and costume designer living and working in Calgary. She grew up in Belgium and got a BA from the Academy of Visual Arts Maastricht and an MA in Scenography at the Technical University Berlin. She has worked for various companies in Calgary and she is a regular guest at the Shaw Festival, where she has spent five seasons designing.



NATHANIEL MORIN | Apprentice Stage Manager
LOCAL ARTIST

Persephone Debut

Nathaniel Morin holds a Bachelor's degree in Drama from the University of Saskatchewan and has stage managed productions at Greystone Theatre, both academically and as a volunteer. Nathaniel is passionate in working for Persephone and other local theater companies to deepen his experience and transition into a full-time career in stage management.



JORDAN PERRY | Sound Designer
LOCAL ARTIST

Persephone Debut

Jordan Perry is a Canadian Independent Music Award-nominated artist, drummer, music producer, and songwriter, known for blending '80s aesthetic with modern production and bombastic drums. Collaborations with artists such as Beau Nectar, Vikki Minor and Rooky Kamiz have taken him across western Canada and beyond, performing at festivals and awards galas like *Sasktel Jazz Fest*, *Departure/Canadian Music Week*, *Breakout West*, *The Sask Music Awards*, *Ness Creek Music Festival*, *FONO Festival* and more.



JUDITH SCHULZ | Lighting Designer

LOCAL ARTIST

Previous Persephone Lighting Design Credits: *The Revolutionists* Projection Design Credits: *The Herd* (SATAward Receptient), *This Is How We Got Here* (SATAward Nominee)

Judith Schulz (she/her) is a Saskatoon-based theatre designer, director, producer, and administrator with a passion for making stories come alive through lighting, projection design, abstract sets, or support roles like stage management. She currently serves as the Executive Director for the Saskatchewan Association of Theatre Professionals, where she uses the values of care and progress through a lens of optimistic realism to bring programming and development to the theatre sector in Saskatchewan.

Select credits: *The Curst* (Projections, Dancing Sky Theatre), *A Brontë Without Genius* (Lights, Planter Box Theatre/Live Five), *Zastrozzi: The Master of Discipline* (Lights, Eisenschmetterlinge Collective/Live Five), *The Unplugging* (Lights/Projections, Burnt Thicket Theatre, SATAward Nominee), *Luna* (Lights, 25th Street Theatre), *Yaga* (Director/Producer, Two Bees Productions/Live Five).



XANDER SCRIBANTE | Assistant Director

LOCAL ARTIST

Persephone Debut

Xander Scribante is an Emerging Theatre artist. He is always looking for more ways to be involved with theatre, and is very excited to be the assistant director for *The Romeo Initiative*. He has also been privileged to be able to perform in *Paper Wheat* at Dancing Sky Theatre, as well as *Passage* at the 2024 Saskatoon Fringe Festival. If you see him in the city, feel free to stop him and say hi.



JONATHAN SEINEN | DIRECTOR

VISITING ARTIST FROM VANCOUVER

Previous Persephone Credit: *Constellations* Directing (Workshop)

Directing credits: Boys In Chairs Collective's *Access Me* (Dora Award), *Iphigenia and the Furies* by Jeff Ho (Theatre Passe Muraille), and *Black Boys* (Buddies In Bad Times Theatre). As an actor, he last appeared in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Ekstatika) at the Artesian in Regina. His company Architect Theatre is developing *Weyburn 1959* by Arthur Milner, which was part of Sum Theatre's *The First Monday 24/25* reading series. In 2020, Jonathan was awarded the John Hirsch Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts.

jonathanseinen.com



RACHEL WALLISER | Intimacy Director

LOCAL ARTIST

Previous Persephone Credits: *The Birds & The Bees*
(Assistant Director/Apprentice Intimacy Director)

Rachel Walliser (she/her) juggles work as an actor, award-winning playwright, intimacy director, designer, and professional chocolate taster. On top of holding a BA in Theatre and Performance & Women's and Gender Studies from the University of Regina, Rachel has also trained with the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre's "Reading the Compass" Dramaturgy Program, Theatrical Intimacy Education, and Intimacy Directors and Coordinators. You last saw her on stage in *Colourless Ruby* and the *Fantastical Missing Shades* at the Saskatoon Fringe Festival.

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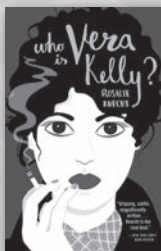
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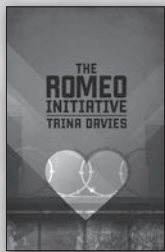
inspired by *The Romeo Initiative*



American Spy
by Lauren Wilkinson



Who Is Vera Kelly?
by Rosalie Knecht



The Romeo Initiative
by Trina Davies



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If you would like more information about the Directors Circle or monthly giving contact:

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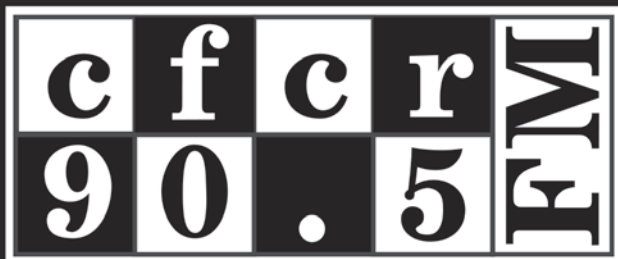
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