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The World Premiere of

THE EMPRESS & THE PRIME MINISTER

by Darrin Hagen
Translations by Gisèle Villeneuve

Featuring: **Darrin Hagen & Joey Lespérance**Director: **Bradley Moss**

Set & Costume Designer:

Tessa Stamp

Set & Lighting Designer:

Scott Peters

Sound Designer: **Darrin Hagen** Stage Manager: **Gina Moe**

Production Manager:

Scott Peters

Carpenter/Painter/Head of Lighting:

Tyler Ferguson

Carpenter/Painter/Head of Audio:

Alana Rice

Makeup Consultant: **Neon**Production Assistant:

Sam Kennedy

Photo by **Ryan Parker Photography**





32nd Anniversary

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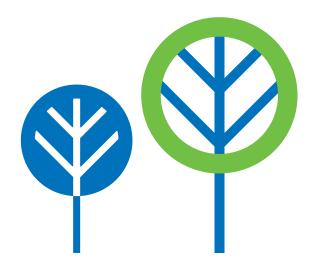
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Friday April 26, 2019 Following the performance 9:35pm FREE OF CHARGE

Join CBC Radio Active host
Adrienne Pan as she sits down with
Darrin Hagen, Joey Lespérance,
and Bradley Moss. The panel will
discuss the journey of bringing
ted northe's story to the stage and
how things have changed in the 50
years since the decriminalization of
homosexuality in Canada.

Even if you've seen the show – we invite you back for talk-back night!





A NOTE FROM THE **PLAYWRIGHT**

DARRIN HAGEN - THE EDMONTON QUEEN

I'd like to dedicate this play to Mr. ted northe. I didn't know him well, but one night six years ago he gave a speech that inspired me. I hope I've done his story justice.

In 2013 my husband and I flew to Toronto. I was to be inducted into the Q Hall of Fame Canada. I still have no idea who put my name forward, but I'm so grateful for that evening, because while listening to the speakers that night, I was reintroduced to Mr. ted northe: The Empress of Canada.

I had met ted decades earlier, ever-sobriefly, because he was a figurehead in the North American Drag world. I was Imperial Crown Princess in Edmonton, and my star was rising through the drag scene. Somehow, we had both survived the 80s, and now I was watching him give a keynote address at the Hall of Fame event.

That night, he shared the moving and emotional story of his early years as a drag activist in the 1950s in Canada and the U.S. Partway through his speech I leaned over and whispered to my husband, "His story should be turned into a play."

It was real life, but it had all the elements of an exciting script: a pioneer who found himself at a crossroads in history, poised to change the world. The fact that he had decided decades ago to do that as a gay man in a dress just made the tale more compelling.



Adrienne Pan on

Radio Active

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A NOTE FROM THE **PLAYWRIGHT**

Mr. northe passed away a few short months later. The speech I had witnessed was, in fact, his final time addressing the community he had worked so hard to liberate. I learned later that his friend Paul Thieren had filmed several hours of interviews with ted before his death. Paul graciously shared those interviews with me and soon I was madly transcribing hours of video. The stories he told in those interviews became the spine of this play.

As we mark 50 years since Bill C-150 was passed into law, we should reflect on how far the world has evolved. But we also need to take note of how precarious this evolution can be. The pre-decriminalization world ted northe spoke of was a dark and terrifying place for LGBTQ people, and vet somehow he saw the future that could be possible. All Queer people in Canada should reflect upon the decades since then, and take note of the continuing challenges that face sexual minorities all over the world.

The revolution that activists like Mr. northe launched isn't over.



BEFORE DECIMINALIZATION

"There's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation."

-Pierre Trudeau



Pierre Trudeau is interviewed following the passing of Bill C-150

between men was a capital crime and punishable by death. There is no surviving record of executions or political figures who were reluctant to enforce the law. This was modified in 1861 when the sentence became imprisonment of 10 years to life.

In the mid 19th century, sexual activity

The law almost exclusively targeted men and used consistently ambiguous language including "gross indecency" to give more powers to law enforcement. Homosexual people were often referred to as "criminal sexual psychopaths," "dangerous sexual offenders," or "someone likely to commit another sexual offence" – which implies that a gay person was sexually deviant to begin with.

A notable case was that of Everett Klippert. Klippert, a Northwest Territories mechanic, acknowledged to police that he was gay, had sex with men over a 24-year period and was unlikely to change. In 1967, backed by the Supreme Court, Klippert was sent to prison indefinitely. Everett Klippert was released from prison in 1971 and is the last Canadian to go to jail for being gay.

Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969 under Bill C-150, an omnibus bill introduced by Pierre Trudeau and the Liberals. This bill was passed one month before the Stonewall Riots which took place in the United States cities of New York, Boston, Minneapolis, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. The Stonewall Riots are often seen as the beginning of the Gay Liberation in North America.

Both the passing of Bill C-150 and the Stonewall Riots celebrate their 50th anniversary in 2019.





CONVERSION THERAPY

Homosexuality was viewed by the APA (American Psychiatric Association) as a mental disorder and conversion therapy was used widely in all parts of North America to change an individual's sexual orientation. This "therapy" involved electric-shock and nausea-inducing drugs during the presentation



Protestors Against Conversion Therapy in Nova Scotia

of same-sex erotic images. Today conversion therapy is still used but focuses mainly on counselling, psychoanalytical therapy, and group support and pressure.

There is no reliable evidence to suggest that sexual orientation can be changed and is seen by many as ineffective and immoral.

Conversion therapy is still legal in Alberta and in other provinces across Canada.

Pride March in Toronto 1972



THE **EMPRESS** OF CANADA

ted northe



ted was born in 1937 in Alberta and was raised in the Fraser Valley of BC alongside his supportive and loving parents. As a young man he traveled extensively, including to Los Angeles to train as a nurse, because in Canada men were not allowed to attend nursing school in the 1950s. Eventually ted ended up in San Francisco where he met other likeminded gay men and women with a desire to see change in the world and become activists for their community. Over time ted spent many years travelling along the west coast in the USA and Canada helping other activists organize.

"Their (my parents) unconditional love gave me strength and made my life that much easier because I knew I always had a safe space and a home. But when I looked around in my community I got angry. I knew in my heart that the public beatings and prosecutions were wrong and I needed to do something about it."

-ted northe, Q Ball 2013

On August 18, 1958 ted and a small group of friends stood on the steps of the Vancouver Courthouse to protest for equal right with placards that read "I am a Human Being". Police quickly chased them from the steps but Mr. Northe looks at that day as the beginning of his revolution which was followed by a massive letter writing campaign in support of the decriminalization of homosexuality. The letter campaign sparked the

THE **EMPRESS** OF CANADA

ted northe

attention of a young Minister of Justice – Pierre Trudeau. The story of their collaboration and ted's journey towards decriminalization is the focal point of *The Empress & The Prime Minister*.

Over his life ted northe had many other accolades and continued to support the LGBTQ community in Vancouver and across Canada. Ted sponsored the first gay sports league, the first Vancouver Pride Parade, and supported the creation of the Greater Vancouver Native Culture Society for Two Spirited People.

Later in life ted was honoured with the Canadian Red Cross Humanitarian and Distinguished Citizen Award, The Governor General's Special Service Medal for Distinguished Citizen and Humanitarian, was the first recipient of the José Sarria Award, is an inductee of the Q Hall of Fame (2009), and in 2013 was granted the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Award in recognition for his contribution to Canada. These are just some of his many special recognitions and awards.

Ted northe passed away in 2014 at the age of 74. He leaves behind a legacy of activism, inspiration, and the long-standing tradition of the title - The Empress of Canada.



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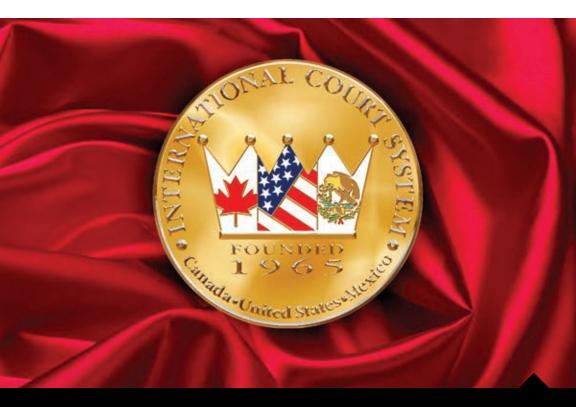


THE IMPERIAL COURT SYSTEM

The Imperial Court System (ICS) was founded in San Francisco in 1965 by José Sarria, also known as Mama José or the Widow Norton. Sarria's court eventually became the nexus of fundraising for gay men and women who were fighting for equal rights. Various chapters or "empires" of the ICS started up in Seattle, Portland, and the chapter started by ted northe in Vancouver in 1967. This is when northe took on the title as the self-proclaimed Empress of Canada which was largely disputed by the ICS. Following that, in 1971 northe founded the Canadian Court System which largely operated exclusively until Sarria began an Imperial Court Council to bring all groups under the ICS together. At which point, northe was given the title Empress of All Canada, ending the dispute.

Now, known as the International Imperial Court System it is the second largest LGBTQ fundraising group and organization in the world.

international courtsystem.org





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THEATRE NETWORK BIOS



Darrin Hagen - Playwright, ted & others, Sound Designer

Darrin Hagen is the Artistic Director of Guys In Disguise, which is celebrating over three decades of creating drag comedies that have toured across North America. He has received 7 Sterling awards for his work in the Edmonton theatre scene, and over 40 Sterling nominations. His writing debut in 1996 was the award-winning THE EDMONTON QUEEN (transformed into book length and published by Brindle & Glass Publishing). Other plays by Darrin include WITCH HUNT AT THE STRAND (nominated for Outstanding New Play); BUDDY (nominated for Outstanding New Play); With Bells On (nominated for Outstanding New Play); BITCHSLAP!; THE NEO-NANCIES: HITLER'S KICKLINE!; TORNADO MAGNET: A SALUTE TO TRAILER COURT WOMEN (published by Brindle & Glass); as well as TYPHOON JUDY (co-written with Christopher Peterson); and PILEDRIVER! (co-written with Wes Borg). His plays have been produced across Canada, in the U.S. and as far away as Ireland.

With his creative partner Trevor Schmidt, he has co-created the hit musical KLONDYKES (nominated for 5 Sterling awards); FLORA & FAWNA'S FIELD TRIP (Sterling Award for Outstanding New Fringe Work); PREPARE FOR THE WORST! (Sterling Nominee for Outstanding New Fringe Work); PUCK BUNNIES (Sterling Nominee for Outstanding New Fringe Work); DON'T FROWN AT THE GOWN; PSYCHOBABBLE; DRAGULA and the children's musical MY OTHER MOTHER.

He has been inducted into the Q Hall of Fame Canada and the Edmonton Queer Hall of Fame. In 2005 he was named one of 100 Edmontonians of the Century, and last year was named one of Alberta's 25 Most Influential Artists in the last 25 years. To the best of his knowledge, he's the only drag queen on that list. He was one of the official Cultural Ambassadors of Canada's 150 Celebrations, and was appointed as the Writer In Residence for Edmonton Public Libraries for 2018. Most recently, he was one of the recipients of the Edmonton Artists' Trust Fund.



Joey Lespérance - Pierre & others

Joey is thrilled to do his debut at Theatre Network. He is a bilingual actor, established in Vancouver for 30 years and performed across Canada. He's been nominated six times by the Jessie Richardson Awards. In 2015 he was the recipient for Best Lead Actor for 'À TOI, POUR TOUJOURS, TA MARIELOU, Théâtre La Seizième. Other credits includes THE HUNGER ROOM, Staircase Theatre. LE SOULIER and BONJOUR LA BONJOUR, Théâtre La Seizième. THE SNOW QUEEN, Globe Theatre, Regina and many, many more. Future projects; Joey will be playing Cuirette in HOSANNA at UBC, Patrick in ELBOW CAFE THE MUSICAL, Zee Zee theatre Vancouver. Joey is a graduate of Studio 58.



Gina Moe – Stage Manager

Recent Theatre Credits include, OH CHRISTMAS TREE for the Roxy Performance Series, A LESSON IN BRIO, SHOCKER'S DELIGHT and THE SALON OF THE TALKING TURK for Teatro La Quindicina, and DON'T FROWN AT THE GOWN and PUCK BUNNIES for Guys in Disguise, WITCH HUNT AT THE STRAND for Workshop West Playwright's Theatre and THE LAST FIVE YEARS for Theatre Network. Gina also assistant stage managed for Edmonton Opera's productions of HMS PINAFORE, DON GIOVANI, CENERENTOLA, MARIA STUARDA, CARMEN, and LUCIA.

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THEATRE NETWORK BIOS



Bradley Moss – *Director*

Bradley is full of pride to be directing the world premiere of THE EMPRESS & THE PRIME MINISTER by Darrin Hagen and to be working with such a talented team. Bradley is a MFA graduate in directing from the University Alberta. He joined Theatre Network in 1996 to create the multidisciplinary emerging artist festival – Nextfest. In 2014 Bradley accepted the dual role of Artistic & Executive Director for Theatre Network. Some recent productions include: MINERVA – QUEEN OF THE HANDCUFFS, INFINITY, The Sterling Award Winning Production IRMA VOTH, BUST, GORDON, RED, THE LAST FIVE YEARS, ARMSTRONG'S WAR, the Governor General Nominated THE GRAVITATIONAL PULL OF BERNICE TRIMBLE, the Sterling Award Winning LITTLE ONE, DRIVING MISS DAISY, the Governor General Award Winning PIG GIRL, the Sterling Award Winning LET THE LIGHT OF DAY THROUGH, WHERE THE BLOOD MIXES, IN ON IT, MOVING ALONG, TWELFTH NIGHT, PUBLIC SPEAKING, DOG, THUNDERSTICK, BUDDY, ALIAS GODOT, MISERY, CLOSER AND CLOSER APART, the Sterling Award Winning SUMMER OF MY AMAZING LUCK, TRUE WEST, GIRL IN THE GOLDFISH BOWL, HOSANNA, MARION BRIDGE, A SKULL IN CONNEMARA, the Sterling Award Winning glam rock musical HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH, and HIGH LIFE.



Scott Peters – Set & Lighting Designer

Scott has worked with Darrin and Guys in Disguise for over twenty years on TORNADO MAGNET, KLONDYKES, WITH BELLS ON, PLANES, TRANS AND AUTOMOBILES and more. Scott is an award-winning Lighting and Set Designer, and his recent design credits include WHAT A YOUNG WIFE OUGHT TO KNOW, INFINITY, IRMA VOTH, BUST (Theatre Network), 9-5, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (Grant MacEwan University), MINERVA: QUEEN OF THE HANDCUFFS (Ghost Writer Theatre), OH! CHRISTMAS TREE (Blunt Entertainment & Theatre of the New Heart), HAMLET, COMEDY OF ERRORS (Freewill Shakespeare Festival). Scott is the Production Manager for Theatre Network, Nextfest Emerging Artist Festival, and The Interstellar Rodeo Music Festival. He is also a founding member of Edmonton band Captain Tractor.



Tessa Stamp - Set & Costume Designer

Tessa Stamp is an Edmonton born theatre professional, entrepreneur, and found object artist. A dancer first, Tessa has made her career in technical theatre. She travelled the world as a pirate, ran away with the circus and eventually landed back in Edmonton. Tessa enjoys set, lighting and costume design and stage management. Recent credits include SLIGHT OF MIND, Theatre Yes (Stage Management and Set Design), LAKE OF THE STRANGERS, Naheyawin (Set Design and Production Management), WHAT A YOUNG WIFE OUGHT TO KNOW, Theatre Network (Set and Costume Design) METIS MUTT, One Little Indian Productions (Set and Lighting Design and Stage Management), SNOW QUEEN, Azimuth Theatre(Set, Lighting and Costume Design), INFINITY, Theatre Network (Costume Design and Props), CONSTELLATIONS, Shadow Theatre (Set and Lighting Design), THE PREACHER, THE PRINCESS AND A CROW, Azimuth Theatre (Set Design), THE SUPINE COBBLER, The Maggie Tree (Set and Costume Design).





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IMPERIAL CROWN PRINCESS OF EDMONTON:



What was the most important thing for you to explore as you wrote the play?

I was 5 years old when decriminalization happened, so the majority of my life has been lived in its aftermath. I wanted to figure out on a very personal level how the changes of 1969 affected my life as a gay man. I also wanted to explore the idea that drag equals activism, and always enjoy drawing attention to how drag has influenced history.

How did the play change and grow as you wrote it?

It has gone through so many changes – it was going to be duelling monologues at one point. But as soon as I put ted and Pierre in a scene together I started to enjoy the two of them sparring and testing each other as a respectful friendship developed.

How does this play differ from previous work you have written?

It has a lot in common with *Witch Hunt at the Strand* because both
plays use real source material. Witch
Hunt used actual court testimony

– The Empress uses ted's actual
words from an interview conducted
before his death. But I think this play
hits home for me in a much more
personal way, because both ted and
I had a journey of self-discovery
through the act of doing drag, and
that realization changed everything.
I think my life experience expertly
prepared me for writing this story.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DARRIN HAGEN

Certain character interactions may not have played out exactly as the play portrays them. How do you approach writing a scene that you weren't a fly-on-the-wall for?

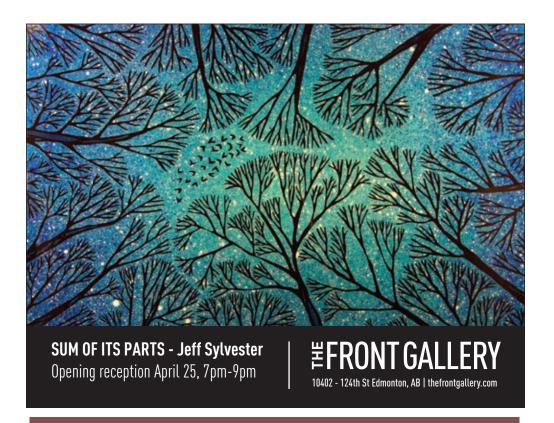
A writer always has to speculate when it comes to how historical figures actually interacted. In writing for ted I always asked myself what I would say to Pierre if offered the opportunity; what would I ask, what would I want to learn. And which stories from my life would I want to share to help him understand how I was affected by the reality of the laws around homosexuality.

How has drag changed for you since you started doing it? Since ted started doing it? Are the same values and practices still at play?

Drag is always evolving. I don't always claim to understand that evolution. But I think at its core, drag is a very public expression of a very private impulse. ted and I both had to deal with society's hostility and confusion when we started doing drag, and we were both lucky enough to see society evolve.

Once popular culture embraces something, it changes forever. Drag has experienced a real cultural prominence in the past few decades. It's always exciting to see the world open up to new forms of expression. But part of me misses being involved in something that was considered very 'underground'.





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AN INTERVIEW WITH **DARRIN HAGEN**

How much of your own personal politics came out in the characters as you wrote them? Or did the politics of the play find their way just due to the nature of the story you are telling?

ted and I had much in common. This creative process has allowed me to explore a lot of ideas that have dogged me for decades as I study the world I came of age in. And in today's Alberta, it seems many of these politics are still being debated.

If you could say one thing to ted and Pierre Trudeau about this play, what would it be?

Thank you for opening Canada's mind to the equality, inclusion and respect of sexual minorities.

What's next for you?

I'm composing music for Freewill Players this summer, and getting ready to don the uniform of the Naturelle Girls again this in August as Trevor Schmidt and I perform *Flora & Fawna Have Beaver Fever (and so does Fleurette).*

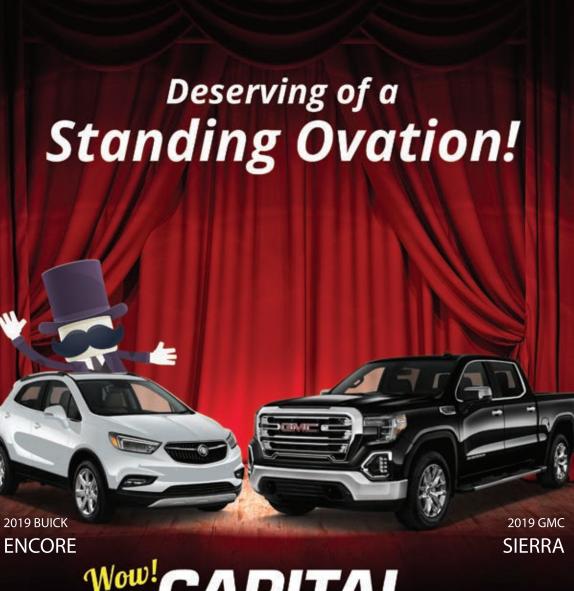
But I am also deep into the process of creating 2 new Queer History plays, including one called *Pisces*, about the infamous 1981 Edmonton bathhouse raids.

Finally, what activities do you enjoy outside of your work as an artist?

Gardening. Road trips to take photos. And baking, believe it or not!

Darrin Hagen in Tornado Magnet 2016









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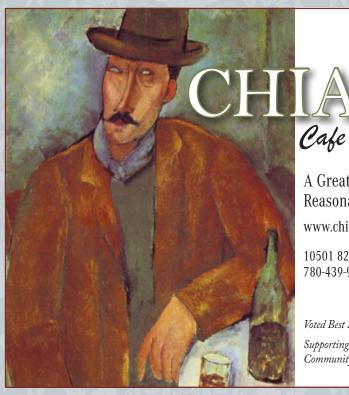
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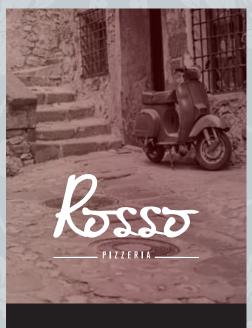
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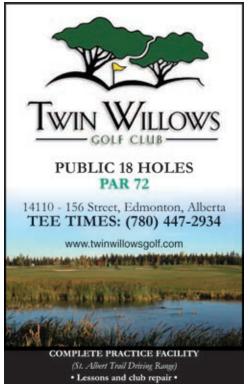














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