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University of Lethbridge alumni at heart of 2024/25 Mainstage Alumni Season lineup

With stories ranging from adaptations of classic tales to intense encounters, social satire and a cabaret, the 2024/25 Department of Drama alumni season promises an exciting lineup of mainstage theatre with extensive involvement from many University of Lethbridge alumni. The alumni season is organized around a celebration of Faculty of Fine Arts alumni, bringing playwrights, designers, directors, performers and more back to the ULethbridge campus.

Kicking off the 2024/25 Mainstage Alumni Season in October 2024 will be *alterNatives*, a hilarious and provocative social satire penned by Indigenous playwright and author Drew Hayden Taylor. Stepping back into the director's role is Na'tayao'tako (Holy Walking Around the Encampment), Marshall Vielle (BFA - Dramatic Arts '17), who co-wrote and co-directed the historic production of [Yisstsiiyi](#) as part of last year's mainstage season.

"It's a gift to be included as a director in the alumni season," says Vielle. "If I've learned anything about directing, it's that being the primary interpreter of the text at hand is equally terrifying, as it is thrilling. Moreover, I'm really excited to see more Indigenous stories being shared at ULethbridge and I hope these kinds of plays continue to be invested in."

alterNatives centres around three couples gathered for a dinner party at a contemporary upscale apartment in Toronto, where cultural differences are explored over a menu of moose roast and vegetarian lasagna. Drama instructor Dave Smith is slated to design the set and lights, while Jolane Houle (BFA - Dramatic Arts '12) is returning to design costumes, after designing for the 2023 production of *Yisstsiiyi*.

The second show in the Alumni Season will be *In Tongues*, written by James Odin Wade (BFA - Multidisciplinary '11). Originally slated to be performed in March 2020, the play is brought back to ULethbridge following its cancellation due to the pandemic. Directed by Anastasia Siceac (BFA - Dramatic Arts '20) and featuring alumni designing costumes (Amanda Epp, BFA - Multidisciplinary '20) and sound (Kelly Roberts, BFA - Drama

Performance '91), *In Tongues* is set in a remote cabin in British Columbia and showcases an intense encounter with the mind of a serial killer.

“I'm delighted to have *In Tongues* as part of the 2024/25 season,” says Odin Wade of the play that will run in November 2024. “ULethbridge is where I first encountered some of my favourite plays, discovered a love of playwriting and even workshopped the initial drafts of this play with the students of the New Play Workshop in 2018. Bringing this play to this stage is a remarkable full-circle moment for me.”

In the new year, the Department of Drama will present *Paradise Lost* by Erin Shields, winner of the Governor General's Literary Award. A contemporary feminist adaptation of the classic English poem by John Milton from 1667, the show will be directed by Jamie Dunsdon (BFA - Dramatic Arts '06) and will feature costumes by Emmy-nominated designer Rebecca Toon (BFA - Dramatic Arts '06). This production, premiering in February 2025, will feature a large cast of actors, with lighting and set design guided by MFA student Lucy Du and drama faculty member Julia Wasilewski (BA '05, BFA - Multidisciplinary '07).

The alumni season will conclude in March 2025 with a cabaret curated by faculty member Mia van Leeuwen. This production, taking place in the David Spinks Theatre, will feature a variety of performances by current students, guest appearances by drama alumni and design support from student designers and drama instructors Dave Smith and Lee Burckes.

Chair of the drama department, Deric Olsen (BFA - Multimedia '03), says this unique slate of productions will showcase the diverse talents of drama graduates and highlight the variety of skills and talents that can be gained from the dramatic arts degree program.

“This is an exciting opportunity for our students to connect with and learn from some of the incredible alumni from the Department of Drama,” says Olsen. “I see this season as a celebration of our alumni and as a valuable way for a new generation of students to work side-by-side with truly excellent theatre professionals and, through those experiences, be inspired and be better able to imagine those opportunities and career trajectories for themselves.”

In addition to featuring Faculty of Fine Arts alumni, the 2024/25 Mainstage Alumni Season will result in many experiential learning opportunities for current students, including roles for stage managers, sound designers and assistant designers, as drama graduates will share their experience and expertise through the creative process.

The Faculty of Fine Arts is pleased to announce Chancellor Terry Whitehead (BA '94) as the Season Patron of the 2024/25 Mainstage Alumni Season and thanks him for his

generous support of theatre at ULeithbridge. Tickets for mainstage productions will go on sale in September 2024.

PHOTOS

Marshall Vielle

James Odin Wade, photo by Mike Tan

To view online: <https://www.ulethbridge.ca/unews/article/university-lethbridge-alumni-heart-202425-mainstage-alumni-season-lineup>

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Our University's Blackfoot name is Iniskim, meaning Sacred Buffalo Stone. The University is located in traditional Blackfoot Confederacy territory. We honour the Blackfoot people and their traditional ways of knowing in caring for this land, as well as all Indigenous Peoples who have helped shape and continue to strengthen our University community.