



**LUNCHBOX**  
— THEATRE —

# Media Release

**Lunchbox Theatre is proud to welcome *The Dark Lady*, a co-production with The Shakespeare Company. Tickets on sale now.**

**CALGARY, AB** – September 22, 2023 — Fresh off of nine nominations from the Betty Mitchell Awards—including a win for Outstanding Production of a Musical for *Home for the Holidays*—Lunchbox Theatre is proud to present its first mainstage production of the 2023-24 season, ***The Dark Lady***, co-produced with **The Shakespeare Company**.

Created by **Jessica B. Hill**, this new play is inspired by the possibility of a romance between William Shakespeare and Emilia Bassano. The story takes place in Elizabethan England, where Bassano, a multilingual woman of mixed race, was living and working as a musician and poet—and is thought to have been the inspiration for the mysterious “Dark Lady” in William Shakespeare’s sonnets.

Says Artistic Director Bronwyn Steinberg, “Jessica uses a brilliant juxtaposition of a historical setting and totally contemporary dialogue to create a love story that is deeply relatable for today’s audiences. She brings Shakespeare down from his divine-inspired status to that of a real person whose inspiration comes from another very real person and their deep, profound love.”

Hill has spent 7 seasons at the Stratford Festival as one of their new generation of leading ladies, and she turned to playwriting when the 2020 season was canceled. This new Canadian play premiered in the summer of 2023 as a co-production by Shakespeare in the Ruins (Winnipeg) and Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan (Saskatoon), and we are thrilled to bring this story to Calgary for a new local production. The show is co-produced by **The Shakespeare Company** and will run **October 10 - 29** in the Studio Theatre at Vertigo.

**Tickets are on sale now, range in price from \$22-\$35 per performance, and can be purchased at [LunchboxTheatre.com](https://LunchboxTheatre.com)**

## **Synopsis:**

*The Dark Lady* is a witty and sensual duet that reclaims the story of a fascinating woman who was almost lost to history—Emilia Bassano. Through her eyes, this thrilling love story helps us both understand and challenge our love of Shakespeare. Emilia was multiracial and multilingual, and the first Englishwoman to publish her own poetry. And she may also be the answer to a 400-year-old mystery—just who was the “Dark Lady” that Shakespeare spoke of with such passion in his sonnets?

Holly Harris from the Winnipeg Free Press:

*“...Hill’s spirited, snappy dialogue cracks like a whip throughout.”*

## About the Playwright

**Jessica B. Hill** is an actress, playwright and educator. Originally from Montreal, and new to the world of playwriting, Hill has been one of the Stratford Festival's new generation of leading ladies for 7 seasons. In *The Dark Lady*, she has woven in countless Shakespearean references and even some of his text while also creating characters that feel completely relatable and contemporary for today's audiences. 2023 marked Hill's professional debut as a playwright, with her two first plays, *The Dark Lady* and *Pandora* both having their world premiere productions.

## About the Director

**Bronwyn Steinberg** has been Lunchbox Theatre's Artistic Director since November 2020. Bronwyn is a theatre director and community builder; she's passionate about making theatre an inclusive gathering space where stories are shared that celebrate the diversity of human experience. Born in Alberta, she has worked across Canada and the USA and is the founding Artistic Director of TACTICS, Ottawa's curated indie theatre series. An award-winning freelance director in both Ottawa and Calgary, she recently directed *The Importance of Being Earnest* for Theatre Calgary. She loves working with the classics as well as new plays, and since coming to Lunchbox, she has directed *Home for the Holidays*, a new musical by Cayley Wreggitt and Alixandra Cowman, Rebecca Northan's *All I Want for Christmas*, and many script development workshops for the Stage One Festival of New Canadian Work and Stage Two.

**THE DARK LADY – October 10 to 29, 2023**

By **Jessica B. Hill**

Co-produced with *The Shakespeare Company*

Directed by Bronwyn Steinberg

Cast:

Natascha Girgis | Emilia Bassano

Luigi Riscaldino | William Shakespeare

**Note: All reviewers need to book complimentary tickets for the 1st week of the run. No exceptions.**

## About Lunchbox Theatre

*Lunchbox Theatre presents an enriching and engaging theatre experience with an emphasis on accessibility for audiences and artists. We create and produce one-act plays primarily at noon, focusing on entertaining new Canadian works that examine and explore socially relevant issues. The theatre seeks to provide rewarding and memorable experiences to its audiences, casts, and supporters by delving into a variety of works that reflect our audience and their particular world, as well as works that will offer fresh experiences and new understandings. Lunchbox is a hub for artistic development—for artists as well as plays, with emerging artists working alongside established professionals.*

For ticket and season pass information, please visit [lunchboxtheatre.com](http://lunchboxtheatre.com)

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For interview requests or more information, please contact:

**Melanie Erickson**

[marketing@lunchboxtheatre.com](mailto:marketing@lunchboxtheatre.com)

403-816-5657 (Text is preferred)