



McCALLUM THEATRE EDUCATION PRESENTS



Producer/Writer/Performer – Susanna Hamnett

Director – Edith Tankus

Original Lighting Design – Michelle Ramsay

Set Design – Lindsay Anne Black

Sound Design – Gavin Fearon

Film – David Parker

Producer/Stage Manager/Additional Direction – Steve MacGregor

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2022
6:30PM**

What if the great and tragic story of *King Lear* were to be told through the eyes of his closest companion?

In this award-winning and dynamic one-woman tour-de-force, Susanna Hamnett plays the Fool (and every other character) to tell a very personal and poignant story that – with breathtaking hilarity and heartache – honours the beautiful language of *Lear* while taking a bit of poetic license.

Upending expectations of what a Shakespeare play 'should' be, *Nearly Lear* blends physical theatre, clown, storytelling, music and film with Shakespeare's rich poetic text to take its audience firmly into the heart of this great story.

Created with Edith Tankus (Kneehigh, Shakespeare's Globe), *Nearly Lear* is an exuberant and unexpected blend of tragedy and humour that has toured to critical and audience acclaim across the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, as well as runs on Broadway at the New Victory Theater, the Chicago Humanities Festival, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and the Sydney Opera House, Australia.

**"A virtuosic performer with a touch
of the endearing goofball"**

**– Charles Isherwood,
*The New York Times***

**McCallum Theatre Education Presents is made
possible through the extraordinary generosity of the
City of Palm Desert and The Houston Family Foundation.**



PALM DESERT



SUSANNA HAMNETT

Susanna Hamnett is an actor, theatre practitioner, director and artist-educator, whose work has taken her across the UK, Europe, Canada, the US and Australia.

Born in London, England, Susanna started out exploring her love of language and story studying Russian and French at Cambridge University before winning scholarships to the Guildhall School of Music and Drama to train professionally as an actor under the tutelage of renowned Shakespeare and Voice coach, Patsy Rodenburg.

For the next few years she worked as an actor in theatre and television in England and with theatre practitioners in Poland and Moscow, following a growing need to acquire the tools to start creating her own work. Her first attempt at performing her own material took her to the Canadian Fringe circuit where she met master clowns, John Turner and Micheal Kennard (of *Mump and Smoot*) and she moved to Toronto to begin an intensive period of training with them, followed by extensive collaboration and a deepening exploration of the application of clown in other forms of theatre. She began directing shows and working to develop an authentic theatrical voice that could explore and marry disparate passions and disciplines: Shakespeare, clown, storytelling, vaudeville, the serious and the mischievous.

Out of this she created *Nearly Lear* – her first full-length solo show. Honoured with the IPAY Victor Award for Outstanding Performance in 2012, *Nearly Lear* has continued to tour internationally to great critical and audience acclaim, connecting with audiences in venues ranging from remote village halls, high schools, universities and festivals to a multitude of theatres – including the New Victory Theater on Broadway, the Kennedy Center and the Sydney Opera House.

She is indebted to the bounty of influences (teachers, directors and collaborators) that have helped to shape her practice. These include: Merry Conway, Yoshi Oida, Anatoly Vassiliev, John Turner, Michael Kennard, Emma Rice, Mike Shepherd, Chattie Salaman, Roy Hart Theatre, Gabrielle Roth, Helen Donnelly, Edith Tankus, Grindl Kuchirka, Valerie Buhagiar, Mike Newell, Theatre Alibi, Theatre Gardiniesz, Red Shift Theatre, Theatre Smith-Gilmour and many more.

Susanna is also a committed artist-educator and has worked in Canada and the U.S. with students of all ages, including teaching masterclasses for university and college students, directing productions of Shakespeare with young teenagers, creating programs for teaching Shakespeare to at-risk teenagers and Grade 1-3 students in a Toronto inner-city school, and being a part of Lincoln Center's Aesthetic Education Program. She believes in always working with a spirit of playfulness and creating an environment where students are fully engaged co-creators.

In 2012 the Kennedy Center's Theatre for Young Audiences department in Washington, DC commissioned her to work on a new solo script which she presented at New Visions New Voices the following year, and in 2014 she was honoured to be awarded the inaugural Colleen Porter Residency Award (IPAY), which took her to Australia and Tasmania.

At present she is living once again in the UK, and is working with her two adult children on a new performance based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* entitled *Hotel Elsinore*, which premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August 2022 to wonderful reviews and audience reactions.

"My work – I think – is the confused love child of two quite different approaches to theatre: a very classical (Shakespeare-based) theatre training and theatrical clown. It is this tension between being extremely over-earnest and serious whilst longing for some riotous and mischievous foolery that seems to shape how I approach everything – performing, teaching and directing. Or maybe that's just being British!"

For information on McCallum Theatre visit www.mccallumtheatre.com



ARTS | INQUIRY | IMAGINATION