

WHALE FALL

SAME
BOAT
 theatre co.



NOV. 17 - 26, 2023 @ RED SANDCASTLE THEATRE

THE COMPANY

Co-founded by playwright Stephen Near and director Aaron Joel Craig, Same Boat Theatre is a Hamilton-based company dedicated to telling authentic and provocative stories onstage that challenge the heart and confront the mind.

THE PLAY

Whale Fall is a one-act drama telling the story of the extinction of Canada's southern resident orca, and the journey of one woman to find the last remaining whale. As she ventures out on this perilous and painful journey, she struggles to hold on to the empowering yet tumultuous memories of her father.

THE STORY

*"Inspired by my daughter's love of the ocean, I wrote **Whale Fall** as a response to my worry about the many species we are driving to extinction. This play is a cautionary fable for the climate change era, and an attempt to confront audiences with an issue that is deeply relevant for the West coast, where orca still swim and where this story takes place."*

- Stephen Near, playwright

CONTACT US!

www.sameboattheatre.com

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MEDIA MATERIALS LINK

THE CREATIVE TEAM

STEPHEN NEAR - PLAYWRIGHT

(he/him) Stephen Near is a writer, performer and educator living in Hamilton. He is a graduate of York University (BFA), the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (B. Ed) and the MFA Creative Writing program at the University of Guelph. Theatre credits include: Shadow Court (playwright, In The Moment Theatre); Monstrous Invisible (playwright, Theatre Aquarius); Test, Finding Mr. Right, Conspiracy of Micheal, Your Own Sons, Creature (actor / playwright) and Whale Fall (playwright, Same Boat Theatre). Stephen is a member of the Playwright's Guild of Canada and an alumnus of the Sage Hill Writing Experience and the Banff Centre. Thanks to Leanne, Brenden and, of course, Rebecca. Thanks to Aaron, Stephanie and Ray for making the ocean sing. stephennear.com

AARON JOEL CRAIG - DIRECTOR

(he/him) Aaron is a director, dramaturge, designer and performer. His passion for developing new work with artists in Hamilton led to the founding of Same Boat Theatre, alongside Stephen Near. His theatre work focuses on questions of identity, power and how to stay hopeful in a difficult world. Some past projects include Test, Your Own Sons and The Conspiracy of Michael, all with Same Boat, and Henry the Fifth and Waiting for Godot for Redeemer University. He recently completed work on a masters degree at Wycliffe College/University of Toronto, exploring the intersections of spirituality and the arts. You can find more about that work @saltcellararts. He lives in Hamilton's East End with his partner, Cath, their two kids, and his probably-too-big record collection.

STEPHANIE HOPE LAWLOR - BECCA

(she/her) Stephanie is a Hamilton-based theatre artist, driven by her passion for authentic storytelling, connected community, and ensuring creative voices have the space to develop and thrive. Recent credits include Whale Fall (Vancouver & Hamilton Fringe), Every Brilliant Thing, Mary's Wedding, Venus in Fur (Rook's Theatre), Never Not Once, The Sound of Music, One Night Only (Theatre Aquarius), as well as productions with Drayton Entertainment, Stage West, Berkeley St. Theatre, and more. Stephanie is the Artistic Director of indie company Rook's Theatre, a two-time Hamilton Arts Award nominee, and the recipient of the inaugural Gilded Hammer Cutting Edge: Innovation Award for her work in the Hamilton theatre community. For my Da. hopelawlor.com

RAYMOND LOUTER - STEVEN

(he/him) is an actor, director, and innovative, interdisciplinary arts educator. He teaches people to find their voice and speak fully in performance spaces like theatres, boardrooms, classrooms, and sacred spaces. His work begins with the body and finding the location of the voice within the body. He is honoured to be working with this ensemble, and he loves his role as Stephen in Whale Fall – a role that has once again reshaped his approach to the creative process. There is no end to learning. He lives in Hamilton, Ontario with his partner and love, Julian. He adores his children and grandsons. And he also loves his motorcycle very much.

WADE MORRISON - SOUND DESIGN

Wade is a Hamilton, Ontario based singer, songwriter, and multi-instrumentalist. Drawing inspiration from post-rock, Americana, found sounds, and dusty vinyl, Morrison uses vintage synth tones, field recordings, telecasters, sampled drums, and digital effects to paint sonic landscapes with a sweeping brush. He can typically be found at home with a crossword puzzle, buried in his computer screen, or tapping away some restless rhythm while watching hockey.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

This play would not have happened without my daughter Rebecca. Ever since she was little, she has dreamed of the ocean and the animals of the sea. Great white and mako sharks, humpback and blue whales, bottlenose dolphins... but most of all, the orca. I often tell the story that the moment my daughter's eyes were opened to both the wonder of the orca and the precariousness of their lives right now, was a trip to Marineland. She was very young and I was still testing out my sea legs as a parent. But that trip changed us both. Since that time, my daughter has never wavered in her dream. She still looks to the future, one where she can help save her whales and sharks from extinction. This optimism never fails to fill me with hope, even as climate change, extinctions and pandemics have become our new and harsh reality. Whale Fall was my effort to not only tell a cautionary tale but also to capture the essence of my daughter's sense of purpose. It is my hope that it might touch and change the lives of others... just as it has changed mine.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Last summer, in anticipation of Whale Fall's premiere at the Hamilton Fringe, I wrote that this piece is fundamentally about memory.

On the face, I think I was probably onto something. This piece is, after all, about one person's memories of another and the way that those memories influence the decisions she makes, the way that they continue to shape her as she moves into her own future and has to wrestle with the consequences of her actions. It's about the memories you might have of your children; of the dreams you have for your kids, and the ways you wish you could protect them. It's about memories of your idealistic self, of open possibilities and dashed dreams. It's about what happens when a once happy memory is shaded by something that happened later on, the melancholy of knowing that things will never be the same again.

But here's the thing, I think I was wrong. Or at least, I wasn't all the way right. Whale Fall is actually a play about hope.

I'll be honest with you, it's hard to be hopeful these days. Odds are good, I don't need to tell you that. I'll bet you feel it every day, every time you scroll through your phone, or look at the price of gas, or you read the news. There's a lot of reasons to lose hope.

And also.

There's something incredible about knowing all the reasons we should probably give up, acknowledging them, and refusing to come to the conclusion that there's no hope to be found. There's a kind of beautiful recklessness to that kind of hope. A kind of hope that says 'I know it's bad out here. I know it doesn't make sense. But something inside me knows that it's better to keep going than to give up.'

That's what Whale Fall is really about. The hope it takes to believe that there's still something out there worth holding out for. My hope is that you'll catch a bit of it, and take it with you when our time together is through.

THANK YOU

Leanne, Brenden and of course (especially) Rebecca Near, Cath, Georgia and Sam Craig, Julian Knibbe-Louter, for every conversation, Bill Watterson, for his course shifting music recommendations, The community of Eucharist Church, for welcoming us into a space to work, Phil Miguel and the staff of the Pacific Theatre, the staff of the Vancouver Fringe Festival, Gregory Strong, Michael Armstrong and Theatre BC MainStage, Vitek Wincza, Christopher Litfin, and the team at HCA, Steven Mitchell, Dawn Cattapan and Beyond James Amanda Cosby-Nesbitt, the Hamilton Fringe Festival, David Hudson, Megan Divecha and the Hamilton Arts Council.

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Hamilton

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