

Stakes & Embers and Carolyn Fe Productions in association with Eldritch Theatre

Aye Caesar

by Carolyn Fe



Directed by Tanisha Taitt

RED SANDCASTLE THEATRE
922 Queen St. East, Toronto, ON M4M 2J5

Sat Sept 26th to Sun Oct 4th, 2026
Mon 7:30 . Wed 2 & 7:30 pm . Thurs 7:30 pm
Fri 7:30 pm . Sat 2 & 7:30 pm . Sun 2 pm

Tickets \$30, \$38, \$45 at www.eldritchtheatre.ca



STAKES and EMBERS

DIRECTOR'S NOTE | by Tanisha Taitt

The first time that I read Aye Caesar, I knew that I wanted to direct it. I was taken immediately by its push and pull – a curious combination of earthy warmth and technological chill that becomes more and more reflective of the world every day. Carolyn's writing is real and unaffected; I believed her character and circumstances without question. There was an ease to the words, yet a tremendous unease that the piece itself left me with. Once again, I felt an unsettling contrast that I couldn't stop thinking about. The character of Brenda moves me because she is a reflection of so many of us as we reach our senior years. Everyone wants a reason to keep waking up in the morning. We all seek meaning, purpose, and interactive bonds with those who smile when they think of us. Still, as we age, each of these can feel all the more elusive.

Time passes quickly. We lose people we love. Our knowledge, ways, and engrained practises become those of the previous generation. For many, amidst all of this, is mental capacity that begins to drift further and further from the shore – as technology surges ever closer to it. Suddenly, who we are feels like yesterday. The world that we moved through for decades – albeit with some struggles – becomes an ill-fitting sweater. We experience the fight to keep up. The reality of what surrounds us starts to become unrecognizable, and cognition takes refuge in a distant but familiar and comforting past.

As human beings, we seek connection like we do air. And so, like Brenda, we do what we can to hold on to a tether.

SPECIAL THANKS

Eric Woolfe and Red Sandcastle Theatre ~ Michael Caldwell and Morgan Norwich at SummerWorks ~ Luc Guilbault ~ Photographer: Mathieu Taillardas ~ Medical Consultant: Marc-André Tremblay. BSc Nursing, RN, NP ~ EMT Consultant: Hal Newman, Journalist and Retired Paramedic ~ AI and Deepfake Consultant: Geneviève Bourassa, Casting Specialist, Khanti ~ AI and Deepfake Consultant: Felipe Ribeiro, Former UX Team Lead and UX Developer at Mi9 Retail (Retail Enterprise Solutions) ~ Cahoots @ SummerWorks Stage Manager: Victoria Wang ~ the Aye Caesar 2024 staged reading audience

AYE CAESAR | Creative Team

CAROLYN FE | Playwright & Actor



Carolyn is Filipino-Canadian multi-hyphenated and multilingual creative, recognized for her diverse talents. A Dora and Betty Award nominated actress, she is an award-winning singer and lyricist with a background as a contemporary choreographer-dancer, who also operated a Science and Technology Human Resources Firm. Carolyn's artistic evolution

includes operating Altera Vitae Productions, a Montreal theatre company, becoming a published writer and later-in-life emerging playwright with stories written in English, French, Tagalog, combined with Spanish and Japanese. Some of her theatre credits include The Brothers Paranormal (Vertigo Theatre), Uncle Vanya (Crow's Theatre), Three Women of Swatow (Tarragon Theatre), Calpurnia (Nightwood Theatre). On TV, she plays Lola in the Emmy Awarded "Blue's Clues & You!", Madame Z in the award-winning French series "Meilleur Avant" and voices on various animated series such as PBS Kids' "Work It Out Wombats". Visit linktr.ee/TheCarolynFe.

APRIL LEUNG | Actor



April Siutong Leung 梁筱彤 is an award-winning playwright, performance creator and actor who grew up in Hong Kong and is now based in Tkarón:to (Toronto). She has worked with, and performed at, many celebrated theatre companies across Turtle Island including Blyth Festival, Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre, Factory Theatre, fu-GEN

Theatre, and Theatre Passe Muraille. April's creative practice extends into playwriting and digital media works, with a specific interest in projection design.

Stakes and Embers engages professional Artists who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association, under the terms of the INDIE 3.0 Agreement.

CHRISTOPHER-ELIZABETH **Lighting & Sound Designer**



Christopher-Elizabeth is an Afro-Indigenous artist and designer with an interest in our ever-evolving relationship to technology, control, and play. Selected Credits include: The Sankofa Trilogy with Watah Theatre; Sanguine with Cahoots Theatre; The Seven Methods of Killing Kylie Jenner with Obsidian Theatre; Creator of Continue? with Theatre

Direct; El Terremoto at Tarragon Theatre; Co-Creator of The Untitled Video Game Project with Pickles Theatre Co.

FRANK/IE | Stage Manager



Frank/ie (they/he) is a queer, non-binary, autistic artist. They are from Treaty 6 land and are a white settler of Ukrainian heritage. He is a performer, writer and stage manager. Previous credits include as Stage Manager: Child-ish at Tarragon Theatre and Pop-Pop! with Carousel Players. As Assistant Stage Manager: Liars at a Funeral at Capitol Theatre, and

A Streetcar Named Desire at Soulpepper Theatre.

TANISHA TAITT **Director and Set Designer**



Tanisha is a director, playwright, actor, educator, sometimes dramaturge, and the former artistic director of Cahoots Theatre. She is a two-time nominee for the YWCA Woman of Distinction Award and the Dora Award for direction. Also a singer-songwriter, she is a recipient of the Canadian Music Publishers Association Songwriters Award for exceptionality in songcraft. Tanisha

taught Acting Through Song for Sheridan College's Music Theatre Performance program for five years, and has been sessional Acting/Scene Study faculty at George Brown Theatre School since 2018. She is a recipient of the 2023 Gina Wilkinson Prize for artistry and leadership in theatre.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE | by Carolyn Fe

Here's a quick summary of some cold, hard data from Statistics Canada. It's a double-edged sword.

On one side, according to a recent study, one in five Canadian seniors aged 65 and older reports experiencing loneliness. Senior women are more likely to report being lonely than senior men. Globally, elderly loneliness affects one-third of older adults, resulting in severe physical and mental health consequences. Nearly 20% of Canadian seniors' loneliness is driven by factors such as living alone, loss of a spouse or family member, and/or limited income. There will be three times as many people in Canada aged 85 and older by 2050.

On the other side, Canadian health care systems are not equipped to take care of the elderly above and beyond physical disabilities. Loneliness is a painful reality in the elder community, and a major contributor to mental infirmities. The geriatric mental health workforce is ill-equipped and scarce. As a consequence of this shortage, the role of the professional and non-professional caregiver is wrought with physical, psychological and emotional challenges.

Change has to happen. I am not a policy maker, nor am I a policy implementer. I can only tell stories in the hope that a seed is planted and nurtured so that change will happen. Like racism, ageism is systemic within Western society. Past generations, labeled The Silent Generation, Boomers, Gen Jones and Gen X, have stories to tell. Whether they be heart-warming or horrific, they carry deep wisdom based on lived experiences. If we are to move into a truly inclusive and diverse era of belonging, it is imperative that the lives and stories from our elders' point of view are included. I want to centre ageism within the realm of "inclusivity".

Aye Caesar is not a story based on "what if". It is real, it is happening, and there is no stopping it. My wish is that when you see the old woman in my story, you will recognize someone in your life who is alone, lonely and trying to get by – one hour at a time.

As a late-blooming playwright, I'd written words that I thought were useless and unimportant – until someone said I was wrong. All it takes to open a door to the next phase of a career is one person who believes deeply and unconditionally.

I am grateful that Tanisha saw the relevance in "Aye Caesar". It feels good to be seen, validating my personal truth that I may be old but not outdated.

THIS LAND... THIS STORY... and US



The wind that breathes air into these fall days carries on it thousands of stories, and we are grateful for a legacy of storytelling that began with the First Peoples of this land.

This territory was originally inhabited by the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Haundenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and others. We know, however, that the 'home and native land' that we sing to in our anthem was acquired through thievery, butchery, and broken promises. We cannot alter the past, but we can challenge the present and thereby change the future. There is no 'Truth and Reconciliation', but 'Truth, then Reconciliation'.

The binary tale of Indigenous nations and European settlers is woefully incomplete. We cannot cite North American history without hearing the echoes of indigenous Africans in chains, bought and sold in the Americas as enslaved people. They were native to neither here nor to Europe, but Africa's own - taken from homelands in which they were free and prosperous peoples in thriving societies.

The stories of those around the globe who have been stolen, dehumanized under colonial forces, subjugated, violated and suppressed are many, and current, and we hear the screams echo without cessation.

The members of the creative team of Aye Caesar are descended from those Indigenous to this land, from the Philippines, from the Caribbean, from China, from the American South, from Ukraine. We cannot think about our lineages without thinking of the rivers of innocent ancestral blood that have seeped into the earth, and do so each day. The land is wise, and weary, and wounded – as are we.

We make art in the hopes that we can look at ourselves... and each other... more clearly. Whether witnessing the lives of a whole group or of one person, theatre allows us a peek at the truth of those whose experiences are often relegated to the sidelines. Today, we get a glimpse into Brenda's life. Thank you for being here, and glimpsing with us.