



BRIAN BEDFORD AS KING LEAR AND GARETH POTTER AS EDGAR,
PHOTO BY DAVID HOU.



THE FESTIVAL THEATRE,
PHOTO BY KERRY HAYES.



TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD
FROM LEFT: SPENCER WALKER AS DILL,
ABIGAIL WINTER-CULLIFORD AS SCOUT
AND THOMAS MURRAY AS JEM.
PHOTO BY CLAUS ANDERSEN.



OF MICE AND MEN
GRAHAM GREENE AS LENNIE AND
NICOLAS VAN BUREK AS GEORGE
PHOTO BY DAVID HOU.



INHERIT THE WIND, BY JEROME LAWRENCE AND ROBERT E. LEE.
WILLIAM HUTT AS HENRY DRUMMOND.
FESTIVAL THEATRE, JULY 28 TO NOVEMBER 3, 2001
PHOTO BY CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN.

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CELEBRATING 55 YEARS, AND THE LIFE OF CANADA'S LEGEND ACTOR WILLIAM HUTT

Stratford Festival

NORTH AMERICA'S LARGEST CLASSICAL REP THEATRE GETS BETTER WITH AGE

BY KATHY BUCKWORTH

Unlike most 55 year olds, the Stratford Festival has no plans for either retirement or taking it easy. In fact, this year, the venerable stage festival celebrating Shakespeare and other notable playwrights, secures its reputation and history as North America's largest classical repertory theatre, with over 600,000 audience members enjoying a variety of remade and traditionally presented plays.

Since 1953, when Sir Alec Guinness spoke the first lines of Richard III, the festival has grown to include concert recitals, author readings, educational sessions, and more. For the 55th Celebration, the production listing is unparalleled. Avid theatre goer and journalist Leslie Garrett visits Stratford more than once every season and she enjoys the variety. "I think they have an incredible lineup this year – as I said, we saw To Kill a Mockingbird, which was really good. We will see Of Mice and Men next week, then A Delicate Balance in September, and An Ideal Husband in October. Stratford isn't just for Shakespeare buffs."

Largest of the four magnificent theatres offering plays, the architecturally gold medal winning Festival Theatre, located just outside of downtown Stratford, provides a unique viewing experience to over 1,600 guests. Plays at the Festival this year include King Lear, Oklahoma!, An Ideal Husband and The Merchant of Venice. The Avon Theatre, situated on the main strip

in Stratford, presents To Kill a Mockingbird, My One and Only, and The Comedy of Errors. Rounding out the festival are an additional seven plays at either the Studio or Tom Patterson Theatre, including the one woman production of Shakespeare's Will, starring Seanna McKenna.

There are matinees and evening performances to choose from, allowing for ample time to stroll through the town of Stratford, stop in at unique and charming stores, as well as the opportunity to sample some fine or casual dining. The all around experience of the festival is something that Garrett enthusiastically endorses. "We gave both my mother and my mother-in-law Stratford tickets for Christmas – in keeping with our desire to be 'virtuous consumers' and give 'experiences' rather than more stuff that none of us really needs. We take each of them to a performance of their choice, then spend the day, have lunch in Stratford and basically enjoy."

To get even closer to the festival and its participants, consider attending one of the "Meet the Festival" events where actors, staff members, designers, and craftspeople have an open discussion to reveal what goes on "behind the scenes." Held for an hour Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, check the website for the times of these informal chats. Or, for a minimal fee, take a backstage tour of the Festival Theatre and see the props, make up, wigs and more which make the plays so visually appealing to watch.

Sadly, the festival is mourning the recent loss of William Hutt, CC, O.Ont, MM, BA, DFA, D.Litt, one of its all time great Canadian performers. Mr. Hutt was a legend at Stratford and in the Canadian theatre community. As a founding company member, director and actor, he participated in 39 seasons and 130 productions. He was an outstanding actor, captivating audiences with both dramatic and comedic roles.

His vast career, saw him commended for the diverse roles as King Lear and also as the Fool to Peter Ustinov's Lear, Titus Andronicus, Falstaff, Richard II, Jaques, Prospero and Tartuffe. He played a remarkable James Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night – opposite Jessica Tandy in 1980 and opposite Martha Henry in 1994 and 1995, on stage and in film. By his own account, he was most remembered for his performance of Lady Bracknell in The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde, a role he first played in 1975 and reprised twice for the Festival.

Mr. Hutt died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 87.

The Stratford Festival runs annually from April to November, and tickets range in price from \$20 (for the student driven "Play On" program), to approximately \$100 during the busy summer season.

For more information on the festival, visit www.stratfordfestival.ca, or call the box office at 1-800-567-1600. **GOODLIFE**