

A WORLD PREMIERE **TARRAGON THEATRE** PRODUCTION
IN ASSOCIATION WITH **WHY NOT THEATRE**
AND **BROADLEAF CREATIVE**



BENEVOLENCE

A THEATRE PLAY CREATED
AND PERFORMED BY
KEVIN MATTHEW WONG



SEASON SPONSOR

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WELCOME TO BENEVOLENCE

This performance of *Benevolence* is a world premiere Tarragon Theatre production in association with Why Not Theatre and Broadleaf Creative.

TARRAGON THEATRE

whynot



Broadleaf
Creative

Benevolence was developed by Broadleaf Creative through residencies with Tarragon Theatre through the Greenhouse Festival, Why Not Theatre, and the Gardarev Center, and with grant support from the Toronto Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council.

***Benevolence* runs approximately 80 minutes
with no intermission.**



CAST

Kevin Matthew Wong

CREATIVE TEAM

Kevin Matthew Wong

Creator, Director, Writer, Video and Projection Designer

Echo Zhou 周芷會 *

Set & Lighting Designer

Chris Ross-Ewart

Sound Designer

Noel Pendawa

Video Associate & Editor

Olivia Wheeler

Assistant Sound Designer

Sara Szymanski

Assistant Lighting Designer

Yizhou Zhang

Dramaturg

Jackson Nair

Apprentice Consulting Director

Tara Mohan

Stage Manager

Kayleigh Mundy

Apprentice Stage Manager

*Indicated designers on this production are represented by the Associated Designers of Canada, IATSE Local ADC659.

TARRAGON THEATRE

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Tarragon Theatre acknowledges that we all are a part of a larger ecosystem within our community, Tkaronto, where our theatre lives and operates – and that we also commit ourselves and energize our audiences to continually reflect on and respond to our relationship to the land around us. This country has been cared for by generations of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nations, and the land on which Tarragon rests and is able to share this story has been cherished and protected by the Anishnabeg, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Toronto is a word that originates from the Mohawk word “Tkaronto,” meaning “the place in the water where the trees are standing,” which is said to refer to the wooden stakes that were used as fishing weirs in the narrows of local river systems by the Haudenosaunee and Wendat. The paths we still walk today, from Davenport to Dupont, are built on the portage trails first established and walked by Indigenous peoples. It is in the spirit of being on the portage route that we invoke our local Indigenous oral history – though covered up by the industrial progress of Toronto – and maintain that those stories are not lost.

We are committed to engaging with these communities in meaningful ways that open dialogue. We look towards a recognition of our shared humanity to create deeper community connection and accountability. Tarragon’s recognition of the contributions of Indigenous peoples to this land is directly connected to our promise to meet the challenge of Truth and Reconciliation: making our commitment real in our work and through our community building. Please do check out the QR codes in the lobby to find out how you can extend your support.

WELCOME TO THE SHOW

Thank you for joining us once again at Tarragon as we launch into the spring with the world premiere, *Benevolence* by Kevin Matthew Wong.

This heartfelt and deeply Canadian story takes us into a community hall where generations come together to feast and honour the impact of coming together. We are immediately invited on a journey through time as Kevin investigates the meaning of “Hakka” or “Guest Families” when he’s asked to represent his community at a world conference. As he wrestles with the decision to take part, he is confronted by whether or not he belongs and his own identity as he uncovers more about the origins from which he comes from. With the support of incredible scenography design, Kevin’s tale deeply resonates and puts us at the forefront of our own story.

We are thrilled to share this world premiere after the workshop exploration that was part of our inaugural Greenhouse Festival nearly three years ago. Co-presented by our friends at Why Not Theatre and Broadleaf Creative, Kevin’s beautifully personal and welcoming play is the latest edition of his *Benevolence* series which included an award-winning art installation as well as a documentary feature in collaboration with Reel Asian Unsung Voices Program.

Thank you for being a part of Tarragon’s legacy of celebrating uniquely Canadian new work. Now, more than ever, we proudly cherish the rich stories that make our country undeniably vibrant.

Bon spectacle,

Mike Payette and Lisa Li

Tarragon Theatre Artistic Director and Executive Director

CREATOR'S NOTE

One day while I was working on the script for *Benevolence*, my father looked over my shoulder and asked, "Kevin, why's this Hakka stuff so interesting to you?" It was a revealing question. It struck me how within cultural diasporas, some generations feel more access to their sense of identity than others. For Hakka, a group known in Chinese as "guest families" and as China's nomadic people — our two thousand years of migration probably exacerbates those generational gulfs.

Growing up, I had a ready answer whenever I was asked about my heritage: "I'm Chinese-Canadian." Simple. But a few years ago, that confidence wavered as I began coming to terms with how little I actually understood about "being Hakka," especially when speaking with elders. If I knew anything about "Hakka-ness" it was the joyful, lengthy, and often mysterious conversations my grandmother would have in the Hakka language, on the telephone with loved ones near and far. This play tries to channel a similar kind of unapologetic joy, and it hopes to interrogate some of that mystery too.

I chose to create *Benevolence* because I had a conviction that my experience was similar to that of many Canadians. Many of us are comfortable declaring who we are — the simple version — but struggle when we consider the question more deeply. I hope that sharing part of my journey of self- discovery resonates with your own questions about identity and being here in Canada. I hope also that the benevolence at the heart of this story finds its way into yours.

Kevin Matthew Wong

ABOUT OUR PARTNER: BROADLEAF CREATIVE



**Broadleaf
Creative**

Broadleaf Creative creates fun, accessible, and contemporary artworks about little-known and urgent topics.

Founded in 2014, Broadleaf Creative creates and tours multidisciplinary art works, films and performances based on local, national and global issues. The company offers dramaturgy and artistic consultation for socially engaged artists and projects. In 2024, Broadleaf Creative became the inaugural recipient of Toronto's Dora Mavor Moore Awards' "Innovative Experience Award".

Broadleaf's projects have been presented and toured widely and have collaborated with organizations like Why Not Theatre, Luminato Festival, Festival Theaterformen (Germany), Arts & Climate Initiative (USA), Gardarev Center (USA), Blooming Ludus (South Korea-UK-Canada), Toronto History Museums and more. Broadleaf Creative is led by Artistic Director Kevin Matthew Wong.

Special Thanks:

Sonia Chin, Karen Lue Tam, Carol Wong, Betty Chin, Charley Chin, Pat Williams-Chung, Larry Chung, Linda Liu and Martin Liu, Wong Family, Cast and Crew of *Mahabharata*, Graham Isador, Ryan G Hinds, Brandy Leary, Sooji Kim, Sharada K Eswar, Miriam Fernandes, Karen Tisch, Ravi Jain, Toronto History Museums, Reel Asian International Film Festival, Centre for Drama Theatre and Performance Studies.

ABOUT OUR PARTNER: WHY NOT THEATRE



Founded in 2007, Why Not Theatre is a Toronto-based theatre company with an international scope. Why Not's work exists at the intersection of art, innovation and social change. For 18 years, Why Not has developed and supported 55 new works that have toured to 83 stops across 40 cities and 11 countries, including the world-wide hit *A Brimful of Asha*, performed more than 300 times around the world, and the critically acclaimed *Mahabharata*. Why Not has an international reputation for creating cutting-edge, cross-cultural theatre, and for facilitating opportunities for underrepresented artists. Why Not Theatre is led by Co-Artistic Directors Miriam Fernandes and Ravi Jain and Executive Director Karen Tisch. whynot.theatre

Why Not Theatre has been proud to support Kevin Matthew Wong's ***Benevolence*** projects with creation residencies between 2022 and 2025, supporting development on: ***Benevolence*** (documentary, Reel Asian); ***Benevolence Hall*** (museum installation, Toronto History Museums/Broadleaf Creative), and ***Benevolence*** (theatre production, Tarragon Theatre).

ABOUT OUR PARTNER: WHY NOT THEATRE

Why Not Theatre Team

Founder and Co-Artistic Director Ravi Jain

Co-Artistic Director Miriam Fernandes

Executive Director Karen Tisch

Director of Production and Technical Crystal Lee

Director of Producing and Creative Associate Kevin Matthew Wong

Producer, Special Projects Mary Anderson

Artistic Associate Michelle Mohammed

Finance Director Sarah Newkirk

Administrative and Development Manager Karishma Bristy

Grants Manager Erin Brandenburg

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KEVIN MATTHEW WONG

**Performer, Creator, Director, Writer,
Video and Projection Designer**

For Tarragon: *Mr. Shi And His Lover* (Associate Producer).

Selected Theatre Credits: **As Actor:** *The Chemical Valley Project* (Broadleaf Creative). **As Producer:** *Mahabharata* (Why Not Theatre/Shaw Festival/Barbican); *What You Won't Do For Love, Prince Hamlet, Like Mother, Like Daughter* (Why Not Theatre); *R+J* (Why Not Theatre/Stratford Festival); *Mr. Shi and His Lover* (Music Picnic). **As Playwright:** *Transmission* (Climate Change Theatre Action).

Selected Film and Television Credits: **As Director:** *Benevolence* (Broadleaf Creative/Unsung Voices 12). **As Projection Designer:** *Rosa's Flowers* (dir. Amanda Ann-Min Wong).

Awards: Inaugural Winner of both the Dora Mavor Moore Award for Innovative Experience (*Benevolence* Hall) and the Jini Stolk Creative Fellowship; Harold Award.

@broadleafcreative @kevinmatthewwong



ECHO ZHOU 周芷會

Set & Lighting Designer

For Tarragon: *A Poem for Rabia, My Sister's Rage, Behind the Moon, Mr. Shi and His Lover.*

Selected Theatre Credits: *Blind Dates, The Year of the Cello* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *Flin Flon Cowboy Cabaret* (Flin Flon Cowboy Collective); *Cymbeline* (Stratford Festival); *Shaniqua in Abstraction* (Crow's Theatre); *Rocking Horse Winner, Dragon's Tale* (Tapestry Opera); *The Chinese Lady* (Studio 180); *Between a Wok and a Hotpot* (Cahoots Theatre); *Every Brilliant Thing* (Thousand Island Playhouse); *White Girls in Moccasins* (Manidoons Collective); *Mr. Shi and His Lover*, and *I Swallowed Moon Made of Iron* (Music Picnic).

Upcoming: *Comfort Food* (Crow's Theatre).

Awards: Dora Mavor Moore Awards for Outstanding Scenic Design.

Other: For my grandpa. 獻給敬愛的爹爹



CHRIS ROSS-EWART

Sound Designer

For Tarragon: *Yaga*.

Selected Theatre Credits: *Behind the Moon* (Belfry Theatre); *Hamlet* (Canadian Stage); *Measure for Measure* (Bard on the Beach); *A Tale of Two Cities* (Alliance Theatre); *The Sound Inside* (Coal Mine Theatre).

Other: With solidarity for those preserving history and fighting gentrification in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.



NOEL PENDAWA

Video Associate & Editor

For Tarragon: Debut.

Selected Theatre Credits: Benevolence Hall (Broadleaf Creative); *Oskar and the Screaming Drum*, *Or A Tiny History of Violence* (University of Toronto).

Selected Film and Television Credits: *A Day Apart on the Seventeenth* (FnC '24); *Alberta Number One* (Chicago International Film Festival '24); *Digi-Art* (CBC Gem); *Love, Leymo* (CBC Gem); *Rosa's Flowers* (Reel Asian Film Festival '24); *Harkness* (Whistler Film Festival '24).

Awards: Dora Award for Outstanding Innovative Experience (Benevolence Hall).

Other: www.noelpendawa.com



OLIVIA WHEELER

Assistant Sound Designer

For Tarragon: *Three Woman of Swatow* (Associate Sound Designer).

Selected Theatre Credits: As Sound Designer: *Cymbeline, The Secret to Good Tea* (The Grand Theatre/National Arts Centre); *The Bidding War* (Crow's Theatre); *Playing Shylock* (Canadian Stage); *Infinite Life* (Coal Mine Theatre); *The Fixing Girl* (Young People's Theatre); *Alligator Pie, De Profundis, The Walk-Up* (Soulpepper Theatre); *Mad Madge* (Nightwood Theatre); *ECHO* (Next Stage Festival); *Here Lies Henry, Armadillos* (Factory Theatre); *Between a Wok and a Hot Pot* (Cahoots Theatre); *It'll Come to Me* (Theatre SKAM). **As Associate Sound Designer:** *A Wrinkle in Time* (Stratford Festival); *Bad Parent* (Soulpepper/Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre/Prairie Theatre Exchange). **As Assistant Sound Designer:** *Mahabharata* (Why Not Theatre – Shaw Festival/Barbican Centre), *Every Little Nookie, Hamlet-911, 1939* (Stratford Festival).

Upcoming: *Forgiveness* (Stratford Festival).



SARA SZYMANSKI
Assistant Lighting Designer

For Tarragon: Debut.

Selected Theatre Credits: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Spring Awakening* (University of Guelph).

Other: Thank you to my family for their support and the *Benevolence* team for letting me be a part of this process.



YIZHOU ZHANG

Dramaturg

For Tarragon: Debut.

Selected Theatre Credits: *Marat/Sade* (Beijing); *War Eagle: A Schizophreniac's Sexual Fantasy and a Middle-Class College Girl's New Year Eve Adventure* (Beijing); *Sky of Darkness* (TheatreLab, NYC); *Vom Armen Bb Et aL. (V.A.B.E.L)* (Brecht Festival, Augsburg); *Oskar and the Screaming Drum, Or A Tiny History of Violence* (University of Toronto).

Other: Yizhou Zhang (pronounced Yee-joh Jang) is a dramaturg, playwright, director and theatre scholar based in Toronto.



TARA MOHAN

Stage Manager

For Tarragon: Debut.

Selected Theatre Credits: *Fifteen Dogs* (Crow's Theatre/Segal Centre, presented by David Mirvish); *Erased* (Open Heart Surgery Theatre in partnership with Theatre Passe Muraille); *YOU dance* (The National Ballet of Canada); *The Full Monty* (Capitol Theatre); *Late Company* (Green Light Arts); *The Chemical Valley Project* (Broadleaf Creative); *Universal Child Care* (Quote Unquote Collective / Canadian Stage); *Toronto Festival* (Just For Laughs); *Outheis* (Talk Is Free Theatre); *Young, Gifted & Jazz* (Dance Immersion); *Loss* (The Theatre Centre/ Luminato Festival); *KickStart* (CanAsian Dance); *inTO focus* (dance: made in canada/fait au canada); *Brain Storm* (Lucid Ludic Productions/Why Not Theatre); *Here Are The Fragments* (On ECT Collective/ The Theatre Centre); *The Seat Next To The King* (Minmar Gaslight Productions/Green Light Arts); *Million Dollar Quartet* (The LOT); *Now You See Her* (Quote Unquote Collective).

Other: Tara Mohan is a Stage Manager who enjoys working on theatre, dance, musicals, and everything in between!



KAYLEIGH MUNDY

Apprentice Stage Manager

For Tarragon: *A Poem for Rabia, 3 Fingers Back.*

Select Theatre Credits: Apprentice Stage Manager:

Infinite Life, People, Place and Things (Coal Mine Theatre), **Stage Manager:** *Truth & Illusions* (JZ Creative Energy Productions); *Untitled Video Game Project* (Pickles Theatre Company/Greenhouse Festival); *When You Close Your Eyes* workshop (Makeshift Company). **Emerging Festival Producer:** Toronto Fringe Festival for 2024.

Upcoming: Apprentice Stage Manager for The New Canadian Curling Club (Lighthouse Festival).



JACKSON NAIR

Apprentice Consulting Director

For Tarragon: Debut.

Selected Theatre Credits: As Director: *Just In Love*, *Outside Looking In: A Modern Fairytale for Young Adults and Other Bipeds* (Alumnae Theatre Company); *Frostbite* (The Villains Theatre).

As Performer/Creator: *Ganapati Stories* (Toronto Fringe Festival: KidsFest).

Other: Jackson is a mixed-race theatremaker and arts educator based in Tkaronto with particular focus on cross-cultural theatre, digital and/or interactive work, and Theatre for Young Audiences. He loves a good story, regardless of if he's the listener or the teller, and thinks it's pretty wizard that he gets to spend so much of his life doing just that.

TARRAGON THEATRE STAFF

LEADERSHIP

Mike Payette Artistic Director	Lisa Li Executive Director
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ARTISTIC & ADMINISTRATION

Jeff Ho Associate Artistic Director	Justin Miller Artistic Producer & Greenhouse Festival Director	Heather Caplap Education and Community Engagement Manager
Becks Hoàng-Lefranc Associate Producer	Elle Baron Education and Community Engagement Intern	

DEVELOPMENT

Mitsuki Amano Development Manager	Natalie Skov Development Assistant
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MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Cameron Johnston Director of Marketing and Communications	Monica Bradford-Lea Marketing Coordinator	Danielle Morgan Publicist
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PRODUCTION

Gerry Egan Director of Production	Jaxun Maron Technical Director	David Mallette Gil Ruston Mainspace Technicians
Emma Burnett Head Scenic Artist	Acadia Walsh Head of Wardrobe	Jeuel Balane Extraspace Technician
Alannah Dzijacky Head of Props	Andrew Chute Head Carpenter	Owen Hill Jagger Smith Rhys Wark Student Interns

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ALSO ON STAGE AT TARRAGON



Feast

A Tarragon Theatre Production
Written by Guillermo Verdecchia
Directed by Soheil Parsa

Can one ever be truly full? From celebrated artist Guillermo Verdecchia, *Feast* is a biting look at a world where some are movers and some are moved and how long we can last when your family is falling apart.

April 1 – April 27, 2025

UP NEXT AT TARRAGON



After The Rain

A Tarragon Theatre & The Musical Stage Company Co-Production
Supported by the Bulmash-Siegel Foundation

Written by Rose Napoli & Suzy Wilde

Directed by Marie Farsi

Full of family turmoil, life's complexities, and centred around a devastating discovery, *After the Rain* is a new Canadian musical based on a true story about the healing power of music.

May 27 – June 22, 2025

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The Rose Directing Fund, developed to continue Richard Rose's vision of bringing excellence to the creation and development of Canadian theatre by celebrating a professional director each season. We are grateful to the individuals whose gifts to this fund will support the future of directors at Tarragon over the next 10 years.

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Tarragon Theatre is extremely grateful for the support of our donors, which allows Canadian stories, education, and community to remain at the heart of our work. Donations to Tarragon allow us to develop meaningful, enriching stories that speak to our audiences today in an environment that welcomes all voices and perspectives within our theatre.

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Sybil Wilkinson
Hersh Zeifman

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Natasha Parson's 30th Tarragon Anniversary

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Temma Gentles	Colin Krivy	Don Van Hamme

If we have made any errors in the spelling, listing or omission of your name please accept our apologies and contact Mitsuki Amano, Development Manager at: mitsuki@tarragontheatre.com

THANK YOU, ENJOY THE SHOW



Tarragon Theatre is an active member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA), and engages professional artists who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement.



Stage Employees of Tarragon are represented by Local 58, Local 828 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

Thank you to our volunteers!