



FEBRUARY 28 to MARCH 18, 2012

**By WILLY RUSSELL
Directed By ROY SURETTE
Starring NICOLA CAVENDISH**

Enrichment Guide

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ABOUT THEATRE CALGARY



The Max Bell Theatre in the EPCOR Centre for the Performing Arts – Home to Theatre Calgary
Photo by David Cooper

In the 1940s, Dr. Betty Mitchell, a drama teacher at Calgary's Western Canada High School, inspired such loyalty and devotion in her students that they continued to study with her after graduating. Together they named themselves "Workshop 14" and became one of the country's finest amateur theatre companies. Two decades later, a second amateur group called the "Musicians' and Actors' Club" (MAC), composed of local business people, were staging short plays and excerpts from musicals in the old Isis movie house. MAC and Workshop 14 merged to become MAC 14 under the direction of Kenneth Dyba and mounted productions in a converted tractor house, later to be named The QR Centre. MAC 14 became Theatre Calgary, a fully professional theatre company, on July 1st, 1968.

Christopher Newton, formerly the Artistic Director of the Shaw Festival, was appointed the first Artistic Director for Theatre Calgary. A keen interest was expressed at this time to produce plays by Canadian playwrights; James Reaney's *The Three Desks* was produced during the first season, as were two others of Newton's works: *You Two Stay Here*, *The Rest Come With Me* and *Trip*. In 1971, Clark Rogers succeeded as Artistic Director, the very year a disastrous fire destroyed most of the company's archives. Harold G. Baldrbridge assumed the direction of the company in 1972, and for the next seven years presented a blend of national, international, contemporary, and classic works.

In 1977 Rick McNair joined Theatre Calgary as the director of Caravan, a touring theatre troupe that brought drama to the schools throughout Alberta. Caravan was renamed Stage Coach Players in 1979 and still exists in Calgary today as Quest Theatre, originally under the direction of Duval Lang. Mr. McNair was appointed Artistic Director for Theatre Calgary in 1979 and presented premiers by John Murrell, W.O. Mitchell, and Sharon Pollock. In 1984, Sharon Pollock became the fifth Artistic Director of the company and again a commitment to producing new Canadian work was re-established.

Martin Kinch succeeded as Artistic Director in 1985. During this time Theatre Calgary became the resident company of the state-of-the-art theatre in the Calgary Centre of Performing Arts (now known as the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts). Designed in conjunction with Theatre Calgary, the Max Bell Theatre came to completion as a striking performance space. Every seat is within sixty feet from the stage so audiences can enjoy the kind of intimate rapport with the actors that serves to enhance the magical experience of live theatre.

In 1991, Brian Rintoul came to Theatre Calgary as Executive Producer. Mr. Rintoul had produced plays previously for Theatre Calgary in the QR Centre. In 1996, James Brewer was appointed Acting Artistic

Director and Richard C. Dennison became the general manager. In 1997 Ian Prinsloo assumed the role of Artistic Director. Prior to joining Theatre Calgary, Mr. Prinsloo was the co-founder of Orange Dog Theatre in Toronto.

In 1997, Tom E. McCabe, after a successful tenure on the Board of Directors, became General Manager (and later President). Prior to this, Mr. McCabe served as Executive Director of Tourism Alberta and held numerous positions over a 25-year career with the Bank of Montreal.

In September 2005, Dennis Garnhum was appointed the new Artistic Director. Over the past 6 years, Theatre Calgary has renewed its commitment to developing and producing new plays through FUSE: The Enbridge Play Development Program and has also nurtured and mentored a new generation of Alberta theatre artists through the FUEL Artist Development Program.



(L to R) Andrew McNee, Christian Goutsis, Jordan Schartner, Hrothgar Mathews and Erin Wells in Timothy Findley's *THE WARS*, by Dennis Garnhum, 2007.
Photo by Trudie Lee



David Fox and Aaron Stern in W.O. Mitchell's *JAKE & THE KID*, by Conni Massing, 2009.
Photo by Trudie Lee



The company of *BEYOND EDEN*, by Bruce Ruddell, 2010.
Photo by David Cooper

THE CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

THEATRE CALGARY

Presents

SHIRLEY VALENTINE

By Willy Russell

Starring **NICOLA CAVENDISH**

CREATIVE TEAM

Roy Surette	Director
Anne-Sequin Poirier	Set Designer
Phillip Clarkson	Costume Designer
Harry Frehner	Lighting Designer
Peter Cerone	Sound Designer
Rick Rinder	Stage Manager
Ailsa Birnie	Assistant Stage Manager

ABOUT THE AUTHOR – WILLY RUSSELL



Willy Russell was born in 1947 in a small town just outside of Liverpool.

After dropping out of school at the age of fifteen, Russell operated a ladies' hairdressing salon for six years. In the mid-sixties, Russell tried his hand at writing folk songs. He was soon writing not only lyrics but also sketches for local radio programs. In 1985, he co-wrote "The Show" which was the theme song for the TV series *Connie*. It became a top 30 hit for recording artist, Rebecca Storm. In 2003, Russell recorded his first album, *Hoovering the Moon*.

In 1967, Russell returned to school and then subsequently did a short stint as a teacher in Toxteth. This chapter in his life was to later serve as inspiration for his play, *Educating Rita*.

His first major dramatic success came in 1974 when he was commissioned by the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool to write a play about the Beatles. It was called *John, Paul, George, Ringo ... and Bert*.

Willy Russell gained more recognition and celebrity status with his hugely popular and semi-auto-biographical play *Educating Rita* in 1980. The story dealt with a female hairdresser who decides to go back to school where she enters into a relationship with her university instructor. The play was adapted to [feature film](#) three years later and starred Michael Caine and Julie Walters.

In 1983, Russell received great critical acclaim and overwhelming audience & critical approval with his musical *Blood Brothers*. It was revived in London's West End in 1988 and is still running!



Original movie poster (Drew Struzan)

In 1988, Russell's *Shirley Valentine* was honoured with an Olivier Award for Best Comedy of the year. In 1989, it was nominated for a Tony Award for Best Play.

It is interesting that Russell chose to feature female protagonists in two of his major works - *Educating Rita* and *Shirley Valentine*. Both plays also center on the theme of escape. Rita decides to go back to school to escape her dead-end working class life and Shirley is a housewife who escapes her soul-numbing existence by going to Greece for a holiday. Both plays were also turned into feature films which starred the original actresses who performed in the stage productions.

Along with song and play writing, Russell has also ventured into the realm of prose fiction. His first novel, *The Wrong Boy*, written in the form of a series of letters, was published in 2000.

Willy Russell still calls Liverpool his home and that is where he continues to live and work on a variety of projects.

Every play I have ever written has, ultimately, been one which celebrates the goodness of man ...

It is the goodness that I hope the audience is left with.

I really don't want to write plays that are resigned, menopausal, despairing ...

I don't want to use any medium as a platform for displaying the smallness and hopelessness of man.

Man is man because madly, possibly stupidly but certainly wonderfully, he kicks against the inevitability of life.

- Willy Russell

OTHER WORKS BY WILLY RUSSELL

1971	<i>Keep Your Eyes Down on the Road</i>	(play)
1972	<i>Sam O'Shanker</i>	(play)
1973	<i>Sam O'Shanker</i>	(musical)
1977	<i>Our Day Out</i>	(play)
1974	<i>John, Paul, George, Ringo ... and Bert</i>	(musical)
1974	<i>Death of a Young Man</i>	(play)
1975	<i>Breezeblock Park</i>	(play)
1976	<i>One for the Road</i>	(play)
1976	<i>I Read The News Today</i>	(BBC Radio Play)
1978	<i>Stags and Hens</i>	(play, filmed in 1990 as Dancin' thru the Dark)
1980	<i>Educating Rita</i>	(play, filmed in 1983)
1983	<i>One Summer</i>	(TV series)
1983	<i>Blood Brothers</i>	(musical)
1985	<i>Connie</i>	(TV series)
1986	<i>Shirley Valentine</i>	(play, filmed in 1989)
1993	<i>Terraces</i>	(BBC TV film)
2000	<i>The Wrong Boy</i>	(novel)
2003	Hoovering The Moon	(Music CD)

WILLY RUSSELL AND THE BEATLES



The Beatles (1964)

Back in the early 60s, Willy Russell had quite a strong connection with the rock group The Beatles. As a teenager, he would often skip school to watch the Fab Four perform at the legendary Cavern in Liverpool. He eventually became very good friends with the band members and this friendship became the basis of his 1974 musical *John, Paul, George, Ringo ... and Bert*.

After the group split apart, Paul McCartney asked Russell to write a screenplay for Paul's new group, Wings. Russell stayed with Paul in Scotland while Wings recorded their album, *Back to the Egg*.

Russell did complete the screenplay which had been tentatively called *Band on the Run* but the film - for various reasons - was never made.

ABOUT THE PLAY



Pauline Collins in 2009

Shirley Valentine premiered at the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool in 1986. Two years later, a new production opened in London's West End. It was directed by Simon Callow and starred Pauline Collins who also reprised the role for the 1989 feature film version of the play.

Willy Russell wrote the screenplay for the film and was honoured with an Oscar nomination for Best Adapted Screenplay for *Shirley Valentine*.

In 1989, the play made its North American debut at the Booth Theatre on Broadway. It opened with Pauline Collins once again as Shirley but the role was eventually taken over by Ellen Burstyn.

The play has been enthusiastically received everywhere it has played. Its success is remarkable considering it is a one-character play or monologue which features a middle-aged, working class housewife talking to the wall about the changes that have occurred in her life.

HOW SHIRLEY VALENTINE WAS BORN

[When] I wrote the line, "I like a glass of wine when I'm doing the cooking." That wouldn't have made a play. But this is what I mean by writing what you don't know what you knew. She turned around and said, "Don't I, wall?" And in that moment the play was born, because you had a whole theatrical conceit of a woman literally talking to a wall and you knew immediately that's how she survived. I didn't know what the play was going to be, didn't know where it was going to go to, but I knew I had a play in that second line.

- Willy Russell during an [interview](#) with *The Arts Desk*

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Since the play takes the form of a monologue, the only character to appear on stage is Shirley Valentine.

Shirley A dissatisfied middle-aged housewife who lives in Liverpool.

In telling her story, she evokes a number of characters who are important people in her life:

Joe Shirley's husband who "likes everything to be as it's always been. Like his tea always has to be on the table as he comes through the door."

Brian Shirley's son - an aspiring busker poet.

Millandra Shirley's daughter who does not know what she wants to be or do.

Marjorie Majors Shirley's childhood rival and enemy who eventually becomes a hooker.

Jane Shirley's "feminist" friend who invites her to go to Greece with her.

Gillian Shirley's neighbour who gives her a special present.

Costas Shirley's Greek lover - a man who knows "how to talk with a woman."

Nicola Cavendish IS Shirley Valentine.

I saw her play the role over 20 years ago and was mesmerized. Now she revives it with a new understanding of this wonderful housewife. You'll laugh even louder and connect with her even more deeply. Nicola is one of the great actors of our country.

It's truly an honour to welcome her back.

- Dennis Garnhum
Theatre Calgary Artistic Director

SETTINGS OF THE PLAY

- Act I** Liverpool, in the "kitchen of a semi-detached house . . . bearing the signs of additions and alterations which have been made over the years." A "comfortable and reassuring place."
- Act II** "A Greek island. A secluded section of shore, dotted with rocks and baked by the Mediterranean sun. . . In the background we see a hint of the village and the taverna. The deep blue of the sky predominates."

PLOT SUMMARY

The play is a monologue made up of three scenes. In the first two scenes, Shirley speaks to the wall or should we say - audience – as she tells her story in the familiar way that one would speak to a friend. (In the only scene of Act II, Shirley finds an alternative to the wall to speak to.)

Act I Scene 1 Shirley has been invited to accompany her friend Jane on a two week, all-expenses paid trip to Greece. She debates the merits of accepting the invitation. She likes the idea of drinking a glass of wine in the country where the grape was grown and she dreams about sitting by the sea and enjoying the sun. However, she also fears that at the age of 42, after many dull years of marriage and motherhood, she has lost her sense of self and the trip would be wasted on her. Besides, her husband Joe, who insists that routines be adhered to, would never approve of her going on such a trip.

Scene II Shirley is going to Greece! She makes her final decision after seeing Joe's predictable reaction to being served chips and egg instead of his usual dish of steak on that particular day. Shirley responds to his outburst by laughing and rolling hysterically on the floor. That is when she knows that she is definitely going.

Shirley does have second thoughts when her daughter Millandra accuses her of wanting to travel to a foreign country to engage in illicit sex. However, Shirley regains her resolve when her neighbour Gillian gives her an unexpected symbolic gift and praises her for having the courage that she never had herself.

Act II Shirley is on a Greek island and living in a hotel close to the beach. We learn that she has been in Greece far longer than her original two-week planned holiday. She has befriended a Greek waiter named Costas and has decided to stay in Greece indefinitely. She now feels fully alive and intends to make the most of the rest of her life. Shirley has told her husband of the changes she has been going through and as the play ends, we learn that Joe is on his way to Greece.

WHAT WAS THAT? – BRITISH SLANG USED IN THE PLAY

Most non-scousers go loop the loop and feel narky when they attempt to communicate with Liverpudians. The British truly do have their own way of saying things. Here is a just a sampling of British slang:

ackers	money
all mouth and (no) trousers	overly proud with no reason to be
antwacky	old-fashioned
bab	to defecate
bobbins	utter nonsense
Bob's your uncle	"There you have it!"
collywobbles	nervousness; "butterflies in one's stomach"
doris	wife or significant other
full monty	complete amount; full extent
nimps	simple; easy
Pat and Mick	feeling nauseous
wag it/off	to be truant (from school)
yobbo	hooligan

To read more examples of British slang expressions, check out this [Dictionary of Slang](#) website.

The following British slang expressions are used in *Shirley Valentine*:

mega brill	most excellent
double fab	wonderful
in a squat	living in a lower class housing tenement
loop the loop	insane
ructions	fighting; quarrelling mood
shite	excrement
beano	a party
going ten to the dozen	moving very quickly
scouser	a person from Liverpool
narked	ill-tempered; in a foul mood
Horlicks	hot malted milk drink usually taken in the evening

MEMORABLE QUOTES FROM THE PLAY

Y'know I like a glass of wine when I'm done the cookin'. Don't I wall?

Know what I'd like to do, I'd like to drink a glass of wine in a country where the grape is grown.

I don't know why I stay. . . . But I've been talkin' to the wall for more years than I care to remember now. An' I'm frightened. I'm frightened of the life beyond the wall.

We were sittin' in the front room an' I said, Joey, Joe, have you ever heard about the clitoris?" He didn't even look up from his paper. "Yeh," he said, "but it doesn't go as well as the Ford Cortina."

What happened? Who turned me into this? I don't want this. Do you remember. . . . Shirley Valentine? She got married to a boy called Joe an' one day she came to live here . . . They got married, they made a home, they had kids . . . And somewhere along the way the boy called Joe turned into "him" and Shirley Valentine turned into this . . . I can't remember . . . when it happened. When it stopped bein' good. When Shirley Valentine disappeared, became just another name on the missin' persons' list.

I love it here –don't I, rock? That's rock. We met the first day I got here, didn't we?

... most men, really, they're no good at talkin' with women. They don't know how to listen or they feel that they have to take over the conversation.

I've fallen in love with the idea of living ... Because we don't do what we want to do? We do what we have to do. An' pretend that it's what we want to do.

Dreams. They are never in the place you expect them to be.

I have allowed myself to lead this little life, when inside me there was so much more. And it's all gone unused. And now it never will be. Why do we get all this life if we don't ever use it? Why do we get all these feelings and dreams and hopes if we don't ever use them?

FURTHER READING – BOOKS RELATED TO THE PLAY

Henrik Ibsen	<i>A Doll's House</i>	(drama, 1879)
Elizabeth von Arnim	<i>The Enchanted April</i>	(novel, 1922)
Elizabeth Gilbert	<u>Eat, Pray, Love</u>	(novel, 2006)
Kate Walbert	<u>A Short History of Women</u>	(novel, 2009)
Jerry Silverman	<u>The Liberated Woman's Songbook</u>	(folk lyrics, 1971)

VIEWING LIST – FILMS RELATED TO THE PLAY

<u>Shirley Valentine</u>	(1989) starring Pauline Collins and Tom Conti
<u>Educating Rita</u>	(1983) starring Michael Caine and Julie Walters
<u>Under the Tuscan Sun</u>	(2003) Starring Diane Lane and Sandra Oh
<u>The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants</u>	(2005)
<u>My Life in Ruins</u>	(2009) starring Nia Vardalos