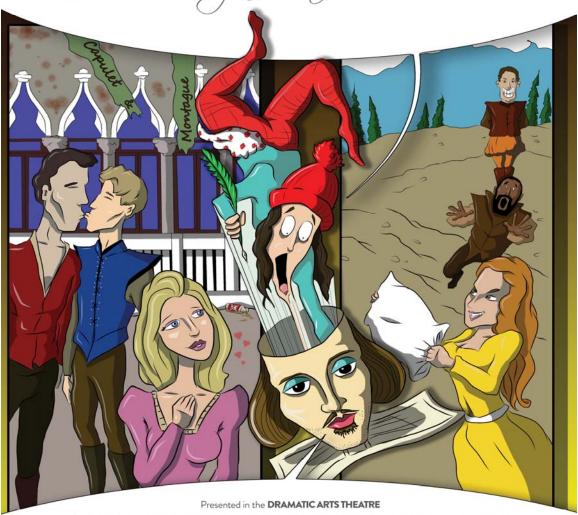
THE DEPARTMENT of DRAMATIC ARTS, BROCK UNIVERSITY PRESENTS

GOODNIGHT DESDEMONA

(Good Morning Juliet) by ANN-MARIE MACDONALD



MARILYN I. WALKER SCHOOL OF FINE & PERFORMING ARTS

15 Artists' Common, St. Catharines

Directed by **DANIELLE WILSON** | Assisted by **MARK HARRIGAN** | Set design by **NIGEL SCOTT** | Costumes by **KELLY WOLF**Sound design by **GAYIN FEARON** | Lighting design by **YASMINE KANDIL** | Fight direction by **JAMIE TRESCHAK**

PERFORMANCES:

Friday, February 26 - 7:30 pm Saturday, February 27 - 7:30 pm Sunday, February 28 - 2 pm Friday, March 4 - 11:30 am & 7:30 pm Saturday, March 5 - 7:30 pm

TICKETS:

\$18 Adults; \$15 Students/Seniors; \$12 Groups (10+); \$5 eyeGo
Purchase tickets through the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre
Box Office: 905.688.0722; online: firstontariopac.ca;
email: boxoffice@firstontariopac.ca | Limited paid parking on site

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Brock University

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Cast and Production Team

Cast

Elizabeth Amos* - Juliet, Student

Michael Fusillo* - Claude Knight, Othello

Jeremy Knapton* - *lago*, *Ghost*, *Chorus*

Robert Herr* - Romeo, Soldier

Katelyn Lander* - Desdemona, Ramona

Josh Sanger* - Tybalt, Nurse

Alexandra Tomulescu* - Mercutio, Servant

Raylene Turner* - Constance

Production

Director - Danielle Wilson Set Design - Nigel Scott Costume Design - Kelly Wolf

Lighting Design - Yasmine Kandil Sound Design - Gavin Fearon Fight Choreographer - Jamie Treschak Stage Manager - Oriana Marrone*

Production Manager - Brian Cumberland
Technical Director - Gavin Fearon
Head of Wardrobe - Roberta Doylend
Theatre Technical Production Assistant Edgar Harris
Fight Captain - Mike Griffin

*indicates senior Dramatic Arts students

This show was built and operated by second year students studying Stage Craft and Production



Ann Marie MacDonald - Biography

Ann Marie MacDonald is a current powerhouse in Canadian culture. She was born on October of 1958 on a military base, and her family moved back to Canada when she was five. MacDonald would later graduate from Carlton University and then from the National Theatre School (1980). She began her career in theatre as an actress and took Toronto stages by storm (Canadian Encyclopaedia). She performed for Theatre Columbus, Canadian Stage Company, and Soulpepper Theatre. She has also appeared on screen in movies such as *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing* and *Where the Spirit Lives*, both of which won her awards (A Genie and a Gemini Award.

Her writing career emerged in 1985 with collaborative work titled *This is* For You Anna. Shortly afterwards in 1988 came Good Night Desdemona (Good



Figure 1 Ann-Marie MacDonald as Constance in the 2001 Canadian Stage rendition of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*

Morning Juliet) MacDonald's first major solo work (Canadian Encyclopaedia). First produced by Nightwood Theatre in the same year, MacDonald's play on Shakespearean tropes has been produced more than 50 times including a 2001 rendition at Canadian Stage where MacDonald played the lead role of Constance (Canadian Encyclopaedia). It also won the Governor General's Literary Award for

Drama, as well as a Chalmer's Award (two of the most prestigious awards in Canadian Theatre).

MacDonald continued to write plays, including three immediately after GDGJ including *The Arab's Mouth* (1990), *Nigredo Hotel* (1992), and *The Attic, the Pearls and Three Fine Girls* (1995). MacDonald is also a prominent force in Canadian literature having written several books such as *Fall on Your Knees* (1996); an international bestseller and Commonwealth Prize winner. MacDonald is also known for *The Way the Crow Flies* (2003), still considered a masterful achievement of literature and was nominated for the Giller prize (an award recognizing excellence in Canadian literature) in 2003 and in 2004 the novel was honoured as the Fiction Book of the Year by the Libris Awards (which are awarded by the Canadian Booksellers Association).



Play Summaries

MacDonald's play utilizes the characters of Shakespeare's tragedies, *Romeo* and Juliet and Othello. The degree of reference is minimal enough that those unfamiliar with the tragedies can still follow the story of MacDonald's play, however a brief familiarity (or reminder) of the original tragedy's content will allow for a deeper appreciation of the themes and comedy that MacDonald presents.

Othello

The Shakespearean tragedy set in Cyprus focuses on the efforts of lago to destabilize the marriage of Othello and Desdemona. Fuelled by jealousy, lago slowly plants the seeds of doubt and in Othello's mind, questioning Desdemona's honesty. lago orchestrates an intricate plot to implicate one of Othello's officers, Cassio, as the seducer of Desdemona. While Othello is firm in his belief that Desdemona is honest and true, his faith is shaken by the constant whisperings and chance circumstances set up by lago. Eventually, lago convinces lago to the point where he agrees to kill Desdemona in her sleep.

Romeo and Juliet

The tragedy of the two lovers, set in Verona, Romeo and Juliet are cast in different families. Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet are from feuding families, to the point where the boys duel and brawl in the streets. However in a chance encounter at a masquerade, the two fall immediately in love. The boundaries set by their families present but deemed not important by the lovers. They plan to marry in secret and then tell their parents to potentially end the rivalry, but Romeo becomes caught in a fight between Mercutio and Tybalt. Both are slain and Romeo is implicated in their deaths, foiling the lover's plan to marry and spiralling the narrative to its tragic end with both lovers perishing.



Good Night Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)

MacDonald's play revolves around the character Constance Ledbelly. Constance is an academic at Queen's University who is trying to find the Wise Fool in Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Constance believes that the fool character is the key to these tragedies becoming comedies. Meanwhile, she is trying to receive the affection and respect of her colleague (and love interest) Claude Night, a leech who is stealing Constance's work and publishing it as his own.

Ultimately, Night destroys Constance by not only marrying another woman, but also displacing her from Queen's by setting up a job position in Regina for her (a position Constance openly declaims). In the midst of her self-commiseration, she is sucked into her trashcan and teleported to the battlefields of *Othello's* Cyprus.

She is transported to the exact moment that lago is about to convince Othello to kill Desdemona. Constance recognizes this and foils lago's plan just in time, earning the respect and gratitude of not only Othello but also Desdemona, (Constance's idol). However lago corrupts Desdemona's favour, and Constance is teleported again just before Desdemona delivers a fatal blow.

Constance is teleported from the world of *Othello*, to Verona, the setting for *Romeo and Juliet* She lands in Verona as Tybalt and Mercutio are in the thick of their soon-to-be-fatal fight, and intervenes once more to spare all characters the tragic end they were destined for, by announcing the wedding of Romeo and Juliet. All seem happy until Romeo and Juliet wake from a night of consummating their marriage, only to realize they cannot stand to be near each other any more. Instead, they both long for Constance, who they believe to be a man from Greece.



Why Othello and Romeo and Juliet?

Ann-Marie MacDonald is not turning these tragedies into a comedy in order to discredit them. In fact, she has stated much the opposite, "I take something people identify with or revere, like Shakespeare, and say, 'Excuse me, while I turn this upside down.' I would never lampoon something I hated" (Hengen 103). Both *Romeo and Juliet* as well as *Othello* are often known to be two of Shakespeare's most tragic plays (among many others). MacDonald has recognized what other literary scholars have pointed out about both plays; they both seem to rely on faulty turning points in order to perpetuate their tragic ends. Some have even gone so far as to say that the tragedies move in completely opposite directions at certain points. These 'points' or moments in each respective play are what MacDonald uses as a basis for making her comedy.

Northrop Frye, the Canadian literary critic and theorist, called these moments *Augenblicks*. He described them as the "crucial moment[s] from which point the road to what might have been and the road to what will be can be simultaneously seen. Seen by the audience that is: it cannot be seen by the hero" (Frye 213). The *Augenblick* is the last possible moment that a protagonist may be happy or in control of their own fate. Audiences can imagine at these points what may have happened, had a different decision been made *at these particular moments*, but are also able to see the choice that the protagonist will inevitably make. Thus, "the wheel of fortune begins its inevitable cyclical movement downward" (ibid 213). However, both *Augenblicks* of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* are rather flimsy.

In *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Augenblick* comes after Romeo and Juliet have eloped and married in secret. Romeo is on his way to release the news, when

he runs into Tybalt, Mercutio and a host of angry, sweaty Verona citizens. Romeo tries not to get involved with the fight, but when Mercutio is slain, Romeo flies into a rage and kills Tybalt as well. Constance points out in *Goodnight Desdemona*, "If only Romeo would confess to Tybalt he has just become his cousin-in-law by marrying Juliet." (MacDonald 13). Similarly in *Othello*, the *Augenblick* occurs when lago claims he saw Cassio (Othello's lieutenant) wiping his beard with Desdemona's handkerchief. Soon after, he produces the infamous

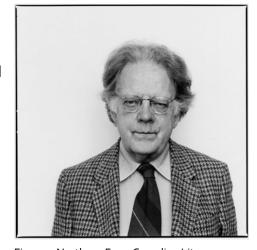


Figure 2 Northrop Frye, Canadian Literary Scholar



handkerchief, claiming that he found it in Cassio's tent. This is enough to send Othello into a rage, and enough to convince him to kill Desdemona. However Othello never questions Cassio or Desdemona about the incident. Had these moments played out differently, many argue that these plays have the potential to be turned into comedies, such as Stanford English Professor, Stephen Orgel.

Orgel argues that the characters in both plays are reminiscent of stock characters from an Italian Theatre style called commedia dell'arte. To quickly summarize, commedia dell'arte was a form of theatre, which used a collection of stock characters that would be dropped into varying situations, mostly ones that surrounded lovers (Orgel 121). Some of these characters include II Capitano, a braggart Spanish soldier who talks of his exploits abroad, as well as Arlecchino, a witty slave usually involved in deceiving the parents of the lovers, in order to allow them to be together (Britannica). Orgel argues that from a stock character perspective, the plays contain all of the necessary ingredients for comedy, "A jealous husband, a chaste wife, an irascible father, a clever malicious servant, a gullible friend, a bawdy witty maid;" outlining the cast of Othello, and "A pair of lovers, their irascible fathers, a bawdy serving woman, a witty friend, a malicious friend, a kindly foolish priest," to describe the cast of *Romeo and Juliet* (Orgel 122). With this in mind, Orgel continues his argument, claiming that because the plays hint at comedy in the beginning, their tragic ends are made more powerful (ibid 122). The effect is similar to that of being told a good joke, which is swiftly followed up with the information that your house was swept away in a flood; the tragic information is amplified due to being happy or laughing not too long ago.

However MacDonald is not interested in the potential tragic power of these *Augenblicks*. Instead, she wants to explore the idea of what could have been. MacDonald goes to those *Augenblicks* and drops in a foreign element (Constance) and allows her to change the outcome of these crucial moments. She effectively changes the tragedies and allows audiences to see their possibility as comedies. We see Othello for the II Capitano that he is, and how *Romeo and Juliet* could conceivably be a romantic comedy. In doing so, we are able to see another side of these characters that we may not have realized in their original form.



The Play and Jungian Psychology

Carl Jung was a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist primarily active at the turn of the Twentieth Century. His work on analytical psychology, individuation, and universal symbolic representations, has remained foundational work to the psychological and psychiatric communities (Slomski). These theories have received criticism over time, however they have left their mark not only in the psychological societies, but also have influenced major artistic work. Many art scholars agree that Jackson Pollock was highly influenced by the psychoanalytical therapy that he received, and Joseph Campbell and his work on the *Thousand Faces of the Hero* were brought to light as he drew on Jung's concept that archetypes were recognizable across cultures(Sedevi 2). Ann-Marie MacDonald may also be added to the list of influenced artists, as *Goodnight Desdemona* explores Jung's theory of individuation. Hillary Knight, writing about MacDonald's play, discusses this exploration.

Knight states immediately that Constance needs to individuate. That is, Constance must discard her persona (the constructed self that she presents to the rest of the world) and must dive into her unconscious mind in order to find her true 'self' (Knight 1). In order to do this, Knight explains that Constance must join together the different aspects or archetypes of Constance's unconscious mind. These archetypes, according to Jungian psychology, are, "core, original aspects of the self" (Adamski 564). They exist within a person's unconscious mind, and Jung believed that across race and culture they could be used to understand what drove human personality and behaviour. Jung drew his archetypes from many sources including mythology and literature, which is why some of the archetypes include the Wise Fool, the Trickster, or the Magician (Knight 1). In Goodnight Desdemona, Constance must deal with three of these archetypes as she endeavours to find her 'self' in her unconscious. Since she has been working extensively on her thesis surrounding *Romeo and Juliet* as well as Othello, her unconscious arranges itself within the worlds of those two plays.

The first two archetypes are the Anima, and the Animus. In Jungian psychology, these two archetypes refer to the notions of masculinity and femininity within us; the Anima is connected to the feminine qualities of us, and the Animus the masculine (Adamski 565). Desdemona and Juliet represent Constance's Animus and Anima. As Knight discusses, Desdemona is representative of Constance's inner warrior-woman, and can help Constance to be more assertive and stand-up for herself. Meanwhile Juliet's willingness to take risks emotionally help Constance, "remain open to the possibility of loving



again" (Knight 1). Essentially, Constance must find balance between both of these archetypes in order to become a whole person.

However the third archetype, the Shadow, poses a consistent challenge. It must be overcome independently, and Constance must correct the damage done to her Anima and Animus. Knight summarizes the Shadow archetype, saying it is, "the opposite of our conscious mind... [The Shadow] represents qualities and tendencies we dislike in ourselves and resist." (Knight 1). The qualities and tendencies that Constance dislikes about herself are represented in the extreme actions of her Animus and Anima (Desdemona and Juliet). Desdemona is brazen and heroic, but is corrupted by lago to target Constance, which reflects Constance's corruption by Claude Night (ibid). In the first Act, Constance hands over an essay that Night had commissioned her to write, saying, "I hope I've destroyed Professor Hallowfern's book to your satisfaction." (MacDonald 18). Desdemona's targeting of Constance reflects Constance's misguided desire to destroy others. Meanwhile, Constance's Anima reflects a desire to cause self-harm in the name of love. While Constance is in her unconscious, as she spends long periods of time with Juliet, she has to stop her from impaling herself on a sword and a dagger. Constance also almost succumbs to Juliet's suggestion to poison each other. This desire to die in the name of love is made clear early when Juliet and Constance first meet, "When love goes to its grave before we do, / then find another love for whom to die, / and swear to end life first when next we love." (MacDonald 65). Juliet's desire to die for love represents the similar desire in Constance again in relation to Claude Night. Once he leaves her alone, taking off to Oxford with another woman, she is completely distraught and enters into a soliloguy describing a five-year plan of how she wishes to die.

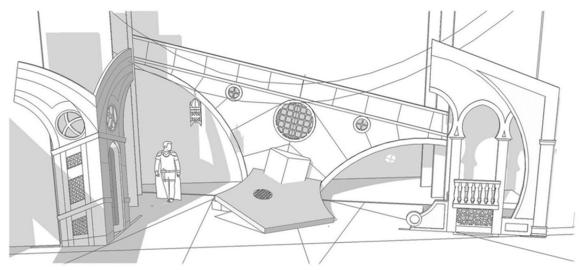


Figure 3 Set Design by Nigel Scott. The angles and warped nature of the set are meant to tell audiences that they are not in reality.



What is important is not that Constance overcomes her Shadow, but rather that she learns to recognize it, and thus bring the two extremes into balance. Constance must come to recognize that her Animus can provide her with great strength of character, and will allow her to be more assertive and to hold her ground. Desdemona helps Constance realize that Claude used and stole from her in order to satiate his needs. At the same time, Constance's Anima can teach her that she is desirable and that she should take more risks emotionally in order to fully realize her potential as a human being. Juliet allows Constance to accept the feelings that she had for Claude Night, to recognize their validity, and to find closure in that failed relationship, so that she may move on and seek out better opportunities.



Why Comedy?

We have all heard the saying that 'laughter is the best medicine'. In fact, this saying is so well established, Reader's Digest has a section named after it. However, when it comes to afflictions other than physical ones, this saying may hold even more truth. For Kate Lushington, the artistic director of Nightwood Theatre in 1988, "[c]omedy had been traditionally the way of dealing with oppression, the best way" (Lushington). Being able to laugh at an oppressive force, allows individuals to take a step back and displace the power that the oppressions may have over them,

if only for a moment. MacDonald uses comic conventions in order to allow audiences to laugh at the sources of oppression, and therefore reclaim power over them (Hengen 99).

Professor David Rush best outlines the structures used by MacDonald. He outlines for readers of his book that much like tragedies, most comedies follow similar structures. They have similar characters, settings and plots. One of the types of plots that comedies follow is called the 'green world'. In this plot, one or more characters begin in a flawed society; this is aptly named by Rush the 'real world' (Rush 120). The real world is flawed in that it is "blocked by false, inappropriate, or unjust rules or attitudes," (ibid 120). With Constance being insulted and used by Claude Night,

MacDonald provides audiences with a clear

notion of what she believes to be the unjust rules of Constance's 'real world'.



Figure 4 Costume design for Claude Night and Othello by Kelly Wolf.

As the play moves forward, Rush continues to explain that these characters somehow travel to the 'green world' where they, "are somehow transformed, educated, or changed in any number of ways." (ibid 120). Constance is thus transported into her 'green world' (her unconscious mind) where she is educated about her worth, and transformed into a whole person. However MacDonald does not regulate herself to just operating within these comedic structures, and in turn limit the subversive power to Constance. Rather,



MacDonald pushes past the comedic conventions and reaches out to pull something more than just laughter out of the audience, empathy.

In order to produce this, MacDonald has altered certain comedic conventions, namely 1) that there is a single protagonist, and 2) that at the end of the play, the protagonist will marry after overcoming those who would scheme against them. While Constance remains central to the story, MacDonald does not isolate her as the protagonist but rather shares the spot with Desdemona and Juliet, creating a group of protagonists. In Susan Carlson's book Women and Comedy: Rewriting the British Theatrical Tradition, she argues that characters involved in this kind of writing, "find victory in the self-growth they have helped one another find" (Carlson 239). By choosing to focus on the development of the characters themselves and not on the development of a romantic relationship, audiences are less likely to detach from the comedy and to become more involved in the narrative.

Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet) takes a more creative approach to the typical 'marriage' found at the end of comedies. Rather than celebrate the coming together of lovers (found in typical comedies) MacDonald chooses to celebrate the coming together of Constance's mind. At the end of the play, Constance unrolls the final manuscript page, reiterating, "two plus one adds up to one, not three," (MacDonald 88). With Desdemona and Juliet standing on either side of Constance, she understands that Juliet and Desdemona are parts of her unconscious that she needs to recognize. We are left with all three women coming together in order to develop further than they might have individually. MacDonald creates an enjoyable but also layered comedy by having Constance, Desdemona, and Juliet share the role of the protagonist, and come together as an alliance by the play's end,

With this in mind, MacDonald combines empathy and comedy to create a subversive play. By the end, Constance, "gains some power through her alliances with other women while audiences feel empathy for her and rejoice in her final hopefulness," (Hengen 107). By making friends with Juliet and Desdemona, and uniting all three of them, Constance's character develops from her previous mousy persona, into a strong and independent woman, who recognizes her desirability and is able to stand up for herself. This development is an important aspect of the play.

Audiences may still need to wrestle with the fact that Constance's oppressor, Claude Night, is still at Oxford, soaking in the glory of Constance's work. Some might argue that to have a truly subversive comedy, Constance would rise from the ashes and become the Dean of Claude's department and fire him, "in cold blood and blank verse" (MacDonald 46). However, what makes MacDonald's comedy powerful is that during Constance's journey, she



develops from enacting a five-year plan which spirals into death out of love for Claude, into a woman who is able to appreciate the complexity and spontaneity of life and willing to explore other horizons, including romantic ones. Along the way, we see the denouncement of Claude, as well as the recognition that her feelings for him were real, allowing her to move on. Watching this, MacDonald has given audiences the opportunity to laugh with Constance at Claude and to find power over oppression in her journey and development as a person.



Gender Performativity

Goodnight Desdemona pays excellent tribute to the original works of Shakespeare, allowing audiences to laugh at conventional Shakespearean tropes, such as mistaken identity and cross-dressing. On top of that, the play compliments the original characters well. Audiences are given a further look at Desdemona's tenacity as she dashes off to join the fray of battle, and the age of both Romeo and Juliet are given further appreciation as they periodically argue themselves into childish banter. However MacDonald has also used the text to forward other ideals. Specifically, MacDonald plays with the ways in which audiences perceive the concept of gender. By cutting and pasting one character's lines into another character's role, and by in-text costume decisions, MacDonald asks audiences to understand how the characters perform gender.

Gender performativity, a term introduced by American feminist philosopher Judith Butler, makes the case that distinctions of gender are arbitrary. Moya Lloyd, writing about Butler articulates how, "'gender is not a



Figure 5 (From Left to Right) Director Danielle working with Constance (Raylene), Juliet (Elizabeth) and Romeo (Robert)

noun'; it is, in contrast, 'always a doing'. Gender does not describe something that is (an essence), rather it refers to a process - a series of acts... a gendered identity is made manifest only at the moment of its enactment" (Lloyd 42). Butler is saying that our gender is not something that is

determined from birth. Instead, our gender merely describes the actions and gestures that we repeat. It also means that a specific gender does not naturally occur from the sex that one is born with. As well, one's sexual preferences do not also naturally flow from one's sex. This theory MacDonald exhibits with Desdemona as well as with Romeo and Juliet.

MacDonald's portrayal of Desdemona gives audiences a fierce and brazen woman, in love with the sight of gore and the idea of conquest. While these qualities are not those exclusive to a man, they are not often attributed to



women (save for Xena and Hippolyta). Desdemona exits and enters with purpose and in one instance with a severed head (MacDonald 35) but what is most striking is when MacDonald gives Desdemona lines that Othello originally says. One of the most powerful appropriations of text is when Desdemona exclaims, "O that the slave had forty thousand lives. / One is too poor, too weak, for my revenge!" (ibid 41). These lines, spoken just one scene ago by Othello, show that Desdemona is able to perform seemingly masculine attributes just as well as Othello does. With a few words from lago, she is just as easily duped and tricked by him as Othello was, and immediately moves to anger. In this moment, MacDonald is isolating a particular action (the propensity for anger) and displaying it as an action that, in our culture, is understood to be a masculine trait, while simultaneously displacing it by having Desdemona speak it.

Meanwhile, MacDonald also displaces the idea of femininity by having Romeo and Juliet switch lines. As Constance arrives in Verona, she is mistaken for a man (this mistake being made by the removal of her skirt, leaving her in long-johns). Already, MacDonald points to another aspect of gender performativity: the clothes we wear. With Constance wearing what looks like the hose that men would wear of the time, it is the cause for such perception. Thus, MacDonald points to how clothes themselves are gendered; those who are perceived to be a certain gender should only wear clothes such as dresses and skirts, and men should wear pants and doublets. The humour of the situation comes from this foregrounding of the historical gendering of the clothes (men may not wear hose as often now as they would have in Renaissance Italy) and thus audiences are able to see how expectations of gender and the clothes worn by certain genders have shifted with time.

Throughout *Goodnight Desdemona* (*Good Morning Juliet*) MacDonald seeks to disrupt audience's perceptions of gender. Not only does she invert the supposed role and traits of women with Desdemona, but also does similar work with Romeo as she has him dress in women's clothing to woo Constance. With this work, audiences should come away from the production questioning which repetitive acts that they perform in order to represent their gender. The play is not intending to make everyone forego the identity that they have established, but rather, be aware of the system that has allowed to be, and make choices moving forward.



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List of Figures

Figure 1 Ann-Marie MacDonald as Constance Ledbelly in the 2001 Canadian Stage production of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* <www.ann-mariemacdonald.com>

Figure 2 Northrop Frye, Major Canadian Literary Scholar. Library and Archives Canada

http://collectionscanada.gc.ca/pam_archives/index.php?fuseaction=genitem.displayItem&lang=eng&rec_nbr=4073270>

Figure 3 Set Design by Nigel Scott, demonstrating the non-realistic nature of the play. Nigel Scott. Original Design.

Figure 4 Kelly Wolf, Original costume design of Othello and Claude Night.

Figure 5 Photo of Director Danielle Wilson working with actors Raylene Turner, Elizabeth Amos and Robert Herr. Photo by David Vivian.

