

Posted on June 23, 2025 by thetheatregirl131

Panoply Theatre Collective's "Clowns Reading Shakespeare"

"THE PLAY'S THE THING" WHEREIN THE CLOWNS SHALL DANCE and sing! Four clowns adventure through three of the Bard's greatest tragedies in Panoply Theatre Collective's hilarious play *Clowns Reading Shakespeare*, created and directed by Kenzie Dalie. With all of the fun and silliness you'd expect from a clown show mixed with witty jokes about Shakespeare and theatre itself, *Clowns Reading Shakespeare* is a delight for theatregoers of all ages!

The Director is on her 5th day of auditions (it was supposed to take a single day), and not only has she not found a cast for her Shakespearean debut, she can't even decide on what play to do! With the help of HotDog, Puff, Cowfeet McHooves, and her trusty Stage Manager DinkEE, The Director is sure that she can get things sorted out before The Producer arrives. Trying out scenes from Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, and Macbeth, the clowns show us that there's so much more to Shakespeare than just the flowery language and epic battle scenes.



Pajsa Madsen Photo by Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions

<https://aviewfromthebox.net/wp->



Featuring Alyssa Pothier. Photo by Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions

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~~<https://aviewfromthebox.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/clowns-promo-1.jpeg>~~ Clowns Reading Shakespeare (https://aviewfromthebox.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/clowns-promo-1.jpeg) only being able to think up the right ingredients for the witches' brew, I could hardly stop laughing. It's one of the things I've learned to love about clown shows: they have a unique ability to fit tons of hilarity into a tiny package. And fear not, it's plenty funny even if you're not intimately familiar with Shakespeare; there are silly secret handshakes, awkward "kissing" and plenty of other jokes that everyone will love.



(<https://aviewfromthebox.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/clowns-promo-1.jpeg>)

Brendan Kinnon

Photo by Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions

The cast of *Clowns Reading Shakespeare* truly bring their all to this performance. Paige Madsen plays The Director and I love her quips about theatre and the very stereotypical director she portrays. Alyssa Pothier's overly-eager DinkEE the stage manager had me howling. Every time she yells "managed!" at one of the other

clowns, I couldn't help but burst out laughing. Sienna Singh's Puff is sweet, and kinda shy, and doesn't want to do anything without her bestie, DinkEE which adds a childlike element into the mix. All three of these performers are also the Co-Artistic Directors of Panoply Theatre Collective, and you can tell that they truly value the "collective" aspect of their company's name. Brendan Kinnon gives a high-energy performance as Cowfeet McHooves. Their timing and crowd work are so spot on. Callan Forrester's HotDog hit close to home; fully prepared and ready for their audition, I loved the enthusiasm and know-how HotDog displays.



Callan Forrester. Photo by Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions



Sienna Singh. Photo by Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions

(<https://aviewfromthebox.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/clowns-promo-2.jpeg>) I attended their first performance in Little Avenue Memorial Park and I just have to talk about something absolutely wonderful that I was able to witness that evening. With the show being in the park, you do get the occasional person who strolls up part way through the show and sits down to watch; it's part of the charm of it all. This particular evening, a family happened to do so, which included two youngsters. The troupe decides to show The Producer the final scene of Macbeth, and therefore they need a Macduff and his soldiers, and these little ones volunteered. They got to use props, and Macduff did in fact beat Macbeth at a game of Rock, Paper, Scissors, and all was well. When they sat down, I hear one of them exclaim "I got to act in a play!" And the other said "I'm going to tell my friends!" This, folks, is the magic of theatre. This is why we do what we do, and I left with my heart full!

Clowns Reading Shakespeare is such a great way to start the season of Shakespeare in the great outdoors! This is truly an event for the whole family, so grab a chair or blanket and the kiddos and take in a performance of *Clowns Reading Shakespeare*; you never know who'll be inspired!

Clowns Reading Shakespeare runs in Kew Gardens Park June 25 – 29. For more information and tickets, visit: <https://panoplycollective.com/clowns-reading-shakespeare> (<https://panoplycollective.com/clowns-reading-shakespeare>)

Cover Photo: Brendon Kinnon, Callan Forrester, Sienna Singh and Alyssa Pothier.
Photo by Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions.

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barczablog

A place to read about arts & culture,
from my own quirky perspective.

Kenzia Dalie explains Clowns Reading Shakespeare

Posted on [May 25, 2025](#) by [barczablog](#)

After a couple years of development (and many laughs), Kenzia Dalie is ready to share the full version of *Clowns Reading Shakespeare*, a show coming to parks east (Kew Gardens) and west (Memorial Park) in Toronto in June.

A multidisciplinary artist, designer, theatre director, and producer currently based in Tkaronto Kenzia is the co-founder of Full Haus Productions, a company dedicated to archival filming of new Canadian theatre, producing films highlighting the experiences of women and queer people, and creating events that uplift emerging independent artists. Kenzia gravitates towards stories that are silly, absurd and thought provoking.

When I heard about Clowns Reading Shakespeare I had to ask her some questions.

Barczablog: *Are you more like your father or mother?*

Kenzia Dalie: What an interesting question! A village raised me, I am quite the amalgamation of my parents and their siblings, and their parents and their siblings too. My mother is a strong willed project manager and athlete. My father is a jokester, loves to draw and is a business owner. My grandfather is a chef and my great-grandfather was a poet and carpenter. My grandmother is a world traveler with an intuition that'll genuinely amaze you. My aunt is a dancer and seamstress. My uncle was an inventor and musician. Just to name a few. I'm proud to say that because of them, I am all these things and more.

I come from a family of dreamers, creatives and stubborn immigrants. I learned from them to enjoy the simple pleasures in life, to take my time, to be in nature, to be silly and unapologetically myself. I come from cultures that are colourful and delicious, so of course they encouraged me to live my life the same way. I can strongly say my family is the reason I love theatre and the arts so much, despite none of them pursuing the arts professionally or knowing much about the industry. I think that's how we differ. Though we share a strong creative philosophy, they didn't have the opportunity to explore it. Instead, they built a foundation, so that I could. I hope that answers the question! Haha, I am a lot like both of them.



Kenzia Dalie

BB: *What is the best or worst thing about what you do?*

Kenzia Dalie: The best and worst thing about what I do is definitely time management! It is simultaneously a blessing and a curse to be in control of my schedule. Having the flexibility to work my own hours, take meetings, schedule rehearsals and take days off when I want is so empowering.

However, with family and friends who are not all in the industry, it becomes difficult sometimes to schedule social gatherings or to commit to anything long or short term. In the event that something urgent can come up and needs immediate attention or needing to jump on those last minute work opportunities can throw a wrench into my calendar. Though, I imagine that finding that balance is something I will be juggling as long as I'm working in theatre and film. And I do love to juggle.

But honestly, the best part of what I do is the freedom and ability to play, to be curious and creative with other artists. I love that I can say, "At work today, we colour walked outside for an hour and made silly shapes with our bodies!" This kind of play is the work and it is so important to creating and sharing stories. It's an honour knowing that for many of our young audiences, our show could be their first exposure to Shakespeare. I have to remind myself that playing is the work and that's always the best part!

BB: *Who do you like to listen to or watch?*

Kenzia Dalie: I love a podcast about human psychology! I find it interesting to hear from various scientists, psychologists or economists and their perspectives on the world as it is. I will eat up anything that tells me why we let our emotions get the best of us, our constant need for validation and understanding the self through others' perception. For similar reasons, I'm a sucker for a good reality tv game show. But not any of those dating shows about finding "the one". I'm more curious about shows that put strangers in a similar situation all fighting with and against each other for the same thing. It's fun to observe the real relationships created but how the layer of a televised competition changes people.

My go-to movies tend to be either light hearted animation, 80s to early 2000s action/comedy, or psychological thrillers accompanied by video essays breaking down filmmaking moments. I will also literally watch any animated short or cooking competition you put in front of me.

BB: *What ability or skill do you wish you had, that you don't have?*

Kenzia Dalie: I wish I could walk on my hands or walk on stilts. Fortunately, I do have stilts and the capacity to learn. Fear keeps getting my way! I hope to stop that soon.

BB: *When you're just relaxing and not working, what is your favourite thing to do?*

Kenzia Dalie: In my downtime, you can find me either painting, cooking or in the garden. All of these activities are quite similar and have a relaxing effect on me. They all involve getting my hands dirty, I get to make or grow something new out of nothing and then I end up with an enjoyable treat that I can either look at and enjoy or eat!

BB: *Who/what was your first clown experience, and how did you feel?*

Kenzia Dalie: I actually started clowning when I was 14. However, it wasn't the theatrical clown that I practice today. I was an entertainment clown for children's parties and holiday events. So I was making balloon animals, simple magic and card tricks, face painting and overall being a silly entertainer for kids. It was a great and easy job as a teenager, but after doing this for many years, I actually started to hate it. I didn't like that I had to always present pure happiness and try to cheer kids up that clearly didn't want to be there, or were just scared of clowns. Not to be dramatic, but I swore to myself that I'd never do it again.

Funny enough, years later in university, I took a class on Clown and learned about it as its own theatrical school of thought.

My professor at the time, Myrna Wyatt Selkirk led her classes with so much focus on innocence, colour, play, drawing from our own experiences and the beauty in failure. I instantly fell in love with it!



Professor Myrna Wyatt Selkirk

While practicing the same entertainment tricks I knew, I ended up learning about my clown that I am always just a little bit grumpy, dissatisfied and easily disgusted. My clown doesn't really like to laugh, and I am actually quite funny when I play pitiful. My clown loves to make others laugh, but it's rarely through her happiness or enjoyment. This was very different from what I had known about clowning and it was the style of acting and improv that I felt most comfortable with because it was honest. I was able to draw on my earlier experiences and reconnect to something that was already a part of me but in a completely different way. It feels good to be clowning again, this time for myself.

BB: *Who is your favourite clown?*

Kenzia Dalie: I don't think I actually have a favourite clown. I think the best clowns are the ones who trust themselves and rely on their unique personalities. What I love about clown is the moment when something is going 'wrong' or that something is 'failing', you can see it on their face, and they share that with you and while being in a headspace of innocence and curiosity, they let you in on the fear of the complete unknown of what they are going to do next. That's my favourite part! It's watching the clown learn, grow and react to a situation in a way that only that clown could from their own experiences or knowledge of the world and immediate surroundings.

However, I did grow up watching an immense amount of Mr. Bean reruns that probably shaped a lot of my understanding and appreciation for physical comedy. I think Mr. Bean is a brilliant clown.

BB: *What's your favourite Shakespeare film adaptation?*

Kenzia Dalie: Joel Cohen's *Tragedy of Macbeth*. I thought it was an incredible film, but remained so theatrical. I genuinely was blown away by the balance of film and theatre techniques and how it honoured the story through both mediums. Kathryn Hunter's depiction of the witches was also just otherworldly, haunting and so beautiful.



Kathryn Hunter in Macbeth

Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* is a close second though! Both films had Denzel Washington... Maybe that says something!

BB: *I love both of your choices. Awesome. So, what Shakespeare will your clowns read?*

Kenzia Dalie: Our clown troupe will be tackling selected moments from three of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies: Hamlet, Romeo & Juliet and Macbeth! Our clowns are bringing their best foot, hand, elbow and nose forward to audition for our illustrious Director. Unfortunately, the Director has not chosen the play yet, so it's best the clowns just audition for them all! We'll see the clowns read iconic scenes such as Romeo and Juliet locking eyes for the first time and the lovers on the balcony. The clowns will also read and interpret heart wrenching moments from characters such as Banquo and Lady Macbeth in a way that audiences have never seen before.

BB: *Help me picture Clowns Reading Shakespeare.*

Kenzia Dalie: Imagine yourself at auditions, a little nervous, excited, wanting to stand out and show the best of what you got, maybe you make some friends along the way. Everyone there wants it to be the best that it can be. Everyone is free to bring in their own interpretations, their own spin and that's exactly what our clowns do. *Clowns Reading Shakespeare* is a silly and interactive window into what it feels like to be in an audition room.

You'll learn quickly that some of our clowns have been acting for years and take the craft very seriously. They are the ones bringing in prepared monologues, skills and scenes to impress our director. For others, this is their first ever audition and they're just happy to be considered, willing to yes-and anything thrown their way.



Brendon Kinnon, Callan Forrester, Sienna Singh and Alyssa Pothier (Photo: Elisabeth Bragale, FullHaus Productions)

BB: *Am I correct to assume Clowns Reading Shakespeare is a family-friendly show?*

Kenzia Dalie: Yes, this is definitely a family-friendly show! I really think it's great for all audiences, as young as 4 and as old as 90+. Whether or not you are familiar with the Bard or not, there's something to enjoy in this production.

While we are exploring tragedies and themes of death, it is all from the perspective of a clown! Death comes in the form of juice boxes and escaping imaginary daggers.

I will say that this is also an interactive show! Don't worry— no one will pull you up onto stage unless you explicitly volunteer. The clowns will have you clapping, laughing, singing and exclaiming alongside them. But it's possible they may ask for some help conquering the King of Scotland.

Clowns Reading Shakespeare is free, it's outdoors, and we have a mix of matinee and evening performances. We

encourage folks to bring a blanket, some comfy chairs, bug spray and some snacks to enjoy this comedy in the park!

BB: *I've just seen a totally disrupted Macbeth done with puppets by Eldritch Theatre. Clowns reading Shakespeare also seems like a kind of disruption, doing the unexpected. What do we get wrong about The Bard that you repair with your disruption?*

Kenzia Dalie: I think all adaptation is disruption and repair in some capacity, but not necessarily because I think anyone is getting it wrong. I think using Shakespeare is a good template to explore the format of adaptation, and you're not always going to please everyone with your interpretation. I've seen my fair share of bad adaptations, but I appreciate that people keep trying! It's when we start thinking there's a right or wrong way to perform classics that we move away from the heart of theatre which is to explore and create.

I think the main thing I wanted to do with this piece was take the tragedies and completely flip them into comedies. I wanted to create a funny show with tragic characters. I thought to myself what happens when we put these two extremes together: Shakespearean tragedy and a simple clown? What perspective can these silly beings bring to poetry and literature that we're required to study growing up?

When we break down Shakespeare's tragic characters to their base human parts, we have heroes and anti heroes that are consumed with feelings of guilt, remorse, deep love, unwavering loyalty, revenge, debilitating regret and their stories hurt, and it makes for incredible theatre. Similarly, when we break down clowns, we find creatures with simple desires fueled by basic emotion, but they come from a place of innocence and wonder.

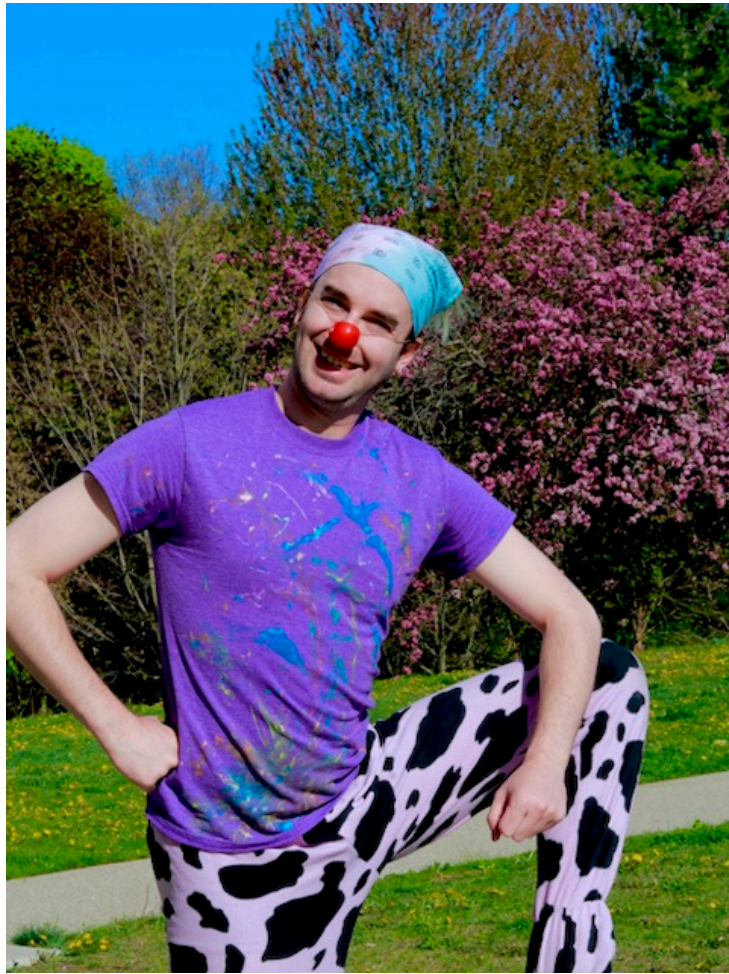
I hope to repair and remind audiences of the joy that comes from being silly with that material we take seriously. To encourage play, to be motivated by failure rather than get stuck by it, to reconnect with the innocent parts of ourselves especially when things feel heavy. I think more often than not, especially as adults, we find ourselves easily consumed and made stagnant by our emotions and shortcomings like Shakespearean flaws and not as often propelled forward by it with the playful logic of a clown.

BB: *You're working with Panoply Theatre Collective. Tell us about the Collective and how that worked.*



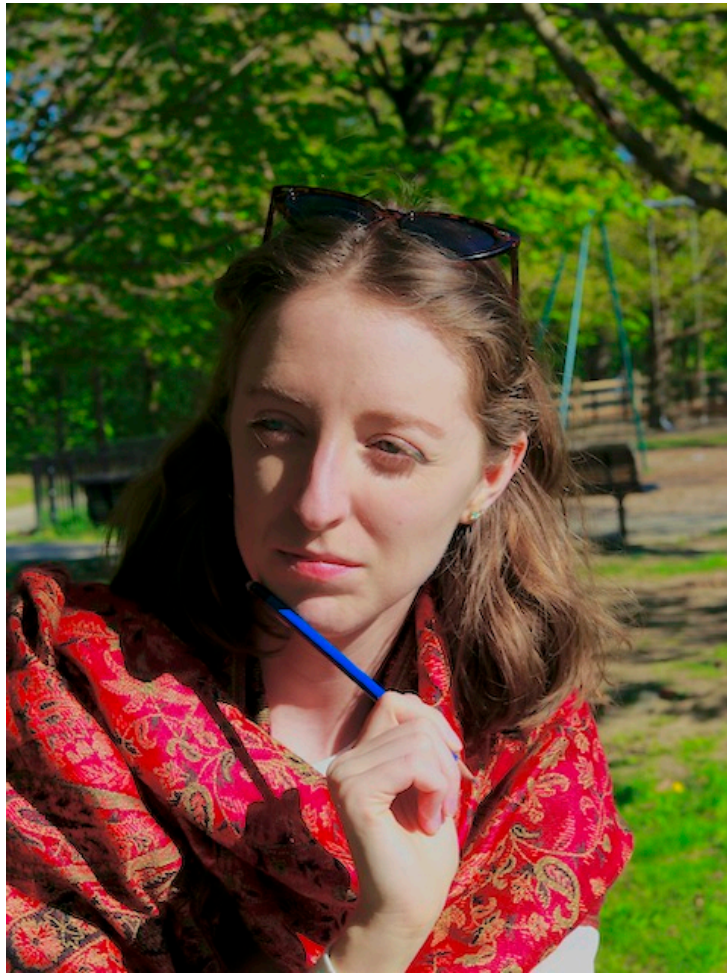
Callan Forrester (photo: Elisabeth Bragale)

Kenzia Dalie: I love working with this company! It has been such a joy to work with them on a number of productions in various capacities and call them my colleagues and friends. This is my fourth year working with Panoply Theatre Collective; I have been a production designer for them on a number of shows and *Clowns Reading Shakespeare* is the first that I've directed with them.



Brendan Kinnon (photo: Elisabeth Bragale)

They are dedicated to adapting classical narratives with a feminist, inclusive and modern perspective, and genuinely committed to re-centering iconic stories to feature queer folks, people of colour and people of different abilities so earnestly in their work.



Paige Madsen (photo: Elisabeth Bragale)

The intelligent creatives behind this organization are Paige Madsen, Sienna Singh and Alyssa Pothier; all of whom are performing in this summer's production of *Clowns Reading Shakespeare*.



Alyssa Pothier (photo: Elisabeth Bragale)

In 2022, they asked me if I'd be interested in directing a show for them. At the time I told them that I wasn't ready to take on a full Shakespearean play but I did have a budding adaptation concept that had to do with clowns. I had written a clown bit for an audition that was Romeo reading his own play for the first time and discovering his own story as it unfolds. I knew I wanted to expand the concept further and offered the idea to the Panoply Theatre Collective. They asked if I was interested in workshopping it with them and offered the opportunity to work on it with a troupe of clowns. How could I say no?



Sienna Singh (photo: Elisabeth Bragale)

So in 2023, as a pre-show for their production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I directed a 30-minute workshop performance with nine clowns and we explored the play *Macbeth*. Since it was a workshop, Panoply organized gathering feedback from the audiences and actors so that I could develop it further into a larger show. It was a success! I received a lot of great feedback and was able to remount the show a few more times that summer as pop-up performances with half the amount of clowns.

I used the summer of 2024 to rewrite the show, restructure the format, cut some characters and recontextualize the clowns outside of the world of the play and into the world of a theater maker: an actor, a director, a stage manager! I realized the initial workshop was more about Shakespeare than it was about the clowns. I didn't want that. I wanted audiences to get to know the clowns, so we expanded it to a 50 min piece that explores 4 clowns and a director, through some of Shakespeare's shows. This way we have time to see more of their personalities and relationships!

Panoply has been incredibly supportive during this process. They are always offering me resources and opportunities to continue to work the show and pushing me creatively. Throughout the entire process they have offered insightful dramaturgical questions, performance suggestions and script edits that have heavily impacted where the show lands today. I'm also incredibly appreciative that they continue to look into ways for us to remount the show for more audiences.

I learned through this collective that we have created a show that truly is continuously evolving and there is so much room for play. Working with Panoply Theatre Collective helped me bring a show to life that I had no idea was waiting somewhere in a silly little pocket of my brain. I'm excited to see how this summer's *Clowns Reading Shakespeare* lands in audiences and to see where it goes next!

Panoply Theatre Collective present ***Clowns Reading Shakespeare*** outside on the following dates in the following locations:

Presented at Memorial Park (22 Little Avenue) June 19-22 and Kew Gardens (2075 Queen St. East) June 25-29

June 19, 7PM (Memorial Park)

June 20, 7PM (Memorial Park)

June 21, 2PM & 7PM (Memorial Park)

June 22, 2PM & 7PM (Memorial Park)

June 25, 7PM (Kew Gardens)

June 26, 7PM (Kew Gardens)

June 27, 7PM (Kew Gardens)

June 28, 2PM & 7PM (Kew Gardens)

June 29, 2PM (Kew Gardens)

Created by **Panoply Theatre Collective and Kenzia Dalie**

Directed and Designed by **Kenzia Dalie**

Featuring **Alyssa Pothier, Brendan Kinnon, Callan Forrester, Paige Madsen and Sienna Singh**

Associate Producer **Bonnie Duff**

Panoply Theatre Collective is a Canadian charitable non-profit theatre company that prioritizes collaborative creation of new and adapted works.

PANOPLY
THEATRE COLLECTIVE

Summer 2025
Memorial Park
June 19-22
Kew Gardens Park
June 25-29

CLOWNS READING SHAKESPEARE

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