

## Company History

Ergo Arts Theatre began in the early 1990's. We started as a core group of artists who were passionate about telling stories and giving a new perspective.

**The start.** With a shoestring budget, we began simply - with readings. We created worlds with words, actors and a stage. This was the **West End Reading Series** – an ongoing initiative featuring modern classics and new plays pared down to the essentials: the script and the actor. This four-year series always maintained a pay-what-you-can policy, as a way to make theatre accessible to everyone. Some highlights include **Copenhagen, The Gin Game, The Pride, Betrayal, Musical Chairs, 7 Short Farces by Chekhov, The Seagull, and Fifty Plays.**

**Growing.** New play development has been one of our mandates from the beginning. We have been a part of developing homegrown works throughout our 25 years of operation. From 1993 to the present, we have collaborated with many of Canada's finest theatre talent: Martha Henry, Diana Leblanc, Oliver Dennis, Jordan Pettie, RH Thompson, Patrick Galligan, Deb Drakeford, Richard Lee, Janet-Laine Green, directors Sue Miner, Andrea Donaldson, Anita La Selva, Marjorie Chan and playwrights and dramaturges, Alexis Bernier, Marcia Johnson and Beverley Cooper to name a few.

We have had the privilege of seeing many new works journey from inception to realization – works like, **The Pride, Still Life, The Women of Casterbridge, Pride and Prejudice, Then/Berenice and Vicious Circle.**

**A new language.** In the exploration of new text development, we began to push the boundaries of text and style. With ancient Greek classics **Lysistrata** and the poetic works of Constantine Cavafy, Giorgos Seferis and Yiannis Ritsos, we delved into bilingual and polyglottal scripts. In 2008, Artistic Director Anna Pappas was commissioned to create an adaptation of **Antigone**, which was performed at Toronto's Nuit Blanche. Our bilingual work continues with **Two Voices (Δuo Φωνες).**

**On the road.** We are no strangers to touring. Our production of the Canadian classic, **Billy Bishop Goes to War**, saw two Ontario tours. From Toronto to North Bay, the show was presented in theatres and private and public schools within the province. The show gave students a unique experience of theatre followed by a talk back with the actors and a World War II veteran. This production was our entry point into theatre and education.

**Reaching youth.** The idea of seeing with new eyes, instigating change and being the change has permeated all the work we have done with youth. In 2014, **Through Your Eyes: The Odyssey Project** brought together youth and seniors to play and create art around themes of journey and home. Later that year, young artists were assembled to improvise and create original versions of Homer's **The Odyssey.**

**The Indie Scene.** From 1993 to the present, we have been a part of the Fringe and Summerworks communities with productions **Vicious Circle, Then/Berenice, Truce, Breaking Character** (chosen as Patron's Pick) and **Buckle My Shoe** (selected as one of NOW Magazine's Fringe Favourites, Outstanding Production, Outstanding Ensemble). Both Festivals have been playing grounds for the development of alternative and experimental work for us.

**Pink and Pink Fest.** 2017 and 2018 saw the creation of Pink, the arm of Ergo Arts dedicated to supporting emerging (young and older), female-identifying and non-binary artists; and Ergo Pink Fest,

the festival created to mentor and give visibility to female and non-binary identifying playwrights. For two years, the festival has given a platform to new and exciting work and has offered audiences a chance for arts community engagement with dynamic panel discussions and workshops. Ergo Pink Fest is currently in the planning phase of year three!

## Artists' Bios

### **Kirk Dunn – Knitter, Performer, Co-Writer**

Kirk is an actor, writer, corporate consultant, and knitter.

### **Acting**

Kirk's stage credits include a tour of **Billy Bishop Goes to War** for Ergo Arts Theatre (also for Gypsy Theatre); **Merlin** and **The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged)** at Young People's Theatre; **Dads! The Musical** at the Charlottetown Festival, Stirling Theatre, and Drayton Theatre; **Romeo and Juliet** at the Ford Centre; **More Munsch** at The Grand Theatre in London; **The War Show**, **A Flea in Her Ear**, **Don't Dress for Dinner**, and **The Affections of May** for Drayton Entertainment; **Sir Gawain and the Green Knight** with the Toronto Consort, and **Fortune and Men's Eyes** at the Tarragon, directed by Jordan Merkur.

TV highlights include *not* being seen for three seasons as the lead on TVO/PBS's **The Adventures of Dudley the Dragon**, during which time he was ensconced in an eight-foot-tall green dragon puppet and the show won Gemini Award for best children's show. Kirk also appeared in CBC's **Chasing Cain**, **Traders** and **Spynet**; Showtime's **Street Time** and **Queer as Folk**; Fox's **Class of '96**; as well as **Little Mosque on the Prairie**; **Real Kids, Real Adventures**; **Kung Fu**; **Women of Windsor**; **Katts & Dog**; and **War of the Worlds**.

On film, Kirk has appeared in 20th Century Fox's **Trapped in Paradise**; in the short films **Brick Red**, Cal Coons' **Day Pass**, Ines Buchli's **Exposure**, Alexandra Gill's **Harriet Loves**, and in the lead of the critically acclaimed short film **Like A Dream: The Mario Lanza Story**, directed/written by John Martins-Manteiga, which screened at the Cannes Film Festival.

### **Writing**

Kirk's writing for television includes multiple episodes of **The Adventures of Dudley the Dragon** (YTV, TVO and PBS), **Ants In Your Pants**, **Fuzzpaws** (Treehouse), and **Hello Mrs. Cherrywinkle** (OWL TV for PBS). He and his wife Claire Ross Dunn have had several original TV properties optioned over the years, and, along with David Burgess, co-wrote a feature that was a modern adaptation of Wycherley's Restoration comedy **The Country Wife**, called **Society Rules**. Kirk has written three musicals for young audiences, including **The Lost Land** and **Derek the Viking**, both of which were awarded first prize in StoryBook Theatre's playwrighting competition and which have been produced across North America. He and Claire co-wrote **The Knitting Pilgrim**.

### **Knitting**

Kirk's greatest love is knitting. has been knitting since 1988 and began designing in 1996. Kirk shares his interest in colour and complex design with renowned textile designers Kaffe Fassett and Brandon Mably. In 1998, Kirk apprenticed at the Kaffe Fassett Studio in London, England.

Kirk has designed several sweaters, afghans and pieces of knitted art. His "Thousand Cranes" sweater design is award winning; his "Symmetricats" pillow design was published in **A Needle Pulling Thread**; and he recently designed two pillows featuring Topsy Farms yarn: "Topsy Turvy" and "The

Loyalist.” Kirk has also contributed several times to the Textile Museum of Canada’s annual Shadow Box Fundraising Gala with small installations of three-dimensional, knitted, marine-themed pieces.

In 2003, Kirk was awarded an Ontario Arts Council Chalmers Foundation Fellowship for **Stitched Glass**, an installation of three 5’ x 9’ tapestries, knit in the style of stained glass, exploring the commonalities and conflicts between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Fifteen years later, Kirk has finally completed the tapestries. With the support of the Toronto Arts Council, Kirk and Claire Ross Dunn wrote **The Knitting Pilgrim**, a one-hour play to tour with the installation.

**Threads of Abraham** is a documentary film about Kirk and **Stitched Glass** made by filmmaker Todd Witham. A short version of it can be seen online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8Bklfd0Zuw>. Currently, filmmakers Omar Majeed and Ian Daffern, are making a documentary about Kirk, **Stitched Glass** and **The Knitting Pilgrim**.

Kirk has been a guest speaker for several Ontario knitting guilds, and has given “Knitting without Fear” workshops at the Textile Museum of Canada. He recently gave knitting workshops at the Aga Khan Museum to teach his unique style of colour-blending on the fly that produces rich, textured knitting.

Kirk has been interviewed on CBC Radio’s “This Morning,” and has been featured in **The Toronto Star**, **Vogue Knitting**, **The National Post**, **Maclean’s Magazine**, **A Needle Pulling Thread Magazine**, **Enroute Magazine**, **Family Circle Knitting**, **The Presbyterian Record**, **Broadview Magazine**, **Vogue’s Knit 1 magazine** and **Knitnet**. He can be seen knitting on various public transportation vehicles across Toronto.

With **The Knitting Pilgrim**, he is now exploring the intersectionality of writing, performing and knitting – his most exciting adventure yet. [www.kirkdunn.com](http://www.kirkdunn.com).

### **Jennifer Tarver – Director, Dramaturge**

Jennifer is a Canadian director and creator working internationally in both theatre and opera. Based in Toronto since 1999, she has directed for the major theatre companies of the region including Soulpepper Theatre, The Tarragon Theatre, Canadian Stage Company, Nightwood Theatre, and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. During five seasons at Stratford her work included **Waiting For Godot**, **The Homecoming**, **Krapp’s Last Tape**, **Zastrozzi** and the world premiere of George F. Walker’s **King of Thieves**. Jennifer’s recent work in the United States includes **Krapp’s Last Tape** at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, and **Hedda Gabler** at Hartford Stage in Connecticut.

Jennifer was the Artistic Director of Necessary Angel Theatre from 2013 - 2019, and the Associate Director at The Theatre Centre in Toronto from 2004-2012 where she mentored over 30 dance, opera and theatre companies in the creation of original work. Her original works include **All But Gone - A Beckett Rhapsody**, **Not Faust**, **History Play** and the award winning **She’s Gone Away**, a collaboration with choreographer Susanna Hood. Jennifer has worked for many seasons with Queen of Puddings Music Theatre as director of contemporary opera, and was the Director of the Opera Studio at the Centre for Opera Studies in Sulmona, Italy from 2007-2009.

### **Claire Ross Dunn – Co-Writer, Co-Producer**

After spending 10 years as an actor for theatre, film and TV, Claire attended the Canadian Film Centre as a Writer Resident in 1996; she now works as a published author, writer for film and TV, story editor and producer. For TV, credits include: DHX’s **Make It Pop**, (Nick/YTV); **Wingin’ It** (Family, Disney XD Canada, BBC) **Little Mosque on the Prairie** (CBC); **Degrassi**, **The Next Generation** (Nick); **The**

**Smart Woman Survival Guide** (W, Cosmo). She has also worked for Universal Kids, TVO, PBS, BBC, Owl TV, and Super Channel. Claire has story edited two produced, award-winning feature films. With Elfi Schlegel, Claire co-wrote The Gymnastics Book: A Young Person's Guide to Gymnastics, a non-fiction book for Firefly. It is currently in its third edition.

### **Beverley Cooper – Dramaturge**

Beverley Cooper is an award-winning writer. She has written for TV, film and extensively for CBC radio drama, twice being nominated for WGC Awards. Plays include **Thin Ice** (co-written with Banuta Rubess, Chalmers/Dora Award), **The Lonely Diner**, **Janet Wilson Meets the Queen** (nominated for Prix Rideau Award) and **If Truth Be Told. Innocence Lost: A Play about Steven Truscott** (a finalist for a Governor General's Literary Award). Beverley trained as an actor and has performed in TV, film and in theatres across Canada. She also directs audio books. Beverley's plays are published by Scirocco Drama. [www.BeverleyCooper.com](http://www.BeverleyCooper.com)

### **Wesley McKenzie – Co-Projection Designer, Lighting Designer, Production Manager**

Wesley is a lighting, sound and video designer based in Toronto. He serves as the Production Manager and Lighting Designer in residence for the Classic Theatre Festival in Perth, Ontario. Wesley also teaches production in York University's Department of Dance. Credits include: *The Scavenger's Daughter* (Paradigm Productions); *Who Killed Adrianna?*; *Orpheus in the Underworld*; (UofT Opera); *The Tender Land*; *Tales of Hoffmann* (Opera Laurier); *The Italian Girl in Algiers*; *The Rape of Lucretia* (MYOpera); *lulu v.7*; *the marquise of O—(the red light district)*; *Mr. Truth* (Lester Trips).

### **John Tarver – Co-Projection Designer**

John Tarver is an Emmy Award winning director of photography and film maker. He has shot projects all over the world including Peru, Canada, the US, Turkey, Austria, Egypt, and Luxembourg. Credits include episodic series such as **Defiance** (SyFy Network), **Club 57** (Nickelodeon), **Copper** (BBC America), TV movies such as **Screamers** (Sony Studios), as well as multiple award-winning commercials. He co-produced and photographed the award-winning feature documentary **Once Upon a Crime**. He currently teaches film making at Ryerson University and holds a Master's Degree in film production from the University of Southern California.

### **Jennifer Stobart – Stage Manager**

Stage manager of over 146 productions in a 32-year career, touring Canada, the US, UK and Australia. Selected theatres include: Actors Repertory Company, The Citadel, The Classic Theatre Festival, Culture Storm, Blyth Theatre Festival, Buddies In Bad Times, Infinitheatre, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, Native Earth Performing Arts, Patria Music Theatre, Pea Green Theatre, Port Hope Festival Theatre, Quest Theatre, The Red Barn, Red Sky Performance, 4/12 years, The Second City National Touring Company, Shakespeare in the Ruins, Souleppper Theatre, Sudbury Theatre Centre, Tapestry New Opera Works, Theatre Aquarius, Theatre Orangeville, Upper Canada Playhouse, Victoria Playhouse, and Petrolia.

### **Kelly Anderson – Stage Manager**

Kelly Anderson is a graduate of York University's theatre program, specializing in Design, Playwriting and Devised Theatre. Recently, she has been working as a playwright, set, costume, lighting and sound designer in theatre, film and for escape rooms. She is the company designer for Theatre By Committee. Selected credits: Playwright and Production Designer, **Practice Drill** (Theatre By Committee); Head of Props at Hart House Theatre 2018 Season; Production Designer, **Best Kept Secrets** (Theatre By Committee); Costume Designer, **Jib & Jab** (Kurt Ogilvie) for film; Costume Designer, **Faust** (Theatre By The Bay).

### **Anna Pappas – Co-Producer, Artistic Director of Ergo Arts Theatre**

Anna's experience stems from 25+ years of work as a stage, TV and film actor. In the early 90's, she founded Ergo Arts Theatre. Producing credits include **The West End Reading Series**, **Breaking Character**, **Then/Berenice**, **Billy Bishop Goes To War**, and **Two Voices**. Selected directing credits: **Antigone**, **Buckle My Shoe**, **The Odyssey Project**, **Witts: Ballad of Queer Cowboys** and **The Knitting Pilgrim** (workshop). She was also commissioned to adapt **Antigone** for Toronto's Nuit Blanche. Anna founded **Ergo Pink Fest**, a theatre festival promoting new works by female/non-binary artists. The festival saw its second year this past March, 2019.