

## U.N.I.T. Productions – Company Bio

U.N.I.T. Productions, the home of the Morro and Jasp clown series, is the brainchild of Heather Marie Annis, Byron Laviolette and Amy Lee. The company has been nominated for three Dora Mavor Moore Awards (winning the 2012 Award for Outstanding Performance by an Ensemble in the Independent Theatre division), three Canadian Comedy Awards (winning the 2014 Award for Best Variety Act), a BroadwayWorld Award and over ten NOW Magazine Awards including Outstanding New Play, Outstanding Production, Outstanding Ensemble, and Outstanding Direction. Their cookbook, *Eat Your Heart Out with Morro and Jasp*, was published by Tighrope Books and won a 2015 Gourmand World Cookbook Award for Best Innovative Cookbook.

U.N.I.T. Productions' mainstage shows include *Morro and Jasp in Stupefaction* (Co-Production with Kabin), *Morro and Jasp: 9-5* (Co-Production with Factory Theatre), *Of Mice and Morro and Jasp*, *Morro and Jasp Go Bake Yourself*, *Morro and Jasp Gone Wild*, *Morro and Jasp Do Puberty* and *Morro and Jasp Go Green* (TYA). Morro and Jasp have also performed shorter pieces, including *Morro and Jasp Lost and Found* (Magnetic North) and *Morro and Jasp In a Pickle*, and hosted numerous cabarets. They have performed at Fringe Festivals in Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Halifax and London; the Edinburgh Festival Fringe; the Clownin Festival in Vienna; the NY Clown Theater Festival and Amuse Bouche Festival in New York City; the SubDevision Festival at Magnetic North; the undercurrents Festival at the GCTC in Ottawa; Theatre Sainte Catherine and the Centaur Theatre in Montreal; The Orillia Opera House; the Vaughan City Playhouse; the Toronto Festival of Clowns, Lab Cab Festival, Pandemonium Machine, Cahoots Theatre, Harbourfront Centre and Factory Wired in Toronto. They recently completed a run of *Of Mice and Morro and Jasp* at the Manitoba Theatre for Young People in Winnipeg, touring high schools throughout Manitoba. In 2018, *Save the Date* was named one of the Top 10 Toronto Theatre Productions of the year by NOW Magazine. They are currently Canada Council creators-in-residence at Factory Theatre developing a Sherlock Holmes adaptation.

## Artist Bios

### Heather Marie Annis - Performer/Creator

Heather is an actor, playwright, theatre creator, theatrical and therapeutic clown, Co-Artistic Director of U.N.I.T. Productions, and "Morro" of the Dora Award and Canadian Comedy Award winning clown duo Morro and Jasp.

She has been a writer in residence at Factory Theatre and Mixed Company Theatre, as well as part of the Thundering Voices playwriting unit at Native Earth Performing Arts where she developed *Walking Forward, Facing Back* (Weesageechak Festival, Native Earth). Heather was part of Directors Lab North 2018. She is directing Julia Lederer's show *U-R-U* at NextStage 2020, and a workshop production of the new show *Pest Me, Pet Me* with Animacy Theatre Collective in January. Performing credits include *Morro and Jasp in Stupefaction*, *Morro and Jasp: 9-5* (Factory Theatre), *A Christmas Carol* (Three Ships Collective), *Remembering The Winnipeg General* (Zietpunk), *Let's Go* (DMT Productions), *Bright Lights* (Theatre Brouhaha), *Emily's Piano* (Young Peoples Theatre), *The Money Tree* (Dora Nominated for Best Ensemble - Roseneath), *Saving Hope* (CTV), *Reign* (CW).

### **Amy Lee - Performer/Creator**

Amy is a Winnipeg-born, Toronto-based performer, writer, educator, creator, producer and Co-Artistic Director of U.N.I.T. Productions, and "Jasp" of the Dora Award and Canadian Comedy Award winning clown duo Morro and Jasp. She has worked as a Resident Artist Educator at Young People's Theatre, and as a mentor with the Paprika Festival and the AMY (Artists Mentoring Youth) Project.

As a performer, Amy most recently played Michael in *Bar Mitzvah Boy* at Winnipeg Jewish Theatre. She has also worked with Young People's Theatre (*James and the Giant Peach*, *Cinderella: A RATical Retelling*, *The Invisible Girl*, *Hana's Suitcase*), Carousel Players (*Here to Hear*), Theatre Brouhaha (*Bright Lights*), Theatre Columbus (*Weather the Weather*), Factory Theatre, Manitoba Theatre for Young People, and Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre

Amy has assistant directed on *Annie* and *Emily's Piano* at YPT and *The Dog and the Angel* with Theatre Columbus. She has been a writer-in-residence at Factory Theatre and was part of the Theatre Kairos Writers' Circle.

She also recently gave birth to a tiny wondrous human named Sadie Rae.

### **Byron Laviolette - Director/Dramaturg**

Byron Laviolette is a director with over twenty years experience working in the arts, the agency, the academy and the arcade.

Theatrically, he is the director and dramaturg for the Morro and Jasp clown series who have received numerous awards including a 2014 Canadian Comedy Award, a 2012 Dora Mavor Moore Awards as well as over 12 NOW Magazine Awards including Outstanding New Play, Outstanding Production and Outstanding

Ensemble. He also works with Summerworks Festival's Audience Choice Winner Pearle Harbour and acclaimed puppeteer Adam Francis Proulx.

Byron was also the Creative Director of The Mission Business, the Digi award-winning experience design agency whose clients included Microsoft, Autodesk, Starbucks, CBC, MetroLinx and NASA.

Byron holds a PhD in Interactive Theatre and Pervasive Transmedia Fiction from the Theatre and Performance Studies Department at York University and his criticism/art journalism has appeared in Scene Changes, EYE Weekly, AdBusters and IN Toronto magazine. He also directs audio books for Penguin Random House including works by Richard Wagamese, Michael Crummy, Thomas King and Ziya Tong.

### **Sarah Miller - Stage Manager**

Sarah Miller is a Toronto-based freelance stage manager for live theatre and events. She's worked with leading arts organizations across the country including the Canadian Opera Company, Factory Theatre, Shaw Festival, Soulpepper Theatre, Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Toronto International Film Festival and U.N.I.T. Productions. She is also a part time lecturer at Ryerson University and a mentor for theatre production students at Humber College.

Most recently Sarah stage managed Tarragon Theatre's world premiere of *Yaga*. Select theatre credits include: *Monday Nights* (6<sup>th</sup> Man Collective/Theatre Centre); *I Send You This Cadmium Red* (Art of Time Ensemble); *Bang Bang*, *The Crackwalker*, *Morro & Jasp: 9 to 5*, *Twisted* (Factory Theatre); *Of Mice and Morro and Jasp*, *Where the Wild Things Are* (Manitoba Theatre for Young People); *Freedom Singer* (Project Humanity); *The Women*, *John Bull's Other Island* (Shaw Festival); *Sisters*, *Innocence Lost*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Spoon River*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Hosanna*, *The Heidi Chronicles*, *Angels in America* (Soulpepper); *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*, *Private Lives*, *It's a Wonderful Life* (Theatre New Brunswick), *The De Chardin Project* (Theatre Passe Muraille) and *Towards Youth* (Project Humanity/Crows Theatre).

### **Victoria Laberge - Producer**

Victoria Laberge is a Toronto-based arts administrator originally from Montreal. In addition to her role as the Director of Development for Nightwood Theatre, Canada's flagship feminist theatre company since 1979, she also serves as the

Publicist for Sex T-Rex Comedy and as the Marketing Coordinator for Puppetmongers Theatre. She produced the award-winning *People Suck* in 2015 (Best of Fringe, Toronto Fringe Festival) and was a co-producer for Confabulation Storytelling from 2016-2019. As a freelance publicist, Victoria has had the honour of working on such productions as Theatre Inamorata's *Gray*; Cue6 Theatre's *Dry Land* (One of the 10 best theatre productions of 2018, The Globe and Mail); Dive Bar Theatre's *Lighters in the Air* (Outstanding Production of the 2018 Toronto Fringe Festival, NOW Magazine); and Scantly Glad Theatre's *Pack Animals*. Victoria has served on the jury of the Toronto Sketch Comedy Festival since 2018. In 2019, she received the My Entertainment World Honourary Critics' Pick Award for Publicity.