



UGA
presents.
24|25 SEASON

HOTEL ELSINORE

THURS, OCT 10, 7:30 pm
Morton Theatre

Supported by
JIM AND CAROL WARNES

Please silence all mobile phones and electronic devices. Photography, video and audio recording, and texting are prohibited during the performance.



HOTEL ELSINORE

Written by **Susanna Hamnett**

(with adapted text from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*)

Created and performed by **Susanna Hamnett,**
Joshua MacGregor, and **Lily MacGregor**

Directors **Susanna Hamnett and Joshua MacGregor**

Stage Manager **Steve MacGregor**

Production Assistant **Alberta Saunders**

Lighting Design **The Swallow Theatre**

With Voice Over by **Alan Williams**

Photography by **Ben Wulf**

Dedication

Hotel Elsinore is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend, the great Canadian actor David Fox who, whenever we would tell him of an upcoming project or dream, would get a fierce glint in his eye and pump the air with his fist, exclaiming “Have at 'em!”

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Once, quite a long time ago, I made a solo play called *Nearly Lear*. It was based on Shakespeare's *King Lear* and I have had the privilege of playing it to hundreds of people of all ages in many different countries and places.

I love thinking of new and unexpected ways to explore Shakespeare's plays. And the idea for *Hotel Elsinore* came from thinking about *Hamlet*. This new play was made with my son, Joshua and daughter, Lily, and a lot of the work was done during the Covid lockdowns when we were all living together. We had been thinking about making something together for a long time and our conversations would keep coming back to the idea of a story that somehow revolved around the themes of *Hamlet*. Then time would pass and we would get caught up in our lives.

But then there was a moment. We were at the time living in Cornwall right at the furthest western tip of England, by the sea. We had gone to have afternoon tea in an old cliff-top hotel that was both a restaurant, cafe, and pub all in one. We ordered a huge pot of tea and pulled out our notebooks and began to brainstorm in earnest—drawing early sketches of what a poster might look like, outlining the characters and what their story-arcs could be. We had a feeling that maybe something had taken root. After a couple of hours we left and I went to the bar to pay. I wanted to leave a tip and asked the server for the tip jar. She handed it to me and it was an empty tin—an empty Hamlet cigar tin.

So we took that as a sign, because it was of course a sign, and began steadily to bring this play into being.

We created a production company. We worked around our day jobs and commitments, evolving a creative process together, shaping ourselves into a professional company, developing our ethos, artistic discipline and working practice until we had something we could shakily put up on its feet and see if this idea that we had dreamt up actually had legs. We invited a dear actor friend to come to our house and, in our living room, we stumbled through the first version. It was rough and unwieldy, with a hundred problems to be solved—but there was an emotional arc and our friend was deeply moved by the journey of these three characters. And so we continued to delve and develop.

I have learned that the best way to get something huge and daunting done is to set a seemingly impossible goal, and so we decided that we would take this as-yet unfinished play to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe—the largest theatre festival in the world. We did everything—we fundraised and crowdfunded and designed and built our set and worked every spare moment and somehow found ourselves in August 2022 onstage in Edinburgh, the recipients of a prestigious award and with a shower of beautiful reviews. And now we are here sharing our work with you.

I love signs. They are real and if we can look out for them, these signposts can point us on our way, encouraging us to keep going with our visions and dreams.

—Susanna Hamnett

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

SUSANNA HAMNETT

Susanna Hamnett is a multi-award-winning British/Canadian artist, currently based in the UK.

Born in London, Susanna studied Russian and French at Cambridge University before winning scholarships to study acting at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She worked professionally in England and Europe before moving to Toronto to study theatrical clowning with master clowns John Turner and Mike Kennard.

There she created *Nearly Lear*—her first full-length solo performance—with a Canadian creative team and with initial research in association with the internationally-acclaimed English company, Kneehigh Theatre. *Nearly Lear* has since toured internationally to a multitude of different venues, including the New Victory Theater on Broadway, the Sydney Opera House and the Kennedy Center, as well as a joyful array of smaller venues, schools, village halls and festivals across Canada, the U.S., and the UK. More recently it has won awards at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and the Riverside Studios in London.

Susanna is also a committed artist-educator who has worked in Canada and the US with students of all ages, including teaching masterclasses for university and college students, directing productions of Shakespeare with young teenagers, creating programs for teaching Shakespeare to at-risk teenagers and Grade 1-3 students in a Toronto inner-city school, and being a part of Lincoln Center's Aesthetic Education Program.



Finding themselves living together again during the Covid pandemic, Susanna and her two adult artist children (Joshua and Lily MacGregor), created a new production company (Plant [Un]Ltd Productions) and began working on the creation of a new play based on Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Hotel Elsinore* premiered at the 2022 Edinburgh Festival Fringe to audience and critical praise, was the recipient of a prestigious Carol Tambor Award, and was then invited to play at The Swallow Theatre in Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland. Later in the year it will have its London premiere at the Riverside Studios.

Susanna is currently working on another solo show. She continues to teach and can sometimes be seen on television and film (most recently in Canadian-Maltese film-maker Valerie Buhagiar's *It's Hard to Be Human*). She is also a qualified yoga teacher.

LILY MACGREGOR

Lily MacGregor is an actor, dancer, singer and visual artist. Born in Toronto and educated there until she was 16, Lily began her training as a dancer at the prestigious CCDT (Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre), starting at the age of 4 and working her way up through the ranks into the Company. Alongside this she was accepted into the Rosedale Heights School of the Arts for her high school years where she also pursued dance, visual art, film, photography and musical theatre. In her last year there she choreographed and performed in the musical *Spring Awakening*.

She completed her last year of high school while travelling in Europe and England, graduating as an Ontario Scholar. She currently lives in Leipzig, Germany, working as a dancer/dance teacher after having recently graduated from the Leipzig Tanz-Zentrale with a professional diploma in dance, choreography and pedagogy.

During the Covid pandemic and lockdown, and living in England with her mother and brother — both actors, they decided to form a theatre production company and work together professionally, developing a working practice and creating an original piece of theatre based around the themes of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. *Hotel Elsinore* had its first public performance in 2022 in the 1000-year-old St John's Church in Winchester before going to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe where it was received with critical and audience praise. The following spring it was invited to be part of the season at the beautiful Swallow Theatre in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland.

In 2023 Lily travelled with her mother to Kerala, India to train as an accredited yoga teacher, acquiring skills that Lily is integrating into her dance and teaching practices.

An accomplished singer and songwriter, Lily recently recorded with Cornwall-based musician, Andy Wilson, on his forthcoming album.

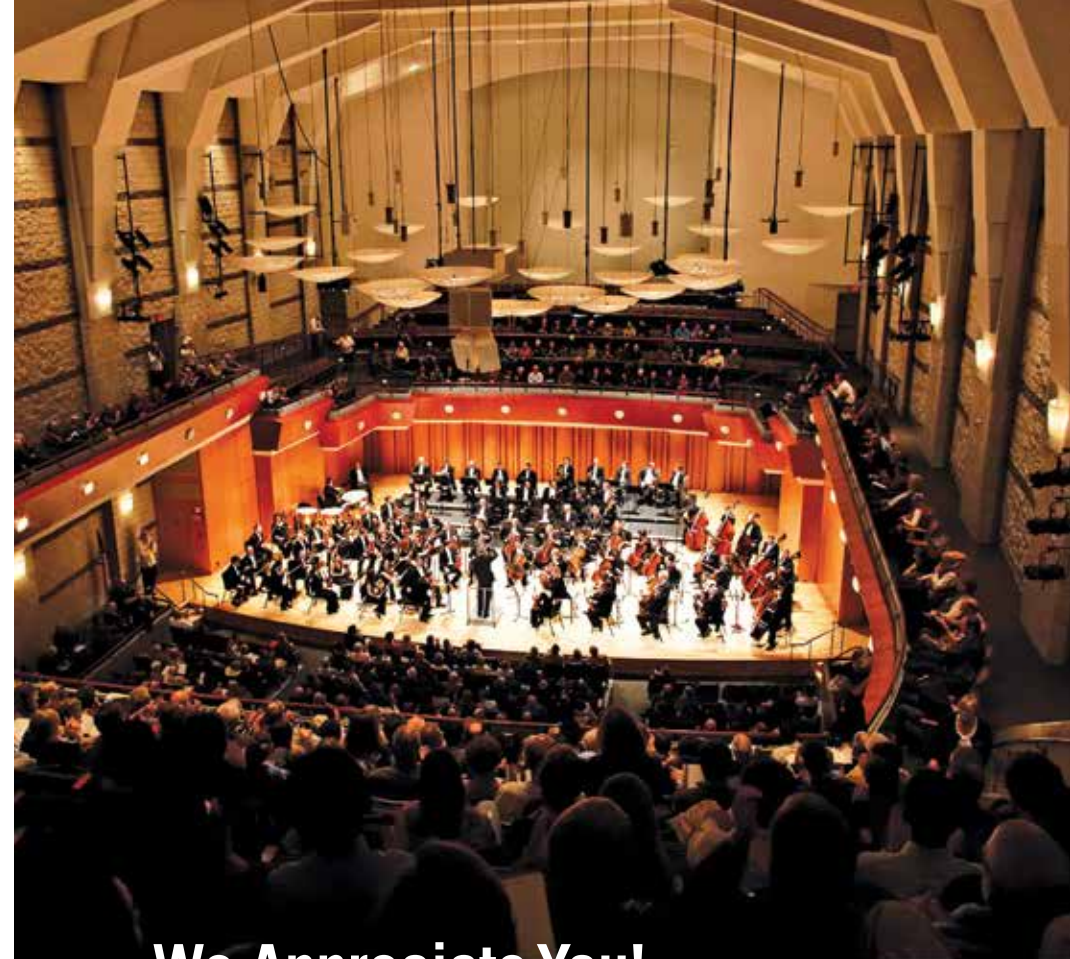
JOSHUA MACGREGOR

Joshua MacGregor is an actor, dancer, and writer. Born in Toronto, Joshua began his training as a dancer at the prestigious Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre, starting at age 4 and working his way up through the ranks into the Company.

Realizing that his passion leaned more towards acting, Joshua then spent two summers at the Stratford Festival Shakespeare Summer School in Stratford, Ontario, on scholarship, and in his last year of high school, he adapted, directed and starred in a production of *Henry V*, which earned him a number of scholastic awards for leadership and community contribution. He graduated high school as an Ontario Scholar.

At 18 he auditioned for drama school and won a place at Rose Bruford College in London, graduating with a BA (Hons) in Acting three years later. While there he formed a theatre company and wrote, produced, and starred in a new play, *The Teeth of Haros*, which went to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and received glowing reviews.

He had just begun working professionally as an actor when the Covid pandemic hit. During this time he lived with his family, now based in the UK, wrote a novel, recorded an audiobook, and formed a new production company with his mother and sister: Plant [UnLtd] Productions. They started working together in a professional capacity and created *Hotel Elsinore*, with Joshua as assistant director and dramaturg, as well as actor. The piece had its first performance in the 1000 year-old St John's Church in Winchester in 2022 and went on to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, garnering shining reviews from both audience and critics. It was then invited to perform at The Swallow Theatre in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, as part of their 2023 season.



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Contact the development coordinator, Carlton Bain, at (706) 542-2031 or cbain@uga.edu.

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