

CHRISTOPHER NEWTON

Honoured with Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award

Toronto (January 10, 2017) – The **Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award (BHMA)** was established in 1996 to recognize Barbara Hamilton's illustrious theatrical career and her remarkable canon of work. This award is presented to a Canadian artist who demonstrates excellence in the performing arts and is dedicated to advocating and being an ambassador for the arts in Canada.

The **Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts** has announced that this year's recipient is visionary director, actor and writer **Christopher Newton** whose distinguished career in the arts spans more than five decades. The Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award will be presented to him on Friday, January 13 in the Yale Simpson Lounge at the Royal Alexandra Theatre.

Christopher Newton is the Artistic Director Emeritus of the Shaw Festival where he served for nearly a quarter of a century (1980-2002). During his tenure, the company grew steadily and came to be regarded as one of the most important acting companies in North America, renowned for its exquisite ensemble work and for its innovative theatrical designs. With an eye to the future, Mr. Newton expanded the mandate in 2000 to include new plays written about the period of Shaw's lifetime (1856-1950).

While the BHMA is typically presented every two years at a press conference announcing the Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations, the Barbara Hamilton Committee decided to make an exception and award it two years in a row to celebrate and take advantage of the fact that Mr. Newton is currently working in Toronto, directing the David Mirvish and Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre co-production of *The Audience* by Peter Morgan which opens next week, running January 17-February 26 at the Royal Alexandra Theatre.

After teaching and studying in the U.S., British-born Christopher Newton arrived in Canada in 1961. His rich career ensued and acting roles came at the Stratford and Shaw Festivals, the Manitoba Theatre Centre as well as in New York City where he played the lead in *The Knack* directed by Mike Nichols.

Mr. Newton founded Theatre Calgary in 1968 where he served as Artistic Director until 1971. In 1973, he took over the Vancouver Playhouse where, with the late Powys Thomas, he launched the prestigious Playhouse Acting School. At the same time, he created three acting ensembles: for large-scale classical work, for new work and for theatre in education.

Over the years, Mr. Newton's directing credits have included operas for the Canadian Opera Company and Pacific Opera, and several iconic theatrical productions for companies across this country (including the Vancouver Playhouse, Theatre Calgary, Mirvish Productions and the Stratford and Shaw Festivals, among others) and in Australia. They include Bernard Shaw's *Heartbreak House* and *Misalliance*, Noel Coward's *Cavalcade* and *Easy Virtue*, August Strindberg's *The Father*, and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. As a writer, Mr. Newton is the author of several plays dealing with the history of Calgary and British Columbia.

Mr. Newton's indomitable spirit and standards of excellence have impacted hundreds – if not thousands – of artists and an entire generation of arts practitioners. His tremendous immeasurable contributions to the arts in Canada have been recognized with such honours as the Governor General's Award, Molson Prize, seven honorary degrees and the Order of Canada. Now Mr. Newton adds another accolade to his lauded career with the Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award.

Previous winners of the Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award are: George Curtiss Randolph, David S. Craig, Richard Rose, David Ferry, R.H. Thomson, Colin Mochrie, Fiona Reid, Karen Kain, Albert Schultz, Martha Burns, William Hutt, Eric Peterson, Maureen Forrester, Charmion King, Mervyn Blake, Douglas Campbell, John Neville, George Luscombe and Don Harron.

The Barbara Hamilton Memorial Award is administered by the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA). The BHMA selection committee is chaired by Jim Roe and comprised of Martha Burns, Jacoba Knaapen and Eric Peterson. The recipient is awarded with an official scroll from the City of Toronto and a cash prize of \$1,500.