

MONICA ESTEVES: ACCEPTANCE SPEECH FOR THE LEONARD McHARDY AND JOHN HARVEY AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN ADMINISTRATION - AMENDED JUNE 8, 2020

Thank you so much for this. I am so touched and honoured to be acknowledged by my peers and beloved arts community in Toronto.

Thank you to the late Elizabeth Comper and her estate for making the choice to recognize the people in the proverbial wings.

We are a motley crew and come from many walks of life in passionate service of the art, artists and organizations that share important stories, illuminate new perspectives, push boundaries of all kinds, and connect society and communities...even in times of pandemics and physical distancing.

It is particularly meaningful to receive this award that bears the names of both Leonard and John. I grew up in the GTA and, in my teens and early adulthood, I would often make my way to TheatreBooks...feeling the thrill of being surrounded by theatre in written form, and just so inspired by the magic of it. At the age of 17 or so, I was preparing my application to NTS. The application included a bunch of work related to play selections and - being the mid-90s and pre-Google – meant I needed to find published Canadian plays. I ventured to TheatreBooks and was so kindly assisted by the staff there, who helped me navigate and select from the Canadian canon at the time. If TheatreBooks hadn't been so knowledgeable and so kind to a teenage theatre nerd... perhaps I wouldn't be here today.

My 25 years in this community and sector has been filled with inspiration on a daily basis. Much of that inspiration has come from my colleagues. As we all know, nothing about arts management is a one-person band – and I have benefited enormously from extraordinary professional partnerships. I would like to take a moment to thank those partners and friends: Kelly Thornton at Nightwood Theatre (now at MTC), Chris Abraham at Crow's Theatre, and now Brendan Healy at Canadian Stage. As well, I extend my gratitude to the artists, staff and board volunteers who I have been so honoured to work with and learn from. And thank you to the tireless Jacoba and the fine folk at TAPA for everything they do to promote and celebrate our community and its people.

I would also like to thank my husband Chris and our daughters Rosie and Andie. Though their support and sacrifice, they have buoyed and contributed to my work.

Since the time this speech was written and pre-recorded a couple weeks ago, our world and communities have once again been stopped in its tracks by another pandemic that is far more devastating and deadly: the systemic injustices and racism that perniciously hold up the architecture of oppression, in every aspect of our societies.

Indeed, it is deeply rooted inside our cultural systems, our institutions, and our theatres, and it trickles down into every crack on and around our stages. Organizations, ours included, have responded with statements of solidarity, which should be viewed with justifiable skepticism. Words are important, stories are important, but action is paramount.

Countless artists, creatives and colleagues – at great personal risk and pain – are sharing their stories about what has happened in greenrooms and theatres across the country. They have done so with heartbreaking truth in the pursuit of real change. I am grateful to them and pained by the experiences and by my own neglect and complicity. As a non-racialized member of our cultural sector who holds privilege, I will seek out resources to delve further into this pathway of education and act. I believe our beautiful community, working together, can make a positive difference by making, in our own sector and systems, the change we want to see across the world, for all time and people to come.