

# Behind. the Curtain

An inside look into what rehearsals are really like.

*Text: Meredith MacDonald*

## ACTING IS NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART.

What looks effortless on stage takes weeks of dedicated time, energy and focus, not to mention years of formal training, to achieve.

Though we, the audience, only ever get to see the finished product of all that hard work and dedication, rehearsals are where the real magic happens. Where strangers become teammates, friends become co-workers and lines on a page are given life through performance.

Each summer, Prince Edward Island becomes a cultural bastion where people from all over the world come to enjoy the best live theatre our province has to offer from tip to tip. Actors have to be on their game, giving their best performance night after night, which makes rehearsals all the more important. But what do the actors themselves think of the rehearsal process? How do they handle bad days and what do they do to relax off-stage?

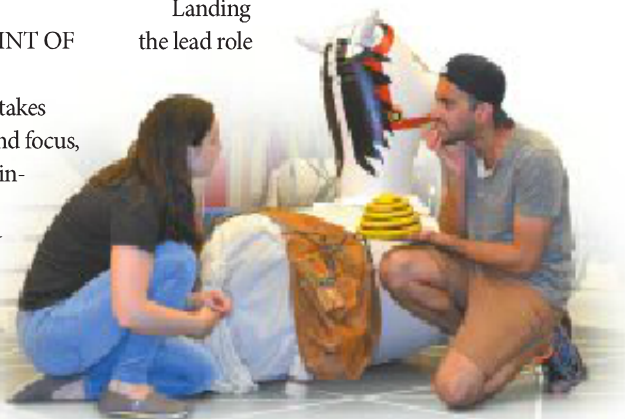
"I still can't believe this is my job," says an incredibly excited Jessica Gallant, pictured, during a recent rehearsal for *Anne of Green Gables - The Musical*. Playing the role of Anne Shirley means long days spent in rehearsals, but she loves every second on set. Photo credit: Meredith MacDonald.

I spoke to Jessica Gallant, Qasim Khan and Bryde MacLean, who are each performing in shows as part of the Confederation Centre of the Arts 2015 Charlottetown Festival, to find out.

Needless to say, actors know what they're getting into when they sign on to perform on P.E.I. for the summer season. Many star in more than one production, meaning even longer days learning carefully choreographed dance numbers and running lines from script. They're not afraid of hard work (which there is no shortage), taking to rehearsals like sponges, absorbing every bit of the experience to get the most out of it.

For Jessica Gallant, who stars as the iconic Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables - The Musical* and as a daisy in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, rehearsals have proven to be a surreal experience. "It's been very emotional, I'm not going to lie," says the actor who is the 17th performer to play the irrepressible red head and only second native Islander (she's from Ten Mile House) to land the role. "I have gone home every day after rehearsal and wept because it's very surreal for me."

Landing the lead role



in one of the world's most-loved musicals has been a dream come true for Gallant, but it has led to what she calls 'crazy moments'. During a recent rehearsal for *Anne of Green Gables*, after feeling particularly frustrated with herself, she heard a young girl, one of the children of Avonlea, singing "Lady Cordelia" in the corner. "This realization hit me; that was me," recalls Gallant, who once starred in the famed production as one of the children of Avonlea. "I was looking at her thinking to myself she probably wants to be Anne – that was me at one point and I am doing this now. Oh my goodness, it's emotionally overwhelming, I'll tell you that much."

For Qasim Kahn, who stars in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* as the White Knight and as Mr. Phillips in *Anne of Green Gables*, rehearsals are about discovery. "For me, it's a means to discover what connection has to be between me and the

