



Rona Waddington Artistic Director -St Lawrence Shakespeare Festival
(photo courtesy of David Cooper Photography (2010))

Much Ado About RONA WADDINGTON

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

No matter what direction Rona Waddington is travelling in, whether it is to the St. Lawrence Shakespeare office on King Street in Prescott or to the amphitheatre down by the river or to St. Paul's United Church in Prescott for rehearsals, one thing is for certain, she is always on cue.

In 2015 Rona Waddington took over the role of Artistic Director for the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival in Prescott from Ian Farthing, who held that position for more than 10 years. However, Waddington was no stranger to Prescott. In 2013 she directed the production "Hamlet" for the festival and she commented that the residents of Prescott

were incredibly generous to her during her transition to artistic director.

She also commented, "Ian was very helpful, though it was, of course, a bit nerve-racking filling such big shoes. Ian was a huge part of this community".

Waddington grew up in Hudson, Quebec, which is about an hour and half from Prescott. She knew when she was very young that she wanted to be in the theatre.

"There wasn't much theatre offered at the schools I attended, so mostly I created extravaganzas in our living room for my parents," said Waddington.

Her first formal training was at John Abbot College in Quebec, where she completed the theatre program. She later attended the University of Waterloo, where she chose to do a Bachelor of Independent Studies. This allowed her the freedom to take different courses from different areas of study.

Over the years she has been involved with approximately 200 professional productions in various cities around the world. She directed *The Tempest* in 2013 and *King Lear* in 2014 in Paris, France. Most recently, she was an assistant director at the Stratford Festival.

Waddington has also written four plays. In 1989 she wrote her first comedy, "East of Elvis", that was produced by Upper Canada Playhouse and Sudbury Theatre Centre. In 1992 she wrote a biography of the last 10 years of Amelia Earhart's life entitled "Earhart". This play was produced by many theatres including New York State Theatre Institute and MetroStage (in Washington, D.C.). Her play about a mystery set in Saskatchewan in 1910, "Willow Bunch", was produced at SummerWorks Festival in Toronto. Last year she was invited to join the writer's unit at the Thousand Island's Playhouse where she wrote another comedy, *Bruiser, Bruiser*.

Preparation for the St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival which begins a year in advance. In September, designers and other directors are hired. Auditions begin in December and the shows are cast by February. The two productions this year will be "Julius Caesar" and "Much Ado About Nothing".

Last year Waddington also put together a community production of "The Sound of Music". The play was a huge commitment for everyone involved and she credits the cast members for their dedication to the project.

"For me, the best part of our production of 'The Sound of Music' was getting to work so closely with members of the community. I made some great friends," commented Waddington.

This year's community theatre production will be "Anne of Green Gables". Waddington has worked on the adaption of this play and rehearsals will begin shortly.

Whether she is bringing out her carefree side in an acting role or creating a play for an upcoming production or using her skill sets while directing, Waddington enjoys it all.

When she is not acting, writing or directing, Waddington enjoys reading, walking but most of all spending time with her husband.

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