

WRITTEN BY MINNA CANTH  
DIRECTED BY RONJA SILJANDER

# THE WORKMAN'S WIFE

8 OCT AT 6PM  
9 OCT AT 2:30PM

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ACTING SCHOOL

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## THE WORKMAN'S WIFE

**WRITTEN BY MINNA CANTH**

**DIRECTED BY RONJA SILJANDER**

THE WORKMAN'S WIFE IS A PAINFUL AND BITTER STORY ABOUT THE DECEITFUL AND POWERFUL GRIP THE MALE GENDER HELD OVER THEIR WIVES IN LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FINLAND. AT THE TIME, A MARRIED WOMAN BECAME THEIR HUSBAND'S PROPERTY. THE PLAY PORTRAYS JOHANNA, THE WIFE, WHO AFTER HER AND RIDGE'S WEDDING CEREMONY IS FORCED TO CONFRONT THE OUTSIDER ROMA WOMAN HOMSANTUU WHO HE WAS ONCE ENGAGED TO. RIDGE HAD ABANDONED HOMSANTUU OVER JOHANNA'S FINANCIAL POSSESSION AND LOOKS. AFTER A HEAVY MENTAL DUEL, THE PRESSURE OF THE SOCIETY WINS, AND JOHANNA STAYS LOYAL TO HER HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LIVING HUSBAND. HE SLOWLY BECOMES AN ALCOHOLIC, WITH THE HELP OF HER LITTLE SAVINGS. WHEN JOHANNA GROWS WEAKER BECAUSE OF THE PHYSICAL TOIL SHE GOES THROUGH TO GET BREAD ON THE TABLE, RIDGE TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THAT OTHER WRETCHED WOMAN HE ONCE BETRAYED. ANYTHING FOR ANOTHER PINT. AND BESIDES, WHAT IS THE HARM FOR A MAN TO FOOL A PRETTY GIRL OR TWO.

## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

RONJA SILJANDER GRADUATED WITH A BA IN PERFORMING ARTS FROM THE PROGRAMME OF DRAMA INSTRUCTING AT TURKU ARTS ACADEMY, FINLAND IN 2018. ALONGSIDE HER STUDIES THAT COMBINED CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE PRACTISES, APPLIED THEATRE, GROUP FACILITATION AND DIRECTING, SHE TRAINED TO BE A PEDAGOGUE, FOCUSED IN DANCE, CIRCUS AND OTHER MOVEMENT-BASED PERFORMANCE FORMS AND GOT HOOKED BY DOCUMENTARY AND POLITICAL THEATRE. BEFORE HER BA STUDIES SHE DID A TWO-YEAR LONG ACTOR TRAINING AT FINNISH THEATRE INSTITUTE. SHE GETS ENTHUSIASTIC FROM ENSEMBLE-BASED THEATRE WORK AND MOVEMENT DIRECTING. DURING HER MFA THEATRE DIRECTING STUDIES AT EAST 15 ACTING SCHOOLS SHE HAS STUDIES AT RUSSIAN INSTITUTE OF THEATRE ARTS, *GITIS*, IN MOSCOW, DEEPENED HER UNDERSTANDING OF PHYSICAL THEATRE AND ASSISTED DAVID GLASS IN DAVID GLASS ENSEMBLE AND E15'S CO-PRODUCTION MAYHEM WITH BA ACTING & PHYSICAL THEATRE 2020 GRADUATE YEAR, TO NAME A FEW. IN LIFE SHE'S INSPIRED BY THE GENDER AND OPPORTUNITY EQUAL VALUES THAT LEAVE NO ONE WITH PHYSICAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SOCIAL OBSTACLES MARGINALISED. AFTER GRADUATING SHE WILL FOCUS ON BUILDING AN INTERNATIONAL AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CAREER IN PERFORMING ARTS FROM LONDON.

## **FOREWORD**

EASY, PAINLESS, JUST. ANYTHING BUT! AS HUMAN BEINGS WE SEEK THE EASE TO GET BY IN OUR LIVES WITH LESSER AMOUNT OF SWEATY STRIFE AND HEARTACHE, YET WE ENTER THE THEATRE SPACE TO SEE THE STRUGGLE. WHEN YOU COME AND JOIN OUR DANCE OF THE OPPRESSED, THINK – AS RIDGE SAYS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY –  
***“WOULDN'T IT BE QUITE FUN TO BE IN THAT SPOT”.***

THE TIMES HAVE EASED UP SINCE LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY FINLAND AND THE DAYS OF MINNA CANTH, THE ‘MOTHER OF FINNISH LITERATURE’, WHO STOOD AGAINST THE CONSERVATIVE CHURCH CIRCLES WITH HER PLAYS THAT PORTRAYED HARD, PAINFUL AND UNJUST LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE REPRESSED SIDE OF THE STORY. BUT THE WORK FOR EQUALITY IS FAR FROM BEING DONE.

OUR LAWS AND OUR JUSTICE SYSTEM ARE THE ULTIMATE ANTAGONIST IN THE WORKMAN’S WIFE, AND THE LACK OF WOMEN’S RIGHTS IS THE FAULT IN THE STORY. BUT EVEN 135 YEARS LATER THE TRUE INEQUITY HAS NOT DISAPPEARED. THE HOME OFFICE’S 2020 DOMESTIC ABUSE BILL PROMISES TO CREATE A STATUTORY DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE, EMPHASISING THAT DOMESTIC ABUSE IS NOT JUST PHYSICAL VIOLENCE BUT CAN ALSO BE EMOTIONAL, COERCIVE OR CONTROLLING, AND ECONOMIC ABUSE. BUT STILL, A RECENT UN REPORT FOUND THAT MORE THAN 80% OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN HOLD GENDER-BIASED VIEWS AGAINST WOMEN. ALYSSA MILANO’S TWEET ON OCTOBER 15, 2017, OR RECENT NEWS OF THE MASS-FEMICIDE TAKING PLACE IN TURKEY ARE JUST THE TIP OF AN ICEBERG. THE GOOD THING ABOUT THE FOURTH-WAVE FEMINISM IS THAT THIS TIME WE ARE BOLD. BUT THE EVENTS OF THIS STORY TAKE PLACE IN 1885.

COME, PLEASE, JOIN US. WELCOME, FOR YOU ARE AN INVITED GUEST. NOW THAT YOU HAVE ARRIVED AND SEE SOMEONE WHO FACES OPPRESSION BECAUSE OF THEIR GENDER, CLASS, SEXUALITY, RACE, COLOUR OR IDEOLOGY, WE ASK YOU TO TAKE THAT SPOT AND STRUGGLE WITH US.



## CAST



**NEA CORNÉR**  
JOHANNA, MISTER,  
ENSEMBLE



**EDWARD CORBETT**  
RIDGE, ENSEMBLE



**EVA MASHTALER**  
HOMSANTUU, MRS  
GOSLING, ENSEMBLE



**FELIX RYDER**  
TONY, ENSEMBLE



**ALEXANDER  
RAYNHAM**  
GEORGE, BULLY BOY,  
POLICE OFFICER,  
ENSEMBLE



**SONJA PALMU**  
MAY, MISTER, MRS  
FORSS, ENSEMBLE



**JONATHAN COOPER**  
GUSTAF, BULLY BOY,  
MR FORSS, POLICE  
OFFICER, ENSEMBLE



**CAROLINE  
CROMWELL**  
LENA-KAISA, OLD  
WOMAN, ENSEMBLE

### NEA CORNÉR

is a Finnish actor/singer based in London, a graduate of the international master's programme at East 15 Acting School. She loves Shakespeare, dark comedy, musicals and physical theatre. Recent credits include the role of Lane/Merriman in an all-immigrant version of 'The Importance of Being Earnest' at Tower Theatre and the lead in a Finnish sci-fi short film.

### EDWARD CORBETT

is a second year BA Acting student at East 15 Acting School. He took part in Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2018 with 'Year Without Summer', directed by Andrew Allen. He wishes to do more voice acting and focus on classical acting.

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## **ACTING SCHOOL**

### **EVA MASHTALER**

trained at Fourth Monkey Actor Training Company, graduating in 2019. Since then she's worked on HUNCHtheatre's production of "The Legend of the Holy Drinker" directed by Vladimir Shcherban. Her training credits include: "Valhalla" directed by Rich Rusk; "The Crucible" directed by Shane Dempsey, "War of the Worlds" in collaboration with "Rhum and Clay Theatre Company. Alongside her career on stage Eva enjoys videography & post-production editing and is particularly passionate about Meisner-based work.

### **FELIX RYDER**

is an actor, dancer and performer from South London. An East 15 Acting School and Brit School graduate, with training based in martial arts, music and world performance forms. During his studies at East 15 he acted in Our Town directed by Montse Gili, The Secret Shed of Trams and Dreams directed by Andre Pink and The F.O.G directed by Andrew McPherson. His professional acting credits include Dinner at Solano's at Woolwich Tramshed.

### **Alexander Raynham**

has acted in Much Ado about Nothing directed by Douglas Rintol at Queens Theatre Hornchurch in 2015 and DNA (by Dennis Kelly) directed by Julia Stallard at Brentwood Theatre in 2016. His training includes the Foundation course and studies in the World Performance programme at East 15 Acting School.

### **SONJA PALMU**

trained at ICMT (previously known as AMTA) in London, specialising in musical theatre. While training Sonja was in several plays and musical workshops, Julius Caesar and Sister Act among others. She was in the ensemble for her final drama school production, Legally Blonde at Stockwell Playhouse.

### **JONATHAN COOPER**

trained at East 15 on the MA Acting, graduating in 2016. Since leaving, he has done mostly fringe theatre and short films, most recently playing Caliban in The Tempest at Finsbury Square Garden. He considers himself a character actor and enjoys exploring a character's inner life from the inside outwards.

### **CAROLINE CROMWELL**

is an American actor based in London. She holds a BA in Theatre from Drew University and is currently an MFA Acting International student at East 15. She has acted in many productions in regional theatres in Virginia, New Jersey, and New York in the US. Most recently, she performed as Jacques in As You Like It at The Globe, during her masters program's residency there.

# **EAST 15**

**ACTING SCHOOL**

## **CREATIVE & TECHNICAL TEAM**

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

**RACHEL MERVIS &  
ANDREA LAVIO**

**DEPUTY STAGE / ASSISTANT  
STAGE MANAGER  
SOUND/ LX OPERATOR  
SOUND SUPERVISOR  
STAGE MANAGERS**

**ALICE REDDICK  
HOLLY MATHER  
JAKE WAKSTEIN  
RACHEL DIXON &  
HANNAH CAMPAGNA  
MATT THURSFIELD  
PHIL HAMILTON  
EMILY DOLAN  
ALAN BOWER**

**PRODUCTION MANAGER  
LIGHTING DESIGN  
COSTUME  
CONSTRUCTION  
HEAD OF STAGE &  
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT**

**ALEX PURSER**

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

SUISTAMON SÄHKÖ FOR THE MUSIC THAT IGNITES | INGRID EAMES | SÄDE JOHANNA PALMU | ALICE PEERS | ESSEX'S CROWDFUNDING PLATFORM CLICK AND EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTED OUR WORK | MFA THEATRE DIRECTING COHORT | THE ASSOCIATION OF THE MINNA CANTH HOUSE | THE FINNISH INSTITUTE IN LONDON AND SEAN CROFT WHO STARTED WITH US BUT HAD TO LEAVE THE PROCESS EARLY

**HEAD OF MA/MFA THEATRE DIRECTING | MATTHEW LLOYD**

