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**SHAW FESTIVAL AND WHY NOT THEATRE CANCEL
2020 MAHABHARATA PRODUCTION**

*- Why Not Theatre's modern retelling of the Sanskrit epic
to appear in future Festival season -*

Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON (April 6, 2020) — In light of the current recommendations and directives from the government and public health agencies, [Why Not Theatre](#) and the [Shaw Festival](#) regret to announce that the 2020 production of *Mahabharata* is impossible to realize in the current circumstances and must therefore be postponed. Why Not Theatre and The Shaw are committed to bringing *Mahabharata* to a future Festival season and are exploring a number of scheduling options.

Commissioned and presented by the Shaw Festival, Why Not Theatre's production, which features artists and creators from five countries, was set to begin rehearsals in June with performances starting in August. This decision comes before work was able to begin on the set, costumes and props for the production.

"Sad as this may be, we all need to take this moment and think about the larger picture. These are unprecedented times for our industry and our world, and this pause allows us the time necessary to ensure we can be safe and healthy when the time comes to gather again. We know how difficult this news is for our team, partners, and audience, and I want to acknowledge everyone's hard work and dedication to *Mahabharata* over the past five years," said Why Not Theatre's Artistic Director **Ravi Jain**. "We remain positive and hopeful that we will realize this production in the near future, when it is safe for artists and audiences, both here in Canada and on the international stages for which *Mahabharata* is destined. The Shaw has been such an incredible partner throughout this whole experience and we are grateful for their support and passion to see this project go on."

"Almost the first phone call I made when I started as Artistic Director of The Shaw was to Ravi. We decided to do *Mahabharata*, and I have been privileged to watch the early stages of this incredible project. While I'm sad to have to postpone it, I really would rather do that than cut corners on what I believe will be an artistic event that people will talk about for years to come. I can't wait to see it. But I can wait," said the Shaw Festival's Artistic Director **Tim Carroll**.

The Shaw will continue to monitor the situation to see if additional cancellations are required based on the direction and guidance of the provincial and federal governments, along with the public health units of Niagara, the province and the country.

Ticket holders to the affected performances will have the full value of their tickets held on their account. The Shaw Festival has a small team of box office representatives working remotely to contact ticket holders impacted by cancelled performances to offer exchanges and refunds. In the meantime, any ticket-related questions can be directed to feedback@shawfest.com.

During this time of limited operational capacity, patrons are asked to be patient as the box office staff is reduced. Response time will be longer than usual, but all patron concerns will be addressed.

For the most up-to-date information, please visit shawfest.com.

Mahabharata, written and adapted by Ravi Jain and **Miriam Fernandes** and based on the poetry of **Carole Satyamurti**, is one of the 200 exceptional projects funded through the Canada Council for the Arts' New Chapter initiative. With this \$35M initiative, the Council supports the creation and sharing of the arts in communities across Canada. **Mahabharata** was developed with support from the National Arts Centre's National Creation Fund and the Wuchien Michael Than Foundation.

This event has been financially assisted by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; and is administered by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund Corporation.

Mahabharata is sponsored by **Fairfax Financial Holdings Ltd.**, **Tim & Frances Price**, and **Corinne & Victor Rice**, with additional support provided by the **Andy Pringle Creative Reserve**.

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About the Shaw Festival

Inspired by the spirit of Bernard Shaw, the Shaw Festival creates unforgettable theatrical encounters. The Shaw Festival is a place where people who are curious about the world gather to share the unique experience of live theatre and to create a deeper human connection with the artists, the beauty and abundance of Niagara; and with each other. For more information, please visit shawfest.com.

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About Why Not Theatre

Good isn't good enough. At [Why Not Theatre](#), we're out for better.

We shake up the status quo to make the world we want to see. A world where everyone can achieve their full potential. We question everything. Rethink how stories are told. And who gets to tell them. We believe in art. It's how we make change. We MAKE great work that takes chances, and tours all over the world. We SHARE everything we have, because more artists mean more stories. We PROVOKE change because we believe art should be for everyone. We push boundaries, build community and find new ways. We represent Toronto, at home and on the world stage. Founded in 2007, we are growing rapidly, led by a core team of Ravi Jain, Owais Lightwala and Kelly Read.

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