

Anna Karenina Lives!

by

Germaine Shames

Defying patriarchy's grip on nineteenth century literature,  
Sophia Tolstoy abandons her death bed to join forces with  
young Mae West on a mission impossible: to save the life of  
Anna Karenina.

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## About *Bad Quarto Productions*

Bad Quarto Productions was founded in 2010 to explore the rarely performed plays of Shakespeare's time, and the ways in which Shakespeare's staging techniques can inform modern theatrical productions. The company has produced the earliest printed version of *Romeo and Juliet*; *The Taming of a Shrew*; *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*; *The Cronicle Historie of Henry the Fift*; *The Tragical Historie of Hamlet*, *The Life and Death of Jack Straw: A Notable Rebel* and *The Ballad of Dido*, an original musical developed using Shakespearean techniques, among other plays.

Combining precise work on verse, rhetoric, and other traditional Shakespearean acting techniques with the liveliness of improv, Bad Quarto's performance style has found favor with audiences wherever we've played, and we continue to look for new ways of bridging the gap between Shakespeare's theatre and our own.

If you like what we do, and support our mission, please consider following us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/badquarto>), Twitter (@BadQuartoPlays), as well as, Instagram (BadQuartoProductions) and help us get the word out about our upcoming shows and events. While you are there, don't forget to sign up for our email mailing list! If you would like us to bring more plays like *Cupid's Revenge* to your area, please consider making a donation by either turning in the enclosed donation slip to a Bad Quarto cast/company member, mailing it to Bad Quarto Productions 165 Daniel Street Amsterdam, NY 12010 or calling our Box Office at 646.598.2128. And don't forget, to Bad Quarto Productions, audience reviews mean the world to us!

## *Shames's Text*

Of *Anna Karenina Lives!*, Tambasco says "this play is really about what we're all going through right now. As theatre artists struggle to find ways of being more inclusive, that means interrogating what it means for a play to be canonical in 21st century America - especially those of us that hold 'the classics' in high regard - and it helps that *Anna Karenina Lives!* is such a good time about it. Germaine Shames has written the perfect musical-comedy mashup about the endurance of canonical texts, and the ways they continue to be meaningful."

## *Shak-speare's Rehearsal Conditions*

Shakespeare and his playing companies likely only ever rehearsed a new play as a group once: on the day of their first performance. They would gather at the playhouse just after sunrise, and rehearse until about 1 o'clock, with performances at two. In the weeks leading up to this rehearsal and performance, the players would likely meet individually with senior members of the company to rehearse individually. Resulting performances were fresh, energetic, and required the players to actively listen to one another in a way that modern rehearsal processes do not encourage.

## *Shak-speare's Staging Conditions*

Plays in Shakespeare's England were performed in universal lighting, and were written to encourage the audience contact made possible by actors and audience sharing the same pool of light; in addition, audiences commonly sat on the stage, and Shakespeare and others take advantage of these conventions by casting the audience in their plays. Shakespeare's plays tended to be heavily doubled, with an actor playing more than one role, and also made use of minimal scenery to enable fast scene changes, and live music to augment the performance. We have sought to deploy all of these conventions, as best as we may in a modern approximation, in our performance. By convention, all of the roles in Shakespeare's plays were performed by men or boys apprenticed to the company, and we have sought to achieve a similar effect by casting actors without regard to the gender of their characters.

# Stuff that happens in the play...

- In 1919, rising vaudeville star Mae West starts reading *Anna Karenina* (again) after a trist with one of her lovers.
- By the power of forces unknown, Mae is transported to the bedroom of Sophia Tolstoy, the ailing widow of the author.
- Mae teaches Sophia a little about America, and convinces Sophia to get out of bed and live the life she has left.
- Mae and Sophia contact the spirit of Leo Tolstoy.
- Mae and Sophia are transported by a mysterious force to Anna Karenina's bedroom in St. Petersburg in the early 1870s.
- Mae and Sophia decide to thumb their nose at fate and save Anna Karenina
- Music, seduction, and a Shimmy Schwabble!

# Company



James Overton



Brigette Estola



Kirsten Egenes

Kirsten Egenes



Rachel Marie Kemp

Rachel Marie Kemp

Director/Artistic Director ..... Tony Tambasco  
 Musical Direction ..... James Overton  
 Choreographer ..... Mike Canestraro  
 Artistic Associates ..... Alex Dabertin, Courtney M McClellan, Andre Silva  
 General Manager/Costumes ..... Joanne Famiglietti  
 Dramaturg ..... Elizabeth Kipp-Giusti

# WHO'S WHO

**Brigette Estola** (*Mae West*) is a Brooklyn-based theatre creator and performer, poet and stand-up comedian. She is a Michigan native and a graduate of Carthage College. Most recently, Brigette produced and directed her play *Up Above & All Around* in the New York Theatre Festival's Summerfest. Favorite roles include Ursula (*The Little Mermaid*), Roberta (*Danny & the Deep Blue Sea*), Janis Joplin (*Beehive! The 60's Musical*) and Dot/Marie (*Sunday in the Park with George*). She's forever thankful and grateful for all those who support and push her daily. [www.bestola.com](http://www.bestola.com)

**Kirsten Egenes** (*Sophia Tolstoy*) is thrilled to be making her debut with Bad Quarto Productions. NY: *Charles and Diana: The Musical* (Morningside Players), *Oliver!* (The Secret Theatre), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Titan Theatre Co), *The Jolly Holiday Carolers*. Past favorites include *Crimes of the Heart* (Lenny), *Ordinary Days* (Deb), *Lucky Stiff* (Annabel). Doing great work as a proud grad of Gettysburg College. This is for Gail.

**Rachel Marie Kemp** (*Anna Karenina*) is an actor/singer/dancer based in NYC. Originally from the Adirondacks, she has worked there regionally; favorite roles include: *Baskerville* (Actress 1), *The Seagull* (Nina), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Hermia). In Brooklyn: *Parade* (Iola Stover), *Singin' in the Rain* (Zelda), and *Les Miserables* (Cosette u/s). Rachel has performed at venues in the city ranging from Carnegie Hall to the Brooklyn Dodgers' MCU Stadium. Love always to the Kemp Fam. [www.rachelmariekemp.com](http://www.rachelmariekemp.com)

**James Overton** (Music Director/*Vronsky, Karenin*) is working for the fifth time with Bad Quarto Productions, and the second time as Music Director! James was recently the Music Director for Bad Quarto's *Cupid's Revenge* earlier this year, in which he also performed. Other credits with Bad Quarto include Pastor John Ball in *The Life and Death of Jack Straw: A Notable Rebel*; The Ghost, Fortenbrasse, and the Player Duke in *Hamlet: The First Quarto*; and the Lord in *The Taming of a Shrew*. Other NYC theatre credits include Andrew Aguecheek in

*Twelfth Night* with Swiftly Titling Theatre Project. James has also appeared with New Hampshire's Shakespeare in the Valley as Launce in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as well as Oberon and Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Bennington College where he starred in *Don Juan*, and *Myths and Hymns*. James is very excited to perform in something less than 100 years old.

**Tony Tambasco** (Director) is the Artistic Director of Bad Quarto Productions, where he has directed *The Life and Death of Jack Straw: A Notable Rebel*; *Hamlet: The First Quarto*; *The Taming of a Shrew*; *The Cronicle Historie of Henry the Fift*, *The Ballad of Dido*; *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, and others. Some other favorite directing credits include *Julius Caesar* with Sweet Tea Shakespeare in Fayetteville, NC; *As You Like It* with The Weathervane Playhouse in Newark, OH; *An Experiment with an Air Pump* with Clarkson University's Theatre Co., and *Closer* with the Catalyst Theatre Co. in Burlington, VT. Tony holds an MFA in directing and an M.Litt. in Shakespeare and Performance from The American Shakespeare Center's partner program with Mary Baldwin University. Tony's writings on Shakespeare, directing, and other theatrical topics have appeared in *Didaskalia: The Journal for Ancient Performance*, *The Marlowe Society of America Newsletter*, *Breaking Character Magazine*, and *The Shakespeare Standard*. You can learn more about his work at [TonyTambasco.com](http://TonyTambasco.com)

**Michael Canestraro** (Choreography) recently played Henry Higgins as well as choreographed *My Fair Lady* for Plaza Theatricals, directed and choreographed *Evangeline: A Musical Journey* at Adelphi University; *A South Shore Summer*; *Blame it on the Movies*; and *The Melody Lingers On for the Madison* at Molloy, starring such artists as Kathryn Crosby, Rob Gallagher, Marie Danvers, Sarah Rice and Angelo Fraboni. Mike previously collaborated with Tony Tambasco on *Merrily We Roll Along* for the Drama League NYC. Mike has staged and restored countless musicals including several for the Cole Porter and Rodgers and Hart estates, at such venues as The Gateway Playhouse, College Light Opera Co., Five Towns, St. Joseph's College, and many Long Island school districts. He is a member of AEA and Lincoln Center Theatre's Directors Lab. Mike has twice won the Innovation in Theatre Award from the STARS AWARDS, plus a third Judge's Choice Award for his production of *Ah, Wilderness!*

He has appeared Off-Broadway in *Give My Regards to B'way*, *Student Prince*, *Merry Widow*, *New Moon* and at such NYC venues as the Russian Tea Room, Don't Tell Mamma, and the Liederkrantz Foundation. Regional credits include Maine State Music Theatre and Theatre by the Sea. TV: Royal Pains, Macy's Parade.

**Germaine Shames** (author) is a recipient of Arizona's Fellowship in Fiction, is author of the award-winning novels, *Between Two Deserts* and *You, Fascinating You*. Writing under the pen name Casper Silk (*Hotel Noir*, *Echo Year*), she has been compared to F. Scott Fitzgerald, Graham Greene and P.D. James "on steroids". A returning playwright, Shames majored in Theatre as an undergraduate. Following a successful career as a novelist and journalist, she wrote her first suite of short plays, *Wars of the Flesh*, which was voted into Tucson's 2014 New Play Festival. Her first musical, the epic historical drama *You, Fascinating You*, was a finalist in the Chicago Musical Theatre Festival and under contract with a commercial producer. Songs from the show have been performed in Paris and New York City cabarets. Read more at <https://germainewrites.wixsite.com/>

For more company photos, please visit us online at <http://www.BadQuarto.org>

**Please feel free to take pictures! And please tag us on social media!**

#bqpAKLives



**Bad Quarto Productions would like to take a moment to thank our Donors.**

## **THANK YOU**

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**Concetta Castellano**

**Dr. Larry E Sullivan  
and the many anonymous donors**

**Your contributions help our company continue to carry out our mission of using the staging practices and the lesser known scripts of the English Renaissance as as our guide in bringing art to our community!**

**\*for more information on how to donate please see your playbill insert, ask a company member, got to [badquarto.org](http://badquarto.org) or call (646) 598-2128**

**Bad Quarto Productions also wishes to thank our Patrons.**

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