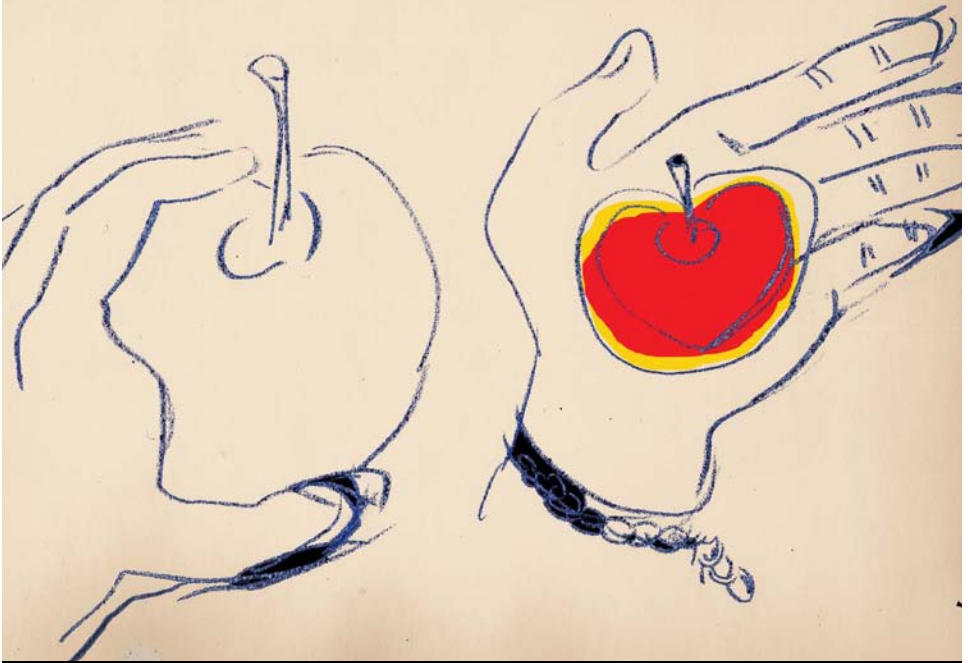


Theatre. Dance. Music. Art.



Growing Together:

A Celebration of Niagara's Migrant Workers

Sean O'Sullivan Theatre
Brock University
Sunday 18 September 2011 7pm

With net proceeds to a scholarship fund for the children of migrant workers organized by Brock University and Niagara College and hosted with the Niagara Community Foundation.



A community-based documentary
theatre project by:

neXt
company theatre

neXt Documentary Theatre

An integral component of the mandate of neXt Company Theatre is to employ theatrical means to document the people, places, and creatures of Niagara. We have adopted a documentary approach as it permits us to 1) collaborate extensively with recognized or emergent groups; as well as, 2) allows such projects to result in the people involved 'speaking for themselves' with the collaboration of trained artists and facilitators. Based on our previous experience, this approach manifests in increased solidarity among participants, a clearer sense of identity—both collective and individual—as well as a heightened sense of agency and personal power. We believe that this kind of creative work actively promotes community integration and complexity, increases communication across ethnic and socio-economic lines, and draws the wider community into reflexive discussion and reflection about its own composition, priorities and values. Let us know what other groups you think we should be collaborating with in Niagara.

Special thanks to all the professional artists and technicians who have volunteered on this production!

Thanks to Cogeco for their work filming this entire process: keep an eye open for a documentary appearing soon on your Cogeco channel.



Daniel Abadie and David Fancy

Co-Artistic Directors for neXt Company Theatre

In collaboration with:

Niagara Migrant Worker Interest Group (NMWIG)



Get Involved

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Thank You For Growing With Us

Welcome to our production of **Growing Together: A Celebration of Migrant Workers**. This adventure in community theatre has involved the collaboration of **neXt Company Theatre**, the Niagara Migrant Workers Interest Group, the Niagara Dance Company, the Agricultural Worker's Alliance, filmmaker Tracy Van Oosten, the Turn Around Project, In the Orchard Arts, students from the Department of Dramatic Arts at Brock University, members of local 461 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, UFCW, and, our cornerstone partner: the Brock Centre for the Arts.

As the show and the various program essays appended here will attest, the reality of migrant workers in Niagara is a complex and diverse, one deserving much exploration and discussion.

Our heartfelt thanks to generous individuals who have contributed to this event:

Daniel Abadie, Mirian Abadie, Billy Arthur, Jody Barnett, Julia Blushak, Emma Bulpin, Brent Cairns, Rox Chwaluk, Chloe Coyle, Troy Ebanks, Nafée Faigou, David Fancy, Angie Geiss, Colin Glavac, Meaghan Gowrie, Duncan Griffiths, Kate Hardy, Calen Healey, Hayyan Khalid, Doug Ledingham, Lisa Matheson, John McArtney, Janet McLaughlin, Mary Jo Mullins, Ambar Reyes Perez, Rose Petkovski, Alex Ramirez, Rangel Ramos, Maggi Robertson, Raymond Robitaille, Taylor Shannon, Shelby Stewart, Lynette Tobin, Tracy Van Oosten, Matt Viviano, Chris Woodall.

The show is less than an hour long and all proceeds will be contributed to the **Migrant Children's Educational Award**, held in trust with the Niagara Community Foundation.

Additional thanks to:

Debbie Slade, Linda Hilko, Elaine Smithies, Fede Holt, Artista Print, Karrie Porter, **neXt Company Theatre Board Members**, Thelma Forrester, Cynthia Aguilera, Jay Forrester, Laura Ingle, Nicole Studenny, Pablo Godoy, Alexes Barrilas, Terry Hunter, Deyanira Benavides, Gloria Barcarcel, Stan Raper, Cogeco, Erica Benedikty, Joann Tweney, Bryan McRae, Roger Cranford, Joe Norris, Beamer's Hardware, Salvation Army Fonthill, Desmit Lumber, Bryan White, Bob Hillier. And a special thanks to Margot Francis.

For neXt Company Theatre

Co-Artistic Directors: Daniel Abadie & David Fancy

Artistic Associate: Billy Arthur

Board of Directors

David Fancy

Lisa Matheson

Christine Nolan

Angela North

Richard Mitchell

Migrant Children's Educational Award

The Migrant Children's Educational Award is a collaborative initiative in keeping with the strategic plans of both of its post-secondary partners. Its principal support comes from St. Catharines Mayor Brian McMullan, Brock University Vice Provost Kimberley Meade and Professors David Fancy and Richard Mitchell, along with Niagara College Director of International Students Sean Coote and the Niagara Community Foundation, among many others.

The project began in 2010 when the migrant workers' organization DOAM – Dignity Obreros Agricultural Migrant – met with Mayor McMullan and Professors Fancy and Mitchell to request greater social inclusion in the Region. At the same time, DOAM requested an educational award so their children might have access to post-secondary education in the Region where they spend most of the year.

Tonight's theater presentation is the first fund-raising event for the initiative, and those wishing to donate are directed to contact any of the post-secondary Committee members named above or Ms. Liz Palmieri of the Niagara Community Foundation.



Make a donation.

If you would like to make a donation to the Migrant Children's Educational Award Fund after the show, please see us in the lobby. We are grateful for all contributions, large or small.

Migrant Workers In Niagara

While they are living in Canada for sometimes more than 8 months each year and have worked in these positions for often over 10 years, agricultural migrant workers remain categorized as “temporary” workers in Canada, with very few protections under Canadian law, and specifically concerning labour laws.

History

The reliance of Niagara’s agricultural economy on extremely low wage paid labour is a legacy which began as early as the first land grants to patrons and Loyalists in the early colony of British North America, where land owners relied on day labourers to tend to their harvests picking their fruits and vegetables. The work was physically demanding, low paid, and temporary, and so workers with other options generally avoided it. It was work that attracted few people with employment options. Thus Farmers were forced, and are continually, to rely on marginalized groups of workers. Indeed, the mechanization and industrialization of farming which has eliminated the need for human labour in many farming practices, has eluded the tender fruit and vegetable industry. Because of the delicate nature of these products farmers still require many more hands in the fields. This need has historically been filled with stop gap measures.

Adapted from Carmela Patrias and Larry Savage. *Union Power: Stories of Solidarity and Struggle in Niagara*. Athabasca University Press.

Migrant Workers: Vulnerable & Exploited

While farm workers are amongst the most at-risk workers in Ontario, some are even more vulnerable. Migrant agricultural workers in this province do not have the right to unionize.

In 1966, workers came to Canada from Jamaica in order to fill the need for labour through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). SAWP was expanded, and in 1967 an agreement was made with Trinidad & Tobago and Barbados; in 1974 a Memorandum of Understanding was made with Mexico, and in 1976 the Western section of the Caribbean was included. Today, approximately 25,000 workers (400 of them women) come from six weeks to eight months each year. 70% of them are in Ontario.

On the Service Canada website, it states that the SAWP program was created “to provide a supplementary source of reliable and qualified seasonal labour in order to improve Canada’s prosperity... These measures help to maintain the livelihoods of Canadian and permanent resident workers in the agricultural industry as well as in other industries that directly or indirectly participate in and benefit from a strong and

vital agricultural industry. In Ontario this program has responded to a critical shortage of available workers suitable for seasonal agricultural work.”

How is “reliable, qualified” and “suitable for agricultural work” defined, and why is there a “critical shortage”?

It is difficult to find enough Canadians who will agree to perform long hours of hard labour in dangerous working conditions for low pay, while not entitled to basic standards such as vacation period or pay (contrary to the two week minimum for Canadian workers) or holiday wages (forced to work holidays at same wages), yet there are people living in poverty in Mexico and the Caribbean with few other options.

Interestingly, Canadians may like to think that they are “helping” poor people from the South by providing opportunities to work. The reality is that migrant agricultural workers are helping us, while we inadvertently contribute to their disadvantaged position in the global economy by not understanding reality of their situations. Migrant agricultural workers don’t have other viable options, so they do the work that Canadians won’t.

Migrant workers are victims of numerous violations of their fundamental human rights. They are subjected to different rules than Canadian workers: lower salaries, abuses in the workplace, excessively long work days, unsafe work conditions, poor living conditions, and poisoning from pesticides. Government inspections of work and housing conditions are not completed frequently, and employers are often given advance notice before inspections.

Some employers prefer to send sick or injured workers back to their country of origin, and don’t always assist in seeking medical attention. This situation generates fear in workers who prefer to hide some illnesses or injuries in order to avoid quick repatriation. Sick days or time off to see a doctor are not guaranteed, nor paid. A sick or injured worker is not “profitable” to employers. Workers live with the fear that they could be sent home at any time, for any reason. They know the reality: there are people at home waiting to take their place.

Migrant agricultural workers pay into EI, CPP and income tax. But they do not qualify for EI when their contracts end, and are not informed that they can claim their pension at age 65. They pay taxes, yet are not eligible for healthcare or other services available to Canadian residents. The workers are entitled to – and possess – a legally recognized Ontario Health Card. However, this piece of documentation in reality does not guarantee basic medical attention, as the intimidation of reporting sickness runs the risk of these workers being repatriated.

Workers are not eligible at any time to apply for Canadian citizenship, or even

resident status. The failure for these workers to be given resident status is a fundamental loop hole that evades Canadian Labour standards for Canadian citizens. Most who come to Canada have families; none are permitted to bring family with them. It is beneficial for Canada to use workers who have a reason to return home; it helps to maintain the system of exploitation of non-Canadians.

Before traveling to Canada, workers receive warnings from authorities in their countries that any difficulties must be reported to their employer and/or their respective Consulate. They are prohibited from seeking assistance from a third party, or they will face exclusion from the program. Workers do not feel protected by their Consulates, which are seen as agents of the employers. The Consulates attempt to please farmers and the Canadian government in order to promote recruitment of workers. Remittances (money sent home by the workers) have become an important part of the global economy, and poor countries are in competition to have workers come to Canada. The agreements between Canada and the different governments are considered understandings, not obligations, and can be cancelled independently by any party though a notification of six months.

As a result of the vulnerability of migrant agricultural workers, many volunteer organizations and advocacy groups have been created. The UFCW, through the Agricultural Workers Alliance (AWA) operates ten Migrant Worker Support Centers across Canada. As of June 30, 2006 agricultural workers are covered under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, thanks to a successful legal challenge led by the UFCW. The UFCW is also continuing its Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms challenge against the province of Ontario for denying agricultural workers the right to join a union and collective bargaining.

Migrant agricultural workers are vulnerable because of the Canadian government's decision to take advantage of their position within the global economy. Canadian employers will continue to benefit at the expense of 'suitable' (perhaps 'exploitable' is more appropriate) migrant agricultural workers as long as their fundamental human rights are denied.

And while Canadian workers enjoy the benefit of cheaper agricultural produce at the expense of migrant workers, they should keep in mind that the greater exploitation and oppression of migrants brings with it downward pressure on their own wage levels and working conditions. Although Ontarians are proud to sing along to the local produce jingle '**Good Things Grow, in Ontario**', far fewer Ontarians are aware of the stories of struggle and exploitations of the humans who produce these products.

In The Orchard Arts With Niagara Youth

In the Orchard Arts, is pleased to be collaborating with neXt company theatre to bring this community-based show to life.

Angie Geiss, Director of In the Orchard Arts, was a fruit picker for most of her youth in Niagara – in fact clay from the orchard was the fist medium she worked with as an artist. With parents from Hungary and the language barrier, picking was the only work available; and, as a result, she has great empathy for the migrant workers.

Angie recognizes the need for cultural integration and cultural exchange, and this need motivates much of her work with youth in Niagara. Art is the international language, and her team wanted to welcome the migrant workers with art able to cross cultural barriers. Her team created the puppets and cutouts for the show with the collaboration of young offenders from Youth Resources Niagara, along with many other volunteers from the community, hardware stores and the Salvation Army. It was a wonderful, collaborative, community effort. Enjoy.

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From Their Hands ... To Your Table

Q: Who are Migrant Workers?

Migrant workers are men and women who come to Canada to do minimum wage, hard physical jobs that Canadians will not consistently do. The number of migrant workers coming to Canada exceeds 280,000 annually. They fall into several categories including live-in caregivers under the Live-In Caregivers Program (LCP), agricultural workers under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP), and other workers under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP). Most work in Ontario, but are also employed in Quebec, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.

Q: What value are agricultural Migrant Workers?

If you eat salad vegetables, crave your fries, enjoy fresh fruit, or at the end of the day revel in a glass of Canadian wine, the main ingredients for all of these come from the strenuous labour of agricultural migrant workers. If it weren't for their hard work at minimum wages, your "Good Things Grow in Ontario" fruit and vegetables would be considered hard to afford for most Ontarians and impossible for Ontario's farmers to sell at competitive prices. The Niagara wine industry alone has an estimated value of more than \$2.5 billion annually – and it all starts with tending and picking grapes by agricultural migrant workers.

That's why we say "From their hands ... to your table."

Q: How long have Migrant Workers been coming to Canada?

The first program began in 1966 when 264 Jamaican agricultural workers came to Canada. Since then many workers have been returning to Canada for 10, 15 and commonly 20 years.

Q: Where do Migrant Workers come from?

The quick answer is: all over the underdeveloped world because of the lack employment opportunities in their home country. The majority of agricultural migrant workers to Ontario typically comes from Mexico (11,798 in 2008) and Jamaica (5,916 in 2008), but also from other Central American and Caribbean nations such as Guatemala and Trinidad and Tobago.

Q: How many Migrant Workers are in Niagara?

There are about 5,000 agricultural migrant workers employed in the Niagara Peninsula.

Q: Hard labour? How's that?

Agricultural migrant workers typically come to Canada for eight months. They work six to seven days a week and often 10-12 hours a day. They are most likely to be found in the fields under Ontario's hot and humid summer sun, often in work that

requires repetitive back bending and lifting to tend the crops, and during harvest periods to lift heavy crates of produce onto field wagons. While there is some mechanization, the tenderness of most fruits and vegetables requires they be picked and harvested by hand.

Q: Eight months in Canada? How's that going?

Under the current government programs Agricultural migrant workers must be married with a family in their home country. That means they leave their loved ones behind for eight months every year. It can be a traumatic isolating experience. Think of how you would be affected to miss important family milestones such as births of your newest daughter or son, significant birthdays of your children or parents, community festivals and other family celebrations. Then there's the every-day supportive companionship of your spouse as well as the comforting camaraderie of your friends in the larger home community. No visiting your buddies at the local pub or for you.

Q: In a perfect Canada, what would agricultural Migrant Workers get?

A right to equal access for all social programs, including Employment Insurance, health care, settlement services, social services and Workers' Compensation; a right to a fair appeal process for migrant workers prior to a pre-removal order, and a stop to deportations until this process is in place; a right to full protection under the Ontario Employment Standards Act and Regulations currently enjoyed by Canadians and permanent residents; and immediate implementation of a national regularization program to grant permanent immigration status for all non-residents living in Canada.

Q: What do Migrant Workers get now?

Next to nothing.

Q: Not even active support for their human rights from their national government?

No.

(Information courtesy of United Food and Commercial Workers Canada)

Growing Strong With the AWA & UFCW

The Agricultural Workers Alliance (AWA) is Canada's largest association of agriculture workers with a network of help centres where the rights of all farm workers come first – no matter where they come from. With our partner, UFCW Canada, we operate ten centres across Canada. Our staff speaks multiple languages and know the laws about domestic, migrant, and temporary work. We know how to make agricultural workers strong, and are here for them at no cost.



The AWA answers only to workers. We are not connected to the government, to the consulates, or to employers. We only work for the farm workers and membership in the AWA is free.



The efforts of the AWA are backed up by UFCW Canada. UFCW Canada is Canada's largest union in the food sector. Most of the 250,000 members work in food factories, grocery stores

and slaughterhouses. They have good contracts and benefits. Thousands of those members are also Temporary Foreign Workers who now have a path to get permanent residency – because of their UFCW Canada union contract.

For their generous support, we are grateful to:



neXt Company Theatre
presents

Richard O'Brien's

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

The image features two silhouetted figures standing on a stage, facing away from the viewer. They are dressed in costumes characteristic of the Rocky Horror Show, including corsets and fishnet stockings. Their arms are raised, with hands splayed out, as if they are dancing or performing. The background is a plain, light color, making the dark silhouettes stand out.

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