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NEWSLETTER

Interview with Natasha MacLellan,  
Artistic Director of Theatre New  
Brunswick in Fredericton, NB

Conducted by Thalía González Kane,  
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## NATASHA MACLELLAN

Natasha MacLellan has been working in New Play Development in Atlantic Canada for about twenty years. Her love of new scripts was fostered through Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre (PARC), where she mentored with Jenny Munday.

For a decade, Natasha produced new Atlantic Canadian plays with her company, Forerunner Playwrights Theatre, then went on to become the Artistic Producer of Ship's Company Theatre, where she premiered eight new scripts. At Theatre New Brunswick (TNB), where she is currently the Artistic and Executive Director, she is invigorating their new play output, chiefly through the Fall Festival of New Plays.

*“New plays have always been my thing. I’ve always done them.”*

*-Natasha MacLellan*

*TNB’s current Artistic Director, Natasha MacLellan, has been at the helm for five years. She is a multi-hyphenate theatre artist with a wealth of experience in the theatre industry, particularly when it comes to developing new works in the Maritimes, where she was born and raised. As a fellow Maritimer myself, I was curious to learn more about the career she’s built as one of the leading artists in Atlantic Canada, and what is currently exciting her in theatre.*



**Thalía González Kane (TGK):** *What did the road to becoming TNB’s Artistic Director look like?*

Natasha started studying theatre, anticipating being an actor. However, after not being admitted to the acting program after completing a foundational year at King’s College and theatre classes through Dalhousie University, it was time to pivot.

**TGK:** *What advice would you give your younger self?*

**Natasha MacLellan (NM):** *“Well, if you’re going to work in the theatre, you can’t let one audition get you down.”*

Fun fact: This is what Natasha ACTUALLY told herself after she wasn’t accepted into the acting program.

**TGK:** *What was the beginning of your career like?*

After completing her studies, Natasha dove into playwriting, having fallen in love with it in school. She faced the struggle so many actors do - having trouble being cast - so she created her own work and began producing. Through Forerunner Playwrights Theatre, a company she started with a friend, she went on to produce new works for a decade, including some she penned herself. As her career went on, she began working more as a performer. According to MacLellan, this was because, *“I never looked like a girlfriend, but I looked like a wife.”* Eventually, she’d go on to work as Artistic Producer at Ship’s Company Theatre in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia, and then as the thirteenth Artistic Director of Theatre New Brunswick.

**TGK:** *What jumps out to you when reading a play?*

**NM:** *“I like things that move quick. I like quirky. I want something a little weird... I’m looking for something that shows me something in a new light. I’m looking for mastery of language... I like plays that are trying to say something.”*

**TGK:** *As someone who does significant work in new play development, what hooks you with a new script?*

If a play doesn't get her in the first fifteen pages, she probably won't finish it, unless there's something there that has her thinking, "I want this to work." New works and emerging artists need time and space for development, so for Natasha sometimes it's about "investing in the writer and not necessarily the script."

**TGK:** *What advice would you offer to writers who want to pitch their work to a theatre or artistic director?*

**NM:** *"If I'm being approached by a new writer, I really prefer for them to have seen something we've done."*

It's important to know who you are submitting to and to consider why. Get to know what kind of work they do and the directions they are moving in. The Theatre New Brunswick [script submission page](#) is a

great place to start. Ensure your work truly fits their mandate before sending scripts in.

**TGK:** *Who is submitting to TNB these days?*

According to MacLellan, overall, the majority of submissions are coming from male-identifying playwrights. In the last couple of years, approximately 20-30% of the submissions have come from female-identifying and non-binary writers.

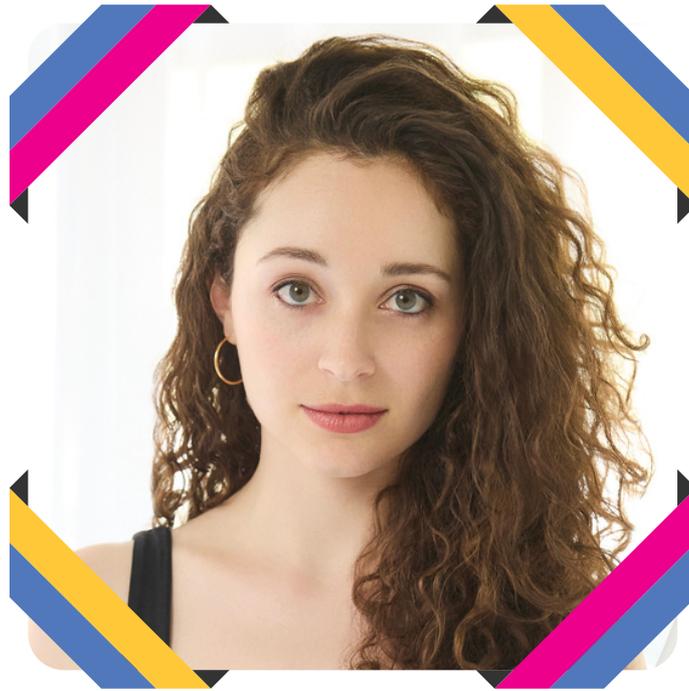
**TGK:** *What keeps you working in theatre?*

**NM:** *"It all rides on the present moment... It's all about "live" and the present, which is I think the reason it survived forever. It's the power of that and the harnessing of that - and how can that play a part in avoiding doomsday?"*

**TGK:** *What is exciting you in theatre right now?*

**NM:** *"I like that people are grappling with big questions now. That's fun... Some of the work that I'm seeing is really trying to get at something big."*





### **Thalía González Kane**

Thalía is an award-winning, queer, Ecuadorian-Canadian multidisciplinary artist and theatre scholar. She has worked as a performer, playwright, director, designer, choreographer, and producer in Canada, Ireland, England, Scotland, Sweden, the Czech Republic, and various states in the US. Thalía is a co-founder of Got Your Back (GYB) Canada; a councillor for ACTRA Toronto and ACTRA National; part of the steering committee for the ACTRA National 2SLGBTQIA+ committee; co-chair of outACTRAto, and the Artistic Director of Crave Productions. She has been published by Playwrights Canada Press, University of Toronto Press, Canadian Theatre Review, Intermission Magazine, and Valnet Inc. Thalía was named “a playwright to watch” by Playbill in 2020. In her spare time, she is a passionate volunteer and amateur astronomer.

