



# ROUGH TRADE

THE MUSICAL

SEX ART ROCK N' ROLL

FEATURING THE MUSIC OF

CAROLE POPE &  
ROUGH TRADE



AN 80'S ROCK MUSICAL

THAT SINGS FROM THE HEART OF

WHY ART AND ACTIVISM

WILL ALWAYS HEAL THE WORLD.

# ROUGH TRADE

THE MUSICAL

SEX ART ROCK N' ROLL

# SEX ART

## AND ROCK & ROLL.



This wham bam thank you ma'am musical is set in the gritty, glamorous 1980's. It is based on the life and music of Canadian Rock Icon Carole Pope whose band Rough Trade provided a soundtrack for the rebellious, activist artists fighting to shake off the rigid sexual and political constraints of the time. The story centers on Pope's life and relationship her brother Howie, who moved to New York in pursuit of rock n' roll, sexual freedom and a new life. He lands in the middle of the AIDs crisis, becomes a founding member of queer activist group ACT UP, and tragically sacrifices his life for love.

### ACT UP

AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power

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# THE MUSIC OF ROUGH TRADE



Their attitude was their calling card. They questioned authority, They oozed sexuality. All sexualities. Rough Trade was a trailblazing, politically charged, punk-inspired New Wave rock band. It was formed in Toronto in 1975 by multi-instrumentalist Kevan Staples and Manchester-born, Scarborough-raised vocalist Carole Pope. Notorious for the openly sexual nature of their songs and the burlesque theatricality of their live performances — which often included bondage and sexual satire — the band was one of the first mainstream musical acts to include explicitly gay and lesbian references. They enjoyed critical and commercial success in the early 1980s and won four Juno Awards before disbanding in 1986. Rough Trade was inducted into the the Canadian Music Week Indy Hall of Fame in 2007, Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2020 and the Canadian Walk of Fame in 2023.

- + Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame
- + Canadian Walk of Fame inductees 2023
- + 3 Juno Awards
- + Genie Award
- + 4 Gold, 1 Platinum and 1 Double Platinum album
- + Multiple independent music awards
- + The 2016 Polaris Prize Shortlist



# AHEAD OF ITS TIME

As part of the post-punk new wave of the 1980's Rough Trade created a brand of avant-garde highbrow performance art fused with rock n' roll.



## IMPACTFUL

GenX'ers and millennials claim that Rough Trade's fearless style gave them the courage and pride to come out to themselves and their families as queer.

## ICONIC

Carole was proudly out on National television, flaunting her sexuality at every turn.

## INTOXICATINGLY '80s

The hit songs that are the source material for the arrangements carry bright synth sounds and hypnotic beats combined with killer guitar licks straight from the 80's with powerful rock vocals.



# SEX ART & ROCK N' ROLL.

The setting is Toronto and New York during the AIDS pandemic of the 1980s. Our musical examines the intersection of art and activism, and the role we play in remembering ones we lost while advancing the causes they cared about the most. The story is personal. It's true. And it happened to one of Canada's most recognized rock stars.

The residual pain left by the AIDS crisis, lives and friends and artists lost, is something that contemporary theater audiences have started to grapple with through plays like *The Inheritance*, *Angels in America* and a few other dramas. This musical now invites audiences to see the connections between the frenetic art, music and activism of the 1980s to the experiences of our current post-pandemic world. The music, the style and energy of the 1980s inspired people to come together, act up, and create movements to heal the world.

HOWARD POPE

1984

SILENCE=DEATH

ROUGH TRADE  
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SEX ART, ROCK N' ROLL



# THE 80'S DESIGN & EXPERIENCE

is also a visual experience drawing heavily on the wild nightclub scene of the 1980's. Clubs meshed performance art, political commentary and the bright pop visuals that defined the decade.

From Keith Haring to Basquiat to Zette to General Idea to Yoko Ono, artists crossed boundaries, disciplines and media to create immersive worlds that swept you away. Our design team is creating an energetic ever-changing landscape of iconic looks for the musical numbers.



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**YOUR  
NOSTALGIA  
KILLING M**



# THE AIDS CRISIS

When AIDS first hit North America, there was a crisis of inaction regarding medical research, making drugs accessible and addressing the severe homophobia, violence and social isolation that LGBTQ+ people with AIDS faced. An army of queer citizens calling themselves ACT UP organized rallies, protests, information sessions, peer-to-peer counseling, fundraisers and media campaigns to force the powers that be into action. Howard Pope was a founding member of ACTUP/ THE ACTUP MOVEMENT

IGNORANCE = FEAR

SILENCE = DEATH ▲ FIGHT AIDS ACT UP



# SILENCE=DEATH





**ROUGH TRADE**

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# SYNOPSIS

## MEET THE TWO CAROLES.

As the musical opens, we meet present day Carole, "Millennium Carole" who is backstage waiting to be inducted into the Songwriter's Hall of Fame and give a concert of her hits. She is visited in the dressing room by her brother Howard. Is he a ghost? A memory? Carole starts telling him about a recurring dream she has about him and is whisked back in time to the mid 1980s by "Agit Prop", a stage turning movement based trio of performers in outlandish costumes based on the performance artists of the 80s. The bulk of the play takes place as she revisits, comments on and experiences her own life, Christmas Carol style. Sometimes she tries to call out to her younger self, "80's Carole" to change the story.

## HOWARD GETS WILD IN NEW YORK

With Millennium Carole as our guide, we see Howard, a young aspiring musician in his own right decide to follow in his sister's footsteps, move to New York and get involved in the Rock scene. He falls in with a group of hip East Village performers, artists and activists and joins Buzz Fuzz, a crazy new wave band led by the charismatic, androgynous Buzz who is secretly (or not-so-secretly in love with Howie.) They play hilarious gigs in outlandish costumes.

Howard's life criss-crosses with his sister, 80's Carole's constant touring and gigging and rock star life. They witness each other's lives, talk on the phone, leave messages, meet up at drug fueled parties as Millennium Carole watches from the wings. As the AIDS pandemic starts to take over news headlines, Buzz's lesbian roommates Desiree and Inez start organizing rallies and meetings to support their friends through these terrifying times. Howard friend-zones Buzz and meets Jude, a promiscuous scene queen who steals Howie's heart. Carole immediately doesn't like the guy, and the New York friends barely tolerate him. Howard has a wild green card wedding to Desiree.

## AIDS STRIKES CLOSE TO HOME

When Jude gets diagnosed with HIV, Howard finds himself joining Desiree and Inez and spearheading the formation of 80s gay activist group ACTUP. At the AMFAR rally in Montreal, Jude tells Howie that if he really loved him he would have sex with him, unprotected. Out of communal guilt, fear, desperation, Howie does, and is soon diagnosed with HIV. Jude dumps him shortly after. When Howie informs 80s Carole of this, she is filled with anguish and regret that she maybe could have, should have, would have done something to prevent this toxic relationship.

CONT. 





# SYNOPSIS

CONT.

## SAN FRANCISCO AND CONNECTIONS MISSED

Howard moves to San Francisco to work with some queer organizations serving children and families and 80s Carole questions whether she should stop performing altogether and just go care for him there. Howard insists that she doesn't and promises to come play guitar with her on the next West Coast leg of Rough Trade's tour. While Carole is on the road, Howard gets ill, and decides to throw himself a gay prom slash living memorial party where all his friends gather to celebrate his life. He passes away while Carole is on a flight to San Francisco, and she arrives to find him gone. For the first time in the play, Millennium Carole and 80s Carole speak to each other directly and sing a tribute song to Howard about all the things they had yet to do with each other. As the stage spins, the cast re-enter in present day clothes and join the two Caroles on stage for a concert version of High School Confidential (one of Rough Trade's biggest hits.) Howard runs onstage and joyously plays guitar as memory and present day collide for the finale.



# PARTIAL SONG LIST

All Touch (and no Contact)  
Attitude  
Fashion Victim  
On With The Show  
High School Confidential  
Crimes of Passion  
Tell Me  
Shaking the Foundations  
What's the Furor About the Fuhrer  
Tourniquet

And More...



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# DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE

## SUMMER/FALL 2020:

Script development and dramaturgy with book writer Kate Rigg, composer Carole Pope and director Robert McQueen.

## SUMMER/FALL 2021:

Online Zoom workshop with musical director Liz Baird arranger Rob Preuss and a full cast of Canadian musical theatre actors including Chillina Kennedy. Closed workshop. Dramaturgy and song choices.

## SPRING /FALL 2022:

Rewrites and work through with stars in studio setting. Broadway Tier 2 workshop in New York City with Showtown Productions with full cast, musical director and creative team

## WINTER 2022

Concert Version of show presented at Joe's Pub The Public Theater in New York City

# CREATORS



## THE MUSIC

### CAROLE POPE

On the Polaris Prize short list, Carole Pope's work has been recognized with three Juno Awards multiple independent music awards, a Genie Award, 4 gold, 1 platinum and 1 double platinum album. Pope has toured with David Bowie and performed at Roskilde, World Pride, AGO, MOCCA, Fashion Cares 25 with Elton John, The Brooklyn Museum of Art, The AGO, Luminato, Joes Pub, The Global Cabaret Festival, The Frostbite Festival, Reykjavik, and countless others. She has contributed music to film and television, including: Transparent Season Two, Love or Whatever, Pretty Hard Cases, The L Word, General Idea Art AIDs and the fin de siecleThe Trailer Park Boys Movie, This Revolution, Queer As Folk, The Five Senses, The Silencer, and Cruising.

## THE BOOK

### KATE SIAHAAN-RIGG

A CanAsian graduate of the Juilliard School of Drama Kate Siahann-Rigg is an award-winning playwright, performance artist, stand-up comedian and lead singer of the punk comedy band Slanty Eyed Mama. Her plays have been produced at Theatre Passe Muraille, The Tarragon Theatre, Center Theater Group Los Angeles, The Brava Theater Center San Francisco. HERE NYC. Dixon Place NYC, La Mama ETC (in NYC and Melbourne, Australia), Out North Alaska, New World Theater, Theater Offensive Boston, The Comedy Central Theater Los Angeles, Magic Theater SF and many more. She has been invited to perform original works at the Smithsonian Institute and major theater festivals across North America. She is also the creator and Executive producer of Dance Your Ass Off (Oxygen TV/ Slice) Cache Craze (YTV/Disney XD) and Tour Dates (E!).

## CREATIVE DIRECTOR

### ROBERT McQUEEN

An Associate Artist with The Musical Stage Company, Robert is also a faculty member at HB Theatre Studio and Arte Studio in Mexico City. Robert has directed The Musical Stage Company production of Caroline or Change, The Wild Party, Falsettos, The Light in the Piazza and Fun Home for which he won a 2018 Theatre Critics Award for Outstanding Direction. Additionally Robert directed the premiere production of Life After (2018 Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Direction) and ReFramed, a collaboration with the Art Gallery of Ontario. His new project Boys Fall from the Sky is opened to critical acclaim at the Royal Alexandra Theater in Toronto in Spring of 2022.



## ASSOCIATED ARTISTS

### Marc Kimelman

Marc is the associate choreographer for Broadway's Tony-award winning Jagged Little Pill. He was the associate choreographer for Broadway's A Bronx Tale and National Tour, the Kennedy Center's Next to Normal, and assistant choreographer for Broadway's revival of Jesus Christ Superstar. He choreographed Saturday Night Fever (National Tour), Billy Elliot (GoodSpeed Musicals), Man of La Mancha (Stratford Shakespeare Festival), Newsies, Play It Cool and The Apple Boys (Off-Broadway), Once on this Island (Dora Award for Outstanding Choreography).

TV/Film credits includes: Degrassi: The Next Generation, Don't Talk to Irene feature film (starring Geena Davis), Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and NBC's One Night Only. Marc was movement consultant for Vogue magazine (Annie Leibovitz, Charlize Theron, A\$AP Rocky). Associate/Assistant: Queen's We Will Rock You (National Tour), Freaky Friday (Disney workshop), Hands on a Hardbody (Broadway workshop), Seven Deadly Sins (NYC Ballet with Patti Lupone), Elementary (CBS). Marc has worked with Disney, Katy Perry, NYC Ballet, Deborah Cox, Queen, Neil Young and Chaka Kahn.

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### DEBRA BARSHA

Debra won the Jonathan Larson Performing Arts Foundation Award for the score to RADIANT BABY, which was produced at the Public Theater, directed by George C. Wolfe. Radiant Baby received 3 Lucille Lortel nominations including Outstanding Musical. Debra originated roles and was the music director for the original Off-Broadway companies of both Tony n' Tina's Wedding and Charles Busch's Swingtime Canteen. She also served as music director for the Steven Sater/Serj Tankian world premiere of Prometheus Bound at A.R.T. directed by Diane Paulus. She was also the music director and onstage performer for the world premiere of the Steven Sater/Burt Bacharach musical NY ANIMALS at The New Ohio Theatre in NY. On Broadway, Barsha served as Associate Conductor for Broadway's smash hit JERSEY BOYS and SUMMER: THE DONNA SUMMER MUSICAL. She currently plays piano for Broadway's TINA: THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL.





KATE RIGG

CAROLE POPE

CHILINA KENNEDY

GET INVOLVED

SEE THE SCRIPT

HEAR THE MUSIC



CONTACT  
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THANK YOU



CAROLE POPE

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