THEATRE: CALGARY 50
2017-18 SEASON

TC UP CLOSE PRESENTS
FORTE MUSICAL THEATRE'S
TOUCH ME:
SONGS FOR A
(DIS)CONNECTED
AGE

PLAY GUIDE
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The Play Guide for *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* was created by:

**Jenna Turk**  
Artistic Associate

Want to get in touch?
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*Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* runs from September 26th to October 7th, 2017

For tickets, visit [theatrecalgary.com](http://theatrecalgary.com) or call (403) 294-7447

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Photo of Selina Wong by David Cooper.
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The Company

theatre:
CALGARY

tc UP CLOSE presents

TOUCH ME: SONGS FOR A (DIS)CONNECTED AGE

THE CAST

MADELEINE SUDDABY
ERIC WIGSTON
TEANJ WILLIAMS
SELINA WONG

Director, Set & Projection Design
Music Director
Choreographer
Costume Design
Lighting Design
Sound Design
Sound Operator
Stage Manager

JP THIBODEAU
JOE SLABE
LAUREN THOMPSON
ALDONA BARUTOWICZ
EUGENIO SAENZ FLORES
ETIENNE ST-JACQUES
COLIN LOWE
SARA TURNER

Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age is performed without intermission.
Song List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Composers</th>
<th>Performers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can You Hear Me?</td>
<td>By Colleen Dauncey &amp; Akiva Romer-Segal</td>
<td>Performed by Madeleine &amp; the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Drafts</td>
<td>By Tamar Broadbent</td>
<td>Performed by Selina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little One</td>
<td>By Dan Perrott</td>
<td>Performed by Eric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas Taylor</td>
<td>By Landon Braverman &amp; Naomi Matlow</td>
<td>Performed by Madeleine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Bubble</td>
<td>By Dan Perrott</td>
<td>Performed by the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Capitalist America</td>
<td>By Dan Perrott</td>
<td>Performed by Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cares About Me</td>
<td>By Landon Braverman &amp; Benjamin Halstead</td>
<td>Performed by Selina &amp; Tenaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My So-Called Facebook Friends</td>
<td>By Joe Slabe</td>
<td>Performed by Selina &amp; the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unplug</td>
<td>By Ethan Cole</td>
<td>Performed by Tenaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Care</td>
<td>By Nicky Phillips &amp; Laura Kleinbaum</td>
<td>Performed by Selina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face Time</td>
<td>By Joe Slabe</td>
<td>Performed by Madeleine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me Slash You</td>
<td>By Matt Board</td>
<td>Performed by Tenaj &amp; the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Feed The Trolls</td>
<td>By Joe Slabe</td>
<td>Performed by the Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Dream</td>
<td>By Joe Slabe</td>
<td>Performed by Eric, Tenaj, &amp; Joe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, 2 AM</td>
<td>By Joel Crichton</td>
<td>Performed by the Company</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The Story**

Equal parts hilarious and heart wrenching, this modern musical revue impresses with its soaring vocals and refreshingly true depictions of our most private technological transgressions. Winner of three Calgary Critics’ Awards, *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* is bound to get you thinking about the connections in your life.
Who’s Who?

The ensemble sings, acts, and plays their own instruments alongside, Music Director, Joe Slabe!

Madeleine Suddaby

Eric Wigston

Tenaj Williams

Selina Wong
Born in Halifax, but a Calgarian since the age of four, Musical Director Joe Slabe is devoted to musical theatre. The founder and Artistic Director of Forte Musical Theatre and Theatre Calgary favourite (Musical Director – *The Crucible*, *One Man, Two Guvnors*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*) spoke with TC’s Artistic Associate, Jenna Turk, about *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* before heading into rehearsals.

Theatre Calgary is presenting Forte Musical Theatre’s production of *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age*. Tell us about Forte.

Forte Musical Theatre is the only professional company west of Toronto that is dedicated exclusively to the development and production of new musicals! We’re specifically interested in smaller, character driven shows and have developed relationships with young writers from across the country to give them a platform for trying out new work.
What does it mean for Forte to be presented by Theatre Calgary?

It’s a pretty big deal! We’re a small, independent theatre company with a modest but very loyal fan base. Being presented by Theatre Calgary will help us reach a much wider audience and help spread the word about the cool work we’re doing.

What can Theatre Calgary audiences expect from Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age?

They can expect to laugh at a lot of things they’ll relate to as the characters in the show wrestle with their complicated relationships with technology. I also think they’ll be surprised that the songs often have a lot of heart, since one of our biggest desires as humans is for connection. It’s moving when we find it and heartbreaking when we miss it. The show is also a revue, which means that each song is like a self-contained little play. The characters range from high school age to senior citizens and everything in between, so there’s someone everyone will identify with.
**What exactly does the Music Director do?**

A Music Director is responsible for all the live music elements in a show. That means I teach the music to the actors and rehearse the musicians. In this show, the actors play the instruments, so I get to do both jobs at the same time! I also work with the director to shape their performances in terms of delivery and interpretation. Since this is a new work, I create things like vocal arrangements and scene change music too. I love that musical direction is such a collaborative job. I get to work with a ton of very talented artists, and we constantly feed off each other to make the show as good as it can be.

*Selina Wong, Scott Shpeley, Christian Goutsis, & Lisa Lennox in the 2014 Production of *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* (Photo by Kristian Jones Photography)*

**Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age** includes songs from various writers – where did this concept come from?

Writing a full-length musical is really hard! As I was searching out new shows for Forte to produce, I realized that there were a bunch of talented musical theatre composers who wrote great songs, but were still working on their craft in terms of creating larger shows. I discovered the revue format (creating a musical that’s based on a theme as opposed to one
central character) was an ideal playground for writers to try out new material without all the pressure of coming up with an entire show. Forte also does traditional, scripted musicals too, but this and our holiday show, *Naughty… but Nice!* allow us to feature a bunch of voices from across the country and beyond.

**This show was first presented in 2014 at the Joyce Doolittle Theatre; how has it changed since then?**

The Joyce is a tiny space so, when we did it there, we didn’t even mic the cast and the production elements were very simple. We’ve challenged ourselves to stretch technically, so we’re bringing in a sound designer and lightly amplifying the show. We also have a slightly more elaborate set and will be incorporating some projections to fill the space at the Big Secret Theatre. And there will be cabaret tables for people to get really close to the performers in order to keep the intimate feel that we had at the Joyce, since we didn’t want to lose that. Also, technology has actually changed since 2014! We’re adding a few new songs and dropping a couple that seemed dated, so it really will feel like a new show.

**What do you hope audiences will take away from this show?**

I hope they’ll be left with the feeling that we live in an amazing time when we can instantly connect with people from down the street or across the country. It’s never been easier to catch up with old friends, or make new ones based on a common interest you may share with someone from halfway around the globe. But I hope that they realize that the technology works best when it’s in the service of real, human connection and not a way of isolating us in a bubble of our own making.

"Each contact with a human being is so rare, so precious, one should preserve it."

–Anaïs Nin
Meet Performer: Selina Wong

Born and raised in Calgary, performer Selina Wong is making her Theatre Calgary debut in *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age*. Theatre Calgary’s Artistic Associate Jenna Turk spoke to the energetic and charismatic actor prior to the start of rehearsals.

*Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* is a Forte Musical Theatre production that is being presented by Theatre Calgary.

**Have you worked with Forte before?**

My professional career started with Forte in 2012. I was cast in *Jeremy De Bergerac* (now renamed *Crossing Swords*) directed by Valerie Ann Pearson. That opportunity opened so many doors for me, and I have been fortunate to have worked with Forte in other shows including *Naughty…but Nice! 2 and 3* and the first rendition of *Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* in 2014.

*Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* is described as a musical revue; what does that mean exactly?

A musical revue has a through line of theme, but each song is from the perspective of a new character relating to the theme. It allows each actor to
play a range of ages and characters which I think helps make the show relatable to everyone. The story is built around the idea of technology, its positive and sometimes negative impacts on our lives and relationships.

**Which number is your favourite to sing and why?**

I love singing all the numbers, but particularly love “Sad Face, Smiley,” as it has delicious harmonies.

*Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* is part of Theatre Calgary’s tc UP CLOSE program which presents big stories in smaller spaces. How up close does the audience get? (Should we be worried?!)

Definitely DO NOT be worried. =) Having an intimate space to connect from actor to audience makes it feel “up close”. But the intimacy of that experience, I think, is an interesting reminder of how wonderful it is to connect face to face versus the technological experience which we sing about.

**Do you have a healthy relationship with technology?**

I think I am still hesitant with fully immersing myself in technology. I still use a paper day timer much to the dismay of my loved ones. I relish in reading paper books, touching the pages instead of reading it on a device. But I do love how technology has helped me stay connected with friends around the world via Facebook, Skype, and text messaging.

**Can you share any advice for aspiring performers?**

Keep working on your craft. I think it is extremely important to keep growing as a person and artist by continuing training, learning, and having the desire to grow. Hard work always pays off!

"Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense."

–Gertrude Stein
Social Media through the Ages

For millennia, people have been trying their hardest to connect, to share their stories, and build relationships through various means. Explore some of the numerous methods human beings have used throughout the ages to connect:

#hieroglyphics (3200 BC)
The word hieroglyphics is formed from two ancient Greek words: *hieros* (holy) + *glyphe* (carving) and refers to an ancient kind of Egyptian holy writing. A language of pictures of objects and animals used to represent different sounds and meanings. Emoji’s have been equated to the modern-day version...

😊😍😢

@towncriers (146 BC)
Spartan runners were said to be the first town criers, warning the Greeks of the impending Roman conquest. Later they were officers of the court whose job it was to make public pronouncements.

#newspapers (17th century)
Developed initially as information sheets for businessmen, newspapers exploded with the advent of the printing press and the Industrial Revolution. Today, many say newsprint is dying with people now finding their news online and via social media.

@penpals (1938)
Old-timey email writing between friends where a paper and pen were used, and the post office was a sacred space. Letters could take days or even weeks to send/receive in the mail. Popularized by camp friends and convicts alike.
#email (early 1970’s)
Electronic mail was invented by pioneering computer programmer Ray Tomlinson who indicated the message’s destination by using the ‘@’ symbol. Created prior to the invention of the internet, email has gone from a neat technological advance to a societal necessity – whether we like it or not.

@LinkedIn (2002)
The place for job seekers and job posters alike. An employment-based networking site with more than 500 million users – and another 500 million unanswered requests to connect in inboxes everywhere.

#Myspace (2003)
A social networking website that began as a way of incorporating various social networking traits: photos, friends, music, videos, etc. At one time it was a more popular site than Google – not so much anymore.

@Facebook (2004)
Originally developed as a kind of “hot or not” game called “Facemash” by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg. First popularized by co-eds, it soon grew into the social networking site it is today used by more than 2 billion people – even great-great-great grandparents.

#YouTube (2005)
A hugely popular video sharing site with over a hundred hours of video uploaded every hour. Now owned by Google, YouTube is revered by cute cat video lovers everywhere.

@Twitter (2006)
An online news and social networking site devoted to “tweets” consisting of up to 140 characters. Responsible for popularizing #hashtags, @tagging, and angry twitter trolls.
#Pinterest (2010)
An online tool for visually sorting or collecting images. Pinterest is often used by inspirational and aspirational designers and crafters alike.

@Instagram (2010)
An app that allows users to share photos and videos publicly or privately. With its popular filters, “Insta” has grown exponentially since it was created, and is now owned by Facebook.

#Snapchat (2011) Known as a fun social media platform embraced and primarily utilized by millennials. As quickly as an image or piece of media appears, it disappears. As quickly as Snapchat has appeared what new app will make it disappear next??

“Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means for going backwards.”

–Aldous Huxley

Selina Wong and Joe Slabe in the 2014 production of Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age
(Photo by Kristian Jones Photography)
Conversation Starters

- How big a role does technology play in your life?
- Can you remember a time before the internet?
- Do you consider social media a helpful tool or a hindrance?
- What is your favourite social media platform? Why?
- Has technology helped you to connect to anyone in particular?
- Would you have been able to connect without advances in technology?
- Have you seen a musical revue before? A Forte Musical Theatre show?
- Was this format an appropriate choice for exploring a theme as opposed to one single narrative? Why or why not?
- Did the performance leave you feeling more connected than when you arrived at the theatre? Why or why not?

Connecting through Song

Musical theatre is a medium that purports that sometimes words are simply not enough: sometimes certain feelings can only be expressed through the power of song. Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age is the perfect example of storytelling through music, as each number tells a new tale. Just as Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age explores the advances in technological communication, so has music across time. Which one of these tunes is your favourite tribute to connecting?

“Please Mr. Postman” by The Marvelettes (1961)

The first song off of the Motown label to hit #1 on the Billboard hot 100 pop singles chart. A celebration of the love letter.

The pounding guitar riff in this song from the ultimate British rockers clearly expresses the frustration to be found in trying to connect with a loved one.

“Call Me” by Blondie (1980)
The band’s biggest single depicts the ultimate woman who knows what she wants. Call her already.

“Star 69” by REM (1994)
Before there was caller I.D. there was *69 which would call back the last person to call in, much to the chagrin of prank callers everywhere.

“Twitter Song” by Ingrid Michaelson (2009)
A short and sweet ode to everyone’s 140 character limit medium.

“Telephone” by Lady Gaga (2010)
Featuring Beyoncé, this song decries constant communication. Blowing up someone’s phone with text messages may in fact make them respond all the slower…

“Gangnam Style” by Psy (2012)
One of the most watched YouTube videos ever, with almost 3 billion views; this song got everyone hopping together.

“Hotline Bling” by Drake (2015)
Canada’s favourite turtleneck-wearing rapper brings people together with his stilted dance moves in this song decrying the booty-call.

"We are all now connected by the Internet, like neurons in a giant brain."
-Stephen Hawking
**Movie Night**

*Touch Me: Songs for a (dis)Connected Age* is a musical revue which explores the many ways technology connects and disconnects us. Navigate these enduring themes with these noteworthy films:

**2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)**
An epic science fiction film from visionary director Stanley Kubrick that follows a voyage to Jupiter with computer, Hal. An existential depiction of outer space exploring the possibility of extraterrestrial life; this film pioneered special effects and is regarded as one of the most influential films of all time.

**You’ve Got Mail (1998)**
A romantic comedy starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan as bookstore business rivals who fall in love online. Inspired by the 1937 Hungarian play, *Parfumerie*, this story is a classic updated for a modern audience. Almost 20 years after its premiere though, it may need another update!

**The Matrix (1999)**
Written and directed by The Wachowskis, this science fiction film is set in a dystopian future where machines rule a world called “the Matrix.” Here, human beings are subdued and their energy is harnessed as an energy source. Thankfully, its hero is computer programmer/hacker Neo, played by Canadian Keanu Reeves.

**The Social Network (2010)**
A biographical drama depicting the formation of Facebook by Mark Zuckerberg and co., and its residual lawsuits. Directed by David Fincher and written by Aaron Sorkin with a killer soundtrack by Trent Reznor.

**Her (2013)**
A romantic science fiction film by Spike Jonze about a man (played by Joaquin Phoenix) who falls in love with his computer operating system (voiced by Scarlett Johansson). It won the Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay.

*Click on the movie posters to read more about each film on imdb.com!*
Recommended Reads from Calgary Public Library
By Rosemary Griebel

The Circle by Dave Eggers
Fiction. 2013. Set in the near future, it examines the inner workings of the Circle, an Internet company that is both the spiritual and literal successor to Facebook, Google, Twitter, and more, as seen through the eyes of Mae Holland, a new hire who starts in customer service.

Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping Us Hooked by Adam Alter
Nonfiction. 2017. In this revolutionary book, Adam Alter, a professor of psychology and marketing at NYU, tracks the rise of behavioural addiction, and explains why so many of today’s products are so irresistible.

Modern Romance by Aziz Ansari
Nonfiction. 2015. Inspired by his own romantic woes, comedian Ansari teamed up with sociologist Klinenberg to design and conduct a research project to better understand the dating game as it’s played in the world of dating apps, mobile phones, and social media.

Thank You for Being Late: An Optimist’s Guide to Thriving in the Age of Accelerations by Thomas L. Friedman
Nonfiction. 2016. A work of contemporary history that serves as a field manual for how to write and think about this era of accelerations.

Touch by Courtney Maum
Fiction. 2017. Trend forecaster Sloane Jacobsen is hired to lead a tech conference celebrating childlessness after her prediction that having children will soon be an "extravagant indulgence.” Sharp, witty, and provocative, Touch will make you think twice about your reliance on the digital.

Click on the book covers to check availability at Calgary Public Library!
Sources

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