

*Straight Stitching Productions* is a new theatre company created by Shirley Barrie, playwright and administrator, Arlene Mantle, singer and songwriter and Lib Spry, director, animateur, writer and actress.

Shirley Barrie was co-founder of The Tricycle Theatre in London, England, for 14 years, during which time she wrote many scripts for it and other British theatre companies. Since returning to Canada she has been writing for the CBC.

Arlene Mantle is a well-known singer-songwriter whose records include "Class Act", "On the Line" and "In Solidarity". She has worked with a variety of community organizations, leading song-writing workshops.

Lib Spry has worked in Canada, England and France, both in the professional theatre and as a popular theatre worker. She has worked with many types of community groups, creating theatre with them. She now runs her own theatre company, Passionate Balance, in Ottawa.

*The play touched me deeply. By highlighting the reason of the miscommunication of the different sewing machine operators in the factory, the play managed to confirm the dignity of the individual operators, (and) give us tools and illustrations on how to bridge gaps caused by cultural differences.* Olivia Chow, Chair, Race Relations Committee, Toronto Board of Education.

**On tour Fall 1989:**  
high schools  
colleges  
universities  
ESL groups  
immigrant organizations  
women's groups  
unions

**Technical requirements:**

20' x 20' performance space, dressing room, 2 power outlets. 2 hours for get in, 1 hour for get out.

**FEE: \$500 per PERFORMANCE**

(Plus mileage for outside of Metro Toronto) Fees negotiable for multiple bookings.

**Contact:** *Straight Stitching Productions*

462 Clendenan Ave., Toronto,  
Ontario, M6P 2X6 (416) 762-7050

## **STRAIGHT STITCHING**



a play with music about  
garment workers

by  
**Shirley Barrie**

inspired by  
Elsa C. Bandoles  
Janet Dassinger  
Philippa Hajdu  
Aida Jordao  
Anna Melnyk  
Adris Moulton  
Maria Vrantsi

Songs  
by  
**Arlene Mantle**

Directed  
by  
**Lib Spry**

*Straight Stitching* is the story of the immigrant women who work in the garment industry.

It was created in close collaboration with a group of garment workers who gave up their evenings to tell us stories about their lives. From their stories, came this play, which they themselves performed, together with some professional actresses, during the 1987 Mayworks Festival in Toronto to a standing room only crowd.

Entertaining, lively and touching, this musical play shows just how gutsy, funny, skillful and inventive these women are. Proud of their speed at the machines, despite the frustrations of piece work, they juggle the demands of children, husband, relatives and a new and bewildering society as they work for a better future.

This is a play about the universality of hope, of the fight for a better life, and how, for women, it is a day to day struggle in which friendship, support and fun play an important role.



In *Straight Stitching* through a mixture of storytelling, song and action we see how these women live. This is a play of many languages - as we hear the stories of these women:

There is **MEI LEE**, newly arrived in Canada from Hong Kong, young and eager for a new life. But she must first deal with the strange language, homesickness, a fellow worker's jealousy, and an intimidating boss .

There is Portugese **BERTINA**, a single mother with two children, frustrated by her lack of English, terrified she will be sent back to Portugal.

There is **VILMA**, a Filipina who has been in the country long enough to know some of the rules of the game, but because she is single, cannot earn enough money to bring her parents to join her.

And, there is **FRENCHIE**, from Jamaica. She is the shop steward, a strong woman, peace maker and defender of the workers, but she still cannot do what she wants outside the factory without her husband's permission.

All of them have to deal with the supervisor, **THERESA**, a woman and an immigrant like themselves, but one who has decided that to work on the side of management is the best way to survive and get what she wants from this new society she lives in.

*"These are things that happened to me. They happened in the past and I dealt with them, so I can talk about them now. I wanted to let other people know what is really going on. Adris Moulton, worker.*