

Standing Tall

“All these
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to grow”

When you look like Sarah Gadon, people often underestimate you. As the brilliant Canadian actor forges the next phase of her career, she talks obsession, sleepless nights and why she hates the word “muse” **PAGE 6**

Photography by Renata Kaveh

Character



Sarah Gadon is one of the most exciting actors of her generation. Her starring role in a shocking play is taking her to places she's never gone before. She talks to Sarah Laing about obsession and interprets spring's top trends for photographer Renata Kaveh

Study

Sarah Gadon is having trouble sleeping. “I wake up often in the middle of the night,” the Canadian actor said on a recent January Friday. “The way that I work is a little obsessive, so it’s really hard for me to turn that off.”

The current object of Gadon’s attention is *Yerma*, a play by Spanish literary giant Federico García Lorca that tells the story of a woman living in rural Spain whose grief at being unable to have a child of her own mutates into an obsession with horrifying consequences.

Gadon—who built an international reputation for her ability to inhabit intensely felt, emotionally harrowing roles in titles like *Alias Grace*, *Cosmopolis* and *All My Puny Sorrows*—plays the lead character in a new production at Toronto’s Coal Mine Theatre.

“I’ve been reading a lot about dysfunction in families, trauma and addiction, IVF and infertility,” Gadon explains of her newfound insomnia during a chat on her rehearsal lunch break. “The journey in the play, the way she has this slow erosion and unravelling...there are things about it that stay with you.” It’s not unusual for Gadon to wake up the next morning saying her lines from the day before.

“I’m not the kind of actor who thinks that all the roles you create are separate from who you are,” she says. “There have to be touchstones where the person you’re playing and the person you are come together and have moments of meaning.”

For Gadon, these intersections are in what she calls “deeply personal” places. “That’s what I love about growing older and having more life experience,” says Gadon. “If I’d played the part five years ago, my interpretation of this character would have been completely different. There are layers I would have understood in a different way.”

At its most straightforward, *Yerma* is a play about fertility, a subject that hits different with age. “I’m 35 now, and the journey that I’ve been on with fertility is, of course, different than what it was when I was 30 or 25,” says Gadon, dancing as close as she feels comfortable to such a profoundly private topic. “If I was looking at this character five years ago, I wouldn’t have had the experience of being in my mid-30s without a child, and I wouldn’t have had what that meant to me.”

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Gadon has been performing since she was a child, but the play, which Gadon first saw in New York years ago, will be her first professional theatre gig. Not that she’s a stranger to Toronto’s stages: As a child, Gadon trained at Canada’s National Ballet School, performing in the company’s productions—including that rite of passage *The Nutcracker*—before developing an “obsession” with auteur cinema at university.

“The 20 years that I was a dancer are coming up in a great way,” she says. “I feel really connected to my body, being able to experience this freedom as a full, moving being.” It’s a contrast, she says, to film, where “it’s very much about what’s happening above your waist.”

Beyond a genre leap, *Yerma* feels as though it also marks a post-pandemic artistic evolution for Gadon. While she says she was grateful for the work she did during the pandemic, many of the creative choices she made were driven by a scarcity of work or a need to work.

“As an artist, I was searching for that job that was going to be really challenging but also that relationship with a director that was going to be really stimulating,” Gadon says of the creative partnership she’s now found with *Yerma*’s director, Diana Bentley, who she describes as a “very powerful leader.”

Gadon says she’s always had a clear vision for the kind of career she wants, and she’s been proactive about carving it out on her own terms. At the same time, she spent much of her 20s being referred to as Canadian director David Cronenberg’s “muse,” starring in several of his films in the early 2010s.

“I think of it as a derogatory term to reduce a female actor and their intelligence and their capabilities as an artist,” she says in reaction to the term. “It suggests a man needs this inspiration in order to do his work, and her only value is derived from that man’s work.”

When she was younger, Gadon says she found it “laughable,” because the directors she was working with were so intelligent, and she felt so autonomous. With a bit of distance, however, she wonders whether it may have affected her a bit more than she’d thought.

“It gives that woman an expiration date, which maybe I felt a bit when I was exiting my 20s and entering my 30s as an actor. It was like, ‘Who am I now? What do I do now?’ Do I elicit that same curiosity among filmmakers?”

Yerma is an example of Gadon seeking out the opportunities that will shape her future. It’s one that looks very bright. She is currently in the writer’s residency at TIFF, working on the second draft of her adaptation of Heather O’Neill’s *Lullabies for Little Criminals*. Either this year or next, the project will also mark her directorial debut.

“It’s been very humbling,” she says. “I’m so established as an actor, and when you branch out into something else like screenwriting, you’re a beginner.” After sitting on the book for four years, it then took her a year to conquer the imposter syndrome that was keeping her from writing the adaptation.

“I was so scared,” Gadon says of the fear that the script would be bad, or that no one would take her seriously as a writer. “It’s been a huge learning process, but it’s also been rewarding because it’s been so challenging.”

From the sublime to the sartorial, Gadon’s evolution includes a fresh approach to her personal style.

“I’ve really been excited by my own autonomy in that space, which I feel like could get me in a little trouble,” she says. “We currently exist in a space where if an actor doesn’t have a stylist, it’s almost like she hasn’t achieved a certain level of success.” For Gadon, however, the kind of world where stylists would appear on the cover of the industry bible the *Hollywood Reporter* is a “disillusionment” of sorts.

“We’re in such an economy of stylists and fashion houses and contracts that I find it an extension of the bureaucracy and politics of being an actor,” says Gadon. “I feel very rebellious against it. I look around at my peers, especially anyone over the age of 25, and I think, ‘I want to know what *you* would wear.’”

When she served on the 2021 Venice Film Festival jury, Gadon styled all 12 of her red carpet looks herself. “It was crazy to do that without a stylist, but it was also really freeing,” she says. “I got to wear what I wanted, including Canadian designers, and I didn’t feel the pressure of doing it with a stylist.”

All in all, it’s a time of immense growth for Gadon, emerging from the survival mode of the pandemic, where life was about simply staying afloat, and the idea of stretching and changing felt frivolous.

“I was planting those seeds during that time, and now it feels like all these little seeds I’ve planted over the past couple of years are starting to grow,” says Gadon of pushing herself to places she hadn’t been before. “And now, so am I.”

SARAH GADON'S 2023 FAVOURITE THINGS

We Measure the Earth With Our Bodies by Tsering Yangzom Lama

“I read this book because it was shortlisted for the Gilliers. It’s a beautiful multigenerational story about culture and identity. I think it would make an incredible limited series. I hope someone has optioned it.”

When We Lost Our Heads by Heather O’Neill

“Heather’s latest book is on my reading list. All of her books are worlds to really get lost in, which is my main objective from any winter read.”

SOS by SZA

“I’ve been listening to this album on repeat since it dropped. I don’t think I can make her Toronto concert this February because of the play, so I’m determined to see her somewhere along her tour circuit.”

Olga Korper Gallery

“This is my neighbourhood gallery. I love the curation but also the architecture of the space itself. Last year I stumbled upon Sandra Brewster’s *Take a Little Trip* and it’s stayed with me since.”

Scanfluencers

“Every time I get on a flight (which has been frequently in the past six months) I listen to the latest episodes of this podcast. My absolute favourites from the last two seasons are ‘The Shady Bunch’ and ‘Superstar Sports Scammer.’”

Le Swan

“On my night off I love to go to Le Swan [in Toronto] for dinner. On these cold winter nights, its cozy booths, make you feel like you’re somewhere in France. With how intense the play is, at the end of the week, I’m really craving comfort food. It’s not on the menu, but last time I was there I ordered the Vanilla ‘Malt’ Milkshake and it was orgasmic. One of the best things I’ve tasted in the recent past.”

PHOTOGRAPHY: RENATA KAVEH; STYLING: KAELEN HAWORTH; HAIR: CHANEL CROKER; JONES VISION; MAKEUP: SIMONE OTIS-CAHORE



TREND NOTE: LEATHER'S NEW LOOK
Brown leather pants are a modern fashion classic, especially if they’re high-waisted, pleated and paired with the world’s most perfect crop top.

HERMÈS TOP, \$5,500; PANTS, \$11,900; BRACELET, \$940, HERMÈS CANADA; **BIRKS** RINGS, \$1,350–\$4,950, MAISONBIRKS.COM; **MARNI** SHOES, \$475, THE ROOM AT HUDSON’S BAY



TREND NOTE: VICTORIANA RETURNS
The high-necked nightgown achieves its Platonic ideal with a trend trifecta: sheer fabric, lace trim and knee-high socks.

DIOR DRESS, \$8,800; SHORTS, \$1,350; SOCKS, \$460; SHOES, \$1,150, DIOR BOUTIQUES; **CHOPARD** RINGS, \$4,880 EACH, CHOPARD.COM



TREND NOTE: TAILORING WITH A TWIST
Use crisp pieces—like a patterned midi skirt—to add polish, then an oversized T-shirt to keep things from getting too fussy.

BOTTEGA VENETA T-SHIRT, \$850; HOLT RENFREW A.W.A.K.E. **MODE** SKIRT, \$1,155, THE ROOM AT HUDSON’S BAY; **TIFFANY & CO.** BANGLES, \$8,700 AND \$42,900 (WITH DIAMONDS); NECKLACE (ALSO AT RIGHT), \$69,500, TIFFANY.CA

ON COVER: **LOUIS VUITTON** DRESS, TIGHTS, SHOES, PRICE UPON REQUEST; SELECT **LOUIS VUITTON** STORES; **VAN CLEEF & ARPELS** RINGS, FROM \$9,250, VANCLEEFARPELS.COM



BEAUTY NOTE: THE NEW SMOKY EYE
The most interesting spring eyeshadow look combines restraint and mystery. On the restraint side: All the action is restricted to the lid. The mystery kicks in with a purr of a cat-eye, with black shadow extending to both the inner and outer corners of the eye.



TREND NOTE: DENIM TROUSERS UP
Go big and baggy (and logoed, if you like) this spring. Unexpected colours like acid green keep the look surprising.

CHANEL JACKET, JEANS, SHOES, RINGS, EAR CUFF, PRICE UPON REQUEST; **CHANEL** BOUTIQUES; **NIKE** BODYSUIT (REWORKED), SIMILAR STYLES \$189, SHOPKYSHE.COM



TREND NOTE: HIGH DRAMA
A dress crafted with sculptural flowers frames a beauty look anchored by a theatrical eye.

GRETA CONSTANTINE DRESS, \$1,745, HOLT RENFREW



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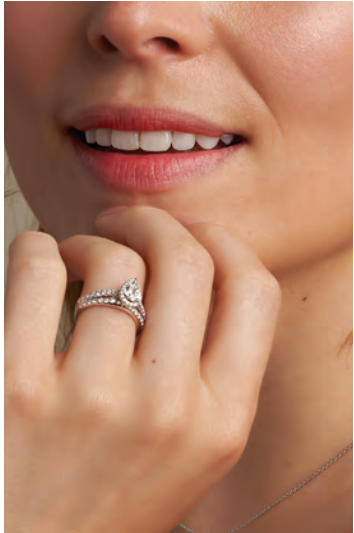
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BEAUTY AHEAD OF TIME



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AND TEST

Diamonds That Delight



A Birks engagement ring is the ultimate gift of love

With engagement season fully upon us, love is most definitely in the air. An engagement ring is the ultimate symbol of your romance, a treasured gem that will inevitably become an heirloom piece. Today's best styles feature fashion-forward designs combined with dazzling, ethically sourced gems, and there's no brand that does engagement rings better than Birks.

The iconic jeweller has been a mainstay of Canadians' love stories for over 140 years. With a long legacy of designing some of the most exquisite diamond pieces, Birks engagement rings can, and have, been passed down from generation to generation.

There are so many sparkling choices when it comes to stone cuts and engagement ring settings. Here are some stylish engagement rings to shop now in Maison Birks stores across Canada and online at maisonbirks.com. Book an appointment with a diamond expert online to find your ultimate engagement ring.



The Perfect Pear
The pear-shaped diamond is the cut of the moment—it's loved for its uniqueness and its elongating effect on the finger. This stunner, framed in a halo of diamonds and set on a micro-pavé band, is truly breathtaking.

BIRKS 1879 PEAR CUT DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING, STARTING AT \$9,900, [MAISONBIRKS.COM](https://maisonbirks.com)



The Sensational Sapphire
A ring design with an elegant vintage twist is one of today's most coveted styles. Combine the old-world setting with a vibrant blue round sapphire and you have a modern, regal engagement ring that's uniquely yours.

BIRKS 1879 HEIRLOOM ROUND SOLITAIRE SAPPHIRE ENGAGEMENT RING, STARTING AT \$6,450, [MAISONBIRKS.COM](https://maisonbirks.com)



The Opulent Oval
Thanks to Hailey Bieber, the oval-shaped engagement ring is now an iconic and timeless style. The oval is a flattering shape for all fingers, and what makes this one so spectacular is the sparkling rose gold metal setting.

BIRKS ROSÉE DU MATIN ROSE-GOLD OVAL DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT RING, STARTING AT \$7,900, [MAISONBIRKS.COM](https://maisonbirks.com)

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On the loose

This spring, it's all about easy, breezy, touchable hair. Picture that moment you'll toss your toque to the back of the closet and strut out of the house with your strands free at last. It's coming...

DO THE TWIST

The spring/summer 2023 spin on the chignon? Let the ends out! Rather than pristine buns with nary a hair out of place, updos are leaning in a more casual direction courtesy of sporty twists and flat-ironed ends. It's giving modern Lizzie McGuire, no?



R+CO MOOD SWING STRAIGHT SPRAY, \$43, [THEBAY.COM](https://thebay.com)



AMIKA UN DONE VOLUME AND MATTE TEXTURE SPRAY, \$40, [SEPHORA.CA](https://sephora.ca)



JVN EMBODY VOLUMIZING HAIR MOUSSE, \$38, [SEPHORA.CA](https://sephora.ca)



ORIBE SUPERSHINE LIGHT MOISTURIZING CREAM, \$65, [HOLTRENFREW.COM](https://holtrenfrew.com)

Happy go lucky



Fanciful flicks in a rainbow of cheery shades, lips drenched in fruity glosses, skin all aglow... Welcome to the era of dopamine makeup

BLACKOUT

We give full credit to Julia Fox for this one. The actor-slash-muse-slash-queen-of-the-zeitgeist made exaggerated wings her signature, and it looks like the runways followed suit. Chunky strokes of black liner adorned lids at several shows including Dries Van Noten and Jason Wu.



MAKE UP FOR EVER AQUA RESIST SMOXY EYESHADOW STICK IN CARBON, \$30, [SEPHORA.CA](https://sephora.ca)

LIGHT BULB MOMENT

Complexions are set to be dewier than ever this season. At Proenza Schouler, models appeared to have been splashed with water before hitting the catwalk. For a more, um, practical take on the trend, dab a high-sheen cream highlighter on the high points of your face.



TOWER 28 SUPERDEW SHIMMER-FREE HIGHLIGHT BALM, \$24, [SEPHORA.CA](https://sephora.ca)

FRUIT PUNCH

A juicy wash of watermelon or tangerine across the lips creates a pretty "just ate a popsicle" effect. How perfect for the warmer months? And bonus: The sheer finish provides an easy way to sport a punchy hue without having to babysit your lipstick all day long.



HERMÈS HERMÉSISTIBLE LIP OIL IN ROUGE AMARILLE, \$69, [HOLTRENFREW.COM](https://holtrenfrew.com)

LINE DANCE

The feline flick is getting dressed up in every colour imaginable this spring. The effect is fresh and effervescent and way more wearable than you might think. Opt for a thin stroke of pencil on the outer corners for a subtle pop or lean into the mod vibes with a bright, bold cat-eye.



M.A.C COSMETICS CHROMA-GRAPHIC PENCIL IN GENUINE ORANGE, \$28, [MACCOSMETICS.CA](https://maccosmetics.ca)

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