

The Cultch

Niall McNeil Productions  
(Vancouver)



# BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: MY LIFE



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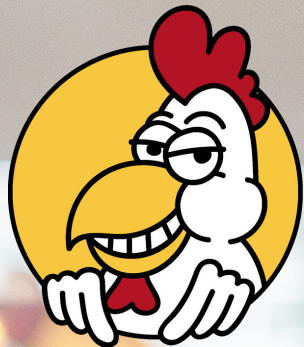


HISTORIC  
THEATRE

Written & Directed  
by Niall McNeil

MAR 28—  
APR 06, 2025

PHOTO // TIM MATHESON



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# BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: MY LIFE

Niall McNeil Productions (Vancouver)  
Written and Directed by Niall McNeil

**MAR 28–APR 06, 2025**  
**HISTORIC THEATRE**

75 min, plus a 15 min intermission

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## CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Creator, Director, and Performer  
**Niall McNeil**

Choreographer, Creative  
Collaborator, and Performer  
**Billy Marchenski**

Creative Collaborator and Performer  
**Sophia Mai Wolfe**

Performer and Collaborator  
**Kate Franklin**

Performer and Collaborator  
**Peter Anderson**

Director Mentor  
**Debbie Patterson**

Composer  
**Veda Hille**

Musician  
**June Mirochnick**

Lighting Designer  
**Itai Erdal**

Costume Designer  
**Christine Reimer**

Sound Designer  
**Mishelle Cuttler**

Set Designer and Technical Director  
**Paula Viitanen**

Production Manager  
**Jessica Han**

Creative Producer  
**Joan McNeil**

Producer  
**Brian Postalain**

Producer  
**John Dippong**

Stage Manager  
**Jillian Perry**

Surtitles Designer & Audio Describer  
**Anika Vervecken**

Pre-Show Projection Design  
**Candelario Andrade**

Dramaturge  
**Michele Valiquette**

The Cultch stage crew, box office, and  
front of house staff are members of  
Local 118 of IATSE



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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Cultch acknowledges that it is on unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) nations.

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## DEVELOPMENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Beauty and The Beast: My Life* was developed & produced with support from:

*Beauty and The Beast: My Life* acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and British Columbia Arts Council



City of Vancouver's Communities and Artists Shifting Culture (CASC) Cultural Grants Program



The Russian Hall's Rental Subsidy Program

**We also gratefully acknowledge generous development support from:** Vancouver Opera Society, BMO Theatre and Bard on The Beach, Presentation House Theatre, Touchstone Theatre, and Fresh Mart

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## THANK YOU FROM THE COMPANY

Niall McNeil Productions would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous artistic collaboration and support of the following people in the development of *Beauty and The Beast: My Life*

Lois Anderson (Artistic Director, Touchstone Theatre)

Lesley Ewen (Access All Areas, UK)

Estelle Shook (Artistic Director, Caravan Farm Theatre)

James Boatman (Visual Artist, mentor)

Lizzie Carolan (Sound Design, Voice-text Dictation, Music Development)

Alex Forsyth (Access Support)

Amber Barton (Creative Collaborator, play development)

Ivan Habel (Managing Director, Caravan Farm Theatre)

Barak ade Soleil (BBML / Roots and Identity Project)

Paul David Power (Artistic Director, Power Productions, BBML / Roots and Identity Project)

Joey Mallet (Visual Artist, Art Exhibit)

Juolin Lee (Creative Collaborator, play development)

Jessie Orr (Visual Artist, Art Studio Assistant)

Elizabeth Barrett (Performing and Visual Artists, Art Studio Assistant)

## ADDITIONAL THANK YOUS

5

Max Forsyth (BMO, Bard on The Beach)

Caravan Farm Theatre

Libby Willoughby (GM, Touchstone Theatre)

Elia Kirby and Great Northern Way Scene Shop

Craig Boyko (Russian Hall)

Tim Matheson (Photographer)

D'Arcey Houser + Fresh Mart friends

Molly MacKinnon (Musician, Violin)

Emmett Race (Visual art photography)

Charlotte Chang (Costume Builder)

Juan Aldazosa

East Van Graphics

Uprising Bakery

The Cultch

Toby Malek at ABC Fine Art for generous sponsorship of the visual art exhibition component of *BBML*. Niall's sketches were Proudly Crafted and Printed in Canada at ABC Fine ART, Burnaby. ABC uses museum-quality materials and expert printing techniques, to ensure that each reproduction reflects the depth, colour, and essence of the original artwork.

ABC Fine ART



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Photo // Tim Matheson



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Welcome and thank you for being here!

The shows we are presenting this March are a powerful mix: personal stories like *Beauty and the Beast: My Life*, from Niall McNeil who identifies as an artist with Down Syndrome, and *How to Disappear Completely*, Itai Erdal's intimate story of his experience with his mother's death. And then there are two starkly different plays by two of our country's leading Indigenous theatre makers: Kevin Loring's irreverent and hilarious satire *Little Red Warrior & His Lawyer*, and Corey Payette's story of the resilience of a family torn apart by residential schools, *Children of God*.

Each of these shows provides an opportunity to create meaningful dialogue, something we all need more of these days. Some of them have built-in post-show conversations after each performance (*How to Disappear Completely* and *Children of God*) and we hope you will stay with us and be a part of them.

Theatre has always been a space where we can connect, reflect, and understand one another on a deeper level, and now — perhaps more than ever — that role feels vital. We need stories to remind us of our shared humanity, to make us feel less alone, and to spark conversations that can change us.

We are here. We are together.

XO,

Nicole McLuckie  
*Associate Executive Director*

Heather Redfern,  
*Executive Director*



Photo // Heather Redfern & Nicole McLuckie by Lisa Wu

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## ABOUT THE SHOW

“*BBML [Beauty and the Beast: My Life]* is experimenting with paintings that I’ve designed with handles so people can dance with them. My original idea is to let the performers work in my different new way. It’s my first time being a director for The Cultch. My goal is to be the best of the hard work and story so the community can really see it. My purpose is to make my own art that I created myself with the paintings so the other people in BC can see it.” — Niall McNeil

*BBML* is a raucous celebration of movement and the power of imagination with Niall’s paintings and performers swirling through space and time, and a seriously catchy musical score that’s sure to challenge your perceptions and delight your senses.

*Beauty and the Beast: My Life* has been created in collaboration with Billy Marchenski, Veda Hille, Sophia Wolfe, Kate Franklin, Peter Anderson and Barakade Soleil. It combines movement and music with McNeil’s paintings, lyrics, and dialogue. Along with creating the play, McNeil will be making his directorial debut with this world premiere — trying out this new role for the first time in his lauded career.

This is a highly original interdisciplinary performance, the likes of which you’re unlikely to experience on stage again any time soon.

*A note about the language of the play.* This play is written by Niall McNeil. As a man with Down Syndrome who is experiencing hearing loss, Niall is learning ASL. This is his first work in which he incorporates signs from ASL into the language of the play. He uses both spoken English and ASL in ways that are intuitive and deeply personal. We invite you to embrace his distinctive ways of expressing himself and find the poetry within it.

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## ABOUT NIALL MCNEIL PRODUCTIONS

Niall McNeil identifies as a practicing artist with Down Syndrome. From a young age, he has explored the arts through acting, writing, painting and music. *Beauty and The Beast: My Life (BBML)* is the debut theatrical production from Niall McNeil Productions (NMP). NMP is currently in development with Toronto’s Musical Stage Company on a new musical called *Cowboy Tempest Cabaret*.



**NIALL MCNEIL**

CREATOR, DIRECTOR, PERFORMER

Director Niall McNeil is an artist living with Down Syndrome who has been involved with theatre from an early age through his lifelong association with the Caravan Farm Theatre. Niall was an ensemble member of Vancouver's Leaky Heaven Theatre's shows since its inception in 1999 under the direction of the company's founder, Steven Hill. In 2010 Niall performed in *A Christmas Carol* as a member of the English Acting Company of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa under the direction of Peter Hinton. Niall and Marcus Youssef have written two Jessie Richardson Theatre Award winning plays together, *Peter Panties* (2011) (Leaky Heaven/Newworld Theatre) and *King Arthur's Night* (2017) (Newworld Theatre). In 2018 Niall was awarded a Certificate from Studio 58 acting school in Vancouver. Niall is currently in development of *Cowboy Tempest Cabaret* a new musical play with Toronto's Musical Stage Company with collaborators Anton Lipovetsky and Lucy McNulty. Niall acted in Marie Clements' short film *Pilgrims* which screened at TIFF and the Cannes market in 2013. Niall partnered again with director Marie Clements in 2022, as creative collaborator and subject of the NFB documentary *Lay Down Your Heart*. Most recently, Niall directed his first documentary film about the Caravan Farm Theatre called *The Originals*, which had its world premiere at the 2024 DOXA Film Festival.

**BILLY MARCHENSKI**

CREATIVE COLLABORATOR, CHOREOGRAPHER, PERFORMER

Billy graduated from the School for the Contemporary Arts at SFU. He's been a working artist in performance art, Theatre and Contemporary Dance for almost 25 years. Billy was the recipient of the Sydney J Rysk prize for *slowpoke*, a travelogue slide-show inspired by his visit to the Chernobyl Exclusion zone in 2011. Billy is a member of the Butoh group "gigamal." His mentors include artists Yoshito Ohno, Jay Hirabayashi, and Lee Su Feh. Billy would like to dedicate this work to his brothers and sisters, and all the kids he grew up with in the Marchenski household.

**SOPHIA MAI WOLFE**

CREATIVE COLLABORATOR, PERFORMER

My name is Sophia Mai Wolfe (she/her/hers), I am a queer, Japanese-Canadian independent artist whose practice is ever-changing. My practice moves and connects me to live performance, video documentation, curation, festival programming, editing, filmmaking, directing and choreographing. My dance practice has led me to performing and touring internationally with companies and independent choreographers such as Company 605, Co-Erasga, Chick Snipper, Cindy Mochizuki, Lisa Mariko Gellely, Kelly McInnes, Antonio Somera, Zahra Shahab, The Only Animal and New World Theatre. I hold an MA in Screendance

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## BIOGRAPHIES

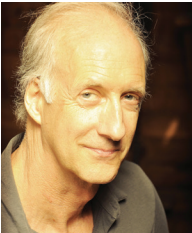
from the London Contemporary Dance School (2022), and am the founder and organizational director of F-O-R-M (Festival Of Recorded Movement).



**KATE FRANKLIN**  
COLLABORATOR, PERFORMER

Kate spent the first ten years of her career in Toronto/Tkaronto working as a dancer, choreographer and educator, and co-directing three female-led collectives, all with different missions/mandates. She also walked dogs, babysat children, taught Yoga, cleaned a woodwinds repair shop, and won a Dora Mavor Moore award for her work on *Gotta Go Church*, choreographed by Valerie Calam.

Based in Vancouver on the unceded and traditional territories of the Coast Salish Peoples since 2012, she works as a dancer/collaborator for Company 605, Justine A. Chambers, Jeanette Kotowich/Movement Healing and Tara Cheyenne Performance, amongst others. Since 2016 she has been Associate Artistic Director of Modus Operandi, where she teaches and mentors a group of exceptionally talented emerging dance artists. Kate's own choreographic work has been shown most recently at Boombox, *Dancing on the Edge* and the EDAM Choreographic Series.



**PETER ANDERSON**  
COLLABORATOR, PERFORMER

Peter's delighted to be back at The Cultch, working with this great team on Niall's play. He last appeared here in *Titus Bouffonius* and *Butcher*. Other favorite acting credits include *The Overcoat*, *Middletown*, *Waiting For Godot*, *The Number 14* and numerous roles in his many plays for the Caravan Farm Theatre. A graduate of the University of Michigan and the Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre, he's

the recipient of eight Jessie Awards. You can find his prose poems online at The Mackinaw, Sublunary Review, Unbroken, and elsewhere. You can find his prose poems online at [www.chillsubs.com/profile/petercarlanderson](http://www.chillsubs.com/profile/petercarlanderson). Love to Melody, always.



**VEDA HILLE**  
COMPOSER

Veda Hille is a Vancouver musician, composer, theatre maker, and performer. She writes songs, makes records, co-writes musicals, collaborates in devised theatre, and fulfills other interesting assignments as they arise. Veda performs in a wide of array of places, alone or with bands, ensembles, symphonies, and casts. Her career spans 30 years of working in Canada and abroad, and shows no sign

of flagging. She has worked with Niall on several large-scale works including the acclaimed *Peter Panties* and *King Arthur's Night*.



**DEBBIE PATTERSON**  
DIRECTOR MENTOR

Debbie Patterson is a playwright, director and actor. Trained at the National Theatre School of Canada, she is a founding member of Shakespeare in the Ruins, served as Theatre Ambassador for Winnipeg's Cultural Capital year, and as Artistic Director of the Popular Theatre Alliance of Manitoba. She was the Carol Shields Writer in Residence at the University of Winnipeg and Playwright in Residence at Theatre Projects Manitoba. She served as Artistic Associate at Prairie Theatre Exchange and was a member of the PTE Playwrights Unit. She was a member of the 2023 Acting Company at the Stratford Festival. She was honoured with the United Nations Platform for Action Committee's 2014 Activist Award and the Winnipeg Arts Council Making a Mark Award in 2017. She is a proud advocate for disability justice through her work as founding and current Artistic Director of Sick + Twisted Theatre. She is in demand across the country as a disability dramaturge and as an artistic collaborator versed in disability aesthetics. She lives a wheelchair-enabled life in Winnipeg in Treaty 1 Territory and in a cabin on the shore of Lake Winnipeg in Treaty 2 Territory with her partner and collaborator, Arne MacPherson. She is the matriarch of a family of artists.



**PAULA VIITANEN ALDAZOSA**  
SET AND PROPS DESIGNER, TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Paula Viitanen Aldazosa is an interdisciplinary artist and collaborator whose practice oscillates at the intersection of spatial design, construction, site-collaborative creation and photography. She also works in production management and technical direction, bridging artistic vision with execution. She grew up in Finland surrounded by small bodies of water that didn't ebb and flow, observing and capturing the world through her camera. Since relocating to the unceded ancestral territories of the x̄w̄məθk̄w̄ȳəm (Musqueam), Sk̄wx̄w̄ú̄mesh (Squamish), and səliiwətaʔ (Tsilil-Waututh) Nations in 2014, she has been engaged in the performing arts industry locally and internationally. She holds a degree in Industrial Joinery, and a BFA in Theatre: Production and Design. She is multitudes.



**MISHELLE CUTTLER**  
SOUND DESIGNER

Mishelle is a composer, musician, and sound designer whose work is centered around the integration of music, sound, and storytelling. Her art spans across theatrical, musical, audio installation, and interdisciplinary practices. Some favourite recent projects include: *Here Here: songs we sing for home* (Little Chamber Music), *Hedda Gabler* (Stratford Festival); *Made in Canada: an agricultural song cycle* (rice & beans theatre), *Good Things To Do* (Rumble Theatre), and three years at *The East Van Panto*. Next month she will be traveling to the Yirramboi Festival in Melbourne, Australia as the sound designer for *The Seventh Fire*

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## BIOGRAPHIES

– an immersive audio installation piece by Lisa C. Ravensbergen. This summer she is sound designing *Much Ado About Nothing* at Bard on the Beach.  
[mishellecuttler.com](http://mishellecuttler.com)



### ITAI ERDAL LIGHTING DESIGNER

Itai Erdal is an award-winning lighting designer, writer and performer, and the artistic director of The Elbow Theatre, for whom he co-wrote and performed in *Soldiers of Tomorrow*, *Hyperlink*, *This Is Not A Conversation* and *A Very Narrow Bridge*. Itai's first solo show: *How to Disappear Completely* (The Chop) has had 26 remounts and won the best director award at the 2013 Summerworks Festival (James Long). Itai has designed over 350 shows for theatre, dance and opera companies in over 40 cities around the world. Recent highlights include: *Cambodian Rock Band* and *Primary Trust* for Arts Club Theatre and *Carmen* for Vancouver Opera. He won six Jessie Richardson Awards, Toronto's Dora Mavor Moore Award, a Winnipeg Theatre Award, the ADC's Jack King Award, Victoria's Spotlight Choice Award, Edinburgh's Lustrum Award, the Stratford Festival's Guthrie Award and the Design Award at the Dublin Fringe Festival. He was shortlisted to the Siminovitch Prize in 2018 and 2024. [itaierdal.com](http://itaierdal.com), [theelbow.ca](http://theelbow.ca)



### CHRISTINE REIMER COSTUME DESIGNER

Christine is delighted to be collaborating with this wonderful group of artists. She's been designing costumes for around 25 years now. Favourite recent designs include *King Arthur's Night: the movie* (Opus 59 Films), *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Bard on the Beach), *Guys and Dolls*, *Elf* (Arts Club Theatre), *Matilda the Musical* and upcoming *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Theatre Under the Stars). Christine's design work has appeared in numerous publications including Opera Canada and The Art and Practice of Costume Design (Routledge Press). [christinereimerdesign.com](http://christinereimerdesign.com)



### CANDELARIO ANDRADE PRE-SHOW PROJECTION DESIGN

Cande is a video editor and media designer based in Vancouver. Recent design credits include: *Chochito Rey* (Rumble Theatre); *The Secret To Good Tea* (NAC, Grand Theatre); *The Eyes of The Beast*; (Newworld/UVIC); *BBB* (Rumble); *Women Of The Fur Trade* (NAC, Native Earth, GCTC); *Empty Handed* (The Biting School); *You used to call me Marie...* (NAC, Savage Society); *Julius Caesar* (Bard on the Beach); *Little Red Warrior and His Lawyer* (Savage Society/Belfry/NAC); *Mom's the Word Talking Turkey* (Arts Club). Recent video editing credits include *LOOPING* (Company 605) and the feature film *Done/Undone*

(Bard on The Beach); as well as the short films: *Common Law* and *a film about a uterus*. In recent years, Cande has edited several projects for Mochizuki Studios and the Vancouver International Film Festival.



**JESSICA HAN**  
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Jessica Han (she/her) is a Taiwanese-Canadian technical director, production/ stage manager, lighting designer, and filmmaker who is currently splitting her time between Taipei, Taiwan, and the traditional territories of the x̱m̱əθḵəy̱əm, Sḵw̱x̱w̱7mesh, and səliiwəta7t Nations (also known as Vancouver, BC). She has been working, collaborating, touring nationally and internationally with local dance &

theatre artists and companies since 2011. You can find more of what she's up to at [jessicahan.ca](http://jessicahan.ca)



**JILLIAN PERRY**  
STAGE MANAGER

Jillian is thrilled to be working on this production with Niall! Jillian is currently the tour and production coordinator for Axis Theatre Company. She is a Jessie Richardson award winning Artist for Significant Artistic Achievement: Outstanding Stage Management in Theatre for Young Audiences. She holds a BA from the University of the Fraser Valley. Jillian has worked with many theatre companies

around Vancouver, but her highlights include touring Canada, the USA and China with *Somebody Loves You Mr. Hatch*. Touring across Canada with five seasons of *Chelsea Hotel*, *The Songs of Leonard Cohen*, *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth*, *Dead Metaphor*, *Proud*, *Urinetown: The Musical*. *Terminus* (Pi Theatre) *Elbow Room Café* (Zee Zee Theatre, The Cultch). Jillian would like to thank Carson for introducing me to Niall. He would have loved to see us working together!



**MICHELE VALIQUETTE**  
DRAMATURGE

Michele taught writing and rhetoric in the English Department at SFU. As dramaturge for the Leaky Heaven Circus, she worked with Niall on a number of productions, including his take on *Peter Pan*. Michele is very pleased to be part of Niall's directorial debut.

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## BIOGRAPHIES



**JOAN MCNEIL**  
CREATIVE PRODUCER

Joan McNeil works with Niall to facilitate the centering of his voice and his work as an artist. Joan would like to thank the generous and skillful counsel of disability-identified artists, friends, and artist-mentors in the community who have guided our path. She provides access support to Niall in his work as an Administrator, Coordinator, and Personal assistant.



**BRIAN POSTALIAN**  
PRODUCER

Brian Postalian is a performance creator, educator, and producer born and raised in Toronto/Tkaronto by way of Armenia (via Turkey and Lebanon), Ireland, UK, and the Czech Republic. With their company Re:Current Theatre, they make work that reconsiders how we share space together in communal places, blurring the divide between audiences and performers. Their work extends beyond traditional stages and uses the communal form as an intervention of the private self in public space. Their work *New Societies* used immersivity and interactivity with a focus on game theory and social engagement to create idyllic societies. It has been presented across Canada and Internationally; where it has been translated into Mandarin with the National Theatre of Taipei. Brian's recent work co-creating the Dora Award nominated *Access Me* with the Boys in Chairs collective was published by Playwrights Canada Press as part of *Interdependent Magic: Disability Performance in Canada*. Brian holds a Master of Fine Arts at Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts in Theatre Game Design and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies. They are a certified facilitator of Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process. In their spare time, Brian likes to host board game nights, ride their bicycle, play with their dog Amie, and recently started Lindy Hop swing dancing. After *Beauty and the Beast: My Life*, Brian will be moving home to Toronto/Tkaronto after eight wonderful years in Vancouver. [brianpostalian.com](http://brianpostalian.com)



**JOHN DIPPONG**  
PRODUCER

*Beauty and the Beast: My Life* is John's first foray into the theatre world, after three decades of working in film development, financing, production, festivals and funding agencies. In 2020, John founded V Street Media, a consulting company interested in championing the chance-takers and outliers as well as creators who have yet to be discovered, to help create memorable content and events about meaningful stories and ideas.

**JUNE MIROCHNICK****MUSICIAN**

June Mirochnick is a drummer/multi-instrumentalist originally from Winnipeg, MB, on Treaty One Territory. June has been playing music professionally for three decades, and has performed live, recorded, and toured internationally with numerous artists in Canada and the US including Veda Hille, Great Aunt Ida, Neko Case, Sarah Jane Scouten, Patsy Klein/Tony Wilson Band, Christine Fellows, and many more. They have also performed in many musical theatre productions in Vancouver and across Canada. Theatre highlights include *Super Seniors* (Western Gold Theatre); *Parade* (Raincity); *As You Like It* (Grand Theatre, London ON); *Onegin* (Arts Club); *King Arthur's Night* (Newworld); *East Van Panto* (Theatre Replacement/The Cultch). June currently lives in Vancouver on traditional territories of the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam, and Squamish nations.

**ANIKA VERVECKEN****SURTITLES DESIGNER & AUDIO DESCRIBER**

Anika is a white settler born in Belgium. She has been passionate about performing arts for as long as she can remember and her work testifies to an ongoing pursuit of meaningful ways for everyone to participate. While figuring out her own needs as a single mother living with a brain injury, neurodiversity and mental health challenges, she is a leader in reimagining how we support our audience members as well as questioning the practices and structures within our organisations that may not serve our mission statements. Her creative yet pragmatic approach and willingness to confront difficult conversations have led to innovation in her work as an access activator, surtitler, translator, producer, programmer, researcher and performer. Her motto: I look forward to failing together. It is the only way to move forward. Through failure she has found success with the Vancouver International Children's Festival, VocalEye, Axis Theatre, PuSh, Revolver Festival, Kidd Pivot, Vancouver Recital Society, Folda (Ontario) Kunstenfestivaldesarts (Brussels), Peter Brook (Paris) & the Holland Festival, CDN d'Orleans (France), deSingel (Antwerp) amongst others.

**BARAK ADE SOLEIL****DISABILITY ARTS CONSULTANT, PLAY DEVELOPMENT**

Barak ade Soleil is an international award-winning artist, independent curator, and noted consultant who works at the intersections of blackness, disability, neuro-diversity and queer culture. Barak mentored Niall as a Director in the development of *BBML*, through the Roots and Identity Project, workshop play development and disability art practice, consultation, centering disability justice.

The Cultch

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We host vibrant gatherings and lively conversations around the issues, topics, and ideas that are presented in our shows.



We remove barriers to access by providing free tickets to those for whom cost is prohibitive.

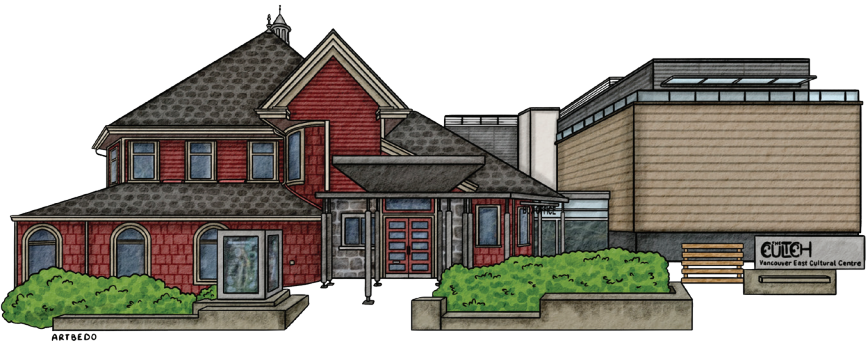
We are connectors, facilitators, culture changers, and we are committed to providing the highest level of service and care we can offer.

We activate this work in our three theatres—the Historic, the Vancity Culture Lab, and the York—a gallery, and various multi-use spaces in the heart of East Vancouver, as well as our Cultch Online digital presentations that reach international audiences.

We welcome everyone who loves live performance into our spaces and invite them to make The Cultch their home.

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## COMING SOON AT THE CULTCH

**DANCE NATION**, APR 23–MAY 11, 2025

*Dance Nation* is the latest production by The Search Party, an award-winning Vancouver theatre company. Clare Barron's Pulitzer Prize Finalist for Drama (2019), which The New York Times called "a blazingly original play", follows an army of fiercely competitive pre-teen dancers as they train for National Dance Competitions.

Photo // Amanda Sum by Emily Cooper Photography



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## Q&A WITH MINDY PARFITT, DIRECTOR OF *DANCE NATION*

**Your company, The Search Party, is known for its hard-hitting productions of some of the most exciting contemporary plays. What drew you to *Dance Nation*?**

It's a very compelling story; it's funny but also heartfelt. There's this beautiful juxtaposition between these big glorious moments of dance and these intimate exchanges between characters. I also really love the discussion it is having around success and the tension that exists between individual ambition and the collective endeavor.

**What can we expect from the casting?**

*Dance Nation* is a big ensemble piece. It follows a pre-teen dance troupe as they fight their way to nationals. Barron requires that the cast not be teenagers, but rather actors of a variety of ages and dancing capabilities. So we have actors in their early twenties to mid-sixties with a wide range of dancing training who are coming together to tell this story. We had a tremendous response to our casting call—people are really excited to have this play in our city. We've been able to cast this incredible group of actors that I feel very inspired and excited to work with. Matching them with the design team that has been assembled—it's an adventure I can't wait to go on.

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