

The Cultch

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ROADBURG
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REDUCTION LTD.

CHILDREN OF GOD

A MUSICAL BY
COREY
PAYETTE

"MUST-SEE
THEATRE FOR
CANADIANS"
THE GLOBE AND MAIL



YORK
THEATRE

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
COREY PAYETTE

MAR 21–
MAR 29, 2025

PHOTO // MICHELLE BARDACH BY MATT BARNES



The Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation is proud to support Indigenous Programming at The Cultch



roadburgfund.org

Photo // *Children of God* a new musical written and directed by Corey Payette, Production Design by Marshall McMahan, Lighting Design by Jeff Harrison, actors Kaitlyn Yott, Cheyenne Scott, Herbie Barnes, Aaron Wells, and Kevin Loring. An Urban Ink production in association with National Arts Centre English Theatre and Raven Theatre, photo by Emily Cooper Photography.

CHILDREN OF GOD

A MUSICAL BY
**COREY
PAYETTE**

An Urban Ink Production (Vancouver)

MAR 21–29, 2025
YORK THEATRE

Running time: 2 hours 10 minutes, including intermission
Plus post-show conversation after every show

Please be advised that this play contains explicit descriptions and depictions of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and suicide, which can be distressing, traumatic, and/or triggering for members of the audience. Emotional support is available on-site for anyone in need.

CREATIVE TEAM

Director, Writer & Composer
Corey Payette

Production Designer
Marshall McMahan

Musical Director
Rachel Kiyo Iwaasa

Lighting Designer
Jeff Harrison

Jewelry Design
Helen Oro

Orchestrator
Elliot Vaughan

Sound Designer
Bradley Danyluk

Associate Production Designer
Alaia Hamer

Associate Lighting Designer
Bryan Kenney

Stage Manager
Melanie Thompson

Assistant SM
Jennifer Wilson

Production Manager / Technical
Director
Alistair Wallace

Fight Director
Mike Kovac

Head of Wardrobe
Halley Fulford

Emotional Support Program &
Outreach Coordinator
Shane Leydon

Powwow Coach & Workshop Leader
Nyla Bedard

CAST

Tom

Sheldon Elter

Rita

Andrea Menard

Julia

Cheyenne Scott

Wilson

čačumḡi—aaron m. wells

Sister Bernadette

Lauren Bowler

Father Christopher

David Keeley

Joanna/Secretary (u/s Julia)

Kaitlyn Yott

Vincent (u/s Tommy/Wilson)

Dillan Chiblow

Elizabeth

Danica Charlie

Understudies

Winona Myles & Vinnie Alberto

Urban Ink is a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres and engages, under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement, professional artists who are members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association. Urban Ink gratefully acknowledges the support of Canadian Actors' Equity Association.



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



SONG LIST

Music used in this performance is from the album "The Music from Children of God" which is available in the lobby, produced by Corey Payette and Brian Chan. Recorded at Afterlife Studios, Vancouver, BC. PIANO Sean Bayntun, CELLO Brian Chan, VIOLA Elliot Vaughan, GUITAR Martin Reisle

ACT I

God Only Knows Full Company

Your Father Rita

Pater Noster All Students and Teachers

The Closest Thing to Home Tommy and Julia

What Do They Take Us For?

Wilson, Vincent, and Tommy

Who I Was Tommy and Students

Runaway Julia

Gimikenden Ina (Do You Remember?)

Tommy, Rita, and Students

This Is What You Get Full Company

ACT 2

Away We Ride Wilson, Tommy, Vincent, and Father Christopher

God Only Knows (reprise) Sister Bernadette, Wilson, and all students

The Closest Thing to Home (reprise) Tommy

Homeward Bound Julia

Pater Noster (reprise) Students and Father Christopher

Their Spirits Are Broken Sister Bernadette

Wonderland Tommy

And We Wait Tom and Rita

Baamaapii Ka Wab Migo (until we see you again) Rita and Full Company

Urban Ink and The Cultch acknowledge that they are on unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔ (Tseil-Waututh) nations.

A MESSAGE FROM HEATHER & NICOLE

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

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Aaniin and welcome to *Children of God*.

We are proudly producing this work on the traditional, and unceded Indigenous territories of the x^wməθk^wəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We honour the past and future caretakers of this beautiful land.

Growing up in Northern Ontario, I was never taught the history of residential schools; it wasn't something people talked about. *Children of God* was born out of anger and the frustration I felt when I discovered that this horrible history had taken place, and was hidden from the narrative of our country.

The journey started with years of research: speaking with survivors on the back of their pick-up trucks in rural BC, visiting abandoned school sites, and a workshop production at the Chief Louis Cultural Centre, a reclaimed former residential school on the Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc (Kamloops Indian Band) in Kamloops, BC. We rehearsed in the chapel of the school with Elders, survivors, and other community members in an open rehearsal hall to the community ensuring that we were creating the work in a good way. Every step allowed for a deeper understanding of our history and leading me to recognize my personal responsibility in telling the truth and acknowledging the strength and resilience of residential school survivors and their descendants.

Over the past fourteen years, I have witnessed a similar transition, on a larger scale, as many Canadians gain this same awareness. Through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we now have a better understanding of our painful history; it's gone from something that wasn't talked about to something that we discuss regularly. But it can't just be Indigenous peoples who bear the burden of this work. I believe that true reconciliation needs everyone, in every community, investing in this process and continuing the journey forward together.

Through this work, we honour and acknowledge the strength of survivors and their descendants. We are proud of Indigenous peoples' resilience in reclaiming culture, language, and our rightful place at the heart of our Canadian identity. Stories are powerful. They connect us, shape our understanding of ourselves and our relationship to one another, so that the true history of this country can be fully understood.

Miigwetch (Thank you) to all the people who have believed in this work over the years, to everyone at The Cultch, and to this remarkable company of artists for bringing *Children of God* to life again.

And to you, the audience, for being here, and including this work as a step on our journey to reconciliation. Miigwetch (thank you).

All my relations,

Corey Payette

Writer, Composer, Lyricist, and Director of Children of God

**SHELDON ELTER**

TOM

Sheldon is a Métis artist. Theatre credits include: *Metis Mutt* (One Little Indian Productions), *The Black Bonspiel of Wullie MacCrimmon* (Alberta Theatre Projects), *Canada Rocks*, *Nashville Outlaws*, *HAIR The Musical*, *Shear Madness*, *The 25th Annual Putnam Spelling Bee*, *The Buddy Holly Story*, *The Full Monty* (Mayfield Dinner Theatre), *The Bear/The Proposal*, *Every Brilliant Thing* (Caravan Farm Theatre), *Where The Blood Mixes*, *King Lear/Queen Goneril* (Soulpepper Theatre), *Ministry of Grace* (Belfry Theatre), *BEARS*, *After The Fire* (Punctuate! Theatre), *The Comedy Company* (Shadow Theatre), *Dear Rita*, *Stories From the Red Dirt Road*, *Martin Guerre* (Confed Centre of the Arts), *Evangeline* (Citadel Theatre/Confed Centre of the Arts), *Crazy For You* (Citadel Theatre/Theatre Calgary), *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Jersey Boys*, *Christmas Carol*, *Alice Through The Looking Glass*, *One Man Two Guvnors*, *Julius Caesar*, *A Prairie Boy's Winter*, and *Vimy* (Citadel Theatre), *Tartuffe*, *The Sound of Music*, *Enron* (NAC), *NEVERMORE* (Catalyst Theatre). TV Credits include: *Delmer and Marta*, *CAUTION: May Contain Nuts*, *Tribal* (APTN), *Hell On Wheels* (AMC). Sheldon was a top 14 finalist on Canadian Idol in 2006, and is a core member of the ukulele rock band sensation, The Be Arthurs.

**ANDREA MENARD**

RITA

Andrea Menard is a Métis actor and singer-songwriter from Treaty 1 territory and the Homeland of the Métis. Theatre: *Rubaboo* (Grand Theatre/Arts Club/Citadel); *Anne of Green Gables*, *Stories from the Red Dirt Road* (Charlottetown Festival); *The Orchard*, *Thanks For Giving* (Arts Club); *Great Expectations*, *Evita*, *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* (Persephone); *The Velvet Devil*, (NAC) *The Velvet Devil*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Governor of the Dew*, (Globe Theatre) *The Velvet Devil*, *400 Kilometers*, *Wawatay* (GTNT); *The Rez Sisters*, *Joni Mitchell: River*, *Godspell* (PTE); *Street Wheat*, *The Selkie Wife*, *The Shipbuilder* (Dancing Sky). Film & TV: *Sullivan's Crossing*, *Blackstone*; *Supernatural*; *Hard Rock Medical*; *Moccasin Flats*, *Rabbit Fall*, *The Velvet Devil*.

**CHEYENNE SCOTT**

JULIA

Cheyenne Scott is a member of the STÁUTW First Nation/ Norwegian settler descent, and an actor, playwright, and creative producer with a focus on new works. Having learned theatre through a colonial lens, she is working to Indigenize her process through her WSÁNEĆ values, land-based methodology, and storytelling. She is a multi Dora Mavor Moore nominated artist for co-creating/performing *Now You See Her* (Quote Unquote Collective/Nightwood/Why Not Theatre) which was published by Coach House, and for The Home Project (Howland/Native Earth/

BIOGRAPHIES: CAST

Soulpepper). Cheyenne was named the protégé of Lori Marchand for the Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award. She is an Artistic Associate for Urban Ink and Western Canada Theatre. As a performer, Cheyenne is drawn to complex contemporary characters and stories that involve music. Select Acting Credits include: *Children of God* (Urban Ink/NAC, Citadel/WCT, Segal Centre), *The Herd* (Citadel/Tarragon), *The Last Five Years* (Blue Bridge) *Joyride* (Caravan Farm Theatre), *The Drowning Girls* (WCT), *Mistatim* (Red Sky Performance), *Trojan Girls* and the *Outhouse of Atreus* (Outside the March/Factory).



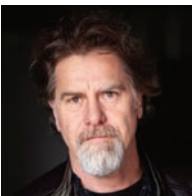
čačumhi — aaron m. wells
WILSON

čuu ʔuuklaasʔiš čačumhi, aaron wells ʔuuklaasʔaʔi. Hello, my name čačumhi — aaron wells is what I am also called. I am an indige-queer actor, singer and storyteller from the nuučanʔut and tsʔymsyen nations as well as English settler heritage and I was born and raised on Vancouver Island. I have been involved in multiple workshops and premieres of new indigenous and Canadian works all across the country, including *Children Of God*. Thank you to all of my friends and family for their support as it carries and holds me when sharing stories like these. chuu!



LAUREN BOWLER
SISTER BERNADETTE

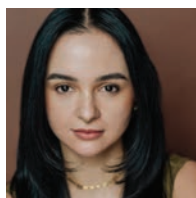
Lauren first workshoped this show back in 2012, and is deeply grateful to be exploring this crucial and transformative story these many years later. She has appeared on stages with many companies around the country, including the Firehall Arts Centre, Arts Club Theatre Company, Western Canada Theatre, Citadel Theatre, National Arts Centre, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Drayton Entertainment, Mayfield Theatre, Prairie Theatre Exchange, & Belfry Theatre. Lauren spent three seasons with the Here For Now Theatre Company in Stratford, Ontario, developing brand new and underproduced plays, and will be spending a fourth season with them in summer 2025. In 2010, she co-founded the Great Wall Tea Company, which she co-owns to this day. Lauren is a passionate advocate and supporter of Action Canada and the organizations that make up the UN's Sexual Rights Initiative. In her spare time, you will find Lauren either reading, discussing politics, or watching a horror movie, usually with a cup of tea in her hand.



DAVID KEELEY
FATHER CHRISTOPHER

David is an award winning actor who has worked worldwide in film, television, theatre and the music industry. Highlights include Sam in the original Broadway production of *Mamma Mia*, Lockstock in *Urinetown* (Dora Award), Canadian premieres of *Rock of Ages*, *Billy Elliot*, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, *True Love Lies*. David has spent

nine seasons at The Stratford Festival, most recently playing Kent in *King Lear*. Other Stratford credits include; *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Richard III*, *Fuente Ovejuna*, *Trojan Women* and *Much Ado about Nothing*. He also portrayed Benvolio in Robert Lepage's ground breaking production of *Romeo and Juliet*. His extensive list of tv and film credits include *The Manchurian Candidate* with Meryl Streep, *Designated Survivor*, *Suits*, *Copper* (series regular), *Lost Girl*, *Heartland*, *Akilla's Escape*, *Albatross* (Austin Film Fest Award), *The Barrens*. Watch for David in the new Star Trek series, *Starfleet Academy*, coming next year. He previously released two independent cds with fellow actor Paul Gross and their compilation cd *Holiday Heroes* achieved gold status in Canada. Recently, he released his own self-produced cd, *Gasoline Rainbows*. davidkeeley.ca



KAITLYN YOTT

JOANNA / SECRETARY, U/S JULIA

Kaitlyn Yott (she/they) is a Queer mixed Coast Tsimshian and Japanese-Canadian actor based in Vancouver. She has been collaborating with Corey and Urban Ink (*Les Filles du Roi*, *Children of God*, *On Native Land*) for nearly a decade and is thrilled to return to *Children of God*. Recent/ Favourite Theatre credits: *Women of the Fur Trade* (Firehall Arts Centre), *Sunrise Betties* (ItsaZOO Productions), *Middletown* (Sticks and Stones Theatre), *Peace Country* (rice & beans Theatre / Firehall Arts Centre), *Little Women* (Cheminus Theatre Festival) Favourite Film/Voice credits: *Charmed* (CW) *Another Code: Recollection* (Nintendo), *Querencia* (Bright Shadow Productions/APTN / Leo Award Winner for Best Leading Actress in a Web Series) *Les Filles Du Roi* (Urban Ink Productions) Love and gratitude always to my family, friends and my dreamy, wonderful partner Kelli for their unwavering support.



DILLAN CHIBLOW

VINCENT, U/S TOMMY/WILSON

Dillan is an Ojibwe storyteller from Garden River First Nation. He graduated from Sheridan's Musical Theatre program and holds a Masters degree in Musical Theatre Performance from The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Dillan was the Syd & Shirley Banks prize recipient (2020) and a recipient of the Musical Stage Company's Aubry Dan Fund for new musicals for *The 7 Fires: A New Musical*. *The 7 Fires* was selected for development at the National Center For New Musicals. He was nominated for a Dora award for Outstanding performance by an Individual for playing Hummingbird in *Bentboy* at YPT. This is Dillan's third time performing in *Children of God*, and is thrilled to be back performing again with Urban Ink! Select Credits: Tom/Tommy—*Children of God* (Citadel, Segal Center, WCT, The Cultch, Urban Ink) Eddie "Star"—*Starwalker* (Urban Ink/Raven Theatre/The Cultch) Fulmar—*Sedna* (Urban Ink/Caravan Farm) Rupunzel's Princ —*Into The Woods* (Koerner Hall) Hummingbird (Dora nom Outstanding Performance)—*Bentboy* (YPT Toronto) Select Film/TV: *Murdoch Mysteries*, *Run The Burbs*, *SkyMed*. DillanChiblow.com

BIOGRAPHIES: CAST



DANICA CHARLIE
ELIZABETH

Danica Charlie (she/they) is a mixed Nuu-chah-nulth/settler artist from Lək̓ʷəŋən territory, who graduated from the Canadian College of Performing Arts in 2021. She feels most empowered when working through an Indigenous storytelling lens, sharing knowledge with others, and learning more about herself as well. Thank you for coming on this journey with us. Some recent credits include: *Women of the Fur Trade* (Firehall Arts Centre), *Eyes of the Beast: Climate Disaster Survivor Stories* (Newworld Theatre), *Father Tartuffe: An Indigenous Misadventure* (Arts Club/Touchstone), *The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito* (Kaleidoscope Theatre), *Ghost the Musical* (Chemainus Theatre), *Goodnight Desdemona, Good Morning Juliet* (Blue Bridge), *Th'owxiya* (Axis Theatre), *The Great Bloom* (Story Theatre). As always, shoutout to her cat Lily. Life: @danica_charlie_ Beadwork: @deadlydeerdesigns



WINONA MYLES
UNDERSTUDY

Winona is a multi-disciplinary artist from the Simpcw First Nation. She discovered her love for the performing arts as a little girl watching Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz*. She grew up performing with various production companies, and is currently completing her musical theatre education at the Canadian College of Performing Arts. Recent credits include *In Her Hands* (Essential Opera), *The Incredible Adventures of Mary Jane Mosquito* (Project X Theatre), and the Canadian premiere of *Angel's Bone* (re:Naissance Opera, Sound the Alarm/Loose Tea Theatre). Winona has had the pleasure of working on the development of *On Native Land* with Urban Ink and is so grateful to be a part of this tour and continue to work with Urban Ink.



VINNIE ALBERTO
UNDERSTUDY

Vinnie Alberto is a multidisciplinary award winning Indigenous artist from Treaty One Territory (Winnipeg). After graduating with an Honours and Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance, Vinnie has had the privilege to perform, write and produce primarily central and east coast in some of Canada's most prolific companies. He is very excited to make his west coast debut and what a better way than on tour with Urban Ink. Vinnie seeks to make brave spaces; to evoke deep thoughts, create lasting stories, and to discover what a family of open-hearted individuals can create through unconditional love and humility. Recent Credits include: Gilbert Blythe in *Anne of Green Gables*, *Jersey Boys* (Charlottetown Festival); *Mother Daughter*, *Prince Caspian*, *Playboy of the Western World*, *Antigonick* (Shaw Festival); *Into the Woods* (RMTC); *Wizard of Oz*, *Rock of Ages* (Rainbow Stage) *Sound Of Music* (The Grand); *Rez Gas* (Capitol Theatre); *Destination Wedding*, *2023 UnCovered Series*, *Get a Life—Banks Prize Cabaret* (Musical Stage Company); Sky in *Mamma Mia!* (Drayton Entertainment). 2023 Emerging

Canadian Musical Theatre Artist Award *Banks Prize* Winner (Musical Stage Company). Kayla Gordon Musical Theatre Award Winner (Winnipeg Studio Theatre). National Mentorship Program—Kimberley Rampersad (RMTC). Vinnie would like to thank 10 Talent, Urban Ink, his family, friends and importantly YOU for attending the arts. Follow the adventure @vinniealberto

BIOGRAPHIES: CREATIVE TEAM**COREY PAYETTE****DIRECTOR, WRITER & COMPOSER**

Corey Payette is an interdisciplinary storyteller, writer, composer, singer, hand drummer, and director in music, theatre, and film. He is a member of the Mattagami First Nations, with French Canadian and Irish ancestry. Known for his deeply moving, large-scale original musical creations, Payette's work challenges the public's notion of what musicals can be, inserting Indigenous perspectives and narratives into mainstream spaces, igniting conversations that inspire social change. Payette's work explores themes of colonization, Indigenous language revitalization, cultural healing, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and the complexity of historic and contemporary Indigenous experiences across music, theatre, and film. His musicals *Children of God*, *Les Filles du Roi*, *Sedna*, and *Starwalker* have won multiple awards and have toured extensively across Canada and those musical albums are available to stream and purchase online. He's also performed his music in concerts around the world and made his Carnegie Hall debut in New York City in 2023. He has won numerous awards for his writing, direction, and music compositions and received the inaugural BC Reconciliation Award, created to honour those who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, integrity, respect, and commitment to furthering reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in the province of British Columbia. coreypayette.com.

**MARSHALL MCMAHEN****PRODUCTION DESIGNER**

Marshall is very proud to be returning to this special production. Previous design work with Urban Ink includes *Les Filles du Roi* and *Sedna*. Other favourite productions include the *East Van Panto: Little Red Riding Hood* (Theatre Replacement), *All the Way Home* (Electric Company), *Avenue Q* (Arts Club), *Chelsea Hotel* (Firehall), seven productions with Caravan Farm Theatre, and many more with Bard on the Beach, Arts Club, Gateway, Pacific Opera Victoria, and others. Marshall also works as an art director for tv and film, most recently on *Avatar: the Last Airbender*, *Invasion*, *The Mysterious Benedict Society*, *Tales From the Loop*, and *The Twilight Zone*. Marshall has been nominated for an Emmy, and is the recipient of the Vancouver Mayor's Arts Award, Ottawa Critics' Circle Award,

BIOGRAPHIES: CREATIVE TEAM

Jessie Awards, and Ovation Awards. He is a graduate of UBC, and a member of Associated Designers of Canada.



RACHEL KIYO IWAASA

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

“Keyboard virtuoso and avant-garde muse” (*Georgia Straight*), RACHEL KIYO IWAASA is among Canada’s foremost contemporary music pianists. Rachel’s reputation for fearless performative risk has inspired many of Canada’s most notable composers to write for her, including Hildegard Westerkamp, Rodney Sharman, Jocelyn Morlock, Cris

Derksen, Nicole Lizée, Farshid Samandari, Emily Doolittle, Jeffrey Ryan, Leslie Uyeda, and Jordan Nobles. Her album *Known & Unknown* was praised as “exceptional, gripping and timeless.” (Tom Haugen, *Take Effect*), and listed in the Top 10 Modern Composition Albums of 2024 by *The Wire Magazine* (UK). While grounded in the European classical tradition, Rachel’s art practice explodes expectations of what is possible at the piano, flowering most powerfully in liminal collisions between artistic genres. Her interdisciplinary adventures include work with artist SD Holman, film director Nettie Wild, playwright David Bloom, choreographers Jennifer Mascall, Idan Cohen and Tara Cheyenne Friedenberg, and multi-media provocateur Paul Wong. Rachel’s work as a recording artist is available from Redshift Records and earsay music. With SD Holman, Rachel co-founded the Queer Arts Festival in Vancouver, acknowledged as one the top three festivals of its kind in the world. Rachel lives and works on the sovereign unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, also known as Vancouver, BC. Rachel was Music Director for Urban Ink’s production of *Les Filles du Roi*, and is thrilled to return to work with the company again on *Children of God*.



JEFF HARRISON

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Jeff is a four-time Jessie Award winning lighting designer for his work on Carousel Theatre’s *Pharaoh Serket & the Lost Stone of Fire*, Patrick Street Theatre’s *Floyd Collins*, Pi Theatre’s *Blasted* and Arts Club’s *Hand to God*. He is a graduate of SFU’s School for the Contemporary Arts, attended the Banff Centre for the Performing Arts and

is a member of the Associated Designers of Canada. Other lighting credits include: Urban Ink’s *Les Filles du Roi*, NAC Indigenous Theatre’s *Women of the Fur Trade*, Savage Society’s *Little Red Warrior and his Lawyer* and Dancers of Damelahamid’s *Raven Mother*.



HELEN ORO
JEWELRY DESIGN

Helen Oro is owner operator of fashion label Helen Oro Designs Inc. Helen is plains Cree from Pelican Lake First Nation. She takes her traditional First Nation beadwork and adorns modern day accessories such as heels, sunglasses, clutch purses etc. Not only does Helen create one of a kind creations, but creates opportunities for Indigenous people aspiring to pursue careers in the fashion/model world. Internationally recognized for her designs and work, Helen aims to create a positive image for Indigenous women everywhere.



ELLIOT VAUGHAN
ORCHESTRATOR

Elliot Vaughan is a composer, performer, and artist based in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. His output includes exploratory concert music, composed theatre, pop songs, performance art, and contributions to collaborative projects. He was the 2024 Te Kōkī—New Zealand School of Music Composer-in-Residence. He has toured extensively as a viola player. For fifteen years he lived in Vancouver, where he completed a BFA at SFU School for the Contemporary Arts and made his living freelancing. His career there extended from arrangements for theatre and pop records to music for dance and contemporary classical composition. Returning to Aotearoa in 2018 to earn his MMus at Te Kōkī, Elliot has established himself as a key voice in exploratory composition and performance here. His blurring of performance art and music has been recognised with awards and commissions, including for his shows *First Buzzard at the Body* (2021) and *Fish in Pink Gelatine* (2019). Elliot is violist with the Moth Quartet, and has a pop band Eigenface. elliottvaughan.com



BRADLEY DANYLUK
SOUND DESIGNER

Brad is a Vancouver-based sound designer who specializes in musical theatre. His past work includes many productions with Theatre Replacement, Arts Club, TUTS, Gateway Theatre, Patrick Street Productions, Theatre Calgary, and others. He also works as a sound system consultant, a music recordist and mixer, and as an operator for live music and theatre shows. Post-pandemic he has shifted to primarily working as a recording and broadcast sound engineer for acoustic music, helping all kinds of productions sound their best in recorded or streamed formats.

BIOGRAPHIES: CREATIVE TEAM



ALAIA HAMER

ASSOCIATE PRODUCTION DESIGNER

Alaia is a Vancouver theatre designer originally from the Gulf Islands. Recent projects she has worked on include costume design for *Measure for Measure* (Bard on the Beach), *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *Sexy Laundry*, *The Cull*, *Beneath Springhill*, *The Birds and the Bees* (Artsclub) *The East Van Panto: Robin Hood, Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid* (Theatre Replacement), *HMS Pinafore*, *Carmen Up Close and Personal* (Vancouver Opera), costume design for *Beautiful Man* (Pi Theatre), set design for *Midsummer Night's Dream* (TWU), *The Hobbit*, *Middletown*, *Case for Existence of God*, *God Said This* (Pacific Theatre), *Seventeen* (Western Gold). She has worked on a variety of smaller shows through Vancouver and has a passion for costuming dance. Alaia is a graduate of the UBC Theatre Design program in 2017 and holds an English literature degree from 2012.



BRYAN KENNEY

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER

Bryan Kenney is a lighting designer with a passion for transforming spaces through light. He crafts immersive and impactful lighting experiences for a variety of projects, ranging from theatrical productions and architectural installations to corporate events and concerts. He is thrilled to be working with the team to put on this very important

production again.



MELANIE THOMPSON

STAGE MANAGER

Melanie Thompson (she/her) is a stage manager and arts administrator based in Vancouver, BC. Selected theatre credits include *Polygraph / Le Polygraphe* (Théâtre la Seizième / Pi Theatre), *On Native Land* (workshop), Transform Festival 2024, *Homecoming* and *Starwalker* (Urban Ink), *Carmen* (Pacific Opera Victoria—ASM), *S'effondrent les vidéoclubs* and *Nos repaires* (Théâtre la Seizième), *Berlin: The Last Cabaret* (City Opera Vancouver), *Away With Home* (MISCELLANEOUS Productions), *The Full Light of Day* (Electric Company Theatre—Appr. SM), *La bohème* (Vancouver Opera—Appr. SM), *Les Filles du Roi* (Fugue Theatre/Urban Ink—ASM), *Rock Legends* (Chemainus Theatre Festival—Appr. SM), *Sonic Elder* (The Chop), *The Out Vigil* (FirePot Performance), *The Last Five Years* (LionFish Entertainment), *Underneath the Lintel* (Pacific Theatre), *Shrek: The Musical* (Theatre Under the Stars), and *Arvaarluk: An Inuit Tale* (Pangaea Arts). Outside of the theatre, Melanie is the managing director of the Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra (VICO), and also writes grant applications and other copy of all kinds for clients in the performing arts. She is a long-time member of the Board of Directors of Theatre Under the Stars.

melaniejthompson.com



JENNIFER WILSON
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Jennifer Anne Wilson, an SFU Fine Arts alum specializing in Stage Management, spent three years with Princess Cruises' entertainment team before stage managing Vancouver productions like her favourite, *Bacio Rosso*. She toured Canada with Ballet Jörgen, enriching her stage management expertise while exploring the country. She is eager to

continue creating unforgettable theatrical experiences and contributing to vibrant productions across Canada and beyond.



MIKE KOVAC
FIGHT DIRECTOR

A certified Fight Director and Instructor with Fight Directors Canada, Mike is also active in the film and television scene in Vancouver and across Canada. In between teaching stage combat at places like UBC, Capilano University, and TRU (among others), Mike has a habit of getting beaten up in various forms of stage and screen.



HALLEY FULFORD
HEAD OF WARDROBE

Halley Fulford is a costume artist based in Vancouver. She is very proud to have recently provided the costume design for Urban Ink's workshop of *On Native Land*. Halley has also designed for myriad smaller companies (including Impulse Theatre and Theatre Skam), served as Assistant Designer on *Measure for Measure* at Bard on the Beach, worked as Head

of Wardrobe at The Caravan Farm Theatre on *Blackhorse* and *The Wonderful*, and has served as a stitcher on productions such as *The East Van Panto: Robin Hood*. Halley holds a BFA in Theatre with a minor in English from The University of Victoria.



SHANE LEYDON
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM & OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Shane Leydon is a Michif, Irish and Mennonite artist from Treaty 5 territory in Flin Flon, Manitoba. He is currently a grateful, humble guest on the unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəy̓ əm, Sḱw̓xwú7mesh, and səliiwətaʔt Nations where he works as an actor, writer, director and mental health worker. Shane's selected film and TV credits include:

INVASION, *ALASKA DAILY*, and *HELLO DESTROYER*. He also played Métis hero Gabriel Dumont in Jay Cardinal Villeneuve's *GODS & DEVILS*. He directed Teresa Rebeck's *SEMINAR* to critical acclaim and was a pick for "The Best of the Year" for theatre in Vancouver in 2019 and recently directed a performance in the 2024 Or Festival. Shane is a graduate of The Writer's Studio at Simon Fraser University. He was also a member of VIFF's Catalyst cohort in 2022. Shane is a proud citizen of the Métis Nation of BC.

BIOGRAPHIES: CREATIVE TEAM



NYLA BEDARD

POWWOW COACH & WORKSHOP LEADER

Nyla Bedard (Tahltan, Kaska, French, Scottish) is a multifaceted performing artist currently residing in North Vancouver. She's an actor, writer, powwow dancer and workshop facilitator. Nyla started to dance at powwows when she was a tiny tot and now has over 35 years of experience. She shares her experience by teaching the various powwow styles with focus on the fancy shawl, sharing the dance steps and the history. In 2011, in partnership with Raven Spirit Dance Company, she started the popular Powwow Bootcamp series.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Original production was an Urban Ink Production in collaboration with National Arts Centre-English Theatre, in association with Raven Theatre/The Cultch. Children of God received the development support of: Urban Ink, Raven Theatre, Western Canada Theatre, T'kemlups le Secwepemc, collaboration through the National Arts Centre English Theatre, Full Circle First Nations Performance and the Talking Stick Festival, The Vancouver Playhouse, Firehall Arts Centre, Arts Club Theatre, Sunset Theatre and Playwrights Theatre Centre.

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ABOUT URBAN INK

For 24 years, Urban Ink's circle of artists have broken barriers through stimulating story, performance, and media. We support Indigenous and diverse artists from the seed of an idea through to full productions that are showcased to audiences around the world through mainstream productions, national tours, feature films, digital works, and festivals. We support artists over the long term, and provide a home for Indigenous and culturally diverse storytellers to develop their voices over years of development. Our programming highlights stories that create unity and inspire social change, share cultural knowledge, and encourage collective healing.

Our work is about opening hearts and minds to new perspectives and experiences no matter how big or small the stage. From a rural reserve to the mainstage at the National Arts Centre, we develop experiences surrounding our artistic work that encourage relationship building through feasting, cultural knowledge exchange with Elders, workshops, facilitated conversations, and installations all aiming to bring communities together to create a more open and empathetic society. Visit urbanink.ca

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RESOURCES

What is the Residential School System?

The residential school system in Canada was designed to assimilate Indigenous children by removing them from their home communities and forcibly turning them into Euro-Christian citizens of Canadian society. The notion “to kill the Indian in the child” was created by Duncan Campbell Scott, Minister of Indian Affairs from 1913 to 1932. Set up by the federal government, and primarily run by the church, the residential schools sprawled across the nation throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

FACTS

- Over 150,000 First Nations, Metis, Inuit enrolled 1857–1996
- 80,000 survivors are still alive today
- 130 schools in total across Canada
- 80 running schools in 1931 (peak of residential schools)
- Schools started closing in the mid-1970s
- Last school closed in 1996 (Akaitcho Hall, Yellowknife)
- An estimated 50,000 children died while attending the residential schools which had a student death rate of between 30% to 60%; with 6% to 12% of the children in them dying per year
- At Peigan Reserve, Alberta the death rate was 47%
- At File Hills, Saskatchewan the death rate was 75%
- Over 50% of kids suffered from tuberculosis with a death rate of 69%
- Roman Catholic (60%), Anglican (15%), United (15%), Methodist (5%), and Presbyterian (5%) churches ran the schools
- 40% of the teachers had no training
- Kids started going to residential schools as early as 2 years old
- It was mandatory for kids to be enrolled at age 7–15
- 3 out of 100 kids advanced past grade 6
- Over a 42-day period students spent on average 9 days in the class
- With all the work children had to do and no class time, many students were 18 and had only got their grade 5
- Most kids had little to no contact with their parents
- Opposite genders were separated and unable to communicate
- Siblings were separated and unable to talk to each other as well
- Abuse (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, and sexual), punishment for speaking their language, hunger/thirst, forced labour, little to no medical treatment, suicide, and disease were everyday realities in schools
- Common injuries included tuberculosis, chronic ear infections, infected bug bites, ruptured appendix, poliomyelitis, and boils

Reference: allaboutresidentialschools.weebly.com/why-were-residential-schools-started.html

Next Steps Towards Reconciliation

Together, Canadians must do more than just talk about reconciliation; we must learn how to practise reconciliation in our everyday lives—within ourselves and our families, and in our communities, governments, places of worship, schools, and workplaces. To do so constructively, Canadians must remain committed to the ongoing work of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships.

For many Survivors and their families, this commitment is foremost about healing themselves, their communities, and their nations in ways that revitalize individuals as well as Indigenous cultures, languages, spirituality, laws, and governance systems.

For governments, building a respectful relationship involves dismantling a centuries-old political and bureaucratic culture in which, all too often, policies and programs

are still based on failed notions of assimilation.

For churches, demonstrating long-term commitment requires atoning for actions within the residential schools, respecting Indigenous spirituality, and supporting Indigenous peoples' struggles for justice and equity.

Schools must teach history in ways that foster mutual respect, empathy, and engagement. All Canadian children and youth deserve to know Canada's honest history, including what happened in the residential schools, and to appreciate the rich history and knowledge of Indigenous nations, which continue to make such a strong contribution to Canada, including our very name and collective identity as a country.

For Canadians from all walks of life, reconciliation offers a new way of living together.

Wondering How to Get Involved in Reconciliation? Start by Asking Yourself these 5 Questions

CBC Interview of Ry Moran, Director of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (*originally aired Sunday, October 22, 2017 on Unreserved with Rosanna Deerchild. Full episode: <http://bit.ly/TRC5Questions>*)

In 2015, the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was created to preserve the memory of Canada's residential school system and legacy. Located in Winnipeg, it is home to the permanent collection of statements, documents and other materials gathered on residential schools. The Centre also continues the work of making sure that reconciliation happens in Canada, and ensuring that as many Canadians as possible take part in the reconciliation movement.

"One of the most fundamental responsibilities that individuals have is to take that inner journey, that self-reflective journey, and really ask themselves, 'What really am I carrying around? What prejudices? What biases? Perhaps what racism am I carrying around?'" said Moran.

By starting out with these questions, Moran says it will expose people to how little they know about Indigenous people.

RESOURCES

A few other questions Moran thinks Canadians should ask themselves are:

- Do I know any Indigenous people? If not, why?
- Have I ever participated in ceremony? If not, why?
- Am I able to name the traditional territory I stand on? If not, why?
- Have I meaningfully engaged in deep conversation with Indigenous people? If not, why?
- Have I read an Indigenous author? If not, why?

“These are all really important questions people need to be asking themselves and then actively trying to work to address,” said Moran.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

For more information, please visit:

Truth and Reconciliation Committee Full Report and Calls to Action
<http://bit.ly/TRCFindings>

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
http://bit.ly/UNDRIP_english

If you are feeling overwhelmed, distressed or in need of emotional support, here is a list of resources that can help you:

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre

Wellness@vafcs.org
604-251-4844

Lamathut Crisis Line

(24-hour, BC & beyond)
1-800-721-0066

KUU-US

(Culturally safe crisis line across BC)

Toll-free: 1-800-588-8717
Youth Line: 250-723-2040
Adult Line: 250-723-4050

Indian Residential Schools

Resolution Health Support Program
1-866-509-1769

National Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line

1-866-925-4419

As Vancouver's most diverse and innovative arts and cultural hub, The Cultch has created meaningful, impactful connections across communities for over 50 years.

As a presenting theatre, we curate unique, intimate, and diverse performances from Vancouver, Canada, and across the globe—offering dynamic contemporary programming in theatre, dance, music, circus, and visual arts.

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 ASL Interpretation performances and free tickets to those for whom cost is prohibitive.

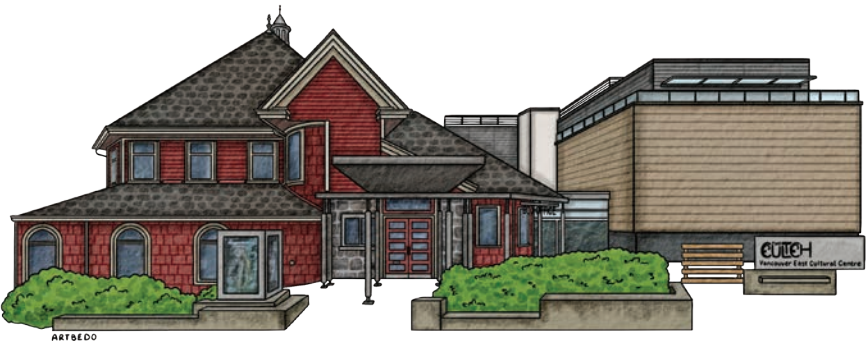
We are connectors, facilitators, culture changers, and we are committed to providing the highest level of service and care we can offer.

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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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



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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