



Company Bio

Animacy Theatre Collective (ATC) is focussed on the creation of original, experimental and interdisciplinary theatre works. We tell stories that: are driven by women, use humor and physical storytelling to raise social awareness, and create characters who defy pre-existing borders (human, nonhuman, gender, sexuality). Our work focuses on physical theatre (mask [building and performance], clown, dance and improvisation), playwriting and multimedia to create research-based and devised plays. By collaborating with communities, artists, and grassroots activism we work to converge the artistic, social and environmental spheres, and to challenge interlocking structures of oppression in order to work towards social and environmental justice. ATC is interested in theatre that offers immersive spaces and views all things within them (humans, more-than-humans, places, objects, technologies and all their histories) as theatrical ecologies. ATC was formed through a shared belief in the necessity – especially in the current political climate – of bringing research into conversation with communities through stories that are funny, physical and imaginative.

Alexandra and Morgan met through the creation of *Terra Incognita* by the Terra Incognita Collective (June 2016, Greenpeace Warehouse), a site-specific mask performance documentary about growth culture and the degrowth alternative in partnership with *Greenpeace Toronto*, *Toronto 350.org* and *Research and Degrowth* (degrowth.org). After *Terra Incognita*, Morgan and Alexandra formed Animacy Theatre Collective (animacytheatrecollective.com) and developed two new research-based works: *Nexus* (written by Alexandra Simpson, a play about the Line 9 pipeline and the humans and more-than-humans that live among it, shortlisted for the PGC Robert Beardsley Award and received a TAC Playwright's Grant for future development); and *Imperceptible* (a multi-media performance work about the LNG project on Lelu Island, created and performed by Morgan Johnson and directed by Alexandra Simpson, published - with an accompanying essay - on York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies *Outstanding Paper Series*). Both pieces involved projection, mask/clown work and were based off of individual research projects. They were presented as part of Animacy Theatre Collective's *Works in Development Double Bill* in May 2017 at the Helen Gardiner Playhouse. Animacy Theatre Collective continues to be active in both the artistic and activist communities of Toronto. Alexandra and Morgan are both PhD students at York University, researching in the fields of Environmental and Performance Studies.

ARTIST BIOS

Co-creator/Performer - Alexandra Simpson is an interdisciplinary artist and actor with a background in dance, music, mask (building, performance and facilitating), directing and playwriting. She has a BFA in Performance Acting (2009-13) and a MFA in Documentary Media (2014-16) from Ryerson University. Alexandra has experience in various creation projects including Swallow-A-Bicycle's *Gargantuan Project*, a collectively created mask work about the Alberta tar sands; *Terra Incognita* by the Terra Incognita Collective, a research based performance documentary about growth culture and the degrowth alternative, and most recently as a performer and collaborator in Theatre by the Bay's *The Five Points*, a documentary play written by Alex Dault and created by the collective, about Barrie Ontario's downtown core. Alexandra's work as a playwright includes: *Hiatus* (Ryerson New Voices, 2013); *Surviving Speares* (Toronto Fringe, 2013); *Pit Sublime* (Alumnae Theatre, 2014) and *Nexus* (Animacy Theatre Works in Progress Double Bill, 2017). Her play *Nexus*, about the Line 9 pipeline and the humans and more than humans who live, work and crawl among it, was shortlisted for the Playwright's Guild of Canada's 2017 Robert Beardsley Award and recently received support from the Toronto Arts Council for future development. Alexandra is a mask builder and facilitator. She has built

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masks for Lisa Hamalainen's immersive theatrical nature walk, *There is No Word for Wilderness* (2017), on Manitoulin Island and has run community mask workshops for Scarborough Arts, the 4e Elements Festival, and various schools in the GTA. Alexandra is on the board for Common Boots Theatre (formerly Theatre Columbus) and a member of their Devised Theatre Lab. She has experience in video creation and editing for projection, and also created *Serious Comedy: an interactive documentary* for Common Boots Theatre about the company's history and creation processes. She is interested in collaborative performance forms, site-specific theatre and representations of interspecies relations.

Co-creator/Performer - Morgan Johnson is an interdisciplinary artist and theatre creator who aims to use performance for social change. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Acting from the University of Windsor during which time she also studied at the Moscow Art Theatre School and with the SITI company. She also has a Masters in Environmental Studies from York University, where she developed the autoethnographic, multimedia solo performance piece *Imperceptible*, which focused on Indigenous/Settler relations in Canada around issues of environmental and social injustice and is currently working towards her doctorate in the same program. She has performed at many festivals and conferences (recently: performer/creator for *Sea Lungs*, a short multimedia physical theatre piece on human/ocean relations in the GTA, performed at York University's EcoArt Media Festival, and *Un(en)titled*, a mask performance piece using storytelling and dance that discussed Indigenous/Settler relations in Ontario's Kawarthas, or 'Cottage Country', performed at the Performing Cartography Symposium). Morgan was a creator/performer for *Terra Incognita* by the Terra Incognita Collective, an immersive performance piece about consumer culture using mask theatre. She has created, produced and performed a one-woman show, *High Tide: On the Life and Writings of Rachel Carson* (Ottawa Fringe Festival 2014) and performed as the title character in the aerial trapeze show *Susannah Bird* (Winnipeg and Edmonton Fringe Festivals 2015). She is currently co-artistic leader of Animacy Theatre Collective, where she is working on a multimedia physical theatre show on salmon-human relations in the GTA.

Director - Martha Ross trained at L'Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris over 30 years ago. Upon her return to Canada she joined creative forces with another Lecoq graduate, Leah Cherniak, at which point they created the Toronto-based theatre company, Theatre Columbus. Their distinctive theatre style, which was physical, funny, serious, imaginative, sometimes anarchic, but always identifiable to the human story, quickly earned them a national reputation. Their passion for creation helped to foster the interest and growth in Canada for devised theatre. Martha and Leah received the 2009 George Luscombe award for Mentorship. For her company Martha created numerous award-winning plays collectively and collaboratively: *The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine* (Dora Award); *Paranoia* (Dora award); *Fertility* (Dora Award); *The Betrayal* (Chalmers Award for Best New Play); *The Attic*, *The Pearls and Three Fine Girls* (Dora Award); *Hotel Loopy*; to name just a few. As a solo writer for Theatre Columbus Martha wrote *Porch People*; *Dr. Dapertutto* (Chalmers nomination); *Ratbag*; (with John Millard); *And Up They Flew and The Story*. (Directed by Jennifer Brewin at the BrickWorks.) For other companies Martha wrote *The Crack* (Rumble Theatre in Vancouver); *The Dog and the Angel*; (Caravan Theatre, Theatre Columbus) *The Bog*, (for HomeTown, Blyth Festival Theatre 2011). In Ottawa, she directed *Skin*, a collective creation by Deluxe Hot Sauce (nominated for a Rideau Award for Outstanding New Creation) for the 2013 undercurrents festival at Great Canadian Theatre Company. Martha directed Kristina Watt (100 Watt Theatre, Ottawa) in the creation of a play inspired by Virginia Woolf's novel, *The Waves*, that will be part of the Undercurrents festival in 2016. Martha teaches the Lecoq method of creation at universities across Canada, most recently at University of Waterloo, University of Toronto and



McMaster School of the Arts. In private studios across the country she also offers her workshop for theatre writers, "What's the Big Idea?"

Choreographer - Alyssa Martin is a Toronto-based choreographer, performance maker and artistic director. Alyssa has created Rock Bottom Movement in 2012 as an experiment in dance making and has since created over 20 new works. Alongside a team of delightfully eccentric collaborators in both the dance and theatre worlds, she has presented her work in Toronto and abroad at festivals including Next Stage, SummerWorks, Women in Dance and at the Center for Performance Research. In all that she creates, she strives to blur disciplinary boundaries and explore popular culture & the human psyche from a satirical standpoint. In addition to her work at Rock Bottom, Alyssa has created as a guest choreographer with Tarragon Theatre, Ryerson School of Performance, Canadian Contemporary Dance Theatre and Conteur Dance Academy as well as with other educational institutions and independent theatre companies. She has experimented in residencies under the mentorship of Heidi Strauss, Ame Henderson and Christopher House

Composer - Anders Azzopardi is a Toronto-based trombonist, composer and educator. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance from the University of Toronto. Anders is an active member of Toronto's music scene performing his own compositions and collaborating with others for large events. Anders theatre credits include Common Boots Theatre's *Weather the Weather* and composed music for *Terra Incognita* by the Terra Incognita Collective. He is also the artist in residence at both Mayfield Secondary School for the Arts and the Country Day School.

Composer - Stefan Hegerat is a drummer, composer and educator based out of Toronto, Ontario. Originally from Calgary, Alberta, Stefan relocated to Toronto in 2008 to complete his Bachelor of Music in Jazz Performance at the University of Toronto while studying under legendary Canadian jazz drummers Terry Clarke and Nick Fraser. In addition to leading his own band Icterus, which performs his original compositions, Stefan is a member of JJ and the Pillars, Blue Sky Miners, Laura Tremblay Bearah Fawcett, Ferra Fauna, Moneyhouse and The Naive. He also works as a sideman for a variety of other bands and artists. As a composer Stefan's work is featured on commercial recordings by JJ and the Pillars, Blue Sky Miners and Laura Tremblay. His music has also been featured on the Canadian television show "Bitten", on George Stroumboulopoulos' "The Strombo Show", and received radio play on CBC radio, the Edge and Indie 88. Stefan has had the privilege of performing at the Ottawa Jazz Festival, Toronto Jazz Festival, Elora Music fest, Edge Fest, The Casby Awards and at various venues across the country during multiple Canadian tours.

Stage Manager - Noa Katz is a Toronto-based Stage Manager. Before completing a Diploma in Theatre Production at Humber College, Noa received a BA in Environmental Studies and Sexual Diversity Studies from the University of Toronto. Past Stage Management credits include *Day of the Locust* (Humber Theatre), *Yeats in Love* (New Ideas Festival), *The Possessed* (SMC Troubadours). Assistant Stage Management credits include *High Point Fields* (Humber Theatre), *To Ithaca* (Humber Theatre), *Hamlet* (Hart House Theatre). Noa is so excited to be working on a project that combines his two passions - environmental education and theatre!