

COMPANY BIO
THEATRE@EASTMINSTER

Founded in 2015, Theatre@Eastminster grew out of a fundraising initiative in support of Eastminster United Church's major, ongoing accessibility initiative. Proceeds from our productions continue to support community organizations on the Danforth and around Toronto.

We have made the theme of accessibility a key focus, too, for our productions. Our goal is to introduce new, challenging plays to Toronto's East End community, while developing approaches to audience experience that emphasize accessibility and inclusivity.

The guiding area of inquiry for Theatre@Eastminster has been how we as a society can turn towards or away from pressing issues. Past performances explored ideas around divinity and morality through *Agnes of God* (2016), issues around homelessness and community through *The Lady in the Van* (2017), and ways in which we love and harm ourselves and others through *Gruesome Playground Injuries* (2018). Through talkback discussions facilitated by community partners, T@E has continued to work towards minimizing stigma against mental health challenges & disabilities.

We hope our audiences see the cultural, social, and economic challenges they may face reflected back to them in our performances. Through this, we strive to build collective understanding, empathy, and connection. Theatre is not simply an art form, but can be a proactive search for solutions in our society.

We truly believe that theatre is for everybody. Our productions explore themes of community, mental health, spiritual well-being, faith, hope, and love, while affirming the full spectrum of human experience.

Creative Team:

Jennifer Thomson, Creative Director Jennifer holds a diploma in Performing Arts from Douglas College and a BFA in Theatre from Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts. Her training includes work in directing, dramaturgy, playmaking, make-up design, stagecraft, and acting. Career highlights include roles with Cutting Edge Theatre in Edinburgh and with Teatr Korzeni in Canada, the USA and Poland—including, in the latter instance, working with prominent Grotowski collaborator Jozef Szanjan on a production of his *Replika*. Jennifer's directing experience includes productions of WB Yeats's *The Cat and the Moon*, Gavin Bryar's

Sinking of the Titanic, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Erik Ehn's *Polio Comes from the Moon*, John Pielmeier's *Agnes of God*, Alan Bennett's *The Lady in the Van*, and Rajiv Joseph's *Gruesome Playground Injuries*.

Christine Berg, Voice and Text Coach Many of her clients and students have appeared in shows such as *Orphan Black*, *Grey's Anatomy*, *Kevin at Work*, *The Book of Mormon* (Mirvish), *Kinky Boots* (Mirvish), *Infinity* (Tarragon), *Spoon River* (Soulpepper) and the *Stratford* and *Shaw Festivals*. She was on the faculty for Humber College Theatre Performance Program for six years, where she taught on all three years of the program and coached on department productions. Christine holds a BFA in Acting (UBC), an MA in Voice and Speech (CSSD, University of London), and Linklater Voice Designation.

Adele Thomson, Stage Manager Adele has grown up in theatre. It runs through her veins and gives her life. She has performed in Canada, Scotland, and Germany and in 2014 debuted in the Canadian premiere of *Emotional Creature* (Eve Ensler.) Since high school Adele has thrown herself into mental health advocacy. She has struggled with PTSD and BPD, and is proud to say she is in complete recovery. She has worked with Theatre@Eastminster from its conception. Since becoming a mother Adele's people-wrangling skills have gone up, and this is her first stage managing gig! Making her Fringe debut, she is excited to be working on such a significant piece to her community.

Shawn McDonald, Production Manager Shawn came to production management in the usual way—with a Bachelor of Science and twelve years of experience in environmental science and marketing. She is passionate about community theatre and the opportunities it creates to build new voices and tell new stories. She has previously worked both volunteer and professionally, with Theatre Etobicoke, The St. Lawrence Shakespeare Company, and Theatre Antigonish.

Performers:

Kris Langille, Kathleen While working as a nurse and raising a family, Kris brought music back into her life by joining a musical theatre company. 22 years later, kids grown and no longer nursing, she counts several roles as favourites: Bonnie in *Anything Goes*; Widow Corney in *Oliver!* Golde in *Fiddler on the Roof*; and Stepmother in *Into the Woods*. Kris studied vocal technique under Brenda Berge. She currently

sings with the rock choir, Alt Vox. Theatre work apart from musical theatre include A Better Place (Factory Theatre); All Things Need Saying (Toronto Fringe, 2017); The Big Checkout and The Marionette Makers (InspiraTO, 2018). Kris also works in film and television, studying with Marvin Hinz and Rae Ellen Bodie at Pro Actors Lab and with Kim Hurdon for voice-over coaching. Other passions that fill Kris's life are her family, her dogs, good friends, cycling and gardening.

Stephen Flett, Benoit Steve received his theatre training at Queen's University in Kingston (BA - Drama), and at the British American Acting Academy in London, England. He has performed across Ontario with many companies including Shaw Festival, 1000 Islands Playhouse, Showboat Festival, Theatre Brockville, Theatre 5, and Perth Summer Theatre -acting in comedy, drama, Shakespeare, musicals, operetta, commedia dell'arte, and farce -working on scripts both new and old. This marks Stephen's 23rd Toronto Fringe show: frequent Fringe forays include Pseudolus, Shakespeare's Rugby Wars, Hockey the Musical, God of Carnage, and last year's Tears of a Bullet. He has received a number of ACT-CO awards and nominations for his work with Toronto Irish Players and Amicus, including A Chorus of Disapproval, Moonshine, Big Maggie, Someone Who'll Watch Over Me, Shining City, A Flea in Her Ear, Affections of May, and Quiet Courage. Recent roles include Paravicini in The Mousetrap (Scarborough Guild), and Kris Kringle in Miracle on 34th Street (Stage Centre).

Jonas Trottier, Jean Jonas is an emerging theatre-maker living and working in Toronto. He is very happy to be making his debut with Theatre Eastminster on this powerful and timely piece by Colleen Murphy. He is also pleased to be returning to the Fringe this summer after making his Toronto Fringe debut last year performing in All of Me presented by Theatre Insomnia. Look for him at the Fringe Patio or in line outside one of the many Fringe venues as he desperately tries to see and do as much as possible during this magical time of year. Upcoming: The Bartender (Malcontent Theatre). Past Credits (selected): Dry Land (Cue6), All of Me (Theatre Insomnia), The Provok'd Wife, Fear and Misery of the Third Reich, Candide, Machinal (George Brown Theatre School), RED (In Your Eyes Productions).