

## SZEPTY/WHISPERS: DIALOGUE – CREATIVE TEAM



### **Veronique West - Concept Creator/Producer**

Veronique West (she/they) is a non-binary settler of Polish descent, based on the occupied and unsundered lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Their work, informed by their lived experience of madness, spans artistic creation and facilitation, as well as mental health peer support and advocacy. Their personal and collaborative projects have taken various forms, including performance, sound art, community conversation, virtual reality, and web-based storytelling. They have facilitated programs on writing, devising, multimedia performance creation, and Mad Arts. Veronique has also been an eating disorder peer support mentor, a crisis responder, and will be a mental health workshop facilitator at post-secondary campuses next spring. In their life and work, they seek to complicate and shift mental health paradigms, making space for multiple, expansive understandings of our bodyminds.



### **mia susan amir - Audio Contributor**

mia susan amir (she/they) is a queer, Crip+Mad Jew of mixed Ashkenazi and Sephardic ascent. She lives as an uninvited settler on the unceded and occupied territories of the xʷməθkwəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and sə́lilwətaʔt/Selilwitulh Nations, Vancouver, BC. mia works at the intersection of creative and community practice as an educator, cultural organizer, curator, and theatre artist whose practice includes writing, sound design, dramaturgy, direction, and performance. mia is interested in the ways that live performance offers a prefigurative space to investigate the conditions shaping our world, challenge and expand perception, unearth relationship, and engage in democratic narrative production, starting from the site of physical sensation. She has taught and presented her research, solo and collaborative performance works nationally and internationally. She is amadh solas' mama.



#### **Kagan Goh - Audio Contributor**

Originally from Singapore, Kagan Goh is a Vancouver-based multidisciplinary artist: published author, spoken word poet, playwright, actor, mental health advocate and activist. Kagan has been published in numerous anthologies, periodicals, and magazines. Select Books in Singapore published his first book, *Who Let in the Sky?* Goh is also an award-winning documentary filmmaker with a number of releases, including the award-winning *Mind Fuck* (1996) and *Stolen Memories* (2012). His films have been broadcast on national television and gained entry into respected film festivals across Canada. Kagan was diagnosed with manic depression on Valentine's Day in 1993, at the age of 23, and has struggled and lived with it for close to 28 years. Kagan is committed to putting his creative talents - writing, spoken word, acting, filmmaking and storytelling, to good use by educating people about mental health issues and fighting the stigma against people with mental health challenges. His personal mission is to educate people about mental health issues and fight the stigma against the mentally ill.



#### **Maya Jones - Audio Contributor**

Maya Jones - Actor, Writer, Creative...etc. Professionally worked across fields in Northeast Ohio and nationally in the US. Daughter, Friend, Sibling, Mentor, Mentee, MFA Student. Lover of liberation and empowerment. Encourager of breaking generational curses. Grateful to share this story.

**Constantin Lozitsky - Audio Contributor**

Constantin Lozitsky (they/them) has first appeared in Russia around twenty years ago and has recently re-appeared on the unceded Coast Salish territories colonially known as Vancouver, BC. What they were doing in between that is a mystery to all, including them. They are primarily a poet and a writer, exploring unreality, multiplicity of being, and death at the moment.

**Jivesh Parasram - Audio Contributor**

Jivesh is an award-winning multi-disciplinary artist and facilitator of Indo-Caribbean descent. His work has toured nationally and internationally. Jiv is the founding Artistic Producer of Pandemic Theatre. He became the Artistic Director of Rumble Theatre in Fall 2018, following three years as the Associate Artistic Producer at Theatre Passe Muraille. He was a member of the Cultural Leader Lab with the Banff Centre and Toronto Arts Council. His public service work has included collaborations with the Ad Hoc Assembly, The Canadian Commission for UNESCO, and as an advisor to the National Arts Centre. Jiv has received numerous recognitions for his contributions to the sector including the Toronto Arts Council Emerging Artist Award, Two Harold Awards, and A Herald Angel from the Edinburgh Festival as part of the CanadaHub programming in 2018. His current cultural practice centres decolonization through aesthetics.

**Kendra Place - Audio Contributor**

Kendra Place is a writer, artist, and art worker. She is a settler of Northern European descent living with the sacred and stolen land and waters of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh people. The sound for her reading is composed by Jane Harms.

**Manuel Axel Strain - Audio Contributor**

Manuel Axel Strain is a non-binary 2-Spirit artist with Musqueam/Simpcw/Inkumupulux ancestry, based in stolen, sacred and ancestral homelands and waters of the Katzie/Kwantlen peoples. Although they have attended Emily Carr University of Art + Design they are more appreciative of the knowledge they have gained from their mother, father, siblings, cousins, aunties, uncles, nieces, nephews, grandparents, and ancestors. Creating artwork in dialogue, collaboration, and reference with their kin/relatives, their lived experience becomes a source of agency that resonates through their work with performance, land, water painting, sculpture, photography, video, sound and installation. They have contributed work to Capture Photography Festival, the Richmond Art Gallery, and Surrey Art Gallery. Recent exhibitions — Needed Medicine , My Blood Can't Feel the Land , and Ancestral Ties To The Flood — engage land, water, spirit, and embodiment to offer a space that can exist beyond the colonial matrix.





### **David Mesiha - Sound Designer**

David Mesiha is a Toronto & Vancouver based award-winning music composer, sound/video designer and theatre maker. David's practice centres around examining questions of form in interactive and performance arts. Chosen credits include: co-creator & music composer: Foreign Radical (Theatre Conspiracy); sound designer: The Humans (Arts Club Theatre), Antigone (YPT), Oratorio (IFT), Sound of the Beast (Theatre Passe Muraille) and Terminus (Pi Theatre); mixed media: Miss Vancouver, The Relay, and Forget Me Not (online components); film & TV: +-40, Spirit Glitch, The Mission, and Toward You. David is Artistic Director of Theatre Conspiracy and a core member of The Cultch's Digital Storytelling Team, focusing on creating innovative trans-media experiences. He is also leading the development and creation of Same Difference, an immersive mixed media theatre piece that deconstructs issues of identity, belonging, sameness and difference through the viewpoint of immigrants and refugees.



### **JD Derbyshire - Inclusive Designer**

JD is an inclusive educator, innovator, mad activist, disability and transformative justice speaker, listener and activator. They are also a practicing writer, comedian, performer, playwright and theatre maker. JD's work involves community and artist collaboration, co-design, writing, experimental storytelling, audio, digital interactions, event creation, participatory experiences, theatre performance and stand-up comedy. They became entitled when they earned a Masters in Inclusive Design from OCAD University in 2014. In JD's life/work especially over the last 7 years they have been trying to bring the language and concepts of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility into plain language and actionable items of change. They keep asking seemingly unanswerable questions with others like; What does it mean to be fair? Who belongs and who doesn't? Are we the ones to be asking these questions? Who is at the table? Who isn't? How do we get them to the table? Do we even need a table? Why do some changes work and some don't? Can we make

mistakes? Can we try to learn from them? Can keep asking questions: What is working? What isn't? What do we know? What don't we know? Who do we need to ask? Can we stay committed to staying in the grapple of problems looking for solutions? JD will continue to leverage the imaginations of themselves and community members to collectively envision a speculative future that allows everyone to bring their full humanity to everything they do. In the meantime, they will continue to find practical, entertaining and meaningful ways to bring the imagined into the real.



### **Kathleen Flaherty - Dramaturg**

Kathleen is the Dramaturg Emeritus at Playwrights Theatre Centre. She collaborates with theatre makers to dig into the deep structure and essential story or idea, the soul, of a work, building outward with concrete details and images to manifest a piece of theatre live in space with the capacity to engage an audience. She is a former producer of radio drama and Ideas documentaries for CBC Radio. She has the privilege of being a working-class woman from small prairie towns who has achieved an MFA in Directing and collaborated to make theatre across Canada for forty years – from the 'happenings' and collective creations of the early '70s through American realism to post-modernism and the postdramatic. She has lived on unceded Coast Salish territory for the past twenty years.



### **Ladan Sahraei – ASL Interpretation**

Ladan Sahraei was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. She is the first Deaf filmmaker in Iran, where she has made several short films, as well as two feature documentaries made in Canada. She has received awards and honors for her work. Filmmaking is her passion.



### **Brian Postalian - Production Coordinator**

Brian Postalian (Բրայն Փոսթալյան) is an arts administrator, educator, and creator born and raised in Toronto/Tkaronto by way of Armenia, Ireland, Wales, and the Czech Republic. Brian produces with some of the most innovative theatre creators, companies, and arts administrators in Canada. He was the Artistic Producer of CRAPSHOOT! at Theatre Passe Muraille, and Compass Points Curator at Canada's Magnetic North Theatre Festival. He is the founding Artistic Director of Re:Current Theatre, which produced the sold-out SummerWorks hit *The Smile Off Your Face* and most recently *New Societies*. Brian's performance work has been featured on "Best of the Year" lists, been produced at festivals across Canada, and he has been described by one reviewer as "clearly unafraid to try just about anything." Brian is a graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program at Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts in Theatre Game Design and Interdisciplinary Performance Studies. On his spare time, he likes to visit used book stores, ride his bicycle, play with his dog Amie, and is learning how to draw and play the Armenian duduk.



### Cultch Digital Storytelling Team - Digital Platform Realization

The Cultch Digital Storytelling Team focuses on the development and integration of innovative approaches and tools to extend story-worlds beyond the physical stage and to realize new approaches to engage with a wider audience demographic. It is also focused on making platforms and tools available to artists in the community while functioning as a resource for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Since its inception in 2018, David Mesiha, Milton Lim and Kris Boyd have collaborated with a wide variety of theatre artists to create multi-platform experiences. Notable projects include *The Relay* which engaged 13 artists in the creation of a multi-episode virtual series, work with the artists from the Transform Cabaret festival to create an interactive experience for festival attendees, Ronnie Burkett (*Forget Me Not*), Theatre Replacement and Conor Wylie (*MINE*), Marie Farsi and Jacob Niedzwiecki (*Holiday Corner*), Amiel Gladstone (*Do you want what I have got? A Craigslist Cantata*), and Lili Robinson, Shanae Sodhi, Jiv Parasram, Donna-Michelle St. Bernard and Ariel Slack (*Mx*). In addition to continuing to support artists in the community on multiple projects, the team is currently developing The Hub, a new initiative to bring together audiences and venues from across Canada in a shared digital space that will serve as an easily accessible platform for hosting live streamed/digital performances. The aim is to create an environment that fosters the feeling of community for audiences while allowing presenters to reach wider demographics from across the country.