

EASTERN FRONT THEATRE

PRESENTS



THE VILLAINS THEATRE

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO
THE NIGHT SKY

WRITTEN BY COLLEEN MACISAAC

DIRECTED BY GARRY WILLIAMS



SEPTEMBER 26 - OCTOBER 8

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KNOW THE LAND

Eastern Front Theatre operates in Mik'ma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. As a settler run organization, we are active participants in the story of this land -- past, present and future.

It is our responsibility to seek truth, and to work towards peace and friendship as we share this land.

We encourage our audiences to read the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation commission.

WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE AND THIS WORK IS ONGOING.

Read the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Reports

Search the Mi'kmaw Place Names Digital Atlas

nctr.ca/records/reports

placenames.mapdev.ca



Eastern Front Theatre was founded in 1993 as Dartmouth's first and only professional theatre company, devoted to telling Atlantic Canadian stories. Over the past 30 years, EFT has championed and supported countless Atlantic Canadian theatre artists through commissions, workshops, our annual STAGES Theatre Festivals, and development efforts like our Design Mentorship Program, Playwrights Unit, and our MACRO/micro Creation Series. EFT has produced or presented over 200 original Canadian plays, 32 of which were World Premieres. We are out to prove that #DartmouthIsForTheatreLovers.

FOLLOW EFT @easternfronttheatre @Eastern_Front



PHOTO CREDIT: CORREIA PHOTOS

The Villains Theatre is dedicated to creating transformative theatrical experiences. Run by Artistic Director Dan Bray and Artistic Producer Colleen MacIsaac, we collaborate with artists who inspire us and are dedicated to providing opportunities for emerging and established artists. Scrupulously operating in beautiful Mi'kma'ki since 2009, our work is vibrant, provocative, and full of play. Often funny, sometimes spooky, always honest, we focus on new works and adaptations that address what it is to be a human in our contemporary context."

FOLLOW VILLAINS THEATRE @villainstheatre

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE NIGHT SKY

CAST

ALBERTINE GENEVIÈVE STEELE*
LÉO ROOKS FIELD-GREEN

CREATIVE TEAM

WRITTEN BY COLLEEN MACISAAC
DIRECTED BY GARRY WILLIAMS*
ASSISTANT DIRECTED BY LARA LEWIS
STAGE MANAGED BY DAN BRAY
STAGE MANAGEMENT MENTORING BY OLIVIA RANKIN
COMPOSED BY JENNY TRITES
SCENIC DESIGN BY BRENDA CHICAS-DURAN
COSTUME DESIGN BY NOELLA MURPHY
LIGHTING DESIGN & TECHNICAL DIRECTION BY MATTHEW DOWNEY
FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY BY AUDREY EASTWOOD
PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE BY TRISHA MALIK
CARPENTRY BY MARK BACHYNSKI
CHILD CARE BY HOPE MACPHERSON

FOR EASTERN FRONT THEATRE

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ELSA PIHL GENERAL MANAGER
SARA GRAHAM ACCESSIBILITY COORDINATOR
DANIEL WITTNEBEL DIGITAL CONTENT MANAGER
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*The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the Dance Opera Theatre Policy (DOT).

FUNDERS



SPONSORS



PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Thank you for being here, tonight, to see *A Beginner's Guide to the Night Sky*. I am so grateful to everyone who has contributed to the journey of this little story, yourself included. What is a play without an audience? Your presence here tonight is a vital part of this process. As a theatre creator, I am interested in shared encounters, in embodied experiences, and in coming together as a community of individuals to ponder unanswerable questions.

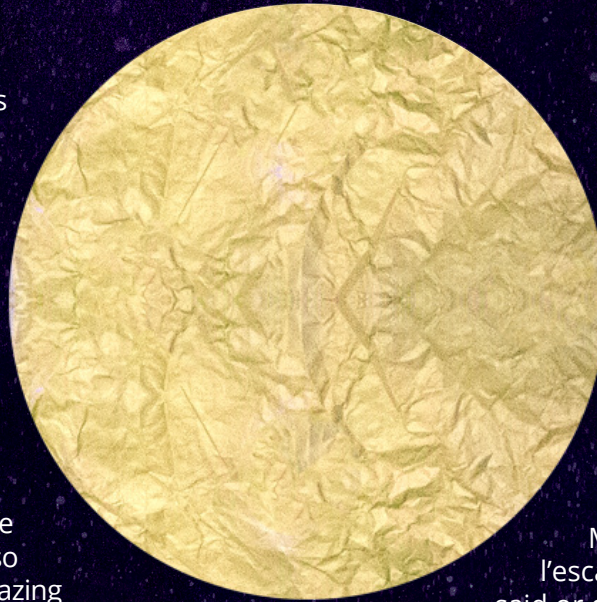
While you are here with us, thinking and singing about what lies beyond our tiny planet, you are echoing experiences I have had through my whole life - my father, a botanist and geologist by training, is also an amateur astronomer who introduced me to stargazing at an early age. I remember well the frigid winter nights on the outskirts of Edmonton in Treaty 6 Territory, neck sore from gazing upwards, following where he pointed to constellations, nebulas, and whole other galaxies, sharing the wonder he felt at these distant but incredible sights. Similarly, my mother, a kindergarten teacher, ensured that singing was a constant presence in the lives of myself and my three younger siblings, encouraging play, community, and joy. This piece is inspired by these lived experiences as a child, as well as my more recent experiences with my father's long and winding journey into what has officially been diagnosed as an "unspecified neurological disorder" which presents like early-onset dementia.

This is a piece that is very close to my heart, and I am so fortunate to have had such a stellar group of people working on it. Thank you to them, and to all the folks that have believed in the project and trusted me along the way.



We are here, together, now. I invite you to laugh, to sing, to be gentle with your tender selves, and to wonder, joyfully, under the vast and beautifully incomprehensible night sky.

With love,
- **Colleen Maclsaac**



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

'We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.'

- **Oscar Wilde**

Death is never the goal, but it is always the outcome.

Finding meaning, or patterns in our lives is up to us. Sometimes we look to the skies. That is, after all, where we imagine the soul goes. But the mind resides here with us. Unless we gaze too long at the moon. We wonder; therefore, we are.

Mostly, we live our lives in reverse, *l'esprit de l'escalier* - the afterwit, knowing what we should have said or done. But we have observer bias. My mother observed that parents probably never fully approve of their children's choices because they always want better.

As in life, so in theatre. So, when a playwright entrusts you with their work, it is no small compliment. I am honoured to bring Colleen Maclsaac's life-affirming, tender, philosophical play to the stage, in this iteration with this sweet cast, and this fine production team. To call them stellar would be too pat. They are the world of the play, create the world, and provide the tools with which we can observe it.

Beginner's Guide to the Night Sky has been a treat to direct. Dense, layered, and understated, the playwright's words shimmer, twinkle, and glint.

Like us, theatre is ephemeral. Even as the actors' lines are spoken, they vanish. Yet their light remains, long after their flame has guttered out. Like the loved ones we have lost, still with us long after they go.

I find myself with Wilde, Léo, Albertine, and Maclsaac: all about the gutter, and the looking.

- **Garry Williams**





SOME NOTES ON DEMENTIA

In our play, we depict a character who experiences dementia.

“Dementia is a broad term that describes a set of symptoms that may include memory loss, changes in mood, and difficulties with thinking, problem solving and language. While they may seem small at the start, they can affect the day-to-day lives of people with dementia. Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases or a series of strokes. There are many diseases which can cause dementia, with Alzheimer’s being the most common.”

“While most people living with dementia are over the age of 65, a small number of people in their 40s and 50s can and do develop dementia. This is known as young onset dementia.”

“Dementia is usually progressive. As more brain cells become damaged and eventually die, the symptoms of most dementia types will gradually get worse.”

- Alzheimer Society of Canada (<https://alzheimer.ca/>)

For more information about dementia, please visit:

Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia

112-2719 Gladstone St. Halifax, NS B3K 4W6

(902) 422-7961 | Toll-free: **1-800-611-6345** (Ns only)

Fax: **(902) 422-7971** | alzheimer@asns.ca | alzheimer.ca/ns

CAST



GENEVIÈVE STEELE

ALBERTINE

Geneviève (she/her) just completed a fun summer with Shakespeare by the Sea and is delighted to remain in the great outdoors to revisit A Beginner’s Guide to the Night Sky; which holds a very special place in her heart. Recently she had the pleasure of performing in a workshop production of Frenchy’s, The Musical for EFT. Other theatre credits include Calendar Girls, Rabbit Hole, Snake in the Grass (Neptune Theatre), Half Cracked (EFT and Ship’s Company), Myth of The Ostrich (Theatre Baddeck), Cottagers and Indians (Watermark), Animal Farm, Uncle Vanya (Two Planks), Venus in Fur, Gaslight (FAST). Thank you to this stellar team, and a wink and a nod skyward for my MamaLise.



ROOKS FIELD-GREEN

LÉO

Rooks (He/They) is a white, Jewish, and trans/non-binary theatre artist settled in Kijipuktuk. Rooks’s career thus far has involved a lot of great people, a few sacred places and a lot of joy. Rooks has worked with Zuppa Theatre Co. (City Ditties, This is Nowhere, F.I.S.H.), 2b Theatre (The Bridge), DaPoPo Theatre in association with Shakespeare by The Sea (Queer Theatre Ensemble: Shakesqueer), Neptune Theatre (Boys, Girls, and Other Mythological Creatures, Jabber) and Ship’s Company Theatre (Good Grief). The majority of his career has focused on the development of new works with Zuppa Theatre (F.I.S.H.) Villain’s Theatre (M: The Berlin Murders, Isolate Nights, Scene of the Crime, Madsummer, A Beginner’s Guide to the Night Sky, International Waters, Rain On The Parade & Knight of The Bat II). Rooks also creates queer children’s radio plays (Frog and Toad are Together: Ice Cream, A Swim, Cookies) as well as plays for adults: Oy Vey, My Baby’s A They, Booby Trap! and Into The Out Of, or ITOO. They recently directed Water, Baby! by Trisha Malik at Outfest 2023. Rooks is proud to be a star gazer and has enjoyed this process of wonderment for Colleen MacIsaac’s latest creation. He dedicates his work on this production to their Aunt Suzanne, a person who was both the twinkling light and the curious, wondering gaze.

CREATIVE TEAM



COLLEEN MACISAAC
PLAYWRIGHT

Colleen (they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist living in Mi'kma'ki (Halifax, Nova Scotia), working across theatre, drawing, illustration, video, graphic design, animation, comics, and performance. The artistic producer of The Villains Theatre, Colleen's recent performance creations include 'A Beginner's Guide to the Night Sky', 'the effects were cumulative and I almost didn't notice', 'TO: THE UNKNOWN', 'Shortcuts', 'mercury', 'Cartography', 'The Blazing World', and 'dark matter'. They are a graduate of Emily Carr University (Bachelor of Media Art in Animation) and NSCAD University (Master of Fine Art in Studio Arts - performance), and they have served on the boards of Theatre Nova Scotia, The Bus Stop Theatre Co-operative, and the Halifax Fringe Festival. A Robert Merritt Award nominee for Best Ensemble, Colleen is the winner of the Halifax Mayor's Award for Emerging Theatre Artist, the Bhayana Foundation Invisible Champion Award, and the Helen Hill Animated Award.



GARRY WILLIAMS
DIRECTOR

Garry (he/him) is an actor, director, singer, writer, musical director, and composer-lyricist. He has directed several plays, musicals, operas, and operettas, including Something Rotten, Pippin, She Loves Me, A Good Death, Julius Caesar, The Sex Play (La ronde), R.U.R., Le nozze di Figaro, Alcina, and Patience. He appeared in Love, Peace & Hairgrease, and There Are No Gays in Chechnya (reading) with EFT. EFT co-presented the original musical KAMP, and So... What About Love? for which he wrote music & lyrics. With Villains he appeared in Tyrant and The Roaring Girl, and composed music for Arden, Edward II/The Jew of Malta, and Rain on the Parade. Most recently, he musically directed Crypthand (Ship's Company), Pinocchio (SBTS), and the River Clyde Pageant: A Windfall in the Hollow.



LARA LEWIS
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Lara (she/her) is a queer, mixed Mi'kmaq theatre artist living in Kjiptuk. Lara was formally educated at Dalhousie University's Fountain School of Performing Arts and the University of King's College. Primarily an actor and dramaturge, she has worked with writers across the country and performed with companies including Villains Theatre, Theatre New Brunswick, Eastern Front Theatre, Heist, and Atlantic Repertory Company. Lara was nominated for a Merritt Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor, and won for Outstanding Volunteer.



DAN BRAY
STAGE MANAGER

Dan (he/him) is a multidisciplinary artist who splits his time between Kjiptuk/Halifax and Antigonish. As the Artistic Director of The Villains Theatre, he has written and directed many shows, including Hansel und Gretel in: der Garten von Edible Horrors, which earned Dan a Merritt Award for "Outstanding Adaptation," and Dinostories, which earned him an ECMA nomination for "Children's Entertainer of the Year." He has had the privilege of working with many of Nova Scotia's finest companies, including Two Planks & a Passion, ZUPPA, Shakespeare by the Sea, Eastern Front, Terra Novella, Festival Antigonish, and more. This is his first time stage managing, and he is grateful to this lovely team for their patience and support. Love to Noella and Gilbert.



OLIVIA RANKIN
STAGE MANAGER MENTOR

Olivia (she/her) is a stage manager, film producer and lighting designer based in Kjiptuk/Halifax. She moved here in 2010 from the Okanagan, BC and received her BA in Technical Scenography from Dalhousie. Over the past decade she has made Nova Scotia her home, working with theatre companies around the province. Many of her shows have received recognition such as Merritt Awards, re-mounts and tours, as well as national and international acclaim.



BRENDA CHICAS-DURAN

SCENIC DESIGNER

Brenda has been in the show business for 14 years wearing many hats in each department. She earned a BFA in Theatre Production and Design at York University and has worked all over the GTA as a designer and technician. Since living and working in Nova Scotia, she's won the 2023 Wes Daniels Design Merritt Award. She is

extremely thankful for all the support from family and friends. Her recent theatre credits: Downed Hearts (Ships Company Theatre / EFT), Pinocchio/ Romeo & Juliet (Shakespeare By The Sea) Mischief/ Colonial Park (YPCo, Neptune Theatre), Miracle on 31st Street (Saint John Theatre Company), Glass Menagerie (ARC), Beyond the Sea (Victoria Playhouse), #iamthecheese (HTFYP/EFT), Fat Juliet(EFT).



NOELLA MURPHY

COSTUME DESIGNER

Noella (she/her) is a trained actor, costume designer, visual artist, and all around clown. She holds a BFA from NSCAD University, and is an alum of Kinsale's Wooden O Drama Program (Ireland). Despite an active visual arts practice of her own, Noella is deeply interested in sharing art as a therapeutic

tool, especially as it pertains to individuals living in care homes as well as children; indeed, much of Noella's professional career has been dedicated to working with folks with disabilities, students, and the elderly. Noella uses these various expertises, as well as her background in clowning and visual art, to explore deeper, more challenging subject matter, while simultaneously infusing these discoveries with light, care, and play. As a collaborative theatre professional, Noella has worked with many groups around the province. Most recently, she co-created Dinostories: 3 Prehistoric Fairy Tales with Dan Bray - a commission for Festival Antigonish's 2022 summer season, which has since played in other venues around Nova Scotia. Prior to that, she has helped devise various shows for festivals such as the Halifax Fringe (Worry Duck) and Nocturne: Art at Night (Fox Hatch), and she has been an instrumental collaborator with groups such as The Villains Theatre and North Barn Theatre Collective. Noella has also worked as an educator at such wonderful institutions as the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, Arts Health Antigonish (of which she is a founding member), L'Arche Antigonish, RK MacDonald Nursing Home, Theatre Antigonish, and Red Sky Gallery.



JENNY TRITES

COMPOSER

Jenny Trites (she/her) is a composer, pianist, and choral musician based in Kijipuktuk (Halifax). As a sound designer/composer, Jenny has worked with Villains Theatre (Observatory Mansions, In the Telling, Blazing World, Changeling: The Chimes of Bedlam, Gallathea, The Roaring Girl), LunaSea (Bitterest Time: The War Story of Mona Parsons) and Lion's Den Theatre (The Shadow, Santa Claus Conquers the Martians)



MATT DOWNEY

LIGHTING DESIGNER & TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Matt (they/he) is a queer non binary theatre artist from St John's Newfoundland. Theatrical designer, Technician, Photographer, as well as the technical director of The Bus Stop Theatre Co-op. Since the pandemic hit they have expanded their focus to creating and supporting digital

art and performances, with investment in making art accessible and finding fun projects to collaborate remotely. Recent projects include augmented reality content for LiveHeist's Frequencies, and Princess Pride and Joy, and Animation and software programming for Sci-fi rock opera Journey To The Zone. Recent Lighting credits include Fatty Legs, Rings thru water (Xara Choral Theatre), The Blazing World, Chimes of Bedlam (The Villains Theatre), Punchup (Matchstick Theatre).



AUDREY EASTWOOD

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

Audrey (she/her) is a multi-disciplinary artist and parent working in Kijipuktuk/Halifax. She has worked as an actor, designer, musician, technician, fight choreographer, and makeup artist for a number of local companies including Villain's Theatre, Kick at the Dark, Halifax Summer Opera, Halifax Fringe, Votive Dance and Whale Song

Theatre. She is the general manager of the Bus Stop Theatre Co-op, and the Artistic Producer of Terra Novella Theatre. In her spare time she loves cooking and sharing huge meals, spending time messing about in gardens, trundling her two children off on adventures, and chasing her chickens with her very patient partner Nick.

SPECIAL THANKS

This project was aided in its early development by Two Planks and a Passion Theatre's 'You Are Here' playwriting residency, received a workshop production presented at Page1 Theatre's OutFest, and has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts.

Dave Chapman and Cathy LeBlanc of the Mi'kmaw Moons project, Drew O'Hara, Jessie Walker, and Shakespeare by the Sea, Franziska Glen, Isaac Mulè, Daniel Wittnebel, and Page1 Theatre, Kat McCormack and Elsa Pihl and the EFT team, Katrin Whitehead, Ken Schwartz, Chris O'Neill, and the Two Planks and a Passion team Laurie Fleet, Lily Falk, Linda LeBlanc, Lynn Foley, and the team at Alderney Landing, Linda MacIsaac, Mark Bachynski, Patricia Vinluan, Tracy Murphy, Trisha Dhar Malik, Jesse MacLean and Jade Douris-O'Hara

And to the workshop team from the 2022 Page1 Outfest Workshop production who were so essential to the script's development:
 Dramaturgy by Annie Valentina, Assistant Direction by Rooks Field-Green,
 Music Direction & Composition by Jenny Trites, Design assistance by Anna Shepherd, Scenic Elements by Katrin Whitehead.
 Production Assistance by Trisha Dhar Malik, French-language dramaturgy by Franziska Glen,
 Performed by: Mallory Amirault as Léo
 Geneviève Steele as Albertine

Extra special thanks to my father, Dan MacIsaac, the stargazer, and my mother, Linda MacIsaac, the teacher.



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DEEPWATER

WRITTEN BY DAN BRAY | DIRECTED BY BURGANDY CODE
 MARCH 13-17 2024, THE BUS STOP THEATRE

UP NEXT AT EASTERN FRONT THEATRE



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