



MATCHSTICK
THEATRE

LEAVING HOME

A PLAY BY

DAVID FRENCH

PRESENTED AT THE

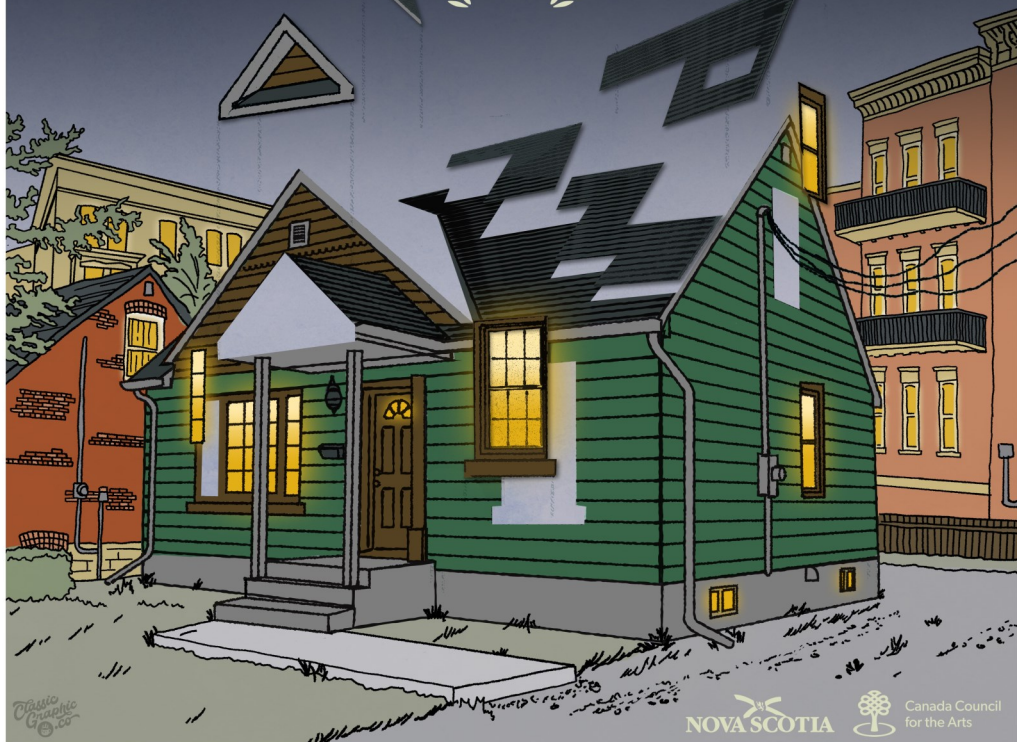


COAL MINE THEATRE

2076 DANFORTH AVE. TORONTO

JUNE 10 - 22, 2025

Times & tickets at matchsticktheatre.ca



Classic
Graphic
Co.

NOVASCOTIA



Canada Council
for the Arts

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Coal Mine theatre is located in the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. This region is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Matchstick Theatre is from Kijipuktuk, meaning Great Harbour, located within unceded Mi'kma'ki. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq Wəlastəkwiyyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726.

It is our shared responsibility to learn about the ongoing process of truth and reconciliation with the original caretakers of our land.

Follow the [link here](#) to learn about the 94 Calls to Action listed in 2015 from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

CONTENT AND SENSORY WARNINGS

ALLERGY ALERT: During the show, food will be served onstage containing small amounts of seafood (haddock fish).

There will also be one herbal cigarette smoked (in two different instances) during the performance. The cigarettes are a cocoa bean blend, but still smell quite strong.

Anyone concerned with either of these elements is encouraged to sit further from the stage, and we will also have face masks available on site.

We are happy to refund tickets for those who don't feel comfortable attending with these conditions.

CONTENT WARNINGS: Leaving Home contains intense moments that may make audiences uncomfortable, and the incredibly close nature of Matchstick's production may heighten this experience.

In order to not spoil aspects of the show, we have left these content warnings a separate opt-in for those who feel they may benefit from knowing what to expect ahead of time. We encourage you to read these general warnings if you feel you may need them. You can find these general content warnings by [clicking here](#).

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Leaving Home is about unrequited love. Expressions of love can be hard; sometimes they don't come at all. Here love flows like a subterranean river.

We are and are not our parents. When we're young, they influence us in subtle and obvious ways. We can't help but be like them, yet there comes a time when we resist and discover ourselves. A week before rehearsals in Toronto, I became a father for the second time. Two years ago, when my daughter Alice was born, I was gifted clarity, identity, and purpose. It was a moment of division: then and now, before and after, there and here. I was remade. Even now I worry: what happens—who do I become—when my children grow up and leave? How will I reconcile their reality when it's bound to be different from the world I've known? *Leaving Home* is full of transitional moments where established identities come apart and new ones take their place. Through his honesty and specificity, David French has created a universal work of art which echoes across generations.

Thank you to my parents, siblings, wife, children, and friends for helping make me who I am.

Thank you to Alex and Chelsea for believing from the beginning.

Thank you Ted for giving us the opportunity to stage our production at the Coal Mine.

Thank you David French.

- Jake Planinc



THE TEAM

Cast

Mary Mercer	Shelley Thompson*
Ben Mercer	Lou Campbell
Bill Mercer	Sam Vigneault*
Jacob Mercer	Andrew Musselman*
Kathy Jackson	Abby Weisbrot*
Minnie Jackson	Sharleen Kalayil*
Harold	Sébastien Labelle*

Production

Director	Jake Planinc
Stage Manager	Chelsea Dickie*
Production Manager	Erik Richards
Director of Production	Wesley Babcock
Technical Director	Wesley Babcock
House Technician	Sebastian Cattrysse
Scenic Design	Wesley Babcock
Lighting Design	Alison Crosby
Sound Design	Jordan Palmer
Costume Design	Kaelen MacDonald
Costume Assistant	Nix Brazao
Front of House	Alex Mills
Dance Coach	Jade Douris-O'Hara
Accent Coach	Sherry Smith
Head Scenic Carpenter and Painter	Nicole Flynn
Assistant Scenic Carpenter	Ben Cable

Production Management Provided by WxW (WhatbyWhen)

** "The participation of these Artists is arranged by permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association under the provisions of the **Dance Opera Theatre Policy (DOT)**."*

Leaving Home runs for approximately 2 hours, including a 15 minute intermission

CAST



Lou Campbell:

Role: Ben Mercer

Lou Campbell (they/them) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Kijipuktuk/Halifax. Their practice traverses many mediums including playwriting, directing, performance, clown, poetry, and sound design/installation. They co-run a cross-province collective based in Toronto and Halifax called Probably Theatre. This collective creates performance work devised from poetry, and runs events and exhibitions that facilitate the creation of

new work by other artists. Lou wrote and stars in their award winning solo show *PRUDE* Which premiered at Stages Festival in 2022 and went on to tour to rEvolver festival, intrepid theatre, high performance rodeo, outfest and next stage festival. Lou is currently writing a trilogy play series about the afterlives of trans and gender non-conforming saints and religious figures called *The Holy Ones*.



Sharleen Kalayil:

Role: Minnie Jackson

Sharleen (she/her) is honoured and grateful for this opportunity to perform in her first production with Matchstick Theatre. She makes her home in Halifax, where she also runs a home-based business, and raises her two goofy, energetic sons. She wishes to thank her parents, who paved the way primarily by leaving home. And thank you to Scott for always cheering me on!

Other Theatre: *Steel Magnolias* (Watermark Theatre); *Dayboil* (Ship's Company); *'Til Death Do Us Part* (Kick at the Dark Theatre); *At This Hour* (Zuppa Theatre); *Calendar Girls* (Neptune Theatre); *Miss N Me* (EFT); *Half-Cracked* (EFT/Neptune, Ship's Company); *The Bitterest Time* (Lunasea/SarAndipity); *Adult Entertainment* (Taboo Theatre). Film/TV: *Escaping the NXIVM Cult* (Sony Pictures), *Nightblooms* (Midnight Blue Pictures), *Aliens With Knives* (44Cinema Productions), *Pure* (Two East Production), *Diggstown* (CBC), *Moonshine* (Moonshine Productions Inc), *Cam Boy* (Isolatory Pictures Inc), *The Sinner* (Netflix), *From* (Paramount), *Sullivan's Crossing* (CTV). Sharleen is a four-time nominee for the Theatre NS Robert Merritt Award for Outstanding Performance, and one time winner for Outstanding Ensemble for her role in *Dayboil* (Ship's Company).



Sébastien Labelle:

Role: Harold

Sébastien Labelle (he/him) left his home in the Odawa (Ottawa) valley twenty years ago and settled near the shores of Kijipuktuk, the great harbour, in Mi'kma'ki. He is now an accomplished performer who has worked with many of Nova Scotia's most acclaimed companies including Mocean Dance, Halifax Theatre for Young People, Eastern Front Theatre, Villains Theatre, Zuppa, Workshirt Opera, Shakespeare By the Sea, 2b Theatre, Two

Planks and a Passion Theatre and Symphony Nova Scotia's production of *The Nutcracker*. This is his third collaboration with Matchstick Theatre after performing in their productions of *Bone Cage* and *The Woodcutter*. His most recent performance was in Winnipeg for Chartier Danse in a production of *Fracas* by Margaret Sweatman. His screen credits include *Sullivan's Crossing*, *The Good House*, *Chapelwaite*, *Diggstown* and *Black Cop*. Sébastien is also the Festival Director for Mayworks Kijipuktuk/Halifax, a writer and collaborator for PEI's River Clyde Pageant and the former Executive Director of the Bus Stop Theatre Co-op.



Andrew Musselman:

Role: Jacob Mercer

Andrew Musselman (he/him) is an actor, writer and entrepreneur based in Toronto. As a writer, he co-created and sold an original tv series to AMC Studios. As an actor, he received a Beinecke Fellowship from Yale School of Drama and has been nominated for a Dora Award for his performance in *Catalpa*. Other theatre credits: *These Paper Bullets* (Yale Rep, Atlantic Theatre Company), *Butcher* (Theatre Centre, Mirvish Productions),

Greenland (TPM Backspace) and *Prince Hamlet* (WhyNot Theatre/US Tour). Television credits: *The Lost Symbol* (CBS/Peacock), *Utopia Falls* (Hulu), *Cardinal* (CTV/Bell Media), *Orphan Black* (Space/BBC America) and *Murdoch Mysteries* (CBC). He was the On-Set Acting Coach for the Disney/Family Channel show *Backstage*, as well as the dialect coach for CBC's *Baroness Von Sketch Show*. He runs a company called Fluency that coaches people to be more impactful communicators (check it out at LearnFluency.com!)



Shelley Thompson:

Role: Mary Mercer

Actor/Author/Writer-Director

Shelley Thompson is based in Wolfville, in Mi'kma'ki. Trained at RADA (UK), Canadian Film Centre Toronto, Women In The Directors Chair Vancouver, the Writers Lab NYC, and most recently, the Whistler Film Festival's Producer's Lab.

Recent screen credits include: CBC TV's *MOONSHINE*, CTV's *SULLIVAN'S CROSSING* and the web-series *TOKENS*. Thompson is a multiple ACTRA/Gemini-winner for her

roles in *TRAILER PARK BOYS*, features *SPLINTERS* (Thom Fitzgerald) and *THE CHILD REMAINS* (Michael Melski). Stage work includes The Royal National Theatre (UK), the ATF, The Shaw Festival, The Neptune, PTE, Festival Antigonish, Bristol Old Vic and...her last time on stage in Toronto - *TAMARA*, (Necessary Angel).

Thompson's first feature film (Writer/Director of *DAWN, HER DAD & THE TRACTOR*) is on platforms including Amazon Prime, and won NS's MASTERWORKS Prize in November 2022. A new doc series, *TRANSLATIONS*, was released on Fibe TV and moves to CBC Gem this Pride month.

Her first novel, *ROAR*, was published by Nimbus/ Vagrant Press in 2023, and her second book *WINTER SKY* - a short story collection - will be published this fall.



Sam Vigneault:

Role: Bill Mercer

Sam Vigneault (he/him) is an actor, musician, filmmaker and theatre-maker based out of Kjiptuk/Halifax and a graduate of the Fountain School of Performing Arts acting program (2017). In 2023, Sam was nominated for a Robert Merritt award for Outstanding Performance for his role in *The Aliens* (Theatre in Space). Sam is delighted to be back with Matchstick Theatre for the fourth time. It's such a privilege to be working alongside so

many talented artists on this iconic piece of Canadian theatre.

Selected theatre credits: *The Aliens* (Theatre in Space), *The Mountain and the Valley*; *Chased by the Bear* (Two Planks and a Passion), *Rain on the Parade* (the Villains Theatre), *West Moon* (Rising Tide Theatre), *Big Sister*, *Little Brother* (Festival Antigonish), *Bone Cage*; *The Little Years* (Matchstick Theatre)



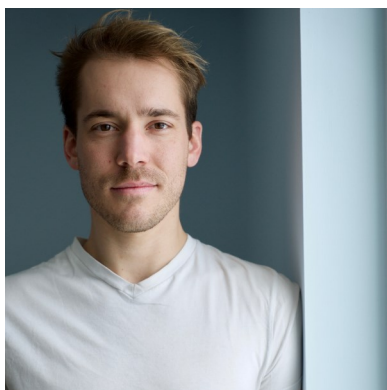
Abby Weisbrot:

Role: Kathy Jackson

Abby (she/her) is an actor and speech-language pathologist based in Kjiptuk [Halifax]. Abby is delighted to join Matchstick in bringing the first of the Mercer plays to audiences in Tkaronto [Toronto]. Selected theatre credits include: *Emilio's a Million Chameleons* (Neptune TourCo.), *The Object at Trash Beach* (Unnatural Disaster Theatre Co. and The Villains Theatre); *The Hobbit, If You Could Wear My Sneakers* (Festival

Antigonish); *'Til Death Do Us Part* (Kick at the Dark Theatre); *Listen to the Wind, Macbeth* (Steady Theatre Co.); and *The Changeling* (The Villains Theatre). Big love to her family and friends in the big city.

Production



Wesley Babcock:

Role: Set Designer/Technical Director/
Director of Production

Wesley (they/them) is a Queer Non-binary set and lighting designer, and production manager who splits time between Kjiptuk (Halifax, NS) and Tkaronto (Toronto, ON). They have been nominated for Merritt Awards in Scenic Design in 2019, 2022, and 2023, and were the recipient for the Wes Daniels Design Award in 2020.

Wesley is a founding member of WhatbyWhen (WxW) (with Crystal Lee),

where they develop models for sustainable production management and technical direction through praxis (whatxwhen.ca).

They founded and co-curated Dark Day Monday (with Thea Fitz-James), a Toronto-based performance series featuring artists who break boundaries and defy expectation. They are also a founding partner of Act1 Consulting for the Performing Arts (with Peter Henry), where they are currently working on a masterplan for Ship's Company Theatre, among other architectural projects with companies like Coal Mine Theatre (act1consulting.ca). Favourite projects with Matchstick include *Footnotes*, *The Woodcutter*, and *Bone Cage*.



Nix Brazao:

Role: Costume Assistant

Nix Brazao (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist from Toronto, ON. She spends her time working with textiles, creating visual art, making music and chasing around her little dogs. Nix has been mending garments since she was a child and is thrilled to lend a hand to such talented cast and crew.



Sebastian Cattrysse:

Role: House Technician

A graduate of Toronto Metropolitan University, Sebastian is an emerging set designer based in Toronto with over five years of professional experience. Notably, he contributed to the Canadian Exhibit at the Prague Quadrennial in 2023, showcasing a creative approach that fuses spontaneous inspiration with an iterative process refined by the insights of fellow creatives. His work spans film sets, escape rooms, and diverse productions across Ontario, highlighting his expertise in scenic

carpentry and painting. Through this blend of initial spark and collaborative refinement, Sebastian transforms ideas into immersive, captivating environments.

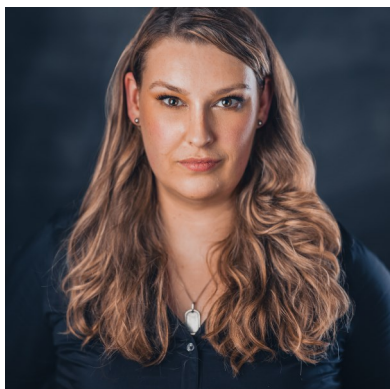


Alison Crosby:

Role: Lighting Designer

Alison Crosby (she/her) is a theatre artist originally from Unama'ki / Cape Breton and currently based in Kjiptuk / Halifax. Other lighting design credits include *Footnotes*, *Joyride*, *The Little Years*, *The Woodcutter*, *Peter Fechter: 59 Minutes*, *Bone Cage* (Matchstick Theatre); *The Aliens* (Theatre in Space); *Downed Hearts* (Ship's Company / Eastern Front / Matchstick); *Dayboil*, *Still Dancing* (Ship's Company); *The Last Show on Earth! TM*, *The Prom*, *Heathers* (Neptune

Theatre); *Misery*, *Gaslight*, *Steel Magnolias* (Watermark Theatre); *House*, *Little One*, *YAGA*, *Constellations* (Highland Arts Theatre); *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory*, *Mary Poppins* (SJTC). Associate lighting design credits: *Red Like Fruit* (2b Theatre / Soulepper / Luminato); *Cinderella* (Neptune Theatre). Awards: TNS Merritt Award (*Dayboil*). Training: Mount Allison University.



Chelsea Dickie:

Role: Managing Director of Matchstick Theatre/Stage Manager

Chelsea Dickie (she/her) is a multifaceted arts manager and educator based out of Kjiptuk/Halifax, originally from South Maitland, NS. She works all across Mi'kma'ki with different theatre companies in a wide range of roles. Chelsea serves as the current Executive Director of Theatre Nova Scotia, and a founder and Managing Director for her own indie theatre company Matchstick Theatre, which has staged 14

major productions since 2017, all of which Chelsea helped produce and stage manage.

When not producing her own shows with Matchstick, Chelsea has been a go-to stage and production manager around Kjiptuk/Halifax, having worked with such companies as Neptune Theatre, Nestuita'si Storytelling, The Halifax Fringe Festival, The Villain's Theatre, 2b theatre, Workshirt Opera, Theatre New Brunswick, The Doppler Effect, and Festival Antigone.

In her previous line of work as a high school Drama teacher, Chelsea developed a passion for outreach, education and mentorship for young artists entering the arts community. This led to her work for three years as the provincial coordinator of the Nova Scotia High School DramaFest.



Jade Douris O'Hara:

Role: Dance Coach

Jade Douris-O'Hara (she/her) is a Tkaronto/Toronto born-and-raised, Kjiptuk/Halifax-based actor, choreographer, and Shakespeare coach. She is the Studio Director and Resident Artist at Shakespeare by the Sea. CHOREOGRAPHY: At Shakespeare by the Sea -- *Pinocchio*, *Cinderella!* (Merritt Award nomination), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Merritt Award nomination), *The Wizard of Oz*, *Alice in Wonderland* (Merritt Award nomination),

Peter Pan. Elsewhere -- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare at Play), *The Tempest*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Dauntless City Theatre), *As You Like It* (Shakespeare BASH'd). ACTING/THEATRE: 7 seasons at Shakespeare by the Sea, 5 seasons at Shakespeare BASH'd, Theatre Aquarius, Dauntless City Theatre, Shakespeare at Play. FILM/TV: *CBC's According to Kids*, *22 Minutes*, *Trailer Park Boys: Jail*. The Coast Best of Halifax 2022 Bronze Winner for Best Theatre Actor. SOCIALS: @jadedourisohara



Kaelen MacDonald:

Role: Costume Designer

Kaelen MacDonald (she/her) is a queer designer based out of Halifax / Kjiptuk, working in film and theatre. Her designs prioritize collaborative and detailed world building.

Select theatre credits include: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (Neptune / Mirvish, 2024), *Little Shop of Horrors* (Neptune 2025), and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Neptune 2024 - Merritt

Award winner for outstanding costume design)

Select film credits include *The Girls* (Costume Designer, Ind. Short) *To Have and To Holiday* (Assistant Costume Designer, Hallmark), *Escape the Usual* (Costume Designer & Production Designer, MacRad Productions), *The Trades S2* (Background Costume Supervisor, Crave), and *111* (Costume Set Supervisor, Auguste Content).

She is a proud member of IATSE locals 849, 680, and ADC659.



Alex Mills:

Role: Financial Director of Matchstick Theatre/Producer/Front of House
 Alex (he/him) is an indie theatre producer, musician, and Chartered Professional Accountant working in Kijipuktuk/Halifax. Alex uses his financial acumen to serve on a number of arts organizations' board of directors. He is proud to sit as the current Treasurer for Kinetic Dance Studio, the Halifax Fringe Festival, and Zuppa Theatre, and he was previously the Treasurer of Theatre Nova Scotia and the Bus Stop

Theatre Co-op during their recent capital campaign to purchase their building in 2020. He was incredibly grateful when his work with all of these vital organizations earned him the Outstanding Volunteer award at the 2019 Nova Scotia Merritt Awards. Alex is one of the founding members and the Financial Director of Matchstick Theatre. He has produced all of their shows to date.



Jordan Palmer:

Role: Sound Designer
 Jordan Palmer (he/him) is a sound designer and technician. Previous credits with Matchstick include *Footnotes*, *Joyride*, *The Little Years*, *The Woodcutter*, *Peter Fechter: 59 Minutes*, *Bone Cage*. Other theatre credits: *Misery*, *Billy Elliot*, *The Play That Goes Wrong*, *In Lieu of Flowers*, *The New Canadian Curling Club*, *Elf*, *Frozen* (NeptuneTheatre); *Old Stock: A Refugee Love Story* (2b Theatre, Merritt Nominated); *The Aliens* (Theatre in Space); *The Hydrofoil*

Mystery (Theatre Baddeck, Merritt Nominated); *The Proletariat*, *YAGA*, *Little One* (Highland Arts Theatre). Training: OIART, Diploma in Audio Recording Technology.



Jake Planinc:

Role: Artistic Director of Matchstick Theatre/Director
 Jake is the founding artistic director of Matchstick Theatre, assistant director of the Mayworks Kijipuktuk/Halifax Festival, and coordinator of Theatre Nova Scotia's DramaFest. Selected directing credits include: *Bone Cage* by Catherine Banks, *The Woodcutter* by Don Hannah, *Leaving Home* by David French (Matchstick); *The Aliens* by Annie Baker (Theatre in Space); and *Rhinoceros* by Eugène Ionesco (Timms

Centre). In 2025, he received the Robert Merritt award for Outstanding Direction (*Leaving Home*). Jake is a graduate of Mount Allison University and holds an MFA in Directing from the University of Alberta.



Erik Richards:

Role: Production Manager

Erik Richards (He/Him) is a Theatre Maker from Treaty Six back at the Coal Mine and joining Matchstick for the first time with *Leaving Home*. Selected works include, *DION : a Rock Opera*, *Infinite Life and People Places and Things* (Coal Mine), *A Little Closer* and *Discount Dave and the Fix* (The Vault and *Takwahiminana* (Soulpepper/Punctuate). Erik was thrilled to premier his own hybrid punk rock concert play *Brother Rat* last fall and continues to strive for exploration and curiosity at the intersection between music and live theatre.



Sherry Smith:

Role: Accent Coach

Sherry Smith (MFA Theatre Voice Pedagogy) Sherry (she/her) has been predominantly an actor for the past 40 years, working at such theatres as the Shaw Festival, the Grand, the Royal Alex and multiple theatres around the Maritimes. She has been nominated 8 times for best performance Merritt Awards and has won twice (*Winnie* in Beckett's *Happy Days* at Neptune and *Ensemble* for *Dayboil* at Ship's Company). Completing her

MFA at the University of Alberta in 2016 has opened doors to teaching Voice at Dalhousie's FSPA, Mount Alison, University of Alberta and Neptune Theatre School. Dialect coaching has become a specialty of hers working on Netflix's *The Mist*, Neptune's *Billy Elliot* and *Snake in the Grass*, and multiple productions at the Fountain School of Performing Arts. This show brings her home to her own accent of Newfoundland & Labrador and she couldn't be more pleased with the work the cast has done! Thanks to Jake and Matchstick Theatre for this very special opportunity.

MATCHSTICK THEATRE WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

The Coal Mine Theatre

Ted Dykstra, Chris Hayes, Alex Vautour, Breanna Dillon, and more

Our Funders



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



Our Board of Directors

Juanita Peters, Mary Vingoe, Peter Henry, Cody Au, Kathryn Shipp, Alex MacLean, Kathryn McCormack, and Mark Ferraro-Hauck

Our Wonderful Ushers and Bartenders

And A Special Thanks To...

Glenda McFarlane, Emily Chisholm, Rosanne Chisholm, Diana Bently, Suzanne Cheriton, Don Kendal, Sean Skerry, Barry McCluskey, Helena Marriott, Neptune Theatre, Souleppper Theatre Company, Dylan Tate-Howarth, Maggie Huculak, Kim Schaedlich, Carlos Varela, Johnson Wang, Nathan Gregory, Betty Robertson

Want to stay up to date with Matchstick Theatre? [Visit our website](#) to learn more about us and sign up for updates!



**MATCHSTICK
THEATRE**