**The Cull**

By Michele Riml & Michael St. John Smith

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The Cull was originally commissioned by the Arts Club Theatre Company, Vancouver, British Columbia

An Arts Club silver commission funded by Stan and Kathy Hamilton

**World Premiere**

January 26–February 26, 2023

Granville Island Stage

Running time: approx. 2h 10m (including one intermission)

**Starring:**

**John Cassini** john

**Jasmine Chen** lynne

**Craig Erickson** paul

**Meghan Gardiner** nicole

**Stephen Lobo** lewis

**Dawn Petten** emily

**Creative team:**

**Mindy Parfitt** director

**Stephen drover** dramaturg

**Amir Ofek** setdesigner

**Alaia Hamer** costumedesigner

**Ted Roberts** lightingdesigner

**Owen Belton** sounddesigner

**Phay Moores** intimacy director

**Mike Kovac** fight director

**Rebecca Mulvihill** stage manager

**Marijka Asbeek Brusse**assistant stage manager

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# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Arts Club Theatre Company acknowledges that this production takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish Peoples, in particular the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə’ lilwətaɁɬ̓ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are honoured to live, work, and create on this land together.

# WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the Arts Club’s Granville Island Stage for this world premiere production of The Cull by Michele Riml and Michael St. John Smith. This season, in addition to this production, we have offered the world premieres of three other new plays that we commissioned and developed through our Silver Commissions program: Redbone Coonhound, Mom’s the Word: Talkin’ Turkey, and Forgiveness, now playing at our Stanley Industrial Alliance Stage until February 12. And all of it is made possible through the generosity of our valued patrons and champions, Stan and Kathy Hamilton. Thank you!

At the Arts Club, supporting artists as they perform on stage, design the elements that make up a production, or as they write a new script is part of our DNA. We are happy to announce that this season we have added a new program. The Miriam Bennett Artist-in-residence program is a new initiative that provides mentorship, office space (right here at the Granville Island Stage), and financial support to a single artist for a year. Its aim is to help an artist develop their practice and deepen their relationship with the community.

Our inaugural Artist-in-Residence is Ashleigh Giffen, an Oji-Cree playwright and multidisciplinary artist who explores dream states, realm travel, and fragmented histories through lenses of critical Indigeneity. Ashleigh was a participant in our LEAP program, where she developed her play Kamwatan Nipe (Quiet Water). She is also a recipient of a Silver Commission. She was the second place winner of the 2019 Canadian Arts and Stories writing contest, as well as the 2019 Writing in the Margins poetry winner in Briarpatch magazine. She was also the second-place winner in the 2020 Room magazine poetry contest. Her stop-motion film, Pesowan, created in collaboration with Maura Tamez, was featured in the Lake Country Art Gallery for two exhibits last summer and at the Kelowna Art Gallery, along with her multimedia collage work. Welcome, Ashleigh!

Initiatives like this exist because of our donors. If you would like to support this program, our education and outreach activities, or support what we do on our stages, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Arts Club today. As a not-for-profit charitable organization, we rely on the generousity of this community. Thank you for your consideration and enjoy the show.

**ashlie corcoran** artistic director

**peter cathie white** executive director

# PLAYWRIGHT’S NOTE

Any play written by two people who are married is bound to bring up compelling issues, especially if the themes of that play focus on the deeper motivations that drive human relationships.

In writing a first draft of The Cull, our first challenge was how to collaborate as a married couple writing a play together, an ironic twist considering the subject matter. In fact, we had to set aside any preconceptions we had about our own individual “process” as writers, and allow for a method of working that examined the same dynamics that were at work not just in the play but also in our own relationship. Not always an easy process.

As we continued to research and talk about wolves, about people, about genetic programming and social contracts, we began to appreciate the fundamental difference between the two. Wolves don’t make deals. People do. Often at the cost of their own personal integrity and the integrity of the group.

It was important in writing The Cull that we both remained completely true to the play and what it was trying to say. To allow it to assume its own natural shape which proved to be quite fast-paced and confrontational (not unlike our writing process!)

We each took alternate scenes, wrote rough drafts, then went over them together, making suggestions, getting frustrated, leaving the room, exchanging some sharp words, but always keeping a clear view on making the play the best we could with a spirit of respect and collaboration.

In developing the play further, we were blessed with an outstanding group of creative and professional individual artists who committed their considerable craft to interpreting and enhancing what we had written. Their efforts are the embodiment of the play itself:

“For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack” –Rudyard Kipling.

Ultimately, the entire effort has been a great reminder that theatre survives, and inspires, as an art form because it is a truly collaborative endeavour, the last step being between artist and audience, that can only ever be realized together.

(And, by the way, we are still married.)

**MIKE ST. JOHN SMITH & MICHELE RIML**

# DIRECTOR’S NOTE

It has been a minute.

I was asked to direct The Cull back in 2019–when the play was initially programmed–which is, for the theatre, an unusually long prep period. I am deeply grateful for what this hiatus has afforded me. Time. Time to contemplate and imagine. Time to question and investigate.

It is always a great honour and responsibility to direct a world premiere. To have the very first opportunity to tell a particular story in a very particular way. Usually, the world of the play I create for a premiere adheres very closely to that which the playwright describes. With The Cull, I stepped away from this norm. I wanted to, in a piece that deals with values and material wealth, strip away the visual noise and be left with these six incredible actors telling a story of the nuances and complexities of long-term friendship.

It was a big ask–of the playwrights, of the actors and designers, and of you. To take away the wine glasses and napkins. The bits of food to nibble and pillows to fluff. To remove the things that make us comfortable. The things that define us. During rehearsal, when working with one of the actors, I told him that what I was asking of them was hard–I wasn’t naïve to that–but I was asking anyway. Maybe this is the defining characteristic of this time in our development as a society and as a planet. That we ask one another difficult questions and to do difficult things.

I don’t know.

But what I do know is that I am so very thankful to the team that has brought you this show today. Without them I am only a tangle of ideas and images.

Thank you for spending this time with us. Enjoy the show.

**MINDY PARFIT**

# ARTISTIC TEAM

**MARIJKA ASBEEK BRUSSE** assistant stage manager

For the Arts Club: Debut

Other Theatre: The Pearl Fishers, Amahl and the Night Visitors, Flight of the Hummingbird, La Traviata (Vancouver Opera); Take This Waltz (Ne.Sans Opera Dance); Silent Light (as Faculty SM for Opera in the 21st Century at the Banff Centre for Performing Arts); Mom’s the Word: Nest ½ Empty (Belfry Theatre); Hir (Pi Theatre); C’Mon, Angie! (Touchstone Theatre)

Other: Marijka is a Vancouver-based stage manager, working in both theatre and opera, including ten seasons as an Assistant Stage Manager at Vancouver Opera. She is a graduate of UBC Theatre’s Production & Design program, where she also taught stage management from 2012–2019.

**OWEN BELTON** sound designer

For the Arts Club: The Valley (debut, 2016); Me & You, No Child, Redbone Coonhound

Other Theatre: The Father (Search Party Theatre); Macbeth, Richard III, Henry V (Bard on the Beach); Initiation Trilogy, A Great Day for Up (Electric Co. Theatre)

Film & TV: The Eleven

Other: Graduate of SFU.

**JOHN CASSINI** john

For the Arts Club: Rabbit Hole

Other Theatre: Edmond, Geography of a Horse Dreamer, One for the Road (L.A.); God of Carnage (MTC); The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat (Firehall)

Film & TV: Alive, Se7en, The Game, Daughter, Volition, Robson Arms, Intelligence, Next, Tribal

Other: John is a Lifetime Member of The Actors Studio (NYC) and Artistic Director of the Railtown Actors Studio (Vancouver). He has received 19 award nominations, and is a four-time winner, including a Vancouver Film Critics Circle Award for Achievement (2019). V.P of UBCP/Actra.

**JASMINE CHEN**  lynne

For the Arts Club: Someone Like You (audioplay), The Wedding Party, The Great Leap (as Cultural Creative Consultant)

Other Theatre: K BODY AND MIND (A Wake of Vultures/Shadbolt Centre); Henry G20 (Luminato); Antigone (Young People’s Theatre); The Bakkhai, The Komagata Maru Incident (Stratford Festival); Sweet Charity, The Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide (Shaw Festival); Chimerica (Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre); The Winter’s Tale (Canadian Stage)

Film & TV: The Power (Amazon Prime); New Eden (CraveTV); Womanish (CBC Punchline); Defiance (Syfy)

Other: Jasmine is a director, creator, movement coach, and educator. She has been featured in CBC Arts, The Georgia Straight, Intermission Magazine, the Toronto Star, and the Vancouver Sun.

msjasminechen.com.

**STEPHEN DROVER** dramaturg

For the Arts Club: Skydive (co-director; debut 2009); as Director: The Patron Saint of Stanley Park, Hand to God, Mustard; as Dramaturg: It’s a Wonderful Christmas-ish Holiday Miracle, Redbone Coonhound, Forgiveness

Other Theatre: as Director and/or Dramaturg: The Society for the Destitute presents Titus Bouffonius, Indian Arm, Penelope (Rumble Theatre); The Last Days of Judas Iscariot, Macbeth, The Bond (Pound of Flesh Theatre); three East Van Pantos (Theatre Replacement); Harlem Duet (Bard on the Beach)

Other: Born and raised in Newfoundland, Stephen has degrees in theatre from Memorial University, UBC, and the University of Ottawa. He has been the Artistic Director of Pound of Flesh Theatre, Artistic Director of Rumble Theatre, and is currently in charge of New Works and Professional Engagement at the Arts Club.

**CRAIG ERICKSON** paul

For the Arts Club: The Sound of Music, Forget About Tomorrow, Angels in America, parts 1 and 2, Scar Tissue, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf (with Blackbird Theatre), Tear the Curtain (with Electric Company), Cyrano de Bergerac, The Glass Menagerie

Other Theatre: Wakey, Wakey (Pacific Theatre); 12 seasons at Canadian classical theatres: Bard on the Beach, Stratford, Shaw; The Invisible Hand (Pi); Speed-the-Plow (Mitch and Murray); The Great Gatsby (Theatre Calgary); The Idiot (Neworld); Vinci (National Arts Centre/ Manitoba Theatre Centre); Of Mice and Men (The Citadel/Manitoba Theatre Centre)

Film & TV: The Man in the High Castle, Backstrom, Lucifer, A Series of Unfortunate Events, Supernatural

**MEGHAN GARDINER** nicole

For the Arts Club: Evita (debut, 2004); recent favourites: The Sound of Music, Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, A Christmas Story: The Musical, Paradise Garden, Blood Brothers

Other Theatre: How the World Began (Pacific Theatre); The Boy in the Moon (Neworld Theatre); The Music Man (Gateway Theatre); Dead Metaphor, Urinetown (Firehall Arts Centre); Gunmetal Blues (Vancouver Playhouse/ PTE)

Film & TV: The Flash, Family Law, Motherland, A Million Little Things, Firefly Lane, The Good Doctor

Other: Meghan has been nominated for four Jessie awards, three Leo awards, and is a YWCA Women of Distinction nominee. Much love to her family.

**ALAIA HAMER** costume designer

For the Arts Club: Beneath Springhill, The Birds and the Bees, The Sound of Music; assistant design: Sweat, The Humans

Other Theatre: HMS Pinafore, Carmen: Up Close and Personal (Vancouver Opera); Beautiful Man (Pi Theatre); Assistant Designer for Romeo and Juliet, Coriolanus, The Taming of The Shrew, Macbeth (Bard on the Beach)

Other: Graduate of UBC, Department of Theatre and Film

**MIKE KOVAC** fight director

For the Arts Club: The Thing About Men (debut, 2009); as Fight Director: Disney’s Beauty and the Beast, Mustard, Misery, Noises Off, Forgiveness

Other Theatre: Children of God, Les Filles du Roi (Urban Ink); Sweeney Todd, Cabaret (Snapshots Collective); She Kills Monsters, The Crucible (UBC)

Film & TV: Batwoman, Tin Star, The 100, Supernatural, Kung Fu, Fake Blood

Other: Recipient of the Paddy Crean Award and J.P. Fournier Award – Fight Directors Canada.

**STEPHEN LOBO**  lewis

For the Arts Club: Debut

Other Theatre: Kindred (Belfry Theatre); The Motherf\*\*ker with the Hat (Firehall Arts Centre); Jesus Hopped the ‘A’ Train (Performance Works); Closer (Havana); Home Free (Edinburgh Fringe); A Little Grain of Sand (White Bear)

Film & TV: Donkeyhead, Snowpiercer, Continuum, Travelers, Supernatural, The Flash, Arrow, Arctic Air, Afghan Luke, Godiva’s

Other: Four-time Leo award nominee and two-time winner; three-time UBCP/ ACTRA award nominee and two-time winner; graduate of Drama Centre London.

**PHAY MOORES** intimacy director

For the Arts Club: Debut

Other Theatre: Bunny (The Search Party, a Jessie award winner); Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again (UBC); The Girl Next Door (Painted Fern Productions) Film & TV FREYA (a Leo award winner); A Million Little Things season 5 (ABC); Superman & Lois (WB); Golden Delicious (dir. Jason Karman)

Other: Intimacy Director (theatre) and Coordinator (film) with Principal Intimacy Professionals. Excited to collaborate with Mindy Parfitt again, and with a stellar cast of lovely people!

**REBECCA MULVIHILL** stage manager

For the Arts Club: Do You Want What I Have Got: A Craigslist Cantata (debut, Apprentice SM, 2012); Educating Rita, Good People, King Charles III, The Shoplifters (ASM), Topdog/ Underdog, The Wedding Party, The (Post) Mistress (SM)

Other Theatre: favourite credits elsewhere: Harlem Duet (Bard on the Beach); Bunny, The Father (The Search Party); As dreams are made (Music on Main); Anywhere But Here (Electric Company Theatre); The Pearl Fishers, La Traviata (Vancouver Opera); Fall Away Home (Boca Del Lupo)

Other: Graduate of the University of Victoria.

**AMIR OFEK** set designer

For the Arts Club: My Granny the Goldfish (debut, 2010); The Graduate, The Importance of Being Earnest, Boeing, Boeing, Other Desert Cities, One Man, Two Guvnors, A Christmas Story, The Valley, The Men in White, Fun Home, Me & You, Buffoon

Other Theatre: Orfeo ed Euridice (Vancouver Opera); La Voix Humaine (Vancouver Opera); A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Bard on the Beach); Bunny (The Search Party); The Father (The Search Party)

Other: Graduate of Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design with a BFA in Theatre Set and Costume Design and an MFA in Theatre Set Design from Brandeis University.

Design Portfolio: amirofek.wordpress.com.

**MINDY PARFITT** director

For the Arts Club: Armstrong’s War (debut, 2013); The Valley, Me & You

Other Theatre: Bunny, The Amaryllis, The Father (The Search Party, for whom Mindy is the founding Artistic Director); Reverberations (Belfry Theatre); am a (collective creation with Amber Funk Barton); This Stays in the Room, Palace of the End, 4.48 Psychosis, You Are Here (Horseshoes & Hand Grenades)

Other: Mindy has the great privilege of working on a wide variety of theatre productions from world premieres to collective creations to community-based productions.

**DAWN PETTEN** emily

For the Arts Club: All My Sons (debut); The Birds and the Bees, Tear the Curtain!, The Penelopiad, A Flea in her Ear, Turquoise Years, Shear Madness, A Christmas Story

Other Theatre: Seven seasons of the East Van Panto, most recently The Little Mermaid (Theatre Replacement); Romeo and Juliet, Love’s Labour’s Lost, The Comedy of Errors (Bard on the Beach); A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Caravan Farm Theatre); Hedda Gabler, The Pavilion, Our Town (Osimous Theatre, a company that Dawn co-founded and coran with Craig Erickson); A Doll’s House (Chemainus Theatre).

Other: Graduate of UBC's BFA program; recipient of Jessie Richardson awards. Next up: reviving the one person show Every Brilliant Thing at WTC. Thanks to Mama.

**TED ROBERTS** lighting designer

For the Arts Club: Cruel Tears (debut, 1977, Tour Manager for national tour); Starting Here, Starting Now (debut as Designer, 1978); recently: Beneath Springhill, Noises Off, The Birds & the Bees

Other: Resident designer for the Arts Club since 1983.

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**Contact info@artsclub.com**

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Pre-Production personnel and stage crew are members of Local 118 of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, and guest services staff are members of Unifor 3000.

The Arts Club Theatre Company, one of the largest not-for-profit theatre companies in the country, is the principal gathering place for the theatrical arts in British Columbia. The organization is dedicated to the advancement of local artists telling stories from around the globe and, in particular, those of our region. From this, we believe that culture expands, an understanding of differences is nurtured, and art bursts forth. The Arts Club was founded in 1964 and is currently led by Artistic Director Ashlie Corcoran and Executive Director Peter Cathie White.

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