



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Department of Theatre & Film

Faculty of Arts

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The Parliament of the Birds

by Guillermo Verdecchia
Directed by Camyar Chaichian

November 23—December 3, 2022 | Frederic Wood Theatre

UBC OPERA



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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
School of Music

Welcome from Department Head



What a pleasure to welcome you back to Theatre at UBC and the Frederic Wood Theatre! After a “no-audience” 20-21, and a “regularly pivoting” 21-22 season, I am hopeful that this year will afford us the luxury of presenting the entire program as planned. The 2022-23 season is unique in that we will present each production in a different venue. Tonight, it is the proscenium-based Frederic Wood. *The Wolves* by Sarah Delappe will be presented in the Telus Studio in the Chan Centre. And the adaptation of Aristophanes’ *The Birds* by Yvette Nolan

will be presented in our adaptable studio space on University Boulevard, the Dorothy Somerset Studio. We are always proud to present the work of our emerging artists and tonight is no exception. You are seeing the dynamic work of student stage managers, designers, production personnel and actors.

It is exciting to welcome back Camyar Chaichian, one of our esteemed alumni, to lead the team for *The Parliament of the Birds*. If you have been a long-time follower of our work here, you may have seen his tremendous MFA production of Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage* on this very stage in 2007. Camyar led us to this beautiful and poetic version of Farid ud-Din Attar’s Sufi poem adapted by Guillermo Verdecchia. It was first presented as a podcast and radio play during the darkest days of the pandemic and produced by Toronto’s highly-acclaimed Soulpepper Theatre. You are seeing the world premiere of this work live and in-person. Guillermo is a four-time recipient of the Chalmers Canadian Play Award, as well as the Governor-General’s Award for Drama. We are grateful to him for allowing us the privilege to present its premiere.

The Parliament of the Birds takes us on an epic journey with characters in search of enlightenment and truth. The birds spend this journey exploring their connections to each other and to their environment. To me, this is one of the hallmarks of the live event. It is about connections – artists to artist, audience to artist and audience to audience. Thanks for coming on the journey tonight.

All the best,

Stephen Heatley

Department Head, Theatre and Film

Director’s Notes



Today’s global consciousness can be overwhelming and, at times, hopeless. Social systems that used to serve as anchors are hindered by a capricious economy, culture wars, military aggression, climate change crisis, pandemics and more. The anger we feel and the inequity we see are fueled in part by the cynically designed polarization of anti-social media and runaway algorithms. All this, with seemingly few leaders in sight who are pure hearted and courageous enough to pull us out of the darkness. Not entirely unlike today, over

800 years ago, the mystic poet, Attar, also lived in a world rife with tribal warfare, imperial aggression, and existential anxiety. A Sufi, his path was to believe, unwaveringly, that the only route to being at peace, was to find unity through Love. In this contemporary Canadian adaptation, Guillermo Verdecchia focusses his sharp lens on the despair of our current world and offers an unashamedly idealistic salve for our hearts in the form of a theatrical journey that reminds us, as we sit and breathe together in the theatre, that we are all inextricably linked.

Gratitude to the delightful cast, designers and crew, buoyed our spirits while, each rehearsal, I could not quiet my heartache and awe for the young in Iran who are risking life and limb to fulfill their dream of having the freedoms we enjoy. Zan, Zendegi, Azadi/Woman, Life, Freedom.

Camyar Chaichian

Director

We acknowledge that the UBC Vancouver campus is situated within the traditional, ancestral and unceded territory of the Musqueam.

The Parliament of the Birds runs 1 hour and 40 minutes with no intermission
Audience Advisory: Non-toxic, water-based haze effect

Cultural Context

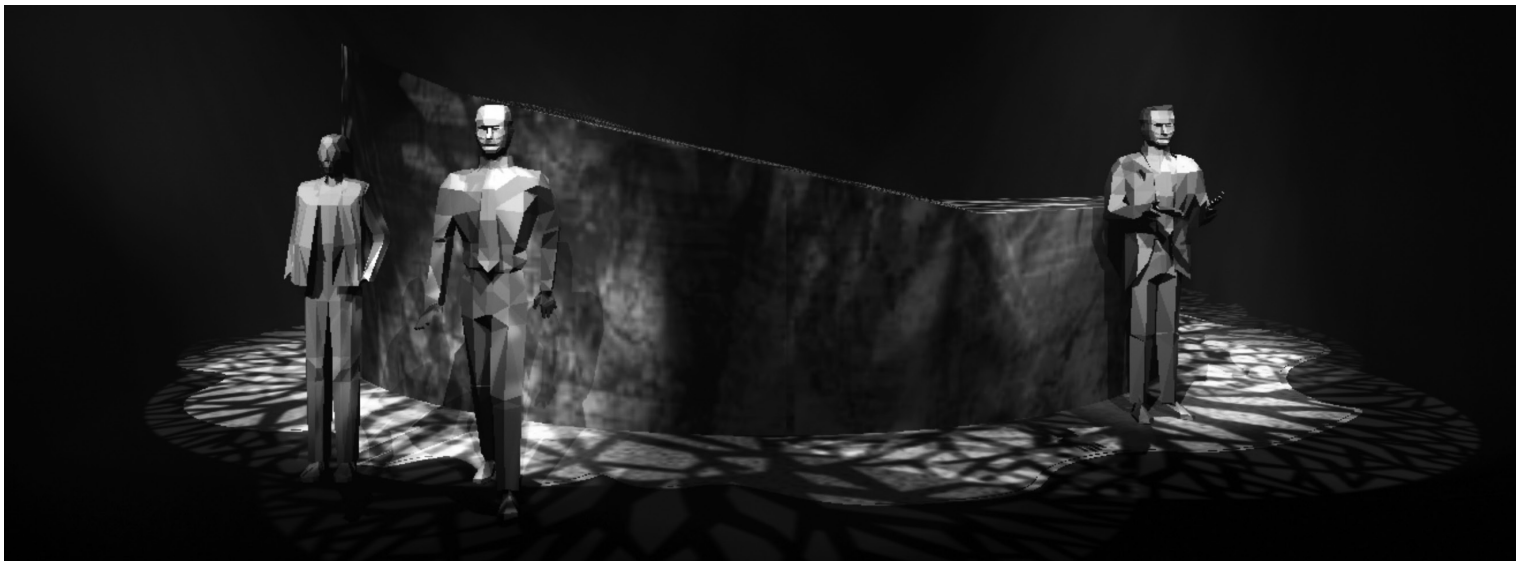
Rewritten as a play by contemporary Canadian writer and theatre artist Guillermo Verdecchia, *The Parliament of the Birds* is a welcome addition to world literature. It is a timely and gripping modern play adaptation of an already classical piece of world literature, *The Conference of the Birds*—an allegorical narrative poem by Persian Sufi poet Farid al-Din Attar (d. ca. 1220). For many years a pharmacist, Attar apparently authored some of his works while attending to his frequent customers. (Literally meaning “perfumer,” *attar* would especially refer to an “apothecary.”) Legends have it that Attar’s spiritual transformation occurred following his closing down the pharmacy, yet the career obviously left an impact on the writer’s tropes and mystical philosophy, reinforcing in them the medicine-inspired imagery—albeit in a deconstructed mystical manner. “O You—who are both the pain and the cure!” is, for instance, how a chapter in another of Attar’s mystical narrative poems, *Asrar-Namah* (*The Book of Mysteries*), opens. Or, a couplet in a mystical ghazal in his diwan reads, “Pour down pain on me and leave me untreated/ Since your pain is pleasanter than treatment.” For Attar, as with many other Muslim Sufis, human souls are shackled by the worldly on their upward path toward the Divine, which serves as a warning for an awakening in them of a genuine longing for the riddance of all such impediments.

That awakened desire is what eventually starts, in *The Conference of the Birds*, a long and laborious journey for a myriad of birds (symbolizing human souls)—under the humble leadership of the more knowledgeable and experienced Hoopoe—in search of the mythical “Simorgh [“Phoenix”], the king of all birds.” The birds embark on the journey in thousands. Numerous ones bring “excuses,” many others burn out or perish along the way, with each major incident occasioning a story shared by the Hoopoe or another bird. At last, thirty birds manage to pass through all seven “Valleys,” making it to Mount Qaf, the alleged abode of the Simorgh—only to realize that the Simorgh is none other than themselves (*si* [thirty] *morph* [birds]). Unity in diversity.

The Parliament of the Birds’s characters are “birds from all corners of the world,” thus tapping into the above key theme in Attar’s poem, while also replenishing it for a 21st-century global audience, with the Hoopoe giving all birds a familiar warning: “The world we’ve made is ...,” she regrets, “in great trouble. [. . .] The oceans are sick. The air is poisoned. The clouds are dying. Everywhere I look I see trouble, sorrow, violence. Terrible fights over scraps of land, over a handful of grain. Upheavals, misery, war.” Her list gets much longer later, when she enumerates even more things that afflict too many *from within*. As with Attar’s Hoopoe, however, Verdecchia’s leader-bird is ever-hopeful, thus not only depicting her wayfarers the extant afflictions but also informing them of, and helping them envision, their own “Simorgh”—hence their eventual collective journey towards it. While differing in many ways from its original, Verdecchia’s play adaptation shares an essential commonality with Attar’s poem, securing the captivating power of Verdecchia’s work among its audiences. Both writers caringly and shrewdly identify problems shared by more than a few around them; both aspire to solutions; and both turn these endeavours into collective stories—as rallying-cries for change that give both *pleasure* and *insight*.

And what place better than UBC’s Department of Theatre and Film for an enactment of Guillermo Verdecchia *The Parliament of the Birds* as an aesthetic call for love and justice? As I understand it, the play beautifully shares our institution’s vision of “inspiring people, ideas and actions for a better world.”

Mostafa Abedinifard, PhD
Department of Asian Studies



Lighting concept renderings by **Ben Paul**

Q&A with the Creative Team

Ben Paul Lighting

What is your process for creating a lighting plot?

Creating a lighting plot is an exciting journey that takes great patience and good understanding of both the show and the venue where it takes place. As the design meetings occur and the rehearsal process advances, you quickly begin to understand how your design needs to aid the story. There are lots of adaptations made to the plot as ideas are shared and realized. Therefore, the final lighting plot for *The Parliament of the Birds* looks nothing like the drawings from back in September. It is all a part of the creative process.

What are some of your favorite lighting effects that you've designed for the show and why?

My favorite moment from this lighting design is when we travel to the Valley of Detachment and see the Astrologer draw a map of the stars and planets in the sand. There is something so captivating and beautiful about this part of the journey. I invite you to enjoy this moment, while experiencing flourishing curiosity and wonder.

Jasmine Liu Set/Scenic

What drove you to become a Scenic Designer?

One thing that made me want to be a scenic designer was the idea of seeing my imagination become reality in the physical world. When I was a kid, I liked to play make believe with my doll house. The doll house is like a set, in that it creates the feelings of the world that the dolls live in, as well as where all the imagination and stories get created. Scenic design gives me the opportunity to share my creativity with the audience. With every show that I helped design, I hope to bring to the audience the same sense of wonder that I used to feel when I played with my doll house.

What would you say is the show that has affected you the most?

The show that has affected me the most is *Bombogenesis* directed by Steven Hill when I was in SFU, where I assisted with set design for the first time. Throughout the designing process I really enjoyed collaborating with different kinds of people, and there was always so much to learn from them. The feeling of working on something together to achieve a common goal with the excitement of seeing it realized is precious to me.

Muleba Chailunga Costume

How do you decide what a character should wear in a particular scene?

The characters in this show each confront their own shortcomings and undergo a significant internal transformation over the course of their shared journeys. I aimed to reflect this externally by starting each character in clothes that serve as a social armour, projecting the image with which they most comfortable to the world. As they grow, their armour is gradually removed and replaced with pieces that deemphasize how they once wished to be perceived, instead highlighting the strength they eventually find in their vulnerability.

What are some of your favorite costumes that you've designed for the show and why?

As far as aesthetic goes, my favorite costume changes with my mood. The loudness of Parrot's jogger set and Moth's dramatic head to toe silhouette are locked in a never ending battle in my mind over which design I love more. That being said, creation-wise my favorite pieces were Duck's first sweater and Hoopoe's jeans. Over the course of this show, I have had the honor of working with the most enthusiastically collaborative build team a designer could hope for and they each contributed to crocheting bits of Duck's sweater and/or painting Hoopoe's jeans. There's something so special about getting to use these one of a kind garments that we put together by so many hands, sitting in a room together. Every time I look at those pieces in particular, I get a little sentimental because I feel like I'm looking at an old yearbook.

Brendan Lowe Sound

What are some of the most important skills for a sound designer to have?

One of the most important skills I believe a sound designer should have is the ability to formulate an idea of what the show should sound like in your head. The second is to be able to pick up on the various attributes of a soundtrack and allow them to dictate what you feel when listening to them in order to make a decision on where to start them, where to end them, and what lines feel the most natural to start the soundtrack on.

What problems did you face while designing this show?

One of the challenges I ran into while working on this particular show included the fact that I was flying solo for a good portion of the creative process; having a second set of ears on a project like this is an invaluable resource.

The Parliament of the Birds

CAST

Christian Billet Archer King, Slave 2, Hermit, Old One, Traveller, Border Patrol, Herald, Brother

Air Dayman Pigeon, Monk

Sera Jorgensen Crow

Adriana McKinnon Sparrow, Servant, Slave 1

Kristi McQuade Hoopoe

Lauren Ordeman Falcon

Nicole-Anne Smith Duck, Queen

Peihwen Tai Parrot

Caylee Watrin Nightingale, Princess, Bat, Walker, Astrologer, Joseph

Jasmine White Cardinal, Moth

CREATIVE TEAM

Camyar Chaichian Director

Parmiss Sehat Asst. Director

Jasmine Liu Scenic Designer

Taylor Wen Asst. Scenic Designer

Ben Paul Lighting Designer

Hayashida Kuniyoshi Asst. Lighting Designer

Brendan Lowe Sound Designer

Victoria McNeil Asst. Sound Designer

Muleba Chailunga Costume Designer

Victoria Moo Asst. Costume Designer

Midori O'Connor Stage Manager

Finnley O'Brien Asst. Stage Manager

Yuting Yue Asst. Stage Manager

Harlow Nguyen Stage Management Swing

Kathleen Baldakin Production Assistant

Ariana Barer Intimacy Coach

CREW

Shaliya Ma Lighting Board Operator

Victoria McNeil Sound Operator

Isabelle Barlow Head Scenic Painter

Tariro Motsi Asst. Scenic Painter

SET RUN CREW

Annika Chan, Vincie Lin

COSTUME RUN CREW

Rachel Chan, David Siu, Stephanie Shih

SET & PROPS CREW

Grycel Tercero, Tiana Khandelwal, Amelia Wagenaar, Isabelle Barlow, Jules Sassi, Marilia Saito, Nishi Praveen Kumar, Huda Shawwash, Sophie Fougere, Mary Anne William, Aaron Au, Hana Yaguchi, Kristine Wu, Maddie Stepler, Mikka Visperas, Samantha Cheng, Jack Mosher, Tariro Motsi, Hannah Abbott

PAINT CREW

Aaron Au, Luella DeGeer, Nyssa Estrella, Kaileigh Funnell, Michelle Lee, Victoria Moo Pak Hei, Yun Shim, David Siu, Nina Yu

LIGHTING CREW

Aaron Au, Annika Chan, Freddi Li, Jasmine Liu, Jack Mosher, Jaddi Sze, Holly Theobald, Yun Shim, Julia Sassi

COSTUME SHOP CREW

Julia Chase, Colton Albee, Wren-Harlow Gillepsie, Marilia Saito, Grycel Tercero, Lauren Rankin, Harlow Nguyen, Elly Ich

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THTR 308 Sound class, Mercan Dede for his generous permission to use his music, Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, Liesl Javik, Celeste Mol, Lindsay Lachance, Olivia Michiko Gagnon

FACULTY ADVISORS

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Jennifer Stewart Scenic Advisor

Brad Powers Technical Production Advisor

Lorraine West Scenic Paint Advisor

Robert Gardiner Lighting Advisor

Patrick Pennefather Sound Advisor

Christine Reimer Costume Advisor

Inga McLaughlin Stage Management Advisor

Kunji Ikeda Movement Coach

Tanya Elchuk Voice Coach

STAFF

Borja Brown Production Manager

Cam Cronin Department Administrator

Ryan Murcar Scenic Technical Direction

Lynn Burton Head of Properties

Jodi Jacyk Head of Wardrobe

Erika Champion, Abby Levis, Jeremy Vreeken Production Staff

Amy McDougall, Holly Andersen Staff Costume Support

Linda Pitt Communications Specialist

Sarah Crauder Film Program Administrator

Tony Koelwyn Audience Services Manager

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Bhagyashree Chatterjee Communications Assistant

Sophie Fougere, Madeleine Polak Costume WorkLearn Assistants

Kaileigh Funnell, Finnley O'Brien Properties WorkLearn Assistants

CREATIVE COLLABORATORS

Jonathan Wood Graphic Designer

Javier R. Sotres Photographer

Cast



Christian Billet

Christian Billet is a fourth-year BFA student from Vancouver. In high school, Christian spent his time in improv classes and main stage productions, most notably as Pharaoh in his school's production of *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (2019). Post-secondary, Christian enjoyed being a part of productions including *Arlecchino* in *What's Wrong with Frank* (2021) and *For All Time*, A Shakespearian motion-capture project for the Vancouver Art Gallery (2021).



Air Dayman

Air Dayman is a Fourth Year BFA Acting student from Estevan, Saskatchewan. She has been in productions including *School of Rock* (Summer), *Footloose: The Musical* (Ariel) and *937* (Elise). After moving to Vancouver, she has been a part of the short film *Barstool* (Lorelai) and the theater productions *Coriolanus* (Ensemble), *What's Wrong With Frank?* (Veronique), and *Lost But Found* (a UBC Devised Production). Air would like to thank her family for always being a safe and supportive nest to come back to.



Sera Jorgensen

Sera Jorgensen is ecstatic to be taking flight into this production during her final year at UBC. Most recently, she played Dar in *Oranging*, a student-led production. UBC credits include *Barstool* (Krystal), *Coriolanus* (ensemble), *What's Wrong With Frank?* (Pulcinella). Other credits include *Encounter* (Woman), *The Madwoman of Chaillot* (Constance), and *Turn it Off* (Alia). Sera is forever grateful to everyone who has encouraged her to take wing.



Adriana McKinnon

Adriana McKinnon is a fourth-year BFA student double-majoring in Acting and Film Studies. Adriana has recently performed with UBC as Virgilia in *Coriolanus*, and Juliette in *What's Wrong with Frank?*. Adriana previously trained with TUTS Musical Theatre Camp and Deas Island Dance. She studied dance for fourteen years and won awards at dance competitions. Adriana is honored to be the 2022 recipient of the John Emerson Memorial Scholarship in Arts.



Kristi McQuade

Kristi (she/her) is a fourth-year BFA Acting student originally from Ktunaxa amakis (Calgary) on Treaty 7 Territory. For UBC: *Coriolanus*, the Commedia dell'arte show *What's Wrong With Frank?*. Other select credits include: *Into The Woods* (Storybook Theatre), *Dirty Laundry: The Next Generation* (Lunchbox Theatre), *Family Law* (The CW), *Who Is Riley Oakes?* (Ron Devitt). Kristi also had the pleasure doing motion capture for the Vancouver Art Gallery in *For All Time: The Shakespeare First Folio*, and SIGGRAPH 2022: Future Stage with Evil Eye Pictures (LA) and Sawmill Studios (YVR). She hopes you enjoy this magical show and thanks her family for the endless support.



Lauren Ordeman

Lauren would like to recognize the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory that she is given the opportunity to play and learn on, the land of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people. Lauren's previous work includes the 2021 Commedia production *What's Wrong with Frank?* as Genevieve and the 2022 production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* as Titus Lartius. Tonight, audience and production members fly as one. Soar!



Nicole Anne Smith

Nicole is a fourth-year acting student from Toronto. She has also trained at Vancouver Acting School and AADA in NYC. For UBC: *Coriolanus* (Cominius), *What's Wrong with Frank?* Commedia dell'Arte (Il Dottore). Upcoming: *Naked Cinema Barstool* (Lindsay), *The Wolves* (#11). Nicole is grateful for the emotional and transformative journey that this production has facilitated, both on and off the stage. She thanks her instructors and cast-mates for their continued support.

Cast (cont'd)



Peihwen J. Tai

Peihwen J. Tai is a Taiwanese-Canadian BFA actor at UBC, double-majoring in Japanese. Born in Zhongli, Taiwan, she spent 2 years at National Taiwan University before transferring to UBC. Her Vancouver theatre credits include *Final Boarding Call* (SFU), *What's Wrong with Frank?* (UBC), *Oil* (UBC), *Oranging*, and *Zoetic* (Vancouver Fringe). She wishes to express immense gratitude towards her family and loved ones for supporting and encouraging her love for acting.



Caylee Watrin

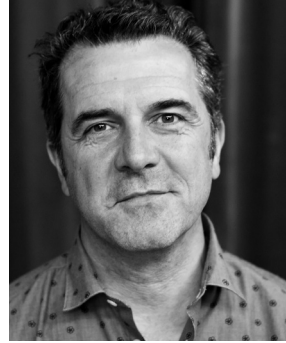
Caylee is an actor from Abbotsford, BC. UBC credits include: *Ma Singer in Oil* (2022, Moya O'Connell), and the 2021 Commedia dell'arte show: *What's Wrong With Frank?* (Susan Bertoia). Caylee has worked as an actor and first assistant director for the indie limited series *I Killed Maddie Forbes* (2022, Ava Maria Safai), and has acted in short films and produced music videos with prod company First Floor Collective (2020-2022). Caylee would like to thank her teachers, her Mom, Dad and classmates (informal teachers) for helping her put a foundation in place.



Jasmine White

Jasmine is a fourth-year BFA Acting student from Calgary, AB. She found her love of acting at a young age making plays and forcing her younger brothers to perform in them. Her Vancouver credits include *Coriolanus* (UBC), *What's Wrong with Frank?* (UBC), directing the musical *Mamma Mia* (UBC) and co-writing/acting in the film *Barstool* (UBC). In Calgary she performed in many shows, including *Grease*, *The Crucible* and *Anne of Green Gables*. Jasmine is thrilled to be performing alongside her friends and is grateful to her parents, Gillian and Ryan, supporting her to continue following her dreams.

Creative Team



Guillermo Verdecchia Playwright

Guillermo Verdecchia is a multi-award-winning playwright, director and dramaturge living and working in Toronto. He is delighted that his dear friend and colleague Camyar Chaichian who first introduced him to the Conference of the Birds years ago is directing this adaptation.



Camyar Chaichian Director

Camyar has been working in theatre, film, television, opera and radio for nearly three decades. As a multi-award-winning director and actor, he has worked across Canada and the United States. He is also a published playwright and founder of NewWorld Theatre. He is currently the Community Cultural Development Manager for the City of Richmond where he has been working for the past twelve years. As a graduate of UBC's BFA Acting and MFA Directing, Camyar is excited and honored to be back at the Frederic Wood Theatre. Camyar would like to thank his wife, Lorena, and his children Elijah, Tatiana, and Jasmine.

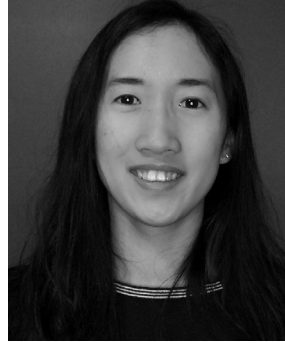


Parmiss Sehat Assistant Director

Parmiss Sehat (she/her) is an Iranian-Canadian, Jessie award winning actor and BFA graduate of UBC. She works in theatre, film and television and is incredibly grateful to be assistant directing on such a beautiful play. Various credits can be found on IMDb and upcoming projects on her instagram @parmisssehat. She'd like to dedicate **this work to the people of Iran**. To Woman, Life, Freedom. #iranrevolution2022

**Ben Paul** Lighting Design

Ben Paul is a lighting designer, stage manager, and production assistant from New Westminster, BC. Currently a fourth-year BFA Theatre Design & Production student at UBC, he also holds a diploma in Stagecraft & Event Technology from Douglas College. Ben has worked on several live events, including the *PNE Fair* and *Canada Sevens*. Recent credits: *Coriolanus* (Assistant Lighting Designer, UBC Theatre) and *The Nutcracker* (Stage Manager, Royal City Youth Ballet).
benpaul.ca

**Jasmine Liu** Scenic Design

Taiwanese Canadian set designer Jasmine Liu is currently in her last year of undergraduate studies at The University of British Columbia. Growing up studying music, she uses her knowledge in music to broaden her prospects in her projects. With passion in various art forms, she is willing to experiment and explore different materials to extend her creativity. Some of her recent works include shorts for a future TV series called *Blame The Accountant!* as art director, and a commercial called *The Wild Things* for BC Lions as prop master.

**Muleba Chailunga** Costume Design

Muleba is a theatre design and production student at UBC who is honored to be head costume designer for *The Parliament of the Birds*. A multifaceted creative, her past credits include acting as costume assistant for UBC's production of *Oil* and head set designer for the UBC Player's Club's production of *6 Characters In Search of An Author*. She is looking forward to gaining more momentum as a designer.

**Midori O'Connor** Stage Management

Midori is a 4th year Theatre: Design and Production major. Her main focus of study is stage management, so she is very excited to be the Stage Manager on a UBC Main Stage production. Previous stage management credits include: *The Greeks* - Assistant Stage Manager (UBC), *Chronicles of the Afterlife* - Co-Stage Manager (The UBC Collab), *Coriolanus* - Assistant Stage Manager (UBC), and *Something Rotten* - Assistant Stage Manager (Theatre Under The Stars).

**Brendan Lowe** Sound Design

Brendan is a 3rd year BFA Production and Design student specializing in lighting and sound. He has been involved in the industry since he was 16 and is excited to present his first show as a sound designer at UBC. Other shows Brendan has worked on at UBC include *Oil* and *The Last Jubilee*. Brendan would like to thank Patrick Pennefather and Robert Gardiner for their continuing support throughout the creative process.

Thy Neighbour's Wife

BY TARA BEAGAN

DIRECTED BY MELISSA OEI
MENTOR DIRECTOR TAMARA MCCARTHY

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Jocelyn Sioui

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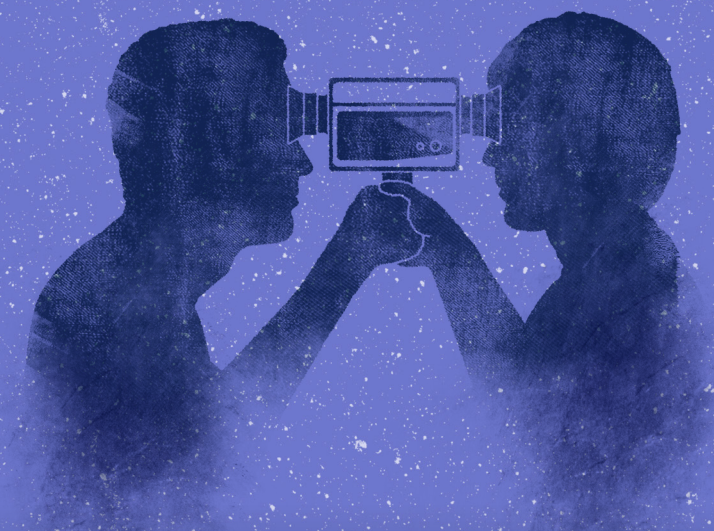
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Directed by Michelle Olson

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The Wolves

by Sarah DeLappe
Directed by Leora Morris

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