

## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

### **Alyson Leah**

Being a part of *Godspell* is very exciting for Alyson as it is her first theatre gig out of school! However, acting has always been a passion of hers. Before attending Bishop's University she attended St. Georges High School and John Abbott College and received the opportunity to play many comedic/character roles, such as Yente the Matchmaker in "Fiddler on the Roof" (at 13 years old), Miss Adelaide in "Guys and Dolls" (at 16), Professor Kokintz, which was originally written as a male role, in "The Mouse That Roared" (at 18) and her absolute favorite, Princess Puffer, an opium den owner with 5 inch nails, in "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." She also started doing voice work at ten years old, when, after doing a two-line part on "Caillou" was cast as three-year-old Vicita on "Arthur." She can also do many silly people tricks such as wiggling her ears and touching her nose with her tongue and is terrified of fish and other sea creatures.

### **Dane Stewart (Jesus)**

Dane hails from the Maritimes where he spent his childhood learning how to be nice to everyone. Most nights when he's locking his door, he misses the land where he could leave his door unlocked without worry of being robbed/catnapped. He is currently finishing his degree at McGill where he spends half his time studying theatre and the other half playing percussion. He spends his free time helping run McGill's Players' Theatre and running around the city to help out the band Motel Raphael with his vibraphone experience. The only person who inspires Dane more than himself, is the co-star of *Brokeback Mountain*: Jake Gyllenhaal, with whom Dane shares an unsettling obsession (alongside the entire global gay community). Dane is fearfully excited to be a part of this production.

### **Elizabeth Conway (John/Judas)**

Elizabeth Conway spent half of her life in Hershey, Pennsylvania and Bronxville, New York, and is thrilled to cap off her last year of her four year stay in Montreal with this creatively tickling production of *Godspell*. Elizabeth will be playing the role of John the Baptist/Judas, and is excited to explore the gender bending creation that comes with this dynamic role. Some of her other favorite, most challenging parts include Yitzhak in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, a third of the Warden in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, a third of the Daughter in *A Dream Play*, and all three girlfriends in *Company*. (Perhaps three should be her lucky number.) Elizabeth has studied clowning and mask with Prof. Myrna Wyatt Selkirk at McGill University, and has a certificate in acting from the Stella Adler Summer Conservatory in New York. She appeared alongside Karen Allen of "Indiana Jones" fame in the 2002 short film "Smallroom Dancing," directed by Sports Illustrated photographer Neil Leifer. Elizabeth has studied tap, jazz, and ballroom dancing, and was the 2008 winner of the NATS Allegheny Region Musical Theatre Voice Competition. Recently, Elizabeth originated the principle role in the award winning musical "21 Days" at the 2012 Toronto Fringe Festival. Most importantly, however Elizabeth received the highly coveted "Punniest Thespian Award" at McGill University. Elizabeth used to be an avid recreational fencer.

### **Elyse Lewis**

Elyse Lewis hails from the small New England town of Sharon, Massachusetts. She relocated to Montreal to attend McGill University, where she will complete her BA in Theatre Studies and Women's Studies this December. At McGill, she has studied clowning and mask with Professor Myrna Wyatt Selkirk. Montreal credits include Players' Theatre's *Company* (Susan), McGill

English Department's *A Dream Play* (Billposter, Dean of Law), and V-Day McGill's 2011 *Vagina Monologues* ("They Beat the Girl Out of My Boy"). She also performed in this summer's Toronto Fringe Festival as Cynthia in Bad Dress Production's original musical *21 Days*. Elyse is an active member of Queer McGill, where she held the positions of 2011-2012 Co-Administrator and 2010-2011 Political Action Coordinator. As an amateur burlesque act, Elyse has performed in and hosted Queer McGill's Drag and Burlesque Show. In high school, she was an active member and leader in the Jewish youth organization B'nai Brith Youth Organization.

### **Emily Skahan**

Emily Skahan is a Concordia theatre graduate and a founding member of Montreal Indie pop sensation Motel Raphael. The band includes, among others, *Godspell's* very own Dane Stewart. When she isn't acting or playing with the band, Emily is a licensed street musician, and if you catch sight of her in the dank bowels of the metro, chances are excellently large that she'd be happy to talk.

### **Eva Petris**

As far back as she can remember Eva has always had a passion for musical theatre. Dancing since 3 years old, she learned the basics of jazz and ballet and excelled in the art of Tap dancing, thanks to the incredible Ethel Bruneau. Eva was also chosen out of hundreds of auditioners, where a select few were able to go to New York City and be taught by some of Broadway's brightest as part of Broadway Dance Center's Musical Theatre Performance Project. Most recently Eva was featured in the Dora Wasserman Yiddish Theatre Production of *On Second Avenue* where she had the opportunity to sing and fall in love with the Yiddish language. Outside of rehearsing for *Godspell*, Eva makes lattes at Starbucks during the day and devotes the rest of her time to making herself a better performer.

### **Laurent Bergeron**

Still studying in pursuit of a classical lyrical career, Laurent is a talented young Montreal singer. *Godspell* is his first experience with a major independent musical production. Laurent has been attracted to music since childhood, his close family having been very active in the Canadian and International Opera scene. In addition to his studies in opera, Laurent graduated from College Jean-de-Brebeuf in Communications and Theatre studies. Following his collegiate studies, Laurent pursued classical training with former MET singer, Madame Colette Boky. Fluent in English and French, Laurent has also developed his ability to sing in three additional languages: Italian, German and Spanish. Laurent is so pleased to have been chosen for this production of *Godspell* and is overwhelmed with joy to be working with such a talented and experienced cast. Previous productions include: *Starmania*, *Le Fantôme de L'Opera*, *D'La Maine à La Rue Papineau* (a collage of select Michel Tremblay's plays), and a series of four individual private classical recitals.

### **Melissa Stavrakis**

Melissa Stavrakis is thrilled to be part of the cast of *Godspell*! Hailing from Montreal, Melissa is a singer and actress who loves musical theatre. She's played Grizabella in *Cats*, Veta in the play *Harvey*, and Ms. Caroline Bingley in *Pride & Prejudice* among others. Melissa has training in Stage Combat and can sword fight in the classical Italian style. When she is not at rehearsal, she is working on her impressions of such performers like Stevie Nicks, Diana Ross, Katy Perry, Gwen Stefani, Ellie Goulding, and Florence of Florence + the Machine.

### **Olivier Auger**

Oli is a talented singer-songwriter. His audience takes note of his passion for folk-pop genre, his catchy melodies and his deep lyrics about hope and love. Oli finished his collegiate studies in song writing and in doing so was able to develop his acting skills. Oli was selected to play the main character in the musical, *In Transit*, a Segal Centre production with the Wandering Stars theatre group. He was completely taken over by a love for the stage when he was invited to open shows for François Cousineau and Ima. This is what pushed him to concentrate on song writing and produce his first EP-album "Rage For Fire", containing three of his recent creations. Oli is now available on iTunes, Facebook and other websites. Just type: "Oli-Rage For Fire."

### **Samantha Chaulk**

Samantha Chaulk has worked for professional theatre companies in Newfoundland for three years and has recently completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre. Samantha has come to Montreal from the not so tropical, yet ever-exotic island of Newfoundland to explore, learn French, and to get experience acting and creating her own work. She is a singer-songwriter and loves to sing jazz, funk and soul music, and is currently trying her best to find people to jam with so as to work her way in to the Montreal music scene. Samantha loves clown and is very grateful for the unexpected amount of clowning opportunities that have come her way since moving to Montreal. Samantha also loves vaudeville, James Brown, *I Love Lucy* and making homemade fried chicken.

### **Shannon Tasic McNally**

Shannon is a graduate of the Dawson's professional theatre program. Since graduating from "The Dome" in 2010 she has had the pleasure of performing in a wide variety of Montreal musicals ranging from *EDGES* (a song cycle by Processed Theatre), and the Segal Centre for Performing Arts' Wandering Star School Tour, to performing with Ben Folds at the 2012 Just for Laughs XXX, hosted by Bob Saget. Her last role was playing Magenta in *The Rocky Horror Show* at Mainline Theatre. Born in Toronto, Shannon moved to Mexico at the age of 7 where she became fluent in Spanish, studied dance and music, while learning that the best things in life really do come free. At age 13, she returned to Canada with her family, settling in Montreal where she continued her studies in language, as well as dancing, acting and singing. While Shannon loves musical theater, she is also involved in a variety of screen acting projects, including one with Montreal based Brain Child Productions. She is honored to be one of the 13 actors in *Godspell* and glad to be able to participate in this wonderful team. Besides acting, Shannon enjoys old school cartoons, reading magazines starting at the back, and wearing matching coloured socks (even though this rarely happens). Her motto: "Be nice to the people on the way up, you will meet them on the way down."

### **Vladimir Alexis**

Born and raised in Montreal, Vladimir Alexis fell in love with acting when he went to Disney World and was completely mesmerized at the age of 4. Ten years later, he was a full triple threat, doing shows with dance troops, school plays and being part of his church's choir. Now, this eccentric ball of energy has worked with theatre companies such as the Segal Centre and Black Theatre Workshop. Next year, he will be part of the French production of *Hairspray* by Denise Filiatrault.

### **Zachary Creatchman**

Zachary Creatchman is a graduate of John Abbott College, where he studied for three years in the professional theatre program. Before and during that time, Zachary was involved in a band with his brother Jesse called Zach & Jesse. Close to the end of their partnership, they were invited to Calgary to be interviewed on the radio by Terry Demonte. Now Zachary has been putting all his efforts into pursuing a career in acting. Zachary could have been seen most recently in Persephone's production of *Hamlet* where he played various roles, and is very much looking forward to *Godspell*.

### **CREATIVE TEAM BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **Natalie Gershtein (Producer)**

Co-founder and producer of BCT, Natalie Gershtein is currently working towards her M.F.A in Theatre Management & Producing at Columbia University in New York City. Prior to moving to New York, Ms. Gershtein studied theatre and religion at McGill University for four years. Ms. Gershtein is well-known in the Montreal theatre community and has completed internships with Teesri Duniya Theatre and the Segal Centre for Performing Arts. Ms. Gershtein has produced and directed award-winning shows in both Montreal and New York. Her production of *Jump*, which Ms. Gershtein wrote and produced, won the award for Best Play in New York City's Network One-Act Festival (2012). Other Montreal accomplishments include writing and producing *Awakening* in Players' Theatre at McGill University (2012) and co-directing the McGill English Department's main stage production of *A Dream Play* (2012) with Professor Myrna Wyatt Selkirk.

Related to arts management, Ms. Gershtein has received stage manager training through Equity in the *S.M.ing The Arts Conference* (2011). She has stage managed a total of six productions, working at the Dancemakers Studio in Toronto (2008), the Fringe Festival in Montreal (2011) and several McGill University productions. As a part of the Montreal Fringe, she was both the stage manager and the venue manager for an original Turtle of Shoe production (2011). Ms. Gershtein has coupled her management experiences in the theatre by taking on other creative roles, such as dramaturg, playwright and director. She directed seven plays at McGill University, including *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose, *Ashes to Ashes* by Harold Pinter and *Songs for a New World* by Jason Robert Brown. At McGill, she was able to explore theatre using a theoretical approach, while combining her academic studies in religion. Combining religion and theatre allowed Ms. Gershtein to explore human relationships using history, culture and religion as a means of expression and self-realization. Ms. Gershtein has had a paper published in *Canons: Religious Studies Undergraduate Journal* exploring the implications of Japanese Noh Drama in Mahayana Buddhism, and has also presented her research on Buddhism and dramatic writing at the 2012 Arts Undergraduate Research Conference at McGill University.

In New York, Natalie has worked for 101 Productions, helping to organize the opening nights for such Broadway shows as *Annie* and *The Heiress*. She is currently working for Snug Harbor Productions, and began by assisting with their Off-Broadway opening of *The Vagina Monologues*' playwright and activist Eve Ensler's new play, *Emotional Creature*.

**Calli Armstrong** (*Director*)

Co-founder and artistic director of BCT, Calli Armstrong is a theatre practitioner with more than 20 years of experience directing, producing, stage managing, and performing. She has been a director for the Unweeded Garden Theatre Company (2001-2003; Sudbury, Ontario), and has also directed large-scale productions for McMaster University and McGill University. Ms. Armstrong is also a drama therapist (M.A. Creative Arts Therapies, 2007) and a Ph.D. candidate in counselling psychology (McGill University, 2013). In this capacity, Ms. Armstrong has worked with a number of non-profit organizations including the Centre for the Arts and Human Development, which is a creative arts therapies centre for adults with developmental disabilities. She is also the founder of the Drama Club at the Teapot (La Théière), a seniors' 50+ centre in Lachine, Québec.

Ms. Armstrong has experience using theatre to benefit the Montreal community: to raise money for charitable organizations, build dialogue, raise awareness, and decrease discrimination. From 2005-2008, Ms. Armstrong was involved in Troupe Becket Players productions on the West Island of Montreal, an organization dedicated to raising funds for children's charities. Ms. Armstrong has also been involved with four different Playback Theatre groups over the past four years, including Montreal Playback Theatre and Third Space Playback. This form of theatre can be used to address conflict and to build empathy, dialogue, and community among individuals and groups.

Ms. Armstrong has vast experience as a leader and scholar. Ms. Armstrong has taught at McGill University, Concordia University, and McMaster University, and has been an invited speaker for training sessions (e.g. playback theatre training for staff at Aulneau Renewal Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba) and conferences (e.g. National American Drama Therapy Association Conference). She has given and/or authored more than 40 presentations and workshops. Her work has been presented at regional (Association des Art-Thérapeutes du Québec), national (Canadian Psychological Association), and international (International Margaret Cavendish Society) conferences. In 2013, Ms. Armstrong will begin a postdoctoral fellowship in Concordia University's Creative Arts Therapies department.

**David Terriault** (*Musical Director*)

A Montreal native, David Terriault is currently studying classical piano at McGill University. Recent credits as a musical director include *Créatures* (CETM), *The Prince and the Pauper* (CETM & Midtown International Theatre Festival), *The Wild Party* (In Your Face Entertainment), *Songs for a New World* (Players' Theatre) and assistant director for *On Second Avenue* (Segal Centre). Before his involvement in musical theatre, David won and participated in several classical music competitions across Quebec such as Canadian Music Competition, Concours de Musique Classique de Sorel-Tracy, Festival de Musique Classique de Montreal and Concours de Musique Classique de Sillery. David is also a choir conductor currently working with *Harmonicoeur* and *Jazz, Pop et Talons Hauts*.

**Ghislaine Doté** (*Choreographer*)

Originally from the Central African Republic, Ghislaine Doté grew up in Ivory Coast where she learned dancing, singing, and martial arts. After a BA in contemporary dance in Montreal, Ghislaine Doté founded her company, Virtuo Danse, and both choreographs and composes the music of her pieces. Ghislaine is the recipient of several grants and awards for her artistic work. A performer at heart, Ghislaine has danced for several companies and productions: company

Sinha Danse, company Flak, Cirque du Soleil, SYTYCD Canada (2008, Toronto finalist), Just For Laughs, etc. Her love for music and expression has led her to musical theatre. She was part of the cast of *Starmania* (Plamondon/Berger, 2008-2009). She has appeared in the Yiddish production *On Second Avenue* (Segal Center, 2012), she was also in the cast of *The Virgin Courtesan* (DB Clarke Theatre, 2012). Ghislaine is thrilled to be choreographing *Godspell* for Beautiful City Theatre.

**Myrna Wyatt Selkirk** (*Creative Collaborator*)

Myrna Wyatt Selkirk is a professor at McGill University, where she teaches acting and directing. Her current passions include clown, mask and physical theatre. During her sabbatical this year she is investigating all three. As part of her collaboration with BCT, she recently led the *Godspell* cast in a series of workshops on clown and play.

**Eric Chad** (*Technical Director*)

Eric Chad is a fourth year Pharmacology student and would love nothing more than to abandon all science and join the circus (but actually). Hailing from Ottawa, he has been swept up into the theatre community at McGill. After meeting Calli on a production of *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, he is extremely excited to work with her in this exciting new space! Furthermore, he is elated to be working with such an amazing production team.

**Chloé Fortier** (*Lighting Designer*)

Since graduating from the Stage Techniques program of L'École du Show Business, Chloé has worked in many theatre and music venues as a lighting technician. She is now the head of the lighting department at the Cabaret Latulipe and is a technician at the Segal Centre. Her passion for lighting design has grown over time. This year, she has worked as a lighting designer on the UdeM musical *Jekyll and Hyde*, and with the choreographer Nika Stein on the show *Autour d'Eau*. In this production of *Godspell*, she is using her interests in music, theatre and dance to bring the spectator into the universe of the play through the lighting.

**Mathieu Turmel** (*Sound Designer*)

Born and raised in Ottawa, Ontario, Mathieu first moved to Montreal in 2010 to go to school to become a lighting technician. The original plan was to go back to Ottawa, but fortunately for Mathieu, he found friends, love and plenty of work in Montreal! So he decided to stay right here, in his "adopted city", Montreal. Mathieu graduated from L'École du Show-Business in 2011, and he is excited by the new challenge of working as Sound Designer with BCT.

**Katrina Carrier** (*Costume Designer*)

Katrina Carrier is a wardrobe artist from Little Britain, Ontario. After graduating from the George Brown College Fashion Design & Technique Program in 2005 she has pursued a career as an independent fashion designer, milliner, and costumer for theatre and film. She first found her love for theatre while volunteering for the Scugog Choral Society in Port Perry. Some of her recent credits include Costume Assistant for the short film *LIAR* by writer director Adam Garnet Jones, costume assistant for *Berlin Blues & Cavan Blazers* at 4th Line Theatre, costume assistant for Rosanna Saracino's production of *Provenance* at the Randolph Academy for the Performing Arts, co-costume designer for Theatre Elusive's *Anthony & Cleopatra*, and co-costume designer for Fallen Rocks' production of *The Rocky Horror Show*.

**Jordana Weiss** (*Stage Manager*)

Jordana Weiss is a stage manager. She has been working on gaining more skills and training herself to become the best stage manager possible. She has held many other positions in theatre, such as Executive Director of Players' Theatre, lute finder, and spotlight operator at Café Cleopatra. Her two favourite productions that she has worked on so far have been *Measure for Measure* (she fell in love) and *The Alchemist* (she made a fairy fly, created an entire working laboratory and exploded a potato). In her spare time, she is an avid jam maker and budding confectioner. Her ideal project would be stage managing a theatrical version of *Trailer Park Boys*.

**Rachel Lebowitz** (*Assistant Stage Manager*)

Rachel was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, the US of A, and has had so much fun adapting to Montreal winters over the last three years. This past summer, Rachel read approximately 97 plays, developed and got over a brief shopping addiction, and ASMed José Rivera's new play *Brainpeople*, during which she learned how to use glow tape and prepare tiger meat. When Rachel is not stage managing or going to see plays as an audience member, she enjoys perfecting her procrastination skills as a McGill student in her final year; ensuring she can't sleep at night by watching American Horror Story; Israeli dancing; and cooking wheat-free delicacies. She can also be spotted taking long walks with her roommate, whom she thanks daily for putting up with her and keeping her (in)sane.

**Mélanie Ermel** (*Assistant Stage Manager*)

Mélanie began her artistic career as a dancer. Following training in technical theatre, she went on to be an apprentice stage manager at the Segal Centre on *Lies My Father Told Me* and with the International Yiddish Theatre Festival's production of *The Megillah of Itzik Manger*. Since then, she has worked at the Segal Centre on several productions including *Equus*, *Vigil* (in co-production with Théâtre du Rideau Vert), Theodore Bikel's *Sholom Aleichem: Laughter Through Tears* in the summer of 2012 and, most recently, *RED*. Other credits include Geordie Productions' *Pinocchio* at the Centaur Theatre and *Where the Blood Mixes* with Teesri Duniya Theatre. Mélanie also works as a stage technician and a dance teacher.