PERSISTENCE
Theatre Company

Capacity Theatre

NOVEMBER 26 - 28 | BARBARA BARRETT THEATRE

# IPHIS IS A MAN



WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CHENEY EMBERG

ARTSNL

Newfoundland & Labrador
CANADA

ST. JOHN'S

# IPHIS IS A MAN

Written and directed by Cheney Emberg

## CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

| | |
|---|---|
| Goddess Isis | Ophelia Delight |
| Telethusa/Ligdus | Kia Gates |
| Dimitra | Bailey Jackson |
| Ianthe | Jessica Quaw |
| Iphis | Eli Gaertner |
| Ensemble | Arturo Cuevas |
| Ensemble | Melissa Ralph |

## PRODUCTION TEAM

| | |
|---|---|
| Written and Directed by | Cheney Emberg |
| Stage Management | Audrey Gerow |
| Designer: Set & Costume | Emma Cole |
| Designer: Lighting & Sound | Julian Smith |
| Assistant Designer: Lighting & Sound | Robin Peters |
| Designer: Projections | Audrey Gerow |
| Set Construction | Jason Cole |
| Intimacy Director | Kelin Boyd |

*Pieces composed by Robin Peters: Prayer Soundscape, Dimitra's Backstory, The Conjuring of Isis Soundscape*

### CAPACITY THEATRE COMPANY STAFF

Artistic Director :
Gabrielle Therrien

Managing Producer :
Emma Cole

### PERSISTENCE THEATRE COMPANY STAFF

Producing Artistic Director :
Sharon King-Campbell

Resource Manager :
Maggie Coady

## LAND & LABOUR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

St. John's is home to a rich, diverse, and vibrant urban Indigenous community. Located on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Beothuk, the lands and waters in and around the City have traditionally served as a gathering place for the Mi'kmaq. The broader region of Newfoundland and Labrador continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. We honour and pay respect to the past, present, and future caretakers of these territories.

We acknowledge the labour theft extracted from people of African descent and used to build European wealth and economies globally and in the Canadian nation state—including Newfoundland and Labrador's shipbuilding and cod fishery industries—through the violence of trans-Atlantic enslavement.

# PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I'm not sure many people would say that Ovid's Metamorphoses felt like it freed them, but I am certainly one. The first translation I read of the story of Iphis and Ianthe had the line, verbatim, "I want as my father wants. I want as my mother wants. I want to be a man." What a revelation! A trans character and one (spoiler incoming) with a happy ending? Such stories are few and far between, even now, many thousands of years later. I felt I had to tell this story, then looked at the tools in my creative toolbox at the time: high camp, heavy anachronism, emo music, and butt jokes. Not really the type to do an epic. Then I did a little more research.

With Metamorphoses, Ovid blended gods and heroes from Greek, Egyptian, and Roman myths to show a sweeping narrative of physical transformation in a way his peers could understand. The man wasn't writing some stiff, traditional single-hero epic: he was retelling the (even ancient-er) stories of the Hellenistic poets, weaving familiar and obscure tales from across the Mediterranean into a continuous song from the creation of the Universe to his own time. In other words, this gorgeous, ancient text was essentially gorgeous, ancient fanfiction.

Now, that's an author I could work with. Ovid took creative liberties, and so did I. I think he'd love Isis being a drag queen. Even in the original, first century B.C text, that's just what she gave.

I am not alone in the endeavor to excavate treasure from buried queer history. How many of us have told someone who we are, just to be met with doubt? How many have heard the phrase "trans people didn't exist in my day," as if that nullifies our existence now?

# PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The difficult part of such ideas is that you cannot always blame those saying them; they come from our parents, our friends, our lovers, our siblings. Sometimes, they are even exclaimed out of an earnest desire for understanding, but still, it leaves genderqueer people bearing the burden. Without positive representation in the world around us, how are we to "explain" a sensation that most have never felt?

With the erasure of queer history comes a detaching from our roots, making it far easier for the so-called "powers that be" to frame a trans existence as an unnatural trend, or something disposable. Recognizing that trans people have always been part of the human experience reminds us, all of us, of our *shared* humanity.

We all laugh, we cry, we pray, we exaggerate, we sing, we dance, we pick our nose. We have our first love, and we have our last. We go on. We endure. However we are made. However we exist in this world. Whichever way we look, or feel, or identify. We're on this earth together, all of us, from the start of time to the end of it. Let's all remember how alive we are in this room and, for a moment, decide to be thankful for it.

xoxo
Cheney



## IN HONOUR OF MOLLIE GUAC

Mollie Guac was one of the bravest people I've ever met, in that she was one of the funniest and most creative people I've ever met. It takes a lot of guts to be either in times like these. I thought about her a lot in the making of this piece, and will be inspired by her art forever. Mollie was honest and hilarious with an incredible depth of soul (and impeccable understanding of camp). She was beautiful, she was brilliant, and I hope she knows how adored she was.

# PRODUCERS' NOTE

It's always a good time for a story about trans joy. But right now seems like an especially good time.

Since early 2025, it seems like there's been a new wave of hate for all things gender-nonconforming. Bans on drag shows. Legislation restricting puberty-blockers, restricting the rights of school-aged children to use their appropriate names and pronouns at school. Laws requiring public schools to assign all bathrooms to one of two genders, and determining who can play on which high school sports teams.

One of the arguments we hear a lot (or perhaps have even made ourselves) is: "This is new." Where did all this come from, suddenly complicating our understanding of something that used to be so simple? And the answer is: It isn't new.

Trans people have always existed, as full, complex humans who have participated in their communities and societies and lived complete lives.

So, here is a story from Ancient Greece, told for an audience in 2026. It's a love story. It's a zany comedy. It's a celebration of identity, and family, and community. It's for whoever needs it most, and it's for everyone.

We are deeply grateful to Cheney for writing it and to the full cast and production team for bringing it to life. And, we are doubly grateful to you for being here to experience it with us.

-Sharon, Emma, and Gibby.





# SPECIAL THANKS

## FROM THE CAST AND CREW OF IPHIS IS A MAN

Allison Bartlett
Kate Clow
Maggie Coady
Wayne Coady
Dumebi Damian
Aidan Karcha
Trudy Morgan-Cole
Mike Royle
Samuel Royle
Shae Scott Singer
Belle Warner

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This production is made possible by the support of Arts NL, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the City of St. John's.

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CAPACITY THEATRE WEBSITE

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# CAST



## ARTURO CUEVAS: ENSEMBLE

is an actor who began his theatre career in Mexico before moving to Newfoundland in 2021. Since settling in St. John's, he has continued to develop his craft, with local stage credits including Moose in *Binja* with Shakespeare by the Sea, *Newfoundlanded*, and several short plays. Active in Newfoundland's film and television industry, Arturo has appeared in numerous film challenges and short films, as well as regional commercials. His television experience includes background appearances on *Son of a Critch*, *Hudson & Rex*, and *Saint-Pierre*, where he portrayed a background detective, as well as stand-in work on Netflix's *Below*. A former performer with the ALMA Bachata group, Arturo brings a passion for movement and physical expression to his performances. He is delighted to be part of the ensemble of I*phis Is a Man*. His upcoming projects include directing and performing in *The Kingdom of the Secret Garden*.



## BAILEY JACKSON: DIMITRA

(she/her) is an actor, writer, and theatre educator based in St. John's, Newfoundland. She earned her BFA in theatre (acting) from Grenfell Campus, Memorial University in 2021 and is currently pursuing her MA in English (creative writing) at MUN. She has worked as an actor across the province, performing with Perchance Theatre Company (2026), Stephenville Theatre Festival (2021, 2023), Rising Tide Theatre (2022, 2023, 2025), and RCAT (2025). Select theatre credits include: *Little Women*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Perchance); *Hedda Gabler*, *Bingo Ladies*, *West Moon*, *Maiden Voyage* (RTT); *Macbeth*, *The Wolves* (TAG).. Bailey is thrilled to be a part of Persistence's *Iphis is a Man* and is so grateful to the cast and crew.



## ELI GAERTNER: IPHIS

is thrilled to take on the role of Iphis, their first theatre lead since playing Vivienne in a high school production of *Legally Blonde* almost 9 years ago. Originally from Vancouver, Eli moved to St John's to study at MUN and graduated in 2025 with a B.A in English/CMST, a diploma in Creative Writing, and a diploma in Stage & Screen Technique. He joined Shakespeare by the Sea as an actor for T*he Winter's Tale* in 2024, and returned to stage manage *Henry IV Part I* this past summer. He wrote and directed *Play-Life: The Play* for the St John's Short Play Festival this fall. Beyond theatre, Eli performs spoken word poetry under the alias Weatherbird, including performing at St John's 2026 Pride in the Park and as a contestant in the Canadian International Poetry Slam in May 2026. He also plays the oboe. Eli is moving to Montreal in 2027 - but he'll be back.

A standing ovation to the incredible cast and crew of *Iphis is a Man* for bringing this production to life.

Bravo on a fantastic show!



## Sheilagh O'Leary

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# CAST



## KIA GATES: TELETHUSA/LIGDUS

is an actor from Birmingham, UK, and a graduate of The Lir National Academy of Dramatic Art in Dublin. Having recently relocated to St. John's, Kia is delighted to be joining the wonderful team at PerSIStence Theatre and Capacity Theatre for *Iphis Is a Man*.

Her recent theatre credits include Jo in *Little Women* (Perchance Theatre), Tybalt/Sampson/Friar John in *Romeo and Juliet* (Perchance Theatre), Georgia in *Goodbye Dorothy* (LSPU Hall/Barbara Barrett Theatre), Mary Debenham in *Murder on the Orient Express* (Power Productions), Dr. Seuss in *The Wholly Divided Trinity Conspiracy Theory of Queen Elizabeth I Near Dublin The Musical* (Smock Alley Theatre), Witch/Lennox in *Macbeth* (The Mill Theatre), and Alex in *Good Sex* (Dead Centre Theatre).



## JESSICA QUAW: IANTHE

is a Ghanaian actor and theatre artist based in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Dance Studies from the University of Ghana and a Master of Arts in Folklore from Memorial University. Her background in dance, theatre, and folklore continues to shape her interest in performance, culture, and storytelling. Jessica has performed in theatre productions in both Ghana and St. John's, with acting credits including *No Men Allowed* with Fiifi Coleman Productions, *Echoke* with YEP Productions, The Seedling Project with the Women's Work Festival, *Beauty Behind the Norms* with Centra NL, and performances at the St. John's Shorts Festival, to name a few. Her experience also extends to stage management and directing, in which she recently completed a mentorship as an assistant director to Jillian Keiley on *The Night Logan Woke Up*.



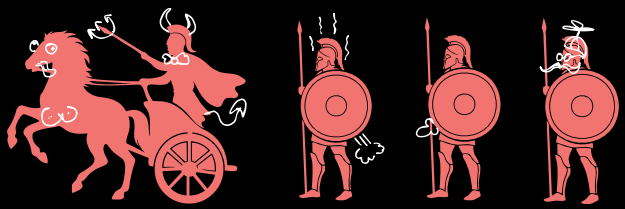
## MELISSA RALPH: ENSEMBLE

is a simple gremlin who surfaces occasionally to shake off the drudgery of cave life and perform in a play. After studying performance and directing at NSU in Louisiana, they returned home in 2009. Since then they have been heavily involved with Shakespeare by the Sea since 2011, and has worked as both actor and director with St. John's Players, Rivetting Productions, and as an actor and stage manager with Joint Productions. They are very excited to work on such an amazing script with such a talented group of individuals.



## OPHELIA DELIGHT: GODDESS ISIS

is a Newfoundland-based drag performer with nearly six years on stage, multiple competition wins, and two Newfoundland drag awards she has taken the drag scene by storm. Known for campy humour, sharp looks, and an over the top personality Ophelia brings both glitter and grit to every stage she hits and she can't wait for you all to see this goddess.



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# CREATIVE TEAM

## KELIN BOYD: INTIMACY DIRECTOR



is a multi-disciplinary artist with a passion for theatre. Starting as an actor and more recently working in film and television behind the scenes, she has lately learned Intimacy Direction. With twenty years of theatre experience and eighteen years of Argentine Tango, Intimacy Direction/Coordination seemed like a natural fit! Kelin believes in the importance of communication, safety, and advocacy for performers. This role is not only in place to help choreograph intimate moments safely, but to help protect production, crew, and actors alike. Past ID credits include: *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Heathers* (Best Kind Productions), and Stephenville Theatre Festival 2025. Intimacy Coordination for film: *Hangashore*, *Oliver* (short).

## EMMA COLE: SET & COSTUME DESIGNER, PRODUCER



is a writer, producer, designer, and anarchist bookseller from St. John's, NL. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Acadia University in English and Theatre. By day she works for local arts organizations in sales and marketing, and on other days she designs costumes for theatre. She is an assistant producer with Artistic Fraud of Newfoundland and managing producer of Capacity Theatre. Her writing has won awards from Kiwanis, Arts and Letters, and WritersNL, and been featured by CBC, estuary, Riddle Fence, toothcut, and Paragon. You can find her creative writing, theatre projects, and sewing creations at www.emmacharlottecole.com.

## CHENEY EMBERG: PLAYWRIGHT/DIRECTOR

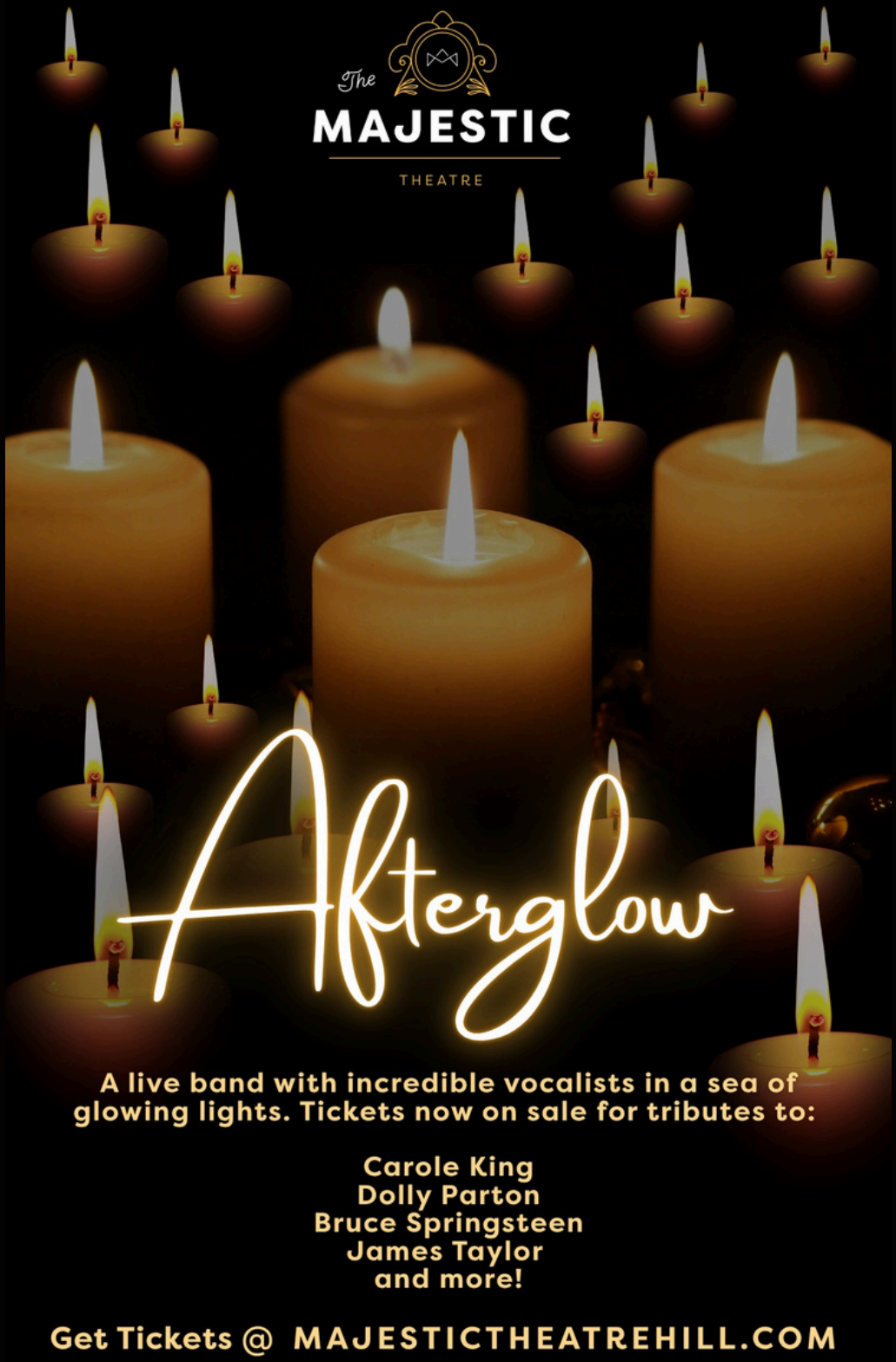


(they/she/he) is a multidisciplinary theatre artist and collage-lover from Texas currently based in New York. During Cheney's (near) four years in Newfoundland, they received five grants in support of their writing from ArtsNL and City of St. John's, participated in multiple theatre festivals, did lots of sketch and standup comedy, and drank many beers at Linda's Inn of Olde. Cheney is over the moon to be back in their home away from home to direct *Iphis is a Man* and *The Final Sermon of Avery Joel Wyatt*, two of their pieces that were previously written and workshopped in Newfoundland.

## AUDREY GEROW: STAGE MANAGER



is a Puppeteer/Puppet Builder and Stage Manager based out of Ktaqmkuk. They have worked with RCAT, Shakespeare by the Sea, St. John's Shorts, Play Dead Productions, and Studio Squidcicle; Audrey also creates her own puppet shows such as *The Wholly Untrue Origin of the Ugly Stick* and *As Seen on TV*.


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# CREATIVE TEAM



## SHARON KING-CAMPBELL: PRODUCER

(she/her) is a theatre-maker, storyteller, poet, and scholar with a passion for the connective and change-making power of theatre. She has worked with companies across Ktaqmkuk, including Artistic Fraud of Newfoundland, Best Kind Productions, New Curtain Theatre, Grand Bank Regional Theatre, Stephenville Theatre Festival, Girl Power Inc., St. John's Short Play Festival and Shakespeare by the Sea Festival. Sharon holds a BFA Theatre and a MA English from Memorial University of Newfoundland, and is currently pursuing her PhD. Sharon is Producing Artistic Director of PerSlStence Theatre Company.

## ROBIN PETERS: ASSISTANT LIGHTING & SOUND DESIGNER



is a theatre artist from St. John's. She is a recent graduate of the technical theatre program at Grenfell Campus. Robin is very excited to have the opportunity to hone and expand her craft with this production. Past credits include *Dolly's House* (Capacity Theatre), *The Trojan Women & The Birds* (Theatre at Grenfell), and *Seconds to Midnight* (Just a Concept Productions).

## JULIAN SMITH: LIGHTING & SOUND DESIGNER



is an award-nominated designer, manager, and technician originally from Norman's Cove, Newfoundland, who now calls Corner Brook home. His notable credits include *Le Retreat* (Sound Designer, Imago Theatre), *Shit Piss and Cystic Fibrosis* (Sound and Projection Designer, Workshop Presentation, Jeremy Nolan), and *There's Nothing You Can Do* (Sound Designer and Composer, RCAT). Julian is honoured to have the opportunity to design this production and collaborate with an incredible group of friends, both new and old. Special thanks to my Design Assistant, Robin, for diving in headfirst with great ideas, bringing a drive to create beautiful work, and being so open and receptive to my creative process.



## GABRIELLE (GIBBY) THERRIEN: ARTISTIC MANAGER, CAPACITY THEATRE

(she/they/he) is an actor, playwright, theatre educator, and Capacity Theatre's Artistic Manager. She has a background in commercial voice acting, theatre performance, and works for the Neptune Theatre School as an Outreach Instructor in Kjipuktuk. They are thrilled for Capacity's involvement in making *Iphis Is A Man* come to the stage!




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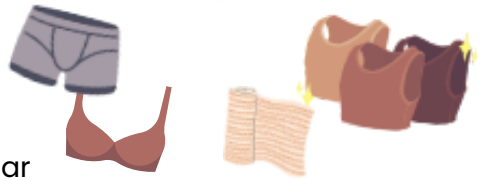
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