



GWAANDAK THEATRE

Feb 11 > 28, 2026


The **BIRDS**

by Yvette Nolan

directed by Jennifer Dawn Bishop



The Guild Hall
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The Birds

by Yvette Nolan

Featuring

Tyra Ashauntie, Autumn Chandler, Jeff Hamilton,
Frances Kitson, Alia Krueger, Greg Murdoch,
Felix O’Laney, Austin Roe, Josh Schroeder,
Emma Seward, Rachel Sherman, Kevin Spofford

Production Team

Director: Jennifer Dawn Bishop

Assistant Director: Alexis Smith

Stage Manager: Mary Sloan and Paisley Schroeder

Assistant Stage Manager: Halia Pealow

Set Designer: Annie Johnsgaard

Lighting Designer: Beth Dart

Costume Designer: Gloria Mok

Choreography: Blake Lepine

Assistant Costume Designers: Katelyn Clark and Felix O’Laney

Props Designer: Felix O’Laney

Sound Designer and Technical Director: Kelvin Smoler

Head Carpenter: Al Loewen

Production Manager: Brenda Pilatzke Vanier

Artistic Director: Brian Fidler

Administrator: Sylvie Walton



The Birds

by Yvette Nolan

Produced by special arrangement with
the Playwrights Guild of Canada.

Yvette Nolan (Algonquin) is a playwright, director and dramaturg. Her plays include *The Unplugging*, *Annie Mae's Movement*, *The Birds*, *The Diviners* (with Vern Thiessen), *The Art of War*. She also works in opera, as the librettist and co-director of *Shanawdithit*, the librettist of *Sophia*, and the director of *Indians on Vacation*. She co-created, with Joel Bernbaum and Lancelot Knight, the verbatim play *Reasonable Doubt*, about relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan. She recently directed the world premieres of Donna-Michelle St. Bernard's *The First Stone* in Toronto and Ottawa, *The Flood*, by Leah Simone Bowen, and *Mizushobai* by Julie Tamiko Manning, both in Montreal, as well as the Stratford and Globe productions of Frances Koncan's *Women of the Fur Trade*. She is currently working on the National Climate Play with Joel Bernbaum, which will workshop in Whitehorse at Awaken Festival in May. From 2003-2011, she served as Artistic Director of Native Earth Performing Arts, Canada's oldest professional Indigenous theatre company. Her book, *Medicine Shows*, about Indigenous performance in Canada was published by Playwrights Canada Press in 2015, and *Performing Indigeneity* (co-edited with Ric Knowles) in 2016. She recently defended her Master's thesis, about governance in non-profit theatres, at Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.



MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Yvette Nolan's play poses profound questions about land and ownership, about appropriation and reconciliation; important questions that Nolan tackles without judgement and with her trademark humour and wit. This tightrope act requires a deft directorial hand and an open minded team to pull it off. Director Jennifer Dawn Bishop has created an atmosphere of acceptance in the rehearsal hall that has allowed this group to explore these big concepts in a safe environment and to create a hilarious production that tackles challenging questions with grace and humour.

I tip my hat to the wonderful cast. Every time I have popped my head in the rehearsal hall there is always laughter and joy as this group knuckled down and did the hard work of rehearsing and putting together this play. For the first half of rehearsals Mary Sloan was our fearless Stage Manager and then the amazing Paisley Schroeder stepped into the role with some help from Halia Pealow as Assistant Stage Manager. We are excited to have Alexis Smith as our Assistant Director.

The creative and technical team for The Birds are a flock of ingenious, outrageously talented local designers and technicians. Gloria Mok has built a whimsical joyful costume design that is both ridiculous and absolutely spot on. Gloria has had some top notch support from Katelyn Clark and Felix O'Laney. Felix also brought together the props for the production. The cloud world of play is perfectly realized by the ever inventive Annie Johnsgaard's set design. As always, our head carpenter Al Loewen has constructed the perfect frame for Annie's otherworldly set. We are thrilled to work with Beth Dart as she creates the ethereal atmosphere of the land of the birds with her lighting design. The Grand Entry movement sequence was crafted by Blake Shaá-koon Lepine. Kelvin Smoler worked closely with the director to build an evocative sound design that matched the tone and spirit of Jennifer's vision.

I am grateful to my colleague Brenda Pilatzke Vanier who answered the call to lead the group as our Production Manager - you're the best Brenda! Thank you to Sylvie Walton our Administrator and to the Guild Board for their steadfast support and guidance.

And finally thank you for continuing to support community theatre!

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello and welcome family, friends, and community! I would like to give thanks and welcome you all for joining us for Yvette Nolan's reimagining of Aristophanes' classic production of *The Birds*.

Being invited out to this artistic community to work on this piece has been a full circle moment for me. I'm so thrilled to have everyone come out and experience all the work, collaboration and artistic design in bringing the world of the birds to life.

The play brings two men, frustrated by the modern world, to the fabled land of the bird's seeking freedom and a better way of life. Despite their best intentions the men are unable to resist remaking this utopian paradise in their own image, without regard for the inhabitants who already occupy the land. Reflecting First Nations themes and concerns, using the story to examine colonization, land, and the creation of alternative worlds. The work is intended to invite dialogue about building community, and in this production, I wanted to embrace community and to give some of our birds their own identity. We don't just see a community of birds but unique individual personalities, their own voice whether they had dialogue in the show or not, and I wanted to find a way to highlight those moments. There are a few things to take away from this production, and indeed I hope one of those is hope.

I just wanted to take another moment to say thank you to each cast member, design team, The Guild Hall and Gwaandak Theatre for putting you all into this amazing production! And to Yvette Nolan, this full circle moment started with you introducing this piece back in 2016 Globe Theatre Conservatory where I first fell in love with this cheeky play!

Thank you everyone for coming out, enjoy *The Birds*!

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By Erica Willson
April 22nd & 25th

The National Climate Play
By Yvette Nolan and Joel Bernbaum
And Climate Play Artists
April 23rd & 25th

All details are accurate at the time of print & are subject to change.
Find out more: gwaandaktheatre.ca/current-season



GWAANDAK THEATRE

BIOGRAPHIES



Jennifer Dawn Bishop - Director

Jennifer is a Metis artist from Treaty Six Territory. She is an actor, playwright and director. Her first introduction into theatre was at age 13 in the first Circle of Voices Program back in 1999 through GTNT, formerly SNTC. Many moons later Jennifer became GTNT's Artistic Director from 2017-2024, and although she has transitioned out of her role, her love and belief in GTNT will always hold a special place in her heart and is still a second home

to her. She has been in various projects in theatre and film, works include "Breaking the Curse" at 25th Street Theatre/ Ferre Play Theatre. Directed audiobooks for Penguin Random House Canada, played Smee in Globe Theatres & 39's Peter and the Starcatcher, she directed "Cottagers & Indians" by Drew Hayden Taylor with Persephone Theatre, Curated for the Indigenous Cities Project through NAC Indigenous Theatre/Savage Society. Writing and directed for Burnt Thicket Theatre's "We Treaty People" project, Co-directed "Dead Hand Signal" by Logan Martin-Arcand, directed episodes in seasons 2, 3, 4 of "Stories of the North". Performed as Liset in Keith Barker & 39's This is How We Got Here at Persephone Theatre, Co-directed LEAR A trilingual adaptation in partnership with NNS-GTNT-LTDJ. Other works directed the COV 2024/2025 production "A Sea Most Cruel" by Liam Scramstad and performed in GTNT's "Powwow: A Theatrical Production" written by April Rogers. Jennifer's other written produced works include, "Wolves", "Love Thy Family", "Iskotew", "Hospitals, Broken Piano's", "Shadows Among the Prairies", and "Taken Before Birth".

Alexis Smith - Assistant Director

Alexis is a talented, passionate performer who has worked in theatre for several years being part of plays like "Without Rule of Law" and "The Wolves". She loves being a performer, but for this production she has lent her talents backstage for the first time to learn something new where she is the assistant director. She is very excited for everyone to see the Guilds Production of "The Birds" and hopes that everyone enjoys the show.





Mary Sloan - Stage Manager

Mary was happy to launch rehearsals for *The Birds* before she flew off to Chicago to be with Amy, Michael and Roman while they made a movie. The Guild has been Mary's second home since she arrived in Whitehorse in 1993. She has had the pleasure of stage managing, directing and acting in many plays here— but this is her first time ever as an animal sound recording artist! Mary is continually grateful to live in this beautiful traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün

First Nation and the Ta'an Kwach'an Council. And she is likewise grateful for the continual love and support of her family.

Paisley Schroeder - Associate Stage Manager

Paisley Schroeder (she/they) is thrilled to get the opportunity to stage manage a Guild production for the first time. Paisley is a grade 12 student who has been working in theatre since they were 14. They have many backstage credits including *Mustard & Hurricane Diane* with the Guild Hall, as well as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Rent*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Hadestown*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Anastasia* with Yukon Theatre for Young People. Paisley is super proud of all the work that everyone has put into this amazing production.



Halia Pealow - Assistant Stage Manager

Halia has been well versed in theatre her whole life, starting by watching *Frantic Follies* weekly to getting paid for acting gigs. This is Halia's first time behind the scenes and she's grateful for this production and to learn the different perspectives in theatre.





Brenda Pilatzke-Vanier – Production Manager

Brenda has been haunting the Guild for a few years now – notably as Stage Manager on *I, Claudia*, and Production Manager on *Ride the Cyclone* and *Animals Out of Paper*. When she isn't harping on people at the Guild, she is with her other favourite people at Yukon Theatre for Young People, having stage managed past shows like *Newsies*, *Les Miserables*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, and *Anastasia*. However, her favourite

role is Wife/Mom in the Vanier Family and continually thanks them for putting up with her. Now, please, look up! It's the Birds! Enjoy our menagerie xo.

Annie Johnsgaard – Set Designer

Annie is a Yukon multidisciplinary artist who's been working full time in film and theatre art departments for the past 5 years. She loves to lean into visual story telling through set designs, props, puppets, sfx make up and animation. Annie is delighted to be back at The Guild collaborating with the talented and dedicated team who brought the world of *The Birds* to life.

You may have seen her work here before set painting with *WROL* and *Young Frankenstein*, in props for *Mustard*, or set designing *The Wolves*, *Ripcord*, *Coywolf*, and *Ride The Cyclone*.



Kelvin Smoler – Technical Director

Kelvin Smoler is the Guild's Technical Director for the 2025-2026 season. You can find him somewhere in the theatre organizing cables, cleaning gear, or scratching his head over signal routing. Or recording Mary Sloan's voice for bird calls.



Beth Dart – Lighting Designer

Beth (she/her) is a theatre artist, producer, arts administrator and advocate based in Whitehorse, Yukon. With over 20 years of experience across festivals, theatre, interdisciplinary performance, and arts administration, Beth has worked with companies large and small including Catalyst Theatre, Citadel Theatre, Edmonton Fringe Theatre, Northern Light Theatre, Workshop West Playwrights' Theatre, Good Women Dance Collective, Small Matters Productions, and more.

She served as Artistic Producer of the Common Ground Arts Society and Festival Director of Found Festival in Edmonton for seven years, championing site-specific and immersive theatre and performance art while mentoring hundreds of emerging artists in risk-taking and collaboration. Alongside her sister, she co-founded Catch the Keys Productions, an award-winning indie theatre company known for scrappy, immersive creations that blur space and storytelling. Beth's work spans producing, directing, curation, dramaturgy, stage and production management, lighting design, and arts administration. In 2024, she stepped into the role of Executive Director of Music Yukon, where she now amplifies Yukon's vibrant and wildly talented music ecosystem through advocacy, partnerships, and artist-centered initiatives. Beth is eggstatic to join this flock of feathered phenoms to take flight with her very first production at The Guild!

Gloria Mok – Costume Designer

Gloria is a theatre creator and designer from Mississauga, ON (Treaty 13 Territory), who now calls Whitehorse home. She holds a BA from the University of Guelph, BEd from the University of Toronto, and is a graduate of the National Theatre School's Production Design and Technical Arts program. She is the Producer at Nightswimming in Toronto, a dramaturgical company that commissions new theatrical projects and fosters performance research. She is also the co-founder of Silk Bath Collective, a team of three Chinese-Canadian theatre makers who create multilingual interdisciplinary work about the Chinese diaspora. She was the Costume Designer for Dreary and Izzy and is excited to be back at the Guild working on The Birds. Her favourite Yukon bird is the black-billed magpie.



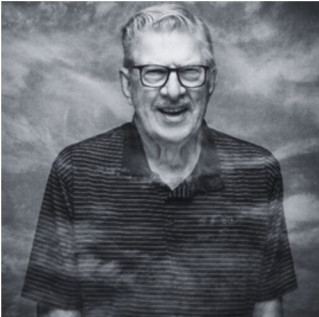


Katelyn Clark – Assistant Costume Designer

Kate grew up in rural Alberta on Treaty 6 Territory. They hold a BFA in Theatre from Uvic and a BED specializing in Drama Education from UBC. Kate's background in theatre includes improv, acting, puppetry, directing, and more recently, creating costumes! They love most wetland birds, especially red-winged blackbirds.

Felix O'Laney – Ensemble (Blue Jay) / Props Designer

Felix (they/them) has lived in the Yukon for a few years now, and they're so grateful to have found a passion for performance and theatre since moving here! They moonlight as a draglesque artist and have tried their hand at stand-up a couple of times. Felix was part of the ensemble in Guild Hall's production of Spamalot and did props for The Weir. For this collaboration between Gwaandak and The Guild, they're excited to be in the ensemble, and do props!



Al Loewen – Carpenter Extraordinaire

And in the first weeks of the first month he created the rocks for the birds to stand upon, and the sky above wherein they could fly. And he was thankful that he could still do it in his eighty third year of life.

Brian Fidler – Artistic Director

Brian has been piloting the wonky airship Guild Hall for nearly a decade. He is a huge fan of Yvette Nolan's writing and is thrilled to program this cheeky, thoughtful play at the Guild. Brian is always excited to see all the pieces fit together and the incredible dedication of the cast and crew in the creation of a Guild production.





Greg Murdoch – Jack

Greg Murdoch is an actor and singer, born and raised in Whitehorse. He started off performing in his family's business, the Frantic Follies Vaudeville Revue. He attended MAD throughout high school, and in 2022 he graduated from the Canadian College of Performing Arts in Victoria. His first year at CCPA, Greg got the chance to see the senior students perform *The Birds*. After college Greg went to Toronto to be in the Canada's Wonderland Christmas shows. For the

last couple of years, he's been back in Whitehorse, and taking part in every Guild show that they'll let him. Other credits include Jack in *Newsies* (YTYP), Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast* (VOS Theatre), Trevor the Dog in *Dogtown: the Musical* (Yukon Circus Society), Mustard in *Mustard* (Guild Hall), Mischa in *Ride the Cyclone* (Guild Hall), and Sir Galahad in *Spamalot* (Guild Hall).

Josh Schroeder – Gulliver

Josh (Gulliver, he/him) is thrilled to be kicking off his third year of performing on the Guild Hall stage by venturing amongst the pageantry and satire of *The Birds* to explore the themes of escape, belonging, and humankind's tendency to make things in our own image. His previous Guild Hall credits include *Mustard*, *Ride the Cyclone*, *Animals Out of Paper*, and *Spamalot*!



Frances Kitson – Terrance the Hoopoe

Frances is dee-lighted to be in her first Guild show! Originally from Vancouver, Frances arrived in Whitehorse by way of Saskatchewan, naturally. (Lanigan. Hwy 16. Between Saskatoon and Yorkton. Because some of you will ask.)

Her current day job is being minister at Whitehorse United Church, which is the best job ever. Before landing in theology as a profession, she tried acting (stressful, underpaid, great people) and construction (stressful, well paid, occasionally great people). She's glad she tried them, and is glad she's not in them any more.

Frances loves salsa dancing, random 1940s Hollywood movies, and her cats, Forest and Hermia (not Hernia). Enjoy the show!



Jeff Hamilton – Sandpiper

Introducing Jeff Hamilton as Sandpiper! His creative outlets of sustenance include writing creative non-fiction on a typewriter or in a pocketbook and playing the eighty-eight or squeeze box in local dance band, Pink House. He enjoys seeing the other end of storytelling by taking small roles in film and theatre. This will be his first speaking role and like his character, he likes to forage. To Jeff, The Guild and Gwaandak Theatres embody all that is good in the community of the territory.

Alia Krueger – Raven

Alia Krueger plays the role of Raven in The Birds. They love working with animals and have a passion for animal communication and connecting with spirits. They have been involved in theatre for many years and enjoy being different characters on stage and doing improv. They were in MAD at Wood Street school in 2018, 2020, and 2021. Alia enjoys being characters that are not quite human or are very strange. They have enjoyed observing real ravens in their natural habitat to get into the Raven character. If you see Alia in the wild, like ravens, they may also be and distracted by shiny things snacks. Their special skills are being able to make weird faces and noises and being able to talk about cows or horses for hours.



Austin Roe – Eagle / Ensemble

Austin Roe, age 34 father of one, started his acting journey in high school at age 16. He was 'bitten by the bug' when he was cast in his first role as Capt Von Trap, at Bellport High school's rendition of the Sound of Music. He traveled to the Yukon and landed his next role in Gwandaak Theatres production of "Map of the Land, Map of the stars" and now "The Birds!". Offstage Austin works in construction and is studying Law, fully enjoying his return to the stage as "the Eagle".



Emma Seward – Ensemble (Mallard Duck)

This is Emma's first guild show and she is having a very grand time. She has loved seeing the set come together, all the babybel cheese, #calfwatch2026, and learning from all the very wonderful people involved. Emma is a mallard duck, which is arguably the most noble of ducks?! Although there are not many mallards to be seen this time of year, Emma loves living in the Yukon, the pink frosty evening skies and all the special people here. Thanks to the Guild and Gwaandak

for bringing so much light to the community. Quack quack xoxo

Rachel Sherman – Priest / Poet / Agent / Lawyer / Ensemble (Flamingo)

This is Rachel's first production at the Guild. You may have seen her browsing at the yarn store, snowboarding at Sima, or watching movies at the theatre, but you've never seen her quite like this! Having grown up active in school theatre and drama, she's excited to find her way back on stage after a long intermission. Amongst the birds, her first Yukon winter has been warm, bright, and full of laughs. Thank you to the Guild and Gwaandak for putting on this show. Rachel hopes you enjoy watching it as much as she's enjoyed being a part of it!



Autumn Chandler – Nightengale

After spending some time away to work with the National Theatre School, Autumn couldn't be happier to be on the Guild stage again! When offstage, they can be found photographing the beautiful landscapes and local performances, as well as busking saxophone in the summer. His previous Guild performances include "Doggs Hamlet", "Without Rule of Law", and "Young Frankenstein". She would like to thank the incredible cast and crew at Gwaandak and the Guild, as well as everyone that came out to see the show!"





Kevin Spofford – Surveyor / Ensemble (Hawk)

My Name is Kevin Matthew Spofford, Deline First Nations, born February 29th, 1996, in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada. I'm 29, almost 30 years old and currently employed by Whitehorse Canadian Tire. Since 2014, I have lived in Whitehorse, Yukon with my Dad, Stuart. I'm a Special Olympics athlete who's won medals in soccer and swimming events. I have been in the Special Olympics for twenty years and traveled with them to Langley in 2013, Vancouver in 2014,

Kelowna in 2017, Halifax in 2018, then in July 2025 to Prince George. I did win medals at these places I mentioned, in these years. I also mentioned back in elementary school I starred in one play, the gingerbread man. I played the gingerbread man himself quite well actually then years later in 2018 I was fascinated by the acting on Murdoch Mysteries, one of my favorite shows and it fueled my acting passion. I'm a storyteller in my DND campaigns and when I heard about the Guild Hall, I got an introduction to the Guild Hall in July 2025 through Inclusion Yukon. I met with Brian, the director of the Guild Hall, then in December 2025, I got the part in the play called The Birds due to premiere in February 2026. My part is a Red-Tailed Hawk and Surveyor. I'm excited about my parts, so I hope, as people in the business say, “break a leg”. That's all folks!

Tyra Ashauntie – Ensemble (Pigeon) / Traditional Dancer

Tyra Ashauntie is from Pelly Crossing, Huchá Hudān, Selkirk First Nation. Tyra is an emerging playwright and interdisciplinary artist.

Tyra loves their siblings, culture, language, painting, writing, friends and family.

Tyra is currently working on their writing, acting and development of their very own script, Constellation! They love exploring all forms of theatre and creating! They're very excited

and grateful to be part of this production with so many talented people!



Projects that Tyra has partaken include:

- Music, Arts & Drama Program - 2019, 2020
- Indigenous summer play readings - Gwaandak Theatre - Actor - 2022-2025
- Indigenous Summer Play Readings - Gwaandak Theatre - Director - 2023
- The Crows - Gwaandak Theatre - Actor - 2023
- Queer & Trans Playwright Unit - ZeeZee Theatre - 2022-2023
- Yukon Theatre for Young People - Frozen the Broadway Musical - Actor - 2026



Our photographer - Brian Pelchat

Brian is a portrait and event photographer who currently works primarily with the arts community. He has photographed many plays at The Guild, as well as at their Round Back Festival. He has also photographed numerous classical, jazz, bluegrass and choral concerts, as well as events hosted by the Yukon government. In addition, he

shoots portraits for artists pro bono, which is his way of supporting artists who do much to enrich the lives of Yukoners.

Brian is a retired wildlife biologist who has lived and worked in the Yukon since 1984. He has a lifelong interest in photography. Even as a teenager, he had a darkroom, a professional camera and was the student union photographer at his school.

