

# PENELOPE DREAMWALKER – Ghost of Shirreff Hall

## ARTISTS AND CREATIVE TEAM



### **Janice I. Jackson — Soprano & Composer (Penelope Dreamwalker)**

Janice Isabel Jackson is an acclaimed soprano celebrated for her fearless commitment to new music, having premiered more than 250 works written for her distinctive voice. She has performed internationally with leading contemporary ensembles in Beijing, Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Torino, Toronto, Montreal, New York, Berlin, Johannesburg, and Cape Town. Her festival appearances include Wien Modern, IRCAM, The Proms (Amsterdam), November Festival (Ghent), and the Diem Festival of Electro-acoustic Music. Since 2006, she has served as Artistic Director of Vocalypse Productions, Halifax's contemporary vocal arts organization. In recent years, she has expanded her creative practice to include composition for solo voice. Jackson's contributions to Canadian music have been recognized with the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia's Masterworks Arts Award, the Established Artist Award

from the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council, and the national Friend of Canadian Music Award. Her work continues to champion innovation, collaboration, and adventurous vocal expression.



### **Sarah Frank — Violin, Voice**

Halifax-based musician Sarah Frank is a versatile violinist, singer, and banjo player whose work spans folk, classical, and improvised traditions. She has performed in theatre, opera, and orchestral settings, including Neptune Theatre and the National Arts Centre's production of *Controlled Damage*, Sandy Moore's opera *Escape to Freedom*, and engagements with Symphony Nova Scotia. As a folk artist, she collaborates widely, appearing with Dave Gunning, Basia Bulat, and in her award-winning duo The Bombadils. Trained at McGill University and through mentorship with leading classical and folk musicians, Sarah brings technical fluency and emotional clarity to every project. The *Montreal Gazette* praised her "stratospheric beauty" in both fiddle playing and vocal harmony. Whether performing contemporary works, traditional tunes, or original songs, Sarah is known for her warmth and curiosity.



### **Emily Jewer — Director**

Emily Jewer (she/they) is a multidisciplinary artist working in theatre, film, and the visual arts. Emily graduated from Mount Allison with a BFA and spent a year training with Neptune Theatre's Pre-Professional Training Program in acting and was part of the inaugural Chrysalis Project at Neptune in the directing stream, assisting on productions such as *Shakespeare in Love*, *KAMP*, and *Hamlet* and directing a presentation of Brecht's *The Jewish Wife* with a modern day slant contrasting the experiences of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community with pre-WWII Germany. In recent years, Emily has expanded into opera directing, assisting on the 2022 world premiere of Sandy Moore's *Escape to Freedom* and co-directing Hildegard von Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* in 2021. She has also

taught acting master classes for opera singers for the past three years at Vocalypse's *Opera from Scratch*. In 2026 Emily will direct the premiere of Fiona's Ryan's new opera *In Her Hands* with Essential Opera. Emily is eager to direct bold, challenging opera and theatre that prioritizes accessibility and intersectionality for both audiences and performers.



### **Arianne Pollet-Brannen — Wearable Art**

Halifax artist Arianne Pollet-Brannen is known for her imaginative sculptural art wear and visually striking costume designs. A graduate of NSCAD University, where she received multiple scholarships, she has created costumes for numerous opera and film projects. Her work for Vocalypse Productions' *Vonda de Ville in Temporal Follies* earned the Theatre Nova Scotia Merritt Award for Outstanding Costume Design. Pollet-Brannen's wearable sculptures have been exhibited widely, including solo shows at Cape Breton University Art Gallery and Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery, as well as at Fashion Art Toronto. Her pieces are held in the Nova Scotia Art Bank, MSVU Art Gallery's permanent collection, and private collections. Known for blending humour, craftsmanship, and conceptual depth, her work transforms the body into a site of narrative and visual exploration, enriching both stage productions and gallery spaces with her distinctive artistic voice.



### **Dylan Hay — Audio Technician**

Dylan Hay (they/he) is a technician, multi-instrumentalist, composer, sound designer, and educator based in K'jipuktuk/Halifax. Their recent technical work includes live sound for the Open Waters Festival, production support for Live Art Dance and Breaking Circus, and assisting renowned engineer John DS Adams. As a performer, Dylan's musical practice spans genres: they play trombone with reggae artist Jah'mila, contribute to the improvising Upstream Orchestra, perform trombone and keyboard with pop-soul artist Avery Dakin, play electric bass with jazz-fusion group Under The Bus, and write and perform original music as a singer-songwriter. Dylan teaches Sound Design at Dalhousie University, where they share their passion for audio experimentation and interdisciplinary collaboration. Their work is marked by curiosity, technical precision, and a commitment to fostering inclusive, innovative musical environments.



### **Sophie Dupuis — Composer (The House Rules of Shirreff Hall)**

Francophone composer Sophie Dupuis, originally from New Brunswick, creates vivid, eclectic music shaped by her background in visual art, stage performance, and the landscapes of the Maritime provinces. Her debut album *Comme bon lui semble* was nominated for the 2024 NB Music Award for Enregistrement de l'année, reflecting her distinctive voice as both composer and performer. In addition to her compositional work, Sophie is an active freelance violinist, arranger, and music educator, contributing to a wide range of artistic projects. She is also deeply engaged in community arts, volunteering and working within cultural organizations to support local creativity. Her opera *The House Rules of Order of Shirreff Hall: Penelope's Story*, created with librettist Monica Pearce, highlights her interest in storytelling, character, and theatricality. Sophie's music is marked by colour, curiosity, and a playful yet thoughtful approach to sound.



**Monica Pearce — Composer & Librettist (*The House Rules of Order of Shirreff Hall*)**

Monica Pearce is a Canadian librettist and composer known for her inventive approach to opera, chamber music, and toy-piano repertoire. Born in Prince Edward Island and long based in Toronto, she now lives in Lansing, Michigan, where she continues to develop new interdisciplinary projects. As a librettist, she has collaborated widely, including with composer Cecilia Livingston on the Dora-nominated *Singing Only Softly*, an opera exploring the life of Anne Frank. She also wrote the libretto for Michael Donovan's *Caroline's Sweeper*, centred on astronomer Caroline Herschel, and for Sophie Dupuis' opera *The House Rules of Order of Shirreff Hall: Penelope's Story*. Her compositions have been performed by Banff Centre, Opera Laurier, Essential Opera, Loose Tea Theatre, Bicycle Opera Project, Opera Nova Scotia, Vocalypse Productions, and the Toy Piano Composers. Pearce's work is celebrated for its clarity, wit, and imaginative musical storytelling.



**James Rolfe — Composer (*Do you hear me?*)**

Toronto composer James Rolfe is internationally recognized for his wide-ranging contributions to contemporary music. His works have been commissioned and performed by ensembles, choirs, orchestras, theatres, and opera companies across Canada, the United States, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. Rolfe has received numerous honours, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the K. M. Hunter Music Award, the Louis Applebaum Composers Award, the Jules Léger Prize for New Chamber Music, Choral Canada's Outstanding Choral Work Award, and the Johanna Metcalf Performing Arts Prize. He holds composition degrees from Princeton University and the University of Toronto, where he now teaches composition and mentors emerging artists. Rolfe's operas have been staged in Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, Banff, Edmonton, and New York, earning sold-out audiences

and critical acclaim. His music is known for its expressive clarity, structural inventiveness, and deep engagement with text and dramatic form.



**Luke Hathaway — Librettist (*Do you hear me?*)**

Luke Hathaway (he/him) is a trans and queer writer, librettist, and theatre-maker based in Kijipuktuk/Halifax. He teaches creative writing and English literature at Saint Mary's University and is the author of four acclaimed books of poetry, including *The Affirmations*, named a *Times* Best Book of 2022. Luke is co-creator of re:naissance opera's touring production *Eurydice Fragments* and of *Mme Caeneus's Canteen* (music by James Rolfe / ANIMA), premiering at the Open Ears Festival in Kitchener. His work blends myth, contemporary queer experience, and theatrical experimentation. Luke is grateful to his queer communities, whose support makes his creative work possible, and to collaborators Janice Jackson and James Rolfe for their thoughtful partnership. He also acknowledges the students of Saint Mary's and Dalhousie Universities, whose openness and self-expression

have affirmed his identities and enriched his teaching and artistic practice.