

FRUIT MACHINE

ELECTRONIC
PRESS
KIT





THE SHOW

Fruit Machine is an original physical theatre performance created and directed by Alex Rioux in partnership with Solo Chicken Productions. This groundbreaking production uses movement, projection, and historical text to interpret and investigate the horrific practices of the RCMP and Canadian Military that targeted the 2SLGBTQIA+ community from the 50's through to the 90's. Fruit Machine gets its title from the non-functional device of the same name developed by Frank Robert Wake that attempted to use pupil dilation as proof of a man's homosexuality. Created and directed by Alex Rioux, with a primarily queer ensemble and creative team, Fruit Machine shines a light on the barbaric practices and the unfair treatment of queer individuals in Canadian history and creates space for 2SLGBTQIA+ artists to take ownership of their history, and their stories.

After a series of work-in-progress showings, Fruit Machine premiered as the Mainstage Production at The Notable Acts Theatre Festival in 2019. Attended by members of the queer community and purge survivors, the show was celebrated for capturing the period with care and accuracy and the company was encouraged to continue development of the piece. Since then, Fruit Machine has been adapted into a high-quality touring show. In the summer of 2023, Fruit Machine received a New Brunswick tour, performing for audiences in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John and Sackville.

Fruit Machine is currently seeking new performance opportunities!

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"What is the greater treason?
Treason to your country? Or
Treason to your friends?"

TRAILER



ALBUM



PRESS



"In creating the Fruit Machine, Rioux brilliantly depicts a dark and relatively unknown part Canadian Queer History. The testimonies of suffering and survival experienced by LGBT Purge victims come to life of stage."

Meredith J. Batt, President of the Queer Heritage Initiative and author of *Len & Cub: A queer history*



"Moving, beautiful and highly emotional, Fruit Machine opened a lot of eyes, not only to this dark time in our history, but also to theatre's ability to act as an effective means of communicating socially important issues."

Matt Carter, Grid City Magazine - "[Best Theatre of 2019](#)"

CAST



Sam Black (he/him)
Herbert

Sam has been dancing since the age of 3, Originally from Yoho lake , New Brunswick.He was raised as a competitive dancer and from there pursued the arts in Toronto where he attended "Randolph College for the performing arts". He has been grateful for the handful of exciting works including, "The Drowsy Chaperone" as underling (Theatre New Brunswick) , "The Weavers" (Randolph College) , "The Drowsy Chaperone" as George (Randolph College), and "Anatomy of a Dancer" as Young Gene Kelly" (Breakaway Entertainment). As well as the select Commercial dance works including working with Billie Eilish and dancing in Disney Zombies 2. Sam is thrilled to be apart of this informative and wholehearted creation with a talented cast.



Lara Lewis (she/her)
Yvette

Lara Lewis is a mixed Mi'kmaw theatre artist based in Kjiptuk (Halifax, NS). Largely an actor and dramaturge, Lara was educated at the Fountain School of Performing Arts at Dalhousie University, and works primarily in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. She made her professional acting debut in 2017, for which she was nominated for a Theatre Nova Scotia award for best supporting actor. As a dramaturge, Lara has worked with writers across all four Atlantic provinces, as well as in Ontario, Quebec, and New York. She has been resident dramaturge at the Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre's annual retreat, at Theatre New Brunswick's Fall Festival of New Plays, at NotaBle Acts Theatre Festival in Fredericton, and at the Fresh From the Island festival in Prince Edward Island.



Samuel Crowell (he/him)
Harold

Samuel Crowell graduated from St.Thomas university's Education Programme in 2022 and is currently working as a supply teacher. Samuel is happy to be returning to the Fruit Machine cast and reconnecting with his theatrical roots. Samuel loves to get involved with theatre as a writer, performer and director and he launched his first community theatre company Buttercup Productions in 2012. Samuel would like to thank his family and friends for endless support and love.

CAST



Jean-Michel Cliche (he/him)
The Officer

Jean-Michel Cliche is a theatre artist, improviser and educator of Lebanese and French-settler descent. He has trained with Fight Directors Canada and is now New Brunswick's most active Fight Director and Violence Designer. As an actor, he has had the great privilege of performing in major cities across the country as well as communities of all sizes throughout the Maritimes. He has over 15 years of improv experience, including coaching the competitive team at Ecole Sainte-Anne, founding the Hot Garbage Players, and now hosting improv classes through Solo Chicken Productions. As an educator, Jean-Michel has taught drama with the University of New Brunswick and Theatre New Brunswick. He is also the Associate Artistic Director of Solo Chicken Productions!



Sydney Hallett (she/her)
Sue

Sydney Hallett is a queer actor, dancer, and choreographer based in Fredericton, NB. She received her BA, majoring in English (Drama) and Fine Arts (Performance Art) from St. Thomas University in 2020, and has been performing and training with Solo Chicken Productions since 2017. She has also appeared in productions with various other companies around the city including STU Musical Theatre, Theatre St. Thomas, Bard in the Barracks, NotaBle Acts, and Hyperloop Theatre. Her most recent endeavors have included choreographing for STU Musical Theatre's productions of Cabaret (2022) and Seussical (2023), creating her first dance film 'River Dreams' which premiered online through the Fredericton Playhouse and appeared at the 2022 Saint John Contemporary Dance Festival, and playing in Bard in The Barracks' production of As You Like It as Rosalind.



Naomi McGowan (she/her)
Swing

Naomi Thais Mercedes McGowan is a multidisciplinary performer and theatre instructor based in Fredericton, NB. While her focus is in acting, singing and movement theatre, it's important for her to experience theatre in its many forms in order to grow as an artist and teacher. A priority for her is to constantly try different genres of performance and collaborate with new artists. Recent companies include Theatre New Brunswick, Never Again Theatre, Next Folding Company and Dead Serious Improv. Working on Fruit Machine with this group and these leaders has inspired her beyond words and she looks forward to watching the project evolve.

CREW & DESIGNERS



Alex Rioux (they/them)
Director & Creator

Alex Rioux is a non-binary theatre artist, improviser, and educator currently based in Fredericton, New Brunswick. Their work focuses on using physical theatre to enhance traditional narratives to create rich and unique theatre experiences. Other select works include: *Mind the Light* in the role of Allistair (Written by Gabrielle Papillon, Directed by Annie Valentina for Stages 2023) *I Hope You Can See the Birds* (Director, Notable Acts Theatre Festival 2022), *Miss Bennet: Christmas At Pemberly* (Assistant Director, Directed by Ryan G. Hinds with Theatre New Brunswick.) *The Kelpie* (Playwright, Directed by Esther Jun with Theatre New Brunswick's Fall Festival of New Plays 2021). Alex also continues to spearhead *The Plain Site Theatre Festival*. Founded and curated by Rioux, the festival is dedicated to promoting queer-focused storytelling and visibility by providing emerging artists and students a safer space to develop their craft under the guidance of established 2SLGBTQIA+ artists.



Georgia Priestly-Brown (she/her)
Stage Manager

Georgia Priestly-Brown is thrilled to be working with Solo Chicken. Her recent credits include: *Tannery Series '22*, *Priyanka Show* (The Cap/Downtown Fredericton), *Red Carpet Producer* (ECMAs '22), *All Is Love* (Opera Atelier), *Sweet Dreams* (Impulse Productions), *Kiinalik*, *The Rhubarb Festival* (Buddies in Bad Times), *The Toronto International Film Festival*; *Walking on Bombshells*, *The Best Is Yet To Come Undone*, *Party Today Panic Tomorrow*, and *Second City's Guide to the Symphony* (The Second City Toronto). She would like to thank her family and friends for their constant support.



Chris Saad (he/him)
Technical Director

Chris Saad is the Technical Director of the Black Box Theatre on the St. Thomas University campus, and loves the opportunity to work with other companies including NBACTS, Bard, TNB, SJTC and Solo Chicken. Chris is pleased to be working with Solo Chicken Productions on yet another show after touring with The Spirit Project's *Hearts Above Us* this past spring. Chris is very proud of the hard work and dedication of the company. Break a leg everyone!



Stewart Legere (he/him)
Sound Designer

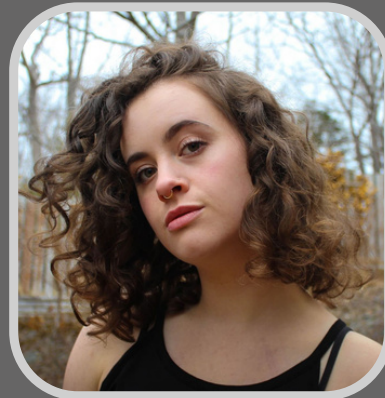
Stewart Legere is a multidisciplinary artist living between Halifax/Kjipuktuk and Toronto. He is the Co-Artistic Director of The Accidental Mechanics Group and Associate Artistic Director of Zuppa. His performances have been presented at theatres and festivals across Canada and the UK. He is a vocalist with orchestral pop outfit The Heavy Blinkers, and a solo singer/songwriter. He composes music and sound for performance and film. An avid and passionate collaborator, his work is fascinated with sexuality, vulnerability, intimacy, the destruction of persona and the celebration of performance. He is currently an artist-in-residence at The Theatre Centre in Toronto. Follow him @stewartlegere.

CREW & DESIGNERS



Trent Logan (he/him)
Lighting Designer

Trent Logan (he/him/his) is a New Brunswick based theatre technician, designer, manager, and educator. He has filled several production roles for theatres across New Brunswick and into Nova Scotia and Ontario. He currently works as the technical director and resident designer for the University of New Brunswick (Fredericton). Trent is also the production manager/technical director for Hyperloop Theatre. Together with Artistic Director, Jean-Michel Cliche, they strive to create new performances exploring new integration of technology with theatre with an emphasis on accessibility. Past credits include: Space Girl (Hyperloop Theatre; Technical Director), The Ends of the Earth (UNB-Fredericton; Set & Lighting Design), and Matilda, the Musical (Impulse Productions; Lighting Design).



Anna Shepard (she/her)
Projection Designer

Anna Shepard is a queer multidisciplinary artist, currently working in video design and devised creation. Recent design credits include lighting for Un Violon Discordant (2b theatre company), projection for At This Hour (Zuppa Theatre Co., nominated for TNS Merritt Award for Outstanding Projection Design), and set, lighting, and projection for How The Light Lies (On You) (New Pants Project). Most recently, she assisted set and projection designer Andy Moro on the world premiere of The Extractionist at Vertigo Theatre in Calgary. Shepard was the 2017-18 Emerging-Artist-In-Residence at 2b theatre company, and trained with Ghost River Theatre as part of their National Devised Theatre Intensive in 2019. She was a member of the 2019-20 Director Unit of Neptune Theatre's Chrysalis Project, and is the recipient of the 2019 Theatre Nova Scotia Chrysalis Emerging Artist Award.



Rebecca Wieggers (he/him)
Costume Designer

Rebecca Wieggers is a costume designer originally from Prince Edward Island. She adores visual storytelling and is fascinated with how tiny details in an environment or object can change the way a scenario is seen entirely. Due to this she strives to create garments that tell tales just as elegantly as the scripts that accompany them. She believes fashion and costume are how we tell our own stories to everyone we meet.



Andrea Evans (she/her)
Set Designer

Andrea Evans (she/her) proudly holds a BFA with Honours from York University where she studied Theatre Production and Design. With nearly 20 years' experience, she has worked as a set designer, scenic painter, and props builder for numerous theatres throughout Ontario and the Atlantic provinces. Andrea has worked for theatre companies such as the National Ballet of Canada, Theatre New Brunswick, Saint John Theatre Company, the Chester Playhouse, Tarragon Theatre, and many others. For two seasons, Andrea worked as an assistant designer at the Stratford Festival. She has also been a guest artist / instructor at numerous high schools teaching stagecraft and design. Andrea has been nominated two times for Toronto's Dora Awards and the proud recipient of a Dora Award for Outstanding Set Design. Andrea resides in Fredericton, New Brunswick with her partner Margaret and their son Jack. She currently works at Theatre New Brunswick as the Head of Props and Scenic Paint.

BOOKING

Interested in booking
Fruit Machine?

E-mail us [here](#) for more info
and a performance quote.





FRUIT MACHINE

Created and Directed by Alex Rioux

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