



aluna
THEATRE

JUNE 27 – JULY 2, 2022
CHILDREN'S PEACE THEATRE

CHILDREN OF FIRE

Photo of Kurdish Freedom Fighters, 2015, by Shahrzad Arshadi

Created and written by Shahrzad Arshadi and Anna Chatterton
Verbatim text translated by Shahrzad Arshadi
Directed by Beatriz Pizano

#ChildrenOfFire



CHILDREN OF FIRE

WORLD PREMIERE

A **Nightwood Theatre** Production with support from **Aluna Theatre**

Created and written by **Shahrzad Arshadi** and **Anna Chatterton**

Verbatim text translated by **Shahrzad Arshadi**

Directed by **Beatriz Pizano**

Co-Designed by **Anahita Dehbonehie** and **Niloufar Ziaee**

Stage Managed by **Erika Morey**

Production Managed by **Tamara Vuckovic**

Production Assistance by **Reva Lokhande**

Poetry translation by **Raha Javanfar**

Featuring **Parastoo Amanzadeh, Shahrzad Arshadi, Anna Chatterton, Nyiri Karakas** and **Aida Keykhaii**

Content warning: while this show does not include any physical depiction of violence, it does include verbal recounting of violence, mental and physical torture, assault, and genocide.

Deepest thanks to the freedom fighters who hosted Shahrzad Arshadi and Anna Chatterton in the mountains of Kurdistan and whose stories are shared in this piece: Payman, Ronia, Tinda, Bernal, Medya, Ciwana and Berivan.

Special thanks to Wiigwaasikaa and The Minisnook, Shakespeare in the Ruff, Children's Peace Theatre, Raha Javanfar, Bahareh Yaraghi, Jim Ruxton, Frida Ruxton Chatterton, Elizabeth Chatterton, Kelly Thornton, Rob Baker, The Hamilton City Enrichment Fund, Nick Brownlee, Delara, Dana Vuckovic, Leyla Batgi, Pishrow Alipour and Kurdish House.



Children of Fire is supported by the Toronto Arts Council's Animating Toronto Parks grants program, which provides funding to professional artists, arts organizations, artist collectives, and non-profit organizations to create and present free arts programming in selected Toronto parks located in Etobicoke, East York, York, North York and Scarborough.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

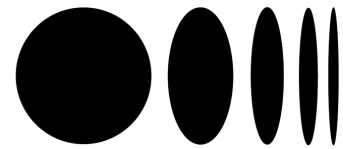
In the spirit and intent of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendations, Nightwood Theatre acknowledges the land on which our work is created and where our offices are located is the traditional territory of many Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

We acknowledge them and any other Nations who care for the land (acknowledged and unacknowledged, recorded and unrecorded) as the past, present, and future caretakers of this land, the traditional territory named Tkarón:to, the Mohawk word for "the place in the water where the trees are standing." The treaty for this particular parcel of land (Treaty 13), collectively referred to as the Toronto Purchase, applies to lands east of Brown's Line to Woodbine Avenue and north towards Newmarket.

We recognize the enduring presence of Indigenous peoples on this land. We commit ourselves to addressing and disrupting the systems of oppression and the colonial forces that undermine, distort, or erase the vital role of Indigenous peoples in our world, and recognize stewardship as a shared responsibility of all those who reside in a territory, as is the spirit of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreements.



NightwoodTheatre



ABOUT NIGHTWOOD THEATRE

As Canada's foremost feminist theatre, Nightwood Theatre is driven by artistic excellence, advocacy, and the successful training and development of artists that self-identify as having lived experience touched by womanhood – this includes but is not limited to trans, cis, Two-Spirit and non-binary folks. Founded in 1979, Nightwood Theatre has created and produced award-winning plays, which have won Dora Mavor Moore, Chalmers, Trillium and Governor General's Awards.

NIGHTWOOD STAFF

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Erika Morey	Head of Development
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ABOUT ALUNA THEATRE

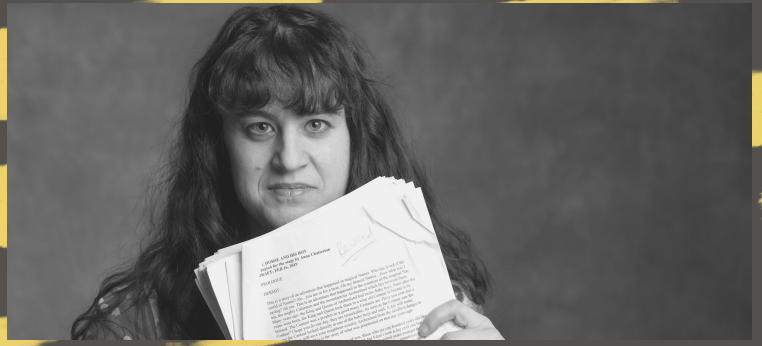
Aluna Theatre is an artistically-driven theatre company based in Toronto creating exciting new work that introduces audiences to diverse and rich performance practices from across the Americas. Aluna's bold productions in English and Spanish are marked by a distinct theatrical language drawing from our heritages, cultures, and languages, including dance, physical theatre, and multimedia design. Over eighteen years of production, Aluna has received 26 Dora Awards' nominations for acting, writing, directing, and design – and has won eleven awards.

ALUNA STAFF

Beatriz Pizano Artistic Director
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PLAYWRIGHTS' NOTE

We were asked to write a note for this program, and decided to reach out to our dear friend and comrade, Peyman Viyan, a Kurdish female freedom fighter, living and fighting in the mountains of Kurdistan.

Shahrzad left Peyman a voice message:

"Peyman, our play is going to go on stage soon, and we have to write something for the program, but we want to give the audience your message, rather than us saying something. We miss you and all the fighters, and we are so sorry we can't be there with you in this hard situation. As you know, I am old woman, I can't fight with you!"

Peyman called back and left a voice message:

"But you are helping, what you are doing is so important for us. Yes, it is a hard situation here, but we are doing what we have to do. The fighters have been asking how you and Anna are, saying how they miss you, how they missed your laugh, and you being there with us."

This is what she wanted to say to you, dear audience:

In the history of Kurdistan, Kurds were not allowed to write their own history, so we taught our history to the next generation through songs. We sang about our pain, oppression, injustice and our heroes. For us it is important to sing, write poems, create art and fight at the same time.

Female guerrillas have been fighting for their freedom and existence for decades. Freedom is a principle we cannot live without.

The free mountains became schools for us guerrillas where we learned determination, kindness, and the struggle for freedom. It opened our eyes to our own strength and courage, the more we learn, the more difficult and meaningful our struggle for freedom becomes.

With the growth of female guerrillas, Kurdish people and Kurdish women from all four parts of Kurdistan came to the great realization of their own power, and crossed all the boundaries set by the governments and the patriarchy.

Being a guerrilla is not easy, it requires hard work, love, faith, love of the land and freedom. Despite all the hardships, Guerrilla women do not give up and have become the greatest force today. Guerrilla women's struggles express the history of women's resistance. We are responsible not only for Kurdish women, but also for protecting and fighting for the freedom of all women. That is why today women from all over the world are joining the guerrilla women, so that the Kurdish women's liberation movement can be called a feminist, socialist and internationalist movement. We pledge to fight as long as women are oppressed.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

What happens in places far away, places that we might not know much about, has the potential to transform us. "It's not them over there, it's not us over here": this is what Anna and Shahrzad want us to hear, as we follow their journey to the Qandil mountains to meet Kurdish women fighters in 2018.

Children of Fire is a testimonial piece shared with love, compassion, an open heart, and most of all, with honesty. Anna and Shahrzad have maintained a commitment to the truth-- to what they heard, what they were entrusted with, and what they shared with these fighters. Dramatization has been avoided because it would take away from what these women are fighting for: hope and a better future.

If we listen to these stories, we will perhaps understand that we are all connected and responsible for each other.

Beatriz Pizano, May 2022

CHILDREN OF FIRE TEAM BIOS



Parastoo Amanzadeh – Ronia, Ciwana (she/her)

Parastoo is an Iranian actor, dancer, puppeteer and a yoga instructor based in Toronto. Parastoo studied Theatre Art Performance back home and she now is studying Theatre art performance at Humber College. Her love for body movements got her into dancing/physical theatre and yoga. She also have received her certification in make-up for theatre and film. Parastoo had the chance to work with many great directors, dancers, puppeteers and actors both in Iran and Canada. Parastoo had performed at Glendon Theatre, Fringe festival, Cahoots Theatre, Pia Bounman school of Ballet and creative movement and Tirgan Festival. She had recently choreographed a piece of solo movement under supervised of Dave Wilson at Pia ballet school.



Shahrzad Arshadi – Playwright/Performer (she/her)

Shahrzad Arshadi, a Montréal-based, award-winning, multidisciplinary artist, performer, and social justice activist, came to Canada as a political refugee on December 24, 1983. In her artistic career Shahrzad has ventured into the different fields of photography, documentary film, playwriting, sound creation and performance, enabling her focus on the issues of memory, culture and human rights. Shahrzad is a core member of the Center for Oral History & Digital Storytelling (COHDS) at Concordia University. She is the founding member and artistic director of Z Gallery, a multidisciplinary and community-based artist-run organization.

Listen to [FUTURE IS NOW](#), a podcast series exploring intersections between art and social change, produced by Shahrzad and Caroline Künzle



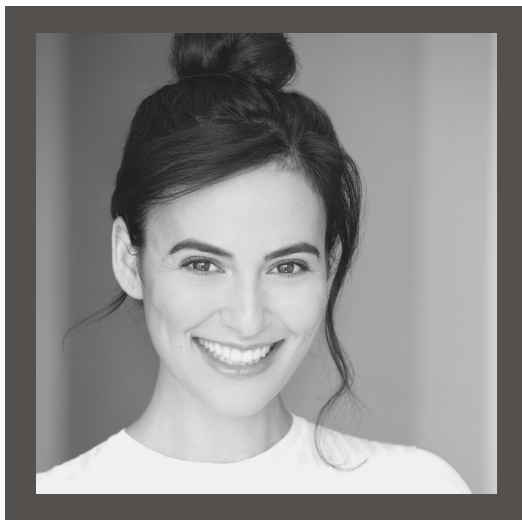
Anna Chatterton – Playwright/Performer (she/her)

Anna Chatterton is a librettist, playwright and performer based in Hamilton, Ontario. She is a two-time finalist for the Governor General's Literary Award for Drama. Anna's plays have been commissioned and produced by The Shaw Festival, Tarragon Theatre, Nightwood Theatre, Buddies in Bad Times, The Theatre Centre and Theatre Passe Muraille, among others. Upcoming, her play *Cowgirl Up* will be produced by Alberta Theatre Projects. As a librettist, Anna's work has been produced across Canada and the States and has been nominated for a Juno Award. Anna was nominated for five Dora Mavor Moore Awards, winning the 2018 Outstanding Production of an Opera. She was awarded the 2020 Gilded Hammer National Impact Award; the 2017 Hamilton Arts Award for Theatre, the 2016 Toronto Theatre Critics Award for Best Supporting Actress, the 2016 My Entertainment Award for Best Actress, was named a top ten Toronto Theatre Artist by NOW Magazine in 2016 and was a finalist for the 2019 Hamilton Literary Awards in Fiction for her play *Quiver*. Anna teaches theatre courses at McMaster University, Humber College and Sheridan College.



Anahita Dehbonehie – Co-Designer (she/her)

Currently based in Toronto, Anahita Dehbonehie is an Iranian performance creator, designer, and installation artist. Her practice is founded on the principle that truths are communicated most powerfully through evocative sensory experiences. She is committed to work that questions positions of power and creates space for contemporary conversation. Anahita's work has been featured across Canada and internationally, including at the Prague Quadrennial, The Vilnius Capital of Culture, and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art. Her work on both stage and screen has been recognized with multiple awards and nominations, including two dora mavor moore awards, 2 toronto theatre critics awards and eight nominations.



Nyiri Karakas – Peyman, Tinda (she/her)

Nyiri Karakas is a Canadian-Armenian performing artist. Training: East 15 Acting School. Stage: Adela in *The House of Bernarda Alba* (Modern Times/Aluna Theatre); Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Bash'd), Melantho in *The Penelopiad* (Hart House Theatre), Orlando in *As You Like It* (Bard in the Park), and Joyce in *Top Girls* (Alumnae Theatre). Film/TV: Chiara Marchetti in *Tiny Pretty Things* (Netflix). Nyiri would like to thank her director Bea Pisano, whose gift of artistry and humanitarian spirit is unmatched. Nyiri would also like to thank Aram Bowen for introducing her to the struggle of the Kurdish people, the revolutionary female fighters, and for promoting unity between Armenians and Kurds. "These women might have the key for the world" (Bea Pisano).



Aida Keykhaii – Medya, Gein (she/her)

Aida Keykhaii is an award winning Canadian-Iranian Actor and Director, producer, theatre instructor, who immigrated to Canada in 2015. She holds an M.A in Play Directing and a B.A in Acting from the University of Tehran. She is the co-founder of NOWADAYS THEATRE, which was the 2018-19 Company in Residency at Canadian Stage. Select Credits: *Winter of '88* (NNNNN), *Swim Team* (NNNN), *Drought and Lies*, *Proof*, *Dinner with Friends*, *Sleeping in an Empty Cup*, *The Pillowman*, *Iceland*, *The Only Possible Way*, *From The Basement To The Roof*, *Mother*, *Coroner*, *What We Do In The Shadows* and her last appearance was the *Heart Of A Dog* at The Next Stage Theatre Festival 2022.

Aida is thrilled to be on stage with this amazing team.



Reva Lokhande – Production Assistant (she/her)

Reva Lokhande is an arts manager and advocator, artist and an aspiring producer, stage manager, script supervisor and director. She earned her bachelor's in Arts Management from Lasalle College of The Arts in Singapore and her Post-Graduate Diploma in Theatre Production (Honours) from Humber College. She has experience and knowledge in assistant stage managing, producing, as well as working on short films as a script supervisor and director. Her passion for theatre, film, art, and nature is what keeps her on her toes and brings her joy. She is an alumnus of the 2021 TENT program that is held by the Toronto Fringe. Most recently she has worked as an associate producer at Theatre Direct's Balancing Act initiative and Forward March festival. She currently enjoys working, learning and taking in new experiences as the Associate Artistic Producer at Nightwood Theatre. Instagram – [@reva_lokhande](#)



Erika Morey – Stage Manager (she/her)

Erika Morey is a stage manager, arts administrator & producer who is passionate about live performance and improving working conditions for artists in the sector. As a stage manager, she's worked on productions with Mirvish, the Charlottetown Festival, Soulpepper Theatre, Edmonton Opera, Tarragon Theatre, Factory Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Musical Stage Company, Theatre New Brunswick, Sudbury Theatre Centre, Lighthouse Festival Theatre, Thousand Islands Playhouse, Aluna Theatre, and many more. From 2018-2021, Erika sat as the Secretary-Treasurer and National Stage Management Councillor for the Canadian Actor's Equity Association. She also studies Arts & Cultural Management at MacEwan University and is currently the Head of Development for Nightwood Theatre. Instagram - [@erikadmorey](#)



Beatriz Pizano – Director (she/her)

Beatriz Pizano is a director, playwright and actor, and the founder and Artistic Director of Aluna Theatre, a company recognized for its unique approach to creation, its daring political work, and its experimentation with multi-language productions. Beatriz has received a number of prestigious awards including the John Hirsch Prize, the Chalmers Fellowship, the K.M. Hunter award and numerous Dora awards and nominations. She is the first Latinx actress to win a Toronto Critics award and a Dora for her performance in *Blood Wedding*. In 2019 she was named one of TD's 10 Most Influential Hispanic Canadians.

Beatriz's long relationship with Nightwood Theatre began almost two decades ago with the development of her award-winning play *Madre*, followed by a Metcalf internship as associate artistic director, as well as, acting as dramaturg and director for a number of projects for Write from the Hip. In 2020, Aluna theatre presented *The Solitudes*, a collective creation written and directed by Beatriz in association with Nightwood Theatre.



Sabra Rezaei – Pre-Show Santoor Player: June 28, 29 & July 2 (she/they)

Sabra is an on-the-ground community activist, mental health worker, scholar and musician. Sabra has been performing and teaching Santoor in Canada and Iran. Their work has always been inspired by liberation movements and their connection to music. Sabra's main influence comes from classical motives and folk melodies from the Middle Eastern region. In their teaching, they use improvisation as a source of creativity and a form of pedagogy. Apart from music, Sabra has been writing on queer diasporic studies, anti-capitalism and anti imperialism in the Middle East. Her mental health practice is informed by her ever-deepening understanding of anti-oppression, feminism and decolonization.



Tamara Vuckovic – Production Manager (she/her)

Tamara is a Toronto based Production Manager, Stage Manager, Producer and Director in both Theatre and Opera. Her work has taken her across Canada, from Toronto to Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, London, Montreal, and Halifax; to the US, and overseas. Tamara is the Managing Producer and Resident Stage Manager of indie performance company ARC, and the SM of opera performance company Off Centre Music Salon. She has years of experience producing, administering, and managing festival productions, company tours, and outdoor shows.

Tamara has worked with theatres and companies across Toronto including The Harbourfront Centre, Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Buddies in Bad Times, Factory Theatre, The Theatre Centre, Crow's Theatre, Coal Mine Theatre, Randolph Theatre, Why Not Theatre, Soundstreams, ARC, Native Earth, Theatre Direct, Roseneath Theatre, Toronto Centre for the Arts, WeeFestival, Shakespeare in the Ruff, Opera Atelier, Against the Grain Theatre, Tapestry Opera, Opera 5, Off Centre Music Salon, Meridian Hall, The Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Waldorf Academy, and Ryerson Theatre School.



Niloufar Ziaee – Co-Designer (she/her)

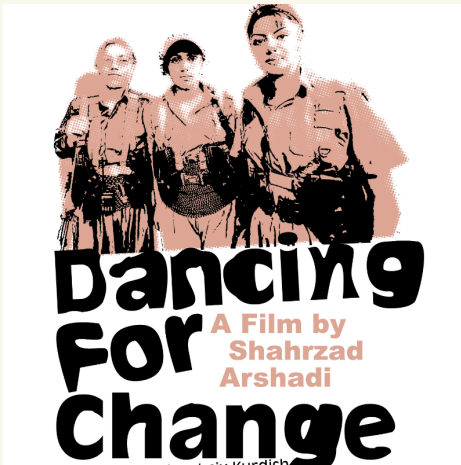
Niloufar is a filmmaker and multidisciplinary artist from Iran who has made Canada her home since 2016. Since then, Nilou has worked as an art director, costume designer, set dresser and painter across multiple mediums. She is passionate about the power of collective storytelling and relishes the opportunity to introduce her audience to new worlds. Previously, her work has been seen at the Miss Eco International Competition in Egypt. She holds a degree in Fashion Design from George Brown college.

WAYS TO ENGAGE BEYOND THE STAGE



CHILDREN OF FIRE PODCAST SERIES

Patrons who would like to share the *Children of Fire* experience, or who are interested in hearing the piece again can do so by listening to the ***Children of Fire podcast***. This multi-episode series Directed by **Beatriz Pizano**, Sound Designed and Edited by **Cosette Pin** features **Shahrzad Arshadi**, **Anna Chatterton**, **Nyiri Karakas**, **Raha Javanfar** and **Bahareh Yaraghi**. [Listen for free here on Nightwood Theatre's website.](#)



DANCING FOR CHANGE DOCUMENTARY

[*Dancing For Change*](#) – a documentary by Shahrzad Arshadi – is a story about secular and socialist women of the Islamic world, their ideals, activism, and visions for a better world. It focuses on six Kurdish Iranian women from three different generations. These women live with their male comrades in a mountain camp where they organize and have been fighting the Iranian fundamentalist Government since 1979. They joined the underground organization, due to the extreme oppression they have been subjected to in the Islamic Republic of Iran. **Free to view** [here on Nightwood Theatre's website.](#) Runs 50 min. Original languages: Kurdish and Farsi With English subtitle



ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

Nightwood Theatre is delighted to offer recordings of two digital talkbacks to offer further insight into the issues explored in *Children of Fire*, as well as a deeper look into the playwrights' process in creating the piece. [Please click here to access the talkbacks:](#) the first talk features Kurdish activist **Kazhal Fattah**, followed by a discussion with the playwrights exploring art and activism (ASL-English interpretation provided); and the second delivers a playwright discussion with **Shahrzad Arshadi** and **Anna Chatterton** offering an inside look into the world of creating documentary theatre (closed captioning provided).



RUTAS 2022

AN INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF PERFORMANCE

After four years, Aluna Theatre's **RUTAS international performing arts festival** is back! Now in its 5th edition, the festival is stronger than ever. **From September 22 to October 9**, RUTAS will host artists and conversations that inspire us to envision together how we might go from where we are now to a world that includes all of us. International and local artists will infuse our city with fresh perspectives, with art from across the Americas and beyond.

Re-thinking the routes for our lives together in a shifting world is the driving force behind RUTAS 2022. With performances, installations, cabaret and five days of Conversatorio/Conversations RUTAS 2022 explores many surprising ideas and themes. As always, RUTAS promises to gather us into magical spaces of artistic excellence, knowledge sharing, bringing us together in celebration.

Stay tuned to Aluna Theatre's social media to read more about the, companies, artists and programming. Learn more here!

SHAKESPEARE IN THE RUFF

COMING SOON!

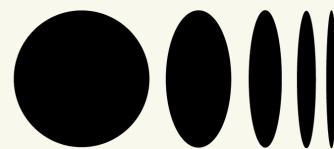
Shakespeare in the Ruff presents *Otîhêw*; an Indigenous re-imagining of Shakespeare's *Othello* by Cree-Métis-Saulteaux playwright **PJ Prudat**. Set in the fur-trade, *Otîhêw* explores themes through a Cree-Métis lens of race, land, love, survival, and betrayal. *Otîhêw* is the story of an affluent Indigenous woman, bound in the historical "custom-of-the-country" to Desmond, a fur-trader employed by the imperial trading and trafficking institution that drove colonization over sovereign Indigenous lands. Featuring an IBPOC cast and directorial/design team.

Running **August 18 – September 4 at 7:30**

Withrow Park, 725 Logan Avenue

Visit shakespeareintheruff.com

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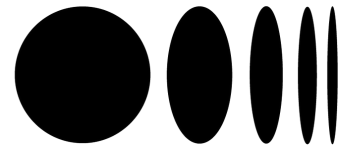
Anonymous x 4, Azita Gerami and Ahmad Afsahi, Wasseim Al Zouabi, Moira & Ed Bacon, Linn Baran, Danielle Bourgon, Cathay Lloyd, Joan Cranston, BJ Danylchuk, Lia De Groot, Sabina Delvecchio, Barbara Fingerote, Patty Fleming, Matt Fowler, Jean Gourdeau, Harriett Grant, Joyce & Grahame Henry, Rose Janson, Jani Lauzon, Corinne Leon, Jeanne LeSage, H. Ian & Dorothy Macdonald, Robin Mackie, Mary Motz, Dan Murdoch, Eleanor O'Connor, Judith Parker, Burke Paterson, Colleen Pollreis, Jacquie Robison, Michael Schechter, Marsha Sfeir, Paula Shewchuk, Linda Silver Dranoff, Linda & Alan Slavin, Imre Szeman, Suzanne Thompson, Bruce Wilkinson, Anthea Windsor, Richard Worsfold, Hersch Zeifman

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Donations received since July 1, 2021. Last updated on June 23, 2022. If your name has been misspelled or omitted, please accept our sincere apologies, and don't hesitate to reach out to Amanda Lin, Development & Engagement Associate, at amanda@nightwoodtheatre.net.

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