



# With Bells On

BY DARRIN HAGEN



November 28 - December 17, 2023



410-131 9<sup>th</sup> AVE SW - 403.265.4292 - [Lunchboxtheatre.com](http://Lunchboxtheatre.com)

# With Bells On

By Darrin Hagen

## CAST

**Bernardo Pacheco** ..... Ted

**Joel Schaefer** ..... Natasha

## CREATIVE

**Lauren Acheson** ..... Lighting Designer

**Conrad Belau**..... Director

**Alexa Elser** ..... Choreographer

**Darrin Hagen** ..... Playwright/Sound Designer

**Cassie Holmes** ..... Set Designer

**Meredith Johnson** ..... Stage Manager

**Haysam Kadri** ..... Fight Director

**Amelia Newbert** ..... Set Builder

**Caaryn Sadoway** ..... Apprentice Stage Manager

**Benjamin Toner** ..... Costume Designer

We at Lunchbox Theatre are grateful to live and create here in  
Mohkinstsis, and the Treaty 7 region of Alberta.

We acknowledge the traditional caretakers of these lands including the  
people of the Blackfoot Confederacy, Tsuu t'ina, and Stoney Nakoda  
Nations, as well as the people of the Métis Region of Alberta, Region 3.

### Special Thanks To

Alixandra Cowman, Ari Rombough, Dolly Parton, EZ Sybom, Haysam Kadri,  
Jack Grinhaus, Krafty Krista W, Marsha Wright, Marshall Vielle, Nearah Nuff,  
Little Guy Tattoo Club, Suki & Folk Take Hair.

# A Conversation Between Our Artistic Director & Director

— Bronwyn Steinberg & Conrad Belau



CONRAD: Well, here we are in the program notes for our 2023 holiday production of *With Bells On!* I feel incredibly honored to have built this new iteration with such a fantastic group of artists! So Bronwyn, what made you decide to do this show again, nearly 10 years after it was last done?

BRONWYN: This show is so beloved that I'm constantly hearing from patrons that it was one of their all-time favourites! And folks have been asking me when I might bring it back, so it's been a potential for a while now. And then this year, with so many attacks on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and particularly

on drag and drag artists, it became clear that this was the perfect moment to stage this show again. I feel privileged to have this opportunity to not only put on an excellent and fun production that's perfect for the holidays, but also to be able to stand with the drag community.

CONRAD: The queer experience is multi-faceted. There are large amounts of joy and anger and everything in between. With this production, Darrin offered that he was open to things being more sparklier, and the entire team has brought that. The team includes some of Calgary's best rising stars, and it's an honor to have watched this entire production come together.

BRONWYN: You're telling me! I'm just thrilled with the team that you've brought together, and I've been so excited to see how this new version of the show continues to honour Darrin's intention with the story while also bringing in new perspectives from the next generation of queer theatre makers.

CONRAD: I know Christmas can be a very lonely experience. But one of the beautiful things we learn from this show is how we can find love and comfort in the most unlikely of new friends. That our chosen families can be as expansive and fluid as gender itself!

BRONWYN: Absolutely! And even if you don't celebrate Christmas (like me) or if it looks a little different for you, this show reminds us of how important our connections to each other are. And to me, that's really what a holiday show is all about.

CONRAD: I think that fluidity is the great thing about various art forms like opera, visual art, graffiti, theatre and drag! Drag is a whimsical, magical and personal art form. One that has a long and rich history, but also can feel quite foreign or confusing. This confusion and wonder is welcomed! It's an art form that explores the facets of what makes us who we are. Is it the clothing we wear? The attitude we have? Our capacity to surprise each other? It all is a part of the fun :) I'm so thrilled to share our ideas and love of drag with our audiences at Lunchbox!

BRONWYN: Exactly, and I think in this play, we get to share the love of drag in a way that is absolutely inclusive to every single person.

CONRAD: A very happy holiday to everyone out there! *With Bells On* is a celebration of the great friendships we make along the way. Like Dolly and Kenny, Bruce and Clarence, and Bronwyn and myself! May this show remind you of the warmth and love of your chosen families and friends, and how it's like the fuzzy feeling of Christmas lights and toasty fires.

BRONWYN: Aww, I'm feeling all warm and fuzzy already, thanks Conrad! And thanks to all of you for choosing to spend a part of your holiday season with us! Enjoy and happy holidays!



The journey of *With Bells On* started in 2009, when I sent a sketch of a fragment of an outline of an idea to the Stage One new play program at Lunchbox. Lucky for me, Caroline Russell-King met me and we discussed the idea and where it could go. It was chosen for some development, and soon I was working with three amazing Calgary theatre folk I had never met before.

The play started as an idea about two neighbours - one of them a very tall drag queen. There were scenes of them standing outside the elevator in their shared hallway. That's all I had at first. It was my friend Neon who made a joke about the elevator

in my building as it clunked roughly to the ground floor - she said "You should write a play about this elevator."

While we were workshoping the drag queen / neighbour / elevator play, director Ian Prinsloo asked a question about one of my stage directions - it read, "She is sparkly and jangly, like a drag Christmas Tree." He asked "Why is she dressed as a Christmas tree". I replied "That was a figure of speech. I didn't mean that literally."

And Ian asked "Why not?"

And then we all began to discuss why she would be dressed as a Christmas tree. And then I suddenly recalled the annual Christmas Queen pageant in Edmonton.

And then the whole play fell into place. And suddenly I was writing my first Christmas play.

*With Bells On* has played in Edmonton 4 times, in Kelowna, in Key West, Florida, and across the pond in Ireland. The play has been adapted into a musical by the Live and In Color team in New York City, with book by Devanand Janke and music and lyrics by Tommy Newman, and it makes its world premiere in Edmonton as we speak at Theatre Network.

This is a homecoming and a rebirth for this little play, back in Calgary for its third time. Not only is it back where it all began 14 years ago, but it's arriving in a brand new package with a brand new team. The world has changed since the play was last seen here....The laughter this play brings is needed now more than ever.

Every playwright craves creating something that is embraced unconditionally by audiences - something that brings people joy, and makes them laugh and cheer. When Lunchbox Theatre invited me on this journey in 2009, I had no idea how far it would go. In nurturing my first Christmas comedy, Lunchbox gave me the best Christmas gift ever. This play is for anyone who was left out of holiday celebrations because they didn't fit in.

When people who are strangers end up sharing time together, even though they are worlds apart - that's the real magic of the season.

Please enjoy this Christmas gift.

### **Playwright's Acknowledgements:**

Anton DeGroot, Caroline Russell-King, Ian Prinsloo, J. MacDonald, Neon, Norman, Pamela Halstead, Paul Welch, Stafford Perry.



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### **Bernardo Pacheco** - Ted

For Lunchbox Theatre: *Bright Daybreak*, *Please Return to Empire Video* (Stage One Festival). Select Credits: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* (Vertigo Theatre); *Little Women*, *Forgiveness* (Theatre Calgary); *Network* (Citadel Theatre); *Laughs in Spanish*, *To Saints and Stars* (San Diego Rep). Bernardo is an Albertan artist excited to be working again with Lunchbox theatre! For Michael: You're going to love this show.



### **Joel Schaefer** - Natasha

Joel Schaefer is a *Betty Mitchell Award* nominated performer, music director, and educator. He's so thrilled to be strapping on his heels and sharing this incredibly topical, wonderful story! For Lunchbox Theatre: Debut! Elsewhere: *The Louder We Get*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, *Billy Elliot* (Theatre Calgary); *Tick, Tick... Boom!*, *Naughty... But Nice: Vaccin8!* (Forte); *Morricone + Bernstein*, *Ragtime* (Calgary Philharmonic); *Beauty and the Beast* (Young People's Theatre); *Slipper* (ATP). Joel also teaches voice lessons out of his home studio. Select Music Direction credits include: *TC Sings For Pride* (Theatre Calgary); *Legally Blonde* [MD and Co-Director]; *Pippin*, *Elf*, *The Sound of Music*, *Annie* (SBT); *Dex Delaney: Stranger in Balzac* (St. Francis); *A Glass Hive* [MD and Assistant Director] (Randolph College). Up next: *The Antyssey* (Quest Theatre). So many thanks for love and support always to Mom, Dad, Julia, Kristi, Jamie, and Garrett. @joelrschaefer



### **Lauren Acheson** - Lighting Designer

Lauren is a queer and trans artist living and working here in Mohkinstsis. Previously for Lunchbox: lighting design, *Home for the Holidays*. Other design credits include: set design, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Vertigo Theatre); lighting design, *Sneaks* (Alberta Dance Theatre); lighting design, *The Nordegg Incident* (Sucker for Punishment/ CYPT); set and lighting design, *366 Days* (Major Matt Mason Collective); set and lighting design, *Bright Lights* (Theatre BSMT). Lauren holds a diploma in Theatre and Entertainment Production from Red Deer College, as well as a certificate in Set and Costume Design from The National Theatre School of Canada. You can check out some of their design work at [laurenacheson.com](http://laurenacheson.com)



### **Conrad Belau** - Director

Conrad is a non-binary, hard-of-hearing award-winning queer theatre director, actor and educator. In Calgary they've worked with Theatre Calgary, Ghost River Theatre, the High Performance Rodeo, Alberta Theatre Projects, Lunchbox Theatre, Stage West, Inside Out Theatre, Vertigo Theatre and many other predominant organizations. They are the creator and performer of the Instagram Livestream phenomenon *MONO MAN MIA!*, for which they won Broadway World's "Vocalist of the Decade". They are the Theatre Arts Director at Youth Singers of Calgary and work with the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium as an Arts Education Facilitator. Much love and admiration to Alix for her continued love and support.



### **Alexa Elser** - Choreographer

Alexa Elser (she/her) is a Calgary-based actor, dancer, singer, choreographer, and clown, and she is absolutely thrilled to be joining the creative team at Lunchbox Theatre for *With Bells On*. Select Choreography Credits Include: *LOVE STRUCK* (Common Ground Festival), *The Sound of Music* (Storybook Theatre); *The Boy from Oz* (Front Row Centre Players); *As You Like It* (SBTB); *Chicago, Grease, Oliver!* (Calgary Actors' Studio SummerACT). Alexa has been training in dance since she was a wee baby, teaching dance to folks of all ages for over a decade, and is ecstatic to now bring all this experience to Lunchbox to help everyone live out their drag queen dreams. All the love to the pals and the fam.



### **Darrin Hagen** - Playwright/Sound Designer

DARRIN HAGEN is an award-winning playwright, author, composer, performer, and Queer historian. He has created over 40 plays, and dozens of published essays and articles, many dealing with the history of sexual minorities in Alberta.

Plays by Darrin include his award-winning 1996 debut, *The Edmonton Queen* (published by Brindle & Glass Publishing). Other published work includes *Tornado Magnet: A Salute to Trailer Court Women*. Other plays are the *Sterling-nominated Buddy, Witch Hunt at the Strand, Metronome, 10 Funerals, The Empress & The Prime Minister*, as well as the international hit *BitchSlap!*. His hit holiday comedy that was commissioned by Lunchbox, *With Bells On*, is currently being adapted into a musical by a team of artists in New York City and is making its world premiere at Edmonton's Roxy Theatre as we speak.

In 2005 he was named one of 100 Edmontonians of the Century. In 2013 he was inducted into the *Q Hall of Fame Canada* for his contribution to Queer Canadian culture. He was recently named by the AFA as one of the 25 Most Influential Alberta artists in the last 25 years. He has received 7 *Sterling awards* for his work in Edmonton theatre.



### **Cassie Holmes** - Set Designer

Cassie (she/her) would like to dedicate her design to the entire queer and trans community, she believes that now more than ever it is important that the voices of the 2SLGBTQIAP+ community are amplified. Beyond this work Cassie is an advocate for the queer and disabled community, she works to make theatre a more inclusive space through her art. Cassie's work spans all areas of theatre design, projection, sound, costume, set and lighting. Select University of Calgary credits include: *A Monster Calls, Argonautika, Hookman, Horse Girls, and The Bus Stop*. She wishes you the best of luck finding all 46 local drag artist names on her set and encourages you to experience the vibrant local drag scene.



### **Meredith Johnson** - Stage Manager

Meredith is a Calgary based stage manager. Previously for Lunchbox: *Cottagers and Indians, Miss Caledonia, The Complete works of William Shakespeare, Brave Girl, Last Christmas, Woman Against Gravity Workshop*. Meredith has worked with the likes of Alberta Theatre Projects, Arts Club Theatre, Bad Knaps Theatre, Black Radish Theatre, Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra, Calgary Young People's Theatre, Globe Theatre Regina, Handsome Alice Theatre, Heritage Park, Making Treaty 7, Major Matt Mason Collective, One Yellow Rabbit, Theatre Calgary, The Shakespeare Company, Spontaneous Theatre, Quest Theatre, Vertigo Theatre and Verb Theatre. Meredith wishes to thank her extended theatre family across Canada for the reminder that dedicated, thoughtful, caring people are everywhere you go, just open your eyes!



# Lunchbox Theatre Raffle

Only 1400 Tickets Printed  
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**1<sup>st</sup> Prize Valued at \$1,667**

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Prize Valued at \$469**

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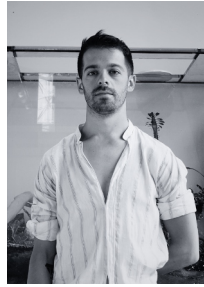
**Caaryn Sadoway** - Apprentice Stage Manager

Caaryn Sadoway is a Stage Manager born and raised in Canmore, Alberta. She loves snacks, cozy video games, and spreadsheets. For Lunchbox: *Countries Shaped Like Stars*.

Recent credits: *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* (Vertigo); *Mail Ordered* (Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, & Edmonton Fringe 2023, Vancouver Fringe 2022); *Murder On The Orient Express* (Vertigo); *Mary Jane* (Fire Exit Theatre); The Canmore Summer Theatre Festival (2018-2020, 2022-2023, Pinetree Players); Bard on Bower Festival (2021, Prime Stock Theatre Co).

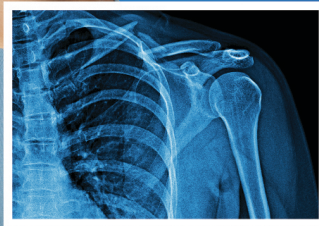
**Benjamin Toner** - Costume Designer

Benjamin is excited to be making his Lunchbox Theatre debut! Benjamin is a Costume Designer professionally in film, television and stage, having worked internationally on a multitude of projects and is educated by way of the University of Lethbridge and the National Theatre School of Canada. His work includes the Bell Grandstand Show for the Calgary Stampede (2022, 2023), television shows like *Lost in Space*, *The Last of Us*, and *A Teacher* and films like *The Mother* and *Hold the Dark*. Benjamin has also been involved in the drag community as a costume designer for a number of years, making *With Bells On* a perfect combination of his worlds of design. He is thrilled to be able to bring some of his unique sparkle and glamour to the Lunchbox audiences!



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# Behind the Design

## Cassie Holmes on Set Design -

The set design for *With Bells On* takes inspiration from many aspects of the queer community. Of course there is the elevator, a deconstructed version, but it's the walls beyond that I used to showcase the 2SLGBTQIAP+ community. It was important to me to exemplify the history of the queer identity and explore the queer zeitgeist in Calgary.

You may notice iconography in the graffiti wall of famous artists throughout history. I wanted to take inspiration from artists who have both shaped my artistic practice and also shaped how the world sees and celebrates queer people. Featured artists include Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Indiana, Andy Warhol, and Keith Haring. Each of these artists are celebrated for their artistic impact but also for their representation of the queer community. They were willing to stand in their truth and that opened doors for the queer community.

On top of their work, there is the Calgary skyline. This is to reflect how the community in Calgary builds upon the past, to create an ever blossoming representation of queer people.

The final layer of the graffiti wall and the set are graffiti tags. These tags are names of drag kings, queens and non-binary artists local to Calgary. When exploring ways to represent our local community, I wanted to include our vibrant and diverse drag scene. Lunchbox put out a call and had forty-six local drag artists send in their names! They are all featured somewhere in our set! They sent in their social media handles so you can follow them and experience our incredible local drag.

**The last piece was hiring a local graffiti artist, Harvey Nichol, to bring life and dimension to the work.**

He has taken my drawings and brought them to life in a way that gives power to graffiti. I hope this set serves as a reminder that queer culture and identity is vibrant and thriving in Calgary.



## Check Out Harvey Nichol's Work

YouTube: AklasComics  
Instagram: @harveyisdead

Website: [Harveynichol.ca](http://Harveynichol.ca)



## Benjamin Toner on Costume Design -

Drag for most of us is about something incredibly radical; joy. Drag costuming holds such a special place in my heart as a costume designer because the creative process is so different, the aesthetic is so specific, the joy that it brings is so unique. I am fortunate enough to have worked with countless drag performers and to have brought my own sparkle to stages and screens across the globe.

Being able to create for *With Bells On* was such a beautiful gift because it allowed us to bring the spirit of drag to an entire production, both with Ted and Natasha. I want you to think of your favourite celebrities. Is it Dolly Parton? Is it Beyonce or Garth Brooks or Mick Jagger? Is it Santa Claus? Do you think they always look and dress like their most celebrated personas? No, of course not; they are human beings under it all. They don their shiniest, sparkliest, most iconic smiles, outfits, and performances because it brings immediate, intentional joy to their audiences. Just because they go home and put on sweatpants does not detract from the validity of the joy that they help provide through those staged characters. That, my friends, is the entire point of drag. The wig, the makeup, the rhinestones, the heels, are all put on to entertain and allow audiences to immediately be transported somewhere other than the conventions of regular life; first and foremost through costuming.

I encourage you to allow the joy, the sparkle, and the unique glamour of both Ted and Natasha's drag to be your permission to tear down a wall and feel something special that maybe you haven't in a long time.



## Calgary's own Drag Queens

Names	Social Handles	Names	Social Handles
<b>Aida Cupcake</b>	@aidacupcake.official	<b>Lance Charmsmoms</b>	@lancecharmsmoms
<b>Bit Chen</b>	@kyleboniol (on instagram)	<b>LAVACAKE</b>	apple_asian
<b>Brad Diesel</b>	@brad__diesel (2 underscores)	<b>Leah Way</b>	
<b>Carly York-Jones aka Carly's Angels</b>	CarlyYorkJonesYYC	<b>Lilith Fair</b>	@lilithfairyyc
<b>Crystal Guysler</b>	thecrystalguysler	<b>Lux Exterior</b>	lux_exterior_89 (instagram)
<b>D. FROST</b>	@galenzamacdonald	<b>Mavis Vontrese</b>	@mavisvontrese
<b>DD Miraj</b>	@dd.miraj	<b>Mira May</b>	themiramay
<b>Dogiichow</b>	@dogiichow	<b>Nada Nuff</b>	@nada_nuff_
<b>El Rey del Sol</b>	@el_rey.del_sol	<b>Natasha Brite</b>	Natasha_brite
<b>Farrah Nuff</b>	Farrah_Nuff_	<b>Noble Oney</b>	@nobleoney
<b>Holtasoli</b>	@Holtasoli	<b>Oliver Twirl (they/ them)</b>	@oliver_twirl
<b>It's just Ella</b>	Its_just_ella	<b>Osmo Cis</b>	@cosmonautbinary
<b>Jane Hustle</b>	@janehustledrag Jessika.Rabid - IG/ TikTok, JessikaRabid - Twitter, Jessika Rabid - Facebook	<b>Phoebe Butters</b>	phoebepeanut__butters
<b>Jessika Rabid</b>	@juliehamdrews	<b>Posie Pocket</b>	Posie_pocket_
<b>Julie Hamdrews</b>	@thejulienecarrots	<b>Rocket Mercury</b>	@rocketmercury (insta)
<b>Julienne Carrots</b>	@etsybatpublisherspres s896	<b>Roy Gbp</b>	@KSC_hatch
<b>Justina</b>	@kal.varium	<b>Sativa Divine</b>	https://linktr.ee/ sativa_divine_omni
<b>Kal Varium</b>	xxx_sweetringo_xxx	<b>Omni</b>	Shaneonyou_1
<b>Karlah Montecarlo</b>	kennymercury_	<b>Shane Onyou</b>	sir.velvet.drag
<b>Kenny Mercury</b>	@kingneptunedrag	<b>Sir Velvet</b>	@sowright1
<b>King Neptune</b>		<b>Sophie Wright</b>	@tana_nuff_
		<b>Tana Nuff</b>	@thaliaxchanel
		<b>Thalia Chanel</b>	Gay.Jatsby.Drag
		<b>The Gay Jatsby</b>	

**The Dark Lady**

Brian Mills & Susan Tyrrell ..... Alixandra Cowman  
Peter & Lorraine Moore ..... Rebecca Toon  
Paula Neice ..... Luigi Riscaldino

**With Bells On**

Cheryl Cohen ..... Benjamin Toner  
In Memory of Diana Ballard ..... Joel Schaefer  
Anne Brown ..... Conrad Belau

**Kisapmata**

Camille McCreath ..... Isabella Pederson  
Available for adoption ..... Cassie Holmes

**The Ballad Of Georges Boivin**

Liam & Mary Christie ..... Duval Lang

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Grace Fraser

Kevin Rothery

Richard F Shaw

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\*Patron donation includes the Adopt an Artist Program



 **Cathie**

LONG-TIME PIANIST (still finding joy in every note)

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A central illustration of a black smartphone with white headphones plugged into the top. The screen displays a video player interface with a yellow background and small red hearts. The video shows the silhouettes of a man and a woman kissing. The video player controls include a play/pause button, a progress bar, and a volume icon. The time "2:15" is visible in the bottom right corner of the video player.

# Kisapmata

BY **BIANCA MIRANDA**

January 30 - February 18, 2024

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