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MAY 13 TO JUNE 8, 2025

COMFORT FOOD

Written by Zorana Sadiq | Directed by Mitchell Cushman



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Photo of Zorana Sadiq by Paula Wilson.

MAY 13 TO JUNE 8, 2025

COMFORT FOOD

Written by Zorana Sadiq | Directed by Mitchell Cushman

WORLD PREMIERE

A Crow's Theatre Commission

May 13 to June 8, 2025

Studio Theatre

THE COMPANY

THE CAST

Noah Grittani KitKat
Zorana Sadiq Bette

THE CREATIVE TEAM

Zorana Sadiq Playwright
Mitchell Cushman Director
Sim Suzer Set, Props, & Costume Designer
Niloufar Zaiee Associate Set & Costume Designer
Thomas Ryder Payne Sound Designer
Echo Zhou Lighting Designer
Jay Hines Associate Lighting Designer
Tori Morrison Video Designer
Mitchell Cushman Dramaturg
Nate Bitton Fight Director
Elaine May Head of Wardrobe
Lochlan Cox Head of Props
Meghan Speakman Stage Manager
Aviva Armour-Ostroff Voice of Helen

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Deanna Morrison Head Scenic
Ryan Davy, Emily Kuthe, Ian Noble, Liam Wallner,
Rhys Bernier, Rowan Jones, Will Nazar Crew
Steve Bromley Scenic Painter

Thank You:

Writing this play would not have been possible without the generosity of so many people who helped in the following roles:

Readers and Listeners: Aldrin Bundoc, Rami Khan, Stephen Jackman Torkoff, Breton Lalama, Emilio Viera, Jessica Greenberg, Jonas Chernick, Kalale Lufton Dalale, Amanda Cordner, Todd Houseman, David Di Giovanni. **Chefs:** Didier Leroy, Vikram Vij, Regan Daley. **Script Sounding-Boards:** Tanja Jacobs, Donna Michelle St. Bernard, Maev Beaty, Damien Atkins, Kanika Ambrose. **Experts on Babies and Bread:** Lindsay Kyte, Hannah Burrows, Steven Cohen, Bonnie Beecher. **Dough Makers:** Petite Thuet. **World Builders:** Amy Keating, Sébastien Heins, Aviva Armour Ostroff, Thomas Ryder Payne, Benny and Rachel Gilbert. **Horticulturalists:** Echo and Xiaojing Zhou. **Grant givers:** Studio 180, Theatre Passe Muraille, Nightswimming.

Huge thanks to: Chris and Paolo and the entire team at Crows.

All my fellow cooks in the kitchen of Comfort Food: Noah, Meghan, Sim, Thomas, Tori, Echo, Niloufar, Elaine and Lochlan and to Mitchell, the very best egg.

Additional Thanks: Jay Hines for help during previews.

Running Time:

Comfort Food is approximately 90 minutes, with no intermission.

Crow's Theatre is a proud member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA). We engage professional artists under the terms of the Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) with Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA).

*Indicated designers on this production are represented by the Associated Designers of Canada, IATSE Local ADC659.



WELCOME FROM CROW'S

The company of *Comfort Food*.

Welcome to the final show in our 2024.25 season, *Comfort Food*. We're thrilled to close out the season with such a timely work, brought to life by two longtime Crow's Theatre collaborators: playwright Zorana Sadiq, whose previous performances here include *Towards Youth*, *Mixtape*, and *Trident Moon*, and director Mitchell Cushman, Artistic Director of Outside the March, who previously directed *The Flick* and *Jerusalem* at Streetcar Crowsnest.

This year, the Netflix series *Adolescence* brought the question of what our kids might be doing behind closed doors online to the forefront of public conversation. It became one of the most watched shows globally and intensified fears about the internet's impact on the lives of teenage boys. Even the British Prime Minister admitted it hit him hard as a father.

We're in a moment of deep questioning—and perhaps an urgent reckoning—about how algorithms and online communities are shaping our kids' psychological and moral development. *Comfort Food* felt essential the moment I read it. This play doesn't just add to the cultural conversation—it invites us into it: How do we guide children through the forest of life in the internet age? How do we stay connected when so much of their world is invisible to us? How do we leave space for young people's particular response to the urgent matters of the world we have left them?

It's a play that reflects the complexity and immediacy we've tried to bring to the stage all season—stories that sit with uncertainty and invite us to listen more closely.

While we're about to shut our doors for the summer, our 2025.26 season—our biggest yet—is just around the corner, featuring more collaborations than ever, including a new three-year partnership with Soulpepper. We're kicking things off with *Octet*, an a cappella chamber musical by Dave Malloy (creator of *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*), followed by the Canadian premiere of Lucy Kirkwood's dark and dazzling comedy *The Welkin*. Two bold pieces that set the tone for a landmark season.

You can explore the full season at crowstheatre.com. Subscriptions are on sale now—we'd love to see you back.

Thank you again for being here. Your presence and support are what make this work possible. We're lucky to share these stories with you—here at Streetcar Crowsnest and across the city.

CHRIS ABRAHAM
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

SHERRIE JOHNSON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

Spring makes us into optimists. This thought occurred to me while walking past some raised garden beds the other day. I was late for rehearsal, but even in my rush, the little green shoots popping up in the brown soil felt like hope itself. After gently planting seeds and nubby brown things, spring tells the gardener that they have done something right. "Keep going," it says, "you're pretty good at this."

Round about August, my own back garden can start to feel wild and ungovernable – an exercise in futility. I'm either cutting something back before it has generated what it needs to survive the following year or hacking away at something I have let get out-of-hand. Sometimes it is hard to know which is which. Late summer says: "You're in over your head."

I started writing *Comfort Food* because I was curious about love languages and how they often become rigid within the urgent task of nourishing something. It was my observation that sustenance was complicated. Humans, like plants, had swerving, changing needs, especially the young ones. Also, the soil is off these days – sometimes I worry we have already spoiled things for them, so that they crave the wrong things.

As I continued to work on the piece—alongside Mitchell Cushman's beautiful dramaturgy—I knew I was also honing-in on an investigation about the delicacy of familial love. I chose the smallest possible unit of it—a mother and her child, early in the writing process. As I kept working, I found I could hold them in the palm of my hand, which meant that I could see the thing from so many sides.

I hope you do, too.

Thanks for coming to the theatre tonight. I'll see you up there.

ZORANA SADIQ
PLAYWRIGHT

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I started collaborating with Zorana on this play's development in the fall of 2023. About six months before that, my mother had passed away. I don't think I fully appreciated at the time what a balm this work would be. Cooking didn't play the same central role in my family growing up as it does in Bette and Kit's household, but the passionate exchange of ideas certainly did. When it comes to inheritance, like many of us, I owe much of my rhetorical style to my parents – the first people I ever got to argue with. Working on *Comfort Food* has helped to remind me that, when it comes to family, as with art-making, debate can be a love language.

One could never ask for a more inspiring and generous creative sparring partner to investigate life's big questions than Zorana Sadiq. I'm resisting the urge to invoke too many cooking metaphors here, but if you'll permit me one: as both a playwright and a performer, she has an uncanny ability to know when to follow the recipe, and when to let instinct take over. And what a joy to collaborate with Noah on his professional debut – an actor who, when he first came in to audition a year ago, introduced Zorana and I to KitKat, truly for the first time. I'm deeply grateful for the headspace that pondering this play has offered me. I hope that, like for me, it leaves you with much to chew on.

MITCHELL CUSHMAN
DIRECTOR

THE CAST



Noah Grittani

KitKat

Pronouns: He/him. **Hometown/Current Town:** Oakville, ON. **For Crow's Theatre:** Debut. **Other Theatre:** *Macbeth*, *Alice Through the Looking Glass* and *The Visit* at Etobicoke School of the Arts. Performer at the Oakville Improv Theatre Company.

Upcoming Projects: TBD. **Education:** Currently enrolled at the University of Toronto Mississauga for Theatre & Drama Studies. **Thank You:** My ever-supportive and encouraging family, as well as Mitchell Cushman and Zorana Sadiq for offering me this incredible opportunity and experience. **Social Media:** @ndgrittani on Instagram.



Zorana Sadiq

Playwright

Bette

Pronouns: She/Her. **Hometown/Current Town:** Toronto. **For Crow's Theatre:** *Trident Moon*, *MixTape*, *Towards Youth*. **Other Theatre:** *Armadillos* (Factory Theatre); *Wildfire* (Factory Theatre); *Into the Woods*

(YES); *MixTape* (Grand Theatre, NAC, Here for Now); *CHILD-ish* (Summerworks); *Bend it Like Beckham* (Starvox); *The Enchanted Loom* (Cahoots); *Tout Comme Elle* (Necessary Angel Theatre); *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (YPT). **Film/TV:** *Stealing Vows*, *Strays*, *Kim's Convenience*, *In the Dark*, *Designated Survivor*.

Upcoming Projects: *Octet* (Crow's Theatre). **More:** Zorana is an award-winning actress, playwright and classical musician. Her solo show, *MixTape*, received three Dora nominations and was featured on CBC's PlayME. Zorana was playwright-in-residence at Crow's Theatre in 2020 and participated in the Banff Playwright's lab in 2024. She was book writer for the choral piece, *The Great Pause*, composed by Suzy Wilde. She has been a guest host for CBC Radio's program, *Tempo*, and has sung with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Tanglewood Music Centre, Vancouver Symphony, Calgary Symphony, Tapestry Opera and Boston Musica Viva. **Thank You:** Thanks to J and Ciar for knowing all the stuff, and being my favorite show in town.

THE CREATIVE TEAM



Mitchell Cushman

Director & Dramaturg

Pronouns: He/Him. **Hometown/Current Town:** Born in the UK, has always called Toronto home. **For Crow's Theatre:** *The Flick*. Crow's Associate Artistic Director (2012 - 2014). **Other Theatre:** Founding Artistic Director of Outside the March, one of Canada's

leading immersive theatre companies. Recent OtM Directing credits include: *Performance Review*, *Death of Walt Disney*, *No Save Points*, *Trojan Girls*, *Lessons in Temperament*, *The Tape Escape*, *Dr. Silver*, *Jerusalem*, *TomorrowLove*, *Mr. Burns*. Other favourite directing credits include *Treasure Island*, *Breath of Kings*, *Possible Worlds* (Stratford); *Age Is A Feeling*, *The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale*, *I'm Doing This For You* (Soulpepper/Haley McGee); *Into the Woods*, *Merrily We Roll Along* (YES Theatre); *The Effect*, *Hand to God*, *The Aliens* (Coal Mine); *Brantwood* (Sheridan); *Sweeney Todd*, *I, Claudia* (TIFT). **Film/TV:** *Lessons in Temperament* (LevelFILM/TVO); **Upcoming Projects:** *Rainbow on Mars* (OtM/ National Ballet); *Medusa* (Soulpepper). **More:** His work has been seen on stages as large as The Royal Alexandra Theatre, in spaces as intimate as kindergarten classrooms and in locales as far-flung as London, New York, Argentina, Edinburgh, Munich, Finland and Japan. Mitchell has been the recipient of the Siminovitch protégé Award, two Dora Awards for Outstanding Direction, and his shows have received 4 Dora Awards for Outstanding Production, and 14 Toronto Theatre Critics Awards. Much love to Amy, Rosencatz and Guildenpurr (only one of whom is supportive enough to read this). **Social Media:** @outsidethemitch.



Sim Suzer

Set, Props, & Costume Designer

Pronouns: She/Her. **Hometown/Current Town:** Istanbul, Turkey / Toronto, Canada. **For Crow's Theatre:** *The Bidding War* - Co Set Designer, *Bad Roads* - Set Designer, *Fifteen Dogs* - Associate

Costume Designer. **Other Theatre:** *Sanguine* - Set and Costume Designer (Cahoots Theatre); *1939* - Associate Set Designer (Canadian Stage Company); *All That Is Between* - Costume Designer (Tiger Princess Theatre); *A Year With Frog and Toad* - Costume Designer (The Capitol Theatre); *Dark of the Moon* - Costume Designer (George Brown College); *Sweeter* - Set Designer (Cahoots Theatre); *Carnival of Musch* - Costume Designer (George Brown College); *Love's Labour's Lost* - Costume Designer (Stratford Festival); *The Game of Love and Chance* - Set and Costume Designer (Shaw Festival); *Everybody* - Costume Designer and Associate Set Designer (Shaw Festival); *Anahita's Republic* - Set Designer (Bustle and Beast Theatre). **Upcoming Projects:** *Romeo and Juliet* - Set and Costume Designer (Canadian Stage Company). **Education:** BFA Toronto Metropolitan University Theatre Production. **Social Media:** simsuzer.com



Niloufar Zaiee

Associate Set & Costume Designer

Pronouns: She/Her. **Hometown/Current Town:** Born in Iran and lives in Toronto. **For Crow's Theatre:** *Comfort food* - Associate set and costume. **Other**

Theatre: *The Thanksgiving Play* - Mirvish Theatre (Costume & Prop Designer); *The Caged Bird Sings* - Modern Times Stage (Costume Designer); *Death of Walt Disney* - Outside The March & Soulpepper (Costume Designer); *On the Other Side of the Sea* - Aluna Theatre (Costume Designer); *No Save Points* - Outside The March/Lighthouse Immersive (Costume Designer); *Anahita's Republic* - Factory Theatre (Costume Designer); *English* - Soulpepper Theatre (Costume Designer); *The Death of The King* - Humber College (Costume Designer); *Children of Fire* - Nightwood Theatre (Co-Set and Costume Designer); *Trojan Girls* - Outside The March & Factory Theatre (Associate Set Designer); *Art in Transit* - Luminato Festival (Assistant Costume Designer); *1184* - Theatre Passe Muraille (Co-Set and Costume Designer); *The Sylvia Effect* - Kingston Theatre (Costume Designer assistant); **Film/TV:** *The Start Of A Problem* (Production Designer); *Trading Up Christmas* (On-set Dresser); *Mother* (Production Designer); *Time Rebuilt* (Costume Designer); *Ella* (Production and Costume Designer); *The Players* (Associate Costume Designer); *The Young Arsonist* (Art Director); *Salome Learns To Dance* (Art Director); **Education:** Fashion Technique and Design - George Brown College. **Social Media:** nilofarziaee.com, @Niloufar.zi



Thomas Ryder Payne

Sound Designer

Pronouns: He/Him. **Hometown/Current Town:** Toronto. **For Crow's Theatre:** *Wights*, *Rosmersholm*, *shaniqua in abstraction*, *Bad Roads*, *The Master Plan*, *Perceptual Archaeology*, *Red Velvet*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Orphans For The Czar*, *MixTape*, *Julius Caesar*, *A&R*

Angels, *Boy In The Moon*, *Wedding Party*, *The Watershed*, *Someone Else*. **Other Theatre:** Designs for Stratford, Shaw, Mirvish, Soulpepper, CanStage, Tarragon, Factory, TPM, YPT, Crows, Modern Times, Aluna, BIBT, Theatre Gargantua, Nightwood, Toronto Dance Theatre, NAC, Centaur, Theatre Calgary, GCTC, RMTG and many others. **Film/TV:** *Plain View*, *7A*, *Blood Harvest*, *Hero.Traitor.Patriot*, *Alegra & Jim*, *Robert's Circle*. **Education/Training:** Studied composition with James Tenney, Honours BA, York University. **More:** [bandcamp](http://bandcamp.com), xeno-canto.org



Echo Zhou 周芷會

Lighting Designer

Pronouns: she/they. **Hometown/Current Town:** Changsha, China/Takronto. **For Crow's Theatre:** *Chinese Lady*, *Rocking Horse Winner*, *Shaniqua in Abstraction*. **Other Theatre:** *Benevolence* (Tarragon

Theatre); *Blind Dates* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *Flin Flon Cowboy* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *Cymbeline* (Stratford Festival); *A Poem for Rabia* (Tarragon Theatre); *Between a Wok and a Hotpot* (Cahoots Theatre); *The Year of the Cello* (Theatre Passe Muraille); *I love the Smell of Gasoline* (Pencil Kit Production); *HMS Pinacore* (Lancouver Opera); *Every Brilliant Thing* (Thousand Island Playhouse); *White Girls in Moccasins* (Manidoons Collective); *Mr.Shi and His Lover*, and *I Swallowed Moon Made of Iron* (Music Picnic). **Upcoming Projects:** *Firehorse and Shadow* (Dream Walker Dance Company). **Education:** BFA from Toronto Metropolitan University. **More:** Set Design for MYUZ experience (National Art Centre). Echo received the Dora Mavor Moore Award for the independent theatre division's outstanding set and projection design. She is a first-generation Chinese immigrant artist who makes Takronto her home.. **Thank You:** 獻給親愛的嘜嘜. **Social Media:** @echoaroundtheworld, echohouzdesign.com



Tori Morrison

Video Designer

Pronouns: She/Her. **Hometown/Current Town:** Edmonton/Toronto. **For Crow's Theatre:** Debut. **Other Theatre:** co-creating music, video design,

and producing for *I Don't Even Miss You at Factory Theatre* (2024, Toronto); sound design and composition for *The Woman in Black at Teatro Live!* (2024, Edmonton); and sound design and additional music for *Murder on the Links at Vertigo Theatre* (2024, Calgary). She did multimedia design and producing for *This Is the Story of the Child Ruled by Fear* with Strange Victory Performance, which has toured to twelve Canadian presenters and counting. **Film/TV:** Tori is an alumna of the Canadian Film Centre Slight Family Music Residency. Fern, a short film she created at CFC with writer David Gagnon Walker and director Lisa Rose Snow, is available on YouTube. **Upcoming Projects:** Multimedia design and performing for the premiere of *Ostinato (or, I Would Prefer Not To)* at the High Performance Rodeo (2026, Calgary). **Education:** Tori is a graduate of the Production Design & Technical Arts program at the National Theatre School of Canada. **More:** Learn more about her work at www.torigmorrison.com. **Thank You:** My parents Rose Fitzgerald and Ian Morrison, and my partner David Walker. **Social Media:** @torigmorrison



Nate Bitton

Fight Director

Pronouns: He/Him. **Current Town:** Toronto. **For Crow's Theatre:** Debut. **Other Theatre:** As Fight

Director: *Sweeny Todd* (Talk is Free Theatre - Dora Award winner "Outstanding Production: Musical, 2022); *Dead Broke* (Lost Dreams Collective); *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, *Comedy of Errors* (Shakespeare Bash'd); *The Philanderess* (Truth 'n' Lies); *Rocky Horror Show*, *Heathers*, *Hamlet*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Goodnight Desdemona/Good Morning Juliet* (Hart House Theatre). As Performer: *Soldier in Macbeth* (Canadian Opera Company); Laertes in *Hamlet*, Romeo/Iago in *Goodnight Desdemona/Good Morning Juliet*, Jamie in *Bone Cage* (Hart House Theatre); Antonio in *Twelfth Night*, Lennox and Young Siward in *Macbeth* (Shakespeare Bash'd). **Upcoming Projects:** *Rainbow on Mars* an Outside the March experience in co-production with the National Ballet of Canada and Peripheral Theatre. **Education:** University of Toronto Missassauga/Sheridan College, Fight Director's Canada, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. **More:** Nate is a visually impaired, award-winning Fight Director, stage combat instructor, performer, director and occasional stunt man. **Social Media:** @frostbitton, natebitton.com



Elaine May

Head of Wardrobe

Pronouns: She/Her. **Hometown/Current Town:** Ottawa. **For Crow's Theatre:** *The Bidding War*. **Other**

Theatre: 15 years at Young People's Theatre and 20 years with Soulpepper in various wardrobe positions, as well as stints at Stratford, Canadian Stage and Ross Petty's Panto. Highlights include *King Lear*, *Top Girls*, *A Christmas Carol* (Soulpepper); *Hana's Suitcase*, *Seussical*, *Frog and Toad* (Young People's Theatre). **Upcoming Projects:** *Fifteen Dogs*. **Education/Training:** BFA Theatre Production (York University); Diploma in Adult Education and Perinatal Education (Douglas College). **More:** Elaine is a certified childbirth educator and personal trainer specializing in pre and postnatal fitness. **Thank You:** Katie Pounder for dragging me back in!



Meghan Speakman

Stage Manager

Pronouns: She/Her. **For Crow's Theatre:** Debut. **Other Theatre:** *Hypothetical Baby* (Nightwood);

Madama Butterfly, *Faust* (COC); *Madame Minister* (Talk is Free); *Age is a Feeling* (Soulpepper); *Hamlet* (Canadian Stage); *Monster* (Factory); *Canoe* (Native Earth); *Where You Are* (Lighthouse); *Behind the Moon* (Tarragon); *The Trojan Girls and the Outhouse of Atreus* (Outside the March). **Upcoming Projects:** Two different productions of *Romeo & Juliet* at Canadian Stage and the Canadian Opera Company. **Thank You:** Much love to Ephraim and Ianto for their continued support.

A SPECIAL REQUEST

In honour of the World Premiere of *Comfort Food*, Crow's Theatre has made a donation to [Indspire](http://Indspire.ca), a national Indigenous registered charity that educates, connects and invests in First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people so they will achieve their highest potential. Their vision is to enrich Canada through Indigenous education and by inspiring achievement. We invite you to consider supporting this very worthwhile organization as well.

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The cast of A Strange Loop. Photo by Dahlia Katz.

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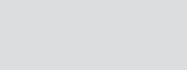
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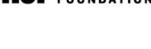
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