

Hi, I'm Lindsey Schneider, the playwright and director of *Bad Dog* at the 2023 Victoria Fringe Festival. I've loved dreaming up these characters and directing this production. In this introduction, I'll tell you a bit about the casting, the actors and the blocking, as well as the theatre space and the set.

The play is about 50 minutes long, and takes place at the Skam Satellite Studio in Victoria, BC.

In this play, there are four actors, all in their twenties. They play The Dog, The Cat, The Owner, and The Neighbor. The play takes place in the Owner and the Neighbor's apartment building, during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021. At the beginning of the play, The Owner adopts The Dog, and brings him home. Later, we meet The Neighbor, and her pet, The Cat.

The actors who play animals can see the audience. The actors who play human characters cannot. The entire show is from the perspective of The Dog or The Cat, who view themselves as fully human, and act like humans in every way, except when one of the human characters touches them. For example, the actor playing The Dog will walk around the stage, put his head in his hands, throw things, and get an idea like a human would, but when The Owner enters, she pets him on the head. When The Dog and The Owner leave the stage on a walk, The Owner leads him off by holding his hand. During a pivotal fight scene between a human character and The Dog, the actor playing The Dog fights like a human would. I should note that there are **no** animal costumes in this play. No one is wearing anything a regular person wouldn't wear on the street!

Dawson Rutledge, who plays The Dog, is the tallest actor in the show. He looks like he spends lots of time outside, doing something very active—he's got blonde hair that's lighter from the sun. He's dressed like one of those ultra-marathoners you might encounter on a trail. He's wearing high performance leggings and shorts, a long-sleeved running shirt, and a red bandana. He's often paces, and stops to turn to the audience to make sure we're on his side.

The actor who plays The Owner and the actor who play The Neighbor are the same height. The Owner, played by Jessica Burdge, looks like the sweetest girl in your art class. She's dressed in lots of comfy layers, made of different knits and textures. She has red hair and always carries her backpack, even at home.

Lynnéa Chan, the actor who plays The Neighbor, has long black hair and a mischievous sparkle in her eyes when she smiles. When she's stressed, she puts her hair up. Her outfit would be perfect for a spontaneous camping trip, without *looking* like it's perfect for camping. She's always running around.

Darian Ngai, the actor who plays The Cat, is a dancer. He's taller than The Owner and The Neighbor, but shorter than The Dog. His dark hair stands up, and he's wearing an all-black ensemble that looks equally well suited for a performance or going out to dinner. When he speaks to the audience, he comes downstage, waves, or even flirts. When he enters or exits, he leaps, twirls, or strolls.

The Dog always speaks to the audience, and controls the world of the play: including the lights, sound, and set. When something is out of place, he moves it or asks the technicians to change the lights or give him a fun sound effect. He can rewind, pause, or fast forward the world, to show the audience his memories and prove his point. However, so can The Cat, who shows the audience their own memories that The Dog never saw or experienced. This tension between the primary and secondary narrator, both of whom are not entirely reliable, allows The Dog and The Cat to play with what actually happened, and how their own biases color their memories of the events. Through this dual perspective, the audience can decide for themselves whether The Dog and The Cat's judgements of the human characters are accurate.

There are a few important scenes I'd like to describe, without giving spoilers. When you hear club music, The Dog and another character are dancing together. They're trying to be sexy, but it looks ridiculous. When you hear classical ballet music, The Dog is doing ballet barre warmups, and getting ready to do another gran plie and further sabotage The Owner. When The Bite is mentioned again, there is a fight sequence between The Dog and one of the human characters. He grabs her and throws her to the ground.

The set was built by production designer Corina Fisher, aided by assistant designer Matthew Gordon. The setting of the play is during the pandemic, in 2020 and 2021. Many of the scenes take place when the characters are "staying at home." The design is a modular set made of light wood, with accents of red and blue, that match The Dog's red costume accents, and The Cat's blue ones. Some of the blocks are hollow so that the actors can sit in them. There are two 20-inch square blocks, put together to make a couch. It has a padded wooden back, that is attached to the blocks with a utilitarian rope and carabiner clip. This padded back can be unclipped from the bed, and becomes a dog bed when laid on the floor, such as in the "treat" scene. There are two smaller blocks that are used as chairs, rocks, or benches, or stacked to be the cat's tower. There is a cat post wound with the same rope as secures the couch. When the Cat creates the café, the cat post becomes the table stand, and the back of the couch becomes the table top. The Cat and The Dog, who can see the audience, move the set like they're stage hands. They notice when parts are out of place, and move them into their preferred position. They move the furniture into multiple configurations: a couch, a bed and dog bed downstage, a café, a diagonal hallway, a park with benches, a trail with rocks, and a cat tower with a flipped over block to represent a cardboard box that The Cat sits in.

The theatre itself is close quarters, not unlike a young person's apartment. The walls are black, and the space is longer than it is wide. The theatre was once a retail space, and it has the low ceiling and long dimensions to reflect its former use. These features make the theatre feel indie, cozy, intimate, and a little bit like a secret. The stage is level with the floor. When you enter, you pass the front of house area, and walk down a long rectangular room into the theatre. The stage is flat to the floor. The first two rows of seats are flat on the floor. The third row of seats is 6" off the ground on a riser, and the fourth row of seats is 12" off the ground. There is an aisle, and 4 more rows of seats that are flat to the ground on house right.

The actors exit behind a curtain at the far back of the stage. When they leave The Owner's apartment, they exit through the curtain at the back. When character's leave The Neighbor's apartment, or the apartment hallway, they exit through the aisle between the audience.

Thank you for listening to this audio introduction of Bad Dog at the Victoria Fringe. If you're interested in attending our show, we would be thrilled to have you. Thank you for listening, and I can't wait to meet you at the show.