

WORLD PREMIERE

AUGUST 2026



WHO IS ESTHER

ABOUT WHO IS ESTHER

Set in the present day, everything was going well for CEO Mr. Verious ... until his female VP quits due to his sexual advances. To recruit a replacement, he decides to hold a singing contest. Esther, a street-wise young woman from a gritty part of town, is encouraged by her Uncle Mo to compete. To the surprise of all (except her), she wins and is appointed as the new VP.

Meanwhile Ham, Verious' racist advisor, doesn't like Esther or people like her, and slyly plots their demise. Esther finds the courage to speak truth to power: she turns the tables, and holds Mr. Verious to account.

WRITER/COMPOSER'S MESSAGE

When I originally read the Book of Esther, I knew that this story should be brought to life, through music, for today's audience. What I didn't expect was that I would have the "opportunity"... while also receiving treatment for leukemia and a subsequent bone marrow transplant. For seven long months, my entire life was a tiny hospital room, a rented Yamaha piano, and of course, everything connected to surviving chemo and radiation.

For me, Who Is Esther has been filled with firsts: Transporting a 2500 year-old story into today's idiom. Writing 21 original songs, including a few really catchy ones. Learning to arrange the music. Building the character profiles. MANY substantive revisions over 8 years. COVID. Workshops. A studio cast recording. Building the brand. Working with an exceptional cast and creative team. And then producing Who Is Esther with my wife, Linda Craig.

This musical is dedicated to each and every person who leans into their unique challenges, and discovers that when the chips are down, they can step up, and they can make a difference.

Randall

SCENES & MUSICAL NUMBERS

- 1.....Corner Block
- 2.....Behind Every Great Man
- 3.....Thanks for Your Service to Date
- 4.....Talent Stadium (Look at my smile /
I'll tell you what to do / Sometimes)
- 5.....Best of the Three
- 6.....Who Is Esther
- 7.....Perversity
- 8.....Mo's Lament
- 9.....Privileged World
- 10....We Are Believers
- 11....The Invitation
- 12....Wonderful Day
- 13....Investigate! Interrogate!
- 14....Turnabout
- 15....Ham's Disgrace
- 16....The Event
- 17....The Gallows
- 18....We Can Fix This
- 19....Finale

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The company of Who Is Esther acknowledges we are on the traditional territories of many nations: in Tkaronto/Toronto, the Mississaugas of the Credit, Anishinaabe, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat; and in Katarokwi/Kingston, the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee.

CO-PRODUCER'S MESSAGE

December 2025: We were sitting in a restaurant, half-way between Toronto and Florida, when we decided to produce *Who Is Esther*, at the end of 2027. We had never produced a musical before, and thought that with two years, we could figure it out. So at the end of February 2026, we got a "shock" call: *Who Is Esther* had been selected to appear at the Kingston Fringe Festival, a mere 5 months later.

To say that it was a steep learning curve would be an understatement. That urgency meant we had to be organized: Hire a director and cast ... done. Rehearsals... done. And the other 350 items on our to-do list... well, mostly done. Thanks to the many who helped make this production come alive, and especially the exceptional cast and creative team.

Linda Craig and Randall Craig

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As a proud Kingstonian, I was thrilled to be selected to direct the world premiere of *Who Is Esther*. (And I actually was equally thrilled to travel to Toronto each week for rehearsals - really!) As a world premiere, it meant exploring each scene for the very first time: original blocking, original choreography, and of course, working directly with the writer/composer and co-producers in an original musical. The cast also made a significant difference, bringing each character (and interaction) to life. It truly was a collaborative production. The end result: a musical that connects emotionally with each person in the audience, and gets them to think: "*Who Is Esther?* That person is ____."

Tracy Forster

CAST (alphabetical)

Tommy Amoroso Ham
Leah Becker Aide, Schemer, Chorus
Zalyzza Govia Esther
Sedona Jones Contestant 1, Schemer, Chorus
Michelle Kettrick Vashti, Chorus
Mitchell Lauer Mr. Verious
Brice Leunkeu Uncle Mo
Tikka Smiley Ham's Wife, Contestant 2, Chorus

CREATIVE TEAM

Book and Music.....Randall Craig
Co-producers.....Linda Craig and Randall Craig
Director/Musical Director.....Tracey Forster
Lighting Design.....Rian Tran
Costumes and Props.....Temima Rocklin
All performances called by.....Randall Craig
Prompt Book.....Joey Lau
Admin and Social media.....Mary Gesim
Outreach and partnerships.....Loretta Levinson

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Louise Burgess, Rob Corbett, Wayne Logan, Brian Craig of Tribute Videos, Rosemary Doyle for cast billeting and AD, Tim Fort for photography, Evvie Craig for props, Friends and family for nine years of listening, input, and encouragement, Randall's stem cell donor, Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation, Long & McQuade for the AV equipment, Christ Church Deer Park for rehearsal space, TAPA, Kultura Collective, Our studio cast on Spotify and Apple Music, Our community singers (the first time we heard the music sung), Our Sing With Esther team, All of the communities who are sharing Who Is Esther with their members and YOU! (Thanks for being part of our world premiere audience.)

Cast Biographies (alphabetical)



Tommy Amoroso (Ham)

Tommy brings a wealth of experience and natural charisma to this production. His theater credits are truly remarkable for their breadth - spanning beloved musicals and works alike. Audiences may recognize him from standout roles such as Lord Wessex in Shakespeare in Love and Professor Bhaer in Little Women, among many others. He has performed with some of Toronto's most respected theater companies, including Etobicoke Musical Productions, No Strings Theatre, Scarborough Music Theatre, Clarkson Music Theatre, and Alexander Showcase Theatre. Beyond the stage, Tommy has appeared as a television background performer in numerous productions, including Reign, The Strain, and Canada: The Story of Us.

Leah Becker (Aide, Schemer, Chorus)

Leah brings tremendous range and enthusiasm to this production. Her stage credits include Belle in Beauty & the Beast, Cinderella in Into the Woods, Pugsley in The Addams Family, and Ali in Mamma Mia! at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts. She has appeared in film productions with

Beachwood Canyon Productions and Resonating Films, as well as the Destination Toronto 100% Campaign. Trained at the Randolph Academy in dance, vocals, and acting, Leah has also honed her voice with Ryan Luchuck and as a member of the Viva Chamber Choir Singers. She is also a pianist and guitarist.



Zalyzza Govia (Esther)

Zalyzza brings both vocal power and deep emotional presence to this pivotal role. Her theater credits speak for themselves, most notably her portrayal of Lady Clapham in Something Rotten at Sheridan College, alongside

in Something Rotten, Armchair Confidential, and the Factory Theatre workshop production 18 Palace Road. She has also graced the stage at the Dora Awards as a chorus member and served as an adjudicator at STAR Fest which is no small honour! Zalyzza holds an Honours Bachelor of Music Theatre Performance from Sheridan College, where she trained extensively in singing, acting, and dance. Her vocal versatility spans Pop, Soul, Gospel, R&B, Jazz, and Country - a range that perfectly suits the richness of this story. Beyond the stage, she shares her gifts as Assistant Director and Acting Coach at All Nations Full Gospel Church.

Cast Biographies (cont'd)

Sedona Jones (Contestant 1, Schemer, Chorus)

Sedona Jones (Any/All) is cast in three exciting roles! Contestant #1 in the "Talent Stadium", where hopefuls compete for attention and the coveted title of VP in a high-stakes singing contest. She then turns up the intrigue as a Schemer, where she sets her sights on deposing the CEO. And she also adds her voice and energy to the Chorus. She is a graduate of St. Lawrence College's Music Theatre Performance program, where she trained across acting, singing, Jazz dance, Tap, and Ballet; with a special love of Heels dancing, after. She originates from Northern Ontario, is currently located in Toronto, and works as a Director, Performer, and Voice/Music Teacher. Credits include *Oliver!* *The Sound of Music*, *The Music Man*, *Rocky Horror Picture show*, *Bol Brown Boy Bol*, and more.



Michelle Kettrick (Vashti, Chorus)

With a rich background in both Opera and Musical Theatre, Michelle brings a wealth of talent and stage presence to this production. By day, Michelle inspires the next generation of musicians as a band and voice teacher with the DDSB and Director of Music at Church of the Ascension. Her Musical Theatre credits include *Chicago*, *Into the Woods*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Spamalot*, *the Fantasticks*, and more. Performance credits span concert engagements and recordings with the Elmer Iseler Singers and Aradia Ensemble, and her vocal versatility is demonstrated in her featured soloist appearances including Oratorios (Handel's *Messiah*, *Considering Matthew Shepard*, *Faure's Requiem*) and as the lead singer for the alternative rock cover band, *Kvetch*. Michelle holds a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Northern Arizona University.

Mitchell Lauer (Mr. Verious)

A seasoned character actor with a gift for both comedy and drama, he brings an impressive depth of experience to this pivotal role. Mitchell's theatre credits are wide-ranging and wonderfully diverse, from Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* and Horace Vandergelder in *The Matchmaker* to the formidable Richard III and Schroeder in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. He has also produced and directed *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, proving that his talents extend well beyond the stage itself. Mitch has a playful range that he brings to every performance. Trained at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York and Sheridan College's Musical Theatre Program, Mitchell's foundation spans acting, voice, singing, movement, stage combat, and more.



Cast Biographies (cont'd)

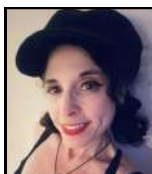


Brice Leunkeu (Uncle Mo)

A singer-songwriter, participant in the Canadian Model & Talent Convention, and proud member of the Forte Toronto Gay Men's Chorus. Brice has purposefully built his performance experience with one clear destination in mind: the musical theatre stage. Alongside his theatre work, he has been developing original musical material and honing a versatile vocal identity that moves fluidly through pop, soul, R&B and more. This genre breadth has shaped him into a dynamic, expressive performer whose storytelling extends far beyond the stage.

Tikka Smiley (Ham's Wife, Contestant 2, Chorus)

Meet Tikka Smiley, who brings warmth and joy to the stage in the roles of Ham's wife and Contestant #2. Tikka has been delighting audiences of all ages with her dynamic and soulful music, and it is easy to see why: her live performance credits include her Indie band HopefulPhoenix, leading Hava N'ranena: the soulful song circle ensemble NiggunToronto.com and both the televised and touring productions of Skinnamarink TV Live. She is a Juno Award recipient, as a Featured Vocalist on Sharon, Lois & Bram's album Friends Forever. (And before that, she also won a Dora award!)



Creative Team Biographies

Randall Craig

(Book and Music, Co-producer, Show Caller)

Randall Craig - composer, writer, co-producer: a man of many hats and boundless energy. Some may call him a serial entrepreneur, but we think “twenty-first century renaissance man” captures him far better. Whether he is writing books, coaching those with a business vision to pursue, earning recognition from his peers, Randall has a remarkable gift for seeing what is possible... and then making it happen. Randall brings that same zest and determination to everything he touches, including this production.



Linda Craig (Co-producer)

Behind every great production is someone who sees its potential long before the curtain rises, and for *Who Is Esther*, that person is Linda Craig, Co-Producer. With a keen eye for storytelling and a talent for bringing the right people and ideas together, Linda has been a driving force in shepherding this musical from vision to stage. A lifelong choral singer with a grounded professional business background, Linda's ability to communicate with clarity and heart has made a significant difference to this production. Linda is passionate about music and storytelling, and believes deeply in the power of live performance to move and inspire.

Tracey Forster (Director/Musical Director)

Currently based in Kingston, Ontario, she is a graduate of Sheridan College Musical Theatre Program. Her dedication to the arts extends beyond performance, as she continues to nurture the next generation of talent through her work at TF Vocal Studio and her involvement in musical theatre and rock school camps. Originally from Toronto, Tracey was an active and respected presence in Ontario's vibrant theatre scene, performing in a wide range of productions that captivated audiences across the province. Her stage credits include *Blood Brothers*, *Nine*, *Lost in Yonkers*, *Steel Magnolias*, *Annie*, and many more, where she brought memorable performances to life as an actor/singer, musical director, or director. Her time in Toronto helped shape her into the well-rounded theatre professional she is today, with a deep understanding of both dramatic and musical performance. Tracey continues to make her mark on the local arts community as an actress, voice-over artist, and director.



Creative Team Biographies (cont'd)

Rian Tran (Lighting Design)

Rian (they/them) is a queer lighting designer who focuses on worldbuilding and collaboration. They are a storyteller at heart and their design reflects the story of the world that they light. They are excited to be a part of the team to bring the story to life on stage! Other Lighting Design credits include: The Prom & Mean Girls (Burlington Student Theatre), May Louise (Start The Riot), Honey Never Spoils (Bait & Switch Theatre).



Temima Rocklin (Costumes and Props)

Temima brings hands-on experience in sewing and costume drafting, with training at George Brown College, and Young People's Theatre Drama School. She is currently pursuing her studies in Costume Design at Dalhousie University, and her passion for the craft is already evident.

Joey Lau (Prompt Book)

A multidisciplinary theatre artist (and stage manager) based in Toronto, Joey brings a wealth of experience, precision, and heart to this production. Joey holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Performance Production from Toronto Metropolitan University and a Certificate in Entertainment Law from Osgoode Hall Law School. Selected as the 2020-2021 RBC Apprentice Stage Manager with The Musical Stage Company, her career has since taken her to some of Toronto's most respected stages: Canadian Stage, the Stratford Festival, Theatre Passe Muraille, Cahoots Theatre, Theatre Calgary, Talk is Free Theatre, and the Lua Shayenne Dance Company, where she toured Yassama and the Beaded Calabash across Canada. She was also part of the team behind Woking Phoenix, recipient of the 2024 Jon Kaplan Audience Choice Award at the Dora Awards.



Creative Team Biographies (cont'd)

Mary Gesim (Social Media and Admin)



Mary Gesim lends her talents to social media, marketing design, and administration. She brings exactly the kind of polish and organization this production needs to connect with audiences far and wide. Mary holds a Bachelor of Arts in English, with a major in Applied Linguistics, from Cebu

Technological University. Her professional experience spans social media strategy, content development, and admin for organizations across North America and the UK. She is also well-versed in influencer marketing, and brings her expertise in community management and reputation building. A skilled hand with Canva, Generative AI design platforms, and CRM systems.



Loretta Levinson (Outreach and Partnerships)

A graduate of the Ivey Business School MBA program, Loretta brings an extensive Strategic Marketing background and a genuine passion for the arts. One of the earliest believers in this production, she has been with Who Is Esther from the very beginning. Prior arts experience with the Toronto Jewish Film Foundation and Starvox Entertainment.

Bring Who Is Esther music to your choir

We've arranged Corner Block and the
Finale for SATB choirs, and are
making the music available
at zero cost.

Find out more at
www.SingWithEsther.com



Enjoy the musical?

Two out of five people will be diagnosed
with cancer in their lifetimes.
Given the musical's unique origins, we
wanted to do something about it.

Profits from
Who Is Esther, along with any
contributions from patrons, directly
support cancer research.

Support Cancer Research



WholsEsther.net/cancer

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