

# The Morrígan

By Erin McNulty & Dancers

October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023

The Path of Life Sculpture Garden  
Windsor, VT



***Program & Poem Book***

## **A note from the Director/Choreographer:**

**Welcome to The Path of Life, and thank you for being here!** This piece has been in development through various iterations since early 2022, and now, here we finally are with a full ensemble where the work belongs – in the great, and threatened, outdoor theater of our Earth.

**Living with The Morrigan for this long – as a concept, a cultural artifact, and an entity – has changed me.** She's fundamentally unknowable, like a folk hero in American tall tales whose persona is a result of filling in blanks between wild stories. She is commonly known as the Irish goddess of war, from a time before Christianity came to the isle. But there are endless complexities beyond that. The Morrigan appears with different names, in different eras, and is oft interpreted as three otherworldly sisters under one title. She famously shapeshifts into a crow or raven, but also myriad other animals, a young maiden, an old crone, and a disembodied voice. She is associated with fertility and sovereignty as much as death, magic as much as violence, and strategic connections as much as fate. She is stingy with her favor and intercedes vengefully at her pleasure. She is both woman and nature, never fully conquered, controlled, or domesticated. An ecofeminist hero – and a vision of horror to patriarchal structures.

**Irish or not, I encourage you all to take a page out of her dark and twisty book.** You have agency here. Look around at the bigger picture – the decay and life happening together. Breathe. Place yourself, and the performers, as just one interlocked element of this landscape. Change your depth of focus or your angle. What do you see? What do you hear? What does your skin sense, and what textures are under your feet? What small adjustments does your body make on its own as you amplify awareness of both body and earth? Imagine those adjustments intensifying into bigger shapeshifts – where would you fly, what would you conjure, what would you protect, if you could?

**Lastly, flip to Page 4 for an easy way to reflect on what you see and experience, right from your phone.** These responses are vital data that will directly impact our future process, so thank you for taking an extra minute to be a creative collaborator! The more responses we get, the better.

With gratitude,

Erin McNulty

## Thank You to Our Supporters

Points East Acupuncture & Healing Arts (Windsor, VT)  
Kate & Co. Real Estate (Woodstock, VT)  
Anonymous (8)

Thank you to our site partner and host, Great River Outfitters  
& The Path of Life Sculpture Garden.

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This project is supported by a fiscal sponsorship with the **Vermont Dance Alliance**, a non-profit organization working to expand the visibility and accessibility of dance throughout the state of Vermont.  
Learn more at [vermontdance.org](http://vermontdance.org).

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## Land Acknowledgement

The land we are on is the homeland of the Abenaki People, past, present, and future. The Vermont bank of the Connecticut River had several important Abenaki archaeological sites dating back over 2,000 years, and we recognize the importance of this river (*Kwanitekw*, or “long river”) to the Abenaki. We love this beautiful land, and also know it is not ours. Please join us in acknowledging this history and its present forms. Learn more and take action at: [www.pbisvermont.org/land-acknowledgement](http://www.pbisvermont.org/land-acknowledgement)

# Cast

*Please visit the project website (see back cover) for full bios of all the artists.*

## **Dancers / Choreographic Collaborators**

*Note: The dancers were intimately involved in generating much of the movement you'll see today. Their experiences, creativity, and improvisational responsiveness enriched the choreographic process, and allowed it to grow in unexpected ways while aligning with the guiding vision of the director.*

**Kassidy Coon (NV/MA)**

**Emily Higgins (NH)**

**Suzannah Dessau (NY)**

**Tayla McDonald (MA)**

**Tina Forés-Hitt (VT)**

**Erin McNulty (NH)**

## **Musicians**

*Fiddle/Lead Composer: Emerson Gale (VT)*

*Mandolin: Sanaa Siddiqi (VT)*

*Guitar: Justin Rodig (VT)*

## **Guides**

Kassady Small (NH)

Tegan Tyler (VT)

## **Poems**

Written by Erin McNulty

# Audience Reflection Tool

**Be a part of our creative process.**

As you experience the work, you're welcome to take a picture of anything that resonates; or to note any words that pop into your head.

Then, after the show, there are two easy ways to share:

**1. Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code below, and fill out a quick, mobile-friendly form (this method allows you to upload photos too)**

OR

**2. Stop by the table near the exit, fill out a paper form with text or drawings, and leave it in the box for us.**

All responses can be provided anonymously.

THANK YOU!



*[www.ErinKMcNulty.com/TheMorrigan/Response](http://www.ErinKMcNulty.com/TheMorrigan/Response)*

## Section 1: Phantom Queen

She came in a dream and asked,

Do you hear how a footstep echoes through the earth?  
Vibrating down and out, beyond your control the second your foot lands.  
Accept what it wakes.

Do you sense how your scapulae shift beneath skin, wolflike or birdlike or bovine?  
Somehow not piercing, the hardness against softness.  
We still call them blades.

Do you see the old woman washing armor in the ford?  
She knows what is, what was, and what will be.  
Listen, don't fear.

Do you feel how there's delicacy in revelry?  
The leaves dancing on wind with holes in their skin.  
Let go to hold on.

Let go.  
Let go.  
Let go.

Your eyes are open, you know.

## **Section 2: *Cath Maige Tuired***

I'm just here to remind you  
that screams leave echoes  
and rain leaves stains  
and my body will absorb this.

Ridges and valleys and soft skin  
transform with visitors  
seeking the high ground or a secret shortcut  
to power or pleasure.

They say the Hungry Grass of Eire  
strikes those who pass through  
with deathly hunger—  
a hollow with grasping hands, a memory held in land.

He tramps around and through and in  
while I know to perch and fly and slip.  
But he'll see what we've done  
in the end.

### **Section 3: *Macha***

She of plains, horses, fertility, and blood. She appeared from the Otherworld and reveled in running, in making things grow. (The liquid dark of a horse's eye, with a fly on its belly) Thighs churning and ribs heaving and the pleasure in effort. (Don't speak her name) The farmer's home and bed and fields transformed, brought back to sensuous life. (Rebirth implies a death, doesn't it?) Of course he was going to speak her name, yanking her mystery into the burning light of their gaze. She had to run, for the king to measure his strengths against, she of plains, horses, fertility, and blood. (What could they possibly know of violence or labor?) So she ran, thighs churning and ribs heaving and the liquid dark of a horse's eye telling her it was time. She gave birth to twins right there on the dusty track, for the men to behold. Before she left – betrayal complete, season over, back with her Morrígan sisters – she cursed them all, these men with their gaze, to feel days of labor pains in their greatest hour of need. (Did she know what was coming, or just how the Earth turns?) She of plains, horses, fertility, and blood.



## Section 4: Shapeshifter

On a winter night

with cold slipping up underneath fabric edges,  
it takes mere seconds for my mane of hair to absorb the scent  
of the chimney smoke billowing out above.

For the imprint of heat and sparks to infiltrate my body  
and turn it into an omen suspended in the darkness.

For a second it feels possible

to turn, run, and slip between the silent trees,  
like a slip under a black dress,  
bringing the fire with me.

And the footprints in my wake not boot soles,  
but raven's talons.

Because when fires are lit, bodies and souls feel different.

They change colors, subdivide, light up or go dark.

They open, close, melt, and take flight.

Lit by memory or by touch, by wrongs or utter rights.

Look in my eyes  
to find the feathers.

## Section 5: Knotwork

What if,

what is.

What if a haunting didn't mean doom,  
but the very aliveness of the air,  
the exchange between here and there?

What is that rule again—  
Energy cannot be destroyed, only transformed?  
A vibration here travels down the rope 'til the last knot frays.

I heard them in the woods.

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**More about the project & the artists:  
[www.ErinKMcNulty.com/TheMorrigan](http://www.ErinKMcNulty.com/TheMorrigan)**