

OFF KILTER

“Meet the up-and-comer who never up-and-came.”

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Choreographer

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OFF KILTER

SERIES SYNOPSIS

Milton Frank was the ballet world's up-and-comer who never up-and-came. After a massive plagiarism scandal, Milton keeps meaning to make a triumphant return to the world of professional ballet. It's been the next thing on his to-do list for twenty-five years, in fact. But it's not until his comeback gets intertwined with the agendas of a PR genius and an almost-retired ballerina that any of those intentions start to materialize.

Like many brilliant artists, Milton's struggle is to get over the past and out of his own way. A comedy that lingers in the awkward silences as much as it does on the stunning choreography of the acclaimed Shawn Hounsell (Royal Winnipeg Ballet, National Theatre Ballet - Prague), OFF KILTER documents a man remaking himself into the critically acclaimed asshole he never got to be in the 90s.

OFF KILTER is a CBC original production and produced with the participation of the Independent Production Fund.

EPISODE SYNOPSSES

EPISODE 1: THE DENIAL

Milton Frank has come back to the studio after a twenty-five year absence, but under no circumstance is anyone to call it a "comeback." This is just for fun. A lark. A whimsical experiment. And whatever other terms BB has approved for use in earshot of Milton's sensitive genius.

EPISODE 2: THE DISTRACTION

Gary, the venue manager, inflicts a series of absurd safety drills on the team. Milton acquiesces artfully while BB, Luke, and Anna debate the fine points of the scandal that sent Milton into hiding 20 years earlier.

EPISODE 3: THE REBRAND

While Milton indulges in a familiar kind of meltdown, Anna's domestic duties are quickly interrupted by a surprise visit from her ex-husband and his new partner. BB uses spin to coax Milton out of his spiral, and Anna is thrown off by the common ground she shares with her "replacement."

EPISODE 4: THE ACCOUNTING

Despite Milton's protests, it's time to bring in more dancers. BB is alarmed to find out that the gender wage gap is embedded in the ballet world as much as anywhere else. Adamant about equal pay, she inadvertently causes tension between Anna and Luke.

EPISODE 5: THE COMPARISON

Two new, young dancers arrive full of drive and talent. Milton transforms into a choreographic master, fully inspired... Until the glow of the dancers' youth casts shadows across the rest of the team, and Milton suddenly realizes he isn't a 21-year-old prodigy anymore.

EPISODE 6: THE PRESCRIPTION

Pas-de-deux quickly becomes foot-in-mouth when Milton meets – then promptly forgets – BB's partner, Casey, over and over. Consumed in a hypochondriac fever, Milton learns Casey is a physician. Now he'll never forget her, or let her leave without a proper medical diagnosis for his terminal angst.

EPISODE 7: THE DECONSTRUCTION

"Deconstruction" is the creative process of taking apart a set sequence of choreography and rebuilding it in a different order. Alarm bells go off as Milton takes this process a little too literally, visibly unravelling. Anna's deconstruction occurs mainly in the knee, as Milton's incessant demands exacerbate her old injury.

EPISODE 8: THE DISAPPEARANCE

This is the part of the process where you quit the process. Milton is gone, unreachable. Gary creates a one-man search-party. BB and Anna quietly rebel with a five-minute hiatus from fixing Milton's messes, before promptly getting back to saving the day.



CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

MILTON FRANK was the ballet world's up-and-comer who never up-and-came. By his own telling, Milton's story goes like this: 25 years ago, he "accidentally copied" someone else's choreography, he took a "break" from the ballet world and now is putting together a "a little showing" of his latest work. His small but loyal team indulges his sense of denial because what's undeniable is that almost three decades later Milton Frank is still a brilliant choreographer. With no filter to speak of, what he lacks in tact he more than makes up for in ego and pride.

ANNA's career as a professional ballet dancer is on its inevitable decline and she is being aged out of her passion. At 43, fewer choreographers are willing to take the risk on a body that, in their critical eyes, could fall apart at any minute. Like Milton, Anna's gift is tremendous. As Milton would say, "There's no one here who can do what she can do... but I'm worried she can't do it." Quick answer: she can and she will and if saving Milton is what it takes to get her what she wants, she'll do that too.

BB is the type of woman who's seen it all – except the ballet, because she's more into the transformative power of words. She is a force in the PR world who specializes in "crisis management," the ambitious business of bringing careers back to life after a major scandal. For BB, Milton – the man, the artist, the train-wreck – will be her Magnum Opus. Clever and biting, she is the invaluable backbone of Milton's support team but she is definitely, absolutely not his goddamn mother.

LUKE is the young, hot-shot dancer that might strike a chord of familiar discomfort for anyone (artist or otherwise) with enough self-awareness to remember the hubris of youth. He is Milton (before the scandal), Anna (before her 40s), and all of us (before we realize that attempts fail, opportunities are missed, knees wear out, because we're unfortunately not invincible).

GARY owner and manager of the building the dance studio is in, fastidiously ensuring that the structure and the people inside it are safely padded in the soft layers of bureaucracy. Predictably he takes his job very seriously, throwing HR hurdles at Milton and his team because he can.

DES and MICK the Aussie twins, former Soloists of the renowned Sydney State Ballet, they work so well together, so much so that a choreographer once paired them as Romeo and Juliette, a memory that still causes them extreme discomfort.

ABOUT THE CAST

SARAH MURPHY-DYSON (Anna) Gemini Award-winner Sarah Murphy-Dyson was a First Soloist with The Royal Winnipeg Ballet Company. She played "Penny" in *Dirty Dancing* (Mirvish), was a stunt double for Milla Jovovich and Kate Beckinsale, coached Jennifer Lopez, and has starred in world premieres of five George F Walker's plays. TV/film credits include *Suits* (NBC), *Workin' Moms* (CBC), *Rookie Blue* (CTV), the feature *The Dark* which will premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival. Sarah recently choreographed *Cabaret* for the Lower Ossington Theatre.

ZARRIN DARNELL-MARTIN (BB) Born and raised in Montreal, Zarrin Darnell-Martin is an actor and writer based in Toronto, Canada. She has guest starred and appeared in numerous film and television productions. Some credits include: the Academy Award winning Best Picture *Spotlight*, *Taken* (NBC), *The Strain* (FX), *Defiance* (SyFy), *Rookie Blue* (ABC), *Good Witch* (Hallmark), and *Private Eyes* (Global). A classically trained actor, Zarrin's conservatory training was done at the prestigious National Theatre School of Canada where she graduated from the Acting program. She has performed on some of the biggest stages in Canada, including the Shaw Festival. Zarrin is an avid writer and has been published by Canada's national newspaper, The Globe and Mail. She holds dual US/Canadian citizenship, and is fluent in French and English. Zarrin is currently finishing a degree in Journalism at Ryerson University.



MANUEL RODRIGUEZ-SAENZ (Gary) has been acting since he was eight years old in theatre productions. He graduated from The National Theater School in Havana, Cuba in 1998, and went on to play several roles in Cuban TV and film. He worked with the renowned Buendia Theater Company where he produced and played the lead on an adaptation of the Eugene O'Neill play *Desire Under the Elms*, before moving to Toronto in 2000. Manuel has studied puppetry in Prague with Mijek Trenar and clown with Helen Donnelly and Francine Côté. He has many theatre credits including *Emigrante* in the Rock.Paper.Sistahz Festival, in *Ayelen* for Summerworks Festival and in *The Race* with Miko Sobreira in several cabarets around the city, including the Red Nose District and the Toronto Festival of Clowns where he won the Mark Purvis Bursary. Some of Manuel's English-language film and television credits include: *Special Correspondents*, *Caught*, *Kim's Convenience*, *Shazam*, *XIII: the Series*, *Street Without Exit*, *Mistletoe Over Manhattan*, *Wilderness*, *Piggy in a Blanket*, and *Manhattan Undying*. He was a co-producer and lead actor on *A Brand New You*. He also works as a therapeutic clown at Holland Bloorview Paediatric Hospital.

BRENDAN SAYE (Luke) was born in Vancouver, British Columbia and trained at Canada's National Ballet School. Mr. Saye joined The National Ballet of Canada as a RBC Apprentice in 2008 and was promoted to First Soloist in 2017. Mr. Saye's roles include Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*, Le Roi in *Le Petit Prince*, Phlegmatic in *The Four Temperments* as well as Romeo and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* and an Icicle in *The Nutcracker*. He has danced featured roles in *Hamlet*, *Cinderella*, *The Four Seasons*, *In the Upper Room*, *The Second Detail*, *Chroma*, *Enkelli*, and *Self and Soul*. Mr. Saye has also danced roles in *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Onegin*, *Giselle*, *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*, *Don Quixote*, *La fille mal gardée*, *The Seagull*, *La Sylphide*, *Pinocchio*, *Carmen*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Glass Pieces*, *West Side Story Suite*, *Emergence*, *Genus*, *The Dreamers Ever Leave You*, and *No. 24*. In 2012, Mr. Saye received the Patron Award of Merit and represented the National Ballet in The Tenth International Competition for The Erik Bruhn Prize. He also received the Peter Dwyer Award and Christopher Ondaatje Prize in 2008 while a student at Canada's National Ballet School.

ALYSSA OWSIANY (Sophie) always knew she wanted to be an actor. When she was old enough to move to the big city on her own, she left home and started doing whatever she could to pursue her passion. She landed leading roles in indie films such as *Tulip*, *Texas and Us* and nominations for her work on the web series *Out With Dad*. Her directorial debut will be in 2018 with the LGBTQ short film *Gold Star*, which she wrote and will star in.

HARRISON WYNN (Desmond) was born in Paraparaumu, New Zealand and trained at San Francisco Ballet School's Trainee Program in California and the New Zealand School of Dance. Mr. James danced with Canada's Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Béjart Ballet Lausanne before joining The National Ballet of Canada in 2013 as a member of the Corps de Ballet. Mr. James was promoted to Principal Dancer in 2016. Mr. James dances such lead roles as Leontes and Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*, Prince Florimund in *The Sleeping Beauty*, Prince Charming in *Cinderella*, Lensky in *Onegin*, Albrecht in *Giselle*, James in *La Sylphide*, Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, The L'Aviateur in *Le Petit Prince*, Des Grieux in *Manon*, Peter/The Nutcracker in *The Nutcracker*, Raj/Caterpillar in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Stanley in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. His repertoire includes roles in *Swan Lake*, *Nijinsky*, *The Second Detail*, *Genus*, *Watch Her*, *Being and Nothingness*, *Carousel (A Dance)*, *Piano Concerto #1*, and *Spectre de la Rose*. In 2015, Mr. James was awarded the Patron Award of Merit by the Patrons' Council Committee of The National Ballet of Canada.

CHELSY MEISS (Mick) was born in Melbourne, Australia and trained at Karen Curlis School of Dance, Thelma Williams School of Dance, The Victorian College of The Arts and The Australian Ballet School in Melbourne. Ms. Meiss danced with San Diego Ballet before joining The National Ballet of Canada as a member of the Corps de Ballet in 2008. Ms. Meiss was promoted to First Soloist in 2015. Ms. Meiss recently debuted as Stella in the Canadian premiere of *A Streetcar Named Desire* by John Neumeier. She has danced such roles as Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Queen of Hearts in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Bronislava in *Nijinsky*, Russian, Hungarian and Spanish Princess in *Swan Lake*, Petal and Twig in *Cinderella*, Spring in *The Four Seasons*, the female lead in *Spectre de la Rose* and

featured roles in *Chroma* and *Genus*. She has also danced roles in *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, *Onegin*, *Don Quixote*, *La fille mal gardée*, *Manon*, *La Sylphide*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pinocchio*, *The Concert*, *The Four Temperments*, *The Seagull*, *Carmen*, *Symphony in C*, *Opus 19/The Dreamer*, *Allegro Brillante*, *Carousel (A Dance)*, *Cacti*, *Being and Nothingness*, *In the Upper Room*, *West Side Story Suite* and *Russian Seasons*. In 2016, Ms. Meiss was awarded the David Tory Award, and was the recipient of the Patron Award of Merit by the Patron's Council Committee of The National Ballet of Canada in 2009.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ALEJANDRO ALVAREZ CADILLA (Series Creator/ Showrunner/Co-writer and Actor “Milton Frank”) Montreal-based Alejandro Álvarez Cadilla is former principal dancer and guest artist with some of the most acclaimed ballet companies in the world including Nacho Duato's Compañía Nacional de Danza and William Forsythe's Ballett Frankfurt. He studied scriptwriting with Oscar-nominee Pedro Loeb and is a graduate of The Oxford School of Drama. His first short film *Le Trac* was personally selected by Edward James Olmos for the Los Angeles International Latino Film Festival. His second short film *Deep Sleep* won Best International Short Film at the London Independent Film Festival and had 33 international film festival selections. His TV hour documentary *Disportrait*, a co-production with ZDF/Arte and the Tribeca Film Institute, won the Golden Prague Grand Prix TV Award and was nominated for a Robert Award in Denmark.

Alejandro premiered his short documentary *Fisk, Untitled Portrait*, commissioned by CBC, at the Palm Springs International ShortFest in 2017 and it was also selected at Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival, Pittsburg Shorts Fest and Master of Art Film Festival in Bulgaria among others. He is currently shooting the follow-up titled *The New York Opening*, also commissioned by the CBC.



PRISCILLA GALVEZ (Producer) is a Toronto-based producer and director. She is the producer and co-director of the CBC digital documentary series *Art Kids*, profiling young artists across Canada. In 2017, she produced the afro-futurist action short film *The Drop In* for Bell Media that premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival, Fantastic Fest and Canada's Top Ten Film Festival. Priscilla has worked on television series and feature films for BET, Syfy Channel and Netflix as Associate Producer for Blue Ice Pictures. She is currently in development on the feature film version of *The Drop In*.

CLARA ALTIMAS (Co-Director) is a writer, director and actor originally from Montreal, now based in Toronto. Her directorial debut, *Girl Couch*, which she also co-wrote, was selected as the winning screenplay by the Toronto ACTRA Women's Committee in their 2014 competition. Clara's first feature script *Benson* is set to go to camera spring/summer 2018, and her short film *Jeremy and Margot Make a Baby*, which she wrote, produced, and acted in premiered at the Austin Film Festival (October 2016) and was released online as part of the NSI's film festival (November 2017). Most recently, Clara wrapped production on the short films *CPR* and *Sup' Meg*, both of which she wrote and directed. Clara is currently shifting her writing abilities into the TV world, working in the room on half hour comedies in development, *Asshole Detective* (Crave), *Girl in the Boy's Room* (CBC), as well as the second season of *Crawford* (CBC). Clara studied screenwriting with the UCLA Extension Program and completed a residency in the Writer's Lab at the Canadian Film Centre in December 2016. She attributes her love of story and character to her extensive training in acting; she studied Meisner technique with the late Jacqueline McClintock, scene study and script analysis with the renowned Larry Moss, and improvisation at Toronto's Second City.

AMY CUNNINGHAM (Co-Writer/Actor "Casey") is a Toronto-based writer and comedian who is a regular contributor to The Beaverton and CBC Comedy websites. She has performed stand-up internationally and was featured in the Oddblock Comedy Festival, SheDot Festival, and will be premiering her second hour-long show, *Eat the Teeth*, at the 2018 Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Together with an incredible team, she was awarded the 2017 Independent Production Fund's web series grant.

CONOR FISHER (Director of Cinematography) is a Cinematographer from Toronto whose work stretches multiple formats and disciplines. He has shot features internationally in London and Colombia, including multiple series, features and music videos in Canada. When not shooting he serves as Senior Colourist as a longtime member of the post production house Alter Ego. With a huge array of commercials under his colourist belt, Conor has also graded Feature Films including *Mad Max Fury Road*, *Operation Avalanche* (Sundance '16), *The Dirties* (Grand Jury Prize for Best Narrative at Slamdance 2013) and TV Series *Nirvana The Band The Show* among others.

SHAWN HOUNSELL (Choreographer) Originally from Saskatchewan, Canadian choreographer Shawn Hounsell danced professionally with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal between 1989 and 2003. Noted for his versatility and theatricality, he danced soloist and principal roles in works by world-renowned choreographers such as Jiri Kylian, Ohad Naharin, Nacho Duato, Rudi van Dantzig, Anthony Tudor and Jose Limon. An award-winning choreographer, Shawn has created and staged pieces for numerous Canadian companies including

the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Les Grands Ballet Canadiens de Montreal, Les Ballet Jazz de Montreal, Les Jeune Ballet du Quebec and Festival Dance Company. Many of his duets have been performed in galas across the globe including the Prix de Lausanne Gala (Tokyo, Japan) and the Cincinnati International Gala of Ballet Stars (Cincinnati, Ohio). In addition, his works have been performed by American companies such as Ballet Pacifica and in Europe by the Ballet of the National Theatre of Prague. Projects in the tele-visual field include dance shorts for BravoFACT, choreography for the CBS mini-series *The Reagans*, choreographer and principal artist for the Montreal Symphony Orchestra's live national broadcast of *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony* with maestro Kent Nagano, and choreographer for the CBC production of the Lieutenant Governor's Centennial Gala in the presence of H.R.H. Queen Elizabeth II. Mr. Hounsell also acted (2006 – 2009) as rehearsal director and artistic assistant for the world tour of *Amjad*, creation of Edouard Lock and LaLaLa Human Steps.

JAMES WATTS (editor) graduated from the Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema in 2013 with a BFA in Film Production and shortly after was hired as the Associate Producer of Just for Laughs Digital. At JFL James filmed, scripted & edited videos featuring Hannibal Buress, Maria Bamford, Jerrod Carmichael, Bridgette Everett, Marc Maron and countless others. In 2014 James set up his production company, Good House Digital, and began to produce and direct digital advertising campaigns for clients such as Ford, Cadbury, Crocs and GE with agencies such as Sid Lee, Ogilvy & Mather, Zulu Alpha Kilo, Victors & Spoils and more. James works with Montreal comedy company The Brunch Club in creating comedy shorts, live tapings and audio recordings and has acted as one of key videographers and editors of 375MTL. He has directed and edited an uncountable amount of short comedy films, music videos and promotional spots featuring artists such as Simple Plan, Nickelback, Ellie Kemper, Kevin Hart, Gad Elmaleh and Michel Gondry. While working as a stand-up comedian in Montreal he has performed at OFF JFL and Montreal Sketchfest. In 2018, he will have completed his first feature film with his partner Kelly Hurcomb.

KATHERINE WOO (Costume Designer) is a freelance wardrobe designer based in Toronto, ON. Her designs include projects in features, shorts and commercials such as *I, Pedophile*, *Nicorette* and *Fleetcarma*. She holds a B.A.A. in Film and Media Productions from Humber College but it was the inspiration of her father's background in fashion that motivated her to pursue a career in wardrobe for film & television. Her skills and attention to details are what helps her create compelling characters and capturing the storytelling through every piece of the garments. When she's not designing she can be seen assisting other designers on their projects such as *Mayday*, *Canadian Heritage Minutes* and *Web of Lies*. As her credits continue to grow and diversify, Katherine works collaboratively in the wardrobe department to expand her skills and persistently looks to where the craft will take her.

PRODUCTION STILLS





