

ILLINOIS THEATRE PRESENTS

I WISH AN ESCAPE ROOM

Amber Dewey Schultz and Genesee Spridco, directors Friday–Sunday, April 5–14, 2024 CU Adventures in Time and Space

WELCOME

Welcome and welcome back to Illinois Theatre! This season we invite you to join us as we present our productions—a range of new work and innovative approaches to performance—on campus and about town. We're excited that our student artists will have the opportunity to extend their education beyond the classroom on the stages of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts as well as other performance spaces in Champaign-Urbana. We look forward to our collaborations at the Virginia Theatre, CU Adventures in Time and Space, and Fat City Bar and Grill for our 2023–2024 season. Our season invites you to dream, play, contemplate and connect in unexpected places and in new ways.

Fall 2023 marks the return of our Daniel J. Sullivan Playwright-in-Residency Program. Inaugurated with Chicago-based playwright Mallory Raven-Ellen Backstrom's *A Darkling at Nightfall*, this program allows us to engage in the early stages of development of new work by exciting American playwrights. This year, our alum and celebrated writer Matthew-Lee Erlbach returns to campus to develop a brand-new work, *Birds of North America*. Questions about displacement and extinction are at the core of this dark comedy. We are thrilled to work with Erlbach just before his new play, *Revelations*, premieres on Broadway next year.

This season offers musical and satirical adaptations focusing on connection and discovery in unstable, unpredictable worlds. Some of the authors we showcase—Jonathan Larson (RENT), Jen Silverman (Witch) and Bertolt Brecht in adaptation (The Gangster Play: CIRCUS/ CIRCUS, forcibly adapted from Brecht's The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui) look to the shadows of the past as a guide—or a warning—about the futures we build. The productions explore games, gameplaying, and gamesmanship-whether we watch the gamesmanship of a demagogue or a devil, see characters who win or lose at playing pretend, or play the games ourselves-this season brings new attention to the games we play. I hope you'll explore new worlds with us at Krannert Center and join us as we venture into spaces throughout Champaign-Urbana.

> –Valleri Robinson Associate Professor and Head, Theatre

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I Wish: An Escape Room is sponsored in part by the following generous donors:



SUSAN & MICHAEL HANEY

PROGRAM

I WISH: AN ESCAPE ROOM

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This production is recommended for ages 13 and up.

ILLINOIS THEATRE

I WISH: AN ESCAPE ROOM

DIRECTORS Amber Dewey Schultz Genesee Spridco

SCENIC DESIGNER Will Sexton

COSTUME DESIGNER Chantel Renee

LIGHTING DESIGNER Yingman Tang

SOUND DESIGNER Madison Ferris

MEDIA DESIGNER Danielle Monet

PUZZLE DESIGNERS Duncan Baird Emilie Butt

STAGE MANAGER

Lydia Pryzbylski

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We advocate for theatre that moves away from the passive audience experience of receiving into a proactive, immersive depth of character and collaboration. While theatre is often shackled to the text of a scene held at arm's distance from the audience, the characters of theatre live beyond the words. They are capable of becoming richly complex beings, fully living and breathing engagements of perspective for the audience to connect with as much or as little as they dare. In this immersive experience, we look to share the characters' perspective, challenge the audience's perspective, and provoke conversations of the impact of action.

More and more clearly we are seeing how our actions have consequences, regardless of

the intention. The impact creates ripples that expand past the range of our limited scope. This interactive piece of playable theatre gives agency over to the audience players to fully engage and act upon a knot of wishes and wants. We may feel we have the ability to control our actions, but what does it take to gain control of the cascade of consequences and conundrums that erupt forth from it?

Welcome, play as fully as you dare, and thank you for being a part of the story.

-Genesee Spridco and Amber Dewey Schultz, directors

CAST

NARRATORS Anthony DeGregorio Laney Rodriguez

RAPUNZEL'S PRINCE

Calvin Pennington Jake Majerczyk

WITCH

Gracie Benson Jailene Torres

CINDERELLA Cocoa Afonso Julia Clavadetscher

MILKY WHITE Charlotte Howard-Check Justine Ryan

VOICE OVER CHARACTERS Courtney Mazeika

PROFILES



Cocoa Afonso (Cinderella) is a junior acting major, as well as a psychology major, at the University of Illinois. They are originally from Brazil, having moved to Champaign-Urbana in 2012. They graduated from Uni High in Urbana in 2019, where they were in many

shows such as Arsenic and Old Lace, Crimes of the Heart (Babe), Midsummer Night's Dream (Hippolyta), and Noises Off (Lloyd Dallas). So far in their college career, they have had the opportunity to be onstage at Krannert Center in the fall 2022 in The Revolutionists and in Spring 2023 in Valiente. Additionally, they performed at the Armory Free Theatre in Chasing the Ghost in fall 2021. They are excited to see what the future holds.



Gracie Benson (Witch) is currently a senior pursuing a BFA in acting at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She was previously seen onstage at Illinois in *The Revolutionists* (Marie Antoinette U/S, ensemble crew) and *Coriolanus* (Volscian

Soldier 2), as well as at the Armory Free Theater in *The Gulf* (Kendra) and *So You Think You Can Stay*? (America). Last year, she took part in a short film entitled *After Algos* in association with a few media students on campus. She is very grateful for everything she's learned as a student and artist at the U of I. Enjoy the show!



Julia Clavadetscher

(Cinderella) (she/her) is a third-year acting major at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. You might have seen her as Hope in *Urinetown* or as Volscian Soldier #1 in *Coriolanus*. Outside of the U of I, she has been in *Mac Beth*

as Lady M and in *Hurricane Diane* as Carol.



Anthony DeGregorio

(Narrator) is an actor/director/ comic from Northern California who received his BA in theatre performance at California State University Long Beach and is currently pursuing his MFA at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He was

most recently seen as Aufidius in Illinois Theatre's production of *Coriolanus*. He is a company member with the Echo Theater Company, and is a founding member of the LA THTR TRUK, which brings free theatre to communities all across the greater Los Angeles Area. He would like to thank his family for all their constant support, Riel Paley for helping him find his inner clown, and the Wu-Tang Clan for teaching him to bring da ruckus.



Charlotte Howard-Check

(Milky White) is a junior acting major with a musical theatre minor. She has been recently seen in *The Wild Party* (Ensemble), Coriolanus (Citizen), and *Urinetown* (Penelope Pennywise). In her free time, Charlotte loves cooking and writing music. She would like to thank her friends and family for their continued support.



Jake Majerczyk (Rapunzel's Prince) is a sophomore pursuing a BFA in acting at the University of Illinois. Jake hails from the south suburbs of Chicago and now resides in Champaign, Illinois. This fall, Jake made his Illinois Theatre debut in *The Birds of North America* written

by U of I alum Matthew-Lee Erlbach and directed by Latrelle Bright. When not at Krannert Center, Jake spends his time with the What You Will Shakespeare Company, playing King Hamlet in their fall production of *Hamlet*.



Courtney Mazeika (Voice Over Characters) is currently a senior pursuing her BFA in acting at the University of Illinois. Recent Illinois Theatre credits include *On the Verge* (Alex), Fefu and Her Friends (Julia), *A Dance in the Dark* (Amber), *Urinetown: The Musical* (Soupy Sue), and

The Heist (Charlie). When she's not creating with Illinois Theatre, Courtney enjoys writing and performing stand-up comedy, modeling for The Fashion Network, and collaborating with her improv troupe (Odd Request) and sketch comedy troupe (Potted Meat) as president within the Champaign-Urbana community.



Calvin Pennington (Rapunzel's Prince) is currently a freshman pursuing a BFA in acting at the University of Illinois. He is very excited to be making his Illinois Theatre debut. Recently he has performed in a scene from *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Christian) as a part of a directing

workshop in the Armory Free Theatre. When not studying in the Krannert lobby Calvin spends his time listening to Billy Joel and loves to sing, too.



Laney Rodriguez (Narrator) (she/her) is overjoyed to be joining Illinois Theatre in this exciting production of *I Wish*. Laney is a Cuban actress and choreographer hailing from Miami, Florida. She is currently in her seccond year pursuing an MFA in acting at the University

of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She holds a BFA in acting from Florida International University. Illinois Theatre credits include: Ali/Vendor/Mimi's Mom in *RENT* and Menenius in *Coriolanus*. Armory Free Theatre credits include: Contestant Four in *So You Think You Can Stay*? Notable South Florida theatre credits include: *Everybody* (Somebody), Tres Hermanas (Olga), Sonnets for an Old Century (Cordelia), *Right You Are If You Think You Are* (Mrs. Sirelli). Big thanks to all the artists who made this production possible! All the love and dedication to my family, friends, advisors, and teachers. Seguimos pa'lante! Website: www. laneyrodriguez.com / IG: @laneyrodz



Justine C. Ryan (Milky White) is making her third Krannert Center appearance as an MFA student. She recently appeared as an ensemble member in *RENT* and as Osric in Notre Dame's Shakespeare Festival *Hamlet 50/50*. She debuted at TheatreSquared as the show

understudy for School Girls, or the African Mean Girls Play in 2021. Ryan returned to appear as Mrs. Phelps in TheatreSquared's summer (2021) production of Matilda the Musical, 2021 ANPF reading, Pearl understudy in Miss You Like Hell, and is an understudy in the world premiere of FLEX. Her credits include being a member of the LatinX Theatre Project cohort (2019–2022), playing Ciera Johnson on the TV One Network series For My Man (S:4, Ep.23); and co-writing and starring in a one-woman show called Lessons From My Suitcase, which premiered at the 2018 Kansas City Fringe Festival. Justine earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in theatre from Bennett College.



Jailene Torres (Witch) is a senior BFA acting major here at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her Krannert Center credits include Prima in *The Realness*, Virgilia in *Coriolanus*, Andrea/Mary 2 in *The Neverland*, Ensemble/US Tania in *Native Gardens*, and US

Alma in *The Redline Collection*. She's also appeared on campus at the Armory Free Theatre as Contestant Three in So You Think You Can Stay? and as Emilie in *The Moors*. Offstage, Jai loves to spend time with friends and family, play with sparkly makeup, cook yummy meals, and drink Dr. Pepper. She would like to thank everyone in her life for their ongoing love and support.

Amber Dewey Schultz (Director), a Clinical Assistant Professor of Design in the University of Illinois' Department of Theatre and affiliated faculty in Game Studies and Design, also leads the Academic Programs department at the Siebel Center for Design. Specializing in gamified storytelling, her designs range from playable theatre and theatrical escape rooms to tabletop role-playing games. Notable works include *The Heist: A Theatrical Escape Room* (Illinois Theatre), Thank you, Five! (a stage management-themed board game), and Murder on Klein Island (a tabletop RPG whodunit). Theatrical escape rooms that students designed within Amber's courses can be found at the Museum of the Grand Prairie (Mahomet, Illinois) and U of I's Molecule Maker Lab Institute. Amber previously served in stage management and production management roles at such performing arts companies as San Francisco Opera, the Dallas Opera, and Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Amber holds a BFA in design and production from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and is pursuing an MFA in experience design at Miami University.



Genesee Spridco (Director) has been performing professionally across the country in various forms of interactive theatre for over 20 years. Genesee currently tours with the Washing Well Wenches, which was voted the best non-musical

stage act in the nation for 2023. She has also directed and performed award-winning nonverbal immersive Fantastikal experiences in Chicago and Los Angeles. Genesee earned her MFA in devised acting from Dell'Arte International School for Physical Theatre. Illinois Theatre credits include Varslaren: The Whistleblower (Devising Director), Pshitter! (Associate Dir/Movement Director), The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time (Movement Director). Genesee is an advocate for new works in their various creation processes and currently serves as regional chair for the National Playwriting Program with the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. Genesee teaches movement at Illinois Theatre as Assistant Teaching Professor with emphasis on Alexander technique, mask work, Viewpoints, circus and clown, and vocabularies for physical embodiment of character.

Duncan Baird (Puzzle Designer) is one of the lead instructors for the Champaign-Urbana Community Fab Lab and affiliated faculty within the Games Studies and Design program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He has been teaching makerspace-related courses for the university since 2017, from introductions to makerspaces to working with Emilie Butt to create game- and design oriented experiences. He has designed and developed Glider Grove (2022 CUDO Plays Board Game Design Competition Winner) and Escape from the Hospital: A Complex Interprofessional Geriatric Discharge Planning Exercise. His students have developed escape rooms used by the Molecule Maker Lab Institute and Museum of the Grand Prairie for public engagement.

Emilie N. Butt (Puzzle Designer) (MSLIS) is the Engagement & Instruction Coordinator for the Champaign-Urbana Community Fab Lab, and affiliated faculty within the Game Studies and Design program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She is a makerspace and game design educator focused on community engagement and programming around games literacies, art, board games, and escape room design for all ages. She has designed and developed Glider Grove (2022 CUDO Plays Board Game Design Competition Winner) and Escape From the Hospital: A Complex Interprofessional Geriatric Discharge Planning Exercise (Carle Illinois College of Medicine). Her students have developed escape rooms used by the Molecule Maker Lab Institute and Museum of the Grand Prairie for public engagement, and she has presented on developing and teaching escape room design courses at the Game Developers Conference (2022).

Madison Ferris (Sound Designer) is a third-year graduate student pursuing an MFA in sound design and technology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. At Illinois, she has previously served as the sound designer for *The Realness*, *Urinetown*, and *Redline Collection*. She has also served as the audio engineer for *Carnaval*! 2023 and as the A1 for *City of Angels*. Outside of the U of I, she has served as the sound department head at Contemporary American Theater Festival. Beyond her studies, she enjoys spending her free time on photography and videography.

Danielle Monet (Media Designer) is a multimedia designer with experience in theatrical and themed entertainment. She received her Bachelors of Arts in design and technology from San Diego State University. While in San Diego she worked in technical entertainment and aided in the grand opening of a local theme park. Her credits include A *Raisin in the Sun* at San Diego State University, *The Royale* and media in pieces from October Dance 2023 and February Dance 2024 at Krannert Center Danielle is currently a secondyear graduate student pursuing a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Illinois with an emphasis in media design and technology.

Chantel Renee (Costume Designer) is an MFA candidate in costume design in her last semester at the University of Illinois. Chantel is from Detroit, Michigan and received her BFA in apparel and textile design from Michigan State University; she also studied briefly at Ohio University before coming to the U of I. Her Illinois Theatre credits include RENT (Costume Designer), Coriolanus (Assistant Costume Designer), and Urinetown (Assistant Costume Designer and Wardrobe Supervisor). Other credits include Absentia (Costume Designer), Vibrancy Theater; Everybody (Craft Shop Supervisor), Be Head, The Women of Lockerbie (Costume Designer) Ohio University Theater; Bonnets: How Ladies of Good Breeding are Induced to Murder (Costume Designer), Frankenstein (Hair and Makeup Designer) Michigan State University Theatre. More of Chantel's work can be viewed on her website chantelreneedesigns.com. Chantel is also the Owner of So'Cha Handmade a jewelry and

accessories business, Find me on Instagram @ sochahandmade.

Yingman Tang (Lighting Designer) is currently a fourth-year graduate student in lighting design at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She comes from Szechuan, China. Her credits include The Royale, Urinetown, and *February Dance 2022* at Krannert Center; Newsies and *Shrek* at Balibay Theatre; *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* at Duanjun Theatre, Shanghai; Maigi Jiao's personal concert and Siena Nishizawa's personal concert at Morden Sky, Shanghai; and ICME/EMW's new media concert at Shanghai Concert Hall; etc. She directed *Death Variations* at Armory Free Theatre. Yingman's installation artist work The whole was selected for Prague Quadrennial 2019.

Will Sexton (Scenic Designer) is an Air Force veteran and third-year scenic design MFA candidate with his BA in theatre arts and BS in business management from Bridgewater State University. Previous scene design work includes RENT and The Revolutionists (Illinois Theatre): Descendants: The Musical, Moana, and James and the Giant Peach (Ogunquit Playhouse); Constellations, The Totalitarians, and The Bald Soprano (Bridgewater State University). He has presented at the United States Institute for Theatre Technology on the topic "Integrating Military Experience into an Undergraduate Theatre Education." Additionally, Will was scenic carpenter for Singin' in the Rain, On Your Feet!, The Da Vinci Code, The Cher Show, The Nutty Professor, Dr. Holland's Opus (Ogunguit Playhouse); Much Ado About Nothing (Brown Box Theatre Project); and was Crew Chief/Deck Carpenter for Into the Woods, Gertrude and Claudius, and Fall Springs (Barrington Stage Company). Upcoming work includes his scene design for Pass Over at the Armory Free Theater.

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The University of Illinois System carries out its mission in its namesake state, which includes the traditional territory of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Menominee, Ho-Chunk, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgment and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward.

Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.

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We are living through history. In the midst of it, Illinois Theatre continues to be a leader in producing art that helps us know ourselves and the world we live in. We are training students today to imagine the art of tomorrow. If you'd like to help, we welcome you as a Friend of Illinois Theatre. We'll use your financial contributions to support our students through scholarships, visiting artist residencies, new work development, and production. Help Illinois Theatre make theatre that matters today, tomorrow, and beyond.

Contributions to Friends of Illinois Theatre can be made by visiting **theatre.illinois.edu/about/giving**, scanning the QR code, or by check payable to UIF/Friends of Illinois Theatre and sent to: University of Illinois Foundation, PO Box 3429, Champaign, IL 61826-3429.



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Adrian Rochelle, Front of House Performance Supervisor

PRODUCTION

Terri Anne Ciofalo, Director of Production Maria Miguens, Production Manager

Audio Department

Rick Scholwin, Audio Director Alec LaBau, Associate Audio Director/ Video Director

Costume Shop

Andrea Bouck, Costume Director Richard Gregg, Costume Rentals Director/ Wardrobe Adviser/Associate Costume Director

KRANNERT CENTER STAFF

Paige Stewart-Rankins, Hair & Makeup Supervisor Julianna Steitz, First Hand April McKinnis, EB McTigue, Cutters/Drapers Kari Little-McKinney, Theatrical Stitcher

Lighting Department

Lisa Kidd, Lighting Director David Krupla, Associate Lighting Director Nick Jukes, Theatrical Lighting Coordinator

Properties Department

Adriane Binky Donley, Properties Director Kira Lyon, Assistant Properties Director

Scene Shop

Ryan Schultz, Technical Director Tatsuya Ito, Associate Technical Director Bill Kephart, Scene Shop Chief Clerk Bobby Reynolds, Theatrical Scene Shop Coordinator

Liam Romano, Kayley Woolums, Theatrical Scene Shop Assistants

PERFORMING ARTS BUSINESS SERVICE CENTER

Debbie Delaney, Stacey Elliott, Accounting Staff

WE'RE SO GLAD YOU'RE AT THE CENTER

We work to create the best possible setting for the experiences you seek and find here.

NECESSARIES

Restrooms are located in the foyers of Foellinger Great Hall, Tryon Festival Theatre, and Colwell Playhouse; the east entrances on the Lobby level; and in each elevator lobby on Level 1 and Level 3. Lobby restrooms and one restroom in each elevator lobby are fully accessible and contain baby-changing stations.

Ushers will be happy to provide you cough drops courtesy of St. Joseph Apothecary, or disposable foam earplugs if the place starts rockin'.

If you or a companion needs medical assistance, contact an usher or other staff member.

Please take a moment before the performance to note the theatre exits nearest to you. If it becomes necessary to evacuate the theatre, please remain calm, follow the instructions of the house staff, and exit in an orderly fashion to the appropriate safe meeting location, which will be announced to you.

PHONES AND DEVICES

The use of cell phones, cameras, and recording devices during performances is prohibited unless otherwise announced from the stage.

LATE ARRIVALS

As a courtesy to performers and audience members, latecomers will be seated only at times selected in advance by the artist. Should you find that you've arrived late to a performance, our Patron Services staff will keep you informed about the earliest seating opportunity.

LOST ITEMS

If you are in need of Lost and Found, please visit the Patron Services counter. We will do our best to reunite object and owner!

TICKET RETURNS

If you find you can't attend a performance, please contact the Ticket Office in advance, preferably by 6pm the day before the performance (kran-tix@illinois.edu). We never charge a handling fee on ticket transactions.

ACCESSIBILITY

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts is committed to making experiences accessible for all patrons, and we are delighted to provide a number of services to assist you. Krannert Center is equipped with an assisted listening system, wheelchair-accessible and no-step/few-step seating, and large-print programs, Braille programs, and American Sign Language interpreters are available with three weeks' advance notice.

For assistance regarding your visit, please email:

Para ayuda en relación con su visita, favor de enviar un email a:

Pour vous aider dans votre visite, prière de nous envoyer un courriel à:

欢迎!如若您对您的造访需要帮助,请发送电子邮件至:

स्वागत हे! अगर आपको अपने रहने के लिए मदद चाहिए, ईमेल कीजिए:

환영합니다! 방문에 관해 도움이 필요하실 때에는... 에게 이메일로 문의하시기 바랍니다:

PATRONSERVICES@KRANNERTCENTER.ILLINOIS.EDU 217.333.9716

COME AS YOU ARE. LEAVE DIFFERENT.



STUDEN

UOFI

\$10

U of I students, come on in. In whatever clothes, whatever state of mind, from whatever world of experience, you are welcome here. We don't have a dress code, we don't have an opinion code, and we want the Center to be your kind of place. Because of the vital support of Krannert Center donors and the Krannert Center U of I student fee, U of I students never pay more than \$10 for a ticket, and dozens of events each year are completely free.

Your presence helps to make Krannert Center a place like nowhere else—and what you can experience here makes your education like nobody else's. If you are inspired by what you find here, invite others to join you.

When you come to Krannert Center, we promise that you'll leave different: refreshed, reaffirmed, renewed!