

CU★PRESENTS

2020-21 Season
Digital program



Theatre & Dance
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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2020-21 Digital Programs

October-December 2020

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Theatre & Dance season **interrogates** urgent crises

By Becca Vaclavik

In a typical year, the Department of Theatre & Dance plans its season well in advance, choosing events long before audiences experience them live. Of course, 2020 is anything but a typical year. So when COVID-19 shut down campus in March, leadership was forced to scrap a nearly complete season and envision something new for 2020-21.

“COVID-19 left us in a space of doing some deep thinking around how we can use this platform as a vehicle to continue to hold together and nurture a

sense of community,” said Associate Chair of Dance Helanius J. Wilkins.

In the months since, the department has put together an abbreviated virtual season, featuring *The Laramie Project*, *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms*, and *[un]WRAP*. The new fall lineup interrogates many of the long-simmering crises 2020 has brought to a boil.

In October 1998, two men brutally murdered 21 year-old Matthew Shepard because he was gay. *The Laramie Project* is an investigative play created through 200 real-life interviews with the residents of Laramie, Wyoming, in the years that followed. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the first production and 22 years since Matthew’s death.

“In recent years, hate crimes have been on the rise,” said Elise Collins, who directs the production. “*The Laramie Project* serves as a litmus test to assess how far we’ve come as a nation and how far we still need to go.”

She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms is an action-packed, hilarious homage to geek culture that tells the story of Agnes, a girl playing Dungeons & Dragons to better understand the world of her

recently deceased sister Tilly. Its themes resonate personally with director Amanda Rose Villarreal.

“I have played D&D since I was in seventh grade, and it was the one place where I could explore my own identity. The queer space of D&D allows for a utopic reinvisioning of one’s self that growing up in conservative areas, as I did, doesn’t allow for ... This play issues a challenge for the ‘average’ person, whether that’s white, cis-, or hetero-.”

Finally, this year’s *[un]WRAP* event, titled *(un)doing and (re)making*, features forums with and performances by renowned guest artists who are exploring inequities in dance.

“Artists have started to create a blueprint for the undoing of the field by looking deeply at how it exists right now. And then the remaking of it,” said Wilkins, who curated the symposium. “We’re expanding our conversations. Going forward, what do we want our world to be?”

Photo credit: Building a Better Fishtrap: from the river’s mouth—Oceana James and Jaimé Yawa Dzandu. Photo by Jessica Lee.

There’s more to this story! Read the expanded features at cupresents.org.

More on Theatre

More on Dance

She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms

A play by Qui Nguyen

Nov. 13-20, 2020

Director	Amanda Rose Villarreal
Scenic Designer	Katy Keenan
Costume Designer	Joe Kennedy
Lighting Designer	Connor Robertson
Props Designer	Hannah Male
Dramaturg	Isabel Smith-Bernstein
Dance Choreographer	Darcy Brander
Intimacy and Fight Choreographer	Amanda Rose Villarreal
Videographer	Gregory Towle*
Stage Manager	Issy Leustig

**Visiting Roe Green Artist*

Special thanks:

The Department of Theatre & Dance is grateful to donor Roe Green for making our 2020-21 theatre season possible during these challenging times. We are thrilled to welcome videographer Gregory Towle as our 2020 Roe Green Visiting Theatre Artist, enabling us to stream our productions of *The Laramie Project* and *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms*.

Please note: This production contains adult language and explores themes of grief, violence and sexuality.

She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. [**concordtheatricals.com**](http://concordtheatricals.com)

First produced in New York City

The Flea Theater

Jim Simpson, Artistic Director; Carol Ostrow, Producing Director

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Cast

ROLE

Agnes

Tilly

Vera

Miles

Chuck

Lilith/Lilly

Kaliope/Kelly

Orcus/Ronnie

Evil Tina

Evil Gabbi

The Great Mage Steve

Farrah the Faerie & Narrator

Puppetry/Swing Ensemble

Puppetry/Swing Ensemble

Puppetry/Swing Ensemble

Puppetry/Swing Ensemble

NAME

Matara Hitchcock

Madelyn Wible

Hannah Mariah

Cameron Hazlip

Beth Bolon

Lucinda Lazo

Jo Hoagland

Marshall Glazier

Aidan Cliften

Mikayla Jassem

Caleb Stuart

Marisa Dinsmoor

Darcy Brander

Claudia Davis

Sarah Fahmy

Sam Lustig

Director's note

Communal creative play constructs alternative realities where the exploration of both imaginary worlds and real selves takes place. Tabletop roleplaying games are more than exploring dungeons and fighting dragons; collaboratively crafted narratives emerge from players' shared imagining and rolls of the dice. In that exploration, we can connect, learning about ourselves and one another.

She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms starts with one death and ends with another. Initially, Agnes prizes her ability to excel in meeting societal expectations—her averageness. A year after the death of her sister Tilly, through Dungeons and Dragons, Agnes learns to appreciate Tilly's full self; but in the process, Agnes realizes that she must slay more than monsters. She must defend those that don't conform to her high school's social norms, and to do so, she must allow her dedication to being “average” to die, as well.

In a time where social media activism without supporting, real-life action is rampant, *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* asks us to step out of our

comfort zones and see others as whole, interesting, valuable human beings worth fighting for. Agnes had been blind to her sister's identity, remaining comfortably detached and assuming that Tilly would "grow out of all this—that I'd be able to sit around and ask her about normal things like clothes and TV shows and boys." But while comfortably enjoying her averageness, Agnes remained ignorant of the monsters Tilly was fighting in the real world.

Once Agnes discovers the horrific homophobia Tilly faced in life, Agnes struggles to resist the same homophobic urges within herself. She allows a new quest to become more important than recovering the lost Soul of Athens; she pursues instead the knowledge of Tilly's sexuality. While Agnes obsesses over Tilly's queerness, she loses sight of saving her sister's soul.

We, too, run this risk. While we exist in a world that demands to know—and judge—the details of others' sexualities and gender identities, we find ourselves trapped in a social narrative that steals souls from anyone who doesn't fit in with the cultural definition of "average." Currently, those living within the United States who don't fit this definition continue to be

judged and isolated, their souls held captive by the terrifying dragon of social norms with its five heads—whiteness, straightness, cis-ness, masculinity and Christianity. Our cast is comprised of individuals who refute this definition, and we speak through Chuck as he admonishes Agnes, interrupting her obsessed frenzy to find out her sister's sexuality by telling her that "it's not part of the adventure." We ask our audience, similarly, to focus on the real-world adventure—on living fully and finding connection, freeing those around us to be seen and celebrated for who they are, rather than defining others by isolated facets of their identities.

Qui Nguyen's *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* is a warning that if we enforce our definitions of normalcy on others, we risk losing the opportunity to find connection. Like Agnes, we shouldn't risk our abilities to connect by ignoring the souls of others to focus instead on facets of their identities that don't match our own. Like Agnes, we shouldn't cling to the comfort of inaction, remaining emotionally detached while hoping that things will change. Instead, we must discover the courage to connect with one another, fight alongside one another and

appreciate others as they are, instead of how we want them to be.

This specific production of *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* issues a call to bold vulnerability—to the brave and intimate action of accepting others as they are and opening ourselves up to the discomfort of being seen as we are. Therefore, for this production our directing team worked to craft a new language of intimacy and vulnerability, utilizing the framing of Zoom to do so.

In real-life virtual realms, we often monitor how we are seen through Zoom, staring at ourselves in that second box to curate how others see us, just as we curate our appearances and our public personas online and in real life. Eye contact and camera proximity, then, become expressions of openness to connection within this production. When we make eye contact, we pause our self-curation for a brief moment, allowing ourselves to be seen as we are. When these characters look into the camera, they are reaching out, inviting contact while dropping their self-monitoring shields. Looking into the camera prioritizes connection over self-curation, inviting

others to see into, and potentially free, our souls. Our directing team, along with the entire company of this production, invites you into our Virtual Realm, and we ask you to question the value of averageness with Agnes, to learn to see and be seen and to consider bold vulnerability in your own adventures.

Dramaturg's note

You may have heard of Dungeons and Dragons as that game you play when you're desperately lonely and want to commune with the devil (thank you, Mazes and Monsters). But this collaborative game has had quite the comeback recently--and plays like *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* illustrate why. The game's appeal rests not just in its fantastical worldbuilding, but its integral reliance on connecting with others.

Dungeons and Dragons (DnD) is a collaborative storytelling and roleplaying game where a group sits around a table and is led through a world and quest by the Dungeon Master, or DM. The players all carefully create characters that they will embody throughout the game. The characters are created with a combination of rolling dice and imagination. The

story woven by the DM can really be anything, but it will always be shaped by how the player's characters interact with the world. DnD is the perfect blending of chance, improvisation, logic and imagination.

She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms takes the values of identity, community and collaboration that are the pillars of DnD and transforms them—and the game—into a vehicle for processing grief. The game of DnD inside of the play also allows the play's characters to get to know each other through their DnD characters. It is impossible to make a character, let alone an entire fantasy world, that doesn't reveal facets of yourself.

The game of Dungeons and Dragons allows trying on different identities to find the role that fits you best. It's a game that allows for exploration in many senses of the word. These strengths of the game are reflected in *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms*. The play teaches us it's okay to play, to feel and to be ourselves.



Roe Green

Roe Green, arts patron and community activist, is chief executive officer of the Roe Green Foundation. With a BA in theatre & communications from the University of Colorado Boulder and a MA in theatre from Kent State University, her experience in stage and business management includes Porthouse Theatre, Cain Park, Cleveland Opera and Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

Today, she is president emeritus of C.A.V.O.R.T. Inc. (Conference About Volunteers of Regional Theatre), serves on the Foundation board of Kent State University, the Board of the Cleveland Play House (where she is honorary producer of New Ground) and

the board of Maltz Jupiter Theatre in Florida. She also created the Green House, a battered women's shelter in Geauga, Ohio. Green is an avid traveler, having visited over 160 countries and sees theatre whenever she can. Green received the Governor's 2009 Ohio Arts Council's Governor's Arts Patron Award, the 2012 Alumni Recognition Award from CU Boulder, the 2013 Dramatist Guild Fund Award and the Muse Award (2014) from the Cultural Council of Palm Beach.

In 2015, Green received the Kent State University College of the Arts' inaugural Centennial Award for her service and patronage and the Cleveland Play House Super Nova Award. In 2017, she received the Theatre Forward Leadership Award at the Theatre Forward Chairman's Awards Gala, the 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award and, in 2020, was named a winner of the Cleveland Arts Prize.

Her gifts to CU Boulder have created the Roe Green Visiting Theatre Artist Program and the Roe Green Endowed Chair in Theatre. We all thank Roe Green (BA Theatre '70) for her munificent support of our department.

CU Theatre & Dance Production team

Assistant Director

Benjamin Stasny

Assistant Stage Manager

Emma Donnelly

Sabrina Mason

Production Assistant

Grant Bowman

Production Assistant/Props

Hannah Male

Camera Operators

Nikky Haabestad

Aspen Kimlicko

Zoom Producer & Master Electrician

Cooper Braun-Enos

Live Audio Engineer

Ari Kutzer

Sound Design Consultants

Sam Morin

Gregory Towle

COSTUMES

Costume Shop production assistants: Mari Beazley, Darcy Brander, Kaylyn Buehler, Celeste Fenton, Chloe Freibott, Joe Kennedy, Graham Longworth, Nia Quan, Emily Ray. **Practicum students:** Casey Caplin, Peri Cooper, Emma Donnelly, Bennett Forsyth, Wesley Juels, Sabrina Mason, Viktoria Padilla

SCENERY AND ELECTRICS

Scene shop production assistants: Stephanie Castro-Rivera, Asher Farr, Rachel Fields, Cali Greenbaum, Ari Kutzer, Kyle Lawrence, Calvin Logan, Hannah Male, Sam Morin, Vik Padilla, Hayley Parnell, Connor Robertson, Kelsea Sibold, Logan Wallace, Madelyn Wible, Destin Woods. **Production Practicum students:** Grant Bowman, Darcy Brander, Lexi Borrker, Chris Casteñeda, Kara D'Allesandro, Rita DiSibio, Zoe Fischhoff, Bennet Forsyth, Aidan Heydt, Wesley Juels, Joe Kennedy, Issy Leustig, Graham Longworth, DJ McAllister, Cody Snider. **Lighting Practicum students:** Grant Bowman, Kaylyn Buehler, Jonathan Burgart, Casey Caplin, Evan Cerda, Kara D'Alessandro, Rita DiSibio, Rachel Fields, Zoe Fischhoff, Jo Hoagland, Joe Kennedy, Issy Leustig, Graham Longworth, Cody Snider

DANCE PRODUCTION

Technical crew: Nathan Bala, Aleighya Dawkins, Xaalan Dolence, Brealyn Hager, Sam Morin, Viktoria Padilla, Olivia Sander, James Solis-Gutierrez

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Fall 2020 at CU Theatre & Dance



[un]WRAP:

(un)doing and (re)making

Curated by CU Dance faculty and ED&I

Nov. 13-19

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She Kills Monsters:

Virtual Realms

A play by Qui Nguyen

Nov. 13-20

[Learn more](#)



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A CU dance concert

Dec. 4-5

on CU Presents Digital

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Associate Chair & Director of Theatre Kevin Rich	Roe Green Visiting Artist for Theatre & Dance, Fall 2020 Gregory Towle	Graduate Program Assistant Patricia Paige	Costume Shopper Clara Hoppe
Associate Chair of Dance Helanius Wilkins	Master Electrician Cooper Braun-Enos	Production Outreach & Engagement Liaison Ondine Geary	Dance Costume Coordinator Sarah Napier
Production Coordinator Connie Lane Cooper Braun-Enos	Music/Accompanist Coordinator for Dance Jesse Manno	Administrative Assistant Ciera Barrow	Dance Events Coordinator Christina Mitchell
Director of Dance Production Iain Court	Assistant to the Director of Dance Production Anna Pillot	Academic Advisor Jessica Baron	Dance Video Recording/Archivist rick h m
Costume Production Director Ted Stark	Assistant to the Costume Production Director Veronica Dewey	Costume Rental/Stock Manager Darcy Brander	Front of House Manager Matara Hitchcock
Technical Director Jordan Feeler	Business Manager Stacy Witt	Costume Tech Lab Assistant Ana Langmead	House Managers Xaalan Dolance, Matara Hitchcock, Madison Palffy

*The Department of Theatre & Dance acknowledges that the University sits upon land within **the territories of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho** peoples and are grateful to have the opportunity to be here. Further, we acknowledge the 48 contemporary tribal nations that are historically tied to lands that make up Colorado. We recognize and pay our respects to these Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. We pay our respects to the ancestors, elders, relations past, present and emerging.*

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