



Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

The Center for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies Presents

# DIRECTORS' SHOWCASE 2024



# The Worker

**Written by:** Walter Wykes

**Directed by:** Mika Deneige

## CAST

**The Worker** - Erika Dowd

**The Partner** - Grace Keeping

**The Messenger** - Emily Beaubien

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Set & Costume Designer** - Abigail Kowalski

**Lighting Designer & Stage Manager** - Xinyi (Alyson)  
Zhang

**Sound Designer** - Casper Yang

**Assistant Set & Costume Designer** - Adele Thomson

**Assistant Lighting & Sound Designer** - Hero Emmanuel  
Dela Cruz

**Assistant Stage Manager** - Maryam Joulaie

**Intimacy Director** - Corey Tazmania

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When I think of the companies currently devouring the earth, I don't have to look far — the unmistakable blue and brown boxes are waiting on every other doorstep. The idea for this production started with that box, with the picture of a world boxed in by corporations. We built the box and it became the home for everything this play is; it holds the characters and contains everything they hope for and everything they can't escape.

It holds us too, in a system of dependence and gratification that's become so commonplace we hardly notice. It's barely even fun to open a box anymore, and I can't forgive corporations for depriving me of the great pleasure of opening the mail.

As much as the box looks bare and inescapable, I hope very much that it is not. Hope is central here, now more than ever. If we are to escape the dragging weight of inertia, it must be done together, with a degree of hope bordering on delusion. Our survival depends on these radical acts of hope, and on the commitment to ourselves and to each other that no small act of hope is meaningless.

I hope that we are implicated in this piece, as we are implicated in each other. Good theatre should make it difficult to sit back and forget about our own role in the story. It would please me very much if this turns out to be good theatre.

- Mika Deneige

# CAST

## The Worker - Erika Dowd

Erika is so excited to bring you into the world of *The Worker* as its titular character. She's a second-year drama and English major with a minor in history, (and if you think that's a full plate, don't ask her about her many hobbies). You may recognize her from SMCT's *Ordinary Days*, or in several shows with the U of T Improv performance team. *The Worker* was a fantastic exploration of intent, physicality, and tone that Erika can't wait to show to all of you. Many thanks to Grace and Emily for being the best co-stars ever, and to Mika for bringing this profound production to life.



## The Partner - Grace Keeping



Grace Keeping is a third-year student majoring in drama, theatre and performance studies with a focus on acting, as well as ecology and evolutionary biology, specializing in conservation biology. Originally from Newfoundland and Labrador, Some of Grace's previous work includes background roles on the TV series *Hudson and Rex* and a reading of Avi Kleinman's *Oedipus Goes West*. She is also currently serving as the artistic director of the UC Follies, and looking forward to the rest of their artistic season.

Grace is excited to share the character of partner in this play; with the dark, and sometimes comedic, portrayal of current global challenges. Thank you to Mika for her passion in conveying the complex themes of the play, all who made this production possible, and all who came to support. Enjoy the show!

## The Messenger - Emily Beaubien

Currently based in Tkaronto, Emily Beaubien (she/her) is a Singaporean-Canadian artist with a love for fostering connections using theatre and performance. She is pursuing a specialization in drama, theatre and performance studies. Her recent theatre work includes directing *Hedda Gabler* for the UC Follies at Factory Theatre, as well as performing in *The Middle Place* (Project: Humanity), *Days Since Bo's Been Gone* (Crybaby Theatre) and *The Trials* (CDTPS). She also serves as an executive producer for the UC Follies, and is producing several shows for the upcoming season. Emily hopes to not get shot playing the role of The Messenger, but is nevertheless so excited to be a part of this production.



## CREATIVE TEAM

### Director - Mika Deneige



Mika Deneige makes her directorial debut with *The Worker*, building on a career as an actor, writer, and poet. She is currently double majoring in theatre and international relations with a focus on researching strategies for building sustainable policy. Following this production, she is directing the musical *Dystopical* in the spring, produced by TCDS. Mika originally hails from Edmonton, where the large flat spaces offer plenty of room for thinking about theatre.

## Set and Costume Designer - Abigail Kowalski

Abigail Kowalski is grateful for the opportunity to design the set and costumes for *The Worker*. She is double majoring in theatre and psychology and is in her third year. She is currently involved in lighting design work around campus, with previous experience in set and lighting design. Abigail would like to thank the crew, cast, director, and professors for continuously inspiring her and for helping bring her design to life. She appreciates the audience members for coming to support the play and hopes you enjoy the show!



## Lighting Designer and Stage Manager - Xinyi (Alyson) Zhang



Alyson Zhang is a third-year student at the University of Toronto. She is double majoring in drama and media studies. Outside of theatre, she works as a dance instructor and leads her own dance team. She is thrilled to be working with everyone on this production and wants to extend her gratitude to the incredibly supportive professors who have provided invaluable guidance to her team.

This is her first time taking on both the roles of stage manager and lighting designer. It has been challenging and, at times, quite stressful, but through it all, she has learned so much and

grown in ways she hadn't expected. She says it has truly been an unforgettable experience.



## Sound Designer - Casper Yang

Casper Yang is a third-year student specializing in finance and economics, with a major in drama and a minor in environmental economics. Bringing a unique blend of analytical rigour and creative flair to his work, Casper has honed his technical skills in sound design through various theatre productions. His work on *The Worker* focuses on creating effective soundscapes that support and enhance the storytelling.



## Assistant Lighting and Sound Designer - Hero Emmanuel Dela Cruz



Hero Emmanuel Dela Cruz moved to Toronto five years ago with little knowledge about theatre, but she discovered that she enjoys the tight-knit and communal yet artistic workspace of productions. Therefore, she found herself pursuing a double degree in drama and another field of interest in cell and molecular biology. She is currently in her second year and most of her experiences in theatre involve being part of a production crew such as stage manager, lighting and sound designer. She is also interested in physicality on stage and has experience with choreography mixed with spoken word, mostly abstract and interpretive movements/vocals. During her secondary school years, she had the chance to showcase one of her works as a director at U of T's Hart House for the NTS DramaFest 2023 and received a distinctive award for 'Direction and Conception'. And now as a drama student, she is looking forward to gaining more experiences and furthering her involvement and contributions to the CDTPS.

## Assistant Stage Manager - Maryam Joulaie

Maryam is a first-year student at the University of Toronto studying political science and drama. Passionate about singing, writing, and all things creative, she's excited to expand her experience at university. Outside of theatre, she's a public speaking and debate coach, as well as a major cinephile. She is thrilled to serve as the assistant stage manager for *The Worker* and is incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with such a talented cast and crew. This production has been an unforgettable learning experience, and she knows you're in for an amazing show tonight!





# Suppressed Desires

**Written by:** Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook

**Directed by:** Athena McIsaac

## CAST

**Henrietta** - Isabella Black

**Stephen** - Soroosh Kahnemuyipour

**Mabel** - Priscilla Dhaussy

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Set Designer** - Amitis Mashayekhi

**Costume Designer** - Valeria MacGregor-Ordonez

**Lighting Designer & Stage Manager** - Niamh Moll

**Sound Designer & Assistant Stage Manager** - Winston Zang

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I've always been fascinated by the relationship between desire and the actualization of that desire. Sometimes, we know exactly what we want, but we don't allow ourselves to have it. We lock the desire away somewhere deep in our minds and convince ourselves that it's not there. Maybe we think it's too risky, too embarrassing, too outrageous to pursue. But what happens when these desires are denied for too long? When we don't allow ourselves to get what we truly want?

*Suppressed Desires* explores the consequences of self-denial. The play satirizes psychoanalysis, a practice of examining someone's weird dreams and strange behaviours to uncover their hidden desires. There is a fear that if a person's suppressed desire is not found, the unfulfilled longing will drive them insane.

In the play, Henrietta spends much of her time psychoanalyzing her sister, Mabel, and her husband, Stephen. She insists that there is something wrong with them and urges them both to get psychoanalyzed by a professional. But when both finally do get "psyched" by Dr. Russell and reveal their suppressed desires to Henrietta, she's shocked by what she hears.

I initially loved this play because I love all things satire and comedy. The absurd nature of the plot does a great job of pointing out the absurdity of relying on a practice like psychoanalysis to inform big life decisions, like leaving your husband, while disregarding your own feelings on the matter. In the battle between love and logic, what prevails? Personally, I believe the most logical thing to do is to listen to your heart.

Although the play is from 1915, the questions it asks of us remain timeless. Why don't we allow ourselves to give in to our desires? What's stopping us?

- Athena McIsaac

# CAST

## Henrietta - Isabella Black (she/her)

Isabella is in her fourth year at U of T studying drama and English. She is so excited to be playing Henrietta in *Suppressed Desires* and wants to thank the creative team, specifically Athena and Niamh for a wonderful rehearsal process. It has been so much fun getting to explore these characters and perform again.



## Stephen - Soroosh Kahnemuyipour (he/him)



Soroosh is thrilled to be on the amazing team of *Suppressed Desires*. He is a third-year student at the Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies (CDTPS) focusing on performance, directing, and playwriting! Stay silly!

### **Mabel - Priscilla Dhaussy (she/her)**

Priscilla moved to Canada from France four years ago to pursue her passion for acting and improvisation. Since then, she has had the chance to work on a variety of plays and commercials in French and English. But her true love is being on stage—it's live, unpredictable and every performance is different. Outside of acting, she loves dancing and travelling.



## **CREATIVE TEAM**

### **Director - Athena McIsaac (she/her)**



Athena is a fourth-year student majoring in English and drama, with a minor in creative writing. Pursuing theatre was an accident, but it has been such a fun accident that it is now incredibly on purpose. She got her start acting in high school productions of *Chamber Music* and *The Laramie Project*. She has gotten into the University of Toronto's theatre scene by co-directing and stage managing an independent production for the 2024 Hart House Theatre Drama Festival, acting as an ASM for *Next to Normal* (VCDS and TCDS), and becoming a communications coordinator for

the Drama Coalition. She is very excited for this show and would like to thank the amazing students, professors and staff who have been involved for their commitment to bringing this piece to life! She would also like to add that after directing this show, she feels like she's being haunted by chickens, but she's made peace with that.

### Set Designer - Amitis Mashayekhi

Amitis is a fourth-year U of T student studying cinema studies and drama. With a love for theatre, arts and music from a young age, Amitis has spent the past four years immersing herself in different aspects of the theatre program and found her creativity and passion through the process of design. She is very excited to have worked on *Suppressed Desires* with the team and hopes you enjoy the show!



### Costume Designer - Valeria MacGregor-Ordonez

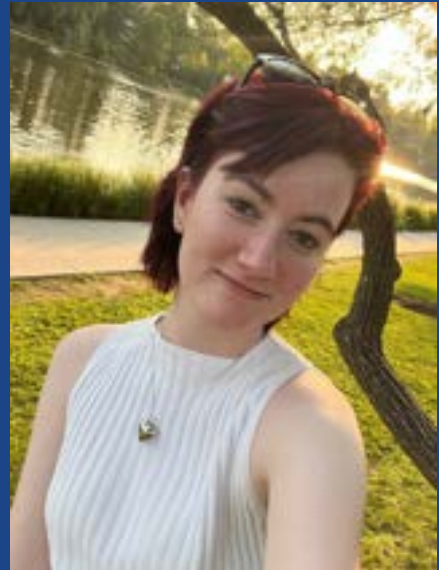


Valeria is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto specializing in drama. She has lots of experience in theatre as an actress. This is the first time she is taking on the role of a costume designer and she is very excited for you to see her work. She is very passionate about the production of *Suppressed Desires* and is grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of the creative team. Being a period piece, this play has challenged and inspired her. She wants to thank Athena for having confidence in her vision and for her constant support throughout the entire process. Finally, she is extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to work amongst such a talented and supportive creative team.

## Lighting Designer and Stage Manager -

Niamh Moll (she/they)

Niamh is a fourth-year student majoring in drama, theatre and performance studies at U of T, with a focus on production. Niamh has operated lights and sound, as well as stage managed in the past, and she is excited to be making her debut as a lighting designer this year! She is grateful to have been a part of this year's Directors' Showcase and to work with the amazing cast and crew of *Suppressed Desires*. Niamh is looking forward to getting more involved with campus theatre production and has already begun stage managing her next show: UC Follies' *Frankenstein's Monster Learns To Cook*.



## Sound Designer and ASM - Winston Zang



Winston is a theatre student at the University of Toronto with a strong focus on performance and technical design. Currently, they are the sound designer for *Suppressed Desires*, a production that explores the intricate layers of human psychology and relationships. Their work integrates theoretical knowledge and practical skills, emphasising how sound can shape audience perception and enhance narrative depth. They are also passionate about adapting international plays for contemporary audiences, experimenting with innovative approaches to dramaturgy and audience engagement. They hope you enjoy the show.



# Pool (no water)

Written By: Mark Ravenhill

Directed by: Rebecca Robitaille

## CAST

### **The Group:**

Tessa Kramer

Madeleine Thompson

Farah Fatola

Artemis Cahill Riedmueller

**Artist Voice** - Frosina Pejcinovska

## CREATIVE TEAM

**Set & Costume Designer** - Salma Wennekers

**Lighting Designer & Assistant Stage Manager**- Jingyuan  
(Jessie) Chen

**Projection Designer** - Liz So

**Sound Designer & Stage Manager** - Sichun Xia

## Director's note

*What does it mean to be an Artist? What defines success in the artistic world? What can art do, and how far can we go for the sake of art?* Questions like these drive the heart of this play—a story of artistic frustration and what it means to navigate the dual identities of artist and human. These themes have long been at the core of my own artistic practice, and is what first drew me to this text.

Without giving too much away, *pool (no water)* explores a group of friends in 2005, narrating a pivotal moment from their shared past—filled with contradictions and exploitation, creation and destruction, where physical and digital medias collide and interact. The play's script is written with a heightened expression and without any traditional characters, instead reading as one narrative voice. This allowed me to create “The Group”: the four friends speaking to you today. The Group met in art college and collectively shared the ‘struggling artist’ lifestyle, but when one of them flies high and hits the big time, the others are left to navigate feelings of jealousy, resentment and inadequacy.

This story exposes the raw emotions that haunt artists (and most people I shall assume) but are rarely acknowledged openly. While this play is darkly twisted and somewhat absurd, I found I connected to the humanity it displays (though perhaps I shouldn't admit that!). The Group is not afraid to voice thoughts that perhaps shouldn't be shared, which I found a refreshing and releasing experience, and I hope you do too. I encourage you to leave this show judging the characters' actions, words, art, hypocrisy and finding their humanity: “because today we are all artists.”

- Rebecca Robitaille

# CAST

## Tessa Kramer

Tessa is a first-year student at the University of Toronto, hoping to pursue a double major in drama and anthropology. Tessa is a writer and actor passionate about social justice, performance and culture. When not in rehearsal, Tessa enjoys going to plays in the city or on campus, upcycling clothes and sewing, spending time with friends, painting, writing plays and exploring different topics of interest including: history, philosophy and linguistics. Tessa has acted in roles such as The March Hare in *Alice in Wonderland* and Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, and wrote and directed a play of her own in high school named *Hot Leaf Juice*. Tessa is excited to be stepping into the world of university theatre. Being part of the community at U of T has been a dream come true. Thank you for being here and hope you enjoy the show!



## Madeleine Thompson



She's Madeleine Thompson and she IS a star. She is currently in her fourth year at U of T, double majoring in drama, theatre and performance studies and cinema studies. Previous performance training includes musical theatre at Bravo Academy for the Arts, acting and choir at Cardinal Carter Academy for the Arts, and dance (jazz, tap, ballet) at Randolph College for the Performing Arts! She loves her cat, Casper, horses and all her fans!

## Farah Fatola

Farah is a fourth-year student who is double-majoring in criminology and sociolegal studies, and drama. Previous theatre credits include *Twelve Angry Men* and *Desert Lily*. When not on stage or studying, she can most likely be found sipping earl grey tea, munching on an everything bagel, and playing the daily Wordle. Farah is incredibly grateful to be a part of this year's Directors' Showcase and is thankful to the cast and crew for the wonderful opportunity to work with them. She also hopes you all enjoy the show!



## Artemis Cahill Riedmueller



Artemis is an aspiring actor, writer, director and stage manager. She is in her third year pursuing a double major in drama, and the history and philosophy of science and technology (which is somehow one major). This year, she is excited to be the assistant producer and Drama Coalition representative for UC Follies, as well as the secretary of SUDS, and theatre operations assistant for CDTPS. She is also acting in Victoria College's *71*, and stage managing *Company* at Isabel Bader, both happening in 2025. When she's not working on theatre stuff, she's either desperately trying to finish her assignments, or sleeping. She is so grateful to have shared the stage with such incredible actors and to have gotten to work with an amazing director, and a great backstage crew!

# CREATIVE TEAM

## Director - Rebecca Robitaille

Rebecca is an aspiring actor, director and visual artist from Kenya, finishing up her final year as a drama, theatre and performance studies specialist at the University of Toronto. Rebecca has always had a love for performing and the community theatre brings, but when not in rehearsals can be found working on a new art project. While this will be her directorial debut on the stage, she has previously shot and directed a short film promoting the conservation efforts at Pacuare Reserve in Costa Rica: *Xploring Pacuare* (2023). Selected theatre credits include Hart House Monologue Competition (2024), *Unfurnished* (Toronto Fringe Festival), *Hedda Gabler* (UC Follies), and *Twelve Angry Men* (Hart House). She is also diving into the world of musical theatre for the first time, partaking in an upcoming production of *Company*. She has loved bringing this bizarre and wonderful script to life with such an amazing team!



## Set and Costume Designer - Salma Wennekers



Salma Wennekers is a third-year English and drama major. She is a U of T National Scholar and this year's recipient of the CDTPS Charles Osborn Moon and Martha Elizabeth Moon Scholarship. Salma is a nine-time Excellence in Playwriting, Set, Costume and Technical Design Award winner at the NTS Dramafest, formerly the Sears Festival, and is also a recipient of the Ken & Ann Watts Memorial Foundation Scholarship. She is overjoyed to have designed *Pool (no water)*. It's fantastic, fantastic, fantastic, fantastic.



## Lighting Designer and ASM - Jingyuan (Jessie) Chen

Jessie is an undergraduate student currently pursuing a major in drama. Driven by her enjoyment of the allure and vitality of live performances, she embarked on the journey in drama theatre and design. She contributed as the assistant set/costume designer for the CDTPS mainstage show *Don't Cry When Constellations Beg to Burn* and VCDS production *Young Frankenstein*. She was also the set designer for *Sure Thing* and *The Most Massive Woman Wins* in last year's directors' showcase, as well as for UC Follies' production *On Spring's Promise*. She looks forward to engaging in more productions in the future.



## Projection Designer - Liz So



Liz (she/her) is a fourth-year student pursuing a degree in drama, East Asian studies, and digital humanities. She focuses primarily on design and production in theatre and film. Liz is Canadian-born Chinese and was raised in Toronto to immigrant parents from Hong Kong. She has studied technical theatre since her high school days at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts (RHSA) where she developed a passion for theatre through stage management, directing, design and production. *Pool (no water)* is Liz' debut work as a projection designer and she cannot wait for you to immerse yourself in her world of pool tiles!



## Sound Designer and Stage Manager - Sichun Xia

Sichun Xia 夏思纯 is currently a third-year drama specialist student from China. She is very excited to be the sound designer and stage manager for *Pool (no water)*. This is her first time designing sound, and she is grateful to work with this amazing team. Recently selected credits for design and production include stage manager for *On Spring's Promise* (UC Follies), Assistant set and costume designer for *The Trials* (CDTPS), and also ASM for last year's Directors' Showcase piece, *The Most Massive Woman Wins* (CDTPS). She wants to say thanks to her cat for being her representative again.



## SPECIAL THANKS

To Adrien, Ariel, and the rest of the team for making this event happen.

To The Group; the gorgeous cast who all jumped into the text with excitement and endless effort.

To the MOST incredible production team: Liz, Salma, Jessie, and Sichun.

To Leah and Raphael, for endless advice, guidance, and keeping it fun.

And shoutout Mum, Dad, Lucy, and Koko!

# Instructors

## Leah Cherniak - DRM403 (Advanced Directing)

Nationally acclaimed director, writer and educator forging theatrical innovation in Canada.

Leah graduated from the Theatre Program (Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies) here at U of T, a very long time ago. She then went on to study for two years in Paris, France at Ecole Jacques Lecoq, focusing on physical theatre styles and the making of new work.



On her return to Canada, Leah co-founded a theatre company with Martha Ross. Focusing on developing and making new plays, they explored the making of a kind of theatre that was fairly new in Canada — physical and playful with an attention to creating new theatrical worlds. There was always a balancing of comedy with the extraordinary, and sometimes the very ordinary, within the stories and characters they created. Over a 30-year history of making new plays they also played with classical texts like *Twelfth Night* and *Peer Gynt*. Leah was concurrently directing a variety of plays in theatres across Canada, including The National Arts Centre, Soulpepper, Tarragon, Factory, Neptune and many more.

Most recently, she directed *Perceptual Archaeology (or How to Travel Blind)* by Alex Bulmer at Crow's Theatre. This fall 2024, *The Anger in Ernest and Ernestine* opened the 2024/25 season at GCTC in Ottawa. It's a play she co-created and was its original director. It has been performed in many countries around the world.

Leah began teaching clown at The National Theatre School in Montreal, then at Toronto Metropolitan University Theatre School for over 25 years. She was an associate artist with Soulpepper Theatre for 10 years, and

associate director of its two-year academy. Leah works annually for The Shoe Project, a boundary crossing writing project coaching women in presenting their stories of immigration to Toronto. At U of T, she regularly teaches Directing and Clown. And loves it!

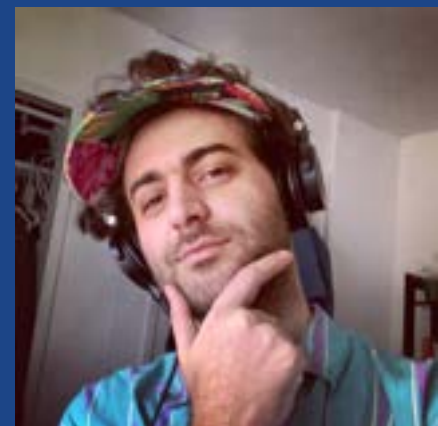
### Snežana Pešić - DRM454 (Advanced Design)



Snežana Pešić is an award-winning scenographer, multi-disciplinary artist and educator. Her work has been seen across Canada and internationally. In Canada, she collaborated with regional and independent theatre companies nationwide. Internationally, her designs were toured and performed in the US, Mexico, Chile, Norway and Serbia, and presented at numerous international exhibitions. Among others, she exhibited at the two most prestigious design events: Prague Quadrennial (2007 and 2015) and World Stage Design (2009, Seoul and 2013, Cardiff). In 2019, Pesic designed and curated the Canadian Professional Exhibition at the Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space (PQ). [www.snezanapesic.com](http://www.snezanapesic.com)

### Daniel Tessy - DRM455 (Advanced Production)

Daniel Tessy is an Iraqi-Jamaican-Canadian multidisciplinary theatre artist and technician. His sound design practice involves a mix of field recording and digital synthesis to create original atmospheric sound effects and music for theatre and film. He has produced original scores or soundscapes for companies such as Renegade Arts Society, Holy Crow Arts, Green Thumb Theatre, United Players of Vancouver, Dirt Road Productions, Capilano University and more. His career outside sound and music work has included lighting design, projection design,



directing, stage management, technical direction/production management, and venue management. He had a long collaboration with UBC's Creative Writing department, supporting new works by their faculty and students with directing and lighting/sound/production design work. He's just relocated to Tkárón:to to participate in its vibrant and diverse arts community.