



Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

DIRECTORS' SHOWCASE

2025



SERIES A
NOV 21 7:30 PM
NOV 22 2:00 PM

M. BUTTERFLY
TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN
AND LET ME LISTEN
DEATH AND THE FOOL
STOP KISS

DIRECTORS' SHOWCASE 2025

THE CDTPS PRESENTS THE 2025 DRM402 DIRECTORS' SHOWCASE, FEATURING EIGHT SHORT PLAYS STAGED OVER TWO EVENINGS AND TWO MATINEE PERFORMANCES. THIS FRINGE FESTIVAL-STYLE THEATRICAL EVENT RUNS FROM NOV. 21 TO 23 AT THE PLAYHOUSE. THE DIRECTORS' SHOWCASE IS A CAPSTONE COURSE THAT GIVES STUDENT DIRECTORS THE OPPORTUNITY TO FLEX THEIR CREATIVE MUSCLES ONSTAGE.

EACH SHOW IS APPROXIMATELY 10 TO 15 MINUTES.

THERE WILL BE A TALKBACK SESSION WITH STUDENT DIRECTORS AND ACTORS FOLLOWING THE MATINEE ON SUNDAY, NOV. 23, 2025.

SPECIAL THANKS

LEAH CHERNIAK

DANIEL TESSY

ARIEL MARTIN-SMITH

ADRIEN WHAN

TARA MAHER

KIT DIXON

NIAMH MOLL

MELIS VANLI

LEAH CHERNIAK NOTE

Eight student directors, twenty student actors, numerous teachers, teaching assistants, and staff have all generously made this year's CDTPS theatre-making adventure a very full, lively, human experience.

It began with each of our eight directors finding and choosing a short piece that they felt drawn to direct and bring to an audience—with a maximum time of 15 minutes. With the students invested in their choices, the pieces challenged each of them to return to the question of why they chose it, why their play might be important to make and bring to an audience. And of course, how to go about making it—and have a good time doing it.

The directors have been brave and committed, focused and necessarily nimble through all the levels of growing their short plays.

With a festival feel and a distinctly human scale of making theatre, the directors partnered with the design and production students to collaborate on finding other ways to support the worlds of their plays through sound, light, and projections.

And of course, the wonderful student actors who, in working with the directors, bring other levels of imagination, talent, usually good questions...and collaboration with the work that this sort of theatre festival environment invites.

All collaborated to support a series of directorial theatrical visions with a slim budget and a ticking clock!

I have recently felt, while watching the directors discover different levels of meaning and experience in the work, or of finding another way to create a moment onstage, that there exists always the potential to experience a kind of joy within a live collective creative endeavour. That there are many levels of life-affirming interaction, and this can especially exist within the environment of making theatre. And I am grateful for that.

I hope you enjoy the directors' offerings made here today/tonight.

M. BUTTERFLY

CREATIVE TEAM:

PLAYWRIGHT: DAVID HENRY HWANG
DIRECTOR: CICI NIE WENXI
LIGHTING DESIGNER: VAL VERGARA
SOUND DESIGNER: YIFEI FAN
STAGE MANAGER: RUNXIN HU
INTIMACY COORDINATOR: MATTEA KENNEDY

CAST:

RENE GALLIMARD: DAVID TUDOR
SONG LILING: YIXUAN CHEN
PUPPETEER: JYX

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

M. Butterfly is a dramatic story based on true historical events. After I watched *Madame Butterfly* at the Canadian Opera Company last year, I had a sense of empathy with the story and felt the meaning of the story has changed a lot across time for East Asians and I would like to reinterpret it on the stage. Then I tried to approach the story from a different point of view which led me to the story of *M. Butterfly*. Resonating with my cultural background, I pitched this show for the Directors' Showcase. Since I consider North America a multicultural society, I think it is the best soil for this show. Thanks CDTPS for giving me the chance to put it on the stage.

For this version, I am trying to squeeze the full-length show into a 15-minute show (which is quite hard). Hopefully, it gives a quick glance and clear summarized version of the theme and plot. If you have some interest in the story after this show, I would encourage you to read the script or watch the movie version to have an entire look at the piece.

M. Butterfly is a critique of Oriental from a Westerner perspective. However, I would also say it is not only about ethnicity, it is also about the destiny of two tragic figures under the pressure of a specific moment in history. I genuinely hope no matter who watches it, they may see a shadow of the society in both a nice and reflective way, and have some empathy for the characters.

And Most important: Many thanks to my wonderful cast and crew members for making the show come true.

CONTENT WARNING: SOME SCENES WILL INCLUDE IMPLIED NUDITY, SUICIDE AND OFFENSIVE LINES CONCERNING ISSUES ABOUT ORIENTALISM, RACE AND SELF-IDENTITIES.

M. BUTTERFLY CREATIVE TEAM



CICI NIE WENXI
PRONOUN: ANY PRONOUNS
DIRECTOR

Cici is a fourth-year student majoring in history and drama and minoring in East Asian studies. They have been working as a stage manager in the theatre as well as in various positions on the crew in different cultural backgrounds. Cici would love to say thanks to the audiences who came to the Directors' Showcase and would love to share this story about Rene and Song Liling with you. Hope y'all enjoy the show!



RUNXIN HU
PRONOUNS: SHE/THEY
STAGE MANAGER

Runxin (she/they) is in her final year studying business and accounting at the University of Toronto, where she somehow found her way from balance spreadsheets to backstage. Her passion for theatre production has shaped much of her time at U of T. Selected credits include Lighting Designer on *Murder on the Orient Express* (TCDS), Co-director on *A Little Fire* (UTSCDS), and Production Manager on *Star People* (UTSC Faculty Production), Assistant Stage Manager on *Cabaret* (SMCT). *M. Butterfly* marks her final theatre work before graduation, and she's deeply grateful for everyone who has supported her along the way. She hopes you enjoy the show as much as the team enjoyed creating it.

M. BUTTERFLY CREATIVE TEAM



YIFEI FAN
SOUND DESIGNER

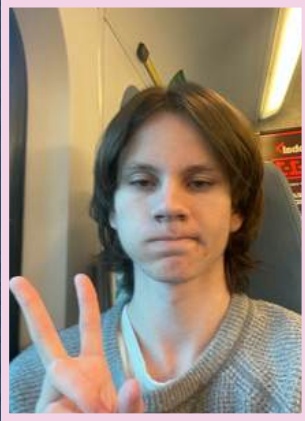
Yifei Fan (Fei) is currently a third-year student at the University of Toronto, double majoring in cinema studies and drama. Outside of her studies, she has been a dancer since elementary school, focusing on choreography, hip-hop, and jazz funk. Along with her dance training, Fei brings technical experience from operating for her high school theatre program, *Mainstage 2025*, and most recently for *Camp XULF*. She is thrilled to join the production team of the Directors' Showcase and hopes you enjoy the shows!



VAL VERGARA
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Val Vergara (they/them) is a queer and Peruvian drama student at the University of Toronto. They focus on costume design and creation and some of their most notable work is *Grease* (TCDS) and *Otîhêw* (Crossroads Theatre), where they worked as lead costume designer and assistant designer correspondingly. Future shows that they will be working on include *Footloose* and *Rent* at Hart House. They are very excited to be working alongside their friends on this production and they hope you enjoy the show!

M. BUTTERFLY CAST



DAVID TUDOR
PRONOUNS: HE / HIM
RENE GALLIMARD

David is a first-year studying math who is very excited to have this opportunity to engage with his more artistic side! He has previously been in two plays, and has in the process gotten experience with less-than-savoury characters on the stage. He is very grateful for the opportunity to act alongside such talented individuals and work with such a helpful crew (and hopes you enjoy the show !!)



YIXUAN CHEN
PRONOUNS: ANY
SONG LILING

Yixuan Chen is an actor and theatre student currently studying in their second year at the University of Toronto and Sheridan College in the Theatre and Drama Studies program. They are honoured to be working in the role of Song Liling for this incredible production, and hope audiences can connect to and enjoy the show! Previous credits include Theodore in *M(AI)A* (BECK Festival), Dennis in *The Play that Goes Wrong*, Yvette in *Clue* (Marquee Theatrical Productions), Captain in *Anything Goes*, Martin in *Mean Girls*, Katherine Howard in *Queens*, Avery in *Murder on the 518* (Richmond Hill High School). Find them on Instagram @chennyixuann!



JIAYAN XIE
PRONOUNS: SHE/HER
PUPPETEER-COMRADE CHIN/ JUDGE

First-year philosophy and economics student who happens to like acting.

TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN AND LET ME LISTEN

CREATIVE TEAM:

PLAYWRIGHT: TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

DIRECTOR: MILA FRUMOVITZ

SET DESIGNER: MILA FRUMOVITZ

COSTUME DESIGNER: MILA FRUMOVITZ

LIGHTING DESIGNER: FAITH CHHOYANG

PROJECTION DESIGNER: FAITH CHHOYANG

SOUND DESIGNER: HERO DELA CRUZ

CAST:

WOMAN: CASS IACOVELLI



DIRECTOR'S NOTE:

Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen... is everything I love in a play. It is one of those plays where nothing big really happens. And that nothingness is everything. It is a play of moments and details, spotlighting the lack of extraordinariness of everyday life. In this spotlight, the beauty and grotesqueness of quotidian sequences are on full display — one that is not always easy to look at.

Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen... is not a one-person play. It is a theatrical world written for two people to inhabit. For this production, however, I have eschewed the two-hander norm in favour of recentering the play around the woman who lies at the text's heart. It has been a privilege to approach the work of my favorite playwright through this feminist lens. It is even more of a joy to do so in collaboration with Cass, Hero, and Faith. It is a true gift to work with these artists, and I am forever grateful to share this experience with them.

SPECIAL THANKS

NEZAR EL-RAYES,
SABRINA PYE,
GILLIAN LEWIS,
CADENCE GUNTHER,
MAGGIE TAVARES,
ANDREW FRUMOVITZ

CONTENT NOTE

THEMES OF ANXIETY, ABUSE,
SEXUALITY, SUICIDAL IDEATION,
DEPRESSION, ALCOHOLISM, AND
PREGNANCY.

ENVIRONMENTAL WARNINGS: HAZE,
LOUD NOISES, USE OF A PROP SPOILED
BEVERAGE

TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN AND LET ME LISTEN

CREATIVE TEAM



MILA FRUMOVITZ DIRECTOR, SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

Mila (she/her) is a Toronto-based theatre director, dramaturg, performer, and designer completing her final year of her honours BA in English and drama at the University of Toronto. She is passionate about centering women in theatrical narratives and engaging with feminist, care-forward theatre practices. Her recent directing work includes *Anyone Can Whistle* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the Trinity College Dramatic Society (also co-choreographer of the former), and *Miss Julie* for the Victoria College Dramatic Society. You can catch Mila's next theatrical endeavours with Shifting Ground Collective and Claw Marks Theatre. Mila would like to thank Cass, Hero, and Faith for being absolute dream collaborators, as well as Leah, Daniel, Soykan, Raphael, Adrien, and Ariel for their unwavering support in indulging her surrealist mishegoss. For Mom, always.

TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN AND LET ME LISTEN CREATIVE TEAM



FAITH CHHOYANG LIGHTING AND PROJECTIONS DESIGNER

Faith Chhoyang is an emerging arts management professional, currently in her final year pursuing a bachelor of arts, majoring in arts management with a double minor in theatre and psychology at the University of Toronto. Passionate about storytelling through light, movement, and projection, Faith's work bridges the artistic and technical sides of production.

She previously worked as an assistant stage manager for *She Kills Monsters* by Qui Nguyen at the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre, where she coordinated props, costumes, and backstage transitions to support six sold-out performances. She was also the sound operator for *Cornelia Sheik* at Drama Fest with the UTSC Drama Society, operating at both Leigha Lee Browne Theatre and Hart House Theatre. Dedicated to cohesive storytelling across the production, Faith will be the producer for upcoming play, *Lady in the Red Dress* by David Yee, at the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre in spring 2026.

Beyond the stage, Faith is the founder and president of the Catalyss Fashion Society (CFS). She produced two professional-level fashion shows since it was founded in 2023, alongside fundraising events, and community engagement initiatives. The shows combine performance, fashion, and community engagement to support local causes. With the next show in spring 2026, CFS will continue to unite students from diverse disciplines and industry professionals in a celebration of artistry and social impact.

TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN AND LET ME LISTEN CREATIVE TEAM



HERO DELA CRUZ
SOUND DESIGNER

I am very grateful for the opportunity to be working on this year's Directors' Showcase! Born and raised in the Philippines, I moved to Toronto five years ago with little to no knowledge about theatre, but since then, my experiences have led me to discover the liveliness of the communal and artistic workspace involving productions — which keeps me bound to the passion I uncovered. I am currently in my third year of study, double majoring in drama and cell & molecular biology, and most of my experiences in theatre involve being a production crew member (i.e., stage manager, lighting and sound designer). Just last semester, I also had the chance to work as a lighting and sound operator for the CDTPS Mainstage Show. Some of my other interests lie in physicality on stage, stemming from choreography, spoken word, and abstract movements/vocals. I feel a profound emotional tie between my personal life and the shows I'm working on for the showcase, therefore, I am indebted to have the theatre as a space to share my sentiments through art. As a drama student, I look forward to gaining more experience and furthering my involvement and contributions to the department.

TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN AND LET ME LISTEN CAST



CASS IACOVELLI WOMAN

Cass Iacovelli is a writer, designer, producer, and performer based in Toronto. She has worked on shows on every scale, from one-woman professional productions to 30-person student musicals. Cass' playwriting has won awards at the U of T Drama Coalition Awards, the Hart House Drama Festival, and her work *Desert Lily* was shortlisted for the 2023 Robert Beardsley. At the University of Toronto, Cass has produced over 20 productions, Best Producer at the 2022 U of T Drama Coalition Awards. She has won awards for lighting and sound design, such as IATSE Local 58 Award for Technical Achievement at the 2023 Hart House U of T Drama Festival and Best Lighting Design at the 2023 & 2024 U of T Drama Coalition Awards. As an actor, Cass has won Best Performance in a Lead Role as Juror #3 (*Twelve Angry Men*, 2023) and Best Performance in a Supporting Role as Paulette (*Legally Blonde*, 2024) and as Fräulein Schneider (*Cabaret*, 2023). Cass is graduating from the University of Toronto with an honours BA in bioethics and theatre.

Outside of theatre, Cass works in community care and advocacy, particularly in harm reduction spaces with at-risk queer youth. Cass' work in theatre-creation often focuses on the impacts of trauma and the human desire for giving & receiving care.

DEATH AND THE FOOL

CREATIVE TEAM:

PLAYWRIGHT: DARIO FO & FRANCA RAME

DIRECTOR: NATHAN R. BELYEA

LIGHTING DESIGNER: VAL VERGARA

SOUND DESIGNER: VAL VERGARA

HAIR & MAKE-UP DESIGNER: MILA FRUMOVITZ

STAGE MANAGER: GOLSHAN ALAEI

CAST:

DEATH: ANNEKE RORDEN

FOOL: ERIKA DOWD



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Death and the Fool is a single piece from the larger work *Mistero Buffo* by Dario Fo and Franca Rame. The latter is a collection of medieval Italian comic-mystery and passion plays that have been reimagined, adapted, and organized into a series of vignettes united by a loose narrative. Inspired by the play's historical roots, I intended for the direction to combine select elements of medieval and commedia dell'arte theatre. However, while traces of this ambition remain in the performance, it is neither commedia nor medieval. Even so, the show certainly possesses a unique character that is sure to be interesting.

Stepping into the director's role for the first time, I thought it a good idea to start small. I knew I must choose a play that concerns something fundamental to the human experience. And what is so fundamental an experience as love? Love is such an essential thing, and the cause for some of the best and worst feelings in one's life. Finding, receiving, and maintaining it completes a person. Therefore, nothing is so warming and cathartic as watching it blossom well. Seeing it happen, it is difficult not to become endeared to the Fool and Death, who are in so many ways the same as they are different. In fact, it is these differences between them that create the excitement, tension, charm, and, if I may say so, the allure that will hopefully draw you in as it did me.

If we imagine the Fool and Death as only the caricatures from the tarot cards representing them, their romance seems an impossibility. For Death, this is plainly understood: who could love the reaper? As for the Fool, while he certainly enjoys entertaining others, his relationship with these spectators is extractive. They take what joy he creates for themselves, regardless of him. Love exists on a basic axis: the giving and the receiving. While each feels the absence of both parts, the Fool has no one to love, and Death has no one to love her. So human is this shared vulnerability that it became the core of our attempts to discover the sensitive beings beneath their respective masks. In our minds, it followed that both Death and the Fool would have long assumed love was simply not for them. What is so wonderful about this play is that it proves them wrong.

I cannot thank enough Anneke Rorden, Erika Dowd, Golshan Alaei, Mila Frumovitz, Val Vergara, and the CDTPS faculty for their steadfast commitment, contributions, patience and generosity with their time throughout this project. It has been a particular privilege to work with such a talented team of artists who took a risk on an untested director.

DEATH AND THE FOOL

CREATIVE TEAM



NATHAN R. BELYEA
ROLE: DIRECTOR

Nathan is a fourth-year student at the University of Toronto, completing a bachelor of arts in history and drama. Nathan enrolled in the drama program with practically no drama experience, having developed an interest in theatre during 2020-21. Since then, he has worked hard to develop his skills through participation in the CDTPS program. His interests in drama are quite eclectic, though primarily centred on directing, dramaturgy, and playwriting. And while history remains his primary focus, he appreciates drama and storytelling more broadly, as the pathetic tool mankind uses to explore and understand itself. As this is Nathan's first time directing, he is honoured to have his work performed alongside this year's many talented directors. Directing *Death and the Fool* was an intensely gratifying experience, and it has been a pleasure to work alongside such a wonderful cast and crew.



GOLSHAN ALAEI
STAGE MANAGER

Golshan is thrilled to be stage managing *Death and the Fool*. This is only her second time stage managing a proper live theatrical production, so she'd like to thank Nathan for trusting her with that responsibility. You might have seen Golshan around in campus theatre as the stage manager/sound designer for *Universes*, set designer for *Little Women*, the narrator in *Every Brilliant Thing*, a cast member in The Bob Sketch Comedy Revue, or Ophelia in *To The Promised Land*.

DEATH AND THE FOOL

CREATIVE TEAM



MILA FRUMOVITZ
HAIR AND MAKEUP DESIGNER

Mila (she/her) is a Toronto-based theatre director, dramaturg, performer, and designer completing her final year of her honours BA in English and drama at the University of Toronto. She is passionate about centering women in theatrical narratives and engaging with feminist, care-forward theatre practices. Her recent directing work includes *Anyone Can Whistle* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the Trinity College Dramatic Society (also co-choreographer of the former), and *Miss Julie* for the Victoria College Dramatic Society. You can catch Mila's next theatrical endeavours with Shifting Ground Collective and Claw Marks Theatre.



VAL VERGARA
LIGHTING AND SOUND DESIGNER

Val Vergara (they/them) is a queer Peruvian drama student at the University of Toronto. They focus on costume design and creation and some of their most notable work is *Grease* (TCDS) and *Otîhêw* (Crossroads Theatre), where they worked as lead costume designer and assistant designer correspondingly. Future shows that they will be working on include *Footloose* and *Rent* at Hart House. They are very excited to be working alongside their friends on this production and they hope you enjoy the show!

DEATH AND THE FOOL CAST



ANNEKE RORDEN
DEATH

Anneke is a fifth-year undergrad at U of T, studying theatre performance and sociology. Anneke has not been involved in any large productions at U of T, but she was involved in two of the UC Follies' Dramafest shows: *To the Promised Land* (2025) and *Rage Laughter* (2023). You can also see her perform in the upcoming show *Tickless Time*, which is happening next weekend at the Cat's Eye. While Anneke's main focus is Sociology, her rehearsals and performance courses are always the highlight of her day. Working on *Death and the Fool* has been an overwhelmingly positive experience, and she has loved spending time with the wonderful cast and crew. In honour of her role, she has a joke for you: What did the murderous frog say to their victim? "Croak!"



ERIKA DOWD
FOOL

Erika Dowd (she/they) is a third-year student studying drama, history, and English. You may have seen her last in the 2024 Directors' Showcase, where she played the titular role in *The Worker* — and you would not have seen her in SMCT's *In Pieces* last year, since she was the stage manager. As a self-described history nerd, Erika is over the moon to be bringing *Death and the Fool's* influences in commedia and medieval drama to life. Special thanks to Anneke, Nathan, Golshan, Val, and the rest of CDTPS for their endless support!

STOP KISS

CREATIVE TEAM:

PLAYWRIGHT: DIANA SON

DIRECTOR: KIT DIXON

LIGHT DESIGNER: YIFEI FAN

PROJECTION DESIGNER: YIFEI FAN

SOUND DESIGNER: YIFEI FAN

INTIMACY COORDINATOR: MATTEA KENNEDY

CAST:

CALLIE: MOLLIE GUEST

SARA: MIA DOWNING

GEORGE: JUAN PARRA



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I made it my mission this year to direct queer theatre. After some research, I discovered *Stop Kiss*. It called to me as a story about a beautiful lesbian relationship, but also a means to inform audiences of the hate that exists in the world to this day. Diana Son's playwrighting is so beautiful, natural and conversational, which brings the writing itself to life. When abridging the full-length piece, I decided to focus on these tender, human moments. With an amazing cast, I am so excited for audiences to fall in love with these characters, and to walk away remembering that, despite the ever presence of closed-minded hateful people, love is stronger than hate.

STOP KISS CREATIVE TEAM



KIT DIXON
DIRECTOR

Kit Dixon is a fourth-year student, enrolled as a drama specialist and environmental studies minor. They began their directing journey in high school, and made their staged directorial debut last year, directing *Murder on the Orient Express* at Hart House Theatre. They are so excited to have had the opportunity to bring Diana Son's beautiful story to the stage for the Directors' Showcase. You can catch Kit's next project, *Rent*, at Hart House Theatre in February! Enjoy Stop Kiss!



YIFEI FAN
LIGHTING, SOUND AND PROJECTIONS DESIGNER

Yifei Fan (Fei) is currently a third-year student at the University of Toronto, double majoring in cinema studies and drama. Outside of her studies, she has been a dancer since elementary school, focusing on choreography, hip-hop, and jazz funk. Along with her dance training, Fei brings technical experience from operating tech for her high school theatre program, *Mainstage 2025*, and most recently for *Camp XULF*. She is thrilled to join the production team of the Directors' Showcase and hopes you enjoy the shows!

STOP KISS CAST



MOLLIE GUEST
CALLIE

Mollie Guest is so excited to be part of *Stop Kiss*! Most of Mollie's experience is in film, but she's had so much fun doing her third play at U of T. Other productions Mollie has acted in at UofT include: TCDS' *Murder on the Orient Express* and TCDS' *The Crucible*. She's incredibly grateful to Kit and everyone involved for making this production such a joy.



MIA DOWNING
SARAH

Mia Downing is a third-year U of T student studying drama and psychology and is ecstatic to be performing in this year's Directors' Showcase! Select credits include Jenny in *Company* (VCDS), Beth in *Little Women* (SMC), and Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Outside of acting, she is the competition director of U of T's a cappella group, Surround Sound, as well as working as the assistant vocal director on SMC's *Footloose*. She is so grateful to have been able to work with this incredible team of creatives that brought this wonderful and important show together and hopes you all enjoy *Stop Kiss*!



JUAN PARRA
GEORGE

Juan is a third-year drama and cinema studies student at the University of Toronto. He loves acting in both theatre and film. His previous credits include Monsieur Bouc in *Murder On The Orient Express* (TCDS, 2024), for which he received Best Supporting Actor at both the Dougie and Iggy Awards. Juan is excited to take on the role of George in *Stop Kiss*, exploring the difficulties of these three characters. Enjoy the show!