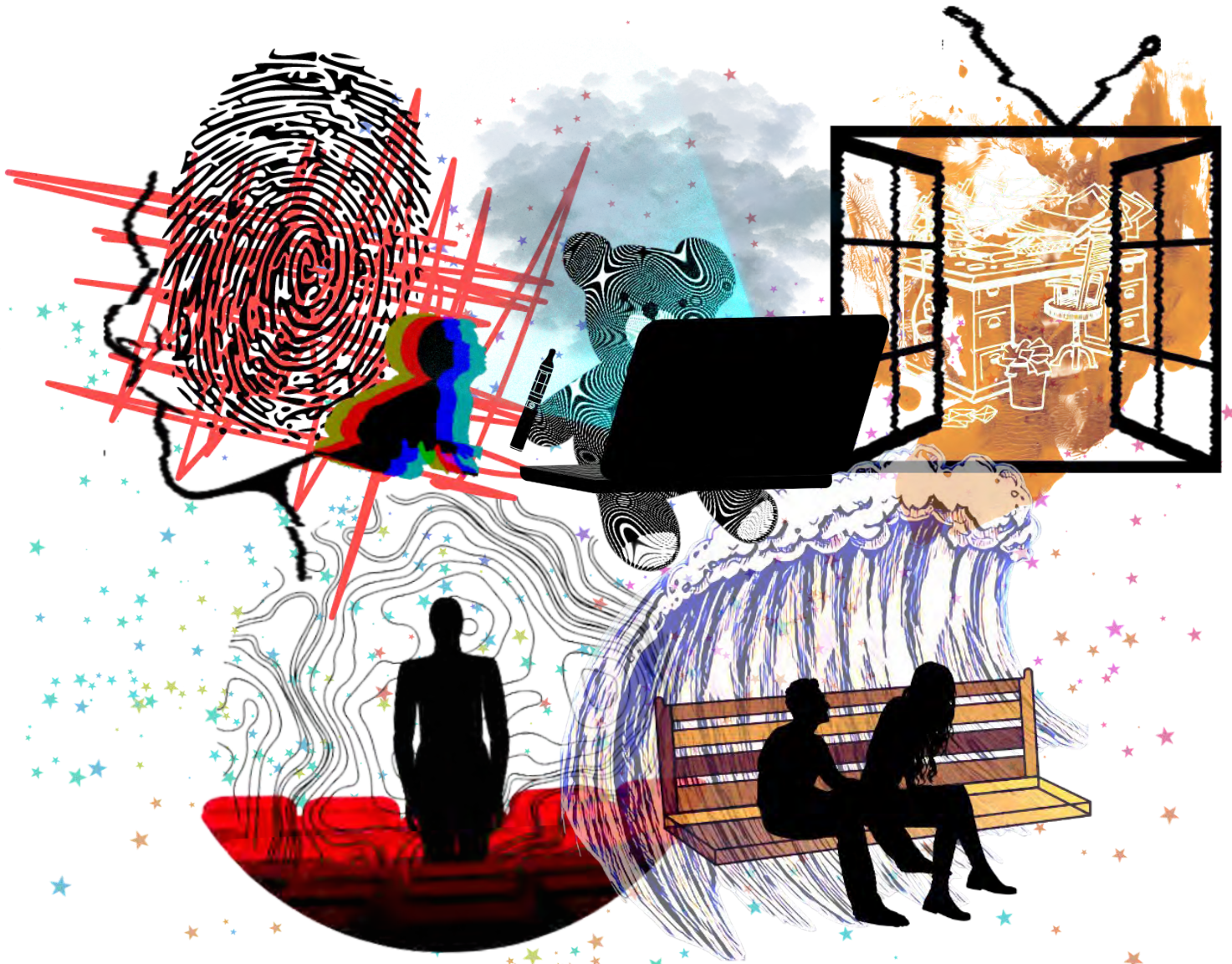




Centre for Drama, Theatre & Performance Studies  
**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**



# DIRECTORS' SHOWCASE



## **BAŅUTA RUBESS, COURSE INSTRUCTOR**

Dr. Baņuta Rubess pioneered feminist theatre, and contemporary opera to national renown in Canada and Latvia. She has lived in four countries and writes in two languages. In Canada, she created groundbreaking works for Nightwood Theatre, Theatre Direct, and Tapestry New Opera Works. As Associate Artist at Theatre Passe Muraille, she threw open the doors to a new generation of theatre creators. In 1998, she moved with her family to Riga, Latvia. She created productions across the

country, ranging from an immersive version of *La Ronde* to an adaptation of *The Trojan Women* performed on a beach. For many years she was a regular columnist in the national newspaper. Baņuta returned to Toronto in 2012. A Rhodes Scholar with a doctorate in history from the University of Oxford, she recently acquired an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph. She has been nominated for many awards and has won a few, including Best Play, Best Director, Best Short Story. She teaches theatre at the University of Toronto where she is lucky to mentor an amazing new wave of theatre makers.

## **SNEZANA PESIC, SET DESIGNER**

Snezana is a performance designer and educator. She has collaborated with companies such as the Canadian Opera Company, Canadian Stage, Confederation Centre of the Arts, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Banff Centre, Theatre New Brunswick, *Against the Grain*, *Ghost River*, *Obsidian*, *Odyssey Theatre* and *Native Earth*, among others. Snezana's work has been presented in numerous international exhibitions, including *World Stage Design* in (2009, Seoul; 2013, Cardiff) and the *Prague Quadrennial* (2007, 2015). In 2019, she designed and curated the Canadian National Exhibition at the *Prague Quadrennial*, where designer Michael Levine received Canada's first-ever PQ Award for Excellence in Performance Design. Snezana won the Betty Mitchell Award for outstanding lighting design and production, was nominated for a Prix Rideau Award, and was shortlisted for the Pauline McGibbon Award.





# A NUMBER

WRITTEN BY CARYL CHURCHILL



DIRECTED BY  
**VALERIA VENTURO ESAINE**

**DEC 3RD**  
**7:30 PM**

**DEC 4TH**  
**2:00 PM**

# Director's Note

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*A Number* was written shortly after the cloning of Dolly the sheep when the world faced the possibility of a future where human cloning could exist. It directly questions themes of identity in the face of cloning and delves into what it could mean for parent-child relationships. It is the reason I love science fiction theatre, and perfectly captures the genre's ability to present the audience with the unlikely but possible in an accessible and interesting format.

This play, in particular, takes into consideration the more personal or holistic variables that pure scientific research doesn't always have the scope for. So, it's not a play about cloning: Churchill *uses* human cloning to make us question the meaning of human identity. At the same time, she shows us the power it could have to create a crisis of identity in the first place.

The idea of identity being tied to genetic material is mentioned by the characters many times within the play and quickly dismissed as something inconsequential. But I think the author cunningly created an intellectual trap with this dismissal. It might seem like the biological dimension is meaningless, but Salter's actions show that his newborn baby represented a unique potential, something irreplaceable. When that potential is wasted, he longs to return to this "perfect" blank slate.

In cloning this child, he proved that he is wanted because of his genetic composition and implied he wouldn't be wanted without it. This goes against the unconditional love that parenting should stand for because there is an element of design and control of the child instead of gratitude and acceptance of their open-ended future. Salter's love is a microcosmos of this concept because his love isn't unconditional. The tragic consequences deliver the message of how dehumanizing parenthood can be when the idea of your child matters more than the reality of them.

I'll let the actors' performances speak for themselves, but I will say: with limited time and resources, while juggling other responsibilities, they embody these complex characters beautifully and master what is (for real) one of the harder scripts I have ever worked with. I am thankful for their work and their commitment to figuring this out with me, to uncover the answers that the text purposefully leaves open-ended and building this awesome dynamic that made it all come alive.

As for me: I'm always thankful for the opportunity to direct, and I have been challenged like I never have before, but I have been so lucky to be able to rely on the incredible talent of my crew and the wise advice of my mentors. I am eternally thankful to the people I love, who remind me to not let my perfectionism drown me, but to look underneath it for the love I have for my art and let that guide me forward.

And now, this show that I have learnt so much from, is more yours than mine, person-reading-the-program. You're what it's all about. So, please: enjoy!



# Cast Biographies



## **AIDAN BENNETT, "SALTER"**

Aidan Bennett is a third-year student majoring in drama and literature and critical theory. He's participated in numerous shows both on and off campus, including the audio drama *When All of This Is Over*, the play *Bag Babies* (winner of that year's Dougie Award for best play), and a staged reading of the play *A Line of Dust* at the Heliconian Club. He has always had a passion for acting and is excited to perform in this year's Directors' Showcase.

## **VALERIO GREGANTI, "B1 / B2 / MICHAEL BLACK"**

Valerio Greganti is an Italian national and a U of T graduate in drama and international relations. He has performed in multiple productions in Europe, the US, and Canada. He is fluent in Italian, English, and French and he hopes that his outlook on the world will enrich the audience's experience with the play. He has performed in *Radium Girls*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Moby Dick*, and musicals like *Oklahoma*, *Damn Yankees*, and *18 Palace Rd: The Musical*. He wishes you a fantastic evening and thanks you for your support.



# Creative Team Biographies

## **VALERIA VENTURO ESAINE, DIRECTOR**

Valeria is a Peruvian theatre artist with a multidisciplinary background in acting, writing directing, production and design – aka an aspiring Jill of All Trades, Master of Most. She is in her final year of the Drama Specialist Program at the University of Toronto and has been an executive member of UTSC's Drama Society and the Drama Coalition. She directed *Cagebirds* by David Campton in 2019, winning the Best Director Baby Oscar Award. Most recently, she directed *A Terrible Beauty is Born*

by Thérèse Naccarato, which won multiple Drama Festival Awards, including the Robert Gill Award for Best Direction. Valeria hopes to dedicate her career to building platforms that uplift artists and create meaningful, accessible, and inspiring work. She is incredibly thankful for the opportunity and humbled to be a part of this showcase!



## **GABE WOO, COSTUME DESIGNER**

Gabe is very grateful for the opportunity to work on this show as they slowly complete their goal of having a costume monopoly on every show at U of T this year. As a shopaholic, naturally costume designing has been their calling, and since their second year of university, they have worked on shows such as *Mythic Women* (UTM EDSS), *High School Musical 2* (VCDS) and *Into the Woods* (SMCT).

## **AVI KLEINMAN, SOUND DESIGNER**

Avi Kleinman is a second-year student with an interest in sound design and music mixing.



## ABBEY KOWALSKI, LIGHTING DESIGNER

Abbey is so grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the lighting design in her first production at U of T: *A Number*. She is a first-year student studying theatre and biology. She has previously worked in sound, lighting, costumes, building, and stage management in productions such as *Macbeth*, *The Addams Family*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. She is excited to continue to be a part of the theatre community at U of T in the future.



## CAITLYN GRANT, STAGE MANAGER

Caitlyn is excited to be a part of *A Number* for the Directors' Showcase! They have had an amazing time working with an incredible team on this play. Caitlyn has just recently transitioned from performing to working backstage. This is the first play they've stage managed, but some of their previous ASM credits include VCDS's *Bag Babies*, directed by Liam Donovan, and Thaumatrope Theatre's *Miss You Till Tomorrow*, directed by Isabella Cesari. They also have just finished directing TCDS's *Carrie: The Musical*, along with Isabella Cesari, and are looking forward to stage managing SMCT's production of *Cabaret* in March!



## Special Thanks

To Melody Irish for being my ray of sunshine.  
To Alexandra Romanescu for keeping me sane.  
To Gabe Woo for keeping me humble.  
To Matt Richard for making me laugh.  
To Madison Zinger for giving me something to aspire to.  
To Richi Farfan porque estamos en el up.  
To Daniela Venturo porque si.  
To Rickito Venturo porque lo extraño.  
To Bañuta Rubess for all the wise and lifesaving advice.  
To my dad for my strange gene mix of sleepiness and ambition.  
And to my mom for being the ultimate and original girlboss.