



# The Young-Howze Theater Journal

One Dana, One Dork, Two Iphones. Look Out Theatre World!

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## Sentimentally Yours: Know Theatre Warms Our Hearts With Theatre: A Love Story

Dana came for Baby J the goat but stayed for Caridad Svich's powerful writing. @knowtheatre @csvich

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

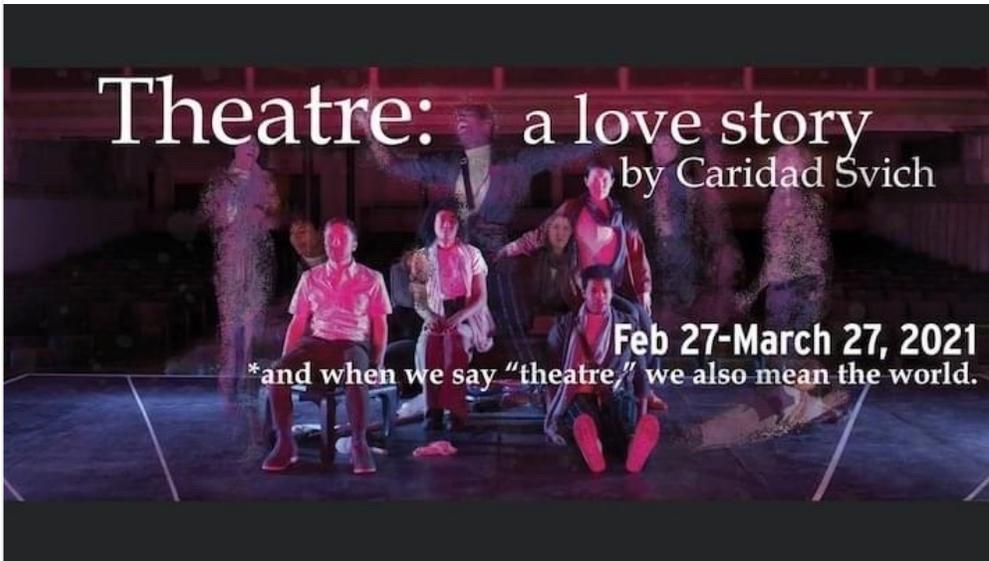
Cincinnati, Ohio

Venmo: @rndyounghowze

Review 207

I've been holding this concept very close to the vest waiting to unveil it in our upcoming book (no I'm not trying to do a shameless plug). Theatre isn't a building or art at all but a consecration. It's an act of consecration performed by the theatre artists creating this work for you. The physical performing space isn't a theater yet until there are theatre artists there to set it apart and make it holy for the audience. That means that any place: our homes, the streets, our schools, and our auditoriums can all be Theatre when the theatre artists show up to create a work of love for the audience. Why am I being a sentimental sap now? On Sunday "Theatre: A Love Story" by Caridad Svich and directed by Daryl Harris, Brant Russell and

Tamara Winters occupied the old space, dissected it, and built it back brick by brick to make it holy again. I can't even begin to tell you how needed this play was for me right now.



I can easily see why this play kept the Know Theatre up all times of night trying to get this production in on time. Know Theatre has been known for these very ambitious works that are breaking the boundaries of the digital theatre form and this time I do believe that they are on the right track. This was one of the few times that a digital theatre production has had heavy digital effects and still maintained that Fifth Wall Breaking spirit of great digital theatre without diving into an over-ambitious film shoot. The key? Dana and I have noticed that in digital theatre that the camera is either the surrogate for the audience or a physical prop held by the performers. This production had both. The Know puts the camera far back and lets the performers move about the space freely still allowing for the stage pictures and dynamics of a stage show.

I cannot believe that this was an actual Livestream. If you told me that this was a hundred percent filmed beforehand and I would believe you. I have to shout out to the wonderful cast. This amazing group kept us enthralled the entire time. I can imagine that this text would be a difficult mountain to climb and they embodied it perfectly. Of course, I love to see the great choreography of Pones. Pones is a Cincinnati staple and it's an amazing treat every time I get to see them. Great job all around!



My weirdest takeaway was the tape on the ground. I know that it was put there as a practical element so that they could change settings while keeping everything uniform but it grounded me. It reminded me that the theatre was everywhere. And by theatre, I mean the world! If they did mean to have visible familiar spike marks and I got the meta-message then that's great. If they didn't intend that then they need to take that secret to their grave.

I don't know how to even begin talking about this script! I've had a couple of days to think about it and I'm still unpacking layers and layers of it all. That's why I love expressionism. People may say that the dialogue made no sense but the playwright isn't aiming for the pattern recognition storytelling part of your brain. Let the episodic stories and the presentational dialogue wash over you and hit the back part of your brain. Have you ever had a great massage and it felt a little painful and intense at the moment but then you wake up the next day and your muscles feel better and your joints are less stiff? That is what this play did for me: I appreciated the style and the imagery at the moment however the beautiful language, music, and dance is what I keep thinking about in the days after. When you're watching a good piece of expressionism this is what's supposed to happen.

You should see this act of consecration for yourself. A great collaboration between dance, drama, and camera Theatre: A Love Story will challenge what you believe. The master craftspeople at the Know have pulled out all of the stops to lovingly create this work for

you. The text has been wonderfully crafted for you and the space has been lovingly prepared. Now is the time for you to take part in their work before it's too late.

Check the Show Out For Yourself [Here](#)

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Mar 3rd, 2021

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### MORE YOU MIGHT LIKE

## Zack by Christian St. Croix Is What We've Been Wanting To Say Since The Nineties

Time Out! Did Know Theatre just bring Toxic Whiteness to a screeching halt? @saintscrossing

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

@knowtheatre of Cincinnati

Review 153

Do you remember the good old TV shows from the nineties where the plots centered around groups of random teens? Remember when all of the fashion looked like a Lisa Frank coloring book? Remember

all of the fashion looked like a Lisa Frank coloring book? Remember when music played on a Keytar was both popular AND good? Remember when blonde white teen males were the heroes and always won the day? Well if you have a vivid sense memory of exactly the show I'm talking about then you just have to see Zack by Christian St. Croix and presented by the Know Theatre of Cincinnati. This story following a similar group of unlikely teenage friends paints the titular blonde hero in a very different way.



I have to say that I really love Know Theatre's stage. It's just an empty space that you can fill with light, movement, and energy. I found the use of the graphics really effective for scene changes. I'm glad that they're using all of the tools in their toolkit as a theatre space and not just film effects to become a "multimedia extravaganza".



St. Croix's writing made Zack into a creature from a haunted house. A mischievous prankster demon. I know this because even though

he's not in a scene his presence fills every bit of the stage. What helps is that Zack is as invisible as Harvey the rabbit but breathed into life by the words and actions of the characters. Everything these two do is to please him or defy him. St. Croix took a blonde teen hunk from my childhood and turned him into the malevolent junior god of toxic whiteness. I'd say this ruined my childhood but I graduated from college in the 2008 recession. That horse is way too dead to beat.



I could write a whole week of reviews about AJ Baldwin and David Armando and their brilliance making both Gina and PJ distinct and breathing characters. However I want to devote the rest of my praise about how they both took a pair of sunglasses and made one character that is so specific and so real that I can smell the hair gel and the Teen Spirit cologne on him. Like I know that there isn't a corporeal form of Zack onstage but because of Baldwin and Armando's talent he is as very real as his toxic masculinity.



If you lived anywhere near a TV as a kid in the nineties you knew everything about Zack (the show) before you even turned your computer on. If you grew up Black in the nineties you've heard "you're the whitest Black person I know". It was weird watching Dana watch this show. They were sampling Zack's racism like an old wine. They knew this vintage well. This play is saying everything we elder millennials have known about the world forever; it's not a sitcom. It's

real, hurtful, and those kids would not be friends. Zack is a healing balm to those old hurts making us realize why we didn't see ourselves in the characters of our youth. It unapologetically says you are too unique for a theme song to make everything better. Thank you.



Welcome to this Live Stream performance of

*Zack* by Christian St. Croix.

The show's run time is 75 minutes with no intermission.



David C. Herriman



A couple things that you need to know so that you can better appreciate the crazy. Andrew Hungerford directed and designed the lights remotely through some technology that I've heard him explain in an interview but still sounds like voodoo witchcraft to me. The actors are acting to a three camera setup on the upper main stage and all of the crew is running this from a control room on a different floor. The running crew and the actors never occupy the same space or breathe the same air. Hungerford has not seen the stage or even the Cincinnati Skyline for a long while now and did this all remotely in LA. This is what it's like to do a run of a show during the pandemic. This is all of the work that goes into making even a two hander work safely. This is the reason why theatre has not been killed by the apocalypse but also why you need to donate to the arts more than ever. Know Theatre worked very hard so that you could stay home safe and watch it.

You have a limited amount of time to see the Livestream of this show. Get your tickets **now**. After that Know Theatre will be streaming a recording.

UI

We have a YouTube Channel. Recently we sat down with three members of the Know Theatre staff for an interview. You can see that here.

<https://youtu.be/yVXVS1TLpt4>

## Know Theatre of Cincinnati Take 5



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**2 notes**

## A Light At The End of A World Is Changing A Game I Thought Was Already Called

Sometimes the critic isn't always right. (Shocker huh?)

@knowtheatre

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Know Theatre Of Cincinnati

Venmo: @rndyounghowze

Review 190

I tried to write the review for this show three times. Every time I thought that I had figured it out and knew what to say I hit a wall. I had come into 2021 with this idea that theatre needed to shy away from going bigger and focus on getting a strong foundation for building longevity. However there is still something radical, experimental, and mind blowing about digital theatre just by existing. That's why "A Light At The End Of A World" by Know Theatre of Cincinnati promptly told me to sit down, shut up, and enjoy the show.



Before we saw the show we were telling everyone how excited we were to see this "choose your own adventure" story. We owe Know Theatre an apology. They are actually doing something akin to a format I love, "human library" or "menu theatre" as it is called when done in-person. Three production teams came together to create their own vignettes that can be chosen as a book on the shelf (so in essence DVD menu style theatre). We saw all of them but you'll get to choose one from each of the three sections.





Each track has been beautifully produced and uses the talents of the creators in a cool and interesting way. We usually don't give summaries but here is a short run down of what you can expect: A man in his attic regaling us with the surprisingly rich history of lighthouses, spectacular puppet performances of old sea tales, and vibrant video art pieces set to creative soundscapes. None of these sound alike, right? That's the point. It's now up to you to decide what mix of these great pieces you want to see.



The overarching theme of this whole experiment is using digital theatre to create a one of a kind experience that is unique to each viewer. This is proving critics who say pre recorded performances aren't theatre because the shows aren't ephemeral like in-person performance dead wrong. Not only is it never the same way twice, The Light at the End of the World is hardly the same way for two separate audience members. Two friends could be watching this show from their respective houses and still not be talking about the same play the next morning. Wake up everyone, the future of digital theatre has arrived!



I usually say this about once a month but this was absolutely the hardest review I've ever written. I was prepared to be so critical talking about the ambitious format and the over reliance on tech to make this work properly. I was so frustrated by the technological difficulties we were having I forgot to look at the wonder. We learned the vital role critics play as beta testers in digital theatre while messaging with the amazing Henry Bateman just about every time we hit a snag as he updated what we were seeing in real-time. I was prepared to fill this review with visceral rants against the technology and how much simpler I thought it could be. However at the end of the day who cares what I think. I found myself crying because of the beauty of this piece and that right there is why it should be defended to the death. Know Theatre is laying on the barbed wire so that future productions can be beautiful too. Let me get off my high horse so there won't be any hoof prints on their back.

[...wtheatre.com](https://www.wtheatre.com)

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**LIGHTHOUSES & LIGHTSHIPS**

ADAPTED & PERFORMED BY ANDREW HUNGERFORD  
ADDITIONAL DRAMATURGY BY LIZ CARMAN

**STORIES OF THE SEA**

WRITTEN & PERFORMED BY  
ZACH ROBINSON & ALEXX ROUSE  
EDITED BY ZACH ROBINSON  
LIGHTING DESIGN BY HENRY BATEMAN

**A STUDY IN LIGHT**

BUILT & PERFORMED BY KAYLA WILLIAMS  
SOUNDSCAPE TEXT BY LIZ CARMAN  
TEXT PERFORMED BY JAMES ALLEN, DOUGLAS BORNTRAGER,  
LIZ CARMAN, ROBERT MACKE, KAYLA WILLIAMS,  
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## A Light Touch by Mind of A Snail Deserves A Second (and Third) Look

I didn't know what to do with this company at first or even the second time. But then I discovered something brilliant thanks to #fringelivestream

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

FringeLiveStream

Review 101

Let me bring you behind the curtain for a bit and tell you what goes on in a theatre reviewer's brain. Sometimes we get distracted and we can't connect to a show. When we first tried to watch A Light Touch performed by Chloé Ziner and Jessica Gabriel as part of the Evolvr Festival our cat had bladder stones and we were about to take him to the emergency vet and we got thirty minutes in and we just realized that this wasn't going to happen. It wasn't going to be fair to them that we gave them a bad review because our minds were elsewhere.



Time passed and our cat got better and we moved on to other shows and other reviews. Then during an interview someone stopped everything to rave on and on about Mind Of A Snail and the great work they do. So when we realized that they were streaming their

show as part of Fringe Livestream we knew we had to give this a do over.



So again we came into their house and started watching as they turned this projector on and had music and lights and projected people onto a screen to turn them into trees or skunks or what have you. I was way more connected than I was the last time but I found myself going, “what even is this show”? “What am I supposed to be watching?” I couldn’t even understand what it was I was supposed to walk away with after the show. Here’s another backstage secret of theatre reviewers: we still often get it wrong.



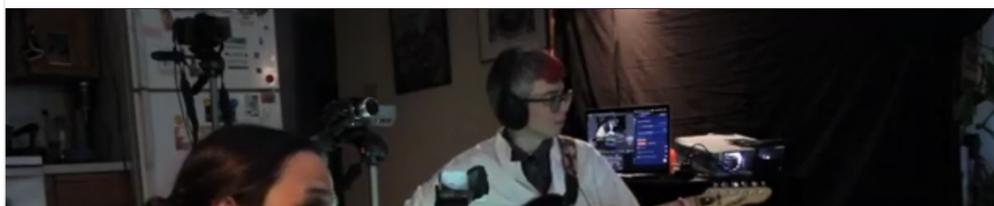
So I decided to just relax my eyes and stop “watching” but just let it

So I decided to just relax my eyes and stop watching but just let it wash over me. I stopped focusing on the screen and I stopped focusing on even Ziner and Gabriel. Then it finally dawned on me... wait are they doing all of this with a gosh darn overhead projector?!?

Turns out when you go on their website they explicitly state that they use an overhead projector as their only light source and they have several photos of them during shows using shadows and puppetry and projections to make wonderful theatre. Let me tell you that the visuals are amazing! When I stopped looking at what was “happening” and looked at what they were doing to achieve it I was so floored!



This is the most undersold premise in the history of showbiz. Using household items and movement, shadows, and colored light they turn this space into a holodeck! They use cloth and drawings and shapes and their own hands to create these stories and then they bring in the Zoom audience as part of the fun. This is a level of puppet mastery and improv performance that they do almost too well. In the days of Zoom backgrounds and computer backgrounds whenever you see magic on screen it's easy to dismiss it. Things projected on screens are just tech and nothing more. Something in my brain just dismissed it as “Tech wizardry, okay let's move on” It kept looking for the show and the theme. When I focused on the magic happening in the foreground, however, that's when the real show began.





I'm really sorry to Ziner and Gabriel for messing up. You have to see the magic that they create in such a humble and generous way for yourself. I can imagine this being done by another performance group and them stopping after every illusion for applause. Not here. Ziner and Gabriel simply just move on to the next person and create even more magic for them.



I also can't help but think that this is one time that digital theatre has failed us. With five camera angles and all of this tech it's really easy for the simplistic beauty of this piece to be lost. I really long to see these shows in-person, wanting to see it all just from my point of view. Just looking at a projector on the floor and a screen on the wall and magic in between. Maybe someday I'll get my chance.





As of right now you're speaking to the converted even though it took me a few months and two tries to get there. I love shows that take something I think I know and then distort it for me. Not many shows

these days make me question reality as much as this duo did. That's what makes this a must watch.

Please go to Mind of a Snail's Facebook [page](#) and watch their past performances on video and get updates about when they'll perform again. Also please support Fringe LiveStream on their Facebook page [here](#). Please tell us what you thought about it on our social media.

Now's the time we remind you that if you want to support our work as bloggers and help keep the lights running to go to our Venmo @rndyounghowze. We graciously accept all gifts!

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#Mind of A Snail #A Light Touch

## **Screw the Dice with She Kills Monsters by Qui Nguyen**

If #D&D was as interesting as this play makes it seem I would have never stopped playing.

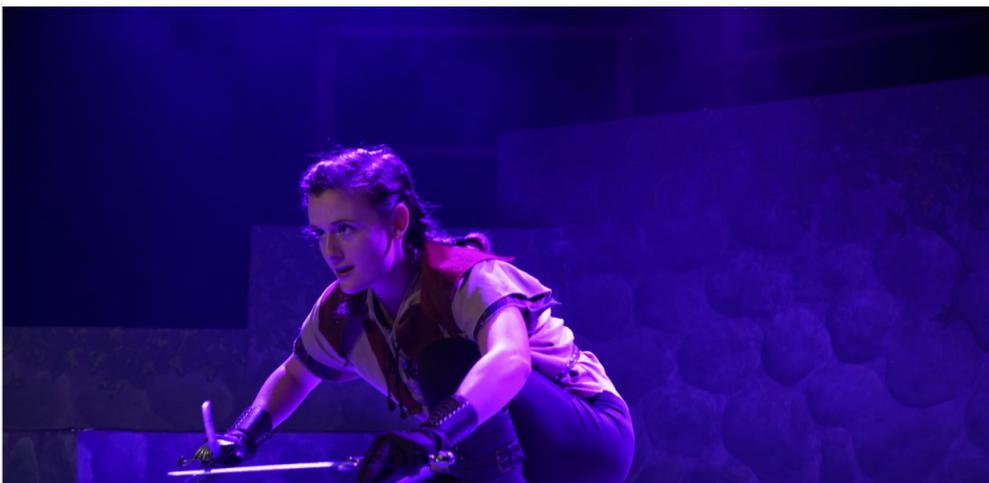
By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Elm Street Cultural Arts Village Woodstock, GA

This show is literally going up everywhere since playwright Qui Nguyen revamped it for the digital stage. In a world where a lot of theatre companies aren't even opting to pursue livestream theatre Elm Street Cultural Arts Village is bringing a show that looked a hundred percent fun for the audience and performers alike. This production, under the direction of Zachary Stolz, will be livestreamed until August 23rd.



Agnes (played by Libby Williams) has found something precious belonging to her dead sister, Tilly: A D&D campaign she was working on before her death. With the help of Chuck (played by Laborn Brown) as Dungeon Master she chooses to play her last campaign as a strange path to learn more about Tilly (played by Emily Haynes). However what she finds in Tilly's creation might not be all she was looking for and more than she bargained for.





Zachary Stolz was not only the director for this show but the fight director as well. I can only imagine how crazy it must have been doing an impromptu fight camp while also trying to be socially distanced. By far it was the best blade work that this stage combat geek reviewer has seen so far even if it still left me wanting more. Choreography seemed either too fast or too slow and I could just tell that Stolz could have wished for another week of rehearsal to fine tune it. That aside here's the praise! It didn't look like hokey "Peter Pan and Hook" swashbuckling and I could tell you definitely took your actors' strengths into account. I mean you made actresses Emily Haynes and Ashley Huber shine! I really want to see what you do with the world laid at your feet.

All of our actors seemed to be having fun and fully committing to their characters. I want to especially talk about the three that popped out the most to us. Libby Williams as Agnes had to really hold this play down on an emotional level. I really feel that she gave us one of the handholds we needed in a show that seemed to have too many people to follow.



I really want to shout out Laborn Brown as Chuck. Chuck has the hard job of not only being our guide into the lair of all things geeky but also being our moral compass at times even if he has a dirty teenager mind. That takes a crap ton of energy and heart and I could

see that Brown has both in abundance.

I almost passed Ashley Huber as Lilith over until I realized that her moment in the real world reading Tilly's letter was super touching. I also realized that it was super touching because you could see her lose it for five seconds and then have to throw it all back in the closet. That is a hard moment to act and it is printed in my mind so much that it is still replaying in my head as I write the review. Great job!

This play has more layers than a wedding cake and just as many flavors. Sometimes it was really hard to tell "where" we were at spatially in the play. When the real world and the D&D world can collide so easily it's also had to tell what's real and what's fake. I do have to give credit to the fabulous production team for making sure that every layer did have it's own distinct flavor.

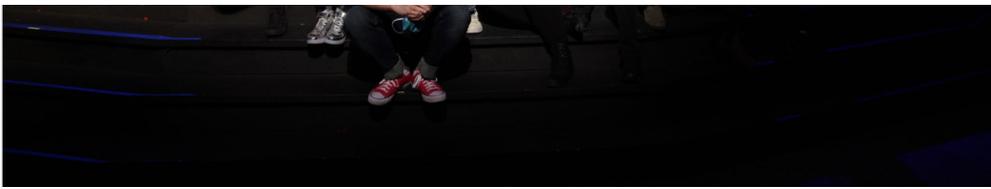


Stolz raised a question in his program notes of "should we be doing this?" After boasting about using every single safety measure that they had to their name they still didn't feel like they were ready. I'm glad that he said it because I don't think I was ready to see a show with such a large cast onstage working so close. (Most "socially distanced" live streamed performances we've seen so far have had no more than four actors in the cast.) I thank the Maker that they didn't make this a heavy moral issue for us by casting mainly college grads and not children or any at-risk populations. I still couldn't shake the feeling of "Is this really safe" while watching so I'm glad that somebody mentioned the elephant in the room.



I will say this: If you're going to take the risk and brave doing theatre indoors you should definitely be doing it with a show that is as fun as this one with a cast that we could see was having just as much fun as they were. What came about was a show that was both apropos to the pain and loss we've been feeling during these times and fun as Hell. It's a winning combination that lets us get away from it all for just a little bit. Thanks everyone!





To learn more about Elm Street Arts go [here](#). You have until August 23 to see this show so get your [show pass](#) now. Tell us what you think on Social Media.

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## Shaw! Shaw! Shaw! Celebrates A Playwright So Nice You Have To Say It Thrice

Shavians rejoice! Here are three plays just for you!  
@ShakespeareNJ

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Shakespeare Theatre of NJ

Venmo: @rndyounghowze

Review 194

When I was in high school I was an avid reader and loved anything to do with theatre. While at church camp on a college campus in South Carolina I ran out of books to read and popped into the open school bookstore to find a new book. I saw a book of George

Bernard Shaw's collected plays sitting on the shelf and bought it. Now just imagine a sixteen year old Baptist on the bus ride home from Bible Camp reading "Mrs. Warren's Profession" trying to tell your friends that "Man and Superman" was not about Clark Kent. Safe to say I've been a "Shavian" ever since. So that's why I was excited to see that Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey was doing Shaw! Shaw! Shaw!: A collection of three of his works.

## Overruled



Mrs. Juno	Skye Pagon
Mr. Lunn	Isaac Hickox-Young
Mr. Juno	Christian Frost
Mrs. Lunn	Billie Wyatt

### Zipline Media Video Crew

Matt Cerisano	Cam-Op, Editor
Tommy Walters	Cam-Op, Editor
Kris Khunachak	Cam-Op
Chris Shendge	Production Audio
Mike Cerisano	Editor

This is a play about very uptight British people trying not to be a side

This is a play about very uptight British people trying not to be a class piece in a very uptight British way. This is a classic Shaw piece that exemplifies his trope of modern ideals clashing with British civility. I wish that I had seen a lot more of that struggle in the staging by Bonnie J. Monte. There could have been more ways to show this fight between human desire and proper manners and it seemed like there were opportunities wasted. Have characters raise their voice and fight against it, grab someone by the shoulders and then shrink away, turn around to not have to look someone in the eye. Find those small moments to anchor us into the action. Although even as I say that each member of the cast did their best at exemplifying their characters and creating four distinct personalities. Some people might think that getting their bodies in the stuffy clothes and wrapping their tongues around the language is all that's needed. Not these pros! They weren't just a blank vessel for Shaw's dialogue they earnestly interpreted the text.

### Passion, Poison, and Petrification



#### Cast

Lady Magnesia Fitztollemache	Ellie Gossage
Phyllis, her maid	Emily Watson
George Fitztollemache	Jeffrey Marc Alkins
Adolphus Bastable	Dino Curia
The landlady	Billie Wyatt
An officer	Isaac Hickox-Young
A doctor	Christian Frost

#### Zipline Media Video Crew

Matt Cerisano      Cam-Op. Editor

I have no idea how this play got past the Lord Chamberlain without being heavily censored. Heck maybe there is a much bloodier version locked away in an antique trunk somewhere. This play was a bit hard for us to connect with and I have a feeling it went off way better in their backyard showing than in an empty theatre. The physical comedy seemed a bit flat without being staged in front of an uproarious socially distanced audience. Something just screamed that they needed people to react to all the craziness and the gore. However it was superbly performed and directed. I have no clue how I would start with such an ambitious piece but they pulled it out.

### **Village Wooing**



**Christian Frost**

**Katja Yacker**

This was a very clean and neat drama and one that Dana connected to very strongly. We normally hate “will they or won’t they” in favor of “we have and now what?”. This play was very much the latter with the signature back talking and verbal sparring. Dana said it best “if

two American characters would have cleared off the table for sex then two British characters would quip about something for twenty more minutes”. Or to put it more simply the text is sex. That’s how important the words and the text is to this story and our actors have interpreted it amazingly.



The thing that strikes me about any filmed stage production in this pandemic is the power I feel followed by the visceral fear of seeing two characters kiss onstage. I know that they have tested out the wazoo and taken every precaution but the perceived danger of it makes the moment not just special but as moving as witnessing a death defying jump off of the high dive. Are they okay? How did they feel about this kiss? What were they thinking? This now defiant and courageous act against death and the extinction of our industry makes the experience all the more touching and worthwhile. You have one more week to see this show. Be sure to see it and tell us what you think.

Check the Show Out For Yourself [Here](#)

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## Bad Dates at George Street Playhouse Was Really Good

Can [@georgestreet](https://twitter.com/georgestreet) get us a call with the Bug Guy? He sounded dreamy.

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

New Brunswick, NJ

Venmo: [@rndyounghowze](https://www.venmo.com/rndyounghowze)

Review 208

Ever since we have started reviewing digital theatre we have seen and reviewed shows all over the globe. However we don't see many in our own backyard (so to speak). That said it was nice to stop by

(virtually) the city that not only houses Dana's Alma Mater Rutgers but is in our home state of New Jersey. That's what led us to see George Street Theatre's "Bad Dates" by Theresa Rebeck and starring Andr ea Burns. This production was directed by Peter Flynn and filmed in a patron's house (shoutout to awesome patrons!).



The acting by Andr ea Burns as Haley was superb! Solo shows have really lit up during this crazy time. However none of that would be worth anything if they were helmed by performers that didn't have the raw energy to provide the spark. Have you ever heard the old saying that the "light that shines the farthest shines brightest at home?" Well if a solo performance is going to be even mediocre it's going to have to start from an amazing performer. Let me tell you Burn's star is very bright! We could have listened to her talk for hours and tell us stories. She sounded like a familiar friend yet had all the presence of a diva.

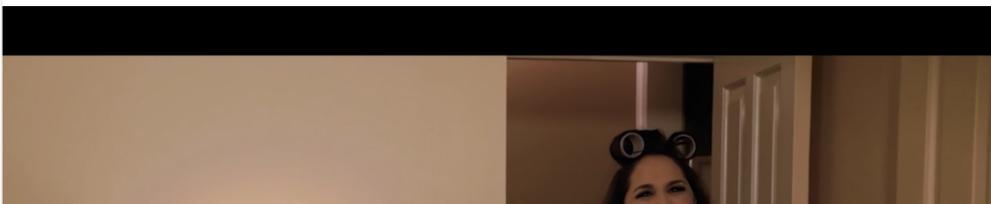


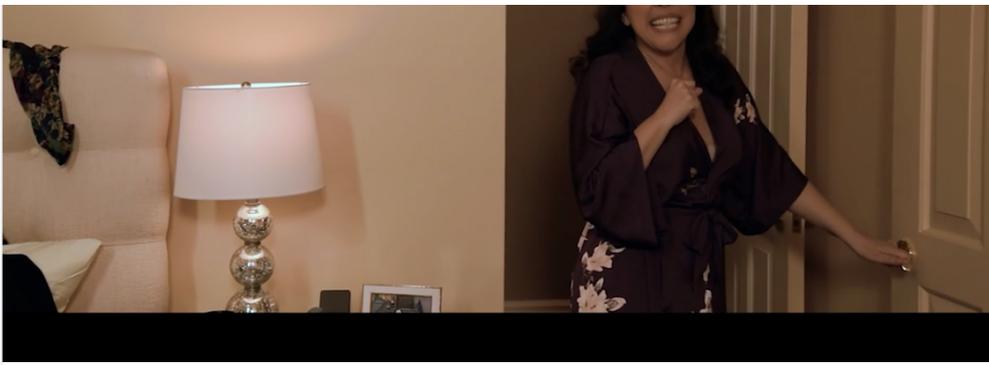
We're tempted to call this show a film which is a lot coming from two people who think film and digital theatre are two completely different disciplines. Between the use of camera angles and the over abundance of setups we didn't feel rooted anywhere. In film the camera has a personality and is the tool of the director. In digital theatre the camera is a surrogate for the audience and performer relationship. It was that relationship that got a little bit muddy. The

camera seemed alive at points, showing us the audience things we wouldn't be able to see unless the characters showed us themselves.



Who are we as an audience to Haley? We seem to be this omniscient force that can go anywhere in the house and look at everything. How does Haley know us and why does she trust us to give us all of this information? How are we supposed to feel about her telling us this? Right now we have way more questions than answers. If we're being honest we aren't sure if this is a writing issue or a directing one and it's not a bad thing. It just made us wonder how much power we had in this world and why we had it. But what if the camera is a laptop? We may have drowned in digital theatre a bit but we've found that the entire relationship between actor and audience changes when you change the camera. We're not saying that you shouldn't use all of the technology at your disposal. In fact , don't listen to us if it doesn't help.





Speaking of relationships we love the relationship Haley has with Vera! Vera is an invisible character but we feel we know everything about them. It's a tribute to acting by Burns and writing by Theresa Rebeck. Rebeck pitches a superbly well written character and Burns just knocks it right out of the park. But also this is a victory for director Peter Flynn for hammering a map of the house in our head. Vera was so important she had her own space, thoughts, ideas, style, and personality even though we never saw her. That is wicked amazing.



Unfortunately this show closed Sunday. We feel a bit guilty because we got so tied down with the award show and SETC that we could just get to it now. Don't be us. However George Street has another show opening soon. Go and watch this show before it's too late. Get your tickets now!

Check the Theatre Out For Yourself [Here](#)

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## Queen City Flash Broke Into Our Hearts with Killjoy, Ohio at Cincy Fringe

We were going to pick our jaws up off the floor but they disappeared.

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Cincinnati Fringe

The buzz around this show was deafening when Dana and I first started the Cincy Fringe almost two weeks ago. And one thing that we will say starting out is that Queen City Flash's social media game was a far cry ahead of everyone else. So when we first opened up on a handheld camera panning over the credits we didn't know what was in store for us but we did get this epic vibe...a camera is walking down the hall and into a closet and then two faces show up on the screen. And then it started with words that will live in infamy with Dana and me forever: "Do you want to tell a story"?



That slow walk to the closet and our glimpse that Trey Tatum was alone in there was a very important step. It's reminiscent of how a magician shows us the "Cabinet of Mystery" is empty before "Wanda the Weirdo" steps out of it. It is important that we are reminded that

these two actors are alone in separate houses while performing. Why? Because with what you're going to see in the next hour will either seem like cheating or straight up witchcraft if you didn't.

And so the show started...

My word...

Dana and I were stunned silent. They were able to weave a story that caught your attention from the first walk down Route 666. And all of a sudden this little zoom play went off and something unexpected occurred. They had stage lights! Freaking lights and colored washes behind them! What right do these guys have being both good and putting a conflabbed color wash in a Zoom play!?!

And that's not all they had. Through uses of lighting effects, filters in front of the camera, and using duplicate props and tricks to make it look like they're passing things to each other they created this kind of magic realism that makes you totally forget that they're in separate houses. Your mind can't even fathom that they're more than three feet away from each other. Because if they aren't your brain will explode from the cognitive dissonance!

Trey Tatum and Jordan Trovillion have a crazy rapport which is great because their timing has got to be spot on. Because not only does Tatum have to grab a phone on his side at the exact moment that Trovillion is handing out a phone until it is out of frame where she can drop it, there's a moment when Jordan is tossing him keys and it's just amazing as he actually catches a set of keys that are tossed his way. You know there's a simple answer but your only thought is "this is totally witchcraft".

And all of a sudden you're seeing details from them that a normal audience would miss. They can hold things up to the camera. They can do tiny little things that were usually too intimate for even the smallest black box. This means the show is very special. We're being treated to something genuinely special that we may never see in the same way again. And these two and their director Bridget Leak deserve a ribbon for daring to go there and lay down the gauntlet.

And then there are all the little threads that get set up in the beginning and brought around full circle. I'm not a huge fan of extra complicated exposition but it's a credit to Tatum's craft as a

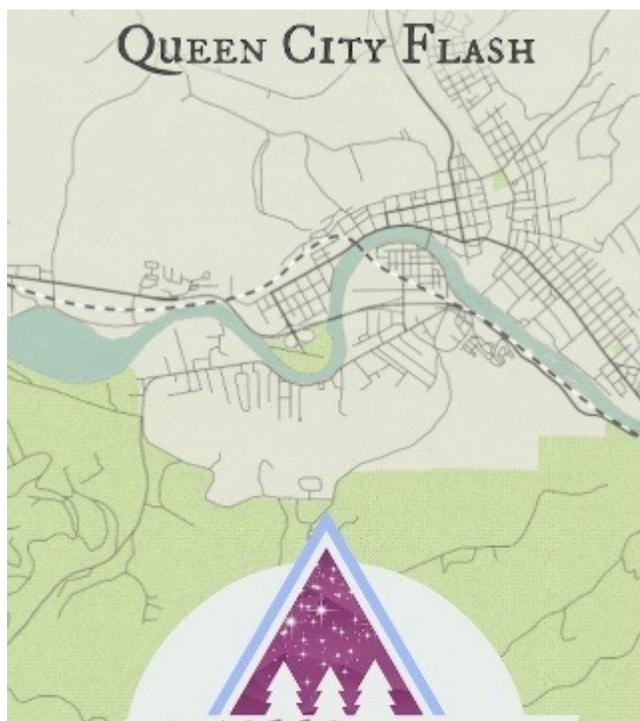
playwright. So when you hear about ice cream cones, sex cuits, and postcards each of those places come back to pay off for you in a very strange way!

Even the most random side quests pay off at the end. We have a bet that the lost “silver bracelet” they talk about in a random monologue is different every time and they have a blank in the script to work it in when the time comes. (If that’s not the case let Dana down gently we have five bucks riding on this).

And it also had the audacity to be touching. We make a joke because it is easy to make me cry watching a show. I cry at the drop of a hat. But when you get Dana tearing up you have a real winner on your hands. She never cries and she was reaching for tissues with this one.

We got so emotionally invested. They built characters so quickly that we immediately bought into them. And we hands down celebrate that Jordan and Trey don’t get together at the end of this! We’re so tired of Manic Pixie Dream Girl seductresses and we were afraid of that the minute that she broke into his house and started being witty. So happy to be disappointed in that regard.

This show is the proof that going to the Fringe is about the nuggets of gold shows like this. This is the diamond in the rough that you go to Fringe’s for because you’ll never find them anywhere else! They have no right being this good. Now we’re not saying that other Fringe Shows weren’t equally as good but something about this play caught us off guard.





It's a very heavy play for being so light-hearted. There's a lot of themes packed into this: Love, joy, friendship, camaraderie, loss. But those are the best plays. They make you laugh, cry, punch a wall, maybe all three but in the end you get this release. We got a true catharsis with this piece.

And now it's your turn to get some of your own! Go to their [ticket](#) page and see this show for yourself! And of course tell us how you liked it on our social media.

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**2 notes**

## Autumn Kaleidoscope Makes Its Case in The Bassoonist at Cincy Fringe

Why Baroque music may have been the punk rock of the day, Bach carried a dagger, and why you should never insult a man's bassoon.

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Cincinnati Fringe

Who new Baroque Music once involved attempted murder? I mean I know some marching band kids that are afraid of missing a note but they don't have to keep rapiers on them at all times in fear that their band teacher is going to try to stab them! But that was exactly what happened during the Baroque period when Johann Sebastian Bach was asked to supervise an orchestra by his employers for no pay. Let's just say things got a little heated and he especially brewed some kind of animosity between himself and Bassoonist Johann (was Johann the "Bob Smith" of that era?) Geyersbach. How

heated? Well our play opens with Geyersbach in court pleading his case after attacking him in the street. Our lesson learned: never mock a man's bassoon.

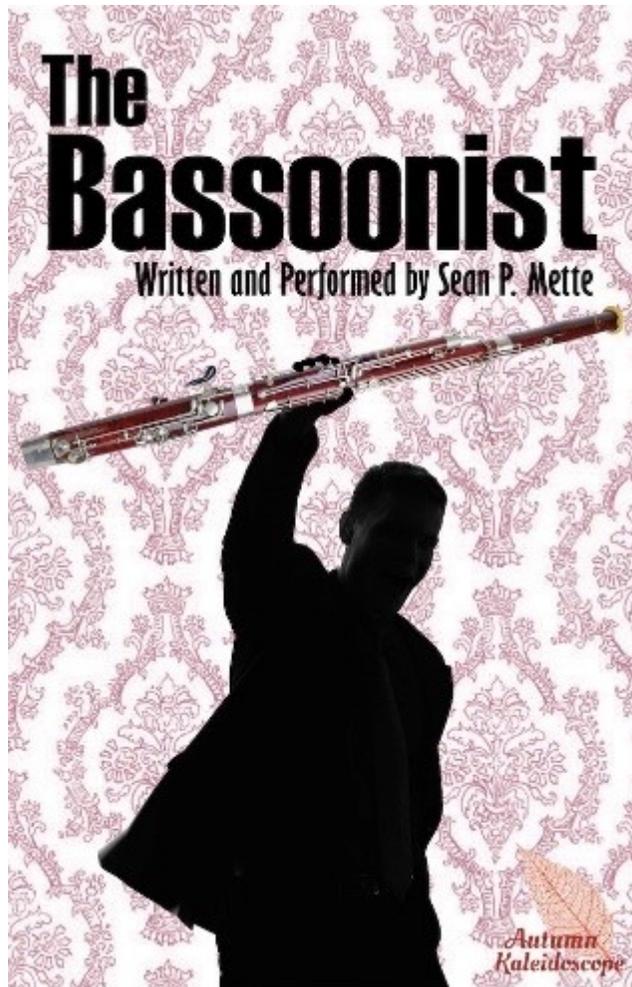


Sean P. Mette of Autumn Kaleidoscope crafts a wonderful performance based on the story of this feud that went down in history. He pleads his case as he unfolds a tale of love, rivalry, and vitriol. All throughout you can get the sense that he is a lover of history and carefully crafted this work.

One of the possibly hardest shows to do in the world is a historically informed performance. You are bound by the primary sources, you have to decide how to present it in the most accurate light, and you have to make it interesting for the audience. I will tell you when I first walked into this show all I knew about Bach was maybe the first page of Wikipedia and a 90's TV movie they used to make us watch in music class. The biggest compliment that I could have given to this production is that the minute I was done I went straight to Google and started researching the real story of this feud between Bach and Geyersbach. To me it's the Baroque version of the movie "Whiplash". I have a grad degree and love music history and this is something I didn't know. Amazing!

I will say however that I felt that this show and the audience deserved more! I craved more dynamics in the performance! I wanted this beautifully researched play to be supported with equally

stunning visuals and physicality. There's a saying I think I've bastardized from somewhere else and that's "If they're getting used to gravel give them velvet next." We got wonderful voice over and vocals so I wanted more visuals. I got this Baroque sense of elegance so when do things get primal and savage? I feel like future performances of this show (especially a live performance like it was originally intended) would do well to explore these things.



But other than that Mette has earned a soft spot in my heart. I love devotés of history and the plays they create. And you should really come out and see him too! Go to the Fringe Primary Line-up page and get your [tickets](#) now! For \$10 you can see this wonderful show for yourself! You should definitely see it before the [TalkBack](#) at 8 PM ET tonight. Come out and tell them just what you thought of it!

#cincyfringe #fringe #ohio #nj travels #nj #theatrelives #theatre #theatre review #Sean P Mette #The Bassoonist #knowtheatre

# Freedom Summer Shows Us Two Women In Utter Fear

One playwright condenses a nationwide turmoil into the lives of two sisters meeting again one afternoon.

@ncblackrep @cyngrobinson

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

North Carolina Black Repertory Company

Venmo: @rndyounghowze

Review: 206

Putting on a well-done play is like cooking a good country meal. You have to have all of the best ingredients, actors, a well-crafted story, a setting, and a moment that is primed ready like a well-seasoned cast-iron skillet. That is exactly what the theatrical gourmets at North Carolina Black Repertory Company have done with Cynthia Grace Robinson's "Freedom Summer" directed by Jackie Alexander. Two performers, Nikyla Boxley as Carrie and Mariah Guillmette as Nora, weave us the story of two people tied together by blood but hundreds of miles apart even when standing in the same room. Let's talk a bit about how this remarkable play sat with us.



Like eggs ready to be scrambled you don't put them in the skillet until the oil is hot. The playwright Cynthia Grace Robinson is a genius because she started the story at just the right moment to create a visceral response with the audience. Dana was on edge and hated

the timing the whole time. They kept telling me that if a sibling had shown up on the day of their wedding with any of that nonsense they would have been furious. However, Dana did admit that is how good stories work. That's the point of a structured drama like this: putting the characters in the story while the tension is highest. You can't do it any other way.



We haven't seen a play so beautifully staged in a long time. Though Dana and I love Zoom and Streamyard theatre, we also do treat filmed stage plays like a glass of cold water in the desert. There's nothing like a powerful show acted in front of a wonderfully built set and cast within arms reach of each other. Close contact is so dear these days which is why a hug, a gesture, a slap are all very loaded with meaning. With a play like this where we need to cut the tension between these characters with a knife the added layers of meaning given to us by the current situation helped this play. We appreciate Jackie Alexander's work with the actors and crew to bring everything to us, the audience.





Freedom Summer is a story without a physical protagonist and antagonist. If you listen to the news coming on the radio and what they're talking about you can understand that the world they live in must be crouched outside their door like a predator outside the village. Both women in this play knew that when they walked outside the door that they could easily be hunted and devoured by this predatorial society. Dana was mildly disappointed that the writer chose to have Nora "kick the puppy" by being so hurtful and mean to her sister. There are so many complex and layered character moments that biting cruelty felt over the top at times. As if the intention was to firmly place Nora in the position of the villain instead of embracing each character's highs and lows.



We can't talk about Freedom Summer without talking about the complexity of Blackness in the story. You have one sister who wants to lean further into her people and another who wants to run away from all the problems Black people face. Nora could have easily been treated like a one-dimensional character for her desire to pass as white. However, it's a testament to Robinson's writing that Nora was a deep, complex, and relatable character. It would have been simple and completely understandable to frame Carrie as purely the hero. She's lost her father, forced to take care of her mother, and is ready to take civil rights head-on. However, having her show up the day of her sister's wedding and telling Nora to go home and give up everything means that she's far from perfect. In other words, these are real people with real motivations and not flat stereotypes.



Nora has decided to pick camouflage to hide against the predator while her sister has decided to fight it head-on. There are so many layered issues before ever scratching the surface of the argument of passing. Robinson has stumbled on something that makes Nora an even more complex character. That pressure to give up your entire life at a moment's notice to prop up your crumbling family? I've seen Dana deal with that every time they get a call from their stepdad. Dana says Black culture often hinges upon the family unit and the pressure to do anything and everything to take care of it. There are some in the community that would want to ostracize her for abandoning her family. However, that part struck an emotional chord with Dana and made her connect with Nora even more.

All of this writing coalesces into a perfect marriage between great characters embodied by great performers in a complex story. Top that off with a beautifully designed and crafted set and you have a perfect picture of the high standards the North Carolina Black Repertory Company holds its shows to. We can't wait to see what shows they have in store for the rest of the year.

Check the Show Out NC Black Rep For Yourself [Here](#)

Learn more about Cynthia Grace Robinson [here](#).

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#Cynthia Grace Robinson #Jackie Alexander

## From Number To Name Convicts Each And Every One of Us

@ewplayers presents a night @mskristinawong says was “a year in the works but only six weeks in rehearsal”

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Los Angeles, California

Venmo: [@rndyounghowze](https://www.venmo.com/rndyounghowze)

Review 219

One of the things Dana and I talk about a lot is Cultural Memory. It's this collective recollection that a playwright or creative can tap into to bring an audience onto their side with very few words. It's that thing that makes you smell eggs cooking when all that was said was “lights up on the kitchen in the morning”. But how do performers start when the words “Prison Kimchi” or “Send a Kite” mean absolutely nothing but scratched heads for the audience? How do you begin to explain the isolation, deprivation, and atrocity of the American Prison System for Asian and Pacific Islanders (API) when the audience could be a crowd of upper-class white people with no priors? If you asked us we would point you to “From Number to Name” directed by Kristina Wong and devised by a group of formerly incarcerated APIs from the group API Rise. This group performance in partnership with East West Players tells the touching and heartbreaking stories of these

beautiful people. We were floored by this performance and now you have one more chance to see it tonight.



These were personal stories told by people who had been there in person. Hearing these stories of being ostracized by the family, denied basic privacy, and essentials struck us like a sledgehammer. Hearing the hustle that has to happen to get something as simple as familiar food as we were listening in our kitchen with food cooking on the stove convicted us. The worst was hearing how being exposed to sunlight after being deprived so long made someone sick. These are the basic necessities of life and we are watching people tell us that they were as precious as gold or foreign as another country or as unreachable as the moon. If you can listen to these things and not be convicted to end the current prison system then you are dead from the neck down.

The cast went further than scripted sketches and stories though to let us know that this was not “just a play”. Our favorite part was when Maria Kanaka Luna said she was going off script because she was so emotional venting her anger about being in prison and detention. I felt it was one of the most important parts of the play. It let us know that no matter what we saw, no matter how we’d laugh sometimes or

cry at others, that this was real. Moments like these were how the entire cast broke down a shield that audiences can carry with us sometimes.

The cast wielded their personal lives like a scalpel cutting through the calluses of our hearts. We have this shield up around our hearts that watch popular Netflix series about the subject of prisons or “classics” like Shawshank Redemption and hold it at a distance from us. But we can’t stare at these people who lived it in the face and do it the same way. You can’t write stuff more real than this. This is why I have to give a huge shout out to our cast of performers/dramatists: Kirn Kim, Ely Sonny Orquiza, Sergio Mauritz Ang, Van Huynh, M.J. Kang, Maria Kanaka Luna, Billy Taing, Eric J. Cheng, Irv Relova, Meena Ramamurthy, Steven Liang. We applaud and appreciate everything they have done to bring this show into our lives.

The show erred on the side of brevity but didn’t need to. We could have been watching for another hour and not have felt the time. We did love that it had the same Kristina Wong energy that we have seen many times before but felt completely different. We felt that Wong’s touch was best felt in how she enabled each of the cast to tell the story in their style. She let them go off script and tell it the way they saw it. If directing is ninety percent casting then Wong’s job was a thousand percent done. Yet she still could be felt in the atmosphere she created. It’s that same atmosphere and philosophy that has convicted us to be more vocal as advocates and activists since we met her last year.

If you are reading this and it is not yet 2 PM PST where you are please make haste to see this show. We can’t begin to tell you how important that this show is for everyone to watch. We can’t pretend that the Prison Industrial Complex isn’t our problem anymore. We cannot sit in ignorance of the struggle that API inmates and others are having during this time. If you can run to your device and watch this show. I’m not joking. Why are you even still reading this? Go

watch it **now**. If you can't watch please go to API-Rise's **website** and see what you can do to keep their mission going.

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