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Fall 2022

Department of Theatre and Dance
Performances

12-3-2022

Dance Nation

Department of Theatre and Dance

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Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts

Department of Theatre and Dance

Randy Mugleston, Chair

Dance Nation

By Clare Barron

December 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10, 2022

Life Hall Studio Theatre

Director **Erin Gorski**

Choreographer **Vanessa Butler**

Intimacy/Acting Coach **Ellen Lancaster**

Fight Director **Rick Sordelet**

Music Mix **Jesse Castellanos**

Lavender Cast: Dec. 3 (mat.), 7, 8, 10

Chartreuse Cast: Dec. 3 (eve.), 6, 9, 10 (mat.)

Cast (in order of appearance)

Lavender Cast

Chartreuse Cast

Dance Teacher Pat.....	Louis Bose	Louis Bose
Luke.....	Alex Fontes	Alex Fontes
Amina.....	Heather Alzpiedi	Anna Mocerì
Zuzu.....	Arianna Marmol	A'Lysai Robinson
Ashlee.....	Yazmery Milian	Natalie Yost
Sofia.....	Laura J. McHale	Alondra Uriarte
Maeve.....	Edmillie Binet	Maxine Stillwagon
Connie.....	Elisabetta Bracer	Elisabetta Bracer
Vanessa/The Moms.....	Zitlali Marcail	Marie-Pier Poulin

Understudies **Madeline Alemi** (Vanessa, the Moms, Minda, Sofia, Maeve, Ashlee, Connie, Amina, Zuzu), **Xander Claros** (Dance Teacher Pat, Luke, Ensemble)

Place and Time

Somewhere in America: Now, Then, and Later

Content Warnings

Explicit Sexual Content, Graphic Violence, Strong Language, Self Harm, Blood

Please be advised this show contains flashing lights/photosensitive effects and sudden loud noises.

Dance Nation received its UK premiere at the Almeida Theatre, London, September 2018.

Playwrights Horizons, Inc., New York City, produced the World Premiere of *Dance Nation* in 2018 with the support from an award by the National Endowment for the Arts, and a generous gift from Scott M. Delman.

Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Trust for supporting new plays at Playwright Horizons, and special thanks to the Time Warner Foundation for its leadership support of New Works Lab at Playwrights Horizons.

Dance Nation was developed at the Perry-Mansfield New Works Festival, June 2015, with the Atlantic Theatre Company, and presented as part of the Contemporary American Voices Festival at Long Wharf Theatre, September 2016.

Dance Nation was written, in part, in residence at SPACE on Ryder Farm, and received extensive workshop time and space as part of New Dramatists' Jerry A. Tishman Playwrights Creativity Fund.

Dance Nation is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.
www.concordtheatricals.com.

In consideration of both audiences and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

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Mysti Stay | Coordinator of Design, Technology, and Management
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Rick Sordelet | Intimacy/Fight Director
Donna Scro Samori | Mental Health Consultant
Erhard Rom | Scenic Design Mentor
Benjamin Merrick | Technical Director
Daniel Graham | Assistant Technical Director
Daniel Haussler | Carpenter
Robert Dietze | Stage Carpenter Mentor
Jeanette Meises | Scenic Charge Artist
Alison Merrick | Props Supervisor
Adam Rigg | Costume Design Mentor
Kaitie Adams | Hair/Makeup Design Mentor
Judith Evans | Costume Shop Supervisor
Jeanette Aultz | Assistant Costume Shop Supervisor
Amanda Phillips Balingit, Arden Donnelly, Katie Pippin | Drapers
Marlene Olson Hamm | Wardrobe Supervisor
Nick Kolin | Lighting Design Mentor
Osman M. Morales | Head Electrician
Zachary Brienza | Electrician
Kimberly O'Loughlin | Head Sound Technician/
Sound Design Mentor
Steven Brown | Sound Technician
Mysti Stay | Stage Management Mentor

Staff for Dance Nation

Jace Pastras | Assistant Director
Becca Landis McLarty | Vocal Coach
Andrew Linden | Costume/Hair and Makeup
Bailey Udin | Dramaturg
Jess Vaccaro | Stage Manager
Lorena Osta | Assistant Stage Manager

This production is part of the Montclair State University Department of Theater's *Studio Series*, which allows students and faculty to produce work quickly and simply, free from the constraints and costs of fully staged productions. It is a laboratory for exploration that emphasizes acting as an art form. These performances give us the unique opportunity to explore a creative process that requires less production support and focuses more on character, speech, voice, and movement.

Program Notes

“It can be kind of paralyzing to make work about gender in a moment like this. And worse to have to talk about it. But I’m going to try.”

—Clare Barron, Playwright, from her February 15, 2018, essay for the World Premiere of *Dance Nation* at Playwrights Horizons

“*Dance Nation* insists we think about [the scariest questions about who we are, how we became that person, and who we will become next] in terms of gender. And there’s really no other way to do it—because, before we even start preschool, we’re assigned and participating in gender roles.”

—Lizzie Stern, Literary Assistant, from her essay “Backstory: Smile for Me” written for the World Premiere of *Dance Nation* at Playwrights Horizons

All this remains true, yet so much has changed in our conversations around gender since 2018, a year that seems like a lifetime ago. While society continues to define us in terms of a gender binary at birth, the social structures that oppress girls and women also oppress boys and men, and perhaps most violently, the trans and nonbinary communities. All this to say, while this play often speaks specifically to what we classically define as the transition from girlhood to womanhood, its themes and implications are more generally in conversation with the experience we all have of shedding our childhood, sometimes regretfully and sometimes triumphantly, to become the people we are today.

All of the characters, except for Dance Teacher Pat and the Moms, are between the ages of 11 and 14, yet they are generally played, quite deliberately, by older actors, some well past middle age. The use of double casting (I highly recommend seeing both versions for a complete experience) and our set of mirrors serve to enhance the notion that shadows of ourselves follow us well into adulthood. As such, this play operates as a sort of hybrid memory play. We are at once living in the moment, reflecting on the past, and pondering the future. We can never forget that the adolescents we see before us in the dance studio will eventually become the adults of our boardrooms and business meetings, the full-time caretakers and freelance workers traveling beside us on our daily commutes and errands. As with us all, these characters will never truly leave their adolescent selves behind.

It feels particularly cruel that at the moment we begin to taste the power and independence of adulthood, we are constrained by a new set of rules dictating appropriate behavior, with often wildly contradictory messages. These characters have an unapologetic ambition to win, crush their opponents, and take home the biggest trophy. Still, they face a future that threatens to take away all of their power and glorious indignation and trade it for a more palatable version of what an adult “should” be. Thus the violence, rage, and blood left on the stage is their liberation, an attempt to explore and own their own power, answering to no one but themselves. At thirteen they still possess one truly liberating belief: the idea that anything is possible. Anything is possible. Imagine believing that all over again.

—*Erin Gorski, Director*

Production Biographies

Erin Gorski (Director) has devised and directed nationally and internationally for over 20 years and performed professionally for over 25. She was a movement professor at MSU for five years and is grateful to return with this incredible cast. Her Suzuki Acting Method work began while she was studying with original members of the first American cohort invited to Toga, Japan, and she honed her directing work over many years performing with Norwegian director Henning Hegland under Anne Bogart’s guidance. She holds a BFA in Acting from the University of Connecticut and an MFA from the Shakespeare Theatre of DC’s Academy for Classical Acting. Her work centers the ensemble to bring a collective vision to fruition. Love to C, I, C, and Mom: you make it all possible.

Vanessa Butler (Choreographer) is a working actor and teaching artist based out of New York City. She began training in dance at an early age and participated in regional dance competitions before entering into preprofessional ballet programs with the Milwaukee Ballet and the Rock School of Ballet. She turned to acting later in life and is currently teaching movement at Stella Adler Studio for Acting and MSU. Butler has choreographed for the Sacramento Ballet, SOUL PRIDE (Beer & Ballet repertoire) in 2008, and Central Connecticut State University’s production of *Rent* in 2013. She holds an MFA in Acting from California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) and received a BFA in Fine Art from Carnegie Mellon University. vanessarbutler.com.

Rick Sordelet (Fight/Intimacy Coach) has served as this country's most prolific fight director for over 28 years. He and his son, Christian, created Sordelet Inc., an action-based company providing stunt coordination, fight direction, and intimacy consulting for film, television, and theater. He has worked on over 80 shows on Broadway, from *Beauty and the Beast* and *Lion King* all the way to *Tina*. Sordelet just returned from the UK, where he revived the fight direction on Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, coming to Broadway next season. The Sordelets are the resident fight directors for the Santa Fe Opera, where they staged the fights for *As You Like It* and *Eugene Onegin*. They are also stunt coordinators for television and film: 12 years with *Guiding Light*, four years with *One Life to Live*, both seasons with *Kevin Can Wait* and *The Crew*, both starring Kevin James. Their most recent film is *Ben Is Back* starring Julia Roberts. Sordelet taught at Yale School of Drama for 22 years as well as at Kean University, Montclair State, and the William Esper Studio. From fight direction and teaching, Sordelet developed into a writer as well, selling several screenplays and a television series. He and his partner, David Blixt, run an E-publishing company called Sordelet INK.

Jace Pastras (Assistant Director) is a sophomore BFA Acting major at MSU, was in two mainstage productions last year, and just directed his first play with F.A.S.T. earlier this semester. He is excited to continue his acting training at Montclair and explore new, sustainable, and impactful ways to create art.

Becca Landis McLarty (Vocal Coach) is a Miller Voice Method—certified teacher and a graduate of MFA Acting at Brooklyn College. She has been teaching voice and speech for the past 11 years at various institutions in New York City and New Jersey and has been working with the amazing students at Montclair State since 2017. Breath, collaboration, curiosity, and a sense of humor are central to McLarty's practice as both an instructor and a performer. She has performed as an actor, singer, and improviser at theaters across the country and now lives in New Jersey with her husband, two kids, and scruffy rescue dog. McLarty is thrilled to be able to work with the talented cast and crew of *Dance Nation*.

Andrew Linden (Costume/Hair and Makeup) is a senior in the Acting BFA program at MSU, and *Dance Nation* is his first production working as a costume/hair and makeup designer. Previous credits include Christopher Boone (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*), Pope Joan/Nell (*Top Girls*), and Forester/Lord (*As You Like It*). While he is used to being on the stage, he is just as happy to be able to support his friends

behind the scenes as well as display his ability to be a multifaceted artist. A big thank you to all of the inviting feminine energy in this beautiful show.

Bailey Udin (Dramaturg) is studying in the MA Theatre Studies program with a research emphasis on diversity and accessibility in theater. They have previously been the dramaturg for *Black Snow*, acted in and production managed a Theatre for Community Impact devised piece, and are currently producing touring productions developing on campus. They have also acted, operated spotlights, and assistant stage managed. They look forward to further production opportunities at MSU and beyond!

Jess Vaccaro (Stage Manager) is a BA Theatre Studies senior. This will be her fourth mainstage production at MSU. For the past three years, she has worked for the university as one of the producers and the only technical director of a student-driven theater organization called Friday Afternoon Student Theatre (F.A.S.T).

Jessica.Vaccaro01@gmail.com

Lorena Osta (Assistant Stage Manager) is a BA Theatre Studies junior. This will be her first time as a stage manager at MSU.

Cast Biographies

Madeline Alemi (Understudy) is excited to be understudying for *Dance Nation*. Previous credits include *Dr. Ride's American Beach House* (Meg, MSU F.A.S.T.), *Spring Awakening* (Ilse, BYA), and *The Odd Couple—Female Version* (Sylvie).

Heather Alzapiedi (Amina) is so stoked to be working on this absolute beast of a play. Previously, Alzapiedi appeared in MSU's productions of *Paradise Lost*, *As You Like It*, and *Enemy of the People*. Alzapiedi would encourage you to give in to the journey of this play and allow yourself to reflect on your 11–13 selves with humility and love.

Edmillie Binet (Maeve/Ensemble) is appearing in her second show at MSU. She was previously a part of *The Curious Incident of a Dog in the Night-time*. She also directed her own devised play, *Deadline*, with F.A.S.T. in the spring of 2022.

Louis Bose (Dance Teacher Pat) is a senior BFA actor. He has been a part of multiple productions at MSU, including department shows such as *As You Like It* and *We Are*

Proud... as well as F.A.S.T. productions including *Paradise Lost* and *The Atriedie*. Bose hopes you enjoy the crazy world the this play brings to life.

Elisabetta Bracer (Connie) is a recent graduate from MSU, with dual bachelor degrees in Theatre Studies and English Literature. She has spent most of her early theatrical career performing but has since moved mainly to teaching, writing, and dramaturgy. She was asked to return to Montclair State as an alumni guest artist for this production and get her acting skills back into good use! On the side, Bracer continues to write and apply for publications throughout her theater artist journey, most recently starting the process of writing her first full-length play!

Xander Claros (Understudy) is excited to be an understudy for *Dance Nation*. He is a freshman Acting student and is thrilled to be a part of this production at Montclair.

Alex Fontes (Luke) is a sophomore in the BFA Acting Program. This is his second time working main-stage at MSU, the first time being a Server in *The Big Meal*. Fontes feels a deep and personal connection with this play, and especially with his character, Luke. Luke's perspective in *Dance Nation* is a valuable one that Fontes can't wait to share with the audience.

Zitlali Marcial (Vanessa/The Moms) is appearing in her first show at MSU. She is beyond excited that this has been her first performance and has had such a wonderful time with the cast and crew. She cannot wait for people to see this wonderful show that many amazing artists have been working on.

Arianna Marmol (Zuzu) is a sophomore year BFA Acting major and is incredibly happy to have *Dance Nation* as their second main-stage show. They can't wait to share the amazing character of Zuzu and the relatable adolescent journey of *Dance Nation* with the audience!

Laura J. McHale (Sophia) is a sophomore BFA Acting major at MSU. Recent credits include *The Curious Incident of the Dog in Night-time* (Number 40/Lady in the Street) and *Yellow Moon* (Leila), as well as an internship at Surflight Theatre this past summer. Instagram: laurajmchale

Yaxmery Milian (Ashlee) is a current junior at MSU as a BFA Acting major. She has been in a couple F.A.S.T. productions, and *Dance Nation* will be her first main-stage production. Milian continues to study acting because she admires how it allows us to live the human experience and call it art.

Anna Mocerri (Amina) is a senior Acting major at MSU in her third production at the school. Former credits include Punk Girl/Ensemble/Dance Captain in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and Amiens in *As You Like It*. Mocerri will graduate with her BFA in Acting this spring and is excited to continue her acting career post-graduation.

Marie-Pier Poulin (Vanessa/The Moms) is a French-Canadian performer from Quebec City, Canada. She attended a three-year musical theater conservatory program at Collège Lionel-Groulx, located in Montreal. Her credits at MSU include New Play Festival 2021, Chorus/Understudy in *'Tasha*, and Mrs. Shears in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. This is Poulin's last performance at MSU, and she is really grateful to be part of this production.

A'Lysai Robinson (Zuzu) is a junior BFA Acting major and has been at MSU for three years. This will be her third productions at MSU, including *'Tasha* and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*. She is looking forward to further productions at MSU and beyond.

Maxine Stillwagon (Maeve) is a senior in the BFA Acting program and is excited to be back in another production at MSU. Her previous credits include *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, *Theatre on the Move*, and *Randi & Roxanne* (staged reading).

Alondra Uriarte (Sofia) is a junior in MSU's Acting BFA program. This is her first mainstage production, and she couldn't be more excited to be a part of the empowering piece that is *Dance Nation*. "Hold the drama, I just wanna dance."
—Jojo Siwa

Natalie Yost (Ashlee) is a senior at MSU, previously having appeared in *The Wolves* (#2) and *As You Like It* (Phoebe). She has also recently appeared in the New York Theatre Festival in *In the Mix* (Pluto).