# Playing the Fool:
# Performing as George Spelvin in Christopher Durang's *The Actor's Nightmare*

by

Jacob Wade

Submitted to the Department of Theatre & Performance
Conservatory of Theatre Arts
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College
State University of New York

May 2019

First Reader: Peter Sprague

Second Reader: Andrea Thome

## Table of Contents

## Artistic Aims

This project will be a great opportunity for me to share my interpretation of *The Actor's Nightmare* with the audience. This play physicalizes a scenario that many people in the Purchase theatre community can relate to and will be a fun way to end my time at Purchase College. A personal artistic goal of mine is to play this role with the upmost honesty and sincerity. I want the words that come out of my mouth to be genuine, as if the dialogue were my actual thought process being relayed to the audience in real time. I would like George to appear as a real person as opposed to a character. To do this, I will have to know the lines better than the back of my own hand and be well-versed in all of the references that this play includes. Another goal of mine is to have the audience feel like they are part of the experience, on the same page as my character, George. The play calls for several asides to the audience, promoting a sense of relatability and connection between the character and the audience. If done well, this play could be a fun, unifying experience for all. This project could be an important step toward my post-Purchase goals because I am going to be acting in my future. With this project as my final production at Purchase, I will be leaving having just played the role of an actor, as an actor. I think that playing a familiar character such as an actor in my senior project is a smart choice because it showcases my talents for my intended career choice, as opposed to playing a role that is challenging or out of my league, like an older man or a transformative foreign role. It is important to me that I play a role that I can relate to and perform confidently. This play would be a good challenge to that, as the play revolves around George as its central character.

In order to portray the role of George with the upmost honesty and sincerity I will have to not only commit myself to the role in rehearsals, but also take time to commit to learning my lines outside of rehearsal. Ideally, I would like to start rehearsing this project in the Fall 2018 semester to give myself a bit of a head start on learning the material for the performances in the Spring. Even though George is the only character that is technically not supposed to know his lines, George has the bulk of the lines in the script. The play is really being carried on George's back from start to finish, and I as the actor must know all of my lines so that I can be confident in portraying George's insecurities. I already know that it is easier for me to memorize scenes than it is for me to memorize monologues. When I am off book, I will be able to listen and respond, making it easier for me to be in the moment and keep the momentum of the scene going forward. It is more of a challenge for me to keep a stream of consciousness going, especially for two pages as the script calls for. In order to get my monologue in good shape, I should be rehearsing it outside of rehearsal. I will be reading it over and saying it out loud to whoever will help me get off book. In order to be truly confident in my monologue, my goal is to work on it over Winter break. This should give me a head start for the Spring semester, when we will be devoting the bulk of our time towards scene work and getting our show ready for performances. Another thing that will help me achieve this goal would be an early off-book date from my director, Jeremy Suarez. With a set deadline in place, I will be more motivated to get the work done in a timely manner. When it comes to being prepared, my motto is to keep my side of the street clean. As long as I stay focused on myself and getting my work done, I will feel

comfortable and confident throughout the process and not have to worry or stress myself out about myself or anyone else.

Upon first reading this play, I could tell that there would be a lot of table work and dramaturgy involved in this process. *The Actor's Nightmare* features heavy references to other plays and playwrights with which I am not yet familiar. I am looking forward to working with Jonathan Mannato on breaking down this script and learning more about what exactly this play is referencing. Not only does this script reference plays and playwrights by name, but also paraphrases from other works of theatre in rapid succession during George's monologue. In this section of the play George is pulling quotes out of thin air in an attempt to piece together a soliloquy. In order to execute my performance most effectively, I will have to know where each of these references lives in George's mind. I need these references to all come from a place of familiarity for myself as a performer, but also for the audience so that they may connect personally to the references. I would also like to connect with the audience as often as possible. I think that the best way to relate would be to take the natural approach to this character. If I am to really take the audience on this ride with George through this nightmare, it is important that my acting does not feel distant from their reality. With the audience on George's side the whole time, it will not only exaggerate how out of place George is within the dream world, but also deepen the connection that George and the audience build together throughout the play. The relationship that George builds with the audience is important to *The Actor's Nightmare* because it establishes empathy for his character. This connection is important in the comedic moments, in moments of George's vulnerability and finally at George's death. Finally, it is important to me that

each audience member is on George's side throughout the performance, unifying them on this journey through George's nightmare.

Ultimately, it is most important to me that my senior project gets good reception and a good reputation. The senior project process can at times get competitive, and I want to impress the faculty and my peers with the work that I do. I have not gotten as many chances as I had wished to perform during my time at Purchase College and this will be a great opportunity for me to showcase my acting ability and my artistry with the community that I have grown to love and respect over the past four years. I have tried to learn from the mistakes of past senior projects and from the success of my shadowing report subject, Melina Finck. Although I am doing a comedic festival piece, I can learn a lot from Melina's process. Melina reported that her senior project, Caryl Churchill's *The Skriker*, did table work throughout the Fall semester and started a more rigorous rehearsal plan in the Spring semester, meeting three to four times per week. For my senior project I plan to follow Melina's example and rehearse as often as possible. Three to four times per week sounds like a manageable and responsible amount of time to be dedicating to this project, especially with my festival piece being about half the runtime of a full-length production. I have heard that there are many reasons for senior projects not coming together as they were originally planned. Some obstacles that I would like to avoid include poor communication amongst the cast and production team, issues of low commitment or dedication leading to unpreparedness, and lack of funding leading to smaller-scaled/less glamorous productions than initially imagined. In order to succeed I will have solid communication with both my director, Jeremy Suarez, and my stage manager, Lacey Szerlip. My hopes are that we may all

work together as a team and execute this play with true collaboration and no drama. In addition, I would like for our team to set up a GoFundMe page over winter break so that we can fundraise and build up hype for the show months in advance. Winter break will be a perfect time to publish this fundraiser because people are more likely to be generous and giving in the spirit of the holiday season. Hopefully this will be enough time to raise the money that we will need to produce this show at the caliber that it deserves.

I would like this production to not only entertain but have a deeper, more meaningful impact on the audience. Especially in the time that we are living in, it is important that we take advantage of the opportunities to escape our reality and travel to places where our cares and worries no longer hold their weight over our minds. I want my senior project to be able to transport the audience to a dream-world where they forget their troubles and devote their thoughts, feelings and attention to the conflict on stage. I am looking forward to putting up a comedy at Purchase College because I find that the productions on campus often touch on more serious themes that leave the audience in a winded state of analysis. I want my project to serve as a breath of fresh air, providing the Purchase theatre community with an uplifting performance that leaves them smiling and wanting more. *The Actor's Nightmare* may not call for deep analysis of controversial themes or make any kind of social commentary, but it does serve as a relevant work of theatre that the Purchase community can relate to. Above all else, I hope that my senior project promotes a sense of fun and adventure for all who experience it and I will do all that I can to make that happen.

## Whose Dream is it Anyway?: A Study of Christopher Durang and *The Actor's Nightmare*

In *The Actor's Nightmare*, Christopher Durang has built a dream world that revolves around George Spelvin, a seeming everyman with limited theatre experience. In this nightmare George is shuffled from one play to another, placed in one uncomfortable position after the next by being the only performer who does not know his lines, what play he is performing in, or even his own name.[1] As George navigates through this nightmare, he reveals to us a little more about who he is in his "real" world. We find out that George is an accountant who has given up on his past religious ambitions of joining the monastery, but the rest of his biography is up for interpretation or entire fabrication. Who is this character that we watch and grow to love for forty minutes? Who is this dreamer? Does he have a real world parallel that Durang is using? These are questions that can only be definitively answered by the playwright. However, it becomes increasingly apparent as we dig, through plot points, character choices, directorial decisions, and exegetic metatheatrical references that our George Spelvin *is* the playwright himself, Christopher Durang. It might be useful, in our interpretation of this *Nightmare* to consider Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams" and alternative theories of dreams as we do our own uninvited interpreting of George and Durang as the writer/dreamer.

Christopher Durang is an American playwright and actor well known for his works of comedy. Born in New Jersey, Durang grew up attending Catholic schools such as

[1] Durang, Christopher, and Christopher Durang. Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You; And, the Actors Nightmare: Two Plays. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1995.

the Our Lady of Peace School in New Providence, NJ and the Delbarton School in Morristown, NJ. He then got his bachelor's degree in English from Harvard and a master's degree in playwriting from Yale.[2] From this information alone, it becomes clearer where George fits within the framework of Christopher Durang and where these plays exist in his world. It is my sense that this play sprang from an ivy league fever dream that Christopher Durang had while studying playwrighting at Yale. That would make Christopher Durang the dreamer, lost in a range of theatrical mystery, not knowing his own name and thrust into the limelight in the identity of the anonymous actor George Spelvin. George is expected, by the other famed actors with whom he comes to share the stage, and by his frantic stage manager, to understudy one of history's most renowned actors in a medley of very different plays (most of which that actor never played, as they were written decades after his death), which would be an absolute nightmare for any actor or playwright, let alone a person who had no background in or talent for theatre or performance.

Because George Spelvin is a pseudonym, the true identity of this character (if he was not a pure creative fabrication) could belong to anyone. The name George Spelvin has a tradition of multiple applications in the theatre world. It is often used to credit an actor who does not want to be credited or it might appear in place of an actor's name who may be playing more than one role in a production. It can also be used to name a character who has no lines and therefore can be played by anybody filling in the role.[3]

---

[2] Smith, Dinitia. "Christopher Durang Explores the Afterlife, Including His Own." The New York Times. November 26, 2005. Accessed April 17, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/26/theater/newsandfeatures/christopher-durang-explores-the-afterlife-including-his-own.html.

[3] Freud, Ralph. "George Spelvin Says the Tag: Folklore of the Theater." Western Folklore 13, no. 4 (1954): 245. doi:10.2307/1496437.

In many ways, Christopher Durang's main character George Spelvin embodies the description of *a* "George Spelvin." In the play, The character extends the theatrical tradition of George Spelvin by being a non-actor who does not want to be credited because he'd rather not be put in this position in the first place, particularly as the plots escalate. As soon as the nightmare begins, George falls victim to the given circumstances. George appears in place of an actor who is playing more than one role over the course of three plays in this nightmare: the great and legendary actor Edwin Booth. In the section that should be Noel Coward's *Private Lives*, George is forced to take over the role of Elyot. The scene ends and suddenly George is expected to be the titular character in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The nightmare then progresses to its Samuel Beckett section where George is playing the role of Willy in a mashup of Beckett plays called Checkmate. Finally, it is announced that George will be playing Sir Thomas More in Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* where Sir Thomas, and George, meet their inevitable death by way of the executioner's axe.[4] In Ralph Freud's 1954 article titled "George Spelvin Says the Tag: Folklore of the Theater," Freud clarifies, "Now let me explain that the 'tag' is the last line of a play, and that it is considered extremely bad luck for an actor to ever say this line during a rehearsal; he must say it for the first time on the opening night."[5] Christopher Durang carries this superstition into *The Actor's Nightmare* by directly correlating Sir Thomas's last line of *A Man for All* Seasons with George's death. In this final scene George's head is placed on a chopping block as the rest of the characters gather around him to finish the play and make him say his final line, "Friend be not afraid of your office, you send me to God."

[4] Durang, Christopher, The Actor's Nightmare.
[5] Freud, Ralph. "George Spelvin Says the Tag: Folklore of the Theater."

George shows much reluctance to say this line as he naturally fears for his life after having been put through all the rigmarole that preceded this impending final moment. After much prodding and impatient prompting from his fellow actors and the stage manager, George finally accepts his fate, justifying, “They say you can never dream your own death, so I expect I’ll wake up just as soon as he starts to bring the blade down. So perhaps I should get it over with.”[6] Although George’s final line of the play is not said in a rehearsal setting, the trope of extreme bad luck lingers in the air as the rest of the characters live on while George’s life appears to end. Throughout the play George is treated by his castmates and the playwright like an everyday “George Spelvin” who can fill any role with no consequences because they have no lines, but the opposite is true for *this* George, who must carry the weight of each show on his shoulders as he frantically improvises his way through and out of this nightmare, trying to please everyone around him, from his castmates and stage manager to the audience.

Throughout the play there are many references to Christopher Durang’s life outside of the dream world. The bulk of these references are theatre references, and ones that were more likely studied than experienced by the playwright. The first of these is a reference to Edwin Booth, the legendary actor and brother to John Wilkes Booth (who infamously assassinated President Abraham Lincoln and broke both of his legs in his escape). In *The Actor’s Nightmare*, Christopher Durang further jokes that Edwin Booth has been in a car accident, an anachronistic scenario as automobiles had not been invented in Booth’s lifetime. The fact that George must understudy one of the greatest actors of the twentieth century also adds a layer of metatheatrical comedy to

[6] Durang, Christopher, The Actor’s Nightmare.

the plot in that Edwin Booth's audience has high expectations upon entering the theater, only to be disappointed by the time they leave. In this way, George has big shoes to fill as he amateurishly takes over and butchers Edwin Booth's signature role of Hamlet in a scene opposite fellow renowned and egotistical Shakespearean actor Henry Irving as Horatio, in which George uses iambic pentameter and Old English words to fake his dialogue. Christopher Durang's references to Edwin Booth and Henry Irving tip a hat to theatre history scholars and exaggerates how out of place George is within his nightmare. Durang goes on to reference actors Sarah Bernhardt, Sarah Siddons and Eleonora Duse, all of whom were alive and working at the same time as Edwin Booth and considered to be grand or glamorous personalities, something that they all have in common, juxtaposing George's lack of experience and elegance within their world. George continues to make more theatrical references in his soliloquy, as he shuffles through his personal library of Shakespeare and theatre knowledge to fill up his time alone on stage. In this monologue, George (mis)quotes *Hamlet, The Tempest, Macbeth, A Tale of Two Cities, Private Lives, A Streetcar Named Desire,* and even *Kiss Me Kate*, the musical adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew.* The final theatre references come in the form of theatre itself as George stars in Noel Coward's *Private Lives* as Elyot, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as Hamlet, Samuel Beckett's "Checkmate," a mashup of *Waiting for Godot, Endgame* and *Waiting for Lefty* as Willie, and finally Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* as Sir Thomas More. These are references that would come naturally to a theatre student such as Durang, and are jokes that would land for an audience of theatre students as they are in on the lines about "breaking legs" and are able to associate the garbage cans and spoken stage

directions in Checkmate with Beckett's metatheatrical *Endgame* although it is not explicitly identified in the script. The next glimpse into Christopher Durang's life comes in the form of a random New Jersey joke that connects Perth Amboy to mobile homes. This out of place reference comes across as an inside joke for the New Jersey community and serves as a nice change of pace that relates to the audience's reality. Through this reference, Christopher Durang is tipping his hat to his home state and writing from a place of honesty and familiarity as many playwrights are encouraged to do. The final parallel between George and Durang is their religious upbringing. Both George and Durang were taught by nuns, attended Catholic schools and experienced guilt for abandoning their religious pasts.[7] In *The Actor's Nightmare*, George expresses a sense of nostalgia for his religious upbringing as he recounts being taught by nuns in elementary school and then Benedictine priests in high school. George looks back on weekends spent at the monastery with pleasure and starts to feel guilty for abandoning his once nurturing Christian faith after being rejected for a spot in the monastery for being too young.[8] In identifying the connections between George and Durang, it may be useful to take a psychoanalytical approach and explore how dream theory relates to this play.

According to Austrian philosopher Sigmund Freud, dreams are a "royal road to the unconscious." Part of Freud's theory is that dreams allow us to access parts of our psyche that are unavailable to us while we are awake, unlocking secrets that we often keep from ourselves. For George, this nightmare reveals his innermost anxieties,

[7] "Christopher Durang by Craig Gholson - BOMB Magazine." Christopher Durang - BOMB Magazine. Accessed April 17, 2019. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/christopher-durang/.
[8] Durang, Christopher, The Actor's Nightmare.

including his worry of not fitting in or belonging to a community, his guilt for abandoning his religious past, and his fear of death. Christopher Durang presents George's worry of not fitting in or belonging to a community through his juxtaposition of George's existence within the world that the playwright has created. To paraphrase Durang, "George is a true innocent who has wandered into this situation and who knows almost nothing of what's going on around him." In this nightmare, George is an accountant among glamorous and world-renowned actors of the 19th century, out of place and desperately different from the characters around him. George's guilt for abandoning his religious past comes up at multiple points throughout the play. For the most part, these moments spark from George's discomfort in not knowing his lines. During the *Private Lives* section, George breaks character in an emotional outburst that leads him to say, "oh God, I don't know my lines. I don't know how I got here. I wish I *weren't* here. I wish I had joined the monastery like I almost did right after high school." As George does not know what to say, he often refers to a place of familiarity in his subconscious, where his knowledge and experience of religion lives. This comes up again during his monologue as he calls for his line after the Hamlet quote, "Get thee to a nunnery!" This prompts George to go on a long tangent about his Catholic school education. The last reference to George's past life at the monastery is different in that it does not come from George directly. This time, it is George's subconscious in the form of Dame Ellen Terry in character during the Checkmate sequence, in which she obscurely asks, "Why did you leave the monastery Willie?" which George is unable to answer. This moment solidifies the theory that George's brain is searching for the answer to this question while he is unconscious, making the answer a secret that George is keeping from himself while he

is conscious. George's fear of death becomes prominent during *A Man for All Seasons* where George fights the forces that surround him as the executioner is introduced. In this section, George clings to the nightmare in a way that he has not yet demonstrated up until this point. George no longer goes along with the obstacles that are put in his way as he attempts to avoid his beheading by requesting to wake up or change plays and refusing to say his final line until he ultimately accepts his fate in hopes that it will end this nightmare. In an online article on Psychology Today entitled "What Dreams of Your Death Are Really About," Dr. Seth J. Gillihan explores dream theory, stating, "Just as dreams can deeply affect us, so too can our awareness of our mortality. We fear death, we hope for death, we plan for death, we resist death. We're preoccupied with a mystery that we never directly experience—until, finally, we do."[9] This rational fear of dying follows us throughout our lives as we experience deaths in our own way. As we get older, this concept becomes more real in our brains in correlation to the people we lose along our journey of life. Since no living person has experienced the permanent and daunting concept of death, our brains can only ask questions in hopes to fulfil the never-ending curiosity and anxiety that it associates with death. Gillihan offers this as an alternative theory of dreams called the activation-synthesis model. In this play, George's unconscious brain is constantly working to unlock the answers to the questions that his conscious brain has trouble with making sense of. George's journey through this nightmare is representative of his subconscious evaluation and synthesis of George's path of life, leaving him with some insight on the choices that he has made and the meaning of life itself.

[9] "What Dreams of Your Death Are Really About." Psychology Today. Accessed May 05, 2019. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/think-act-be/201602/what-dreams-your-death-are-really-about.

Through our synthesis and evaluation of George's subconscious and Durang's *Nightmare*, we have found that the parallels between George and Durang are not merely coincidental, but are historically and scientifically supported by personal events in Durang's own life and psychoanalytic study of the drives involved in the creation of a work stemming from those sources. Though identifiably different, both George and Christopher Durang act with similar goals, to escape the current circumstances under which they are placed and do so with a common thread of familiarity. George exemplifies this through his navigation of the nightmare with his super-objective being to physically escape the nightmare in which he is stuck. George does it by clinging onto the things with which he is most familiar: his personal education in theatre, however spotty, and his religious background. Christopher Durang acts through his role as the playwright, to metaphorically escape the world in which he lives by writing this comedic play in a dream world and doing so by implementing elements of his personal life with which he is most familiar. Durang achieves this by applying creatively his upbringing in New Jersey along with his own personal experiences in religious and theatrical education to this narrative. The exploration of this dream world reveals upon closer analysis many of the ways in which Christopher is "performing" George Spelvin through his playwriting. We see the parallels of New Jersey, religious diversion, and many ways in which the familiar touchstones of the playwright's common knowledge are shared with the audience as a stroke of genius as Durang satirizes Coward, Shakespeare, Beckett, and finally Bolt as we end this *Nightmare* with inevitable death, marking the end of this journey and the prospect of new beginnings.

# Works Cited

"Christopher Durang by Craig Gholson - BOMB Magazine." Christopher Durang - BOMB Magazine. Accessed April 17, 2019. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/christopher-durang/.

Durang, Christopher, and Christopher Durang. Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You; And, the Actors Nightmare: Two Plays. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1995.

Freud, Ralph. "George Spelvin Says the Tag: Folklore of the Theater." Western Folklore 13, no. 4 (1954): 245. doi:10.2307/1496437.

Smith, Dinitia. "Christopher Durang Explores the Afterlife, Including His Own." The New York Times. November 26, 2005. Accessed April 17, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/26/theater/newsandfeatures/christopher-durang-explores-the-afterlife-including-his-own.html.

"What Dreams of Your Death Are Really About." Psychology Today. Accessed May 05, 2019. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/think-act-be/201602/what-dreams-your-death-are-really-about.

## Technical Essay

I found the process of this senior project to be one of ease and low stress. Having an organized view of how I wanted the process to go in advance helped me a lot in executing my work. This came with the help of Theatre & Performance faculty, past students, and my collaborators. The people who most impacted my experience in a helpful way were my Junior Seminar professor Bess Rowen, my shadowing report subject Melina Finck, my director Jeremy Suarez, my stage manager Lacey Szerlip, my dramaturg Jonathan Mannato, and our festival producer Jack Tamburri. Each of these individuals helped me to form and meet my goals in their own way. It feels good to have accomplished pretty much all of the goals that I had set up for myself in my Artistic Aims. Although there were some bumps in the road along the way, we were able to overcome the minor obstacles and put on a show that was a memorable and unifying experience for all that attended.

I was surprised with how much of the work that I did was impacted by my experience in Junior Seminar. Without the help of Bess Rowen, this project would not have been possible. Going into junior year, I was set on putting on a stand-alone production of *Suicide Incorporated* by Andrew Hinderaker, and while this idea was well-received by my classmates and friends, it did not have the same effect on the Board of Theatre & Performance. I had a lot of trouble coming up with a short play to pitch as a festival piece, and in the latter half of the semester Bess sent me and Jeremy an email with the script for *The Actor's Nightmare* attached. I read the play, figured that it was better than nothing, and pitched it thinking that it would not get approved because I was

less passionate about it during the presentation. It wasn't until after the project was approved that I became serious and passionate about the piece. In the summer that followed, I read the play over and over again and became increasingly enamored with the characters and story that Christopher Durang had created. As the Fall semester approached, I knew that my team and I were all eager and ready to begin the actual process of putting together the show.

In the Fall semester of 2018, we scouted Mitch Angelo to create our poster, held auditions and came up with our original cast list. We held our first read-through of the play and shortly after encountered our first set-back. Originally, we had Greta Keating signed on to play the character of Ellen, and we were fortunate enough to find out early on in the process that she would not be able to continue working with us as she had other work to prioritize in the Spring. Although she was a great fit for the role, this was ultimately for the best as it would have been difficult to navigate around her busy schedule and work with someone who was not fully committed to the project. We held a second set of invited auditions to fill this empty role and were lucky enough to cast Siobhan Kiernan as her replacement. From there we held a second read-through of the play with our new castmate and could not have been happier with the result as she brought a unique energy and enthusiasm to the cast. After having two full cast read-throughs of the script, I was feeling more confident about the tone and themes of this play and about speaking the lines out loud. We then had about one week's worth of rehearsals before our hiatus for Winter break. Over the break, I was able to run my monologue a few times with whoever would help me out whether it was my sister,

friends, or Jeremy. This helped me stay on track with my goals and preparation progress for the busy Spring 2019 semester that was to come.

In the Spring 2019 semester we hit the ground running with a rehearsal schedule of three to four times per week thanks to our organized stage manager Lacey Szerlip. Throughout the rehearsal process we ran into few to no problems and stayed on track. Jeremy had the insight of setting an early off-book date which was ultimately pushed back as we knew that we had more time for exploring these characters and crafting moments before worrying about the lines being word-perfect. This helped me as an actor because I was already almost off-book by the time that the original date had come around. Having the extra time with the script felt like a blessing and saved our collective state of mind as we kept rehearsing with the same amount of intensity. During this semester I was thankful to be included in the regularly scheduled production meetings with our producers every other Wednesday. These meetings helped me a great deal as they gave me insight and updates on the progress of the other shows going up within our line-up along with answers and information about the technical aspects of each show. My mind was put at ease as I knew that I had a place and time where my questions would be answered, and where decisions could be made as a group. All technical aspects of the show came together in these meetings, giving us one less thing to worry about. It was in these meetings that we discussed marketing strategies, production teams, and came up with the running order of the shows. I am thankful to Jack Tamburri for all the work he did in organizing this festival and keeping us on schedule regarding all matters outside of the rehearsal room. He, Jordan Johnston, and

Sydney Gottesman all did a lot of work towards collecting information and sharing their resources with us so that we could all accomplish what we needed to get done.

One of the biggest obstacles and frustrations that we experienced throughout this process was the disorganization of tech week. Our festival was allocated one day to load in all three shows' sets, props and costumes and then one day each to build all of our lights and sound cues in the booth. During our designated tech day the sound system was not working, and the majority of our tech cues were sound cues. It was frustrating because it was our only day to run these cues and they were pivotal to the comedy in the show. We had to negotiate with another show to get more time in the space before our faculty showing. The reason that we did not have more time in the first place was because the BA mainstage booked the space for rehearsal during that week. I see this as unfair because no senior project is ever in use of the performance spaces for rehearsal purposes, and we only had the one week to put together the technical elements for the three shows in the festival. All senior projects rehearse in the dance building or in humanities classrooms. It is frustrating that we are a theatre community that seems unable to share its already limited resources. The other theaters on campus should be available for senior project performances. It feels like the program does not prioritize senior projects, even though they are every student's top priority. Theatre and Performance students should be able to utilize the designated Purchase College theater spaces while they have the opportunity to as students.

When it became time for show week, my cast and production team felt ready for performances. We got through our faculty showing and felt confident. The only thing that would have made this experience better is if we had more time in between the

faculty show on Tuesday and our opening night performance on Thursday. At the faculty show, we received some notes that involved making changes to sound cues, and it was difficult to implement these notes as we did not have access to the space in the one day that we had in between these performances. We ended up changing the sound cue and running it for the first time in the performance, as we did not have time to run the scene transition before the show, because we were sharing the space with the two other festival pieces.

As far as the actual performances went, I could not have been happier with the outcome. For our second show we had some technical difficulties with the lights, as someone had come in and patched the house lights to the first row of lights on the grid sometime between the shows, but other than that we had a pretty flawless run. We sold out each performance and had a great turn out across the board. I was happy with the feedback that I got from the faculty and students that got to see the show. It makes me immensely proud to have accomplished my goals, and I could not have done it without my amazing cast, production team and the Theatre & Performance faculty. I feel that this project has prepared me for my career post-Purchase more than any class throughout my college career ever did, and I am grateful to be closing my college career with such a feeling of accomplishment and preparedness. I look forward to applying the knowledge and experience that I have absorbed throughout this process to my future endeavors in the arts.

**Actor's Portfolio**

**Jacob Wade**

**SUNY Purchase '19**

***The Way We Get By* by Neil LaBute**
**Blackwolves Productions**
**Directed by Logan Riley Bruner & Michael A. Jorge**
**Muse McCormack (Stage Manager)**
**Location: Southside**
**Dates: April 4th, 5th, & 6th, 2017**

Jacob Wade (Doug) & Erin Michelitsch (Beth) 2017.

*The Way We Get By* by Neil LaBute is a two-person show about step-siblings Doug and Beth, who have just spent the night together after a drunken wedding reception. The play takes place in the early hours of the morning after their first sexual encounter. The two discuss the rules of attraction, sex and society while getting to know each other better and playfully fighting throughout the play.

**Production Photos:**

Erin Michelitsch (Beth) & Jacob Wade (Doug) 2017.

Jacob Wade (Doug) & Erin Michelitsch (Beth) 2017.


Jacob Wade (Doug) & Erin Michelitsch (Beth) 2017.

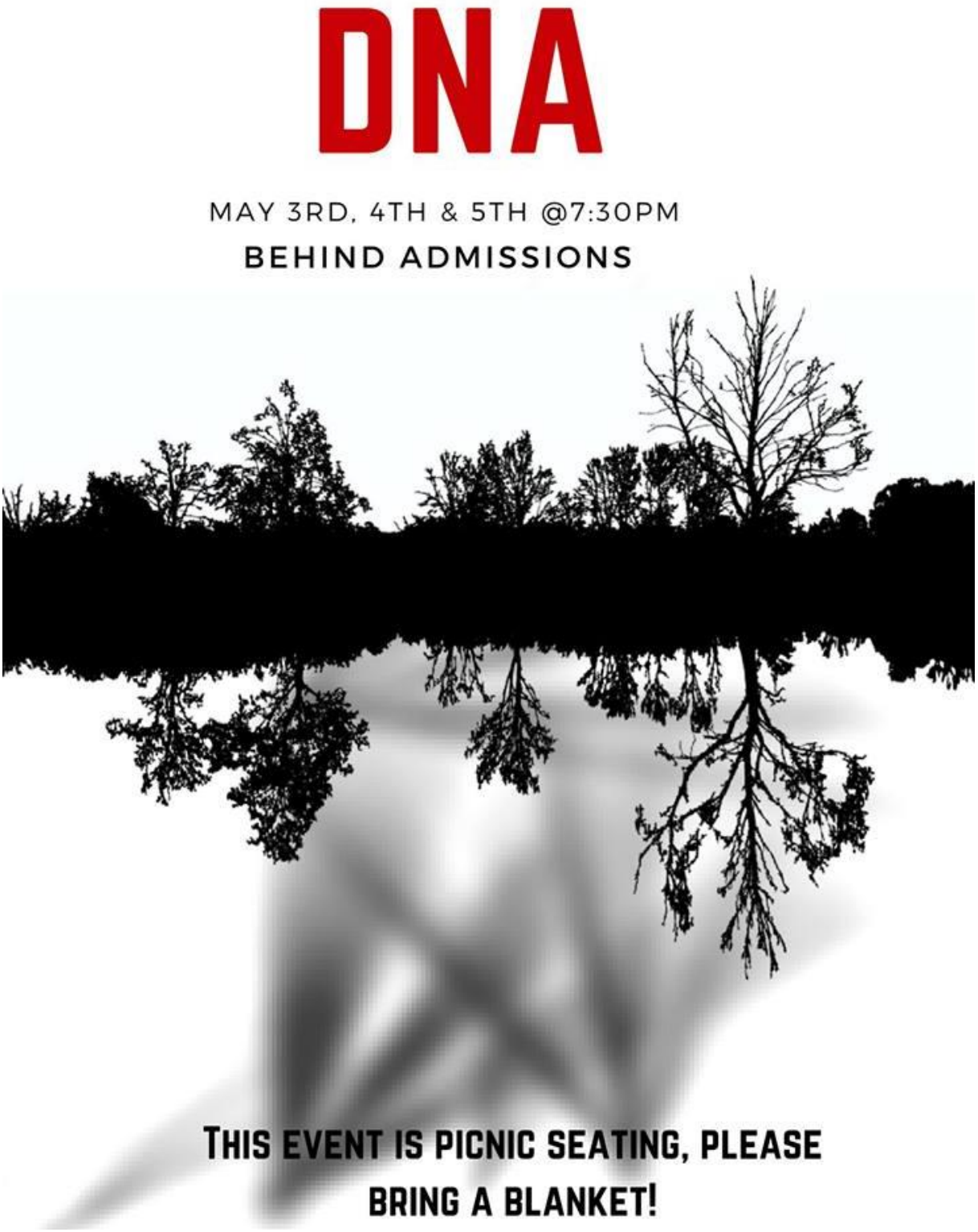
***DNA* by Dennis Kelly**
**Blackwolves Productions**
**Directed by Logan Riley Bruner & Jeremy Suarez**
**Lacey Szerlip (Stage Manager)**
**Location: The Elephant Tree Behind Admissions**
**Dates: 2018**

Left to Right: (Top) Jeremy Suarez (Director), Ashley Driscoll (Jan), Mitchell Angelo (Mark), Jeremy Nuñez (Richard), Soren Correia (Adam), Logan Bruner (Director), Jack Boggan (Brian), Elyssa Eliseo (Lou), Michael Jorge (Danny), (Bottom) Erin Degnan (Leah), Cayleigh Hearth (Cathy), Jacob Wade (John Tate). Missing from photo: Em Hampton (Phil), and Lacey Szerlip (Stage Manager). 2018.

Unfortunately, this production never saw an audience due to outside circumstances. This production made it to final dress.

*DNA* by Dennis Kelly revolves around a group of high-schoolers who gather in the woods to cover their tracks after an accident involving their friend Adam. The circumstances break certain characters and bring others together as they attempt to make things right.

**Poster:**




Poster Design by Marilyn Vasconcellos

**Marketing:**

# MISSING

## ADAM PEDANI

Age: 17 Height: 5'5 Hair: Brown Eyes: Hazel PGP: He/Him

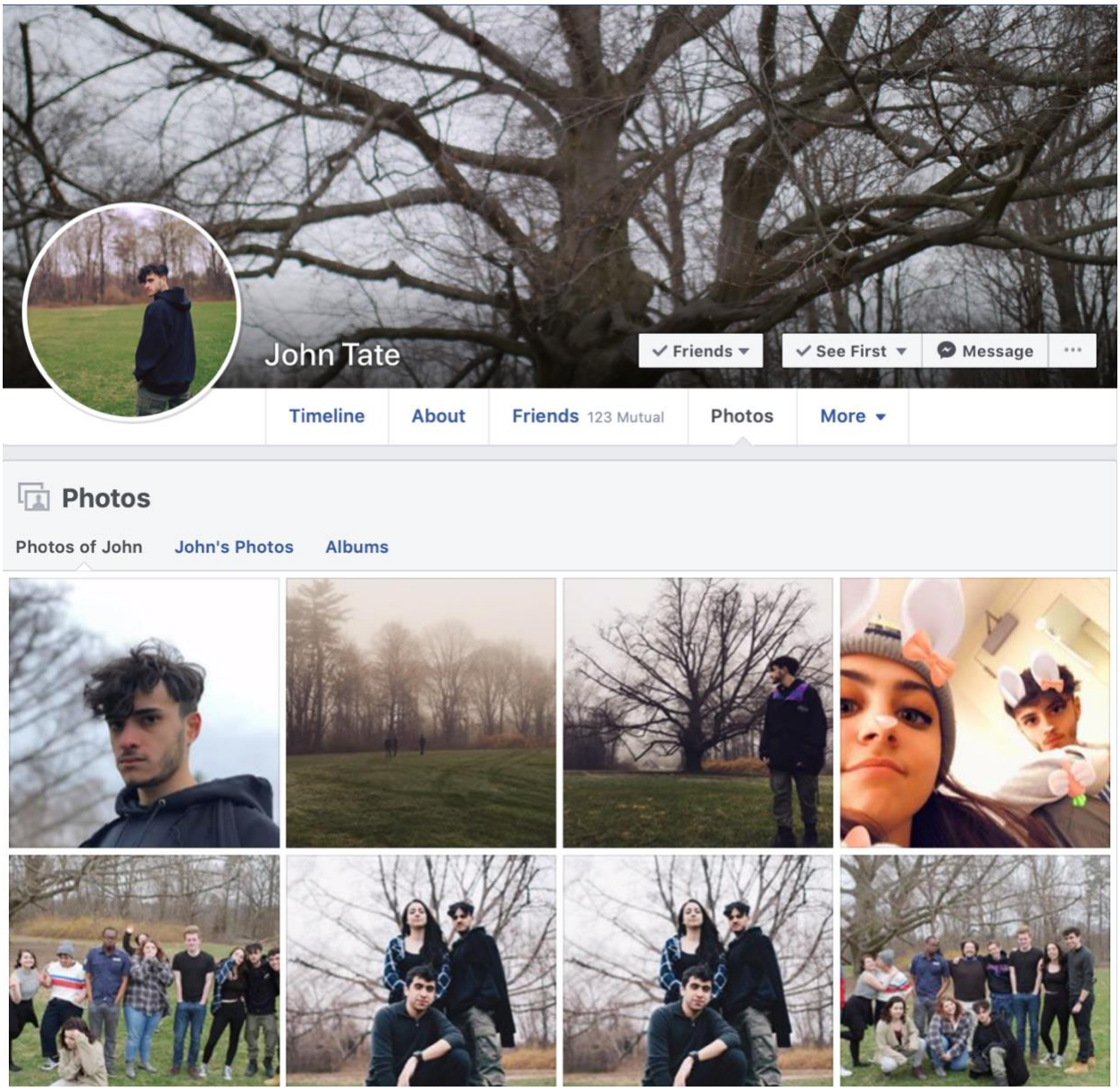
Last seen on 25th April 2018 by the ASDA, wearing blue jeans and a white t-shirt

If you have seen this boy or know of his whereabouts, we advise you to contact Blackwolves Productions on Facebook

Flyer courtesy of www.4themissing.net

Missing Child Poster for the character of Adam, circulated on Facebook by character profiles.

**Character Profile:**



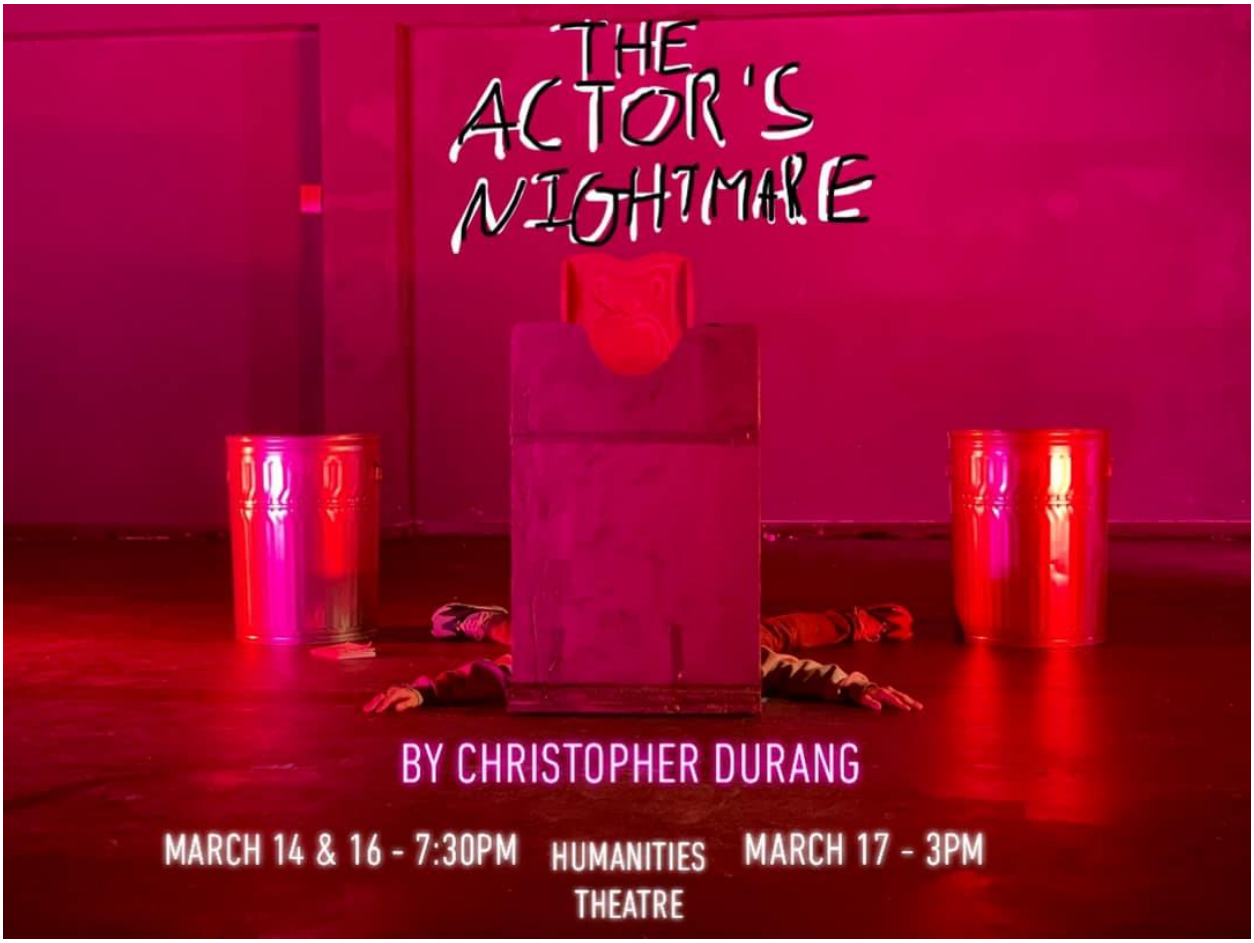

John Tate's photos on Facebook 2018.

**Promotional Photos:**

Jacob Wade as John Tate 2018.

Elyssa Eliseo (Lou), Michael Angel Jorge (Danny), & Jacob Wade (John Tate) 2018.

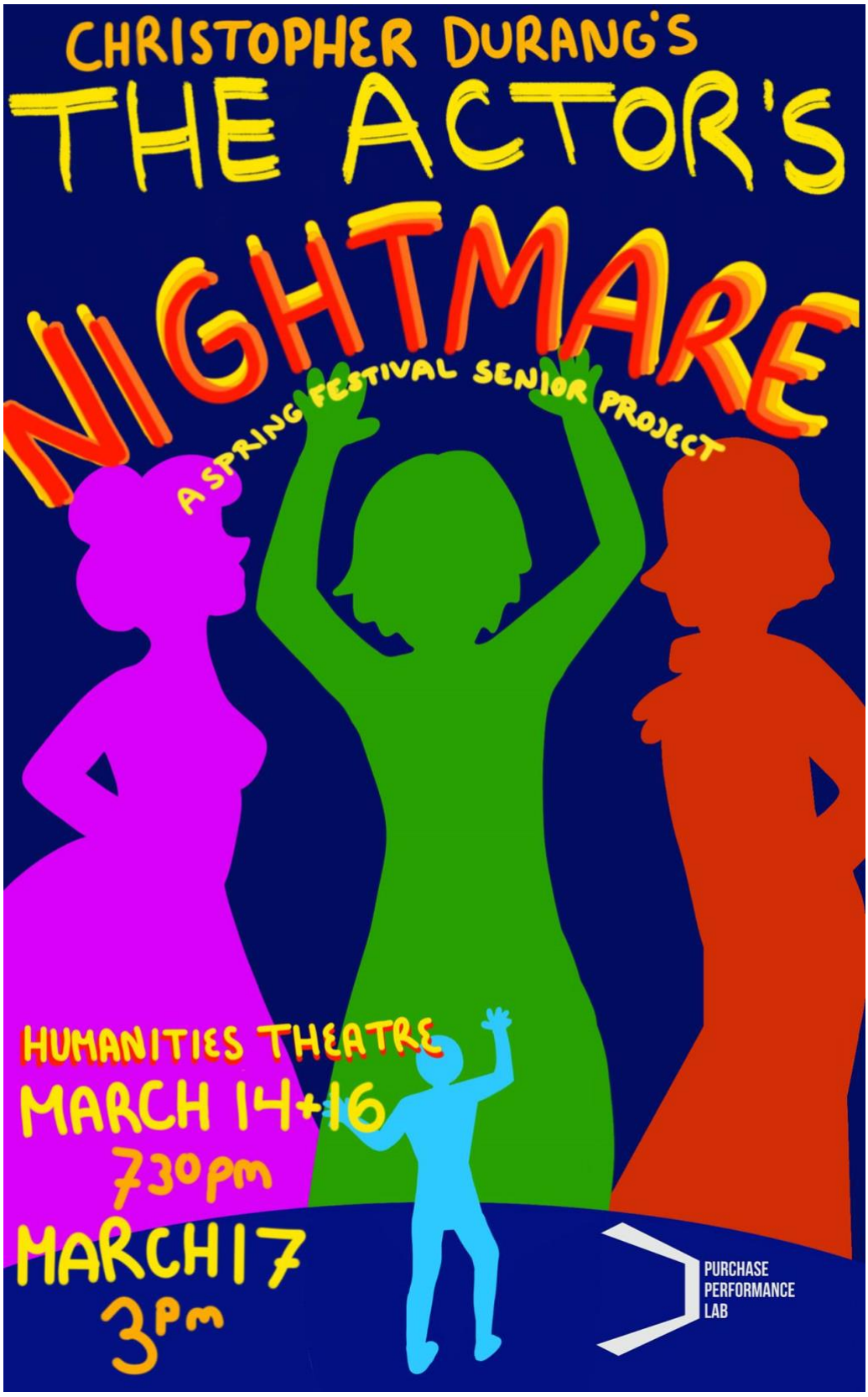
***The Actor's Nightmare* by Christopher Durang**
**Purchase Performance Lab**
**Directed by Jeremy Vance Suarez**
**Lacey Szerlip (Stage Manager)**
**Location: The Humanities Theater**
**Dates: March 14th, 15th, & 17th, 2019**




*The Actor's Nightmare* by Christopher Durang is a short comic play about an accountant named George Spelvin who is mistaken for an actor and forced to perform in a series of plays for which he does not know any of his lines.

**Production Team:**
**Director:** Jeremy Vance Suarez
**Stage Manager:** Lacey Szerlip
**Costume Designer:** Maya Robinson
**Fight Choreographer:** Logan Bruner
**Sound Designer:** Michael A. Jorge
**Lighting Designer:** Adam Hamdy
**Dramaturg:** Jonathan Mannato
**Technical Director:** Alex Theisen

**Poster:**




Poster Design by Mitchell Angelo.

**Photos:**

Left to Right: (Top) Veronica Ryzio (Meg), Maya Dougherty-Harris (Sarah), Jeremy Suarez (Director), Ramsey Heitmann (Henry), (Bottom) Siobhan Kiernan (Ellen), Jacob Wade (George) 2019.

Jacob Wade (George) & Maya Dougherty-Harris (Sarah) 2019. *George and Sarah perform in 'Private Lives'.*

Jacob Wade (George) 2019. *George performs a soliloquy in 'Hamlet'.*

Jacob Wade (George) & Siobhan Kiernan (Ellen) 2019. *George and Ellen perform in 'Endgame'.*

**Fundraising:**


Indiegogo page for *The Actor's Nightmare* 2018/19.