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The Passionate Actor

Britney Nichole Walker-Merritte
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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The Passionate Actor

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Drama

by

Britney Walker-Merritte
Oral Roberts University
Bachelors of Science in Drama/TV/Film, 2009

May 2016
University of Arkansas

This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

Amy Herzberg, M.F.A
Thesis Director

Jennifer McKnight, M.F.A
Committee Member

Michael Landman, M.F.A
Committee Member

ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of materials documenting my thesis performances as well as a statement of artistry, a copy of my current headshot, and resume and a link to my website.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to:

The honeymooners: Bill Rogers, Damian Dena, Stephanie Faatz Murry, Lupe Campos, and Chris Hecke.

My professors at the University of Arkansas.

My bestfriend Ashley S. Price, who has always been my rock.

My family that instilled in me to always to pursue my passion.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to those who passionately pursue their dreams with no limits.

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STATEMENT OF ARTISTRY

“To whom much is given, much is required” (Luke 12:48). I believe I have been given a gift to be a creator: An Actor. I hold myself at a high standard when it comes to showing the complete rawest truth of each character that I portray. I have been given the opportunity to change the people around me. I don’t take lightly the potential to change their ideas and perceptions, or to allow them to reflect on their past, present, or future. It is my job, my passion, and I plan on doing it until I breathe my last breath.

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DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
Proudly Presents

**WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE'S
Twelfth
Night**



Directed by:
JENNY MCKNIGHT

Scenic & Projection Design: **KIAH KAYSER** Costume Design: **PATRICIA J. MARTIN**

Lighting Design: **JACQUELYN R. COX** Sound Design: **JACOB HOFER**



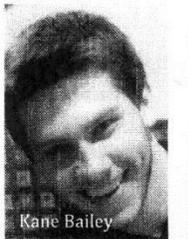
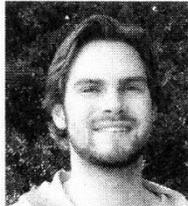
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ARKANSAS
J. WILLIAM FULBRIGHT
COLLEGE OF THEATRE

“Twelfth Night” Program published by University Theatre. Page 1 and 16.

MEET THE CAST



Damian Dena



Kane Bailey



Stephanie Perez-Murry



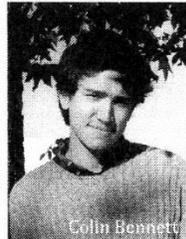
Bill Rogers



Tyla Gibson



Chris Hecke



Colin Bennett



Trey Smith



Maggie Lewis



Tyla Gibson

Dear Theatre Friends

Welcome to the second production of our 2015-16 Mainstage Season. I am certain you will enjoy seeing faculty director Jenny McKnight's rendition of William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* set not in Illyria, but in New Orleans during Mardi Gras at the beginning of the 20th Century. I know they've all had a wonderful time working on this classic piece and are eager to share it with you.

I am often asked, "How do you pick your season of shows for the University Theatre?" The short answer is this. It's not easy! When the faculty begins the process of selecting a season for the University Theatre stage, many, many factors must be considered. However, as an exercise in brevity, I will only discuss two. First and foremost, students who make up the Department of Theatre are our primary concern. As educators, we work to identify just the right pieces that will challenge and inspire students to become the best theatre artists they can as they develop their skills as designers, actors, technicians, directors, and playwrights. The student's best interests are front and center as we make our way through hundreds of scripts in each year's search of the "right" plays and musical. It's no easy task, but one the faculty takes seriously.

Second, and equally important are you, the audience. We understand there are many live theatre options in the Northwest Arkansas community, and we work very hard to stand out amongst a very exciting crowd. I'm sure we can all agree that live theatre should be entertaining. Attending live theatre is a wonderful way to step aside from the rigors of daily life, which tends to be filled with business meetings, house chores, paying bills, and soccer practices. These activities monopolize our day, and the idea of spending a couple of hours in a darkened theatre (with a couple hundred closest friends!) watching live entertainment is an excellent respite from all of these stresses.

However, we also believe that it is our obligation to provide an opportunity for audiences to be challenged; to be provoked; to be inspired; and ultimately, to be changed. We hope that by seeing our productions – created by the next generation of world leaders in the arts and beyond – you are moved to engage in a dialogue with the world in which we live, and perhaps, even more importantly, the world we will leave behind for those who come after us. Some of our productions this year will push that envelope in a way that I believe to be a very healthy and appropriate way.

This year's season is an exciting collection of works written by such artists as Ibsen, Shaw, Coward, William Shakespeare, Sarah Ruhl and Billie Joe Armstrong & Michael Stipe. It is safe to say that most of our audience members will know one or perhaps two of these authors. What is also safe to say is that each show in this season will entertain, challenge, and delight audience members of all ages, interests, and backgrounds. There is truly something for everyone.

Thank you for your patronage and hope to see you at the theatre!

Michael J. Riha
Chair of Theatre

Staff for the Production

Stage Manager.....Cole Wimpée	Cutters/Drapers.....Samantha Burrow, Valerie Lane
Assistant Stage Manager.....Molly Hendran	First Hands.....Ruby Kempf, Robin Okimoto
Makeup Designer.....Ashley Nolan	Stitchers.....Madi Bell, Melissa Ferguson, Hannah Latham, Rebecca Locklin, Kayla White, Students of StageTech I and Production Practicum
Assistant Costume Designer.....Melissa Hall	Scenic/Lighting Staff.....Jacob Hofer, Emily Clarkson, Jacquelyn Cox, Elijah DeWitt, Joseph Farley, Johnathan Jarmon, Kiah Kayser, Joshua Samaniego, Breanna Wright
Fight Choreography.....Damian Dena, Adam Rose	Carpenters/Electricians.....Maryclaire Allen, Kane Bailey, Chandler Birmingham, Ashton Boschert, Matt Clothier, Greg Crosby Aimee Espenschied, Melissa Ferguson, Anna Knight, Austin Lenaburg, Khatan Morel, Tucker Partridge, Ian Pressler, Emily Riggs, Alexa Smith, Sid Tanner, Kayla White, Maclean Wood
Text Consultant.....Grant Goodman	
Original Music Composer.....Keefer Roach	
Dance Consultant.....Nikki Anderson	
Music Assistant.....Grant Addison	
Properties Master.....Joshua Samaniego	
Charge Artist.....Joseph Farley	
Master Electrician.....Emily Clarkson	
Lighting Board Operator.....Ashton Boschert	
Sound Board Operator.....Emily Riggs	
Projection Operator.....Lamar Crosby	
Run Crew.....Tucker Partridge, Ian Pressler, Laurn Waller	
Wardrobe Crew Head.....Jeremy Stuthard	
Wardrobe Crew.....Melissa Ferguson, Katey Martin, Lizzie Reimer, Starlite Stromer, Jocelyn Wolf	
Hair/Makeup Crew.....Sierra Chavez, Maddie Watkins	

MEET THE CAST



Guadalupe Campos



Josh DeWitt



Matt Clothier



Ross Wagner

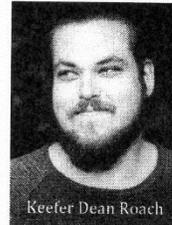
Special Thanks To...

Jason Burrow, David Furr, Ruby Kempf, Robin Okimoto



Staff for the Department of Theatre

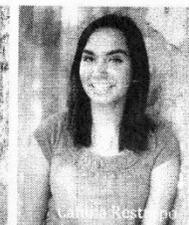
Chair of Theatre.....Michael J. Riha	Theatre Faculty.....Jason Burrow, Mavourneen Dwyer, Kate Frank, Amy Herzberg, Morgan Hicks, Shawn Irish, Michael Landman, Valerie Lane, Gail Leftwich, Patricia J. Martin, Steven Marzoff, Jenny McKnight, Joseph Millett, Michael J. Riha, Les Wade, Weston Wilkerson, Erika Wilhite
Vice-Chair of Theatre.....Patricia J. Martin	
Theatre Office Manager.....Barbara J. Springer	
Production Manager.....Joseph Millett	
Technical Director.....Weston Wilkerson	
Scene Shop Manager.....Brandon Hickman	
Costume Shop Manager.....Valerie Lane	
Theatre Business Manager.....Ashley Cohea	
Box Office/Front of House.....Michaela Conway, Meghan McEnry, Paul McInnis	



Keefer Dean Roach



Ian Bean



Catrina Restrepo

Coming Up in the Spring....

<i>The Motherf**ker with the Hat</i> by Stephen Adly Gurgis, February 4-7 Global Campus Theatre, 2 E Center St	<i>Eurydice</i> by Sarah Ruhl February 19-28 University Theatre, Fine Arts Center
<i>Hedda Gabler</i> by Henrik Ibsen Adapted by Christopher Shinn, March 10-13 Studio 404, Kimpel Hall	Green Day's <i>American Idiot</i> April 15-24 University Theatre, Fine Arts Center



Maryclaire Allen



Sid Tanner



Jordan Martin

“Twelfth Night” Program published by University Theatre. Page 3 and 14.

GETTING TO KNOW...

Kiah Kayser, Scenic & Projection Designer

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

When producing a play by William Shakespeare, many directors choose to set the play in a more contemporary time and place than the playwright intended, to illuminate the themes, relationships and spirit of the play to a modern audience. I've chosen New Orleans: a vibrant waterfront city, prone to storms, with a rich cultural heritage and adventurous, fun-loving, passionate and resilient people.

During the early years of the 20th century, folks of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds lived together in what jazz musician and New Orleans historian Winton Marsalis calls not a "melting pot," but a "gumbo." At that time, jazz was beginning to emerge as a musical form in its own right, improvised from origins in blues and ragtime. And the social structure of those in power and those who served them was extremely important. Not to mention New Orleans carnivals, the history of legal prostitution in Storyville, gambling, jazz funerals, the French Quarter, The Garden District, mariners, pirates... As we rehearsed the play and honed our design ideas, we uncovered even more parallels between 1900s New Orleans and Shakespeare's Illyria.

Thanks for joining us – we hope you'll enjoy the trip as much as we have!

- Jenny McKnight

Who is Kiah Kayser?

I am a second year MFA scenic design candidate from a tiny town in Minnesota that my friends enjoy calling "south Canada." I love hanging out with the grad family here in Arkansas and shamelessly watching *How to Get Away with Murder*. Also I would like to extend the biggest shout out and gratitude towards the grad/shop family. They are truly some of the most supportive people I know.

How did you get interested in design?

I grew up doing community theatre with my family and building sets with them. That's where that theatre bug first really bit. What really got me interested in design was taking a theatre practicum class in my undergrad at Iowa State University. I got to paint every so often and I showed interest in it, so they had me to work in the scene shop the next year. I kept painting and then people wanted me to design. I fell in love with the idea of having to create an exciting world for the actors to work in while still supporting the story.

What do you wish people knew/understood about scenic design?

I wish people knew that putting on a show takes an insane amount of people working together. There are so many people that work on each show, that I stake in it. They all have to make decisions while keeping in mind the other people they are working with and also trying to stay true to how they want to tell the story. It's insane, but very wonderful and rewarding at the same time because there is such a sense of achievement when it is all put together.

If you could design any show, what would it be and why?

If I could design any show, I would love to do *Macbeth*. I am a big fan of Shakespeare and being able to deal with the magic and turmoil of *Macbeth* would be quite fun. I would also really love to do *Guys and Dolls* because I have never done a musical before and that show is so fun and has this nice classic sense.

What do you plan to do after you receive your MFA?

After I graduate I plan on working as a freelance painter/designer for a while then hopefully teaching.

If you were not in theatre, what would you want to do?

If I were not in theatre, I would love to at least be teaching. Seeing others discover things and really let those things "click" is a fascinating process. Seeing the lab students work and learn in the theatre has brought me such joy. The energy and passion reminds me constantly of why I wanted to do theatre in the first place.

"Twelfth Night" Program published by University Theatre. Page 4 and 13.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Jacquelyn R. Cox (Lighting Designer) is from Chattanooga, TN. She is a 3rd year MFA Lighting Designer with her BA Political Violence and Peace Studies and Theatre. Her previous credits include *Dracula*, *Trike Theatre: Peter and the Stormtrooper*, *City Equity Theatre: The Little Mermaid*, *Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ALD): The Caretaker*, *University of Arkansas: Carrie the Musical*, *Birmingham Southern: Godspell*, *University of Arkansas: Sinners*. Since Jacquelyn can't convince the university to let her take the four-year graduate school plan, she plans to move to New York City to work as an assistant lighting designer. She would like to take the union exam and work out of New York.

Jacob Hofer (Sound Designer) is a 3rd year MFA Lighting Design Candidate from Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He holds a B.S. in Theatre from South Dakota State University. He served as Lighting Designer at SDSU and was the Lighting Head at Prairie Repertory Theatre for the past three summers. He previously designed lighting for *The Chairs*, *Kim*, and *As You Like It* at the University of Arkansas. In the future he plans to move to Chicago or Minneapolis and pursue a professional career in Lighting Design.

Kiah Kayser (Scenic & Projection Designer) is a second year MFA scenic design candidate who is from a small town in Minnesota or as others like

to call it, "south Canada." Her recent credits at University of Arkansas include her scenic design for *Chairs*. Kiah got her BA from Iowa State University where some of her design credits include: *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Steady Rain*, and *God of Carnage*. After graduation she plans to become a professional scenic painter and designer.

Patricia Martin (Costume Designer) is a professor, vice chair and head of design for the Department of Theatre at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. She has designed costumes for the Southern Theatre Festival, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, TheatreSquared, Idaho Repertory Theatre, Idaho Theatre for Youth, the University of Idaho, and Tulsa University. She has also worked professionally in New York as a draper's assistant on a variety of Broadway productions and as a cutter for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. Patricia is the recipient of three ACTF design awards and served as Costume Design and Technology Commissioner for USITT from 2002 to 2006.

Ashley Nolen (Makeup Designer) is a Senior Theatre major from Little Rock, Arkansas. She was recently seen on the University Theatre stage as Judith in Noel Coward's *Hay Fever*. After graduation she plans to stay in Fayetteville to pursue acting and design locally.

CAST

Orsino, *Duke of Illyria*.....Damian Dena
Valentine, *a gentleman attending on the Duke*.....Grant Addison
Curio, *a gentleman attending on the Duke*.....Kane Bailey

Olivia, *a rich Countess*.....Stephanie Faatz-Murry
Sir Toby Belch, *uncle to Olivia*.....Bill Rogers
Maria, *housekeeper to Olivia*.....Britney Walker-Merritte
Malvolio, *steward to Olivia*.....Chris Hecke
Sir Andrew Aguecheek, *a suitor to Olivia*.....Colin Bennett
Fabian, *servant to Olivia*.....Trey Smith
1st Gentlewoman, *attendant to Olivia*.....Maggie Harris
2nd Gentlewoman, *attendant to Olivia*.....Tyla Gibson

Viola/Cesario, *a shipwrecked young woman*.....Guadalupe Campos
Sebastian, *brother to Viola*.....Elijah Dewitt
Sea Captain, *rescuer to Viola*.....Matt Clothier
Antonio, *a sea captain and rescuer of Sebastian*.....Ross Wagner

Feste, *a clown and musician*.....Keefer Dean Roach
Priest.....Ian Bean
"Storyville Girl", *prostitute from the Storyville District*.....Camila Restrepo
"Storyville Girl", *prostitute from the Storyville District*.....Maryclaire Allen
1st Officer.....Sid Tanner
2nd Officer.....Jordan Martin

SETTING

New Orleans, Louisiana. Turn of the 20th Century.

Twelfth Night will be performed in two acts,
with one 10-minute intermission.

The video taping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. As a courtesy to other patrons, PLEASE TURN OFF CELLPHONES AND OTHER DEVICES during the performance.

GETTING TO KNOW...

Jenny McKnight, Director

Who is Jenny McKnight?

I'm a director, actor, teacher, wife, daughter, sister, sports fan, introvert, pescatarian, avid reader, seeker of balance in all things. Not necessarily in that order.

What made you decide to join the faculty here at the University of Arkansas?

I really like the emphasis on collaboration, teamwork, and respect for each individual's contributions in the approach to classes and productions here at UA. That isn't always part of every educational environment, but it fuels our Theatre Department.

What is your favorite thing about this production?

Collaborating with the amazing students who are involved, and watching them create a team that's dedicated to honest, clear, innovative storytelling – it's been a joy.

Do you prefer acting or directing? Why?

That's like asking a parent to choose their favorite child! I love them both equally, in different ways. I'm grateful for this opportunity to develop my directing skills and further explore the ways in which my acting experiences inform my directing approaches... and vice-versa.

If you could play any role in the world, what would it be?

A Tennessee Williams heroine: Alma Winemiller, Hannah Jelkes, Blanche DuBois...

If you could direct any show, what would it be and why?

A Harold Pinter play: *Old Times*, *The Birthday Party*, *Betrayal*.

If you could tell the audience one thing before they see this show, what would it be?

I'd thank each of them for investing the next few hours in a real-time, ephemeral, shared experience. I'd invite them to leave the outside world for a while and fully immerse themselves in the world of Shakespeare's (and their own) imagination.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Bill recently appeared in Todd Taylor's *The Jefferson Bottles* with the Black St. Theatre Co. University of Arkansas credits include *The Foreigner*, *Kin*, *Time Stands Still*, *Translations* and *She Stoops To Conquer*. His Northwest Arkansas credits include the *Dupont* series, *Radio Dazed: Dracula vs. Old Man Winter* (Ceramic Cow Productions), *Alley 38* (The Artist's Laboratory Theatre), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Anne of the Thousand Days* (Arts Center of the Ozarks) and numerous other productions. Film credits include *Your Local News*, *Neapolitan* and *Gordon Family Tree*. Following graduation, Bill hopes to pursue a career as an actor as well as teach and/or work at a performing arts center.

Trey Smith (Fabian) is a sophomore from Fayetteville, Arkansas. Previous credits include *East, Lendall*, and *Chad* in *Almost, Maine* and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in *The Mountaintop* (University of Arkansas). Seaweed in *Hairspray Jr.* (Arts Live Theatre). Jimmy in *Almost, Maine* (Fayetteville High School). Trey plans to go to graduate school and obtain a Masters of Fine Arts in Acting, then pursue an acting career doing regional theatre.

Sid Tanner (1st Officer) is from Lewisville, Texas where he received an associate's degree from Collin County Community College. He has been at the University for 2 years. His previous credits include Bill Sykes in *Oliver*, Doody in *Grease*, Jack in *Any Number*

Can Die, and Gus in *The Dumb Waiter*. Sid plans to be a performer after he graduates.

Ross Wagner (Antonio) is a senior double major in Biology and Theatre from Waldron. He has his Bachelor's degree in Broadcast Journalism, and was previously seen in *The Tempest* with the Crude Mechanicals, and *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Gadspell* at the University of Arkansas. He will be performing in the spring production of *American Idiot*.

Britney Walker-Merritte (Maria) Britney is extremely excited to have the opportunity to work on this show! She is original from Houston, Texas. She holds a BA in Drama/TV/Film from Oral Roberts University, a certificate from Los Angeles Film Studies, and is now in her last year pursuing an MFA in Acting from University of Arkansas. Before moving to Fayetteville, she appeared as Aunt Mimi in *The Unmentionables* and Ariel in *The Tempest* (Playhouse Theatre). At the University of Arkansas, her credits include Pecola in *Bluest Eye*, Camae in *The Mountaintop*, Karen in *Poor Relations*, Varya in *The Cherry Orchard*, Intisar in *The Veil*, and Kay in *Kin*. This spring you will be able to see her in *The Motherf**ker with the Hat* and *American Idiot*. After graduating, she plans to move back to Houston, Texas to launch her acting and spoken word poetry career.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Maggie Harris (1st Gentlewoman) is a junior theatre major from Fayetteville, Arkansas. She was previously seen in *As You Like It* with the Arts Center of the Ozarks. This is her first University of Arkansas show.

Chris Hecke (Malvolio) is from Sao Paulo, Brazil. He has a BA in Theatre from North Greenville University. Recently, he was seen in *Black St. Theatre Co.'s Jefferson Battles*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Hay Fever* at the University Theatre and he is a member of *Rodeo Book Club*, a local, long-form, improv Troupe. He will appear in *The MotherF**ker with the Hat*, as Jackie at the Global Campus Theatre. He plans to audition at UPTA and SFTC, and he plans to move to Los Angeles.

Jordan Martin (2nd Officer) is a senior Broadcast Journalism major with a minor in theatre. This is his first main stage show with the UT, but has been in many roles throughout high school and college. He was recently seen in *Almost, Maine* as Phil and Jimmy. He also played Reverend David Lee in the *Foreigner* at the University of the Ozarks. Jordan has been working with the theatre department to produce show promos that have been shared across social media. If you saw the *Hay Fever* or *Twelfth Night* promos, that was him! Jordan wants to be a filmmaker and believes that the acting experience will help him in the industry. His first film will be a documentary following the production

process of *Eurydice*. He and his film partner Colin Bennett will premiere the film next fall.

Camila Restrepo (Storyville Girl) is from Fayetteville, Arkansas. She is a Junior English major, and was previously working as Assistant Stage Manager for the Cherry Orchard, and *The Foreigner*. She was last seen as 'Another Woman' in "The River" with Ozark Blackbox Theatre Group.

Keefe Dean Roach (Feste) is a senior Theatre major from Trumann, AR. His previous credits are *Jesus in Godspell*, *Otto* in *Spring Awakening* (University of Arkansas), *Feste* in *Twelfth Night*, *Friar Laurence/Prince/Chorus* in *Romeo and Juliet* (Crude Mechanicals), and *The Man in The River* (Ozark Black Box Theatre). He has also composed original compositions and done sound design for *Kim*, *Talking Pictures*, and *No Exit*. He looks forward to playing *Will* in *American Idiot* in the spring here at the University of Arkansas. Keefe wants to move to Nashville, TN after he graduates to pursue a career in music or any other form of performance art.

Bill Rogers (Sir Toby Belch) is a 3rd year MFA acting candidate originally from Memphis, TN. Recent regional credits include TheatreSquared productions of *Amadeus*, *The Quest for Don Quixote* (2015 Arkansas New Play Festival), *Superior Danuts*, *Sons of the Prophet*, and *Sundown Town*.

THE STORY OF TWELFTH NIGHT, OR WHAT YOU WILL

Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, is in love with the Countess **Olivia**. She is in mourning for the death of her brother, so she rejects Orsino's suit. Another young woman, **Viola**, has just survived a shipwreck and washes up on Illyria's shore, fearing that her twin brother has died in the storm at sea. Viola decides to dress as a boy to get work as an attendant to Duke Orsino.

Orsino sends his new servant "Cesario" (Viola in disguise as a boy) to woo Olivia on his behalf. Viola goes unwillingly, as she has already fallen in love with Orsino. Olivia is attracted to "Cesario" and she sends her butler, **Malvolio**, after "him" with the gift of a ring.

Olivia's uncle, **Sir Toby Belch**, her servant **Maria**, and Sir Toby's wealthy but gullible friend, **Sir Andrew Aguecheek** (who is also hoping to woo Olivia) all plot to expose the self-righteous, sanctimonious Malvolio. Maria forges a letter that tricks Malvolio into thinking that his mistress Olivia loves him. Malvolio appears dressed ridiculously, smiling and behaving strangely as he was told to in the letter. Unaware of the trick, Olivia is horrified and has Malvolio imprisoned as a madman.

Meanwhile Viola's twin brother, **Sebastian**, having survived the shipwreck, comes to Illyria accompanied by his rescuer **Antonio**, who is a wanted man in Illyria. Sir Andrew challenges Sebastian to a duel (thinking he is "Cesario") and Olivia elopes with Sebastian (thinking he is "Cesario").

Finally, the twins encounter each other, astonishing everyone in town. "Cesario" reveals that "he" is actually Viola, and she and Sebastian celebrate their reunion. The play ends as Orsino welcomes Olivia and Sebastian. Then, acknowledging his own attraction to Cesario, he promises that once she is dressed as a woman again they, too, will be married. **Feste** sings a final song to conclude the play's action, and invites the audience to celebrate the restoration of balance to the world of the play.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Jenny McKnight (Director) is an Instructor in the Department of Theatre, teaching Acting II, Acting for the Camera, and Theatre Appreciation. As a professional actor, Jenny spent nearly 20 years based in Chicago, and performed at theatres around the country including the Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Victory Gardens Theatre, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Arizona Theatre Company, Kansas City Repertory, and many others. Last Spring, Jenny made her TheatreSquared debut in *Superior Donuts*. Jenny has also taught classes at Indiana University, Oklahoma City University, The University of Alabama, and Wabash College. She is very grateful to have landed in Fayetteville among such courageous and imaginative students!

Grant Addison (Valentine) is from Cabot, Ar. He is a senior, and was previously seen in *Into The Woods* at Cabot High School, and *Annie and High School Musical* at the Cabot Community Theatre. He plans to work in Washington D. C. and then he will go to law school.

Maryclaire Allen (Storyville Girl) is a junior theatre major. She is a transfer student and this is her debut on the University Theatre stage! Her favorite credits include: Millie Dillmount in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, Amber Von Tussle in *Hairspray*, Paige Allen in

Project Elan, Judas in *Godspell*, and Liesl Von Trapp in *The Sounds of Music*. She is thrilled to be working with this cast and crew. A huge thank you to my family, friends, and Missy Gipson, they are truly my inspiration!

Kane Bailey (Curio) is a junior Theatre major. This is his first production at the University of Arkansas. In the future, he hopes to make it, as all actors do.

Ian Bean (Priest) is a junior Theatre major from Stilwell, Oklahoma. This is his Mainstage debut, but he was previously seen in *Beauty and The Beast* at Stilwell High School. He plans to teach theatre in a high school or college, and then move to Los Angeles to pursue an acting career.

Colin Bennett (Sir Andrew Aguecheek) is in his last year of school at the University of Arkansas where he is majoring in Journalism, and minoring in Theatre. This is his 7th production with the U of A with some of his earlier appearances being: George Hastings in *She Stoops to Conquer*, David Lee in *The Foreigner*, Sylvius in *As You Like It*, The Orator in *The Chairs*, and more. After graduating in the spring he wishes to pursue an MFA in Acting and eventually move to Chicago to find work there. He hopes you enjoy the show and thanks for coming!

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Guadalupe Campos (Viola/Cesario) is a 3rd year MFA Acting candidate at the University of Arkansas. Recent credits include ensemble and understudy roles in *Amadeus*, *Hamlet* (TheatreSquared) *The Quest for Don Quixote* and *Just Like Us* (NWA New Play Festival). University of Arkansas credits include *The Cherry Orchard*, *Kin*, *Time Stands Still*, and *The Clean House* (University of Arkansas) *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *Othello*, *The Seagull*, *Three Musketeers*, *The Balcony*, *Some Girls*, and *Dracula* (University of Texas El Paso). She is a member of "5 Months Pregnant", a local long form improv group and has studied at the UBC Training Center in NYC. Guadalupe holds a BFA in Theatre from the University of Texas El Paso. She will appear in the University of Arkansas' spring production of *The Motherf**er With the Hat*.

Matthew Travis Clothier (Sea Captain) is a junior from Little Rock, Arkansas. He is a Theatre major with a Business minor. He was previously seen in the *Cherry Orchard*, *The Foreigner*, and in the City Hunt Improv group.

Damian Dena (Orsino) is a 3rd year MFA Performance Major and has been in previous University of Arkansas productions including *Tribes*, *Time Stands Still*, *Poor Relation* and *The Cherry Orchard*

Elijah DeWitt (Sebastian) is a native Arkansan and a senior in the Theatre Department. Previous University of

Arkansas credits include ensemble cast for *The Cherry Orchard*, and *The Foreigner*, Lighting Coordinator for *God of Carnage*, Backstage Crew Chief for *Kin*, and Light Board Operator for *Godspell*. After graduating, Elijah intends to pursue a career in the theatre as an actor, designer, director, and playwright so that, hopefully, one will stick.

Stephanie Faatz Murry (Olivia) is a native of Rochester, NY and a 3rd year MFA Acting candidate. She holds a BFA in Musical Theatre from SUNY Fredonia and has worked professionally with companies such as Playhouse on the Square, Charleston Stage, Black Hills Playhouse, Nebraska Theatre Caravan, Hampstead Stage Company and Gyeonggi English Village in South Korea. Previous University of Arkansas credits include *She Stoops to Conquer*, *As You Like It*, *Godspell* and *The Foreigner*. In her spare time, she teaches Yoga and Zumba. After graduation, she plans to continue performing and teaching.

Tyla Gibson (2nd Gentlewoman) is a senior Journalism and Theatre major at the University of Arkansas. This is her second production with the Theatre Department. Her latest project was *Almost Maine* where she played Gayle, Waitress, and Suzette. She will graduate this upcoming spring. Her plans after graduation are to move to Los Angeles to pursue her acting career.



As Maria in "Twelfth Night" (with Trey Smith and Bill Rogers). Photo by University Theatre.



As Maria in "Twelfth Night". Photo by University Theatre.



As Maria in "Twelfth Night" (with Bill Roger, Chris Hecke, and Trey Smith). Photo by University Theatre.

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Every gift, no matter the size, is instrumental in helping us provide an environment where students can excel to their fullest potential with the latest technology, opportunities to work with guest artists, and adequate materials necessary to create our sets, lights, and costumes. Our future success depends on the involvement of our friends and supporters like you!

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University of Arkansas
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE
Proudly Presents

**THE
MOTHERF**KER
WITH THE HAT**



Directed by:
MICHAEL LANDMAN

Scenic & Projection Design:
SHAWN D. IRISH

Costume Design:
MICHAEL J. RIHA

Lighting Design:
JACQUELYN R. COX

Sound Design & Original Music:
KEEFER DEAN ROACH



“The Motherfucker with the Hat” Program, publish by University Theatre. Page 1 and 8.

MEET THE CAST



Chris Hecke



Guadalupe Campos



Damian Dena



Tiana Ross



Charlie Rodriguez

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

A hearty welcome! Your presence suggests you have an adventurous spirit, for you're here in spite of (or perhaps because of?) this play's startling title.

It's rare to see theatrical explorations of the struggles of addiction and alcoholism and its associated behaviors, such as impulse control, emotional upheaval, and conflicted, distorted thinking; that this playwright has found a way to do so with a comic touch and vibrant, contemporary "street-smart" dialogue is a testament to his writing gifts.

While the characters are urban, young adult New Yorkers, their desperate quests for love and peace of mind are universal.

For those of you who have family and friends who are afflicted with addiction, or if it's something you're personally grappling with, I hope the journey of this play offers opportunities for reflection, solace, laughter, and change.

Michael Landman
Director

Dear Theatre Friends,

Welcome to Stephen Adly Guirgis's prize-winning play, *The Motherf**ker with the Hat* (recently nominated for six Tony Awards). This edgy, dark comedy is an important addition to our studio series, and we are delighted that you have decided to join us this evening. If you are discovering the Department of Theatre for the first time, I want to welcome you personally to our theatre and ask that you share with me any thoughts you might have regarding our productions. We are so excited that you have chosen to be a part of our "theatre family" and hope you will continue to support the amazing work done by our students, faculty, and staff. If you are a season ticket holder or a returning patron, I want to thank you for your continued support. Theatre without you, the audience, is nothing more than rehearsal. It is your presence and energy that allows our work to come alive.

We recently acquired use of the Global Campus Theatre, and the past 8 months have seen improvements to the sound and lighting systems that will enhance your audience experience. Although we have mounted smaller events here, this show is the Department of Theatre's first fully produced production in this venue. Not only is this performance space a welcome addition to our Mainstage home at the University Theatre in the Fine Arts Center, it now also serves the training of our students, home to performance classes for our 140+ undergraduate theatre students, as well as our company of 25 actors, designers, directors, and playwrights in our professional training program. Space has been at a premium up on campus, and this new space will allow us to present even more live theatre opportunities for our students and the arts-savvy audiences of Northwest Arkansas. Additionally, we are thrilled to have a presence on the beautiful Fayetteville Square and hope you find the location and venue as exciting as we do.

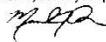
I do want to address the proverbial elephant in the room – the title of this play. Some of you may have chosen to attend this play based on the title. Some of you may have been apprehensive to attend based on the title. And some of your friends may have elected not to attend based on the title. Although *The Motherf**ker with the Hat* could be interpreted as a salacious attempt to incite controversy, I believe the playwright was correct when he shared his thoughts in an interview with the BBC:

"The title is a blessing and a curse. It's a curse because sometimes that's where the conversation begins and ends. It's a blessing because it's like a disclaimer. You can't walk into a play with this title and be offended. What I'd hoped for in London and New York (where it played in 2015 and 2011) is that when you come and see the play you'll have an experience that transcends your experience of the title." Stephen Adly Guirgis.

These words convey our hope as well. We believe the messages within the play are important to everyone in this room. The play is not only about addiction or colorful language or prison or rehabilitation. As Stephen Adly Guirgis explains, it's about "codes of conduct":

"When we're younger, our friendships are probably the things that are most prized. WE have an organized set of rules built around them that we mostly follow. But when we get older, life gets more complicated and those loyalties and codes can be broken. I'm interested in what is acceptable behavior amongst friends." Stephen Adly Guirgis.

Thank you for your patronage, and I look forward to seeing you at the theatre!


Michael Riha,
Chair of Theatre

"The Motherfucker with the Hat" Program, published by University Theatre. Page 2 and 7.

Staff for the Production

Stage Manager.....	Anna Hopo	Master Electrician.....	Elijah DeWitt
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Melissa Ferguson	Scenic/Lighting Staff.....	Jacob Hofer,
Fight Choreographer.....	Adam Rose		Emily Clarkson, Elijah DeWitt,
Assistant Scenic Designer.....	Alexa Smith		Joseph Farley, Johnathan Jarmon,
Assistant Costume Designer.....	Samantha Burrow		Kiah Kayser, Joshua Samaniego,
Sound Board Operator.....	Tucker Sloan		Taylor West, Breanna Wright
Lighting Board Operator.....	Jake Lewis	Stitchers.....	Madi Bell, Samantha Burrow,
Stage Crew.....	Colleen M. Pancake, McClain Wood		MJ Hall, Valerie Lane,
Wardrobe Crew.....	Maryclaire Allen, Gabby Devero		Hannah Latham, Kayla White
Poster Design.....	Emily Clarkson		

Special Thanks To...

Alcoholics Anonymous, Debbie Baños, Flex Coreas,
Janie Landman, Sean Liddell, McClain Wood,
Dr. Javier Reyes and the Global Campus staff

Staff for the Department of Theatre

Chair of Theatre.....	Michael J. Riha	Theatre Faculty.....	Jason Burrow,
Vice-Chair of Theatre.....	Patricia J. Martin		Mavoumeen Dwyer, Kate Frank,
Theatre Office Manager.....	Barbara J. Springer		Amy Herzberg, Morgan Hicks,
Production Manager.....	Joseph Millett		Shawn Irish, Michael Landman,
Technical Director.....	Weston Wilkerson		Valerie Lane, Gail Leftwich,
Scene Shop Manager.....	Brandon Hickman		Patricia J. Martin, Steven Marzoff,
Costume Shop Manager.....	Valerie Lane		Jenny McKnight, Joseph Millett,
Theatre Business Manager.....	Ashley Cohea		Michael J. Riha, Les Wade,
Box Office/Front of House.....	Michaela Conway,		Weston Wilkerson, Erika Wilhite
	Meghan McEnry, Paul McInnis, James Miskimen		

Coming Soon to the University of Arkansas...

Eurydice

By Sarah Ruhl
February 19-28 at University Theatre

Hedda Gabler

By Henrik Ibsen, Adapted by Christopher Shinn
March 10-13 at Vol Walker Hall

Green Day's American Idiot

Featuring special guest director Gary John LaRosa
April 15-24 at University Theatre

CAST

Jackie.....Chris Hecke
Ralph D.....Damien Dena
Veronica.....Guadalupe Campos
Victoria.....Britney Walker-Merritte
Cousin Julio.....Charlie Rodriguez

Place

New York City

Time

Present

The Motherfucker with the Hat

will be performed without an intermission.

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited. As a courtesy to other patrons, PLEASE TURN OFF CELLPHONES AND OTHER DEVICES during the performance.

The Motherfucker with the Hat is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Services Inc., New York.

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Michael Landman (Director) is an Associate Professor of Theatre and Head of the MFA Directing program at the University of Arkansas. Productions directed here include *The Foreigner*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Othello*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, *Levi Me a Tenor*, and *Big Love*. Professional credits include *The 39 Steps*, *Rabbit Hole* (TheatreSquared), *The Sound of Music* (Arkansas Shakespeare Festival), *All Things Home, Bed, and Church* (Festival Valle Christi, Italy), *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *As You Like It* (Hampton's Shakespeare Festival), Assistant Directing: Royal Shakespeare Company, The Shakespeare Theatre, Michael holds an MFA in Theatre Directing from Columbia University. He is an Associate of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, and was recently awarded a professional Observership by their foundation.

Guadalupe Campos (Veronica) is a 3rd year MFA acting candidate at the University of Arkansas. Previous credits include *Amadeus* and *Hamlet* (Theatre Squared), *The Quest for Don Quixote* and *Just Like Us* (NWA New Play Festival), *Twelfth Night*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Kim*, *Time Stands Still*, and *The Clean House* (University of Arkansas); and *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *Othello*, and *The Seagull* (University of Texas El Paso). Guadalupe has also studied at the UBC Training Center in NYC. She is a member of 5 Months Pregnant, a local long form comedy improv group, and holds a BFA in Theatre from the University of Texas El Paso.

Damian Dena (Ralph D.) is a 3rd year MFA Performance Major. He has been in multiple productions at the University of Arkansas including *Tribes*, *Time Stands Still*, *Poor Relations*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Twelfth Night*.

Chris Hecke (Jackie) is from Sao Paulo, Brazil. He has a BA in Theatre from North Greenville University. His previous University of Arkansas credits include *Twelfth Night*, *Spring Awakening*, and *Hay Fever*. He is also a member of Rodeo Book Club, a local long-form comedy improv troupe. He will appear in the upcoming production of *Green Day's American Idiot*, and plans to audition at the Unified Professional Theatre Auditions.

Charlie Rodriguez (Cousin Julio) is a 1st year MFA candidate originally from Dallas, TX. Previous stage credits include *Richard III*, *Clovin*,

Endgame, and *Michael Williams* in *Henry V*. Charlie plans to continue doing Shakespeare in the summer while he pursues his MFA, then more to either Chicago or New York after graduation.

Britney Walker-Merritt (Veronica) is originally from Houston, TX. She is a 3rd year MFA Acting candidate at the University of Arkansas. Before moving to Fayetteville, she appeared as Aunt Mimi in *The Unmentionables* and *Ariel* in *The Tempest* (Playhouse Theatre). Her University of Arkansas credits include *Bluest Eye*, *The Mountaintop*, *Poor Relations*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Twelfth Night*. You will be able to see her again in *Green Day's American Idiot* in April. After graduating, she plans to move back to Houston to launch her acting and spoken word poetry career.

Shawn D. Irish (Scenic & Projection Designer) is the Head of Lighting Design for Theatre at the University of Arkansas. He designed lighting for last year's production of *The Cherry Orchard* and scenery for *Kim*. Professionally, he has designed: *Proof*, *4000 Miles*, *The Spiritualist*, *The Fall of the House*, *39 Steps*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *Twice the Night*, *Drawer Boy*, *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol*, *Moonlight & Magnolias* and *My Father's War* for TheatreSquared. Other recent credits include a new adaptation of *Little Women*, *The Tempest*, *William and Judith*, and *Alan Ayckbourn's House and Garden* (Playhouse Theatre); *The Man Who Came to Dinner* and *The Music Man* (The Arrow Rock Lyceum); and Arthur Miller's *The Price* (Northern Stage). His award-winning lighting design for *Big Love* was featured in Theatre Design and Technology and American Theatre magazines. He has been awarded Outstanding Scenic Design three times by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for *Rabbit Hole*, *A Doll's House* and *Iphigenia 2.0*.

Michael Riha (Costume Designer) is the chair of the Department of Theatre at the University of Arkansas. He attended the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point where he earned his BFA in Technical Theatre and Performance. He went on to receive his MFA from Indiana University in Bloomington, IN. Michael's Broadway credits include Assistant Designer to Christine Jones on *On A Clear Day You Can See Forever* and the Metropolitan Opera's 2013 production of *Rigoletto*. He's also worked at The MUNY in St. Louis, MO as the resident Assistant

WHO'S WHO IN THE PRODUCTION

Set Designer and was the Assistant Designer for the recent national tour of *Fiorello on the Road*, which starred Topol. He is currently the Chair of the Department of Theatre where he has designed sets, projections, and lighting for over ninety five productions. He is also the author of "Starting Your Career as a Theatrical Designer: Insights and Advice from Leading Broadway Designers." Michael is a proud member of USA 829.

Jacquelyn R. Cox (Lighting Designer) is a 3rd year MFA lighting candidate from Chattanooga, TN. She holds a BA in Political Violence and Peace Studies and Theatre. Her previous credits include *Dracula* (Trike Theatre), *Peter and the Starcatcher* (City Equity Theatre), *The Little Mermaid* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival), *Carrie: the Musical* (Birmingham-Southern). In her time at the University of Arkansas, she has designed *Twelfth Night*, *The Foreigner*, *Godspell*, and *Tribes*. Since Jacquelyn cannot convince the University of Arkansas to let her take the four-year graduate school plan, she intends to move to NYC and work as an assistant lighting designer. She would also like to take the union exam and work out New York.

Keefe Dean Roach (Sound Design & Original Music) is a senior Theatre major from Trumann, AR. His previous stage credits include *Feste* in *Twelfth Night*, *Jesus in Godspell*, *Otto* in *Spring Awakening*, and *The Man in the River* (Ozark Black Box Theatre). He has also composed original music and done sound design for *Kim*, *Talking Pictures*, and *No Exit*. He looks forward to playing *Will* in *Green Day's American Idiot* in the spring. After graduating, Keefe plans to play music as a part of the musical duo Trumann Rail Boys. He also intends to move to Nashville, TN and pursue music and entertainment.

Alexa K. Smith (Assistant Scenic Designer & Properties Coordinator) is a junior theatre major from Allen, Texas. She has previously done scenic designs for *Talking Pictures* and *Almost Maine*, and she was the light board operator for *The Foreigner*. After graduation, Alexis plans to either attend graduate school or move to Los Angeles to work as a personal assistant in the television and film industry.

Samantha Burrow (Assistant Costume Designer) is a costume technician and designer who has been living and working in New York City for the past 8 years. She spent most of her time working as a dresser for many Broadway shows and also worked

as a draper's assistant in a Broadway costume shop. Broadway credits include: *Dr. Zhivago*, *In the Heights*, *Raymond*, *Matilda*, *Shrek*, *Gypsy* (Patti Lupone revival), *Mamma Mia*, *Wicked*, and *Newsies*. For the past 4 years, she was working at NYU Tisch School of the Arts as the costume shop manager. Originally from Arkansas, Samantha holds her B.A. in Drama from the University of Arkansas and an M.F.A. in Costume Design and Technology from Ohio University.

Adam Rose (Fight Choreographer) is originally from Plano, Texas. He holds a B.A. in Criminal Justice and Sociology, and is trained as a fight choreographer. Previous credits at the University of Arkansas are *The Cherry Orchard*, *Talking Pictures*, *As You Like It*, and *Legally Blonde* at Arkansas Public Theatre. In the future, Adam would like to continue acting and doing fight choreography for stage and film.

Anna Hope (Stage Manager) is a native of Bentonville, Arkansas. She found her passion for theatre during a production of *Tommy* at the age of 11. She continued to learn more about acting as she attended Cateley College until her sophomore year of college when a U of A alumnae opened her eyes to the wonderful world of technical theatre. Since then, Anna has worked as a stage manager on several shows. Her favorite productions have included *Wit* (Critey College), *The Mountaintop* (University of Arkansas), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Trike Theatre) and *Hay Fever* (University of Arkansas). Anna hopes to create a career working as a stage manager and possibly attend grad school to study Drama Therapy.

Melissa Ferguson (Assistant Stage Manager) is senior theatre major from Doniphan, MO. She holds an AA in Speech Communication & Theatre from Three Rivers College. Her previous backstage credits include costume crew for *The Foreigner* and *Twelfth Night* (University of Arkansas), and costume intern for *The Quest of Don Quixote* and *Amadeus* (Theatre Squared). She also appeared onstage in *Godspell*, *Our Town*, and *Jerry Finnegans Sister* at Three Rivers College. Melissa will enter the University of Arkansas MAT program in August, and plans to eventually teach high school theatre here in NWA.

“The Motherfucker with the Hat” Program, publish by University Theatre. Page 4 and 5.



As Victoria in “Motherfucker with the Hat” (with Chris Hecke). Photo by University Theatre.



As Victoria in “Motherfucker with the Hat” (with Damian Dena). Photo by University Theatre.



As Victoria in “Motherfucker with the Hat” (with Chris Hecke). Photo by University Theatre.

WEBSITE LINK

<http://britneywalkermerritte.com>

HEADSHOT



Photo by Jess Gallegos

Britney Walker-Merritte

B.A Drama/TV/Film—Certificate Los Angeles Film Studies—MFA Acting Candidate 2016*

Height: 5'5 **Weight:** 130 **Hair Color:** Brown **Eye Color:** Brown

Voice Type: Mezzo Soprano

Theatre

American Idiot	Leslie/Ensemble	University Theatre/Dir: Gary John
Motherfucker with the Hat	Victoria	Global Campus Theatre
Twelfth Night	Maria	University of Arkansas
Amadeus	The Cook/Ensemble	TheatreSquared
The Veils	Intisar	Global Campus Theatre
The Cherry Orchard	Varya	University of Arkansas
The Mountaintop	Camae	University of Arkansas
Kin	Kay	University of Arkansas
Poor Relations	Karen	University of Arkansas
The Bluest Eye	Pecola	University of Arkansas
The Unmentionables	Aunti Mimi	Tulsa Playhouse Theatre
Urinetown:The Musical	Ensemble/Rabbit	Tulsa Playhouse Theatre
Alexander Terrible Horrible...	Ms.Dickens/Ensemble	Tulsa Playhouse Theatre
The Tempest	Ariel 2	Tulsa Playhouse Theatre
Lucky Stiff	Landlady/Ensemble	Oral Roberts University
Macbeth	Killer/Solder/Messenger	Tulsa Playhouse Theatre

Film

Parker's Anchor	Jeune-Fille	Purpose Pictures
FM Radio	Secretary	LAFSC Short
The Office Party	Girl date	LAFSC Short Film
Paulina	Paulina	UCLA Student Short Film
Graces Ocean	Christina	Slakes Film
Christmas Snow	Extra	Trost Film
The Elf	Owl lady	ORU Student Short Film

Training

Vocal: Pat Gidion, Jason Burrow

Acting: * Alexander Technique (Kate Frank)

* Long Form Improve (Kris Stoker)

* Meisner Technique (Courtney Sanders, Amy Herzberg, Bob Ford)

* Viewpoints (Chris Crawford, Micheal Landman)

* On Camera Acting (Nate White, Jenny McKnight)

Special skills:

Spoken word Poet, Hip Hop Dancer, Southern Dialect

Work Cited

Gallegos, Jess. Headshot of Britney Walker-Merritte. Photograph. 2015. Personal Collection.

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University Theatre. *Twelfth Night* Photos. 2015. Theatre Department Collection.

University Theatre. *Motherfucker with the Hat* Photos. 2016. Theatre Department Collection.



To: Graduate School and International Studies, University of Arkansas
From: Ashley Cohea, Business Manager for Department of Theatre
Date: January 20, 2016
Re: Use of Department of Theatre production programs, photos, and publicity materials in thesis publications

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acohea@uark.edu