

First Kiss Theatre Presents:

THE THEATRE IS DEAD FESTIVAL



A Virtual Program for a Virtual Festival.

8 New Works.

7pm EST start time.

6 hours sunk into learning YouTube Live.

5? Thank you 5.

4 Shows Each Night.

3 Months in the making.

2 Nights.

1 Festival.

A Note from Co-Artistic Directors

Ellie Strayer and Kendrick Weingast:

When we started to piece together this festival, we had no idea what this would turn into or the magic that would unfold. Very early on in quarantine, we started Zoom calling twice a week or so to pool together our artistic energy. We began exploring what virtual theatre meant, what it meant to have a successful “virtual” production, and how artistic processes must adapt to the reality that theatre must change. And make no mistake, theatre has indeed changed. The idea of having something “in person” has been temporarily removed from current possibilities. Everything we know and learned about how theatre works has consequently changed. In our eyes, pioneering this new form of performance is not only a duty of us young theatre makers, but an odd pleasure bestowed upon us by this day and age.

We’ve been so dedicated to shining a positive light on our situation and so dedicated to immersing ourselves with the groundbreaking work currently requested of theatre artists, but 2020 forced us to look beyond ourselves. This year has brought so many hardships to so many households across our country. We, like so many other Americans, have watched our country discriminate, oppress, marginalize, exploit, and disenfranchise its own citizens, specifically trans bodies and BIPOC. We have witnessed outright acts of oppression by people who hold both prejudice and power, we have witnessed online performative activism, and we have witnessed so, so, so much hate.

While in our personal lives we are both doing everything we can to combat injustice, sign petitions, donate to organizations that make a difference, vote, and unlearn racist, sexist, heterosexist, anti-semitic, abled-bodied, classist and discriminatory societal conditioning, it is also vital to our mission as both artists and Co-Artistic Directors that we attempt to have a positive impact on this world. We believe that it is the responsibility of a 2020 artist to be an active citizen, and we are so committed to this idea because good art can make people think, and great art can change minds.

And so, with a passion for creating new works of theatre, and an unwavering commitment to social justice, we started piecing together an exciting festival that allowed emerging artists to create alongside us, explore this new idea of “virtual theatre” more deeply, and reclaim an artistic voice that the complications surrounding COVID-19 may have snuffed. Sorry, we said “piece together,” when really what happened is we frantically texted artists we wanted to work with and sent out a hoard of emails.

Pretty soon, we were organizing a full-blown Virtual Theatre Festival with eight bold new works created by emerging artists who all identified with our mission and our passion. One of the things participating in virtual theatre has allowed for is the opportunity to be able to sit in on rehearsals, get an idea of different production strategies, and have heartfelt conversations about how to make magic (our very favorite word) happen in a virtual setting. All of a sudden, distance didn’t matter, and we gained much from being able to collaborate at this scale. We’ve had the absolute pleasure of working alongside the creative minds and thrilling storytellers in this two-day festival, and are ecstatic to present our final products, which embrace and push the boundaries of the virtual format.

Thank you so very much for donating to our company by reserving a ticket. Ticket proceeds will be donated to *Color of Change*, an organization dedicated to fighting for racial justice in America, on Saturday, October 24th. On Sunday, October 25th, ticket proceeds will be donated to the *Environmental Defense Fund*, an organization dedicated to fighting for our future on this planet.

Once again, thank you so much for being a member of our “virtual audience”. While we may joke, and say “Theatre Is Dead!” know that what we really mean is theatre is evolving, and our passion for creating bold new work, for being active citizens, and for keeping the arts alive will NEVER die.

Peace and Love,

Ellie Strayer and Kendrick Weingast

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24th, 2020: (In Order)

Was Going To

Created by Ellie Strayer



Featuring: A Doll Named Bridget

This piece is about the specific feeling of numbness you get when you're stuck in a routine. It's very much a response quarantine, and it's very much gathered from the emotional and sensory responses of someone in a post-grad position watching the rest of the world fall apart. This piece is primarily a claymation, however contains elements of frame-by-frame animation, watercolor, and pen on paper. It also includes footage from the window of a plane during a flight from Denver to Boston at the very beginning of the world unraveling (March, 2020).

~4 minutes

comment below

Written by Emmy Kuperschmid

Directed by Terry Kitagawa

Editing by Robyn Huey



Kitty - Lyndsay Tucker

Jess - Marth Brown

Margaret - Nina Gravlin

Kitty is a fifteen year old girl who, after being uprooted in the middle of the year, finds comfort and control in vlogging and the internet. But as her viewers increase, so do her mother's stage-mom tendencies--and what happens when Kitty makes a real life friend who wants to be in a video with her?

~ 1hr

X-Stream: An Online Play Reading About Reading Plays Online

Written By Casandra Clifford

Directed by Rebecca Schilsky



Angela - Liliana Mastroianni

Hector - Sterling Ross

Tate - Erin Frances Speirs

All zoom productions are unintentionally Annie Baker plays.

The prolonged silences.

The awkward pauses.

The stark fourth wall created by your computer camera and the World Wide Web.

One may think “hey that’s awesome! I love The Flick!” or “The Aliens is totally rad; I’d dig that happenstance,” but this unintentional theatricality comes at a price: control.

As artists on zoom, we lack the ability to control pacing!

Diction! WiFi! Outside car noises! Parent’s footsteps!

And many other technical issues. This makes

productions- and rehearsals- harder than they’ve ever been before.

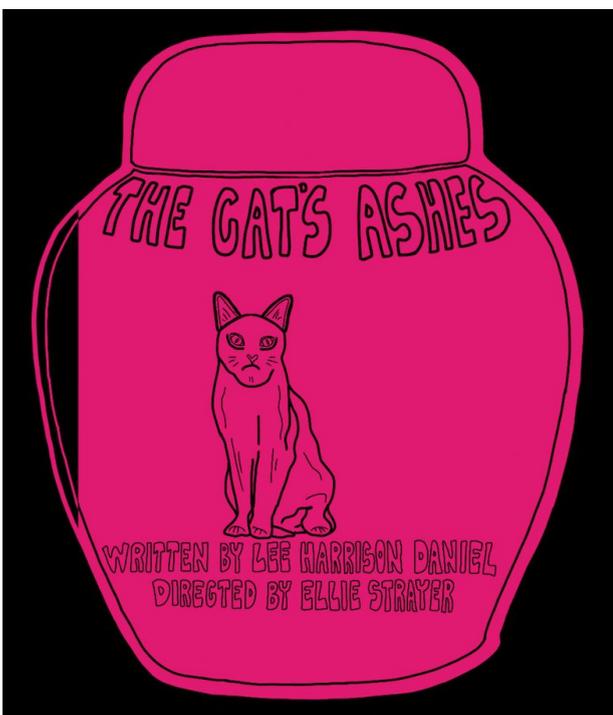
In this piece, we get the inside scope on an attempted play reading. But will X-stream be an Alien success? Or a Flick turned Flop?

~9 minutes

The Cat’s Ashes

Written by Lee Harrison Daniel

Directed by Ellie Strayer



Cast:

Claire Shutters

Liliana Mastroianni

This is a non-play. Whatever that means is correct. It is about everything and anything and nothing. It takes place in The Shower, Cyberspace, Starbucks but more Fucked up, and Minnesota, but it also doesn’t. Please watch it.

~30 minutes

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25th, 2020: (In Order)

Zoom Haunted House

Written and Created by Eliza Kuperschmid



Featuring: Eliza Kuperschmid, Sean Cheney, Georgia Ossorguine, Addie Scenti, Grace Hill, Geri Cynamon, Maddie Sassoon, Chris Morabito, Julia Guarneri, Hannah Margolis, Kayleigh Duggan, Jordan Gonzales, Penn Hoen, Becca Schilsky, Nick Leonard, Danielle Sun, Olivia Sun

Isn't Zoom... scary? Am I actually on mute right now? Am I stuck on mute forever? Who's going to be in that breakout room? Are my friends shit-talking me in the private chat? Can the professor see that I'm not wearing pants?

A harrowing (and potentially silly) exploration into the horrors of video conferencing.

~12 minutes

if this is bad don't tell me

Writing, Design, and Animation by Catie LeCours



Lew - Pdraig Bond
Cora - Grace Alberti
Zosia - Catie LeCours
Jill - Amalia Culpepper-Wehr
Dorian - Patrick Carter
Niamh - Marina Kalaw

Violin - Joseph Dugan

There are two countries in this story. This Country, and the Other Country. Six people exist. Cora, a tired woman who condemns religion before it can condemn her. Lew, an eccentric man who drifts with intention. A Girl who knits sweaters, spells, promises, garlands, nests, blankets, and plots. A sweet Child who feels everything deeply. A Boy who seeks color, beauty, light— enlightenment. And Niamh, a poet.

~56 minutes

Cowgirl Summer

Written and Edited by Karen Stewart



Melanie - Calliope Pina Parker
Theresa - Cornelia Silsbee
Lily - Audrey Erikson
Man - Ian LoCascio

VOICES: Giuliana Mancini, Isabella Iorio, Madeline Rose Parks, Anne McDonagh, Laurel Ledesma, Nanouli Shevardnadze, Cashel O'Malley, Jess Kantorowitz, Julia Gazzara, Jordan Hurley, Lolo Rosado, Audrey Pugh, Rachel Ruecker, Kiara Negroni-Martinez, Nora Kraft, Erin Browning, Piper Lewis, Beau Valentine LaBranch

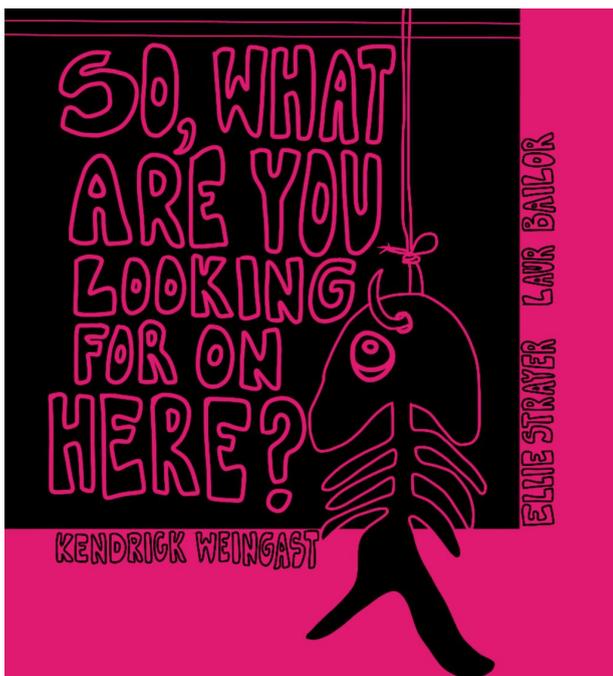
SOUND TEAM: Cashel O'Malley, William Lorenz, Kiara Negroni-Martinez, Beau Valentine LaBranch

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Everyone I sent fragments of this play to at various early hours of the morning,

GarageBand (much love), and Harry Edward Styles, the king of my heart since 2012.

When I first got the idea for *Cowgirl Summer*, I thought it was going to be a funny little play in which fifteen year old me wishes for her One Direction posters to come to life and be her friends, and through the power of teen girl imagination her wish comes true. It was going to be the absolute Disney Channel version of my experience with boy band fandom, the version where I got everything I ever wanted. What I wrote instead is very much not that, I think probably for the better. This play became an exploration in the darker side of teen girl obsession, the line between love and infatuation, and the ways in which our childhood relationships determine what kind of weird we become as adults. It's about how we learn to identify and cope with desire and fear, and what happens when you can't tell the difference between the two. Also, and maybe most importantly, it's a ridiculous play about Harry Styles fanfiction where they have sex in a cornfield. I hope you'll allow all those things to live together, and whatever story results for you is exactly what I intended. I swear. Treat People With Kindness <3 ~57 minutes

So, What Are You Looking For On Here?



Devised by Ellie Strayer, Kendrick Weingast, Laur Bailor

Written by Ellie Strayer

Edited by Kendrick Weingast

Voices by Dave Seidman-Joria

This piece is a meditation on the virtual dating scene, specifically dating apps, in 2020. Lifting conversations and experiences from their own lives, devisors Ellie Strayer, Kendrick Weingast, and Laur Bailor have been able to piece together emotional interactions that exist in a heteronormative space in order to explore themes of sameness, loneliness, and double standards. ~ 35 minutes