

Virtual Show Program

Saginaw Valley State University Department of Theatre
Malcolm Field Theatre for the Performing Arts



Saginaw Valley State University Department of Theatre

PRESENTS

TOP GIRLS

Written by Caryl Churchill

Presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Stage Manager

Trinity Caldwell

Dramaturg

Jaden O'Berry*

House Manager

Holly Houck*

Media Designer

Lucas Inman*

Sound Designer

Drea Brown*

Lighting Designer

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Costume Designer

Jennifer Lothian

Make-up and Hair

Designer

Katelynn Bell

Props Designer

Lydia Bolzman

Scenic Designer

Jerry Dennis

Logo Designer

Josh Abrams

Production Manager

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Mentor to Student

Designers and Crew

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Director

Tommy Wedge

Mentor to Theatre

Management

Tommy Wedge

*Denotes an SVSU Theatre Scholarship Student

Saginaw Valley State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. It encourages diversity and inclusion and provides equal opportunity in education, employment, all of its programs, and the use of its facilities. It is committed to protecting the constitutional and statutory civil rights of persons connected with the University. Saginaw Valley State University is committed to providing work and learning opportunities without regard to age, color, disability, gender identity, genetic information, height, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, veteran status, weight, or on any other basis protected by state, federal, or other applicable law, and to achieving its objectives in compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws and regulations that prohibit discrimination.

ACT I

London restaurant. Saturday night.

10 Minute Intermission

ACT II

Scene I Joyce's backyard. Sunday afternoon.

Scene II "Top Girls" Employment Agency. Monday morning.

10 Minute Intermission

ACT III

Joyce's kitchen. Sunday evening, one year earlier.



ISABELLA
BIRD

(1831-1904)
lived in
Edinburgh,
travelled
extensively
between the
ages of 40 and
70.



LADY NIJO

(b. 1258)
Japanese, was
an Emperor's
courtesan and
later a Buddhist
nun who
travelled on foot
through Japan.



POPE JOAN

disguised as
a man, is
thought to
have been
Pope
between
854-856.



DULL GRET

is the subject of the
Bruegel the Elder
painting of *Dulle
Griet*, in which a
woman in an apron
and armor leads a
crowd of women
charging through
hell.



PATIENT
GRISELDA

is the obedient
wife whose
story is told by
Chaucer in
"The Clerk's
Tale" of *The
Canterbury
Tales*.

*In consultation with Covenant HealthCare and other health experts, SVSU has decided to move
to masks being optional in auditoriums.*

Content Warning: *This production contains strong language, mature content, simulated blood, and adult themes.*

Cast

Marlene

Lexie Schultz*

Waitress

Caroline Temple

Isabella Bird

Briellé Myles-Williams

Lady Nijo

Aimei Ji

Dull Gret

Kee Ferguson

Pope Joan

Alyssa Yankee*

Griselda

Katerina Sorokina

Angie

Scout McCulloch*

Kit

Caroline Temple

Joyce

Katelynn Bell

Win

Holly Greif

Nell

Briellé Myles-Williams

Jeanine

Yolhie Dahana Monchery

Louise

Alyssa Yankee*

Mrs. Kidd

Jordan Rose

Shona

Caroline Temple



Production Team

Director

Assistant Directors

Scenic Designer

Lighting Designer

Sound Designer

Media Designer

Props Designer

Costume Designer

Make-up and Hair Designer

Fight/Intimacy Choreographer

Dialect Coach

Japanese Cultural Consultant

Dramaturg

Stage Manager

House Manager/Publicity Assistant

Tommy Wedge

Erica Close

Abbey Kuhns*

Jerry Dennis

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Drea Brown*

Lucas Inman*

Lydia Bolzman

Jennifer Lothian

Katelynn Bell

Tommy Wedge

Tommy Wedge

Dr. Monika Dix

Jaden O'Berry*

Trinity Caldwell

Holly Houck*

Production Staff

Production Manager

Assistant Production Manager

Scene Shop Supervisor

Scene Shop Assistant

Assistant Lighting Designer

Lead Electrician

Assistant Sound Designer

Assistant Props Designer

Props Coordinator

Costume Shop Coordinator

Mentor to Costume Shop Coordinator

Assistant Costume Designer

Assistant Stage Managers

Logo Designer

Intermission Animation Designer

Dept. of Theatre Office Worker

Administrative Secretary

Mentor to Student Designers and Crew

Mentor to Student Theatre Management

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Lucas Inman*

Jerry Dennis

Artemis Teeple

Dale Peters

Jaden O'Berry*

Zoe Gilbert

Erica Close

Jordan Rose

Olivia Greanias*

Jennifer Lothian

Olivia Greanias*

Kylee Monahan*

Brett Greathouse

Josh Abram

Jennifer Lothian*

Abbey Kuhns*

Kelly Helmreich

Peggy Mead-Finizio

Tommy Wedge

Production Crew

Electricians

Light Board Operator

Sound Board Operator

Media Board Operator

Tricaster Operator

Camera Operators

Drea Brown*

Lucas Inman*

Dale Peters

Ethan Bach

Jaden O'Berry

Abbey Kuhns*

Zoe Gilbert

Morgan Gradowski

Jared Kaufman*

Wendy Gonzalez

Dillen Phillips

Majesty Coleman

Camera Swing

Costume Crew

———— A Note from the Director ————

When Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* opened in 1982, it became a landmark in contemporary theatre history. A critically acclaimed case study in the merging of postmodernist, political, and feminist theatre, Churchill upended conventions of the time and helped usher a new theatrical era. Indeed, it was with *Top Girls* where Churchill invented the notation system for characters speaking in overlapping dialogue that modern playwrights and screenwriters utilize so frequently. Like other postmodernists, Churchill freely mixes genres: in *Top Girls*, you'll find magical realism and Brechtian alienation, topical realism and historical symbolism, black comedy and surreal fantasy. Stage time is real time, yet Act I is an anachronism and Act III is a flashback. There is a clear protagonist in Marlene but no apparent antagonist. At various times the plot is linear, episodic, and circular. Storytelling benchmarks such as the inciting incident, climax, and resolution are elusive. With a cast that includes no men and conversations that touch on motherhood, success, and oppression, *Top Girls* clearly seems to be a feminist play. However, unlike typical feminist plays, it is not the men who inflict the sharpest pain, but other women. It's an alchemy of theatrical contradictions.

But it all works.

Although I've been waiting to tackle the challenge of *Top Girls* for years, it wasn't until last year where we performed live shows for remote audiences that the pieces started to come together. Our students, led by Prof. Peggy Mead-Finizio, built skills in new technologies (such as Lucas Inman's impressive 3D backgrounds powered by Unreal Engine) and employed methods for filming live theatre. We now could employ those skills for an in-person audience: the postmodernist *Top Girls* seemed a perfect fit. I knew I wanted to project live camera feeds onstage, to give each woman an individual portrait while also placing them under a microscope. The concept didn't take shape, though, until guidance from assistant directors Erica Close and Abbey Kuhns, and dramaturg Jaden O'Berry. They pointed me toward Sheena Easton's 1980 hit "Modern Girl," specifically a [1982 performance on Thames TV](#). The design was stark, angular, and monochromatic; filmed along with a live studio audience. Easton sang catchy yet subversive lyrics, such as her final chorus:

I don't build my world round no single man, but I'm getting by, doing what I can. I am free to be, what I want to be, and all I want to be, is a modern girl.

We may be 40 years removed from Easton's song and Churchill's play, but as #MeToo, violence against trans women, and fourth wave feminism indicate, we still have much to learn from 1982 and this story. Churchill hasn't given an interview about her plays since the 1990s, so one can only speculate as to her feelings regarding *Top Girls* on this anniversary in 2022. Is the future still "frightening" per Angie's nightmare, or has progress afforded us more hope? It's a question we have wrestled with these past six weeks, and one I leave with you tonight.

I am incredibly thankful to the student actors, technicians, and designers who have labored tirelessly to bring *Top Girls* to life. The characters in the play may find success elusive, but when looking at the collaboration, dedication, and artistry of the students in this production, I am left with no doubt that they have already found theirs.

-Tommy Wedge



———— A Note from the Dramaturg ————

The 1980s were a decade of social turbulence in the U.K. -- a cultural revolution divided the nation based on opinions of Margaret Thatcher's political ideology, cell phones were the sizes of bricks, hairspray added an extra eight inches of height, and the country was just getting out of its "Winter of Discontent."

Widespread strikes by both private and public sector trade unions demanded pay raises greater than the limits Prime Minister James Callaghan and his Labour Party's government had been implementing in the hopes of controlling inflation. That is, until Margaret Thatcher rose to power in 1979 and remained until 1990; and from her, Thatcherism was formed.

Thatcherism is a conservative ideology that champions free markets and a small state economy. The concept reflected a government in which, rather than regulating business and people's lives, their job was to get out of the way. Although Thatcherism was based on the austere philosophy of monetarism, Thatcher wanted to put a human face on it, so she talked about running the country's finances like a thrifty housewife. Thatcher, going to the same lengths as the men surrounding her, was unfairly slighted for daring to be everything they were already allowed to be: ambitious, aggressive and Machiavellian. She had to play innocent and "feminine" in light of this misogynist aggression from not only her political counterparts, but from the media that painted her as "the Iron Lady" for maintaining a strong will and even stronger opinions.

Caryl Churchill showcases a direct allusion to Thatcher in her 1982 play *Top Girls* with the character of Marlene: the hard-working, "ball-busting" managing director of *Top Girls* Employment Agency. Throughout the show the audience witnesses how Marlene made an impressive life for herself along with what she had to sacrifice to get there.

From an *Alice in Wonderland*-like dinner party, to Marlene's new role at the agency, to a visit to her working-class sister's home, Marlene reckons with her own issues with class, her relationship with her family, and confronts all of the things she gave up to get to the top. She, like the other 16 female-identifying characters in the show, had to conform to the misogynistic mould of both past and present to find a place for themselves at society's table.

Welcome to *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill.

Jaden O'Berry
(she/her/they)



Production Spotlights



Marlene: Lexie Schultz (she/her) is a third-year double major in Music and Theatre, as well as a Musical Theatre minor here at SVSU. She is delighted to be returning to the Malcolm Field Theatre Stage for *Top Girls*! She previously was seen in SVSU's productions of *Silent Sky*, *Animal Farm*, and *Joan the Girl of Arc*, as well as working backstage and on the creative team for others. She would like to thank the entire cast and crew, her friends, and family for their continual love, support, and encouragement.



Angie: Scout is a first-year double major in Theatre and Elementary Education. She is expected to graduate in 2025. Scout was recently seen onstage as the Storyteller in *Animal Farm*. She is excited for you to see the show and hopes you enjoy it!



Joyce: Katelynn is excited to share her work in SVSU's production of *Top Girls*. She is a fourth-year Creative Writing major who loves to participate in the theatre. She enjoys both on and off-stage work, and is also the Hair and Makeup Designer for the show. She wants to thank her castmates and the technical crew for their hard work in making this show happen.



Waitress/Kit/Shona: Caroline is a graduating senior who is absolutely thrilled to be portraying her three amazing characters for her final show at SVSU! Caroline will be earning a Communications major and a dual minors in Theatre and Athletic Coaching. Caroline would like to thank the people in her life who have pushed her to do her best for this show: her mom and dad, her boyfriend Cameron, Abbey Kuhns, Scout McCulloch, and Lexie Shultz.



Isabella Bird/Nell: Briellé is a Theatre/Spanish double major, who is excited to perform in another SVSU production. Previously she has been in *Animal Farm* portraying Benjamin, but usually she is behind the scenes with her recent work as the stage manager for *Silent Sky*.

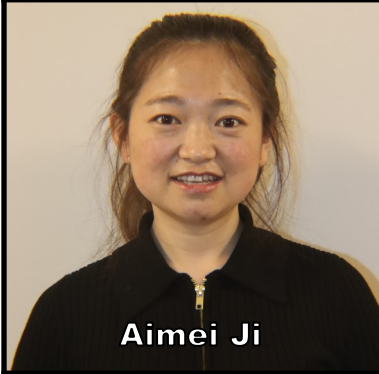




Alyssa Yankee

Pope Joan/Louise: Alyssa is a senior Theatre and Marketing major at SVSU, and she is excited to be back on stage with a live audience! Alyssa has been involved with every SVSU theatre production in some capacity since her freshman year, so she is no stranger to the Malcolm Field stage. She would like to thank her family, boyfriend, and friends for all their support throughout.

Enjoy the show!



Aimei Ji

Lady Nijo: Aimei is an international exchange student. This is her first theatrical production, and she found the experience very exciting. As rehearsal goes on, she learned more and more about her character, Nijo. She is looking forward to performing and wants to do her best.



Kee Ferguson

Dull Gret: Kee Ferguson is a sixth-year Theatre and Creative Writing dual major, and this is their second and final performance at SVSU. They've enjoyed their time in the department and they're thankful to Dave, Peggy, and Tommy for all the opportunities they've had over the years. They specifically want to thank their best friend Emerald for her support throughout Kee's journey. She will always be their clarity in the chaos.



Katerina Sorokina

Griselda: Katerina is an exchange student from Russia. She participated in different plays in her home country and played different characters from *Russian Revolution*, *Writer to Jester*. Here at SVSU it will be her first experience to perform in a play in English. She is excited to see all of you at *Top Girls!*

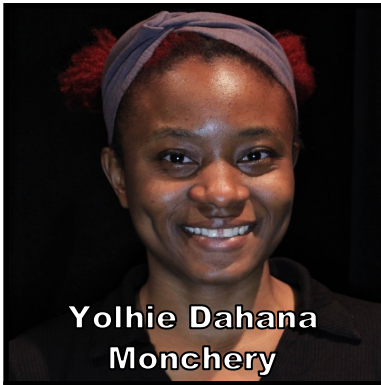


Holly Greif

Win: Holly is a fourth-year Theatre major here at SVSU with a double minor in Musical Theatre and Communications. She is an active member in Alpha Sigma Alpha where she is the chapter's current Ritual Chair. She would like to thank her family for the constant support!

"This one's for you, Grandma!"





**Yolhie Dahana
Monchery**

Jeanine: Yolhie is an International Law exchange student. She really likes this new experience in playing the role of Jeanine. She likes to read, is a feminist, and this play really suits her beliefs. Yolhie just want to say to every woman to keep fighting and make room for themselves.



Jordan Rose

Mrs. Kidd: Jordan is a second-year Music Education major. She enjoys musical theatre. This is her first show at SVSU. She is a member of the SVSU flute choir, pep band, concert band, and would like to be a band teacher in the future. She also enjoys spending time with her girlfriend and attending hockey games and concerts.



Tommy Wedge

Director: Tommy is an Assistant Professor of Theatre at SVSU and has been active in teaching, directing, stage management, and stage combat. Tommy holds an MFA in Directing from The University of South Dakota and a BS in Theatre from South Dakota State University. Professional memberships include Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and The Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) where Tommy holds the rank of Advanced Actor Combatant. Tommy is also a faculty mentor for the SVSU Studio XP student directed and designed Black Box performance series.



Erica Close

Assistant Director: Erica is a Theatre student at SVSU. She has been very involved here as well as in community theatre. Erica is thrilled to assume the role of assistant director! Erica thanks her dad for teaching her everything she knows.



Abbey Kuhns

Assistant Director: Abbey is a second-year Theatre major with a focus in media design and direction. She previously worked on the camera direction team and as the assistant director for *No.6* and *A Doll House* and was the projections designer for *Silent Sky*. Abbey will be working as an electrician at the Utah Festival of Opera and Musical Theatre for the summer. She has loved working on *Top Girls* and would like to thank the cast and crew for challenging and supporting her through this process.





Lighting Designer: Peggy is an active theatre designer, technical theatre instructor, choreographer, dance instructor and arts administrator. She holds MFA degrees in Theatre Arts/Lighting Design and Choreography from the University of Iowa and is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre at Saginaw Valley State University. She is often one of the designers for lights and sound for the SVSU main stage productions and is a mentor to student designers and technicians. She is also a faculty mentor for the SVSU Studio XP student directed and designed Black Box performance series.



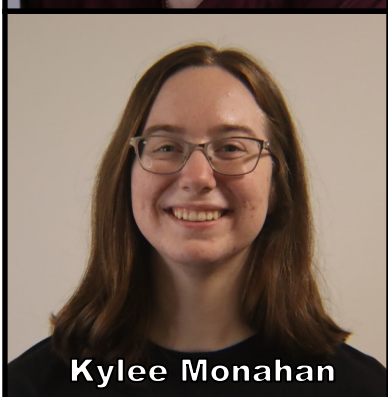
Costume Designer: Jennifer is an Adjunct Professor of Theatre, costume designer, Milliner, collage artist, and Costume Crafts Artisan from Linwood, MI. Jennifer holds an MFA in Production Design and Technology with an emphasis in Costume Design from Ohio University, and a BA in Theatre and Communication Education from SVSU. Some of Jennifer's favorite theatrical pieces she has worked on include *Summer and Smoke*, *People, Places, and Things* (Ohio University), *The Rocky Horror Show* (Rebel Theatre Company), *She Kills Monsters*, *Assassins*, and *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (SVSU).



Stage Manager: Trinity is a third-year SVSU Theater major and Spanish minor. Most recently, she was seen as Felicia in the SVSU production of *No.6*. She is very excited to be making her Stage Manager debut for *Top Girls* and is grateful to be given this opportunity. She would like to thank her family for being so supportive and loving.

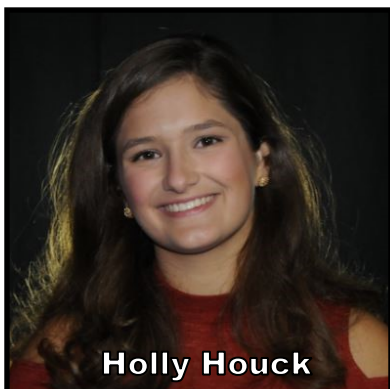


Assistant Stage Manager: Brett is a third-year Theater and English-Education major at SVSU. They have previously worked on SVSU's productions of *A Doll House*, *Lonely Planet*, *Animal Farm*, and *Silent Sky*. This is their first show as an Assistant Stage Manager, and they are very excited for this opportunity.



Assistant Stage Manager: Kylee Monahan is in her fourth and final year at Saginaw Valley State University. She is a Theatre major with minors in Music and Communications. She was most recently the props designer for *Silent Sky* and stage manager for *Animal Farm*. Kylee loves her cat, Hazel, and wants to thank everyone who has come to support her at her final show in the Malcolm Field Theatre.

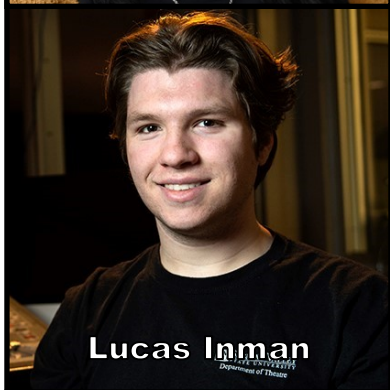




House Manager/Publicity: Holly is a senior graduating in May with majors in Theatre and International Studies and a minor in French. Her recent work with SVSU Theatre includes the dramaturgy for *Silent Sky* and playing NAPOLEON in the Fall 2021 production of *Animal Farm*. It is bittersweet to be closing out her last show at SVSU as the house manager and publicity coordinator. In reflection on her four years with the department, she thanks Dave, Peggy, and Tommy for their ongoing support and encouragement. She also extends thanks to her family and dog, Tanner, for their love through it all!



Dramaturg: Jaden is a graduating Theatre major with a double minor in English and Creative Writing. This is her first production as dramaturg, and her last as master electrician. She wants to thank her mentors Peggy, Dave, and Tommy for always valuing her artistic vision and encouraging her to continuously strive to be her best self. She dedicates this show to the girl she was freshman year, and the person she has yet to become. Jaden wants to thank SVSU for the opportunities and friends she has been given, she's forever grateful. It's been the greatest four years.



Media Designer: Lucas Inman is a fourth-year Theatre major focusing on audio, lights, and video. He has worked as a designer and technician all over Mid-Michigan including audio engineering at Bay City Players and Pit & Balcony, LED tape electrician at Midland Center for the Arts, and light designing at Lebowsky Center of Performing Arts. At SVSU Lucas has been a sound designer (*9 to 5*, *Proof*, *Roustabout*, *Lonely Planet*, *Silent Sky*), lighting designer (*A Doll House*, *Animal Farm*), and projections designer (*Joan the Girl of Arc*). This summer, Lucas has accepted the position of Lead Lighting Technician at Interlochen's Summer Arts Camp.



Sound Designer: Drea is a first-year Theatre major with a focus in Design and Tech. This is her first production as a designer with SVSU, but she has recently appeared as Tech Assistant for *Silent Sky*, as well as Lead Electrician for *Lonely Planet*. Drea has previously sound designed for high school productions, and is very excited to be making her college design debut! She would like to thank the department and especially Peggy for their outstanding care and support.



Props Designer: Lydia worked on the props team for *Silent Sky*, and this is Lydia's first time as the props designer for SVSU. Enjoy the show!





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svsu.edu/theatre

For updates on our upcoming season or information on how to get involved, check out our social media pages!

[Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [Twitter](#) [SVSU's Theatre Page](#)

———— Acknowledgements ————

Full Time Faculty

Peggy Mead-Finizio, MFA
David Rzeszutek, MFA
Tommy Wedge, MFA

Adjunct Faculty

Dan Gerics, MA
Caleb Knutson, MA
Jennifer Lothian, MFA
Dakotah Myers, MA

The Office of President Dr. Donald Bachand

The Office of Dr. Deborah Huntley,
Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs

The Office of Dr. Marc Peretz,
Dean College of Arts and Behavioral Sciences

The Office of University Communications

Departments of RPW & Theatre

Administrative Secretary Kelly J. Helmreich

The Conference Center at SVSU

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— Special Thanks —

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Charles “Pat” Shelley, International Student Advisor

Dr. Monika Dix, Professor of Japanese Language, Literature, and Culture

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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.