

# Virtual Show Program

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

## VERY BERRY DEAD

Written and  
Directed by  
José Pérez IV

WORLD PREMIERE

Saginaw Valley State University Department of Theatre

PRESENTS

# VERY BERRY DEAD

Written and Directed by

José Pérez IV

*Stage Manager*

Drea Brown\*

*House Manager*

Abbey Kuhns\*

*Media Designer*

Lucas Inman\*

*Sound Designers*

Lucas Inman\* & Eric Durette\*

*Lighting Designer*

Peggy Mead-Finizio

*Costume Designer*

Cat Saylor

*Props Designers*

Paige Tuckerman & Emma Koch

*Make-up & Hair Designer*

Becca Dubs

*Mentor to Student  
Designers and Crew*

Peggy Mead-Finizio

*Scenic Designer*

Jerry Dennis

*Mentor to Theatre  
Management*

Tommy Wedge

\*Denotes an SVSU Theatre Scholarship

***CONTENT WARNING:*** *This production uses strong language, references but not depictions of childhood trauma and suicide, and will feature a simulated smoke detector sound effect.*

There will be a ten minute intermission.

This project was made possible in part by the Spatz Endowment for Performing Arts at SVSU, which provides theatre and music scholarships in addition to funding for distinguished playwrights/artists-in-residence. The endowment was established by a generous bequest from the estate of Virginia A. Spatz of Bridgeport, Michigan.

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.

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## Cast

**Ma**

Katelynn Bell

**Casey**

Zoey Schwab

**JJ**

Dana Samalik\*

**Marigold**

Briellé Myles-Williams

**Scat**

Scout McCulloch\*

**Riley**

Lila Duvendack\*

**Sims**

Noah Johnson

**McGill**

Lexie Schultz\*

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## Understudies

**Ma**

Isabel Losa\*

**Casey**

Isabel Losa\*

**JJ**

Lexie Schultz\*

**Marigold**

Alex Dubowski\*

**Scat**

Holly Greif

**Riley**

Daija Thornton

**McGill**

Holly Greif



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# Production Team

**Director**  
**Stage Manager**  
**Production Manager**  
**House Manager**  
**Scenic Designer**  
**Lighting Designer**  
**Sound Designer**

**Media Designer**  
**Props Designers**

**Costume Designer**  
**Make-up and Hair Designer**  
**Publicity**

José Pérez IV  
Drea Brown\*  
Peggy Mead-Finizio  
Abbey Kuhns\*  
Jerry Dennis  
Peggy Mead-Finizio  
Lucas Inman\*  
Eric Durette\*  
Lucas Inman\*  
Paige Tuckerman  
Emma Koch  
Cat Saylor  
Becca Dubs  
Abbey Kuhns\*

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# Production Staff

**Scene Shop Supervisor**  
**Scene Shop Assistant**  
**Assistant Stage Manager**  
**Assistant Costume Designer**  
**Assistant Media Designer**  
**Lead Electrician**  
**Deck Chief**  
**Logo Designer**  
**Dept. of Theatre Office Worker**  
**Administrative Secretary**  
**Mentor to Student Designers and Crew**  
**Mentor to Student Theatre Management**

Jerry Dennis  
Lucas Inman\*  
Zoe Gilbert\*  
Halie Krasinski  
Eric Durette\*  
Alex Dubowski\*  
Alex Dubowski\*  
Abbey Kuhns\*  
Abbey Kuhns\*  
Kelly Helmreich  
Peggy Mead-Finizio  
Tommy Wedge

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# Production Crew

**Electricians**

**Light Board Operator**  
**Sound Board Operator**  
**Stagehands**

Drea Brown\*  
Emma Koch  
Emma Koch  
Zoe Gilbert\*  
Hailie Austin



# A Note from the Director

This is how I got the idea for *Very Berry Dead*: during a socially-distanced lunch, one of my coworkers told me the most fascinating thing. The farm she grew up on in Ohio, they have a family cemetery where everyone gets buried when they pass. Whenever it is time to bury someone, a person from the county needs to come out to approve. A cousin of hers had just died, and none of the family liked this cousin. Her dad technically had veto powers, and he had denied a deceased a spot in the cemetery before. Now the family was debating: is it veto time again?

I immediately knew there was a play in there and I bombarded my coworker with questions over her salad. I told my editor/dramaturg, Taylor Couch, every detail and we immediately scheduled a Writers Room day to develop the outline for a first draft. By the way, Taylor directed the first staged reading of the play (I played J.J.), she has edited so many of my scripts, and is a co-founder of our company, Big Storm Performance Company. Theatre gets made within a community of committed artists and weird friends who spend hours thinking of berry puns.

*Very Berry Dead* is my favorite play I've written to date. It was the smoothest first draft of my life, taking only a week and a half. I write my scripts in the same cafe in Pittsburgh. I have laughed out loud and cried there so many times while working through these characters' stories. I often wonder what the staff think of me.

I grew up in Saginaw and it's where I fell in love with theatre; one original show at The 303 in Old Town did it for me. It feels appropriate that I'd come back to direct a show about returning home.

There might be some ideas in this show that don't sit well with you. I would ask that you just listen through to the end, and perhaps just for these couple of hours not outright dismiss these ideas. I'm trying to present some nuanced situations that don't always fit together or resolve nice and neat. That feels more like real life to me.

Eternal gratitude to the faculty and staff of this Theatre Department. Especially grateful to my colleague and stage combat "fight friend", Professor Tommy Wedge, who was integral in bringing me in as a guest director. This program took a chance on a new play and a new director. These are the kind of opportunities that artists making original work need to see their scrappy new plays have life and not just live in their head.

Thank you berry much.

José Pérez IV



# Production Spotlights



**Katelynn Bell**

**Ma:** Katelynn is a fifth year Creative Writing Major with a minor in Music. She is very BERRY grateful to be acting once again, previously making appearances onstage in *Top Girls* and *Animal Farm* from the 2021-2022 season. She most recently was Stage Manager for the production of ...*Gamma Rays*..., and also participates as a Make-up & Hair Designer. She would like to thank her family for all of the care and support they've given her in exploring her love of the performing arts, as well as the many theater friends she has made along the way.



**Zoey Schwab**

**Casey:** Zoey Schwab is a third-year Creative Writing student and minors in both Spanish and Professional and Technical Writing. This is her first SVSU production, but she has worked as a volunteer director for Bay City Players for six years! She has worked as a sound designer, lighting designer, makeup and costume designer, stage hand, and director for shows such as *Homeschooled*, *Pistols and Posies*, *Toy School*, *The Mad Tea Party*, and *Café Murder*. She wants to thank her family and friends for urging her to pursue her theatre goals, as well as her new theatre friends who have welcomed her with open arms. Enjoy the show!



**Dana Samalik\***

**JJ:** Dana is a first-year Communication and Theatre Education major. She is so excited a part of this joyful, heartfelt production of *Very Berry Dead!* Prior to this production, she has been seen in SVSU's performance of *Tiny Beautiful Things*, and co-prop designer/dramaturg for *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. She has loved being a part of the theatre program at SVSU and has been delighted to work with such an amazing cast and crew. She would like to thank her friends and family for their endless support throughout her career, she wouldn't be here without them! Enjoy the show!



**Briellé Myles-Williams**

**Marigold:** Briellé is a senior Theatre and Spanish double major. She is delighted to play the part of Marigold in SVSU's production of *Very Berry Dead!* She has been a part of many SVSU productions both on and off stage, her most recent productions include *The Effects of Gamma rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds* as sound designer, *Tiny Beautiful Things* as Letter Writer #1, and *Top Girls* as Isabella Bird/Nell. Briellé has loved being a part of this production and working alongside a wonderful cast and crew. She would like to thank her friends and family for being supportive and loving.



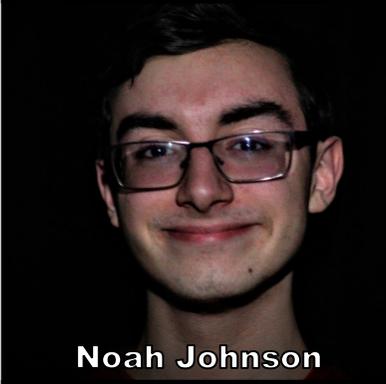
**Scout McCulloch\***

**Scat:** Scout is a second-year Communication and Theatre major. She is so grateful to be back on the Malcolm Field Theatre stage for *Very Berry Dead!* In the past, she has been seen in SVSU's production of *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Top Girls*, and *Animal Farm*, as well as working backstage for other shows! She would like to thank her friends, family, and the entire cast & crew who continuously love and support her. Enjoy the show!



Lila Duvendack\*

**Riley:** Lila is a freshman with a double major in Theatre and Psychology. She is thrilled to be playing the role of Riley in this production of *Very Berry Dead*. Previously they were a prop designer for *Tiny Beautiful Things*, and played Nanny in *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. They are so thankful to be a part of such an amazing theatre company with so many great people, and would like to thank her fellow cast and crew for being so great to work with.



Noah Johnson

**Sims:** Noah is a first-year Political Science major, and this opportunity to play Sims in *Very Berry Dead* will be his first performance with SVSU! However, he has plenty of experience being a part of Troupe 2898 from Lake Orion, and has been in shows such as *Macbeth*, *the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and *She Kills Monsters*. Noah would like to thank the SVSU theatre community for being so welcoming, and his family for attending the show!



Daija Thornton

**Riley (U/S) :** Daija is a second-year Pre-health major at Saginaw Valley. This is also her second show at SVSU, her first show being *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon-Marigolds* and she played Janice. She has been having a lot of fun and is learning a lot from her castmates. Daija would like to thank her friends and family for supporting her dive into theater.



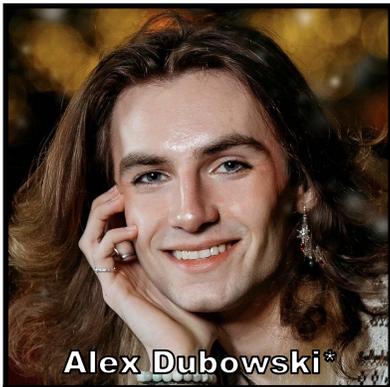
Lexie Schultz

**McGill/ JJ (U/S):** Lexie is a fourth year double major in Music and Theatre here at SVSU. She is so excited to return to the Malcolm Field Theatre stage for the world premiere of *Very Berry Dead*! She was recently seen in the Open Jar Institute's College Showcase in New York City, *The Effect of Gamma Rays...*, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, *Silent Sky*, as well as many others here at SVSU. She would like to thank the entire cast, crew, production team as well as her friends and (most importantly) her family for their unconditional, earth-shattering love and support.



Isabel Rosa\*

**Ma (U/S) / Casey (U/S):** Isabel Rosa is a first year Theater major/minor. She is playing the understudy of Ma for this amazing production of *Very Berry Dead*. She has been part of the prop crew for *Tiny Beautiful Things* and co-dramaturg for *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. Being part of this department has changed her life in more ways than one. She has met amazing people and they really allow her to grow and improve in this department and that's how she keeps going. She would like to thank her parents for believing in her and supporting her through her major. Enjoy this fantastic production!!!!



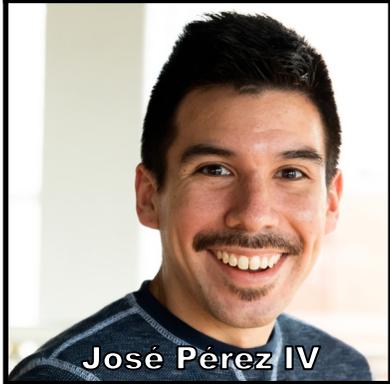
Alex Dubowski\*

**Marigold (U/S)** : Alex Dubowski is a first-year Theatre Major here at SVSU. He has been very excited to work on this production as the understudy for Marigold and the Lead Electrician. He has worked on the previous two shows, *Tiny Beautiful Things* and *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man in the Moon Marigolds*, as Assistant to the Lighting Designer as well as Lead Electrician on both productions. They are so thankful to have the opportunity to perform as well as to continue backstage work on this production. He is thankful to his family for supporting him on his theatre journey.



Holly Greif

**Scat (U/S) / McGill (U/S)** : Holly is a 5th year senior Theatre major with a double minor in Musical Theatre and Communications. She has been in many productions during her time at SVSU including, *Animal Farm*, *Top Girls*, and the title role in *Emilie*. She is an active member in Alpha Sigma Alpha where she is currently the Special Events Chair. Holly would like to thank her family and friends for their constant support on following her dreams.



José Pérez IV

**Playwright/Director:** José Pérez IV is a playwright, fight director, and actor based in Pittsburgh, PA. Born and raised in Saginaw. Resident Fight Director Pittsburgh Public Theater, Artistic Director Big Storm Performance Company. Previously produced plays: *Organs of State* at Times Square Arts Center NYC (FIGHTER), *Downtown Art NYC (Zombies: A Workshop)*, *Orlando Fringe Festival (The Ride Along)*, *Pearl Arts Pittsburgh (All the Fights!)*, among others. Upcoming: *Kelly Strayhorn Theater (Or Forever Hold Your Peace)* May 2023. BFA Drama NYU Tisch Experimental Theatre Wing, MFA Performance Pedagogy University of Pittsburgh. Member of the Society of American Fight Directors since 2009.





Drea Brown\*

**Stage Manager:** Drea is a second-year Theatre Major with a minor in Graphic Design. She is so excited to stage manage for a world premiere! Previous roles at SVSU have included Stage Manager (*Tiny Beautiful Things*), Lighting Designer (*The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*), as well as various technician positions. She recently received a Meritorious Achievement for First-Time Stage Management from the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for her work on *Tiny Beautiful Things*.



Peggy Mead-Finizio  
Cat Saylor

**Lighting Designer:** Peggy is an active theatre designer, technical theatre instructor, choreographer, dance instructor, director, and arts administrator. She holds MFA degrees in Theatre Arts and Choreography from the University of Iowa and is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre at Saginaw Valley State University. She is a mentor to SVSU student designers and technicians for mainstage and Studio XP productions. Her most recent lighting designs were for *High School Musical* at Midland Center for the Arts and *Tiny Beautiful Things* for the SVSU mainstage. Peggy also teaches the Musical Theatre Dance classes for the Department of Theatre. She is a certified teacher Primary - Level 3 of the ABT® National Training Curriculum and teaches dance classes at the Flint School of Performing Arts in Flint, MI. She will be the choreographer for the next SVSU mainstage production of *Urinetown* in April.



Eric Durette\*

**Co-Sound Designer:** Eric Durette is a first-year Theatre and Chemistry major, with focus in Pre-Law and a Criminal Justice Minor. Eric is joining our production as a Co-Sound Designer and Assistant Media Designer. Eric's past experience has been Sound Designing & Execution for Marine City High School from 2019-2022, *Tiny Beautiful Things*, and Sound Assistant of *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. Eric would like to thank the department for their support with his constant and chaotic involvement on campus. Eric would also like to thank his family for driving all the way up to Saginaw, it truly means a lot to him!



Lucas Inman\*

**Co-Sound Designer/Media Designer:** Lucas is a fifth-year Theatre major and multidisciplinary designer from Saginaw. He has been a sound designer (*Proof*, *Roustabout*, *Lonely Planet*, *Silent Sky*), lighting designer (*A Doll's House*, *Animal Farm*), and media designer (*Joan of Arc*, *Top Girls*, *Gamma Rays..*) at SVSU. He has also worked at venues all over Michigan including Bay City Players (*Cabaret*), Pit & Balcony (*I and You*), Midland Center for the Arts (*Mamma Mia!*), Lebowsky Center for the Arts (*Holiday at Lebowsky*), and Interlochen Center for the Arts.





**Rebecca Dubs**

**Make-up & Hair Designer:** Rebecca is a graduate student in SVSU's Master of Public Administration Program and is happy to be back in theatre! Previously, Becca attended SVSU while obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in English Education, with Minors in Theatre/Communications Education and Sociology. This will be the ninth show she has been a designer for at SVSU, with her favorites being *Roustabout*, *Animal Farm*, *A Doll House*, and *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*.



**Paige Tuckerman**

**Co-Props Designer:** Paige is a first-year Theatre major and is so excited to be the Co-Props designer to Emma Koch on this production! Prior to this, she could be found onstage during *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*, and working as an electrician/light board operator during *Tiny Beautiful Things*. Paige would like to thank the incredible cast and crew for their hard work and constant support during this show. She has loved being apart of the design process for *Very Berry Dead* and hopes everyone enjoys the show!



**Emma Koch**

**Co-Props Designer:** Emma is a first-year Theatre major. She is the co-props designer alongside Paige Tuckerman! Prior to this production, she has been involved in *Tiny Beautiful Things* as a stage hand, as well as the role of Assistant Stage Manager for *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. She has loved being a part of the theatre program here at SVSU. She would like to thank her amazing crew and cast that have worked so hard to make this production so wonderful. Enjoy the show!



**Cat Saylor**

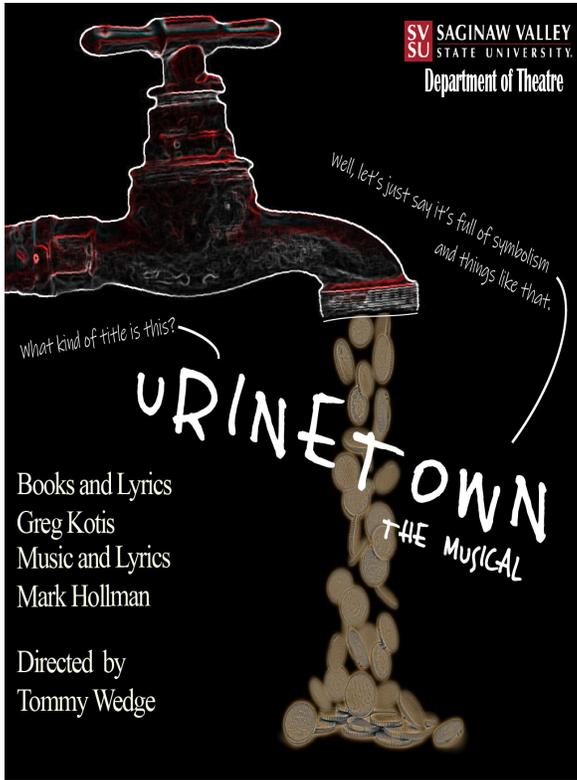
**Costume Designer:** Cat is a fourth-year Pre-Pharmacy student. This is her third show working in the costume department, and is excited to call this her design debut! At SVSU, she recently acted as design assistant for *Tiny Beautiful Things* and *The Effects of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds*. She would like to thank previous costume designer Jen Lothian for her guidance as well as the whole cast and crew for all the heart and hard work that went into this production.



# Upcoming Productions

Tickets—\$15

**Note:** You do not have to be a Theatre major or minor to audition or be involved in production process. All are encouraged and welcomed!



## *Urinetown, the Musical* by Greg Kotis and Mark Hollman

Performance Information:

Wednesday, April 12, 2023 @ 7:30pm

Thursday, April 13, 2023 @ 7:30pm

Friday, April 14, 2023 @ 7:30pm

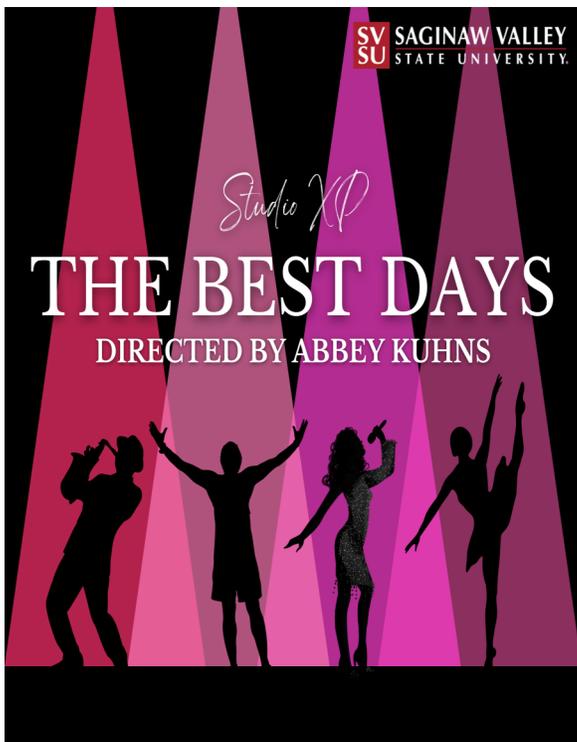
Saturday, April 15, 2023 @ 7:30pm

Sunday, April 16, 2023 @ 3:00pm

Location: Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts

A 20-year drought has led to a government-enforced ban on private toilets. The citizens must use public amenities, regulated by a single company that profits by charging admission for one of humanity's most basic needs. Amid the people, a hero decides that he's had enough and plans a revolution to lead them all to freedom!

Inspired by the works of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, *Urinetown* is a hilarious musical satire of the legal system, capitalism, social irresponsibility, populism, bureaucracy, corporate mismanagement, municipal politics and musical theatre itself!



## *The Best Days* A Student Showcase

Performance Information:

Thursday, April 20, 2023 @ 7:30pm

Friday, April 21, 2023 @ 7:30pm

Saturday, April 22, 2023 @ 3:00pm

Location: SVSU's Blackbox Theatre

Studio XP's *The Best Days* is a student directed and driven showcase inspired by the famous Virgil quote "optima dies...prima fugit", or "the best days are the first to flee". Combining multi-disciplinary performers and designers from different departments and registered student organizations across campus, each scene features inspiring artistic talent and entertainment for all.

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

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

## ———— Acknowledgements ————

### Full Time Faculty

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

### Adjunct Faculty

Sherri Angelloti, MSE  
Caleb Knutson, MA  
Dakotah Myers, MA

The Office of President Dr. George Grant Jr.

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

Andy Sharrow, Eric Johnson, and Julie Eddy

## — Special Thanks —

### **Office of University Communications**

Jeff Shrier, Photography

Michael Randolph, Marketing Specialist for Videography and Photography

**Big Storm Performance Company** - for development of the script and first staged reading.

**University of Pittsburgh** - second staged reading, directed by Alison Mahoney.

**SVSU Foundation** - for continued support in student success

**Alex Dubowski**

**Abbey Kuhns** - for stage management support

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**Campus Facilities** - for technical support

**SVSU IT Department** - for technical support and resources

**Mike Holiday and Information Technology Services**

**Andy Sharrow and The Conference and Event Center**

**Facility Operations** - for assistance with the HVAC



**VECTORWORKS**  
A NEMETSCHek COMPANY



THE  
**CONFERENCE CENTER**  
AT SVSU



# The Kennedy Center

*The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, part of the Rubenstein Arts Access Program, is generously funded by **David M. Rubenstein.***

*Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust for supporting the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.*

*Additional support is provided by The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; and the Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation.*

*Kennedy Center education and related artistic programming is made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts.*

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.