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**UVA DRAMA TO PRESENT FOURTH ANNUAL NEW WORKS FESTIVAL FEATURING FOUR ORIGINAL PLAYS WRITTEN, DIRECTED, PRODUCED, AND PERFORMED BY STUDENTS**

**FEBRUARY 27-29 AND MARCH 3-5 AT 8PM AT THE HELMS THEATRE**

**CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – February 12, 2020** –The UVA Department of Drama will continue its 2019-2020 season with its fourth annual New Works Festival, an evening of short plays written, directed, performed and produced by students. The New Works Festival will be presented from February 27-29 and from March 3-5 at 8pm in the Helms Theatre.

In a process overseen by Dave Dalton, UVA Drama Department Assistant Professor for Acting and Directing; and Doug Grissom, Associate Professor, Playwriting, the students travel the entire road from page to stage in presenting this collection of works that range from fantastical to funny and cover ground from matters of the head and heart to workplace woes and more.

The plays will include:

***Door Knock***, by Caky Winsett – Boy meets girl meets...a double dose of anxiety in this romantic comedy that finds Greg a mere door knock away from his first date with Katherine. Accompanied by insistent anxious alter-egos, the pair may just talk themselves out of a chance at romance before even saying hello!

***Child's Play, Or The Bear***, by Jess Miller – As its title suggests, this play is written by a child...about prostitutes...and murder...and dinosaurs. There is also a bear.

***The Art of Being an OK Person***, by Isabella Ullmann – When Mackenzie's boyfriend breaks up with her for being disloyal, she begins to question her morals, determined to become a better person. After spiraling emotionally and losing her job, her best friend, and her sense of self, Mackenzie finds herself on a self-actualization journey as an advice-dispensing Uber driver. When she meets a passenger whom she thinks is making the same mistake she once made, she can't keep herself from intervening – whether it is the right thing to do, or not. The play has been chosen as a regional finalist in the playwriting competition of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, and it will compete for the national prize this March at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

***Secretaries***, by Elizabeth Bangura – Two secretaries with vastly different backgrounds. One shady company. And just one phone. Can these two find a way to solidarity, or will circumstances continue to get in their way?

“It is always great to give our students the chance to have something specific to shoot for in terms of a production, and then to have the experience of seeing their work on stage,” Grissom said, “It is really fun to watch the pieces develop.”

Faculty mentors Dave Dalton and Doug Grissom split their areas of expertise, with Grissom helping mostly on the playwriting side, working closely with students on the writing and revision processes, while Dalton focuses more on production.

The students become immersed in the entire creative cycle, working together through the casting process and learning about the intricacies of the collaborative process in real time. “For the playwrights who are not directing their own works,” Grissom said, “they get to figure out the relationships with their directors, how to communicate their vision while taking into account that directors may have their own vision. Directors, meanwhile, get the rare and valuable opportunity of working with playwrights sitting right there beside them.”

“It has been a little more hands-on than I expected,” observed Caky Winsett, who wrote *Door Knock*. “I was under the impression that you just write a play and hand it over to someone and they do the rest and never contact you again. It has been great to be in rehearsals and to be able to communicate through the whole process. Sometimes I will be asked about my motivation for writing a certain thing and there is a chance to clarify. Or the director is able to say, ‘Here is my idea, does it stray from yours in any significant ways?’ It’s been great working with my director because we have very similar thoughts about the material.”

Winsett’s initial inspiration, she said, came from the idea of characters battling the voices of their inner monologues, which deliver senses of doubt and mental roadblocks that only anxiety can bring. In the writing process, she expanded that vision to turn the voices into full-fledged characters.

She hopes audiences will come away with some good laughs as well as a reminder that, in the end, love may conquer all – even anxiety. “The moral, if there is one,” Winsett said, “is that you can overcome your anxiety even if it is literally screaming at you, as it is at these characters, and even if it is literally pulling you away from that door.”

Tickets for The UVA Drama New Works Festival are sold through the UVA Arts Box Office and are available online at [www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu](http://www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu), by phone at 434-924-3376, or in person at the UVA Arts Box office located in the lobby of the Drama Building. Hours of operation are noon to 5PM, Monday through Friday. Parking for UVA Drama performances is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theaters.

To access photos of *The UVA Drama Department New Works Festival*, visit <https://virginia.box.com/s/j87b6zyzbwrhcy7zrn2wnjewb0s61jqk>

For more information on the 2019-2020 UVA Drama season, visit <http://drama.virginia.edu/current-season>.