



WEITZENHOFFER FAMILY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
UNIVERSITY THEATRE  
*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA*

# THE BIRDS

A white silhouette of a hiker with a backpack and a walking stick, positioned between the letters 'B' and 'I' of the word 'BIRDS'.

By Yvette Nolan

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E Pope, Production Carpenter  
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WEITZENHOFFER FAMILY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
UNIVERSITY THEATRE  
*The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA*

and  
HELMERICH SCHOOL OF DRAMA  
present

# THE BIRDS

By  
**Yvette Nolan**

Directed by  
**Daniel Leeman Smith**

Music Director  
**TERRY LEVE**

Composer  
**DAWN AVERY**

Puppet Designer  
**AFSANEH AAYANI**

Scenic Designer  
**ELIZABETH ELLIOTT**

Costume Designers  
**LOYD CRACKNELL**  
**NATALIE LANE**

Lighting Designer  
**MATHEU GAY**

Sound Designer  
**MADISON HECKELSBERG**

Production Dramaturg  
**ISABELLA WOODSON**

Violence & Intimacy Designer  
**Dr. KATE BUSSELL**

Mentor/Vocal Coach  
**Dr. JOE ALBERTI**

Stage Manager  
**EMILY MATTHEWS**

Associate Stage Managers  
**McKENNA BOWMAN**  
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**8 P.M. APRIL 3, 4, 10, and 11, 2026**  
**3 P.M. APRIL 4, 11, and 12, 2026**

WEITZENHOFFER THEATRE, 563 ELM AVE., NORMAN, OK

**OU FINE ARTS BOX OFFICE • (405) 325-4101 • THEATRE.OU.EDU**

*The Birds* (a modern adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy)  
Produced by special arrangement with the Playwrights Guild of Canada

Dear Friends and Patrons:

*The Birds* is a modern adaptation of the Ancient Greek comedy by Aristophanes, reimagined by acclaimed First Nations playwright Yvette Nolan. This University Theatre production is a true collaboration among artists from across the country, the School of Drama faculty, and our exceptional students.

Guest director Daniel Leeman Smith, who lives in New York and is originally from Oklahoma, brings this fantastical story to life through an Indigenous lens. His vision is powerfully supported by Mohawk songwriter Dawn Avery, who composed the original music, as well as by striking visual elements—including life-size puppet headdresses and masks by Afsaneh Aayani, and beautiful costumes, scenery, and lighting—created by our drama design and production faculty and students.

It truly takes a village to bring this piece to life. Thank you for being an integral part of the success of our production season. I also extend my sincere gratitude to the Theatre Guild for its unwavering support of the School of Drama and our students' education. The participation of our community makes what we do all the more thrilling and rewarding.

Whether onstage or behind the scenes, everyone involved has given their all and demonstrated the true spirit of collaboration. Although this story centers on *The Birds*, it mirrors our own relationship with nature and society.

Enjoy the show!

Yuanting Zhao  
Director, Helmerich School of Drama  
University of Oklahoma

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Dear University Theatre Patrons,

It's our pleasure to welcome you to our production of *The Birds*, based on the classical Greek play by Aristophanes, in a version reimagined by Yvette Nolan.

Nolan's script deftly brings the classic story to life with the inclusion of Indigenous cultural elements that confirm very clearly the ability of the arts to speak across time and cultures. The result has been an opportunity for all involved with the production to stretch and question their own perceptions of time, culture, and relationships, including those to nature.

Guest director Daniel Leeman Smith utilizes puppets and sculptural pieces as creative tools for character development and storytelling in a world that transforms the Weitzenhoffer Theatre much as it transforms previous perceptions and invites the audience to journey into a different world.

If theatre entertains, it also transforms, transports, and poses questions making the world of *The Birds* one that is at once ephemeral and real, challenging and affirming, and mysterious and revealing. We are delighted that you have joined us to explore that world.

Professor Mary Margaret Holt  
Dean, Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts  
Nichols' Chair, Regents' Professor, and  
Presidential Professor  
University of Oklahoma



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- Membership as of March 10, 2026 -

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Questions? Contact Kimberley Worrell, Executive Director of Advancement, OU Foundation at [kworrell@ou.edu](mailto:kworrell@ou.edu) or call (405) 325-7376.

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# THE BIRDS

## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR Daniel Leeman Smith

This production embraces the play's tonal duality. Nolan's script is richly referential—echoing artists like Nirvana, Canadian sketch comedy, and films like Hitchcock's *The Birds*—while also carrying forward an Indigenous storytelling sensibility that blends humor with instruction. Our staging leans into a liminal, camp-inflected space where the natural and human worlds collide in ways that are intentionally awkward and revealing—and we do it with puppets.

Visually, the production draws inspiration from the Tlingít, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples of the Pacific Northwest. These influences are approached with care, contributing to a theatrical language that honors without replicating. Sound plays an equally vital role. Our score was composed especially for this production by Dawn Avery, a Grammy-nominated Mohawk artist of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, whose work deepens the cultural grounding of this world.

Our ensemble reflects a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Principal roles, where dramaturgically necessary, are performed by actors of Indigenous ancestry from the Americas, while the broader cast is shaped with global Indigeneity in mind—recognizing the birds as a reflection of Indigenous presence across cultures. Each performer carries a personal item tied to their heritage and lineage, a quiet but constant act of honoring that lives within the performance.

This production utilizes a coalitional casting model, inviting artists into a shared responsibility: not to replicate culture, but to uphold it with care, curiosity, and respect. At every turn, we have worked toward cultural responsibility in both process and product.

Guiding this work are values reflected in the cultures of the Tlingít, Haida, and Tsimshian people:

**Haa Aaní | Íitl' Tlagáa | Na Yuubm | Our Land**

**Haa Shuká | Íitl' Kuníisii | Na Hlagigyadm | Our Past, Present, and Future**

**Haa Latseen | Íitl' Dagwiigáay | Na Yugyetga'nm | Our Strength and Leadership**

**Wooch.Yax | Gu dlúu | Ama Mackshm | Balance, Reciprocity, and Respect**

These principles, held across generations, remind us that resilience is rooted in relationship—to land, to community, and to time itself.

Ultimately, *The Birds* asks: what does it mean to belong to a world rather than attempt to possess it? And what might we learn—if we are willing to listen—before it is too late?

So, as you enter this world above the treeline—where men try (and fail) to become birds, and the birds watch, remember, and respond—I invite you to sit with the questions, the humor, and the imbalance. And perhaps, in the listening, find a way back to balance.

Yakoke! (thank you), and enjoy the show.

# THE BIRDS

## A NOTE FROM THE PRODUCTION DRAMATURG Isabella Woodson

### The Power of Adaptation: Indigenizing *The Birds*

*"I ask that you sit with the confrontation of truth. I hope that you [leave] feeling ready to engage in a new narrative, one that celebrates us all."*

—Tara Moses (Seminole Nation),  
"It's Time to Move Beyond the Colonial Narrative" (2025)

Stories repeat, across cultures and generations, changing shape as new voices claim them. *The Birds* is a modern adaptation of Aristophanes' Ancient Greek play by the same name, written by Algonquin playwright, director, and dramaturg Yvette Nolan. In Aristophanes' version, two men escape the human world and build a city in the sky among the birds, an ideal paradise called Cloud Cuckoo Land. In Nolan's version, a world of birds grapples with an invasion of humans and the colonial damage trailing behind them. By inverting the focus of the story, Nolan asks audiences to sit with the consequences of land theft and the subjugation of others. But why choose *The Birds* as a vessel for a story about colonization rather than write an entirely new one?

Instead of decolonizing the story by abandoning it, Nolan chooses to reclaim this familiar narrative, providing an Indigenous perspective within a theatrical tradition that has historically excluded Indigenous voices. In doing so, Nolan participates in a longstanding practice of Indigenous storytelling, in which stories change and take on new shapes depending on who is retelling them. Each iteration thus reflects the values and perspectives of the community telling it. Adapting a well-known Western play, Nolan demonstrates that stories themselves can be reclaimed spaces and opportunities to rewrite old ideals.

Through this Indigenizing act of adaptation, *The Birds* becomes a place of conversation among cultures and generations, where a familiar story could still offer us a different ending.

# THE BIRDS

## CAST

JACK	Michael Paul Miller
GULLIVER	Michael Leubscher Black
HOOPOE	Maxine Cavallini
SANDPIPER	Noah Slicer
RAVEN	Cooper Smith
NIGHTINGALE	Bronwyn Quinlan
EAGLE	Taylor Stephens
SURVEYORS	Isabella Kopec Tavion Smith
LAWYER, et al.	Dean Baumgartner
CHORUS/PUPPETEERS	Buck Blume (Jack u/s) Evelyn Broyles (Hoopoe u/s) Hannah Haddad (Eagle u/s) Ella Howard (Nightingale u/s) Melanie Jacobs Isabella Kopec Alyssa Mullen (Lawyer u/s) Emma Perdue Desmond Pouncil Amal Ramadan (Sandpiper u/s) Tavion Smith William Thompson (Gulliver u/s) Miriam Eleanor Worley (Raven u/s)

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## SETTING

The time is now. Men stand at odds with nature—diverging from their traditional relational role as stewards and succumbing to what the Algonquin refer to as *Weitiko*: a sickness of the spirit marked by greed, excess, and self-destruction. The birds, long gone from the world of man, have found quiet respite far above the treeline, and it is here that Jack and Gulliver arrive, chasing rumors of “transpecies” men who have escaped the human world to live among them.

## THE STORY

In *The Birds*, Yvette Nolan (Algonquin) reimagines Aristophanes’ ancient Greek comedy as a sharp and deeply resonant parable. Drawing on Haida and Haudenosaunee cultural frameworks, Nolan situates the Eagle and Raven as leaders of their respective moieties—equal and necessary counterparts whose balance sustains harmony.

Here, the birds become an allegory for Indigenous peoples, and the encroachment of men reflects the ongoing violence of settler colonialism—where hyper-individualism and the pursuit of wealth replace relational responsibility to land, community, and spirit. What unfolds is both satire and warning.

## MEET THE CAST



DEAN  
BAUMGARTNER



MICHAEL LEUBSCHER  
BLACK



BUCK BLUME



EVELYNN BROYLES



MAXINE CAVALLINI



HANNAH HADDAD



ELLA HOWARD



MELANIE JACOBS



ISABELLA KOPEC



MICHAEL PAUL  
MILLER



ALYSSA MULLEN



EMMA PERDUE

## MEET THE CAST



DESMOND POUNCIL



BRONWYN QUINLAN



AMAL RAMADAN



NOAH SLICER



COOPER SMITH



TAVION SMITH



TAYLOR STEPHENS



WILLIAM THOMPSON



MIRIAM ELEANOR  
WORLEY

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

**DEAN BAUMGARTNER** (Lawyer, et al.) is a drama performance freshman from Magnolia, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Understudy for Sam Norris and Alex Fish, *A Christmas Carol*.

**MICHAEL LEUBSCHER BLACK** (Gulliver) is a drama performance freshman from Ada, OK. Credits: This is his OU University Theatre debut. OU Lab Theatre: Dad u/s, Matthew u/s, *You Got Older*. Michael is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation.

**BUCK BLUME** (Jack u/s) is a drama performance junior from Conroe, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Sid, *Waiting for Lefty*, *Somebody, Everybody*. The Lab Theatre: Ensemble, *Love & Information*; Leonard, *The Legacy*. The Studio Theatre: Ray-Bud/Bud, *Dearly Departed*.

**EVELYNN BROYLES** (Hoopoe u/s) is a drama performance sophomore from Moore, OK. Credits: OU University Theatre: Shadow Dramaturg, *As You Like It*. OU Lab Theatre: Dramaturg, *Bug*.

**MAXINE CAVALLINI** (Hoopoe) is a drama performance junior from Norman, OK. Credits: OU University Theatre: Soldier #2/Segismundo u/s, *Life Is a Dream*; Corin, *As You Like It*. OU Lab Theatre: Macbeth u/s, *Mac Beth*. OU Studio Theatre: Mac, *You Got Older*. OUMT Downtown Series: Daryl, *Bright Star*. Maxine is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation.

**HANNAH HADDAD** (Eagle u/s) is a drama performance junior from McKinney, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Scrooge/Mrs. Crachitt/ plump sister/ laundress, *A Christmas Carol*; Stenographer, *Waiting for Lefty*; Audrey, *As You Like It*; Ensemble, *Life Is A Dream*. Prague Shakespeare Company: Decius, *Julius Caesar*. CIA Productions: Ashley, *The Secretaries*.

**ELLA HOWARD** (Nightingale u/s) is a drama performance junior from Edmond, OK. Credits: OU University Theatre: Actor #3, *A Christmas Carol*; Man, *Waiting for Lefty*; Rosalind u/s, *As You Like It*. Oklahoma Shakespeare in the Park: Moth, *Love's Labour's Lost*.

**MELANIE JACOBS** (Chorus) is a drama performance junior from Dallas, TX. Credits: This is her OU University Theatre debut. OU Studio Theatre: Mae, *You Got Older*; OU Lab Theatre: Emily, *Go.Please.Go*. Oklahoma City Repertory Theatre: Logan/Alicia u/s, *The Thanksgiving Play*; Brubeck Arts Center: Alice, *The Legacy*.

**ISABELLA KOPEC** (Surveyor/Chorus) is a drama performance junior from Dallas, TX. Credits: This is her OU University Theatre production. OU Lab Theatre: *Dearly Departed*; *Love and Information*.

**MICHAEL PAUL MILLER** (Jack) is a drama performance sophomore from Frisco, TX. Credits: This is his OU University Theatre debut. OU Lab Theatre: The Old Man, *Fool For Love*; Hup, *Inside Siberia*.

**ALYSSA MULLEN** (Chorus/Lawyer u/s) is a drama performance freshman from McKinney, TX. Credits: This is her OU University Theatre debut. Alyssa is a member of Citizen Potawatomi Nation.

**EMMA PERDUE** (Chorus) is a musical theatre performance sophomore from Fort Gibson, OK. Credits: This is her OU University Theatre debut. OUMT Downtown Series: Ensemble/Margo u/s, *Bright Star*.

## WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST

**DESMOND POUNCIL** (Chorus) is a drama performance senior from Gainesville, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: *Silvius, As You Like It*; Tom Clayton, *Waiting for Lefty*; Soldier 1/Clarín (u/s), *Life Is a Dream*; Love, *Everybody*. Weitzenhoffer School of Musical Theatre: Ensemble, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Gilson Lab Theatre: Dad, *You Got Older*; Ensemble, *Red Bike*.

**BRONWYN QUINLAN** (Nightingale) is a drama performance junior from Kansas City, KS. Credits: This is her OU University Theatre debut. OU Studio Theatre: Raynelle, *Dearly Departed*.

**AMAL RAMADAN** (Chorus/Sandpiper u/s) is a musical theatre performance junior from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Credits: OU University Theatre: Frau Blücher, *Young Frankenstein*; Woman with Bags/Roger's Mom, *Rent*. OU Drama Lab: Serge, *Art*; Hope Repertory Theatre: Logainne "Schwarzzy", *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*; Mrs. Corry, *Mary Poppins*.

**NOAH SLICER** (Sandpiper) is a drama performance junior from Lyndonville, VT. Credits: OU University Theatre: Le Beau, *As You Like It*; Clarín, *Life Is a Dream*. OU Lab Theatre: Banquo u/s, *Mac Beth*. OU Student Theatre: Peter, *Aloha Say the Pretty Girls*. Student Theatre Council: Jared, *Body Awareness*. CoArts: Vel, *Where the Rabbits Roam No More*.

**COOPER SMITH** (Raven) is a drama performance junior from Prosper, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Astolfo, *Life Is a Dream*; OU Lab Theatre: *Brilliant Traces*; Bug; *Dearly Departed*. Cooper is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma.

**TAVION SMITH** (Surveyor) is a drama performance junior from McKinney, TX. Credits: This is his OU University Theatre debut. OU Lab Theatre: Dun, *Pipeline*; Andres, *Go. Please. Go.* OU Studio Theatre: Swing, *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls*. MTX Dallas Theatre Audrey II, *Little Shop of Horrors*.

**TAYLOR STEPHENS** (Eagle) is a drama performance sophomore from Lubbock, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Scrooge/Fezziwig/Little Cratchit/Topper/Merchant/Turkey Boy, *A Christmas Carol*. OU Lab Theatre: Henry Harry, *Brilliant Traces*; Coal, *Inside Siberia*.

**WILLIAM THOMPSON** (Gulliver u/s) is a drama performance freshman from Grand Prairie, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: u/s, *A Christmas Carol*. William is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation.

**MIRIAM ELEANOR WORLEY** (Movement Captain/Chorus/Raven u/s) is a drama performance senior from Philadelphia, PA. Credits: OU University Theatre: Florence, *Waiting for Lefty*. OU Lab Theatre: Catherine, *Proof*; Rachel, *Oh to Be Pure Again*; Ensemble, *Love and Information* and *Red Bike*. OU Student Theatre: Joyce, *Body Awareness*. Student Theatre: Pony, *The Realistic Joneses*.

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## WHO'S WHO BEHIND THE SCENES

**AFSANEH AAYANI** (Puppet Designer) Select Credits: Denver Center, Alley Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Alliance Theatre, The Old Globe: *English*; Alley Theatre: *Alley All New Festival*, *A Christmas Carol*; Chautauqua Theater: *Birthday Candles*; Princeton University: *A Moment of Silence*; American Stage: *Disgraced*; Two River Theater: *Romeo and Juliet*; Theatre Under the Stars: *Frozen*, *The Ugly Christmas Sweater*; La Mirada Theatre, Papermill Playhouse: *Frozen*; Trinity Rep: *Alabaster*; Meow Wolf Houston; Catastrophic Theatre: *Turn of the Screw*, *Innominate*, *Cleansed*; Stages: *Lehman Trilogy*, *Roe*, *Black Superhero Magic Mama*, *Ms. Holmes and Ms. Watson*; El Paso Opera: *Frida*, *Sunday in the Park With George*; Houston Grand Opera: *Big Swim*; Houston Shakespeare Festival: *King Lear*; Theatre of the Republic: *Finding Nemo*; PBS Arkansas: *Blueberry's Clubhouse Seasons 2&3*; Moores School of Music: *Little Shop of Horrors*. [afsanehaayani.com](http://afsanehaayani.com)

**KASEY ALLEE-FOREMAN** (Associate Producer) has served as Associate Producer/ Production Manager for over 100 productions in the Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts at the University of Oklahoma. She is currently the President of USITT. A short listing of her professional theatre credits include: SphinxCON, a conference promoting Diversity in the Arts; Canterbury Choral: Bernstein's Mass; Houston Grand Opera: Renée Fleming's premiere *La Traviata* (world premiere); Stages Repertory Theatre (Houston); Houston Shakespeare Festival; Shakespeare Festival at Tulane (New Orleans); Theatre West (Los Angeles). Professional film credits include: *Mystery, Alaska*, *Lost and Found*; *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. She is proud to have served on the USITT Board of Directors as the VP for Conferences, the VP for Education and Training, and as a Director. She has served USITT on the Conference Committee chair and member, IDEAS Committee chair and member, is the co-founder of the Gateway Program, and has been the Co-chair of the Women in Theatre Network. Kasey received her MFA in Costume Design and Technology and Lighting Design and Technology from the University of New Orleans and her BA in Theatre Arts from Furman University.

**DR. JOE ALBERTI** (Mentor/Vocal Coach) attended the Yale School of Drama and wrote his dissertation as well as numerous books and peer-reviewed articles on the acting methodology of Earle R. Gister, former Associate Dean of YSD. He is a Designated Linklater Voice teacher, a certified Colaianni Speech and Dialect teacher, a certified Alexander Technique (AmSAT) teacher, and is currently completing certification in Jessica Wolf's *Art of Breathing*. He is the Editor of the *AmSAT* (Alexander Technique) Journal and has written many articles about the Alexander Technique. He is co-author of the interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed article, "The Other Side of Performance: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Listening for Voice and Speech Trainers," published in the international Routledge Journal, the *Voice and Speech Review*.

Dr. Alberti has worked extensively at Shakespeare & Company, served as text coach at the Notre Dame Shakespeare Festival, and has been voice, speech, dialect, and text coach on many theatre productions and film projects. He just completed co-authorship and world-premiere production of *The Trial*, a modern play based on the Kafka novel set in the context of surveillance capitalism.

He is currently co-writing several new plays, including *The Transformation*, a play adaptation of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and a two-character play about the life of John and Abigail Adams, *My Dearest Friend*. He has directed several plays at OU, including *Men on Boats*.

## WHO'S WHO BEHIND THE SCENES

**DAWN AVERY** (Composer) is a Native composer and a GRAMMY and NAMA nominated performer, composer, professor. Dawn Avery has worked with musical luminaries Pavarotti, Sting, Nakai and, Shenandoah, as well as composers including John Cage, Charles Wuorinen, and Phillip Glass. Of Mohawk Kaniènkeha descent, she is dedicated to the Indigenization of composition and performance. With a PhD in ethnomusicology, her work focuses on Native Classical Music, Indigenous theory and research. Avery's work has been performed at the National Museum of the American Indian, Lincoln, and Kennedy Centers. Several chamber works can be heard on the recordings *Tulpe*, *North American Indian Cello Project*. Several of Avery's recordings have won Global Music Awards, including those for theatre and downtempo. She has written two short operas *Sacajawea: Woman of Many Names* and *Trials and Tears*. Avery was a composer for the award-winning film *Imagining the Indian: The Fight Against Native Mascots*. She won best composer in the Paris Women's Film Festival for a video by Duo Concertante of *Iotsistokwaron:ion*. North American Indian Cello Project (Innova) and her works recorded by cellist Wilhemina Smith, produced by Judith Sherman are expected in 2025. Other commissions and premieres include those by the Alexandria and Ancaster Symphony Orchestras and works for Carillon at the University of Michigan and in Berlin as part of "A Century of Women and the Carillon." Avery fosters future generations through retreats, mentorship, composition programs and as a professor at Montgomery College in Maryland.

**McKENNA BOWMAN** (Associate Stage Manager) is a stage management senior from Prosper, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Stage Manager, Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein*; Stage Manager, *Waiting for Lefty*; Co-Stage Manager, OFB '24, Stage Manager, *Rita & L'heure Espagnole*; Associate Stage Manager, CDO '24; Associate Stage Manager, *The Merry Widow*; Associate Stage Manager, *The Nutcracker* (OFB '23); Associate Stage Manager, *Susannah*. Colorado Springs Philharmonic & OU School of Dance: Associate Stage Manager, *The Nutcracker*. Windsong Chamber Choir OKC: Stage Manager, *The Sacred Veil*.

**DR. KATE BUSSELLE** (Intimacy/Violence Designer) is the founder of Heartland Intimacy Design & Training, an intimacy training company which offers academic, accessible, and affordable intimacy training entirely online. She has taught several workshops on staging intimacy, as well as designing intimacy for several productions. She is also one of the original co-founders of Theatrical Intimacy Education. She has written extensively on the topic of theatrical intimacy and de-roling and debriefing practices; her publications can be found in journals such as *Theatre Topics*, *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, *Theatre/Practice*, and *Howlround Theatre Commons*.

Kate is Assistant Professor of Movement, Intimacy, and Violence at the University of Oklahoma, where she teaches foundational and advanced movement courses, stage combat, and theatrical intimacy best practices for performers and stage managers. She also serves as the resident violence and intimacy designer for all School of Drama productions, and provides mentorship opportunities to emerging intimacy professionals within the program. Kate is an Advanced Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) with certifications in unarmed combat, rapier & dagger, quarterstaff, single sword, broadsword, broadsword and shield, knife, smallsword, and theatrical firearms safety.

In addition to her violence and intimacy work, Kate is a Level 1 Margolis Method Certified Educator and is currently working towards her Level 2 Certification. Margolis Method, along with Viewpoints and Laban Effort Shapes, serve as the foundation of her movement-based acting classes.

Kate's national theatre involvement includes serving as the Vice-President for the Women and Theatre Program, which aims to foster both research and production of feminist, anti-racist, and queer theatre activities and praxis. She is also a member of the Association of Movement Theatre Educators (ATME), which also falls under the umbrella of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE).

## WHO'S WHO BEHIND THE SCENES

Kate completed her Ph.D. in Theatre and Performance Studies at the University of Missouri in 2019, making her the first intimacy professional with a doctorate. Kate is also a director, primarily directing all femme productions that challenge or subvert gender performance and violence, play reading festivals, and regional semi-professional theatre.

**LLOYD CRACKNELL** (Co-Costume Designer) originally from Cambridge England, Associate Professor of Costume Design and resident Costume Designer at the University of Oklahoma. Lloyd's career includes both costume and fashion design, working for prestigious design houses including The Emanuels and Versace. Lloyd's designs have been seen in London, New York, Paris, Milan, and South America. He was invited to exhibit his costume designs at the World Creativity Forum in Cardiff, Wales in 2010. Lloyd has costume designed in all genres of the performing arts, including drama, opera, classical ballet, modern dance, and musical theatre. He has designed costumes for over a hundred productions, including over forty for OU's University Theatre.

Cracknell's regional design credits include Regional premieres of *Heisenberg*; *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*; *Let The Right One In*, World premieres: Haydn's *The Seasons* at Haydnstage, Austria. Film and Television: P.B.S. Special Early Music Program; and Film Distance Vision, Francis Ford Coppola, Director.

Awards for Professor Cracknell include the USITT-SW Oscar Brockett Teaching Award (2023), the Irene and Julian. J Rothbaum Professor of Excellence in the Arts Award (2020), and the USITT-SW Mildred and Glen Martin Jr. Award for Outstanding Service. Other awards and nominations include: DFW Theatre Critics Forum Award-Best Design Team for a Season (2015, 2017); Theatre Jones Best Costume Design Runner-up Award (2015); Kennedy Center American College Theater Award (2010), Region VI National Partners in American Theatre KCACTF Award (2010). In 2021, Lloyd received the Broadway World Oklahoma Award for Best Costume Design of a Play or Musical (Professional) for *Pride and Prejudice* (Oklahoma Shakespeare).

**ELIZABETH ELLIOTT** (Scenic Designer) is a scenic design senior from St. Louis, MO. Credits: OU University Theatre: Scenic Designer, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*; Scenic Designer, *Rent*; Scenic Designer, *Life Is a Dream*; Props Lead, *Marie Antoinette*; Props Lead, *Heathers*; Props Lead, *Rita & L'heure Espagnole*; Props Lead, *Young Frankenstein*; Props Lead, *La clemenza di Tito*. Peninsula Players: Properties Intern. Music Theatre Wichita: Props Artisan.

**MATHIEU GAY** (Lighting Designer) is a lighting design sophomore from Houston, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Lighting Designer, *Spite and Basslines* (YCS '26), *Lost in Translation* (YCS '26), *We Became the Fire* (YCS '26), *La Carnaval* (YCS '25), *Where the Mind Goes* (YCS '25). Production Electrician, *A Christmas Carol*, Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein*; Associate Lighting Designer, *La Clemenza de Tito*. Assistant Lighting Designer, *Waiting for Lefty*.

**MADISON HECKELSBURG** (Sound Designer) is a criminology senior with a minor in sound design from Bartlesville, OK. Credits: OU University Theatre: Sound Mixer, *Company*. Sound Designer, *Waiting for Lefty*; Sound Operator, *Rent*. Spotlight Acting Academy: Sound Designer/Engineer, *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*; Sound Designer/Engineer, *Something Rotten!*; Sound Designer/Engineer, *Shrek the Musical*. Bartlesville Fine Arts: Sound Designer/Engineer, *Anything Goes*.

## WHO'S WHO BEHIND THE SCENES

**MARY MARGARET HOLT** (Producer) began her early ballet training in Austin, Texas at Austin Civic Ballet, receiving a Ford Foundation scholarship for study with the San Francisco Ballet at the age of 15. Subsequently, she received a Ford Foundation scholarship for study at the School of American Ballet, also appearing with the New York City Ballet. Holt accepted a soloist contract with Houston Ballet upon completing her BFA in Ballet Performance. While a member of Houston Ballet, she danced a wide variety of solo and principal roles in the classical and contemporary repertoire by choreographers including Stevenson, Van Manen, Van Danzig, Petipa, Balanchine, Taras, Dolin, Boris, Clouser, Franklin, Ivanov, de Mille, and O'Donnell. She also performed principal roles in Terekhov's *The Firebird*, *The Snow Maiden*, and *Don Quixote*. She has performed as a guest artist, teacher, and choreographer with ballet and opera companies across the United States.

Holt joined the dance faculty of the University of Oklahoma School of Dance as an assistant professor, following Miguel Terekhov as chair in 1991, and an appointment as director in 1998. As director of Oklahoma Festival Ballet, Holt has choreographed over forty ballets Haydnstage in Austria (2), Mexico (3), Taiwan, China, and Ecuador. Holt choreography includes the music of Franck, Haydn, The Beatles, Porter, Weill, Mozart, Ginastera, Ikard, Holley, Satie, Bartok, Orff, and Debussy and her ballets have been seen across the U.S. as well as in South America, the United Kingdom, and Europe. Under Holt's leadership, Oklahoma Festival Ballet performed works from the national repertoire by Joffrey and Balanchine as well as de Mille's *Rodeo*. Her students have performed with Miami City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Ballet Arizona, Ballet Austin, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Orlando Ballet, Oklahoma City Ballet, and Tulsa Ballet, and as finalists and semifinalists in the International Ballet Competition. At the University of Oklahoma, Holt taught every course in the ballet curriculum and her continuing studies in ballet pedagogy include studying Bournonville Technique with Tage Wendt; and Vaganove Technique at the Bolshoi Academy at Vail; and in St. Petersburg and Minsk, Russia.

Holt was an honoree at the second national RDA Festival in Pittsburgh in 2007, and she received the CORPS de Ballet International Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020. She has served on the Dance Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts and been a panelist on Women in the Academy at Oxford. She is the recipient of the Governor's Arts Award, the Presidential Professorship, and the Regents' Professorship at OU where she also holds the John and Mary Nichols' Chair in Dance.

**NATALIE LANE** (Costume Designer) is a costume design junior from Bixby, OK. Credits: OU University Theatre: Hair and Makeup Designer, *Company*; Costume Designer, *A Christmas Carol*; Costume Designer, *Lost & pluralisms* (CDO '25); Assistant Costume Designer, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (OFB '25); Assistant Costume Designer, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. Windsong Chamber Choir: Assistant Costume Designer, *The Sacred Veil*. Tulsa Performing Arts Center: Costume Assistant, *Ragtime*.

**DANIEL LEEMAN-SMITH** (Director) is a proud two-spirit citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. He is a New York City-based director, playwright, dramaturg, and producer whose work sits at the intersection of art, education, community, and activism, centering Native joy.

Daniel is a recipient of the 2025 Democracy Cycle commission at New York City's Perelman Performing Arts Center, where he is developing *Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People*, a documentary play about the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz. He will also direct a 29-hour reading of the new play *Monster SLAYer* in partnership with the Perelman Performing Arts Center and Playwrights Horizons in observance of the National Day of Remembrance for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives. Recently, he assistant-directed a 29-hour reading of the new musical *West* under Tony Award winner Michael Arden.

## WHO'S WHO BEHIND THE SCENES

Recent credits include *Pueblo Revolt* (Director, Perseverance Theatre), *Pigeon/Thunderbird* (Dramaturg, Native Voices), *Stories of the Land* (Dramaturg, Long Wharf Theatre), *Diné Nishłj* (i am a sacred being) or *A Boarding School Play* (Director, Alter Theater Ensemble & UC Berkeley), *Perhaps the World Ends Here* (Writer/Director, NYU Tisch Drama Stage), *Ajijaak on Turtle Island* (Associate Director, National Tour), *Where We Belong* (Assistant Director, The Public Theater/Woolly Mammoth), *Flying Bird's Diary* (Associate Director, Long Wharf Theatre), *Repulsing the Monkey* (Director & Associate Producer, White Horse Tavern), and *Tourniquet*, *Dark Earth*, *Yu-Che-Wah-Kenh*, *Poyvfekev*, and *Built On Bones* (Director, New Native Play Festival, Yale Indigenous Performing Arts Program).

An educator for over fifteen years, Daniel has taught students from middle school through graduate programs across the U.S. and abroad. His teaching includes ethnodrama and devised theatre at the Asian University for Women in Bangladesh, and contemporary Indigenous theatre at Marymount Manhattan College and the NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where he is currently on faculty.

He previously co-taught the practicum *Performing Science and Magic: Devised Theatre Laboratory* with Ellen Horne (Radiolab) and Adam Savage (*MythBusters*), culminating in the original performance *The Mystery of the Cardboard Man* at the Midnight Theatre. Before joining NYU, Daniel served as District Chair of Speech, Theatre, Film, and Dance for Putnam City Schools in Oklahoma, helping the district earn the Governor's Arts in Education Award.

He is a member of the Dramatists Guild of America, Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, an Associate Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, and a member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. He is also a member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab and an alumnus of the SDC Observership Program and Lincoln Center Education's Teaching Artist Development Lab. He earned his BFA and MA at Oklahoma City University and completed the graduate conservatory program in physical and devised theatre at the SITI Company.

Daniel is a doctoral candidate in the program of Educational Theatre in Colleges and Communities at NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. His research centers on applied theatre and ethnodrama, exploring how Indigenous approaches to theatre-making can reduce harm and reshape professional practice. He is also the founding manager of the NYU Wasserman Center for Career Development's Creative Career Hub, where he expands access and creates opportunities for students pursuing careers in the arts, entertainment, and culture. Daniel is the 2014 recipient of the New York City Pride Award. [www.leemansmith.com](http://www.leemansmith.com)

**TERRY LEVE** (Music Director) is a second-year Doctoral student in Wind Conducting at OU, and is thrilled to be making his Music Director debut with University Theatre and the Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts. Prior to coming to OU, he served as a Director of Bands for eight years in Colorado Springs, CO and Los Angeles, CA where he music directed such productions as *West Side Story*; *The Music Man*; *Oliver!*; and *Grease*. Terry received his Bachelor's degree in Music Education and Master's degree in Conducting, both from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

**EMILY MATTHEWS** (Stage Manager) is a stage management junior from Dallas, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Stage Manager, Young Choreographers' Showcase 2026; Stage Manager, Oklahoma Festival Ballet; Production Assistant, *Heathers*; Associate Stage Manager, *The Merry Widow*; Associate Stage Manager, *Rent*; Stage Manager, Young Choreographers' Showcase 2025. Stage Manager, Koger New Play Lab.

## WHO'S WHO BEHIND THE SCENES

**JALISA REED** (Assistant Puppet Designer/Props Lead) is a scenic design sophomore from Houston, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Assistant Scenic Designer/Props Lead, *A Christmas Carol*; Props Lead, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*.

**ISABELLA WOODSON** (Production Dramaturg) is a dramaturgy junior from Frisco, TX. Credits: OU University Theatre: Assistant Director, *Waiting for Lefty*. OU Drama: Director, *Koger New Play Lab*; Production Dramaturg, *Dearly Departed*. OU MT: Assistant to the Playwright: *Oh L'Amour*. CIA Production: Co-Producer, *The Secretaries*; Director, *Another Beginning*.

**EMMA YANKOWITZ** (Associate Stage Manager) is a stage management freshman from Katy, TX. Credits: This is her OU University Theatre debut.

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## FUN FACT

A variety of puppets were specially designed for *The Birds*. Each was crafted with the silhouette of five different types of birds on them, as well as patterns that are inspired by Haida art.

# THE BIRDS

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Producer Mary Margaret Holt  
Associate Producer Kasey Allee-Foreman  
Production Manager Michael Cole  
Assistant Scenic Designer Jalisa Reed  
Assistant Costume Designers Kris Campbell  
Faculty Advisor to the Scenic Designer Jon Young  
Faculty Advisor to the Costume Designer Lloyd Cracknell  
Faculty Advisor to the Lighting Designer Renée Brode  
Faculty Advisor to Stage Management Christopher Sadler  
Design and Production Area Coordinator Renée Brode  
Technical Director Akari Harada  
Production Carpenter E. Pope  
Scenic Charge Artist Sydney Hagen  
Scenic Undergraduate Assistants Sydney Brooks, Jake Cook, Elizabeth Elliott  
Braxton Ellsworth, Cadence Gates  
Gillian Kelley, Michael Miller, Oscar Miller  
Abigail Pirtle, Ruby Ravsten, Jalisa Reed  
Goldie Snow, JJ Toly  
Properties Director Margot Glaser  
Properties Lead & Puppet Assistant Jalisa Reed  
Run Crew Head Trisha Pareizs  
Run Crew Kris Campbell, Gabby Garbarini, Felix Joshi  
Ellie Loudermilk, Paul Thibodeau  
Electrics Supervisor Eric Stehl  
Lighting Undergraduate Assistants Kai Allen, Ava Booker, Ericka Dodson  
Micah Dooley, Lauren Foster, Mathieu Gay  
Madison Heckelsberg, Noah Jittawait, Felix Joshi  
Lucas Knapp, Madeline Lewis, Conner Lin  
Lucas Mann, Emily Morris, Carleigh Nickel  
Malerie Pollock, Ruby Ravsten, Sophia Smith  
Production Electrician Carleigh Nickel  
Deck Electrician Spencer-Shane Cartwright  
Light Board Programmer Lauren Foster  
Light Board Operator Celia Jilge  
Audio Supervisor Kenneth Ray Woods  
Audio Undergraduate Assistant Ava Booker, Madison Hecklesberg  
Felix Joshi, Conner Lin  
Sound Board Operator Abbie Stearns  
Costume Studio Supervisor Christina Draper  
Cutter/Draper Ananda Keator  
Junior Draper Chloe Mullin  
Lead Stitcher Amy Kercher  
Stitcher Stephanie Cirar  
Costume Undergraduate Assistants Bree Burchett, Westbrook Hallum, Paige Kasulis,  
Natalie Lane, Ian Lee, Emily Matthews  
Ben Nemmers, Joy Omeish, Emily Post  
Sydney Tuffnell, Samantha Verbsky  
Wardrobe Supervisor Stephanie Cirar  
Wardrobe Crew Head Nola McKee, Sydney Tuffnell  
Wardrobe Crew Jadelan Cartwright, Bella Gutierrez  
Reese Klepacki, Max Pearson, Kaela Theuri  
Lily Polemis, Jalisa Reed  
Box Office Terrye Hudson, Sherri Morgan  
House Managers Taryn Feheley  
Assistant House Managers Kelsey Barnes, Macie Castellanos, Micah Dooley  
Alex Fish, Mario Lopez, Taylor McCardle  
Ben Nemmers, Abby Pieper, Skyler Ryden  
Lucy Vosburg, Pippa Woodward  
Marketing Assistant Lane Houk  
Production Undergraduate Assistant JJ Toly



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James and Janet Gorton, Douglas Gaffin and Mariëlle Hoefnagels  
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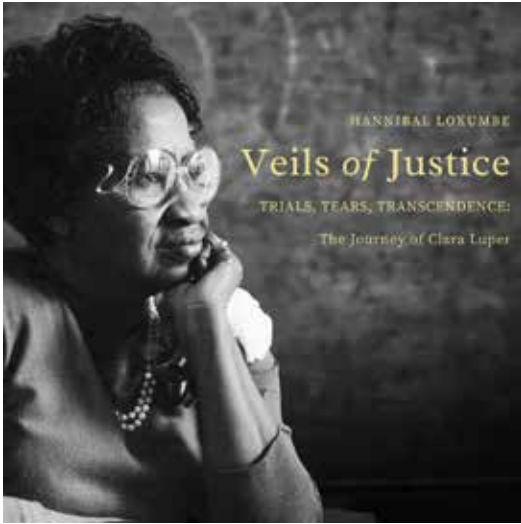
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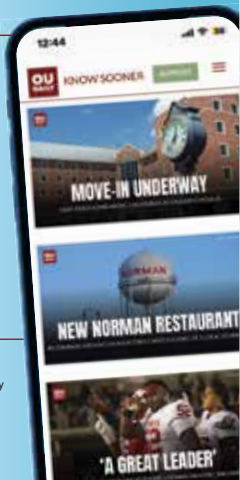


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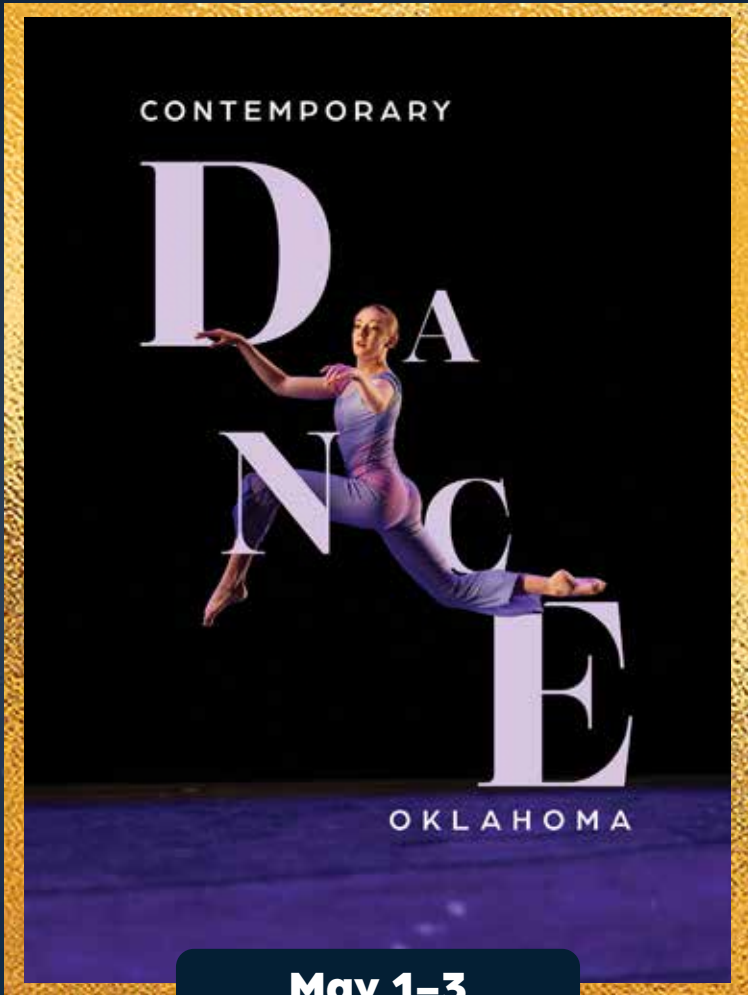
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