

Springing into Summer...

Spring 2025 was a vibrant and inspiring semester filled with dynamic course offerings, exciting mainstage and development stage productions, visits from guest artists and alumni, and a variety of social events. These moments brought our community together in meaningful ways—to learn, create, collaborate, perform, and enjoy a wide range of experiences.

Recognizing and celebrating our graduating students is always a highlight of the spring semester and a special opportunity to reflect on the energy, creativity, and dedication they brought to our department. We're deeply grateful for their contributions and excited to see where their journeys take them next.

As we look head to the <u>Virginia Theatre Festival</u> summer season and begin preparations for the <u>2025-26 academic year season</u>, we want to thank you for being part of our community—in our theatres, classrooms, and beyond. We wish you a joyful summer and look forward to welcoming you back soon!

With warm regards,

R. Lee Kennedy Chair, UVA Department of Drama



in this issue:

Congratulations Graduates!

PAGE 02

Department & Student Updates

PAGES 03-04

Faculty & Staff Updates
PAGES 05-06

Alumnae Updates

PAGES 07-08

Semester in Review

Mainstage PAGES 09-10
Development PAGES 11-12
Academic Events PAGE 13

2025-2026 Season Announced!
PAGE 14

Congratulations Graduates!!



We are so proud of our 2025 graduates!!

It has been an honor getting to know and work with these incredibly talented students!

Congratulations and all the best as you go on to your next chapter!

Upcoming adventures for members of the class of 2025 include pursuing the arts locally, regionally, and beyond, as well as pursuing various graduate programs, including continuing their education at the UVA College of Arts & Sciences, the McIntire School of Commerce, and Georgetown University.

View the full list of graduates and their bios in the 2025 Department of Drama Graduation Program.

Bachelor of Arts, Drama:

Drama Minors:

Brighid Albright
Katherine Haines
Aubrey Michel
Alexandra Pentimonti
Nicole Romero
Faith Sheen Wang

John H. Barnes
Mary Logan Hall
David Hodge
Yingying Elisa Hu
Claire Corrigan Lichty
Abigail Milne
Morgan Poquette
Katia Ramirez
Julian Rivera Santiago

Dance Minors:

Eleanor Byrd Deneishia Haralson Emma Strebel Delaney Walts

Awards Presented:

Pettway Prize
for extraordinary service to the Department of Drama
Katherine Haines, Mary Logan Hall

Caplin Award for excellence and outstanding leadership in Dance Eleanor Byrd, Delaney Walts

Delauney Awardfor singular achievement in playwriting

Mary Logan Hall
for I Am My Mother's Daughter

Department & Student Updates

Welcome New Department Faculty & Staff!

AB Brown will join us in the Fall as Associate Professor of Performance and Performance Studies

Clare Kelly joins us starting this Summer as Properties Supervisor and Artisan for UVA Drama & VTF

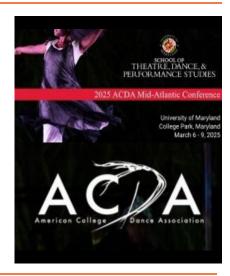
Shawn Tucker joined our staff in May as Director of Production for UVA Drama & VTF

We will meet these newest members of the Department in more detail in our Fall 2025 Newsletter!

Thanks to funding from the Caplin family, eight current students in the Dance Program attended the 2025 Mid-Atlantic ACDA (American College Dance Association) Conference with faculty members Kim Brooks Mata and Katie Schetlick!

The ACDA conference offers various learning and networking opportunities, including performances and presentations. 2nd year student Naomi Diener and 4th year student Mora Poquette submitted screendance works for screening consideration, and all three were accepted--with one of Mora's films opening the screening!

Reflecting on their experience, students shared how they were inspired by the live performances - including AIM by Kyle Abraham - and screendance showings; excited to learn from accomplished teachers and dance alongside peers from other universities; and grateful for the chance to strengthen their connections with fellow UVA dancers.





The Dance Program is also excited to announce the launch of the Ruth Sacks Caplin annual grant program in honor of Mrs. Caplin's enduring commitment to the arts and education—empowering UVA dance students to follow their passion and make a meaningful impact through creative exploration.

Rising 2nd, 3rd, and 4th-year dance students are invited to apply for up to \$5,000 in funding to support their artistic and professional growth. These funds can be used to cover expenses during winter, spring, or summer breaks and are intended to enhance students' educational opportunities in dance.

Ruth Sacks Caplin had a passion for the arts that extended to painting, fashion design, screenwriting, and dance. Her family moved from New York City to Charlottesville, Virginia, when her husband, Mortimer Caplin, accepted a professorship at the University of Virginia Law School. When Charlottesville public schools were closed by the Governor during the days of the Massive Resistance in 1959, Ruth co- created a group called "The Ten Mothers" who, with basement classrooms in private homes, reopened school to all and led studies in dance, music, and theatre. When the Caplins moved to Washington, D.C., Ruth produced children's theatre in the public schools, and supported dance and theatre programs throughout the city.

In 2013, the Ruth Caplin Theatre was named in recognition of Mrs. Caplin's life-long advocacy for the arts. The opening of the Ruth Caplin Theatre fulfilled Mrs. Caplin's desire to create a home for dance at UVA.

In 2015, the annual Ruth Caplin Award in Dance was established by the Caplin family in memory of Ruth Sacks Caplin to identify outstanding leadership and excellence in Dance. Students honored with this award exemplify Ruth's passion and dedication to the arts through dance performance, choreography, scholarship, and advocacy.

Department & Student Updates (continued)

During finals week, students in DRAM 4490: Stage Combat Skills had the chance to work with Fight Master Dale Girard from the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD). Dale adjudicated their national skills tests in unarmed stage combat, where students performed choreographed fight scenes and received valuable feedback. Dale also led a master class, assisted by UVA Associate Professor Marianne Kubik, an SAFD Certified Teacher and instructor of the course.

Join us in celebrating these students for passing their national tests! Their dedicated work has resulted in this impressive achievement, and the skills they've gained will open doors to exciting opportunities ahead.





With Drama Department support, current students Caitlyn Helzer and Will Conrad were able to secure funding from UVA Student Council, UVA College of Arts & Sciences, QVA, The Office of the Provost & Vice Provost for the Arts, in order to attend the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT) 2025 conference in March. Dedicated and hard-working students, Will and Caitlyn also chose to put in hours working on conference set-up, which afforded them a discount on the conference fee and allowed them to make the funding they had secured go even further!



During the conference, they enjoyed attending various classes, workshops - where they were able to test some of the most up to date equipment and software, view exhibits where designers displayed and discussed their work, and spend time at the expo for networking with potential employers, graduate programs, and vendors!

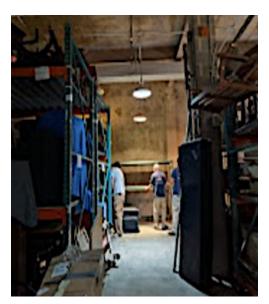
This year's USITT conferences drew an attendance of over 5,000 people, bringing together an international technical theatre community in an effort to open doors for the spread of knowledge. It's mission statement is to "connect performing arts design and technology communities to ensure a vibrant dialogue among practitioners, educators, and students."

Faculty & Staff Updates

Costume Designer and Technologist Caroline Cook and Technical Director Michael Waldron continue to foster community and engage students through department-hosted social events. This semester included a "Pi +1 Day" event (hosted on 4.14, as Pi Day was during spring break) with department members and students bringing pies to try! The event was a lovely opportunity to spend time with friends interested and engaged in drama and dance.

The annual Dram Prom, co-hosted with the students of <u>Virginia Players</u>, provided an additional opportunity to gather and find joy in our department community with a cookout, cornhole tournament, karaoke, and recognition of our graduating 4th-year students!





Production and Operations Manager Shawanna Hall led this spring's effort to clear out and reorganize several areas in our building—an important first step toward reimagining these spaces for enhanced educational and production use. One major milestone has already been accomplished: our 1,800-square-foot prop storage area has already been fully cleared, with retained items relocated to our newly leased offsite, temperature-controlled storage facility!

In the coming months, additional costumes, production materials, publicity posters, and more will also be moved into the new 5,000-square-foot storage space.

This transition will open up valuable space within the building for student learning, rehearsals, and creative work — laying the groundwork for exciting improvements to come. Stay tuned for future updates as we continue this transformation!

Professor and Chair R. Lee Kennedy recently finished a turn as Lighting Designer for Classic Stage Company's production of *Bus Stop*, co-produced with the National Asian American Theatre Company and Transport Group. CSC's production opened this May and the *New York Times* listed it as a show to see, calling it a play of "beauty, humanity, and complexity!"

Bus Stop, by William Inge, is characterized by the playwright's signature sympathetic portrayal of small-town life in America, a reflection of his own background. From CSC's website: "On a snowy night in Kansas, a diner can be an oasis, a prison, a place to hide, or a place to discover yourself. When a bus is forced to take shelter from stormy weather outside, a mismatched group of dreamers and cowboys, waitresses, and outcasts find unexpected warmth in one another."



Faculty & Staff Updates (continued)



Assistant Professor of Scenic Design, Ant Ma, spent time early this semester as Scenic Designer for National Asian American Theatre Company's early 2025 production of *Cymbeline*, by William Shakespeare. As noted in a review by *Lighting & Sound America*, "members of the company remove large swaths of fabric from the elaborate iron bed at center stage, attaching them to rigging lines, and a grand canopy is hung over the stage; it's a lovely effect and even got a smattering of applause at the performance I attended...."

Professor Ma also collaboratively led a dynamic inter-arts workshop series on Sonically-Informed Collage, offering students a unique opportunity to explore creative expression across disciplines, and introducing students to new skills, tools, and aesthetics, while fostering meaningful artistic collaborations and cross-disciplinary

Associate Professor Michael Rasbury (Sound Design) received a stipend from the College of Arts and Sciences to support summer 2024 research, culminating in *Max Stems*, a three-movement musical suite that explores autism through music and sound design. Inspired by his 24-year-old son, who has autism, the suite reflects themes of communication, learning styles, and societal integration through a blend of symphonic instruments, electronic sounds, and unconventional musical patterns. This project serves as both a professional exploration and a deeply personal expression.

The final suite consists of three movements (click on the name to hear the movement):

- Isolated Optimism
- Unfiltered Thoughts
- Maturing Integration

Each movement represents different aspects of his family's journey, offering a sonic perspective on autism and its complexities. <u>Click here to learn more</u> about Rasbury's creative process and view related imagery.







Associate Professor of Theatre History, Katelyn Hale Wood, with collaborators Alan Goffinski (Co-Creator, Co-Producer, Sound guru) and Jordan Perry (Original Music) created a narrative audio story, *Heart Trouble*, which has been accepted as an Official Selection at this year's Tribeca Festival!

Heart Trouble was inspired by Wood's own experiences. Country radio DJ Sid Wood died of a sudden heart attack in July of 1987 as he was about to go on air. Years later, his daughter Katelyn accidentally stumbles upon his unfamiliar voice in a box of old cassette tapes. The sound of Sid's ghost spurs Katelyn on a cross-country journey: through the Midwest and American South, from small-town honky-tonk bars to the Grand Ole Opry. Speaking with musicians, country music historians, and Sid's former colleagues, Katelyn explores the meaning of culture, family, and loss. In her audio-fueled quest, she asks big questions like: How can sound connect us across space and time? Where do we find home and belonging? And what's so great about country music?

Alumnae Updates

UVA Arts and Sciences alumna Brianna Cabrera (Class of 2018) returned to the Drama Department this spring to participate in a talkback after the penultimate performance of *As You Like It*, our community-engaged spring 2025 musical. Cabrera originated the role of Silvia in Public Theatre's production of this musical adaptation by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery of the Shakespeare play and was joined by fellow original cast member Joel Frost.

While studying sociology, Cabrera remained heavily engaged in the arts via the Drama Department and various student organizations. Cabrera went on to receive a master's degree in social work from Columbia University, and is now a singer, actor, performing artist, and social worker based in NYC. About UVA and returning to grounds for this production, Cabrera

I loved my time at UVA! It was a time of great exploration, learning, and growth. Similar to my time at UVA, my time playing Silvia included quite a bit of leap taking, and gaining further trust in myself and my instincts.





UVA Drama Alumna Alexandra Déglise (MFA in Acting, 2016), and her fellow members of ETC Caraïbe were in residence with the Department of Drama this April. This residence included a performance of *Rosanie Soleil*, by Ina Césaire, a French playwright and ethnographer whose writings explore the oral heritage of her home of Martinique. The engagement with ETC Caraïbe is part of an ongoing exchange program in development between UVA Drama and the Martinique theatre organization.

Since completing her MFA in Acting at UVA in 2016, Déglise's mission is to employ her training and talent to help others by connecting passion, power, and essence to promote healing through performing arts. "Everything I do in theatre is for the purpose of healing something, not one specific type of healing but having others leave the theatre with any kind of wound healed."

Read more about Rosanie Soleil in our "Semester in Review" starting on page 9.

Jessica Harris, returned to the Drama Building this spring as Guest Artist and Director of our community-engaged musical *As You Like It*. Harris is a "Double Hoo" with an undergraduate degree in non-profit

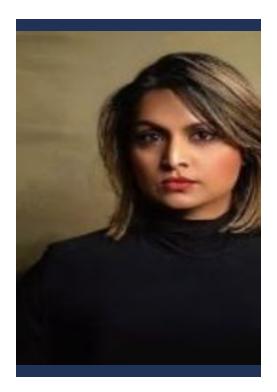
arts administration and education, and a master's degree in educational psychology, both from UVA.

Harris has been using theatre to build bridges to the community for years, so being at the intersection of education, community, and the arts is natural for her, as evidenced by her work with the Center for Community Partnerships and as the founder of Empowered Players, a nonprofit youth theatre in Fluvanna County.

Read more about the production of this musical adaptation of William Shakespeare's **As You Like It**, adapted by Shaina Taub & Laurie Woolery, in our "Semester in Review" starting on page 9.



Alumnae Updates (continued)



#CHARLOTTESVILLE, written and performed by Priyanka Shetty (MFA in Acting, 2019,) premiered at the Keegan Theatre in Washington, D.C., this spring. Described as "an unflinching tourde-force performance" by Shetty, #CHARLOTTESVILLE chronicles the tragic events of August 11th and 12th, 2017, when white supremacists gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia, for the "Unite the Right" rally on the pretext of expressing outrage against the removal of the confederate monument of Robert E. Lee, leading to a violent clash with counter-protesters. Constructed verbatim from interviews with over a hundred local residents, court transcripts from the civil trial, and news reports, this piece unpacks the complex issues surrounding race and identity in modern-day America while drawing parallels to the rise of nationalism and racial division in other parts of the world.

In its review, <u>DC Theater Arts</u> noted "The emotional center of the play is with Shetty's portrayal of Heather Heyer's mother, Susan Bro. Here we witness not just a powerful actor-writer at work but the personal cost of hate, senseless violence, and illiberalism. Her loss is our loss. It's searing."

Zohar (Zoe) Ziff (Dance Minor, class of 2022, Miller Arts Scholar and Distinguished Artist in Dance) is currently in her first year of medical school at UVA and was just accepted into the Hook Scholars Program!

The Edward W. Hook Scholars Program in Humanities and Ethics complements UVA's four-year medical curriculum by providing an informal humanities, bioethics, and arts pathway through all four years of medical education. Each year, the program selects up to five first-year medical students who have demonstrated interest and/or accomplishments in the humanities, bioethics, and/or fine and performing arts and who intend to keep such interest alive and aligned with their medical studies. Hook Scholars become a vibrant part of the life of the Center for Health Humanities and Ethics (CHHE), which provides an organizational framework and mentoring as scholars integrate humanities, bioethics, and arts pursuits into their medical school experience and professional identity formation.



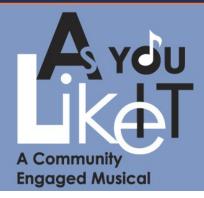
Spring Mainstage Productions 2025

Congratulations to the performers and creative teams in our spring 2025 productions!

As You Like It

Adapted by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery Music and Lyrics by Shaina Taub

March 27 – 29 & April 3 – 6 Culbreth Theatre





Production Photos by Kori Price

Much like UVA Drama's 2022 production of *Twelfth Night*, also adapted by Taub, *As You Like It*, a musical adaptation by Shaina Taub and Laurie Woolery of the Shakespeare play, was a community-engaged production, meaning that the cast was composed of both UVA students and Charlottesville-area community members, many of whom are in local k-12 schools. These partnerships are an opportunity to invite our local community to join us in creating, spend time in our space, and experience a UVA production first-hand, and offering UVA students both a broader view of the community of which our university is a part and the chance to be part of a cast that encompasses a broader range of ages,

Guest Artist and Director Jessica Harris, a UVA Alum and "Double-Hoo," assembled a 40-person cast composed of UVA students, community performers, members of Charlottesville Ladies Arm Wrestlers (CLAW) and Charlottesville Ballet Academy. In addition to community members on the stage, at each performance, representatives from several local organizations focused on community support and improvement were available in the Drama Building lobby to meet patrons and share information on their work and missions.





Spring Mainstage Productions 2025 (continued)

Congratulations to the performers and creative teams in our spring 2025 productions!



Spring Dance Concert

Kim Brooks Mata Producer and Artistic Director

> April 10 – 12, 2025 Ruth Caplin Theatre

Our Spring 2025 Dance Concert offered 7 new live pieces and 3 new screendance films. One work featured this spring was choreographed by guest artist Betty Skeen, a Metro-DC Dance Award-winning artist and an extended company member with Pearson Widrig Dance Theater. Skeen's original work has been shown extensively in the Metro-D.C. area, NYC, Brooklyn, and a number of other regions of the US, as well as Montescudaio, Italy.

Skeen's artistry as a dancer and choreographer is rooted in the exploration of motion as both an enduring and essential force. Through a deep investigation of actions, reactions, impulses, and habits, she examines how the way we move can dramatically influence our perception of ourselves and the world around us. Her piece, *Vanishing and Some Other Seasons Too*, added a unique layer to this study. "We worked with



handheld lights, which gave us the opportunity to play with shadows and very specific framing," Skeen said.



Assistant Professor Katie Baer Schetlick's new work for the spring concert, between possibilities, featured a live performance of Terry Riley's Keyboard Study No. 2 by pianist Jade Conlee, a Rising Scholars Postdoctoral Fellow in the Music Department. Trained as a pianist specializing in contemporary classical music, Conlee received her Ph.D. and M.A. in Music Studies from Yale University and holds a M.M. in Piano Performance from the University at Buffalo and a B.M. in Piano Performance from New York University.

Known for its emotive power, live music added a dynamic layer to the piece, offering a unique opportunity for a direct exchange of emotion between the creation of sound and its physical expression through movement, enhancing the depth and intensity of the performance.

View details of all 10 pieces in the digital playbill

Production Photos by Tom Daly



Spring Development Productions 2025

Congratulations to the performers and creative teams in our spring 2025 productions!

New Works

New

featuring UVA student playwrights and directors

February 27 – March 1, 2025 Helms Theatre

Spring 2025 New Works, co-produced by faculty members Dave Dalton and Doug Grissom, brought 6 short plays to the Helms stage, each written, directed (*mostly), designed, and performed by students.

An invaluable and rare experience for both playwright and director to share the journey from page to stage, New Works continues to be a vital platform for student-driven storytelling, design, and performance. This spring's New Works offered this hands-on learning experience to a large group of students -- 5 playwrights, 4 directors, 17 scenic design students, 1 lighting designer, and 21 actors. A resounding success, both performances were completely sold out.

Congratulations to all who contributed to this year's production!

View the digital playbill



Production Photos by Tom Daly

Spring Development Productions 2025 (continued)

Congratulations to the performers and creative teams in our spring 2025 productions!

Rosanie Soleil

by Ina Césaire Performed by Guest Artist in Residence ETC Caraïbe Caitlin McLeod, Producer

April 11, 2025 Helms Theatre

We were thrilled to welcome Guest Artsits in Residence, Ecritures Théâtrais Contemporaines en Caraïbe (ETC Caraïbe) to perform *Rosanie Soleil*, by Ina Césaire, a French playwright and ethnographer whose writings explore the oral heritage of her home of Marinique.

Rosanie Soleil is a psychodrama which brings together a quartet of women, in a domestic and rural environment in the south of Martinique in the 1870s.

Busy with their household chores, they communicate in coded language, in order to continue a cross-dialogue, to poke the mother or make her talk about the secret she jealously guards: the identity of the father. It is about revolts, fires, insurgents, a mysterious man who we never see, symbolized by a set of percussions. Above all, it explores the place and involvement of women in these insurrectional events. These women, although different, are closely linked to each other and involved to varying degrees in the action taking place outside.

Rosanie Soleil was performed in French and Antillean Creole, with English subtitles

View the digital playbill













VIRGINIA PLAYERS LAB SERIES PRESENTS I AM MY MOTHER'S DAUGHTER

APRIL 18TH @8PM APRIL 19TH @2PM HELMS THEATER FREE ADMISSION





The Virginia Players' Lab Series this spring presented *I Am My Mother's Daughter*. Written and directed by 4th-Year Mary Logan Hall, the script was selected as winner of the 2025 Delauney Award for singular achievement in playwriting.

When Thalia Walker inherits her estranged grandmother's house in her will, she is forced to confront a past she never had. Unable to get answers from her mother, she turns to unlikely methods, including her mother's childhood best friend, in order to piece together her family tree. However, with pushback from both her mother and fiancé, Thalia isn't sure if she'll be able to get what she wants: an understanding of her past and future, including her family, both biological and chosen.

The Lab Series Program is presented by the UVA Department of Drama and the Virginia Players. Through Lab Series, we are interested in providing a vehicle for students to produce and direct their own theatrical work, mentored by the Virginia Players Executive Board and Drama Department faculty. With Department resources and guidance, we aspire to give opportunities and experience to students interested in learning more about theatrical production, as well as help them bring their vision into reality on the stage.

Click here for more information on the Virginia Players

Semester in Review (continued):

Academic Events 2025

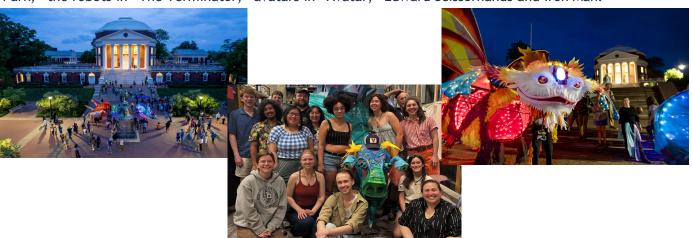
Congratulations to the performers and creative teams in our spring 2025 productions!



As part of the annual Stan Winston and Steven Warner Festival of the Moving Creature, Delia, a majestic flying creature, and her aquatic companion Peri marched from the Drama Building to the Rotunda and back. Designed and animated by students, these imaginative creations brought wonder and excitement to Grounds, celebrating the power of collaboration, storytelling, and kinetic art.

Technical Director of Drama Steve Warner, along with architecture instructor and fabrication lab director Melissa Goldman and studio art technician Eric Schmidt, started the Art of the Moving Creature course in 2012, a two-semester sequence that culminated in the first festival.

Now, the festival is held in honor and memory of Warner and in partnership with the Stan Winston School of Character Arts, named after UVA alumnus and Hollywood special effects legend Stan Winston, who helped create some of modern cinema's most memorable characters and creatures, including dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park," the robots in "The Terminator," avatars in "Avatar," Edward Scissorhands and Iron Man.



Visit the festival's Instagram page for more creature photos and videos!

Overcranked

Student Film Festival

Over cranked

April 28 – 29, 2025 Ruth Caplin Theatre

Our student film festival, *Overcranked*, featured 10 short films this year written, directed, and produced by students. This festival is the culmination of two semesters' worth of work by these students, with the fall semester spent on screenwriting and the spring focused on film production.

Click here for the Overcranked program



MAINSTAGE:

Continuity

by **Bess Wohl**Directed by **Doug Grissom**Fall 2025 in the Helms Theatre

It's magic hour in the New Mexico desert as an exhausted film crew races against the setting sun to shoot their blockbuster (but artsy) action movie, which takes place on an arctic (Styrofoam) ice floe, and features an ecoterrorist plotting a bombing mission to save all of humankind (supposedly). As the clock ticks and the desert sun beats down on the not-so-frozen landscape, personalities clash, artistic vision meets Hollywood demands, and the gap between fiction and science grows wider than ever.

Fall Dance Concert

Kim Brooks Mata, Producer and Artistic Director November 2025, in the Ruth Caplin Theatre

Featuring the work of student, faculty, and guest choreographers, the Dance Concert will showcase technical, creative and artistic approaches to movement and composition, while reflecting each choreographer's personal interests and stories -- an evening of engaging, evocative, and eclectic performances.

Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812

by **Dave Malloy**Spring 2026 in the Ruth Caplin Theatre
Auditions to be announced Fall 2025

From the celebrated and award-winning composer Dave Malloy comes Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812, an electropop opera based on a scandalous slice of Leo Tolstoy's <u>War and Peace</u>. Young and impulsive, Natasha Rostova arrives in Moscow to await the return of her fiancé from the front lines. When she falls under the spell of the roguish Anatole, it is up to Pierre, a family friend in the middle of an existential crisis, to pick up the pieces of her shattered reputation. This award-winning musical expands the possibilities for the genre with its daring score and bold storytelling.

Spring Dance Concert

Kim Brooks Mata, Producer and Artistic Director April 2026, in the Ruth Caplin Theatre

DEVELOPMENT STAGE:

New Works

February 2026, in the Helms Theatre *Auditions in Fall 2025*

Featuring the work of UVA student playwrights and directors.

Virginia Players Lab Series

Fall 2025 & Spring 2026, dates TBD Helms Theatre Student-led shows selected by Virginia Players

Additional Guest Artists and Development Stage Offerings To Be Announced