

SPARK

Written by Tom Arvetis Directed by Karen Gilmer



March 12 - 21, 2021
www.play.pitt.edu

Before we begin this stream of *SPARK*, Pitt Stages and the Department of Theatre Arts joins the call for all artists, cultural workers, public officials, educators, administrators, community leaders, organizers, and engaged community members to open all public events and gatherings with acknowledgment of the traditional Native inhabitants of the land.

We want to recognize that this production was recorded on the traditional, ancestral lands of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (also known as the Iroquois Confederacy), particularly the Seneca who were one of the 5 (and later 6) Iroquois-language speaking tribes in the Confederacy, the Lenape (also known as the Delaware), the Shawnee, the Mingo, and earlier, the Osage, the Monongahela, the Hopewell, and others.

We are mindful that our lives here are possible because the land and lives of people native to this place were stolen. Colonialism and white supremacy have continually tried to erase Indigenous people of this land in the past and present. At this time there are no federally recognized Indigenous tribes in Pennsylvania due to colonialism displacement. Our lives here are also possible because generation upon generation (past, present, and future) of indigenous people in this nation and all over the world are respectful stewards of the earth and its resources.

More information about this call, practice, and additional learning can be found at <https://usdac.us/nativeland>.

Thank you for gathering with us today.



Pitt's **Year of Engagement** is a celebration of the work that's central to our mission: collaborating to confront the world's biggest challenges and mobilize toward a better, more equitable and just society for all.

SPARK

Written by **Tom Arvetis**

Directed by **KJ Gilmer**

Production Team

Assistant Director/
CODA Sign Language Advisor
Rebecca Hobart

Stage Manager
Shamus Bonner

Movement Coach
Sean Cook

Voice and Dialect Coach
Kelly Trumbull

Costume Designer
KJ Gilmer

Scenic Designer
Alex Dolinger

Sound and Projections Designer
Gianni Downs

Lighting Designer
TJ Hays

Dramaturg
Liz Kurtzman

SPARK
is approximately 2 hours long

Please be advised that there are strobe effects
in this production.

SPARK is presented by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.,
of Woodstock, Illinois

Note from the director:

The dystopic play *Spark* was conceived through the work of playwright Tom Arvetis, Rive Collins, and Chicago middle schoolers, who wanted to understand how the ancient Greek stories of Prometheus and Pandora would resonate with the young Chicago community. These discussions centered upon mythology as a source of inspiration for exploring the metaphors of knowledge and the awakening of the human consciousness.

The central Promethean metaphor of fire resonates through the play. The themes suggest a modern dystopic society built on colonialism, competition, survival, mind control and a ruthless leader's determination to keep power. The leaders of Sanctuary use the constant bombardment of misinformation through technology to instill fear and hide the truth. Once Pan's quest begins, her journey to enlightenment and search for a better way is hard to contain. The spark of a stranger's note and her dead mother's words in a diary ignite Pan's quest for the truth.

Spark is a warning. I believe science fiction is a foretelling of what could happen and would happen if we do not heed these missives. Arvetis' play is filled with plot twists and turns that are reminiscent of popular science fiction literature and films, such as the *Divergent Series*, *Hunger Games*, and *Star Wars*. The choice to produce this play came from a desire to direct a dramatic text that was not based in the past but the not-too-distant future, the here and almost now. I wanted to direct a show that embraced how we are living and producing theatre in the age of the COVID-19 Pandemic, but also recognized the current atmosphere of social unrest, social disparities, environmental destruction, and climate change.

Until we can get back to our theatres, the process of filming and streaming productions is necessary in order to have an audience. For *Spark*, we used the entire Rauh studio space and one exterior as our interactive stage, and we created surveillance footage of the play's setting, Sanctuary, using cell phone and above-the-action cameras. I wanted to explore using various methods of filming, projections, light, and sound to create the world of this theatrical event.

I called upon memories of childhood 1970's sitcoms and British public access television shows for inspiration for staging and presenting *Spark*. We produced this play adhering to the University's operational postures, health, and safety guidelines. Staging this show required us to sanitize hourly, limit the number of cast and crew in the studio, and stay 6-8 feet apart depending on location in the space. The consultants on CODA sign language, movement, voice, and dialects were all very instrumental in helping to support the setting of the socially distanced vision.

We rehearsed in-person and in Zoom rooms. The process was not disruptive, but instead allowed for more examination of the play's text and movement to tell this story theatrically and embrace our social conditions in a pandemic. This process brought together a dedicated team of theatre artists that proved the adage that theatre will find a way.

I am thrilled to share Arvetis' play *Spark* with you. Sit back, relax and..."be the Spark."

KJ Gilmer

Special Thanks

Annmarie Duggan, Gianni Downs, Ashley Martin,
Cindy Croot, Maggie Bupp, Kiesha Lalama,
Joan Markert, Hatti Taylor, Hayden M. Gilmer,
Michalle Montgomery, Ricardo Vila-Roger,
Sean Cook Studio, and Point Park University

Pitt Stages
2020-2021



SPRING PRODUCTIONS

MAINSTAGE

Anon(ymous)

Written by Naomi Iizuka

Directed by Ricardo Vila-Roger

April 16-25, 2021

Appalchian Paris

Devised by Cindy Croot

TBA

STUDENT LAB

Carrie and Francine

Written by Ruby Rae Spiegel

Directed by Rebecca Hobart

April 9 - 11, 2021

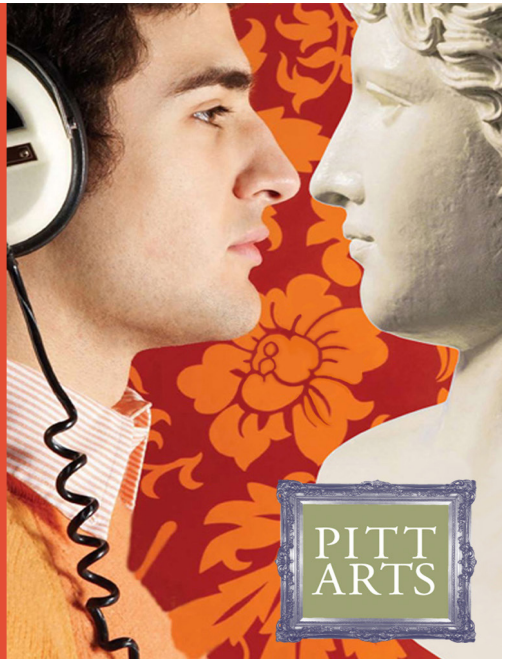


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The Cast

Pandora	Danica Moffitt
Jude	Lauren Scheller-Wolf
Farren.....	Aidan Upton
K	Jermiya Gaines
Drew	Brandon Raglow
Janice	Kaylah Harley
Cord.....	Lance Gibney
Tico.....	Thomas Heibeck
Dr. Lowell.....	Finley Geist
Amin	KJ Gilmer
Storyteller / Keeper	Grace Ruble

The Company

Finley Geist (Dr. Lowell) is excited to take part in their first Pitt Stages mainstage production. Finley is an undecided freshman who has been acting for over a decade. They've performed in *Chicago*, *Pippin*, *The Crucible*, and many other shows.

Jermiya Gaines (K) is a freshman, planning to double major in linguistics and theater arts. She has previously performed in "Hair Waiting" here at Pitt and is excited to perform in this unique theater experience.

Lance Gibney (Cord) is thrilled to be working in this Pitt Stages production. Lance was also in "Bastille Day," last fall. He is majoring in digital narrative and interactive design while also pursuing a theatre minor.

KJ Gilmer (Amin) is the Lecturer of Costume Design. She teaches costume courses, designs, and directs departmental productions. "Amin" is her first dramatic role. She is excited to explore the process of character development, embodying movement and working with the student ensemble of Spark! She is currently training to be an intimacy choreographer (IC). An IC oversees the scenes involving intimacy, nudity, and sexual content. The role of the IC is to create realistic-looking scenes while keeping it safe for the actors and

other participants. The IC works with production's director to achieve their desired results while respecting the boundaries of the actors and the intent of the playwright's text.

Kaylah Harley (Janice) is excited to perform in her second Pitt Stages mainstage production! She is a sophomore pursuing a degree in theatre arts and a minor in Africana studies. She is also on the premed track with plans of going to medical school. She has previously performed in the Pitt Stages production of "Hair Waiting" (Ma Bell).

Thomas Heibeck (Tico) is excited to make his debut in his first Pitt Stages mainstage production. He is a sophomore molecular biology/chemistry double major with a creative writing minor. Outside of Pitt Stages, Thomas writes for Pitt Tonight, an on-campus late night show, gives tours to prospective students as a Pitt Pathfinder.

Danica Moffitt (Pandora) is a junior studying theater arts with a minor in chemistry. This will be her first mainstage role at the University of Pittsburgh. She will be auditioning for multiple productions this summer and post-graduation she will be continuing her acting career in film, television, and theatre.

Brandon Raglow (Drew) is a sophomore English writing major, who is grateful to be a part of his second Pitt Stages production. Brandon was also in *Miss You Like Hell* (Mo), and is ecstatic to be a part of Spark! Off stage Brandon writes for Pitt Tonight, a late night show on campus.

Grace Ruble (Storyteller / Keeper) is excited to make her debut in her first Pitt Stages mainstage production. She is a senior theatre arts and film and media studies double major. Before transferring to the University of Pittsburgh in fall 2019, Grace attended Hobart and William Smith Colleges where she appeared in productions such as *#TheBallentineDays* (Evie), *Love/Sick* (Louise), *5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche* (Ginny), and *Macbeth* (Assassin 2).

Laruen Scheller-Wolf (Jude) is thrilled to be part of Spark! Lauren is a junior theatre arts and English writing double major, with a history minor. Previous Pitt Stages credits include *She Kills*

Monsters: Virtual Realms (Lily/Lilith), and “Hair Waiting” and “Black and Blue” (stage manager). Lauren has also acted with several Pittsburgh theatre companies, including Prime Stage and Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Parks. Next up, she’ll be stage managing the lab “Carrie and Francine”!

Aidan Upton (Farren) is excited to make his debut in his first Pitt Stages mainstage production. He is a first-year University of Pittsburgh student studying architecture and theater arts.



SPARK premiered at Adventure Stage in Chicago, Illinois on April 12, 2014, and ran until May 15, 2014.

CAST:

PandoraCharlotte Ellison
JudeDanielle Davis
Farren..... Mykele Callicutt
KEbony Joy
Dr. Lowell.....Michael Mercier
Admin..... Mike Ooi
Drew Drew Johnson
Janice.....Allison Latta Lashford
Cord..... Kaelan Strouse
Tico..... Blake Russell

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Please consider donating to our department. It is only with your help that we are able to showcase our students and faculty while sharing the future of theatre within our regional community.

Your generous support helps to fund much of our programming throughout the year. This includes the production branch of our department, outreach programs that benefit various community organizations, teaching artists and guest artists, residencies and workshops, and other educational theatre events we provide throughout the year.

We need your help more than ever to support these programs. There are many students on campus whose first experience with the theatre and the cultural community overall starts at Pitt.

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Production Crew

Pitt Stages Production Staff

Costume Shop Manager (Interim)..... Ricky Campbell
Technical Director.....Eben Alguire
Head Electrician/Shop Foreperson.....Kyle Cameron
Prop Shop Manager.....M.K. Hughes

DirectorKJ Gilmer
Assistant DirectorRebecca Hobart
Movement CoachSean Cook
Voice and Dialect Coach Kelly Trumbull
CODA Sign Language AdvisorRebecca Hobart
Dramaturg..... Liz Kurtzman
Stage ManagerShamus Bonner
Assistant Stage Manager.....Emily Niedbala
Assistant Stage Manager.....Abby Dean
Costume Designer.....KJ Gilmer
Assistant Costume Designer.....Rebecca Hobart
Costume CrewAdam Nie, Quinn Murphy
and Macaiah Thaxton

Scenic Designer..... Alex Dolinger
Scenic Charge Artist.....Jess Fitzpatrick
Lighting Designer..... TJ Hays
Assistant Lighting Designer..... Emily -Ann Stephens
Sound/Projection Designer..... Gianni Downs
Assistant Sound Designer..... Natalie Osbourne
Production CrewGramham Demkovitz,
Sean Hale, John Jendrzejewski, Frances Russo
Lea Gordinier, and Samantha Rose

Technical Director..... Sophia Kosowsky
Master Electrician Rissa Towsley
Run Crew Corinne Tumpson and Sophia Lin



The Production Team

Shamus Bonner (Stage Manager) is a sophomore theatre arts major and is very excited to be stage managing a Pitt Stages mainstage production for the first time! His previous work includes Pitt Stages productions of *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* (assistant stage manager), and *Appropriate* (assistant stage manager), as well as the Musical Theater Club's production of *Merrily We Roll Along* (stage manager).

Sean Cook (Movement Coach) is delighted to return to Pitt Stages as a movement coach. His previous work at Pitt includes; *Flyin' West* (assistant director), *Oblivion* (director), and *Appropriate* (Beauregarde "Bo" Lafayette). He is currently co-directing a world premiere of Rosalind Reynold's, *Unsung* at the Sylvia Center for the Arts in Bellingham, WA. His most recent workshop offering was with SONY Pictures: Television: Diverse Directors Program during which he introduced the basic ingredients of intimacy choreography. Sean is an actor, director, producer, intimacy and movement coach. He enjoys membership with SAG-AFTRA, AEA, the Michael Chekhov Association, National Alliance of Acting Teachers, American Alliance for Theatre and Education and is certified in Mental Health First Aid. Mr. Cooke earned an MFA in Performance Pedagogy from the University of Pittsburgh. Read more about Sean at: www.seancookstudio.com

Abby Dean (Assistant Stage Manager) is thrilled to be part of her first Pitt Stages mainstage production. As a busy sophomore biology major, chemistry minor, and theatre arts minor, she is excited to be able to fit theatre into her schedule again. Abby was active in her high school theatre, both on and off the stage. Some of her favorite productions include *Sound of Music* (Liesl von Trapp), *Les Misérables* (Fantine), and *James and the Giant Peach* (stage manager).

Alex Dolinger (Scenic Designer) is thrilled to be designing another production with Pitt Stages, especially one as exciting as *Spark*. They are a senior theatre arts major with a creative writing minor. Previous Pitt Stages productions include *The Wolves* and *Oblivion*, as well as Pitt MTC's production of *Merrily We Roll Along*. Most recently, you may have seen their work in Pitt Stages *Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties*.

Gianni Downs (Sound/Projection Designer) is the Director of Undergraduate Studies and Co-Head of Design/Tech in the Theatre Arts Department. His work has been nationally recognized with a Kevin Kline Award and two nominations for productions at the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, as well as an Irene Ryan nomination for designs at Stoneham Theatre. He is the recipient of the 2017 Tina and David Bellet Teaching Excellence Award and with his colleague Annmarie Duggan: the 2019 Provost's Personalized Education Grant as well as both the 2018 and 2015 Innovation in Education Awards. Gianni received his MFA from Brandeis University, and has been on the faculty of Westminster College, Carnegie Mellon University, and Point Park University. Gianni is a proud member of United Scenic Artist local USA829 and his portfolio can be viewed at www.giannidesigns.net.

Jess Fitzpatrick (Scenic Charge Artist) is a scenic designer and artist who is graduating this spring with majors in theatre arts and English literature. At Pitt, they have completed a research project in scene painting education and received a grant to attend Cobalt Scenic Studios' summer painting program. They have served as a UTA for the department's scenic painting course and work as a freelance mural artist. Their other scenic charge credits include Pitt Stages productions of *Miss You Like Hell* and *On Trial*.

KJ Gilmer (Director/Costume Designer) Ms. Gilmer is the Lecturer in Costume Design in the Theatre Arts Department. She designs for departmental productions and teaches Costume Design I, Introduction to Theatre Design, Theatre and Collaboration and Theatre Production. Previously, she has directed, and designed costumes for Pitt Stages productions of Pearl Cleage's *Flyin' West*, Lynn Nottage's *Intimate Apparel* and "Inside the Zoom: Black and Blue" and "Hair Waiting", two online one acts by Niccole Nero Gaines.

She earned her BA in French at West Chester and an MFA in Costume Design at Boston University. She has traveled extensively designing costumes for Opera, Theatre and Dance. Her national and regional theatre credits: City Theatre Company, St. Michael's Playhouse of Vermont, Philadelphia Shakespeare Festival, Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia's University of the Arts, Arden Theatre Company, Everyman Theatre Company of Baltimore.

Currently, Ms. Gilmer is obtaining training and education in the field of Intimacy Choreography with Theatrical Intimacy Educators (TIE) and Intimacy Coordinators and Directors (IDC). Her studies focus on best practices and consent when staging intimacy, nudity, or sexual violence in all areas of rehearsal and production, professional and academic. Her work strives to create, sustain, and support brave, creative spaces, especially for BIPOC theatre artists.

TJ Hays (Lighting Designer) is excited to be working on another show during this pandemic. He worked on *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms* (streaming technician). He is a junior theatre arts major, hoping to become a concert lighting designer in the future. His past work includes *Ordinary Days* (master electrician), *Oblivion* (lighting designer) and *next to normal* (lighting designer) as well as lighting for Pitt Tonight and Redeye. He looks forward to future Pitt Stages productions!

Rebecca Hobart (Assistant Director/Assistant Costume Designer/CODA Sign Language Advisor) is excited to work on her first Pitt Stages mainstage production. She is a junior theatre arts major/creative writing minor. Rebecca performed in Pitt Stages production of *On Trial* (Landlady/Betty) and is directing the upcoming production of "Carrie and Francine".

Sophia Kosowsky (Technical Director) is a senior theatre arts major with a minor in computer science. Previous Pitt Stages technical direction credits include *Appropriate*, *Miss You Like Hell*, and the grant funded production of *On Trial*. She has extensive experience in scenic carpentry and fabrication and has worked as a carpenter for the Berkshire Theatre Group as well as in the Pitt Stages scene shop.

Liz Kurtzman (Dramturg) is a second year doctoral student in Pitt's Department of Theatre Arts whose research includes theatrical history and modern horror performances. This is her first experience working on a Pitt Stages production.

Emily Niedbala (Assistant Stage Manager) is very excited to help bring this awesome, unique show called *Spark* to life in these dark and difficult times. After many years doing theatre onstage and off,

this is her sixth Pitt Stages show, and her third in this position after *Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights* and *The Verge* (assistant stage manager). Emily is a junior theatre arts major who is also in the ASL certificate program.

Natalie Osbourne (Assistant Sound Designer) is a junior at the University of Pittsburgh, majoring in theatre arts and film & media studies. She is very honored to be working on *Spark* as well as *Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties* (assistant film editor). Natalie is also working on *Appalachian Paris* (sound designer).

Emily-Ann Stephens (Assistant Lighting Designer) is very excited to be working on another show with Pitt Stages. She is a first semester senior theatre arts major. Recently she worked on *Collective Rage: A Play in Five Betties* (lighting designer) and *Miss You Like Hell* (head student electrician). She looks forward to future Pitt Stages productions.

Rissa Towsley (Master Electrician) is excited for the opportunity to work on *Spark* (student master electrician). She is a junior mechanical engineering and theatre student. She looks forward to gaining more experience in the theatre and continuing to expand her set of skills in the future.

Kelly Trumbull (Voice and Dialect Coach) is a Pittsburgh based educator, actor, and director. Currently, she serves as a Teaching Artist with University of Pittsburgh's Theatre Arts Department. She is also on the faculty at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Music. Local credits include work with Pitt Stages, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Real/Time Interventions, City Theatre Company, Quantum Theatre, Bricolage, No Name Players, 12 Peers Theater, and more. She is a proud member of AEA and SAG/AFTRA. Upcoming: Directing *Dance Nation* with Point Park University and *Men on Boats* with 12 Peers Theater. www.kellytrumbull.com



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Directed by Rebecca Hobart



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University of Pittsburgh

Department of Theatre Arts

ABOUT

The Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh is an accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Theatre and offers BA, MFA, and PhD degrees in Theatre Arts. The Department believes in a philosophy of theatre education based on the integration of theory and practice, academic and creative work, and educational and professional theatre.

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Director of Undergraduate Studies	Gianni Downs
Head of MFA in Performance Pedagogy	Bria Walker
Co-Heads of Design Technology	Gianni Downs and Annmarie Duggan
Head of History/Literature/Criticism	Michelle Granshaw
Head of Performance	Cynthia Croot
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Professor Emeriti	W. Stephen Coleman, Buck Favorini Don Mangone and Bruce McConachie

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Anon(ymous)

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Directed by Ricardo Vila-Roger

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Online streaming event

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