

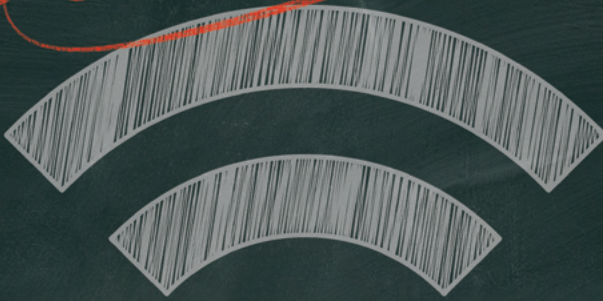
2024-2025 Season
PITT STAGES proudly presents



University of
Pittsburgh.

Theatre Arts
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

DEAD MAN'S Cell Phone



Written by Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Kelly Trumbull

OCTOBER 25–NOVEMBER 3, 2024

Richard E. Rauh Studio Theatre
4200 Fifth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15260

Dead Man's Cell Phone

Written by Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Kelly Trumbull

Production Team

Assistant Director.....Payne Banister

Fight & Intimacy Director.....Tonya Lynn

Dramaturg.....Samuel Couch

Scenic & Projections

Designer.....Gianni Downs

Lighting Designer..... Shea Sweeney

Assistant Lighting

Designer.....Isabel Sinnott

Costume Designer.....KJ Gilmer

Sound Designer.....Howard Patterson

Stage Manager..... Maddie Decker

Assistant Stage Managers.....Glor Mancilla
Maya Viaropulos

Presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals
on behalf of Samuel French, Inc.
concordtheatricals.com

Letter from the Director

Welcome to our production of *Dead Man's Cell Phone* by Sarah Ruhl. As we explore the theme of community this season, I'm struck by how Ruhl's play, though whimsical and absurd, offers insight into the ways we connect, or fail to connect, in a world dominated by technology.

In this play, a cell phone becomes both a bridge and a barrier to meaningful human connection. Characters speak past each other, often tangled in their own versions of the truth, yet they continue to seek a sense of belonging, understanding, and community. Even in a world of fractured communication, the play reminds us that we all share a deep need to connect.

What's particularly poignant about Ruhl's work is how she gently but persistently asks us to consider the spaces between us: How do we build community when we're separated by so much technology? How do we connect across the digital divide, across death, and across the invisible walls we build around ourselves?

As we continue to explore the season's theme of community, I hope *Dead Man's Cell Phone* invites you to reflect on your own relationships—those forged through screens and those nurtured face-to-face.

Thank you for joining us. We hope you enjoy the show.

Kelly Trumbull | Director

Cast

a woman,

Jean.....Elena Wenrich-Quiñones

a dead man,

Gordon.....John Papadimitriou

Gordon's mother,

Mrs. Gottlieb..... Logan Reynolds

Gordon's widow,

Hermia.....Emma Mihok

Gordon's brother,

Dwight..... Emy Vila-Kubiak

the other woman,

stranger.....Diana Craycroft

Understudies

Jean & Hermia.....Kaylyn Guerrieri

Gordon & Dwight.....Sasha Konitzer

Other woman, stranger &

Mrs. Gottlieb.....Shelly Stakich

This digital program allows us to reduce paper consumption and divert printing costs to supporting students' education, creative explorations, and excellence. Click each individual's name to learn more about them. Navigate to credit listings using the links at the bottom of each page.

Cast Biographies

Diana Craycroft (Other Woman/Stranger) is ecstatic to be a part of her second production with Pitt Stages! She is majoring in nutrition science and minoring in theatre. She has recently been behind the camera in various short films at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, including, *Sammy*, *Without Strings* (Beautiful Woman); *What It Takes* (Vivian); *Homer, Teller of Tales: The Musical* (Lachesis), and two Spiderman Fan Films: "Hunted" and "Ultimatum" (MJ). Her favorite stage roles include Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*, Mary Poppins in *Mary Poppins: The Musical*, and Maria in *The Sound of Music*. She hopes everyone enjoys Dead Man's Cell Phone as much as she has enjoyed working on it.

Kaylyn Guerrieri (U/S Jean/Hermia) is very blessed to be part of this amazing show! Kaylyn is a junior psychology major and theatre arts minor. She has previously been in *Bye, Bye, Birdie* (Rosie); *Our Town* (Emily Webb); and "That's Not How I Remember It" (Trisha). She was also a student director for Nazareth Middle School for 2 years. Kaylyn hopes you enjoy the hard work of everyone in this production.

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Cast biographies continued

Sasha Konitzer (U/S Gordon and Dwight) is excited to make his debut with Pitt Stages. He intends to pursue a digital narrative and interactive design major and a theatre arts minor. He's performed in mostly musicals in the past, his favorites include: *The Addams Family* (Gomez Addams) and *The Drowsy Chaperone* (The Man in the Chair). He has enjoyed this new change in direction and has had a blast with this production. Enjoy the show!

Emma Mihok (Hermia) is so excited to be in her first Pitt Stages show! She is a sophomore urban planning major and theater arts minor. Previously, she was seen in the ensemble of Front Porch Theatrical's *Merrily We Roll Along*. Additionally, she spent the past year interning at Quantum Theatre. She is thrilled to be back on stage, and she hopes you enjoy the show!

John Papadimitriou (Gordon) is a sophomore finance major and theatre arts minor at the University of Pittsburgh. He is thrilled to be part of his first Pitt Stages production! Some of his previous roles include Conrad Birdie in *Bye, Bye Birdie*; Orin Scrivello in *Little Shop of Horrors*; and Jeff in *The Curious Savage*. He has loved working on this show and hopes the audience enjoys it as much as he does!

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Cast biographies continued

Logan Reynolds (Mrs. Gottlieb) is a senior transfer student at Pitt. This is her fourth show on campus and she thinks it has been such a pleasure to work on. She had such a blast working with Kelly and her amazing cast mates. She hopes you enjoy the show!

Shelly Stakich (U/S Other Woman/Stranger/Mrs. Gottlieb) is so excited to make her debut on the Pitt Stage! Shelly is a first-year theatre arts major and has been in shows such as *The Game's Afoot: Holmes for the Holidays* (Inspector Goring), *Puffs* (Sally Perks), and *Cheating Death* (Sam Johnson). She would like to thank the wonderful cast and crew for making this such an amazing experience and hopes you have a great time seeing this show!

Emy Vila-Kubiak (Dwight) is honored to be in their first Pitt Stages production. They are an English writing major and a theater arts minor. Last semester they were the light board operator for *Spring Awakening* and played Algernon in Performance Collaborative's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. They are delighted to be working with some of the friends they have made here and hope that comes through in the performance.

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Cast biographies continued

Elena Wenrich-Quiñones (Jean) is excited for audiences to see this production! She is a junior psychology major with a double minor in theatre arts & gender, sexuality, and women's studies. At Pitt, she has previously been seen in *Spring Awakening* (Thea), "The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon" (Girl/Gretel/Dwarf #1), *Legally Blonde the Musical* (Vivienne), and *The Addams Family* (Greek Chorus).

A promotional poster for a 'Musical Theatre Grab Bag' event. The background is a light yellow color. At the top, the words 'MUSICAL THEATRE' are written in a dark blue, sans-serif font, arched over a white, stylized book shape. Below this, the words 'GRAB BAG' are written in a large, dark blue, serif font. Underneath, the event details 'Friday, November 1st' and '6:00 - 9:00 PM in CL B44' are written in a dark blue, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a block of text in a reddish-brown font: 'Join us for a night of community, joy, and musical theatre as we perform a deep dive into a hidden gem of the MT history books.' To the left of this text is an illustration of a stack of three books. In the top right corner of the poster, there is a graphic of a musical staff with notes. In the bottom left corner, there is a graphic of a stack of books.

MUSICAL THEATRE

GRAB BAG

Friday, November 1st
6:00 - 9:00 PM in CL B44

Join us for a night of community, joy, and musical theatre as we perform a deep dive into a hidden gem of the MT history books.

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Production Crew

Production Director.....	Hadley Armstrong
Technical Director.....	JC Bardzil
Assistant Technical Director.....	Abbie Wagner
Director of Lighting, Sound and Projections.....	Forrest Trimble
Costume Shop Manager.....	Ricky Campbell
Costume Shop Assistant Manager.....	Brittany Graham
Faculty Scenic Charge Artist.....	Gianni Downs
Faculty Scenic Artist.....	Alex Dollinger
Scenic Artists.....	Audrey Clare, Julia Ferranti, Kylie Wilson
Scenic Production Assistants.....	Liza Brown, Kyle Bucheister, Jordan Kauffman
Painters.....	Rory Reilly, Ellie Tongel, Ashley Wang, Rubie Yu
Carpenters.....	Xander Giaccone, Emma Hanan, Aidan Kelleher, Jun Kyoung Kim, Charlie Lovett-Dietrich, Pranathi Munagala, Aeriana Olds, Aiden Wilt
Dressers.....	Florian Reihl, Eliver Russo
Cutter/Draper.....	Maya Jones
Stitchers.....	Claire Stemmer, Chi Ejinaka, Gianna Healy, Sammie Samuels, The students of the Costume Production & Technology class
Light Board Operator.....	Alyssa Noval
Sound Board Operator.....	Phuoc Nguyen
Lighting/Sound Shop.....	Krishna Amin, Miles Fraser, Claudia Shrager, Aeriana Olds, Haylee Anderson, Zihan Qin
Student Head Electrician.....	Sean Springer
Stage Crew.....	Kaylee Snyder

Special Thanks

Ricardo Vila-Roger	Wallis Lucas
Tom Pacio	Kitty Strakna
Jiahao Xie	Logan Williams
Brad Stephenson	Paul Yeater
Allen Adair	Joan Markert
Emily Garcia	Point Park University
Isabelle Hoyou	Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council
Becki Toth	Center for Creativity
Tamanna Khan	Pitt Arts

Production Team Biographies

Payne Banister (assistant director) is thrilled to be assistant directing their second production with Pitt Stages. They are a PhD student in the theatre and performance studies program. Before *Dead Man's Cell Phone*, they served as assistant director for *Cheating Fate* (University of Pittsburgh) and *Bull in a China Shop* (Washington University in St. Louis). While at Washington University in St. Louis, they served as a production assistant for several mainstage productions. Payne's creative practice also includes drag performance. They hope you enjoy the show!

Samuel Couch (dramaturg) is a junior, majoring in business and theatre arts. His production credits include "Krapp's Last Tape" (director), "The Brothers Grimm Spectaculathon" (stage manager), *Legally Blonde* (stage manager), *Sweeney Todd* (assistant director), and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (director). Onstage, he has performed in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Stanley Kowalski), *Our Town* (Stage Manager), and *Rumors* (Lenny).

 [Read Samuel's Dramaturgical Note](#)

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Production biographies continued

Maddie Decker (stage manager) is thrilled to be working on another show at Pitt this Fall as a stage manager! She is a double major in English writing on the fiction track and theatre arts. Last year, she worked on *Corsicana* and “That’s Not How I Remember It” as an assistant stage manager. She also assistant stage managed the Emmys & Oscars Showcase for Pitt’s Performance Collaborative. She hopes everyone enjoys the show!

Gianni Downs (scenic and projections designer) is an Associate Teaching Professor in Scenic Design and Scenic Painting. 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, served as adjunct faculty at both Point Park University and Carnegie Mellon University, and is a proud member of United Scenic Artist local USA829.

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Production biographies continued

KJ Gilmer (costume designer) is a Teaching Associate Professor of Theater and Head of Design, Technology and Management in the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh. Ms. Gilmer teaches Costume Design I, Introduction to Theatre Design, Introduction to Performance, History of Costume, Fashion and Dress, Stage Makeup Design and Directing I. Ms. Gilmer works professionally as a costume designer, director and intimacy choreographer. A selection of her professional theatre credits includes Gloucester Stage Company, SpeakEasy Stage Company, City Theatre Company, Pittsburgh Opera, St. Michael's Playhouse, Pittsburgh Shakespeare in the Park, Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, Gulfshore Playhouse and Quantum Theatre.



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Production biographies continued

Tonya Lynn (fight and intimacy director) is a Pittsburgh-based actor and theater instructor. She is a recognized Fight Director and Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors and has served as teaching faculty at their flagship National Stage Combat Workshop. In addition to her role at Pitt, she is an Adjunct Instructor at both Carnegie Mellon University and Point Park University. Her fight directing credits include over 150 productions. Tonya is a co-founder of Brawling Bard Theater and a founding member with New Re-naissance Theatre Company. She is the workshop coordinator for The Allegheny Alley Fight Stage Combat Workshop, and co-coordinates the upcoming Fight Director Training Workshop in Silver Spring, MD. www.eclecticmayhem.com.

Glor Mancilla (assistant stage manager) is ecstatic to be part of their first show with Pitt Stages. They are a junior theatre major with experience as a stagehand and stage manager. They have previously appeared in *She Kills Monsters* (Narrator), *Faust* (Elsbeth), *Pippin* (Leading Player), and more. Recent crew work includes *A Winter's Tale* (stage manager), *Sh-Boom* (assistant stage manager), *Nunsense* (assistant stage manager), and *She Kills Monsters* (assistant props designer).

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Production biographies continued

Howard Patterson (sound designer/mentor) is a Pittsburgh-based sound designer, audio engineer, and educator. Howard is the Assistant Teaching Professor of Sound Design at University of Pittsburgh. He has worked on many projects in and around Pittsburgh and is passionate about sonic storytelling. Recent designs have been heard at City Theatre Company, TheatreSquared, Quantum Theatre, and Pittsburgh Playhouse. He is the DTM Vice Chair at Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Region 2. Howard received his BFA from Point Park University. In his spare time not spent in the theater, he is a pro wrestler in-training.

Isabel Sinnott (assistant lighting designer) is a theatre arts major with a German minor. Most recently, she has worked on the Carnegie Mellon WQED Opera as an assistant lighting designer, as well as interned this past summer at X-Laser. Recent Pitt Stages credits include *John Proctor is the Villain* (lighting designer), *Abduction: A Musical Comedy* (assistant stage manager) and "That's Not How I Remember It" (lighting designer).

Production biographies continued

Shea Sweeney (lighting designer) is thrilled to make her lighting design debut with *Dead Man's Cell Phone*! Shea is a senior theatre arts major, music minor earning a television & broadcast certificate. Her recent technical credits with Pitt Stages include *John Proctor is the Villain* (Light Board Operator), *A New Brain* (Assistant Head Electrician), and *The 39 Steps* (Electrician). Shea hopes everyone enjoys the show!

Kelly Trumbull (director) is a Pittsburgh, PA-based, multi-disciplinary theater artist and Teaching Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh. She is also an Artist Lecturer in Acting at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Music and a Resident Playwright at Pittsburgh Public Theater. She has numerous professional acting and directing credits in Pittsburgh and beyond. Her play, *Morning Reckoning*, will be produced at Pitt Stages this February. Proud member of AEA and SAG/AFTRA.

www.kellytrumbull.com



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Production biographies continued

Maya Viaropulos (assistant stage manager) is an undecided freshman in the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences. This is her first production with Pitt Stages, and she hopes to be a part of many more in the coming years. Previously, she has worked on North Allegheny's productions of *SpongeBob: The Musical* (stage crew), *Little Shop of Horrors* (stage crew), and *Sweeney Todd: School Edition* (assistant stage manager). She hopes you enjoy the show!

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Note from the Dramaturg

“For while the happenings on the stage are absurd, they yet remain recognizable as somehow related to real life with its absurdity. . . . Thus, the absurd and fantastic goings-on of the Theatre of the Absurd will, in the end, be found to reveal the irrationality of the human condition and the illusion of what we thought was its apparent logical structure.”

— Martin Esslin, “The Theatre of the Absurd”

In his 1960 landmark essay on absurdist theatre, Martin Esslin laid the groundwork for future critical analysis, sparking decades of conversation around playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Tom Stoppard, Edward Albee, and more contemporary voices like Suzan-Lori Parks and Sarah Ruhl. What unites these artists is a shared interest in the friction between logic and absurdity in daily life. They ask: If the world refuses to make sense, why must art conform to the illusion of order?

In *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*, Sarah Ruhl continues this tradition, questioning the absurdity of human connection—or lack thereof—amidst the chaos of modern life. By the play’s premiere in 2007, Ruhl had witnessed a world shaped by instability and disillusionment. The attacks on the World Trade Center, and the subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan destabilized many people’s sense of security and logic. At home, discontent with the government’s actions, such as the human rights abuses at Guantanamo Bay, was growing. Meanwhile, new technology—from cell phones to email and social media—promised to connect us, yet seemed only to increase our sense of isolation.

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Note from the Dramaturg

This political and technological landscape shaped the themes of *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. The play grapples with how modern devices alter the ways we communicate—or fail to. Ruhl's characters struggle not just with grief and relationships, but with the overwhelming absurdity of existing in a world mediated through screens.

But Ruhl's take on absurdism is distinct from the existentialism found in Beckett or Ionesco. There is a tenderness to her work, a recognition that, while connection may be imperfect and absurd, it is still worth seeking. Jean's journey through *Dead Man's Cell Phone* is not about mastering logic but about embracing the beauty of the unknown. In a world that increasingly values efficiency, productivity, and certainty, Ruhl's work reminds us of the importance of lingering in ambiguity, of cherishing moments of fleeting connection, living in a little house made of paper, as Jean says.

In a time when texts and calls often replace face-to-face conversations, and when the illusion of connection through technology leaves many feeling more isolated than ever, *Dead Man's Cell Phone* resonates deeply. As we navigate our own chaotic era, Ruhl's play reminds us that life is messy, unpredictable, and often absurd—and that perhaps, in accepting this, we might find a way to truly connect after all.

Samuel Couch,
Dramaturg

About Pitt Stages

Pitt Stages is the in-house production company for the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Pittsburgh, an accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Theatre. 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.

Faculty

Department Chair..... Anmarie Duggan
Director of Graduate Studies..... Michelle Granshaw
Director of Undergraduate Studies..... Gianni P. Downs
Head of MFA in Performance Pedagogy..... Cynthia Croot
Head of Design, Technology, and Management..... KJ Gilmer
Head of History/Literature/Criticism..... Michelle Granshaw
Head of Performance..... Ricardo Vila-Roger
Faculty..... Eve Bandi, Kathleen George, Qianru Li,
Britton Mauk, Patrick McKelvey, Tom Pacio,
Howard Patterson, Becki Toth, Kelly Trumbull

Chosky Teaching Artist-in-Residence..... Natalie Mabry
Richard E. Rough Teaching Artist-in-Residence..... Tonya Lynn

Professor Emeriti..... W. Stephen Coleman, Don Mangone and
Bruce McConachie

Administrative Staff

Arts Administrative Officer..... Ashley Martin
Production Director..... Hadley Armstrong
Academic Operation Manager..... Lori Bollinger
Department Coordinator..... Micky Krenek
Academic Administrator..... Connie Markiw
Graduate Student Services Administrator..... LJ Woolcock-Srolovic
Marketing and Outreach Manager..... Daniel Fleegle
Marketing and Engagement Specialist..... Kate Vargish
Patron and Rental Services Manager..... Jeremy Seghers
Business Coordinator..... Amanda Raczkowski

Production Staff

Technical Director..... JC Bardzil
Assistant Technical Director..... Abbie Wagner
Costume Shop Manager..... Ricky Campbell
Costume Shop Assistant Manager..... Brittany Graham
Director of Lighting, Sound and Projections..... Forrest Trimble

Up next...

PITT STAGES
proudly presents the 2024-25 Season



With puppets and pool noodles, a theatre group prepares a new adaptation of *The Three Musketeers* for a glorious come back... that may not happen.



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