

January 7, 2018

**Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Theater presents**

***Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell**

**January 11 performance will be Amerian Sign Language-interpreted**



### Photo caption: Princeton seniors Marcelo Jaimes-Lukes as Husband and Anna Zabel as Young Woman in rehearsal for the Lewis Center for the Arts’ production of the expressionist drama *Machinal* by Sophie Treadwell

Photos credit: Raina Seyd

What: Sophie Treadwell's 1928 expressionist drama, *Machinal*, inspired by the real-life case of accused criminal Ruth Snyder, tells the story of Young Woman who works as a stenographer in an industrial, male-dominated world. Societal, economic and domestic pressures seem to control her life. She must decide if she will accept her routine existence. Will she ever find human connection? To what lengths will she go to gain her freedom?

Who: Featuring senior Anna Zabel in the lead role, produced by senior Raina Seyd with lighting design by senior Megan Berry, and directed by faculty member R.N. Sandberg.

When: January 10, 11, 12 & 13 at 8:00 p.m. The January 11 performance will be American Sign Language-interpreted

Where: Wallace Theater at Lewis Arts complex on the Princeton University campus

Tickets: $10 for students, $12 for seniors, and $12 general public in advance of show dates, $17 general public purchased the day of performances at the box office.

For information and tickets: <https://arts.princeton.edu/events/machinal/2019-01-10/>

(Princeton, NJ) The Lewis Center for the Arts’ Program in Theater at Princeton University will present Sophie Treadwell’s 1928 expressionist drama *Machinal* on January 10, 11,12 and 13 at 8:00 p.m. in the Wallace Theater at the Lewis Arts complex on the Princeton campus. The January 11 performance will be American Sign Language-interpreted.

Inspired by the real-life case of accused criminal Ruth Snyder, *Machinal* tells the story of Young Woman who works as a stenographer in an industrial, male-dominated world. Societal, economic and domestic pressures seem to control her life. She must decide if she will accept her routine existence, asking: will she ever find human connection, and to what lengths will she go to gain her freedom? The production features Princeton senior Anna Zabel in the lead role, is produced by senior Raina Seyd with lighting design by senior Megan Berry, and is directed by faculty member R.N. Sandberg.

The three seniors proposed the project as their senior thesis work in pursuit of certificates in the Program in Theater for a number of reasons.

Zabel was drawn to the play’s theme of oppression of women and persistent patriarchy, which, though improved since the 1920s when the play was written, she notes is still sadly relevant today. She also found the role of Young Woman an interesting and challenging one, portraying a character who is both a victim and a criminal. Zabel is majoring in comparative literature, studying French, Spanish, and Japanese, and pursuing a certificate in the Program in Theater. She grew up in Brooklyn. In addition to acting, she writes short fiction and plays. She has performed in a number of Theater Program productions including *Mad Forest*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Gurls*, *Etched in Skin on a Sunlit Night, Picnic at Hanging Rock,*and *Fefu and Her Friends.*In October she co-conceived and performed as Oliva and Curio in a four-actor production of scenes and songs from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night.* In addition, she has served for three years as the vice president of Princeton University Players, Princeton's student-run musical theater group, and is the co-host of Princeton's late night talkshow, *All-Nighter*.

Berry (who uses the pronoun “they”) joined the project for both its social relevance and its design challenges, noting the need to balance realism, humanity and the expressionistic genre of the play. They see the role of light as very much in support of creating the character of Young Woman. Their mentor, Jane Cox, Director of the Program in Theater and a Tony Award-nominated professional lighting designer, had designed the lighting for the Roundabout Theatre’s 2014 Broadway production of *Machinal*. An Anthropology major also pursuing a certificate in Gender and Sexuality Studies, Berry is interested in seeking to understand the complex interplay between gender and performance. They are originally from Cambridge, Massachusetts and has designed the lighting for a number of Lewis Center theater productions including *A Dream Play*, *Etched in Skin on a Sunlit Night*, and the musical *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, as well as working on many productions with student groups on campus, primarily Theatre Intime.

As creative producer, Seyd joined the team in a less traditional role for a senior thesis project, seeking to diversify her experience producing a Women in Comedy Festival on campus earlier in the fall with a more traditional theatrical production. She also found the play’s theme of female oppression compelling. Born to two theater artists, Seyd is originally from Los Angeles. She is majoring in English, where her senior thesis, advised by *Machinal* director Sandberg, will focus on comedy performance theory. With funding from the Program in Theater, she spent the summer attending comedy shows in Los Angeles and New York for research purposes. Her interest in comedy largely began when she joined student-run Fuzzy Dice Improv Comedy her first year at Princeton. Last year, she served as its artistic director. In addition to her senior theses projects in producing with the Program in Theater, Seyd has acted in *A Dream Play* and *Into the Woods*, and has taken playwriting every year since first taking an introductory course her sophomore year. Seyd co-hosts Princeton’s first and only late night comedy talkshow *All-Nighter* with Zabel.

The seniors asked Sandberg to direct the production. Sandberg has taught *Machinal* in his Modern Drama course, which is where Seyd first encountered the play. Sandberg teaches in both the Theater Program and English Department at Princeton and is a professional theater director and playwright. A workshop performance of his new musical *Mad Dreams* was presented by the Lewis Center in October. He has directed a number of recent Lewis Center productions including *Cloud 9*, *Madman Robertson, Uncle Vanya, How I Learned to Drive*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire,* as well as Princeton Summer Theater productions of *Pygmalion* and *The Heidi Chronicles.* In February he will direct a production of the musical *Fun Home*. His plays have been seen in Australia, Canada, England, Japan, Panama, and South Korea, as well as at theaters throughout the U.S. He has been commissioned by, among others, George Street Playhouse, McCarter Theatre, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Children’s Theatre, and Merrimack Rep.  Sandberg is a Princeton alumnus and in 2014 received the University’s President's Distinguished Teaching Award.

In addition to Zabel, other members of the all-undergraduate cast include senior Marcelo Jaimes-Lukes; juniors Kwame Amaning, Jackson Artis, and Richard Peng; sophomores Jacy Duan, Ben Bollinger, Sarel Anbar, and Deztynee Rivera; and first-year students Katherine Hosie, Megan Pan, Sally Root, Peter Scharer, and Jonathan Som.

Alumnus Wesley Cornwell serves as costume coordinator and wardrobe supervisor. In addition to Berry and Seyd, other students in production roles include sophomore Katharine Matthias as stage manager, first-year student Ruth Schultz as assistant stage manager, sophomore MinJae Kim as set and sound designer, and junior Jhor van der Horst as movement consultant. Lewis Center Resident Music Director and Composer Vince di Mura is music director on the production.

In addition to Sandberg, faculty and guest artist advisors include Rob Kaplowitz as sound advisor, Lawrence Moten as scenic advisor and Tess James as lighting advisor.

The Wallace Theater in the Lewis Arts complex is an accessible venue. Assistive listening devices are available from the venue staff upon request. The January 11 performance will be American Sign Language-interpreted. Patrons in need of other access accommodations are encouraged to contact the Lewis Center at least two-weeks in advance at [LewisCtr-Comm@princeton.edu](mailto:LewisCtr-Comm@princeton.edu). For more details on access services visit [arts.princeton.edu/accessibility](https://arts.princeton.edu/about/contact/accessibility/).

Tickets are $10 for students, $12 for seniors, and $12 general public in advance of show dates, $17 general public purchased the day of performances at the box office. Advance tickets are available through the University Ticketing online at [tickets.princeton.edu](https://tickets.princeton.edu/Online/default.asp), in person at the box offices at Frist Campus Center and Lewis Arts complex, or by calling 609-258-9220.

Due to the content of the play, the production is not recommended for audiences under the age of 10.

To learn more about this event, the Program in Theater, and the more than 100 other performances, exhibitions, readings, screenings, concerts, and lectures presented by the Lewis Center, most of them free, visit [arts.princeton.edu](http://www.princeton.edu/arts).

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