LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE

THEATRE *newsletter*



FALL 2025 EDITION

RAIN AND ZOE SAVE THE WORLD

DANCE X

ONE ACT FESTIVAL

ONCE UPON A WEEKEND

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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Fall 2025 has been an exciting, busy, and deeply gratifying semester here at Fir Acres building. Personally, as a returning Chair of the Department, I'm happy to be back, and after a long absence the Fall semester once again reignited my love and appreciation of the community we have here.

The semester started with a "bang:" our Theatre Department "Meet and Greet" attracted a stunning one-hundred-and-twenty students, of which more than eighty were incoming freshmen. Our classes, especially those in our energized Dance program under the leadership of Tiffany Mills, were filled to capacity, and the Fir Acres Building was buzzing with activity around the clock.

Our production program was a busy one. The semester began with the annual Student Directed One Act festival. Three student directors, Lila Kunkel, Andrew Van Voorhees, and Brodie Joseph directed an ensemble cast of six actors in pieces ranging from realistic relationship drama set on a fishing boat (!!!) in the Louisiana Bayou to an absurd critique of the American middle class with eyes literally popping out of the characters' eyes on stage (!!!) to a slightly sophomoric "sex comedy" that had the audience in stitches.

We followed with our mainstage production of ***Rain and Zoe Save the World***, a new play by a New York-based playwright, Crystal Skillman and directed by a guest director, Tracy Francis. The production was a new experiment for us, since the playscript is still in development, and the actors worked directly with the playwright and the director in shaping the final version of the text in real time. The production was also a vehicle for Quinn Newberry, a graduating senior in fulfillment of their Creative Senior Thesis. Quinn played the main role of Rain, was on stage the entire time, and gave a wonderfully truthful and engaging performance.

Our annual **Dance Extravaganza** attracted a record number of audiences and every performance was sold out. Eight student choreographers working with a company of more than thirty student dancers created pieces that were not only stunningly beautiful and precisely choreographed but also displayed a wonderful kaleidoscope of styles ranging from a ballet-inspired dance to a dance-theatre-like piece to an energetic riot of a dance that had the audience shout and holler.

At the end of the semester, we presented the **Acting III and Directing final projects** in the Black Box theatre. The Acting III class, never known for its modesty, produced a two-hour-long version of a little-know play, Hamlet by an obscure English playwright, one William Shakespeare. The nine student directors in the Directing class working with thirty-four actors, presented scenes and one-acts, ranging from *Beckett*, to *The Crucible*, to *Sarah Kane*, and others. The final performances attracted a large crowd of audiences filling the Black Box to capacity. In addition, the Playwriting class offered a Festival of New Plays with staged readings of ten original plays generated in the class.

Apart from the "official" season, the students once again put on an entirely student-generated and self-produced production of a "chamber musical," ***The Last Five Years***, the regular **"Once Upon the Weekend"** festival of short, under-rehearsed, but (or maybe exactly because of that) brilliant student-written plays, as well as the end-of-a-semester **"Speakeasies,"** a relatively new tradition of a cabaret-style production of music, short scenes, and all sorts of other shenanigans.

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR (CONTINUED)



The big news on the faculty side is that **Suhaila has a baby**! Layla Ruby Wu was born on October 9th. Welcome to the world Layla Ruby Wu!!! Little Layla is growing and thriving in Chicago, where Suhaila is spending her maternity and her sabbatical leave. As we have already written in our previous newsletter, **Suhaila has received one of the most prestigious academic fellowships in America, the ALS Fellowship**, and she'll continue researching and writing her book as part of that program next year. She has **also published an article in the November issue of "Theatre Topics," the premier Theatre research publication.** The article, based on her mainstage production of the *Wolf Play* in the Spring of 2024 is accompanied by a number of production pictures featuring our students.

Rebecca has been leading the New York Off-campus program. She and the fourteen students in the program have seen more than twenty-five productions in New York, and they are coming back energized and inspired by having spent fifteen weeks at the very center of the theatrical universe. (See more on page 10!) Back on campus this spring, Rebecca and Tiffany are devising, writing, and workshopping their joint Spring semester mainstage production, and Rebecca is also preparing to direct a play for the Third Rail Repertory Company in May. The Spring semester is shaping up to be a busy one for her!

Štěpán, after his Morocco Overseas program and a year-long sabbatical, had an eventful and gratifying semester, and apart from teaching three classes, supervising the one act festival, working with our Seniors in preparation for their Theses, and chairing the department, he wrote, directed and produced *The Snow Globe*, a Christmas show with music, which had a sold out run at the "21Ten Theatre" in Portland.

Miranda designed at the Portland Playhouse, **Tiffany** continues working with her company jet-setting between Portland and New York as she recently started a new dance/theatre work with Tiffany Mills Company in January 2026, called *"In Search of Evangeline"*, and **Jenny** and **Matthew** have been busy supporting all the various projects at the Fir Acres Theatre. **Cristi** and **Eric** continue to inspire students at Fir Acres and in their work out in the world. **Jessica**, our departmental admin has held it all together for all of us (the students and the faculty) throughout the semester, and she clearly is the best thing that has ever happened to the department.

Our graduates are thriving, and while there are too many to mention, one highlight is that **Rocco Weyer-Johnson (2022)** has just finished a run of a wonderful production of Little Women at the Portland Center Stage. He is now a proud member of Actors Equity, and the show is now traveling to the Cincinnati Playhouse for another five-week run. And see page 12 to see what **Emma Greene (2024)** is up to!

So, all is well at the Theatre Department. While the College as a whole is experiencing some budgetary issues, the Theatre Department is thriving. In the Spring we have one of our largest group of seniors (18), our production season is packed with fantastic stuff, our classes are filled to the brim, and everyone is working together as a closely-knit community of artists and scholars.



Students in the Fall 2025 Directing Class

We are really really good at what we're doing here, and we're good because we know that no matter what, THE SHOW MUST GO ON!!!

Cheers,

Štěpán, the (rocking) Chair of the Department

FIR ACRES THEATRE FALL 2025
MAINSTAGE PRODUCTION

OCTOBER 31- NOVEMBER 8 2025

Rain and Zoe Save the World

BY CRISTAL SKILLMAN
WITH ORIGINAL MUSIC
BY BOBBY CRONIN



The Fall MainStage production was ***Rain and Zoe Save the World***, a new play by a New York-based playwright, Crystal Skillman, and directed by a guest director, Tracy Francis. Students had the opportunity to experience working directly with the playwright who came to campus from New York City. While she was here, Crystal Skillman also taught a Playwriting workshop and did a talk-back with the audience after one of the performances.

"PUTTING OUT THE WISH FOR THE WORLD TO BE ABLE TO UNITE TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CRISIS. THIS WORK IS A CRUCIAL PART OF RESISTANCE."

-CRYSTAL SKILLMAN

FROM CRYSTAL SKILLMAN, THE PLAYWRIGHT:







PHOTOS BY OWEN CAREY

"Rain and Zoe Save the World" is one of my most autobiographical plays. It is for all purposes true - based on my parents' own cross-country journey, and inspired by the environmental actions of my cousin-in-law Ken Ward (who lives here, in Oregon, btw!)

In many ways, Portland and Seattle work into this story from the very beginning. I wrote a lot of it initially when I was on retreats out West. In this very "factual" story, a ton of very imaginative things happen on this journey.

Why do I continue to rewrite this play? Well, the play is now. And what is "now"? In an ever-shifting landscape that, outside Portland, has lost the passion for this fight that unites us all and is necessary to save our very planet, fatigue has set in. However, hope is also what connects us, and there is a growing sense that the fires of activism are being rekindled in our current times. In many ways, it is a new start, and this play reflects that.

So why Lewis & Clark? When Tracy Cameron Francis called me and spoke about the students' passion for the play, I realized this was a perfect step on the developmental journey of the play. After receiving a production in the UK in 2022 at Jermyn Street theatre with Drew & Dane Productions, and after Bobby Cronin, my frequent collaborator with music (and dear friend) began to score the piece, we furthered development in the US in 2023. Now, as plays "The Rocket Men" and "Open" are finding their American premieres in New York and across the country... it is a perfect time to return to this play... get on the road... in a play that indeed takes place... across the country.

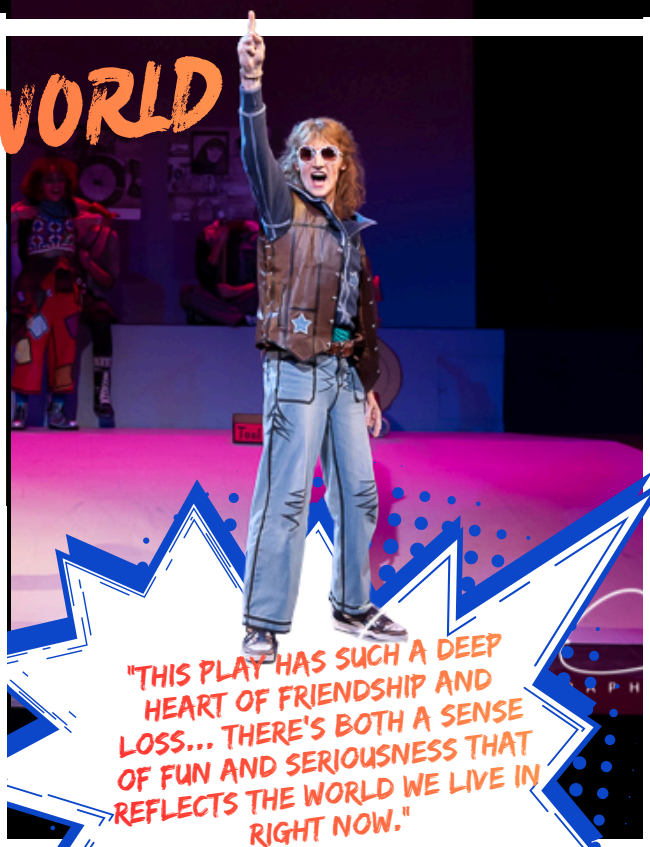
"Rain and Zoe Save the World" is a four-person play; Tracy and I realized in this showing of Rain and Zoe, we can expand the ensemble in a version for colleges and high schools, yet keep the story of Rain and Zoe focused. We also wanted to explore gender expansion in this play. Working with these students has been a joy - ideas have been exchanged, and a true ensemble has been born to tell this story.

I began this play years ago as a baby playwright to simultaneously speak to older and younger generations of activists alike, capturing both the idealism of youth and the burnout that befalls all activists with time, experience, and the constant pushing through obstacles that come with it. Now, let's hop to it, shall we?

-Crystal Skillman, October 2025

RAIN AND ZOE SAVE THE WORLD





"THIS PLAY HAS SUCH A DEEP HEART OF FRIENDSHIP AND LOSS... THERE'S BOTH A SENSE OF FUN AND SERIOUSNESS THAT REFLECTS THE WORLD WE LIVE IN RIGHT NOW."

MELISSA HELLER, COSTUME DESIGNER

"WORKING WITH THESE STUDENTS HAS BEEN A JOY - IDEAS HAVE BEEN EXCHANGED, AND A TRUE ENSEMBLE HAS BEEN BORN TO TELL THIS STORY."

-CRYSTAL SKILLMAN, PLAYWRIGHT







ONE ACT FESTIVAL

LOVE IS BLIND

OCTOBER 2-5

Three student Directors brought three short One Act Plays to the Fir Acres Black Box this Fall. The underlying theme of all these plays was how love can both blind and bind us in unexpected ways.



ANDREW VAN-VOORHEES

REAL AMERICAN DINNER PARTY

"Along this journey, the play explores the dangers of jealousy, arrogance and the suppression of agency and authenticity for the sake of security in relationships."





BRODIE JOSEPH

COURTING 101

"This play is about the DO'S and the DONT'S and the successes and the failures not just in relationships, but life itself. You can do everything right, but sometimes maybe it isn't meant to be."





LILA KUNKEL

THE GULF

"The Gulf is a show about connection, which is the facet of life that theater is so uniquely equipped to communicate. It's also crucially about lesbians, drama, fishing, and desire, which are all important pillars of theater too. "







ONCE UPON A WEEKEND

OCTOBER 17, 2025

Once Upon a Weekend is an opportunity for students to write, develop, and produce a short play/sketch/scene based on a theme. The catch is that they do this all within ONE WEEK! Once Upon a Weekend is sponsored by L&C Journal of Dramatic and the Theatre Department, also known as (Pause).







This year's theme:
"SPEAK OF THE DEVIL"



DANCE X

Dance Extravanganza gives student choreographers an opportunity to have their choregraphy fully produced, empowering LC Dance artists to create dance at the highest possible level. Dance X 2025 was a great success, with sold-out performances.

DECEMEBER 4–6TH



Dance Extravanganza 2025 by the numbers:

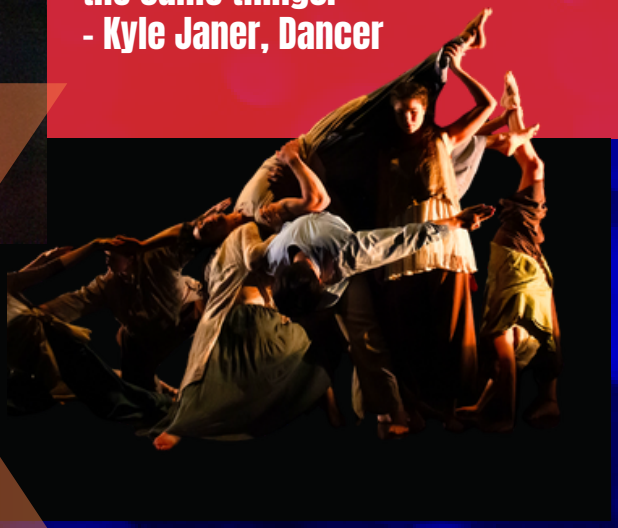
8 Choreographers
34 Dancers
5 dance pieces
770 in audience

FIR ACRES THEATRE FALL 2025
DANCE EXTRAVAGANZA



DANCE X

"The best part of being a dancer in Dance X is the community. As a freshman, I have had such a lucky opportunity to meet so many people passionate about the same things."
- Kyle Janer, Dancer



"My first year in dance x, I was surprised by the level of organic movement creation because I had never participated in the choreography process so heavily as a dancer. It was always either choreographer or dancer and I appreciated the blend that went into the pieces I was in."
- Vinca Schaefer, Dancer

"Dance X creates such a close community. I feel so lucky to be able to choreograph for the first time and have it on a professional stage with professional lighting. Dance X people are all of my best friends."
-Zoe Chinn, Choreographer





"DANCE X IS UNIQUE FROM A LOT OF OTHER STUDENT-RUN DANCE PROGRAMS... IT GIVES STUDENTS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY PUSH THEMSELVES AND THEIR PEERS AND PRACTICE REAL PROFESSIONAL-STYLE CHOREOGRAPHY."
-CHRIS WHALEN, DANCER

NOTES FROM New York City

This past semester, my peers and I had the wonderful opportunity to live in New York City, with the arts being our collective point of entry for learning about both the city's past and present. Classwork examined NYC history and its ecosystem through architecture, the fine arts, and theatre. These courses have encouraged us to engage with our surroundings through both research and participation, with experiential learning via site visits, group reflections and creative projects.

I have seen more art this past semester than I have in any other point in my life (which is saying a lot since I'm an art history major, theatre student, and overall art enthusiast!) In any given week, we would attend at least one theatrical production, visit a museum, tour NYC's architecture, and that's only the activities required for our courses. A day on this program could look like visiting the Lincoln Center in the morning, touring the performance library, eating a hot dog, exploring the New York Historical Society Museum, and then ending the night with a show at the Met Opera. Having art and creativity so heavily ingrained in the day-to-day life of living in NYC proves that it is essential to the city's function, providing inspiration for my own projects and for my post-graduation career.

Another unique opportunity this program offers is through internships. Every student has an internship for the semester. Mine was as an assistant to a professional costume designer, Karen Boyer. As a Theatre Design major, with an emphasis on costumes, this has been an exciting opportunity to learn directly from a professional about the realities of being a freelance designer in NYC, something that is difficult, but incredibly rewarding. Through my internship, the process of transitioning from student to professional is no longer mysterious to me, as hearing about Karen's journey proved to me that this dream career of being an artist is not only possible, but incredibly viable and fulfilling.

Through discussion and collaboration, I have also formed connections with Karen and a number of other theatre professionals, all of whom have been incredibly supportive throughout this semester and will continue to support me in the future. I also gained hands-on experience by helping manage costumes on film sets and during rehearsals for theatre productions. This internship not only allowed me to grow career skills relevant to my studies of Theatre Design, but also pushed me to sharpen the skills learned in my Art History courses by taking full advantage of the plethora of academic resources in NYC. For instance, as part of my internship, I spent hours researching in the New York Public Library's picture collection for historical images that would later inform the costumes and headpieces for a Brooklyn-based theater company. Through this project, I earned my first ever professional costume design credit! Being able to not just learn about the arts of NYC, but actually contribute to the creative ecosystem has been such a special opportunity to expand upon my interdisciplinary studies at Lewis & Clark.

The New York City: Fine Arts program has been a truly life-changing experience for me. I have grown tremendously in terms of academic and career development, as well as in regards to the friendships and open-mindedness. All of this was made possible by the impeccable guidance of Rebecca Lingafelter, our theatre professor extraordinaire and overall amazing human being. I couldn't have asked for a better semester, and I am excited to bring all of my new experiences and knowledge back to Portland with me.

- Lila Epstein, Art History & Technical Theatre Lewis & Clark College '27

FIR ACRES THEATRE FALL 2025 STUDY ABROAD





"As part of my internship in NYC, I spent hours researching in the New York Public Library's picture collection for historical images that would later inform the costumes and headpieces for a Brooklyn-based theater company. Through this project, I earned my first-ever professional costume design credit! Being able to not just learn about the arts of NYC, but actually contribute to the creative ecosystem has been such a special opportunity to expand upon my interdisciplinary studies at Lewis & Clark." -Lila Epstein, '27





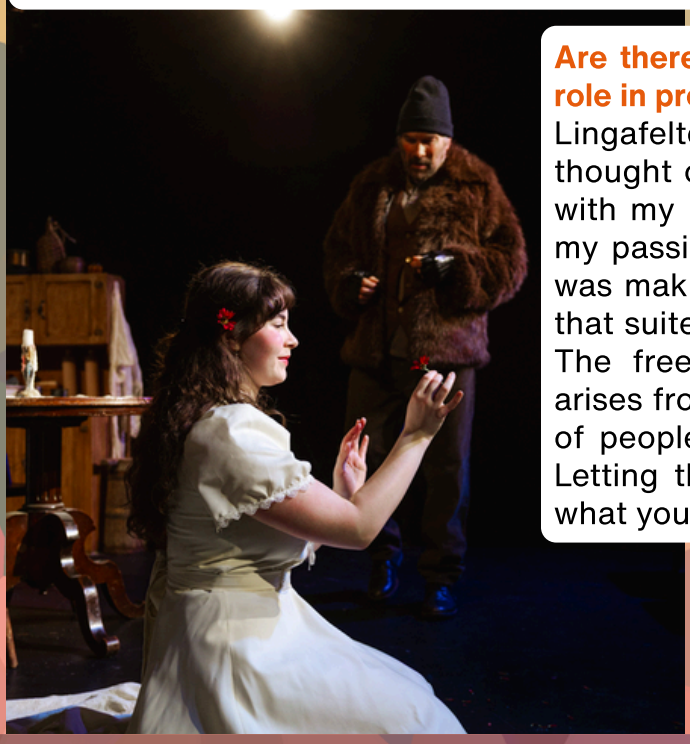
EMMA GREENE '24



PHOTOS BY REED ALYSON

What was the first thing you did after graduation from Lewis & Clark? After graduating from LC in May 2024, I began working with Spotlight Musical Theatre Academy as the Little Stars teacher. I began teaching 4-6 year olds to act, sing, and dance, and harness their silliness. I found this through the job opportunity emails from the LC theatre department, and decided to apply! I still teach at Spotlight for their summer intensives, with this summer showcasing our Oceans of Fun with fellow alum and music director, Emily Stormer.

I recently was in my first professional show, Sue Mach's ***Madonna of the Cat*** at 21ten Theatre. I played Perdita from ages 5 through 16, and it was such a beautiful, heartfelt show and delight to play such a joyful character. Through this show, I worked with many brilliant Portland theatre people, and got to spend each day harnessing the playfulness that acting brings.



Are there specific classes or instructors that played a key role in preparing you for your current work? Taking Rebecca Lingafelter's Devised Theatre completely changed the way I thought of theatre and creation, and the relationship I had with my body as my instrument. Through devised, I found my passion in making art that was birthed by the people I was making it with, not reliant on finding the perfect show that suited us. I didn't even know theatre could be like this. The freedom of creating exactly what you want. What arises from the special and specific conditions of the group of people you are with. Elastic, free, movement-filled art. Letting things become exactly what they want to be, not what you think they should be.



"Rebecca's class made me resilient in my art. When things feel impossible, something magical can emerge. Or you hate it and you move on. Whatever. Not everything you make has to be perfect, or exactly what you imagine it should be. Sometimes it's okay just to make. That is a gift in itself."
-Emma Greene '24

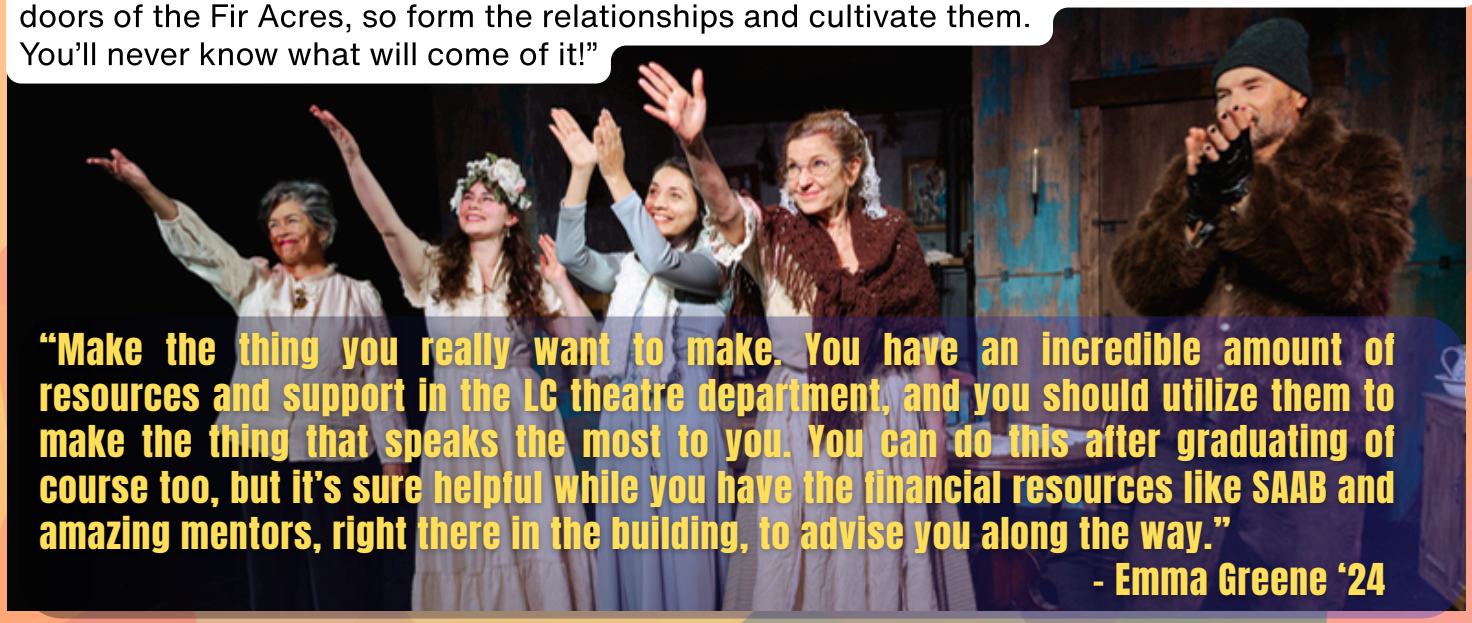
ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: EMMA GREENE '24

What's a favorite memory you have from Lewis & Clark? There are so many favorite memories at LC theatre: stellar classes, many Once Upons, and getting to create my own thesis version of Waitress. However, I think I would have to choose the countless memories I've made in the Green Room. Nowhere feels more like the heart of our little theatre community than sitting in the green room and watching Fir Acres in action. Everyone who is a part of our theatre finds themselves in there at some point. Sitting with your headphones on finishing a paper while your friend naps on your shoulder. Two students sit on the other couch working on a model for Miranda's design class, before a costume fitting with Jenny. A hoard of your friends leave Štěpán's Theatre & Society debating Brecht or discussing shadow puppetry. It is a space full of love and community, discourse and creation, and filled to the brim with so many wonderful memories. Our little home away from home.



What's next for you? I am honored to be participating in a staged reading for the next Fertile Ground festival this April in a Sandra de Helen's play Blue Roses, as well as PETE's Scratch Festival in Niels Truman and Duncan Kass' workshop of their musical, Sam's 21st. Beyond this, I am developing some work with my gorgeous friends/artists for this Spring/Summer/whenever we get it on its feet. Besides that, I am back to auditioning, seeing performances, and improving my craft. All the good theatre things.

Any advice for current theatre students? "I've had the opportunity to meet and work with so many extraordinary artists and people through LC theatre and beyond, and one piece of advice I have is to cherish and learn from each artist you work with. Portland is a small town when it comes to theatre. Talk to your peers, introduce yourself to everyone in the room with you. Who knows who you will be working with again, and who you can reach out to and see if they have anything you can collaborate on. Some pretty spectacular artists and people come through the doors of the Fir Acres, so form the relationships and cultivate them. You'll never know what will come of it!"



"Make the thing you really want to make. You have an incredible amount of resources and support in the LC theatre department, and you should utilize them to make the thing that speaks the most to you. You can do this after graduating of course too, but it's sure helpful while you have the financial resources like SAAB and amazing mentors, right there in the building, to advise you along the way."

- Emma Greene '24

LOOKING AHEAD

SPRING 2026

WHEN WE SLEPT IN TREES
AUDITIONS: JANUARY 21
PERFORMANCES: MARCH 6-8 & 12-14

THEATRE THESIS FESTIVAL
AUDITIONS: JANUARY 24 & 25
PERFORMANCES: APRIL 22-25

ONCE UPON A WEEKEND
FEBRUARY 20-21

APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN FOR:
PRECOLLEGE SUMMER THEATRE PROGRAM
AT FIR ACRES THEATRE JUNE 21- JULY 4, 2026

STAY IN TOUCH!

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