

**KENNEDY CENTER
AMERICAN COLLEGE
THEATER FESTIVAL**

REGION IV

FESTIVAL

56

TEN MINUTE PLAY

FESTIVAL

FEBRUARY 10, 2024

ASTROTURF

by Kolin Lawler

Director: Sloan Elle Garner

Assistant Director: Matthew Scott

Dramaturg: Mary Morgan Collier

Attaya Clarke Madison: Mary Langan

Nelson Elijah Meyers: Alonte Williams

Content warning: This play contains strong language and sexually suggestive content.

“It’s the most merciless environment you could possibly imagine. Extreme radiation. Temperature differences of 275°F. Meteorite hazard. Zero oxygen. An infinitely dark vacuum. But the toughest part about space is being away from your loved ones, your friends, your family.” —Veteran astronaut, Scott Kelly

Light shines more brilliantly when we have been shrouded in nothingness.

Despite the vicious perils of the galaxy, Yuri Gagarin orbited the Earth in 1961 and humanity has never looked back. Perhaps we are emboldened to explore the stars because the greatest danger—loneliness—is native to our planet. It does not take a black hole to feel unimportant or nothingness to feel abandoned, but familiarity does not equate to safety. After all, how can you escape when your home is already an exit?

Whether we’re on the Earth or orbiting it, we find each other. Astronauts soon turned their focus to creative ways to foster connection, and their success was ironically proven when people on Earth suddenly found themselves as isolated as their airborne counterparts. When the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the world, NASA released astronauts’ primary methods to retain the self. Actively choosing connections is crucial to remember their personhood. Alone, together.

Positioned against the thick, dark curtain of space, two capsules will appear much brighter than where they were launched—even if that place used to be home. Perhaps, they can even be taken for stars.

Astroturf is part one of a three-part cycle.

CONQUISTADORES

by Joey Florez, Jr.

Director: Michael Rafael Mercado

Dramaturg: Caroline Hull

Yanessa: Nalanie Ruiz

Super, Man: River Banks

Nelson: Julio Hernandez

Mami: Aileen Diaz

Music has an innate ability to convey emotions, memories, and entire narratives. Notes and scales carry complex tales waiting to unfold. In that sense, ten-minute plays are like musical compositions—compact, yet bursting with meaning. Each dialogue exchange becomes a lyrical stanza, leaving no room for excess. Within this brief timeframe, playwrights must distill their stories to their essence.

As a symphony combines various instruments to create a harmonious whole, playwright Joey Florez's *Conquistadores* interlaces lyricism, dialogue, and rhythm to craft a complex array of characters and the place they call home. As you witness characters navigating their own spaces—an overwhelming office, a bustling city street, or a forgotten childhood bedroom—reflect on your own sense of home. What memories reside within your walls?

Certain places emit signals that transcend time and space. An old photograph, an empty cardboard box, or a haunting melody all carry whispers from the past. *Conquistadores* invites you to listen, observe, and connect. Florez invites you to consider the impossible question: If you could fold time like a piece of paper, where would you journey? And what echoes would you hear?

"Home is not where you live but where they understand you." -- Christian Morgenstern

CONNECT: Where is home to you? Follow the link [HERE](#) to add a photo to our shared Google Drive folder started by our cast & creative team with images that connect us to our places that transcend time and remind us of home. It can be a place, an object, a person, a pet. What whispers "home" in your mind and to your heart?

ENJOY THE MOUNTAINS

by Bridget Blanchard

Director: Imani Nia Morris

Dramaturg: Natalie Bower

Virginia: Dominique Marshall

Dante: Blaine Cleveland

“I Could’ve Been Dead”

If life is all highs and lows, what do you do if you are constantly in a valley? Would you be tempted to escape the valley by going to the mountain and then falling into the valley? Could you then stay in that valley forever?

Death comes for us all, but everyone deals with it differently. Life is cold. Life is harsh. Life is choosing permanent escape or leaning on the only person who is in this valley with you. Sometimes you have an accident when you are on your mountain because you can't stand to go back to your valley. Are you looking for an excuse to stay in your valley where nothing can get worse? Take a look at the valley you are in; now start climbing out. And stay out of that valley as long as you can.

THE LITTLE THINGS

by Abby McWethy

Director: Emma Kitchin

Assistant Director: Florence-Able Hiheglo

Dramaturg: Lola Mann

Rock: Edward Fairley III

Flower: Oluwaseyifunmi (sheyi) Sunmola

Stacy: Ellen Foxx

Teacher/Friend: Samantha Horkins

Nature and Theatre

“The world is a dance. Mindfulness is witnessing that dance.” – Amit Ray

When was the last time you went for a walk outside? Or the last time you stopped and observed nature? There are tiny microcosms of life and beauty in each blade of grass or speck of soil. When did you last allow yourself to appreciate them?

Each of us had a time when little things were much more fascinating than bigger things. When you couldn't care less about a “career” because a ladybug had chosen you (!) as her perch. Or you spent your time obsessing over a colony of ants that appeared to be at war and couldn't be bothered to do your homework and “focus on school.”

Our world has pushed itself to run on a treadmill faster and faster to the point that it has become numb and forgotten how to stop. In this race against no one and everyone, why should we slow down when everything is on the line? Playwright Abigail Mcwethy aims to answer this question in her play *The Little Things*.

During her time in college, Mcwethy found that she had “lost the childlike wonder” she loved so much. Mcwethy says, “I used to love looking at rocks and flowers. Over time, I stopped noticing them – appreciating them. When I realized I had lost that part of me, I knew I had to write about it because I didn't even know I had lost it until I found it again.”

DEAD/NAME

by River Iraida Cusiné

Director: Mia Taylor

Dramaturg: Sloan Elle Garner

Luna: Kade Nelly

Mother: Brandi Smalls

Chorus: Nicki Do, CC Ventura, Thea Bowers

Content disclosures for this production include gender dysphoria and transphobia. If these materials become dangerous for you, please take advantage of the Trans Lifeline (877-565-8860) or the Trevor Project (866-488-7386). – Information courtesy of the Human Rights Campaign

1. **“Don’t Say LGBTQ+ Expansion Bill”** (*House Bill 1069*) bans instruction of sexual orientation and gender identity from Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8, creates a definition of sex based on reproductive function, and forces school staff and students to use legal names.
Is the form of ourselves in which we currently exist all there is?
2. **“Extreme Gender Affirming Care Ban”** (*Senate Bill 254*) inflicts criminal penalties (including felony penalties) on providers who give gender-affirming care for transgender youth or adults and prohibits Medicaid from covering gender-affirming care for transgender youth or adults.
How do we stand across from those we love or those we hate?
3. **“Anti-Trans Bathroom Bill”** (*House Bill 1521*) criminalizes transgender people for using the restroom that matches their gender identity and prohibits gender-inclusive restrooms and changing facilities in schools, public shelters, healthcare facilities, and jails.
What stands on the other side of our bravery?
4. **“Make America Great Again Takeover of Higher Ed Bill”** (*Senate Bill 266*) allows the state Board of Governors to give direction to universities on removing majors and minors in subjects like gender studies and prohibits spending on programs or activities that support such curricula.
Where do our attempts at understanding end, and what lies beyond?
5. **“License to Discriminate in Healthcare”** (*Senate Bill 1580*) allows healthcare providers and insurers to deny a patient care on the basis of religious, moral, or ethical beliefs; allows healthcare employers to discriminate in hiring; and bars Boards from disciplining doctors for spreading misinformation.
How do we transform?

SCARED

by Wyn Alyse Thomas
Directed by Sophie Grace Bell
Dramaturg: Nick Miller

Cate: Sidney Scruggs
Morgan: Mikayla Pursell
Reporter: Madeleine Ross
Stage Directions: LinDell McFadden

This play contains discussion about gun violence and the threat of mass shootings in schools. Please honor your mental health as you watch this piece. **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:** [800-273-8255](tel:800-273-8255) | **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** [800-799-7233](tel:800-799-7233)

ABCs of Gun Violence

A is for Another day, Another mass shooting.
B is for But what will change?
C is for Classrooms are unsafe.
D is for Does anywhere feel safe?
E is for Even our homes
F is for Fail to protect us from
G is for Gun Violence.
H is for How many more must happen until things change?
I is for Is there ever a chance for change?
J is for Just for people to ignore
K is for Killing children in their classrooms,
L is for Leaving parents and children broken,
M is for Memories become the final embrace with the
N is for Normalization of Gun Violence.
O is for OVER 3,700 MASS SHOOTINGS HAVE OCCURRED SINCE DECEMBER 2012.
P is for People watch on their television screens that 23 CHILDREN ARE SHOT EVERY DAY,
Q is for Questioning, “how this could happen again?”
R is for Reading about the latest mass shooting:
S is for Solutions are needed, but
T is for Thoughts and Prayers are all we get.
U is for Understanding each life lost leaves a
V is for Vacancy in our hearts.
W is for Wondering how we can be the change,
X is for Crossing out the status quo,
Y is for You must speak, act, do, fight the
Z is for Zero systematic changes to counter gun violence.