

**SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DANCE**  
**OAKLAND UNIVERSITY**



# Passage

by Christopher Chen

**Director**

Brandon A. Wright

**Scenic Designer**

Jeremy Barnett

**Costume Designer**

Liv Kunkle

**Lighting Designer**

Kerro Knox 3

**Sound Designer**

Abigail Elliot

**Hair & Makeup Designer**

Liv Kunkle

**Stage Manager**

Colin Franz

October 7-9, 14-16, 2021 at 8 p.m.

October 9 and 16 at 2 p.m.

Varner Studio Theatre

# **The Company**

<b>B</b>	Kaye Hoffmeyer
<b>G</b>	Jalen Wilson-Nelem
<b>Q</b>	Aurora Renee
<b>F</b>	Stanley Misevich
<b>H</b>	Lilija Shuger
<b>M</b>	Anna De Valois Konno
<b>S/J</b>	Juju Palmer
<b>R</b>	Braden Cooper
<b>D/Ensemble</b>	Mark LeMire
<b>Mosquito/Ensemble</b>	Alexander Hernandez
<b>Gecko/Ensemble</b>	Cassius Merriweather

## **Time & Place**

**Any time...Every time...Country X.**

***\*Passage* will be performed with NO Intermission.**

## A Word from the Director

To be honest, directing this piece started out as a humongous burden. I wanted to be sure that this process involved growth for my actors, exciting challenges for my designers, and of course an enjoyable experience for our audiences. Arriving to this moment took a beautifully liberating turn when I added myself to the list of those affected! In an interview, the playwright, Christopher Chen said, “the main journey in all of my plays is a digging process, where a reality is presented, and we see below that, and then we see below *that*.” That process of digging can be uncomfortable and uncertain...and more rewarding than just about anything else I can think of! The universality *and* individuality that we unearth during that process is the gift that I’ve gained from working on this piece, and the gift that I hope you will encounter as you witness it. The characters, the conversations, the circumstances are all meant to illuminate pieces of us that are too often buried under societal debris (race, class, ability, identity – just to name a few). You may find moments that celebrate who you are and moments that challenge! You may be led to answers and confronted with questions. I encourage and invite you to receive this play with openness, and when something resonates with you don’t bypass it – dig, and then dig a little deeper! It’s a journey well worth taking...a passage well worth traveling!

The success of this production is due to the work and creativity of so many! I am grateful to my design and production team, the Theatre department, and house and box office staff for all of their efforts. I’d like to thank our department chair, Jeremy for being such a force. Thank you to our Stage Manager, Colin, and ASM Princess for the incredible amount of coordination and organization it takes to put a show like this together. Thank you to my Dramaturg, Jane, for the sound research and perspective brought into this process. Thank you to my colleagues who served as mentors to the student designers, and a special thanks to Lynnae. Thanks to Carly, Sean, Megan, Jessica, and all who have been a part of promoting the show. A massive thanks to my cast of talented young actors, for approaching this work with bravery and curiosity. And finally, to you , our audience; thank you for being here with us. I have poured my heart onto this stage and I hope that what you see , in some way, touches yours!

Gratefully,

Brandon A. Wright

“Confront the dark parts of yourself, and work to banish them with illumination and forgiveness. Your willingness to wrestle with your demons will cause your angels to sing.”

- August Wilson

# PRODUCTION STAFF

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**Technical Director &  
Scene Shop Supervisor  
Scene Shop Assistants  
Costume Shop Supervisor  
Faculty Advisors**

**Voice & Speech Coach  
Assistant Director/Dramaturg  
Assistant Stage Manager  
Assistant Lighting Designer  
Assistant Scenic Designer  
Scenic Charge  
Properties Master  
Scenic/Properties Crew  
Master Electrician  
Scene Shop Staff**

**Costume Shop Staff**

**Light Board Operator  
Sound Board Operator  
Wardrobe Head  
Dressers  
House Managers  
Promotional Photos and Video  
Marketing Manager**

Joe Beck  
Jacquelin Strauder, Randy Magner  
Christa Koerner  
Jeremy Barnett, Dana Gamara,  
Whitney Locher, David Gram  
Lynnae Lehfelddt  
Jane Lyszak  
Princess Jones  
Eden Cope  
Joe Kocenda  
Rachel Daigneault  
Myth Parks  
Haley Lucas, Ever Liedel  
Jaden Leverett  
Jacquelin Strauder, Randy Magner,  
Rachel Sarles, Jaden Leverett,  
Chris Tomolka, Tuger Xiong  
Liv Kunkle, Colin Franz, Eileen  
Brennan, Mimi Denstaedt,  
Madeline Daunt, Katherine Lengyel,  
Sydney Rauch  
Emily Reschke  
Zachary Andrew  
Eileen Brennan  
Sydney Nummer, Kendall Burns  
Casey Van Dyke, Rachel Nesbitt  
JLBoone Photography  
Carly Uhrig

## DRAMATURG'S NOTE

*Passage* by Christopher Chen is a minimalist fable inspired by “A Passage to India” by E.M. Forster. “A Passage to India” talks about colonialism in India during 1912-1924. Chen responds to Forster by “directly linking colonialism to modern day racism, in the name of giving the systemic nature of today’s racism a different kind of historical parallel.” The play is written so that there are no markers of time and place, the gender and sexualities of the characters are fluid, and double casting is encouraged. There are two main reasons for this: the lack of specificity of time and place helps us lean into the language and the conversations of the characters, and the openness of casting allows different, diverse collaborators to “take this play on and make it resonate in ways specific to them.”

We hope that while watching our production of *Passage*, you will follow along with the characters as they navigate and discuss the complexities of power imbalances in relationships, and the loss of individuality in the caves.

*“The caves are a place to confront things, find answers”*

- Jane Lyszak

**Video/audio recording of any kind during this  
production is STRICTLY PROHIBITED!**

# **The Acting Company**

## **Jalen Wilson-Nelem (G)**

Jalen Wilson-Nelem is a senior BFA acting major at Oakland University. Some of his past productions include *Macbeth*, *FAILURE: A Love Story*, *The Servant of Two Masters*, and most recently *Much Ado About Nothing*. He also produces and acts in films created by him and his very close friends. The topics and challenges introduced in his work on *Passage* have been extremely thought provoking, and he hopes that all audience members can engage with the themes and storytelling as much as his fellow company members have. He would also like to thank his family and friends for their constant support of his hopes and aspirations.

## **Kaye Hoffmeyer (B)**

Kaye Hoffmeyer is delighted to be performing in her fourth production at Oakland University. In recent OU productions, she had the pleasure of playing Sharktooth in *How I Became A Pirate* and Caroline in *I and You*. She is currently a junior, pursuing a Musical Theatre BFA. She is thrilled to be performing in the Studio Theatre for the first time and getting back to live theatre!

## **Lilija Shuger (H)**

Lilija Shuger is a freshman Musical Theatre major who is honored to be a part of her first play at Oakland University. Coming from Colorado, she frequently worked as Disney princesses for Wands and Wishes Occasions. Lilija most recently played Chef in *The Polar Express* at The Colorado Railroad Museum, Ensemble in *Oliver!* at the Candlelight Dinner Playhouse, and her favorite, Anne Frank in *The Diary of Anne Frank* at the John Hand Theatre. She is thankful for her parent's support and the wonderful friends she's made at Oakland so far, and hopes to continue improving.

## **Anna De Valois Konno (M)**

Anna is delighted to be playing the role of "M" in *Passage*. She is a second-year BFA Acting major. You may have seen her in Oakland University's productions of *The Servant of Two Masters* as "Waiter/Porter", and in *Failure: A Love Story* as "Nelly Fail". She would like to thank all involved in this production of *Passage* for the remarkable experience. Anna would also like to thank her loved ones for their love and support.

### **Stanley Misevich (F)**

Stanley is currently a senior in the BFA Musical Theatre program at OU, and he is beyond excited to be performing in the studio theatre again. Stanley's recent shows include *Grease* (Kenickie), *35mm*, *Cabaret* (Clifford Bradshaw), *Urinetown* (Mr. McQueen), and *The Who's Tommy* (ensemble). Enjoy the show!

### **Aurora Renee (Q)**

Aurora is overjoyed to be playing Q in Oakland University's production of *Passage*! She is a senior musical theatre major. You might have seen her as The Minstrel in *Something Rotten* at FVP or in *Orestes* or *Marcus; or The Secret of Sweet* at OU in the past. She has loved diving into this intriguing piece of art with Brandon and her castmates and hopes you leave the theatre pondering! "I would like to thank God for the gifts He's given me to make a difference in people's hearts and minds."  
@Curly\_girl18, @friendlyneighborhoodstronggirl

### **Braden Cooper (R)**

Braden is a freshman at Oakland University and is thrilled to be working in his first Mainstage production with *Passage*. Previously, Braden was based in Wisconsin and took part in many different productions across the Fox Valley. Recent roles include Enjolras in *Les Miserables* (Oshkosh North High School), Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* (UWO Fox Cities), and Featured Dancer in *Singin' in the Rain* (St. Norbert College). He would like to thank his family for their incredible support throughout his endeavors, and he can't wait for everyone to see the incredible hard work the cast and crew has done to put this show together.

### **JuJu Palmer (S/J)**

JuJu Palmer is in her third year of her BFA in Musical Theatre at Oakland University. Her past shows include: *Beauty and the Beast* (Belle), *Cats* (Jennyanydots) and *Children of Eden* (Snake/ Storyteller). Although she wasn't able to perform in OU's mainstage productions due to the pandemic, she is super excited to have the opportunity to perform in *Passage*! Shout out to the cast and production team for all their hard work throughout this process! Break a leg everyone!

### **Mark LeMire (D/Ensemble)**

Mark Le Mire is a junior Musical Theatre major here at Oakland University. And he is excited to be in *Passage* playing the role D/Ensemble. Other shows he has played are Anthony in *I and You* as well as John N. Fail in *Failure: A Love Story*. He hopes you enjoy all the creative minds that came into creating the world of *Passage*!

### **Cassius Merriweather (Gecko/Ensemble)**

Cassius Merriweather, a Theatre and Graphic Design Major, is proud to perform with Oakland University for the first time after spending multiple years performing with Teen H.Y.P.E. non-profit as an actor and poet.

### **Alexander Hernandez (Mosquito/Ensemble)**

Alexander Hernandez is from Port St. Lucie, Florida and is a freshman in the musical theatre program at Oakland University. He's pretty new to theatre and hopes you enjoy the show!!

## **The Production Team**

### **Brandon A. Wright, M.F.A. (Director)**

Brandon is honored to direct this production marking OU Theatre's return to live performances. Mr. Wright is a Special Lecturer in Theatre here at Oakland. He directed last year's virtual production of *Appropriate* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins. Brandon holds an MFA in Theatre from Wayne State University. An accomplished actor, Brandon most recently performed the role of Dr. King in Hope Summer Rep Theatre's production of *The Mountaintop*. He also played Harpo in the National Tour of *The Color Purple*. Brandon is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Tennessee State University.

Social media: @iactwright

### **Colin Franz (Stage Manager)**

Colin Franz is a Junior TDT student here at OU. He is thrilled to have had the opportunity to stage manage this beautiful production for you all. A huge thank you to the ASM Princess and to Jane the AD and Dramaturg for all the help in the rehearsal room and of course the all mighty Brandon, the Director and mentor for this production. An additional thank you to Dana Gamara for all the help on this winding journey from Auditions to Opening Night. Some of his recent design and production work has been *How I Became A Pirate* (Costume Designer) *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Properties Designer) and *The Servant of Two Masters* (Asst. Stage Manager). He is very excited for the upcoming shows *Sense and Sensibility* (Scenic Designer) and *Pippin* (Costume Designer). A huge thank you to all the support of family and friends, especially Liv Kunkle for all the tough love and advice, and His Cat and Husky at home, for cuddles after late nights. "And now...Passage!"



### **Princess Jones (Asst. Stage Manager)**

Princess Jones is in her junior year as a B.F. A. Acting Major here at OU. You may have seen Princess in previous productions here such as *How I Became A Pirate* (Pirate Pierre), and Company Class: *We (Are) The People* where she contributed to the project as an ensemble member. A huge thanks to the Stage Manager and Assistant Director/Dramaturg, Colin Franz and Jane Lyszak, for showing her the ropes throughout the theatrical process and making this a fun and memorable learning experience. Princess gives further thanks to her family, friends, and the company of *Passage* for their love and support that makes the journey of pursuing this career field even more fulfilling. This is the first time Princess has worked as an A.S.M. for a production; she is appreciative of this opportunity and will most definitely use what she's been taught to help her in the future.

### **Jane Lyszak (Asst. Director / Dramaturg)**

Jane Lyszak is going into their fourth year at Oakland University as an Acting/Dance major, and they are excited to work as AD/Dramaturge for the first time for *Passage*. They have previously played Clarice in *The Servant of Two Masters* and performed with Dancing Among Nature (DANco). Jane is looking forward to dancing with Oakland Dance Theatre in the fall performance, and hopes to continue directing and choreographing in the future.

### **Abigail Elliott (Sound Design)**

Abigail Elliott is a senior design and technology major who focuses primarily in sound design and props design. She has designed many shows for Oakland University over her four years including the children's shows *James and the Giant Peach* and *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*; *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and *Blue Stockings* which earned her the Raphael Showmanship Award at ACTF. She has worked for Interlochen Arts Center for two summers as a general theatre technician.

### **Liv Kunkle (Costume Design)**

Liv Kunkle is a junior Theater Design and Technology student at Oakland University. This is her first original mainstage costume design though she has worked as an assistant costume designer on *Macbeth* and *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*. Besides costumes she has also worked as the props designer for *How I Became A Pirate* and is looking forward to being the scenic designer for Oakland's upcoming production of *Pippin*.

### **Jeremy Barnett (Scenic Design)**

Associate Professor (Theatre) Jeremy Barnett is a Detroit-based scenic designer and installation artist. Jeremy has nearly 200 scenic design credits and specializes in site-specific work in non-traditional performance venues. As an artist, Jeremy's land-based public art projects have been displayed in Ukraine, Thailand and Spain as well as in venues in the US centered on the Boston and Detroit metro-regions. He is a co-founding member of the Shoe Beer Collective, an international organization dedicated to collaboration between performing and visual artists. Jeremy holds a Master's of Fine Arts in Scenic Design from Boston University and a Bachelor's of Fine Arts in Drama from Carnegie Mellon University. He studied photography at Studio Art Centers International in Florence, Italy and stone sculpture at the Tengenenge Sculpture Gallery in Guruve, Zimbabwe.

### **Kerro Knox 3 (Lighting Design)**

Kerro Knox 3 (Professor, Theatre) teaches lighting design and theatre history, as well as serving as the Interim Director of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance. He has designed countless shows in all areas of music, theatre and dance at Oakland, most recently: lighting for *Macbeth*, *The Who's Tommy*, and *Blue Stockings*, costumes for *Lysistrata Remix*, and scenery and lighting for the operas *Street Scene* and *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Kerro designs lighting regularly for the dance companies Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Take Root, and Patterson Rhythm Pace; which have taken him to New York City, Poland and South Korea. Prior to teaching at Oakland, he taught at Syracuse University and at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. He is former Co-Chair of Region III for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

# THE KENNEDY CENTER

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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

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**October 29 and 30**

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