

## MEDIA INFORMATION

Wednesday, January 8, 2020



# Valerie Curtis-Newton directs *The Best of Everything*

*Mad Men*-era play is a surprisingly candid look at the cost of trying to “have it all.”

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UW Drama professor Valerie Curtis-Newton, who was just named one of the 13 most influential Seattleites of the past decade by the *Seattle Times*, will direct Julie Kramer’s 2012 adaptation of Rona Jaffe’s 1958 novel, *The Best of Everything*.

*The Best of Everything* is a swirling, fast-paced story of a group of women working at Fabian Publishing house in 1950s New York. Drawing comparisons to *Mad Men*, *Sex and the City*, and *Girls*, the play charts the ascendance of Caroline Bender, a young typist who confronts all the allure, degradation, and drudgery inherent to being a “working girl” in that era on her path to becoming an editor.

Straightforward and clear-eyed about everything from sex and abortion to abusive men and true heartbreak, Jaffe’s novel was ahead of its time. According to a 2018 *Buzzfeed* article, “Jaffe’s classic still strikes a chord, this time eerily prescient regarding so many of the circumstances surrounding sexual harassment that paved the way toward the #MeToo movement.”

In her author's note on the play, playwright Julie Kramer suggests that the play is best performed with a "nod to 1940s and '50s performance style—a slightly heightened manner, quick cue pick-up." But, she warns that it should "never be campy. These girls mean what they say, completely and utterly." A *New York Times* review of the 2012 production noted, "The whole show is refreshingly free of the 'aren't-we-clever' self-consciousness that often accompanies such excursions into pop-culture past...there is a welcome humility at work here, which in turn creates a feeling of unvarnished transparency."

"These women have been sold an idea of what's possible for them," says Curtis-Newton. "Over the course of the play, they wake up to the realities of what it really means to be a woman in their world, and it all kind of comes crashing in on them. This book was revolutionary in that it talked about women's lives in non-romantic terms. It talked about what it meant that they could not control what happened to their bodies. It has a lot of relevance for our current moment. This play should do two things: One, it should be funny, and two, it should break your heart and piss you off."

*The Best of Everything* was adapted into a film starring Hope Lange and Joan Crawford in 1959, and a daytime soap opera which aired on ABC in 1970.

The cast is comprised of members of the Professional Actor Training Program (MFA, Acting) as well as undergraduate Drama majors. The designers are all members of the MFA Design program.

#### **MORE ABOUT VALERIE CURTIS-NEWTON**



Professor in acting and directing and Head of Directing, Valerie Curtis-Newton is also the founding artistic director of the Hansberry Project, a professional African American theatre lab. As director her work has been seen nationally at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Denver Center, Playmakers Rep, The Guthrie Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival and The Mark Taper Forum. Locally, her work has been seen at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Tacoma Actors Guild, West of Lenin, ArtsWest, and Seattle Public Theatre.

Valerie has participated in new play development for the New York Theatre Workshop, The Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis, The Mark Taper Forum, Seattle Repertory Theatre, and at the ACT/Hedgebrook and Seattle Rep/Hedgebrook Women Playwrights Festivals, working with playwrights including Kia Corthron, Caridad Svich, Gina Gionfriddo, Laurie Carols, and Valetta Anderson.

In December, 2019, Valerie was named one of the thirteen most influential Seattleites of the decade by the *Seattle Times*. She is the recipient of the 2019 Theatre Puget Sound Gregory A. Falls Award for Sustained Achievement, a 2014 Stranger Genius Award, the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation's Sir John Gielgud Directing Fellowship and a UW Presidential Faculty Development Fellowship and is an alumna of Holy Cross College and the University of Washington (MFA). Professor Curtis-Newton is also a Donald E. Petersen Fellow at the University of Washington.

#### **MORE ABOUT RONA JAFFE**

Rona Jaffe (1931 – 2005) was an American novelist and magazine writer. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Jaffe—the granddaughter of construction magnate Moses Ginsberg—grew up affluent on New York's

Upper East Side, before graduating from Radcliffe College in 1957 at the age of 19. She wrote *The Best of Everything* while working as an associate editor at Fawcett Publications in the 1950s. Her New York Times obituary noted that she had “numerous romantic adventures,” but never married, once dismissively describing marriage as “the rat race to the altar.” She wrote sixteen books altogether, the last, *The Room-Mating Season*, published in 2003. An editor who worked with Jaffe, Robert Gottlieb, said on her death that he believed her finest work was *Mr. Right Is Dead*, a 1965 collection of short stories about a call girl. Her 1981 novel *Mazes and Monsters* was adapted into a CBS made-for-TV movie of the same name which featured a 26-year-old Tom Hanks in one of his earliest appearances. Jaffe died during a vacation to London in 2005. She was 74.

### **MORE ABOUT JULIE KRAMER**

Julie Kramer is a New York-based director and writer. She directed her adaptation of Rona Jaffe’s *The Best of Everything* at HERE in New York in 2012. The play was a *New York Times* and *Time Out* “Critics Pick”, and is published by Dramatists Play Service.

As a director, Kramer’s work has been seen at Theater Under the Stars (Houston) and Pioneer Theater (Salt Lake City) and in New York at The Tank, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Keen Company, SOMEWHAT, New Georges, The Lion, FringeNYC, Upright Citizens Brigade Theater, and NYU/Strasberg.

Julie is currently developing *The Click*, a comedy about the women’s movement with music by Rachel Peters. She was a 2018-19 Audrey resident at New Georges in collaboration with playwright Lynn Rosen on the play *Legerdemain (Slight of Hand)*.

She has developed new work at theatres including The Public, New Dramatists, Dorset Theater Festival, The New York Musical Festival, and Pioneer Theater. She directed three shows for the HBO Aspen Comedy Festival and was a Young Director in Residence at Ensemble Studio Theatre.

Julie is on the faculty of The Tepper Semester/Syracuse University, and is a member of SDC, where she serves on the Political Engagement Committee.

### **CREATIVE TEAM:**

<b>Costume Designer</b>	Guan Ying Lee (2 <sup>nd</sup> year MFA designer)
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	Joshua Legate (2 <sup>nd</sup> year MFA designer)
<b>Set Designer</b>	Adair MacCormack (3 <sup>rd</sup> year MFA designer)
<b>Stage Manager</b>	Elliot Schumacher (undergraduate)

### **CAST:**

<b>Caroline</b>	Hailey Henderson (3 <sup>rd</sup> year MFA actor)
<b>April</b>	Joellen Sweeney (1 <sup>st</sup> year MFA actor)
<b>Gregg</b>	Erika Vetter (2 <sup>nd</sup> year MFA actor)
<b>Amanda</b>	Asialani Holman (2 <sup>nd</sup> year MFA actor)
<b>Mary Agnes</b>	Isabella Brown (undergraduate Drama major)
<b>Brenda</b>	Masha Rojkova (undergraduate Drama major)
<b>Eddie</b>	Nick Bryant (1 <sup>st</sup> year MFA actor)

Mike et al

Brandon Pascal (3<sup>rd</sup> year MFA actor)

## **DATES**

### **February 6 – 16, 2020**

Wednesday – Saturday at 7:30 PM

Sunday at 2:00 PM

Additional matinee Saturday, February 15 at 2:00 PM

Previews Saturday February 1 and Tuesday February 4 at 7:30

## **LOCATION**

Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse

4045 University Way NE

Seattle, WA 98105

## **TICKET PRICES**

\$20 – Regular

\$14 – Senior (65+), UWAA, UW employee/retiree

\$10 – Student

\$5 – TeenTix

Previews: \$10—Regular, Senior, UWAA, UW employee/retiree, \$8—Student

Pay-what-you-can: Wednesday February 12, 2020 at 7:30 PM (\$1 minimum, day-of-show only)

Tickets can be purchased at [drama.uw.edu](http://drama.uw.edu) or through the ArtsUW Ticket Office: 206-543-4880, [ticket@uw.edu](mailto:ticket@uw.edu).

**CONTENT WARNING:** This show contains adult content and themes. It is recommended for audiences ages 15 and up.

**RUN TIME:** 90 minutes

## **UPCOMING SHOWS**

### **WINTER QUARTER**

#### **Frozen: A Play**

By Bryony Lavery

Directed by Andrew Coopman

February 27 – 29 at 7:30 PM & March 1 at 2:00 PM

Cabaret Theatre, Hutchinson Hall  
*Part of our new CabLab series*

**"[A] big, brave, compassionate play about grief, revenge, forgiveness and bearing the unbearable." --  
*The Guardian***

One evening, ten-year-old Rhona goes missing. Her mother, Nancy, retreats into a state of frozen hope. Agnetha, an American academic, comes to England to research a thesis: "Serial Killing—A Forgivable Act?" Then there's Ralph, a loner who's looking for some distraction. Drawn together by horrific circumstances, these three embark on a long, dark journey which finally curves upward into the light.

### **The Women of Lockerbie**

By Deborah Brevoort

Directed by Kristie Post Wallace

March 5 – 14, 2020

Previews February 29 & March 3

Pay-What-You-Can Wednesday March 11

Glenn Hughes Penthouse Theatre

*Part of our mainstage season*

**With a body  
she would have a coffin,  
or an urn,  
or a gravesite.  
A place to put her grief.  
But your wife has no such place.  
All she has is the sky  
where he vanished.  
The sky was not meant  
to be a burial ground.  
It's too big and when  
you store your grief there  
it runs wild.**

In 1988, Pan Am flight 103 was bombed mid-flight, and the fiery pieces rained down on the peaceful town of Lockerbie, Scotland. *The Women of Lockerbie* tells the story of a group of women fighting U.S. government bureaucracy to accomplish a stunningly simple, humane goal: washing and returning the clothes of the crash victims to their families. Playwright Deborah Brevoort uses the structure of Greek tragedy to tell this story of grieving and healing, powerlessness and control, joy and darkness. Second-year MFA director Kristie Post Wallace directs.

## SPRING QUARTER

### **Cabaret (1998 version)**

Book by Joe Masteroff, based on the play by John Van Druten and stories by Christopher Isherwood, music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb, 1998 Broadway version co-directed and choreographed by Rob Marshall and directed by Sam Mendes

Directed by Tim Bond

April 30 – May 17, 2020

Previews April 25 & 28

Pay-What-You-Can Wednesday May 6

Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse

*Part of our mainstage season*

**“What good's permitting some prophet of doom**

**To wipe every smile away**

**Life is a cabaret, old chum**

**So come to the cabaret!”**

In a Berlin nightclub, as the 1920s draw to a close, the garish Master of Ceremonies of a Berlin nightclub assures his audience that they will forget all their troubles at the cabaret. But the decadence of the Kit Kat Club can't ease the creeping sense of darkness in a country yielding inexorably to the Third Reich. Winner of the Tony Award for Best Revival of a Musical, *Cabaret* delivers a stark warning for our time: that apathy, indifference, denial, and self-interest create fertile ground for evil to grow. Faculty member Tim Bond directs this first all-school production since 2015's *The Cradle Will Rock*.

### **Dead Man's Cellphone**

By Sarah Ruhl

Directed by Andrew Coopman

May 14 – 24, 2020

Previews May 9 & 12

Pay-What-You-Can Wednesday May 20

Glenn Hughes Penthouse Theatre

*Part of our mainstage season*

**“Thank God there are still people who build churches for the rest of us so that when someone dies or gets married we have a place to—. I could not put all of this— (*she thinks the word grief*) — in a low-ceilinged room—no—it requires height.**

***Jean's cell phone rings.***

**Could someone please turn their fucking cell phone off?”**

In a quiet café, a cellphone rings...and rings...and rings. So begins this brilliant comedy by MacArthur

“Genius” Grant recipient and Pulitzer Prize finalist Sarah Ruhl. It follows Jean, a woman who embarks on an odyssey into the lives of others when she inherits— confiscates, really—the phone of a (dead) stranger, and finds herself forced to confront her own assumptions about morality and redemption. Second-year MFA director Andrew Coopman directs.

## **LOCATIONS**

### **Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse**

Showing: A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Best of Everything, Cabaret

4045 University Way NE

Seattle, WA 98105

Map: <http://www.washington.edu/maps/#!/pht>

### **Glenn Hughes Penthouse Theatre**

Showing: Three Sisters, The Women of Lockerbie, Dead Man’s Cellphone

Northeast UW-Seattle campus, adjacent to N4 parking lot

Map: <http://www.uw.edu/maps/?hpt>

### **Cabaret Theatre**

Showing: CabLab series

Located inside of Hutchinson Hall, UW-Seattle campus

Map: <http://www.uw.edu/maps/?hut>

## **ACCESSIBILITY INFO:**

The Jones Playhouse and Hughes Penthouse Theatre are both wheelchair accessible. The Cabaret Theatre is accessible via a stair lift, and ushers are available to help transport wheelchairs and other assistive devices up the stairs.

Assistive listening devices are available in the Jones Playhouse.

The Jones Playhouse has two gendered, multi-stall bathrooms. The Hughes Penthouse has two gendered bathrooms with multiple stalls, as well as a single-stall all-gender bathroom. Hutchinson Hall (where the Cabaret Theatre is located) has two single-stall, all-gender bathrooms that are up two flights of stairs, two gendered, multi-stall bathrooms which are down one flight of stairs, and two single-stall bathrooms which can be accessed via stair lift for patrons who cannot traverse stairs. In all cases, patrons are welcome to use the bathroom that best suits their identity and needs. This policy is posted at restroom entrances.

*For general accessibility accommodation requests, contact the University of Washington Disability Services Office at 206-543-6450 (voice), 206-543-6452 (TTY), 206-685-7264 (fax), or [dso@uw.edu](mailto:dso@uw.edu). For interpreting, captioning, and TTYS, contact the*

*Coordinator of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at 206-543-1415 (voice), 206-543-6452 (TTY), or [dhhreq@uw.edu](mailto:dhhreq@uw.edu), preferably at least 10 days in advance of the event.*

## **ABOUT THE UW SCHOOL OF DRAMA**

Led by Interim Executive Director Lynn Thomas and Associate Director Geoff Korf, the UW School of Drama is consistently ranked among the top theatre training programs in the country. Emerging actors, directors, and designers come from all over the world to study with our world-class faculty and prominent guest artists, such as Erik Ehn, Anne Washburn, Daniel Alexander Jones, and Meiyin Wang. We offer a Bachelor of Arts in Drama, a Master of Fine Arts in Acting, Directing, and Design, and a PhD in Theatre History, Theory, and Criticism. Our audiences are adventurous theatre-goers who want the opportunity to see engaging, provocative, and beautiful work.

As an educational institution, UW Drama is able to produce the types of plays that are harder and harder to find on professional stages: large-cast shows with highly diverse casting, period pieces with opulent, detailed designs, and boundary-pushing plays that test form and style. We produce in three intimate, comfortable spaces on the UW Seattle campus: The Hughes Penthouse Theatre (the first purpose-built theatre-in-the-round in the U.S.), the Floyd and Delores Jones Playhouse, and the Meany Studio Theater.

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