PRESENTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, CULTURE AND MEDIA

ANNUAL THEATRE PRODUCTION PRESENTS

The Pandemic Project

A collective creation by the ensemble and the production team
Directed and led by Carla Melo
DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Since the first few months of the pandemic, I have been troubled by mainstream media’s focus on the recklessness of youth. Images of young people partying and attending super spreader events did not seem to jive with those mask-wearing folks in their early 20s that I dodged on my morning walks during those early months. Why wasn’t the media paying attention to the impact this “new normal” would have on the development and future careers of those less vulnerable to the aggravating effects of Covid-19 instead of stigmatizing them? I wondered how young people following restrictions felt about this and whether shaming and blaming could instigate further transgressions on the part of those ignoring or rebelling against the constraints on their urge to socialize, play and to define their identity as part of a group. Though this scenario of neglect and misrepresentation has somewhat improved, those first wave reflections were the seeds for The Pande-Mic Project.

But instead of departing from my own assumptions, my goal with this project was to simply create an environment of trust and experimentation where students could creatively and collectively process the impact of the pandemic on their lives, in the hopes that the particular experiences of the diverse group of students involved in this project could also speak to their peers and other generations.

My vision was to make room for their vision, for their voices. Yet more than just a “mic,” more than a channel for self-expression, the goal was to generate a space where, through the collaborative process of creation, these young artists would be able to forge meaningful connections and a strong sense of community during a time when virtual interactions could be vapid and alienating.

At first, we established that the main concerns of the group were the impact of isolation upon the students’ identities, mental health, relationships and on what it meant to be “political.” As we explored these topics, we noticed how seclusion and mediated interactions could affect our perceptions of time and space. We then used this phenomenon as a thread to weave the stories together – an Ariadne’s thread that would also guide you through the maze of experiences you are about to witness. These experiences reflect not only those of the ensemble you’ll meet in our virtual stage, but of all the youth involved in the production, from designers to stage managers. It is also crucial to note that actors are performing a heightened and selective version of themselves, which includes fictional and real stories, not always their own. In this way, we hoped to highlight that which feminists have taught us a long time ago: that the personal is intimately political and that we are deeply “response-able” to the collective.
SPECIAL THANKS

First of all, I must express my immense gratitude to the brilliance and generosity of all the students involved in this devised theatre project -- a truly collective creation. I have learned a great deal from working with this gifted group. From the first day in our virtual room, they’ve given so much of themselves, taken risks, and held space for others to do so. I was often amazed and inspired by how quickly and collaboratively they could conjure compelling images and moving stories. I was also pleased with how vulnerably they’ve shared their experiences, and by how deeply they’ve engaged in analysis and research, driving the dramaturgy of the piece.

Deep gratitude also goes to my long-time creative partner, our brilliant dramaturg Lara Arabian, who sensitively instigated students to produce personal and fictional narratives while posing generative questions that greatly contributed to the shaping of the piece. On this note, I extend my thanks to the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic & Dean for its support through the Experiential Learning Fund, which allowed us to have Lara in our team.

I am also grateful to the committed students of the Devising Theatre course I taught in the Fall of 2020, who began to develop a vocabulary for this new form of performance that lives between theatre, film and video art. The course, also taken by five members of our ensemble, served as a development workshop for the piece. Much creative credit and gratitude goes to Jhelisa Carroll, Joanna de Villa, Melody Irish, Jessica Lagoda, Mathew Richard, Yidan (Lydia) Xu and Madison Zinger.

This project would not have been possible without the research, ingenuity and dedication of our technical team, led by Production Manager Kevin Wright, who aptly defined our journey as that of “inventing a new artform” and the tech-savviness of our Technical Director Colin Harris. We trusted their magic powers from the beginning and they did not disappoint us.

I want to gratefully thank our ACM Chair, Barry Freeman, as well as my colleagues at the Theatre and Performance Program, for trusting my vision and supporting this project. A big thanks also goes to the staff of the Department of Arts, Culture and Media, a supportive community that I feel so honoured and privileged to have recently joined.

— Carla Melo, Director of The Pande-Mic Project
THE ENSEMBLE

Abigail Boateng
Alfie
Annie Pei
Ciara Wood
Jason Yu
Malika Daya
Maha Bellazzi
Siena HeeSoo Jang
Victoria Addorisio

THE CO-CREATORS

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director..........................................................Carla Melo
Assistant Director.......................... Malika Daya
Dramaturge..............................Lara Arabian
Assistant Dramaturge.................Ahd Abdel Kayoum
Production Manager.................. Kevin Wright
Production Assistant................. Ingrid Liu
Technical Director..................... Colin Harris
Stage Manager ......................... Emily Pople
Lighting Designer .................... Olivia Rennie
Sound Designer .................... Tailynn Smith-Vetter
Scenic Designer ..................... Erin Lam
Costume Designer .................... Irene Genouzou
LLBT Costumer ...................... Gabriel Woo
LLBT Technician .................... Nicholas Mazzoli
LLBT Audience Relations ........... Dryden Steeves
MEET THE DIRECTOR AND DRAMATURGE

Carla Melo  
Director

Carla is thrilled to direct and co-create with this brilliant ensemble and production team. She is grateful and humbled as these unprecedented times have brought her new beginnings: It’s her first year as faculty at UTSC and her first chance to direct a virtual performance. She is, above all, very proud of her students/collaborators. Carla is a theatre and performance artist, researcher and educator with two decades of experience in creating socially engaged performances in streets, warehouses, malls, parking lots and sometimes, even theatres! She is co-founder of the LA-Based Corpus Delicti and of the Toronto-based CorpoLuz Theatre and has widely published on political theatre across the Americas. She also loves dancing and playing Afro-Brazilian rhythms with her band. Since that’s not quite possible now, she’s been spending her extra energy walking and dancing in the parks like no one is watching.

Lara Arabian  
Dramaturge

Lara is delighted to be working with this generous group of people on The Pande-Mic Project as the dramaturge. She is a trilingual Dora nominated Toronto-based artist by way of Beirut, Lebanon, upstate NY, and Paris, France. As a writer, she has been a member of the Banff Playwrights Unit and Nightwood Theatre’s ‘Write from the Hip’ program, and is currently working on a commissioned radio play, Convictions (Radio-Canada/Theâtre Français de Toronto), which will be broadcast across Ontario later on this year on Radio Canada (French CBC). As an actor, she has appeared on stages across Canada, as well as TV series like Kim’s Convenience, The Handmaid’s Tale and Murdoch Mysteries. Lara is also a passionate arts educator and is on the faculty of Sheridan College in both the Musical Theatre and Performing Arts Preparation programs. She has been spending her time in quarantine learning how to be as silly as possible in order to keep up with her 9-year-old son.
MEET THE ENSEMBLE & CO-CREATORS

Malika Daya
Assistant Director & Actor
Malika’s academic pursuits have drawn her to the intersections between International Development, Anthropology, and Theatre and Performance. She is inspired by her experiences working in Malawi with the Art and Global Health Centre Africa and on productions at UTSC like We are Proud to Present, The Shell, This is War, and Heart in the Ground. Currently, Malika is working with Jumbies Theatre and is a part of the Directors Lab with the Paprika Festival. She is excited to invite you into the universe the Pande-Mic team have collectively discovered, built, and fostered together. Here is to connecting in times of isolation!

Annie Pei
Actor
Annie is an actor and co-creator of the performance The Pande-Mic Project. Annie is a third-year student studying media and theatre performance at the University of Toronto Scarborough. Annie is experienced in many other fields of the arts other than theatre as well, such as dance, visual arts, music, and videography and she often integrates them into her artistic expression. Annie is excited to bring her own experiences and feelings during the pandemic to the piece and connect with her audiences. She hopes that audiences can find a sense of healing power in this production as we all support each other in this difficult time.

Siena HeeSoo Jang
Actor
Siena is an actor and co-creator of the show The Pande-Mic Project. Siena is a theatre lover, multidisciplinary artist, creative and mindfulness facilitator, a mental health advocate in means to influence our community. She is interested in telling stories, opening conversations, challenging one’s view, creating together, and healing. Siena has involved music, dance, photography, visual arts in a lot of her work and continuing to work towards emerging them with theatre and mindfulness.

Abigail Boateng
Actor
Abigail is thrilled to be a part of The Pande-Mic Project ensemble as an actor and co-creator. She is currently in her graduating year to complete a HBSc and recently joined the theatre and performance program, as an additional minor, at the University of Toronto Scarborough. She has an interdisciplinary passion for various fields including science, psychology, mental health, film, theatre, and the arts. This is her first role in a faculty show and she is glad to be a part of a collaborative piece working alongside other creative minds. She hopes to bring a unique lens to this production offering her authentic story, lived experiences and nuanced ideas.

Victoria
Actor
Victoria is an actor and co-creator for the online performance titled The Pande-Mic Project. Her recent works in theatre include acting in I Never Saw Another Butterfly at Hart House Theatre and at UTSC Drama Society’s Festival of the Arts. Other works of hers include Refraction, Grease, and All Together Now. She was awarded the “Your Mother Should Know Award” for her portrayal of Jean at Durham’s Minifestival. Along with her acting experience, Victoria wrote, directed, and video edited a one act play titled First Love.
Jason Yu is an actor in the ensemble of *The Pande-Mic Project*. He is excited to be able to help devise and act in this production, especially in these strange and wacky times. Jason is a third-year Theatre and Performance student studying at the University of Toronto Scarborough. His other acting experiences include theatrical productions such as *Never Swim Alone* and *Wrecked*. When he’s not acting, he’s probably acting as the dungeon master in Dungeons & Dragons or playing an unhealthy amount of video games.

Maha Bellazzi is an actor and co-creator for *The Pande-Mic Project*. Maha is a fourth-year student studying Theatre and Performance at the University of Toronto Scarborough and is the current Vice President of the UTSC Drama Society. This is Maha’s second time being a part of the faculty-led production and is no stranger to the productions that have run at the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre at UTSC. Online theatre has been a great learning experience for them, and she can’t wait to see this show go up.

Ciara Wood is a third-year Theatre and Performance student at UTSC. She is super excited to be working with such an inspiring group of people as an actor and a co-creator. Ciara is also majoring in Psychology and very interested in interdisciplinary work. This is Ciara’s first experience with devised theatre, and she is excited for everyone to see *The Pande-Mic Project*.

Victoria Addorisio is an actor and co-creator for the online performance titled *The Pande-Mic Project*. Her recent works in theatre include acting in *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* at Hart House Theatre and at UTSC Drama Society's Festival of the Arts. Other works of hers include *Refraction*, *Grease*, and *All Together Now*. She was awarded the “Your Mother Should Know Award” for her portrayal of Jean at Durham's Minifestival. Along with her acting experience, Victoria wrote, directed, and video edited a one act play titled *First Love*. 
Olivia is extremely excited to be joining The Pande-Mic Project team as the Lighting Designer. Olivia has a combined background in science and the arts, and loves bringing a technical eye to the theatrical and musical endeavors she has been involved with over the years. Olivia hopes this production will provide inspiration and hope for audience and cast members alike, as we collectively make sense of COVID-19’s impact. Olivia is an avid cross-country runner, and spends her free time writing poetry and practicing card magic.

Emily Pople
Stage Manager
Emily is a fourth-year Psycholinguistics major who fell in love with theatre and the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre in their first year! They have been working with the theatre for the last three years doing tech, and is honoured to be doing their first stage manager role this year.

Ingrid Liu
Assistant Stage Manager
Ingrid is the Assistant Stage Manager for The Pande-Mic Project. As a student and lover of theatre, creative writing and art, Ingrid considers herself a storyteller before any other artistic titles, though she also enjoys learning about the technical aspects of theatre production. Ingrid has had some experience in devising theatre before and would gladly use that knowledge to assist any way she can, because it’s quite literally her job here. During this pandemic, you will most likely find her attached to her laptop, and other hobbies include (but are not limited to) writing, doodling, and singing under her breath.

Ahd Abdel Kayoum
Assistant Dramaturge
Ahd is extremely excited to be joining The Pande-Mic Project as an assistant to the dramaturge (Lara Arabian). Ahd is an English major, she is experienced in text analysis. Ahd also understands the art of asking questions. Ahd wishes to bring her enthusiasm, film and theatre knowledge to help create this new form of theatre in hopes that theatre will thrive during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ahd also hopes to learn from her teammates how to create theatre. Ahd enjoys cooking and food photography as a way to rewind and de-stress.

Olivia Rennie
Lighting Designer
Olivia is extremely excited to be joining The Pande-Mic Project team as the Lighting Designer. Olivia has a combined background in science and the arts, and loves bringing a technical eye to the theatrical and musical endeavors she has been involved with over the years. Olivia hopes this production will provide inspiration and hope for audience and cast members alike, as we collectively make sense of COVID-19’s impact. Olivia is an avid cross-country runner, and spends her free time writing poetry and practicing card magic.
**Meet the Production Team & Co-Creators**

**Kevin Wright**  
Production Manager  
Kevin is the Production Manager for the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre. *The Pande-Mic Project* marks his twenty-fifth mainstage production with the Theatre and Performance program. When he is not helping make magic in the theatre he enjoys spending time with his family.

**Tailynn Smith-Vetter**  
Sound Designer  
Tailynn is very excited to be a part of the team creating this production. She has been enthralled by theatre since her mother took her to see *Hairspray* as a child and has since memorized every line in the movie, to the annoyance of all of her friends and family. Tailynn is a second-year Arts Management student with a major in Theatre and Performance. Over the years, Tailynn has poured her creativity into many different forms of art such as writing and music and is delighted to have a new avenue to explore in devised theatre. Throughout the pandemic, you would be able to find Tailynn playing too much Minecraft or D&D with her friends, reading, and playing music.

**Erin Lam**  
Scenic Designer  
Erin is the Scenic Designer and is delighted to have the opportunity to work with this wonderful team on *The Pande-Mic Project*! She is a second-year student still deciding on which major to pursue. With some previous experience in scenic design, she’s thoroughly enjoyed being a part of crafting the aesthetic on her first devised show. During quarantine, you can often find Erin in the kitchen, or procrastinating by watching a multitude of different shows.

**Irene Genouzou**  
Costume Designer  
This would be Irene's first time joining a faculty-led production and is eager to work with such a wonderful team. Irene is currently double majoring in Sociology and Theatre & Performance, combining her two interests. She hopes to bring her love for theatre and attention to detail into this production. Irene hopes that this production will work to connect people in extraordinary ways through storytelling, especially during these difficult times. Irene has used this time in quarantine to enhance her cooking skills and catch up to all her favourite shows.

Kevin Wright.jpg  
Tailyyn Smith-Vetter.jpg  
Erin Lam.jpg  
Irene Genouzou.jpg
MEET THE PRODUCTION TEAM & CO-CREATORS

**Dryden Steeves**
LLBT Audience Relations

Dryden is a fourth-year Arts Management student at UTSC. He has been working throughout this year as the Audience Relations Manager with the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre through a work-study and is incredibly excited to be a part of this production. Dryden is also minoring in Theatre and Performance and is grateful for this opportunity to work on a show although we are all apart.

**Gabriel Woo**
LLBT Costumer

Gabriel currently holds the title of Leigha Lee Browne Theatre work study Costumer and is working as the Costume Designer for *The Pande-Mic Project*. He is in his fourth year of study at UTSC and his fourth time being involved in a faculty led production. He is very excited to take part in this year's production as it finally gave him the chance to do the work he loves but from the comfort of his own bed.

**Nicholas Mazzoli**
LLBT Technician

Nicholas is a third-year Theatre and Performance Studies and Philosophy student who works as the current technician for the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre. He’s a co-runner for sound on *The Pande-Mic Project*. He loves to have fun with his friends and learning everything he can about this new and exciting theatre form.

**Colin Harris**
Technical Director

Colin is the Technical Director for the Department of Arts, Culture and Media. While proud of his work on *The Pande-Mic Project*, the credit really goes to the students. This is his 8th Mainstage at UTSC. While locked up at home, he's been keeping busy playing too many videogames, and online D&D with his friends.
Dryden is a fourth-year Arts Management student at UTSC. He has been working throughout this year as the Audience Relations Manager with the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre through a work-study and is incredibly excited to be a part of this production. Dryden is also minoring in Theatre and Performance and is grateful for this opportunity to work on a show although we are all apart.

Colin is the Technical Director for the Department of Arts, Culture and Media. While proud of his work on The Pande-Mic Project, the credit really goes to the students. This is his 8th Mainstage at UTSC. While locked up at home, he's been keeping busy playing too many videogames, and online D&D with his friends.

Nicholas is a third-year Theatre and Performance Studies and Philosophy student who works as the current technician for the Leigha Lee Browne Theatre. He's a co-runner for sound on The Pande-Mic Project. He loves to have fun with his friends and learning everything he can about this new and exciting theatre form.

Alfie, short for Alfredo, is so excited to make his theatrical debut! He is a 10-month-old calico tabby kitty, he spends his days asking for treats, and bothering his roommates Maha and Ciara.
Affinity Partners

Our events are proudly sponsored by U of T affinity partners:

Manulife
mbna
TD Insurance

Upcoming Events

SpreadArts Auction
Online Silent Art Auction
March 24 - 31, 2021

In the Moment
Studio Art Graduate Exhibition
April 16 - 30, 2021

Spring Awakening Online Concert
April 24, 2021 | 7:00PM

Learn more about ACM events and programming
uoft.me/acmevents

Discover the benefits of affinity products!