

# **AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE**

**By Henrik Ibsen**


**Directed by Johanna Kasimow**

**A New Version Adapted by the Ensemble**

DIRECTED BY JOHANNA KASIMOW

## “A PERSISTENT POISON...”

My first full experience in dramaturgy was with Henrik Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People*. Although, the translation/adaptation we used for that production was written by Arthur Miller—a pillar of realism. I was struck by the way that theatre can be used as a social and political tool to bring certain happenings to light and to enact change in our world. For instance, when I dramaturged Jacksonville State University’s production, a huge event that had actually left the popular discourse was the water crisis in Flint, Michigan (2014)—which, by the way, is still struggling to keep their water clean due to the lack of resources. On top of this, Alabama has the largest freshwater resources in the country, making it a very relevant story for our community—if our water was contaminated like the baths, it would be absolutely devastating to not only our lives but the lives of our wildlife. This is the context I came with when I sat down to watch UIowa’s production of *An Enemy of the People*—this version, translated by Eleanor Marx.



I was fortunate to have insight into the process of staging/devising this piece because Margaret Smith, the dramaturg, would keep us fellow dramaturgs up to date on the goings on while working with Johanna both pre-production and during the process. A lot of research and planning went into the devising and staging of this show—really, I am sincerely in awe at the entire process.



DRAMATURGED BY MARGARET SMITH

I did, however, try to stay objective to the information Margaret was bringing to us because I wanted to see the production with as little knowledge as possible considering this was a devised adaptation.

When I sat down pre-show, I was immediately captured by the video/images we were seeing projected onto the stage. We were being shown what looked like live video of different water sources throughout the world—Hawaii, Norway, Italy, and even the Iowa River right outside the theatre. Immediately, the production was conjuring this idea of water, space, and the connection between the story we are about to see and our own lives, bringing the story and its stakes to a personal place. They were, indeed, live feeds of these spaces. The live feed outside the theatre then became the start of the action, showing us Dr. Stockmann (Joey Lepire) greeting his old friend, Horster (Sara Alvidrez) before the two came into the theatre, joining those onstage.

Before intermission, the adaptation kept close to the original text telling us of the innerworkings of the town, the baths, and the local newspaper. However, at least for me, the characters had more life in them than the original text—and, of course, the Stockmanns had no kids, the career for Mrs. Stockmann (Alicia Philadelphia) changed, and the mayor (Leah Urzendowski) was now a woman—yes, women in power!



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer

DRAMATURGED BY MARGARET SMITH

I found myself being pulled into the story with how they all--Billings (Abbie Paul) especially--seemed to be a part of this family, allowing themselves to indulge in their supper and supporting Dr. Stockmann to the ends of the earth. The establishment of these relationships really helped in showing how drastically opinion changed with the small influence of the mayor's 'reasoning.' Billings went from the biggest supporter to one who went along with the mayor for the simple fact of expectation—follow the person in power to be able to make bigger changes in the future.

What struck me the most was the script changes made in the scenes post-intermission. The town hall meeting in which Dr. Stockmann tries to address the town about his findings but is rebutted by the mayor. We see this same event in this performance, but the main difference is that we, the audience, are included as townspeople. Staging the townhall meeting like this brings us into the problem and the proposed 'solution.' We are given the agency to decide for ourselves who we believe—the doctor or the mayor—and are therefore culpable in the outcome.

Towards the end of the townhall, as Dr. Stockmann is nearing the culmination of his rantings, I thought the show would end with Hovstad (Raphael Thome) following Stockmann out of the theatre while video streaming. There was a moment when the screen being projected froze on Stockmann mid-talking, providing an almost



DRAMATURGED BY MARGARET SMITH

cinematic ending to the performance. However, the play continued after following the Stockmanns through the building.

Focus was brought back to the stage, specifically upstage where the baths were. We see the mayor taking her time as she makes her way into the bath, luxuriating in the water while streaming the experience to the town as a way of marketing the safety of the baths. What makes this moment truly ironic is, earlier in the play, it is established that the mayor is very cautious of what she puts into her body—she won't eat past a certain time because of her "indigestion," she doesn't drink, and she is overall healthy in all her decisions regarding her body. In this moment, though, she is bathing in water that her brother has scientifically proven to be dangerous. Either she's willing to risk her own health to prove to the town that the baths are safe, or she, in convincing the town of the falsehood in Dr. Stockmann's research, has convinced herself that there is nothing wrong with the water. Either way, we can tell that she will suffer the consequences of her own ignorance. While the mayor is promoting the baths, Dr. Stockmann enters the stage alone, clothes ragged, and near complete exhaustion. He sits on the lone couch in the center of the stage while people walk around him, not giving him any kind of attention. This moment shows us that the town has believed the mayor and ostracized Dr. Stockmann.



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer



DRAMATURGED BY MARGARET SMITH

Overall, this devised adaptation stayed true to the original story told by Ibsen, proving that his play withstands the test of time--as it were. *An Enemy of the People* is a story that can be told in any time period, any country, state, city, or town. Conformity will always be a factor in masses and so will censorship because someone will have everything to gain and will do anything to climb to the top. And it is too common a tale to, like Dr. Stockmann, go from a “friend of the people” to “an enemy of the people.”



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer

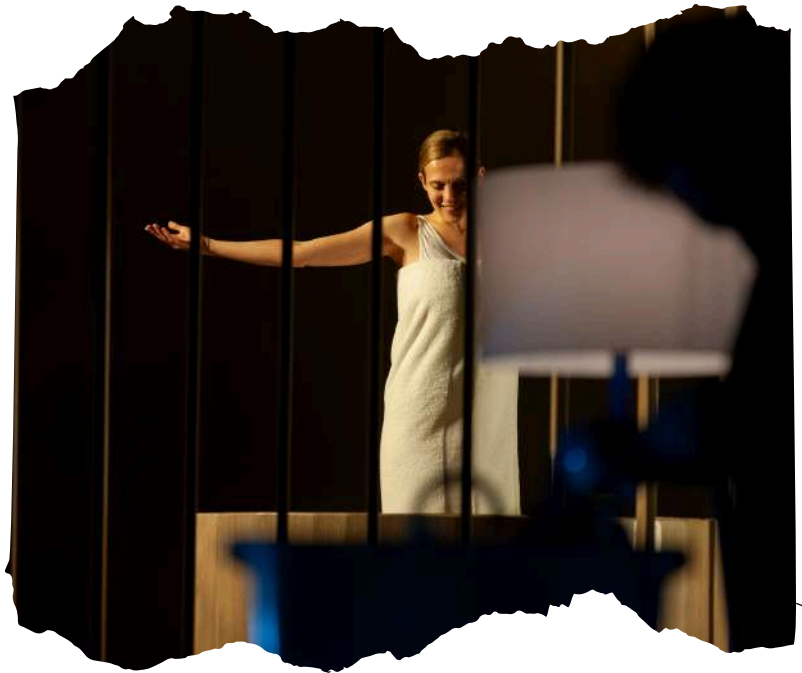


Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer



**Rebecca E. Weaver** is a third-year dramaturgy MFA candidate at the University of Iowa. Previous dramaturgy credits include *Far Away* (d. Meredith Healy), *The Words of Ants* (pw. Xiaoyan Kang), *American Rusalki* (pw. Christopher Lysik), *In the Red and Brown Water* (d. Caroline Clay), *Ugly Lies the Bone* (d. Mary Beth Easley), and *The Children's Hour* (d. Ann Kreitman). More of her work can be found at [dramaturgyweaver.com](http://dramaturgyweaver.com)

COSTUME DESIGN BY CATHY PARROTT

**“...the pursuit of truth can challenge societal norms, reveal corruption...**



**...and ultimately alienate those who dare to speak out against the status quo.”**

COSTUME DESIGN BY CATHY PARROTT

Hello! I'm Cathy Parrott, the costume designer for *An Enemy of the People*, a newly devised adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's 19<sup>th</sup> century play. This marks my tenth production at the University of Iowa, and I'm thrilled to be returning—especially in my new role as Assistant Professor of Costume Design. It's a joy to be designing once again in Mabie Theatre.

When we began crafting the visual world of the play, we drew inspiration from the natural beauty of Ibsen's Norwegian fjords and the tranquil atmosphere of spa and public bath spaces. Though we did not necessarily set our production in Norway, we used elements of Ibsen's environment to help conceptualize our production. CJ Johnson's scenic design, Chloe Cobb's digital media design, and Søren Olsen's lighting and sound design all embody this imagery with sleek precision and intentional artistry. Collaborating with this incredible design team, my student design assistants Chelsea Ann and Ro Kivett and our director Johanna Kasimow, has been incredibly rewarding.

*An Enemy of the People* illustrates how the pursuit of truth can challenge societal norms, reveal corruption, and ultimately alienate those who dare to speak out against the status quo. The director and cast collaboratively reimaged the script, incorporating updated language and settings to reflect Ibsen's commentary on enduring societal issues. Incorporating the devised nature of the piece into the costume design gave the actors space to infuse their own ideas directly into what they wore. Rather than creating fixed costume sketches, we developed inspiration look books to capture the essence of each character, which allowed us to experiment and explore different options in real time.



A meaningful moment for me in pre-production is watching an actor inhabit their character the moment they discover and put on their costume.

I highlight the influence of status by contrasting and aligning color and silhouettes, allowing the audience's perception and personal experiences to fill in the blanks. The color palette for the costumes is dominated by earthy tones, with soft greys, forest green, muted blues, and rust browns reflecting Norway's natural landscape. To add vibrancy, accents of red, mustard and Kelly green are incorporated, reminiscent of the colorful homes and hills lining the water's edge in Bergen, Norway. The fabrics selected are all natural materials, including wool, linen, cotton, leather, and knit fabrics, chosen to embody the essence of the world's natural elements while ensuring comfort and practicality for daily wear.

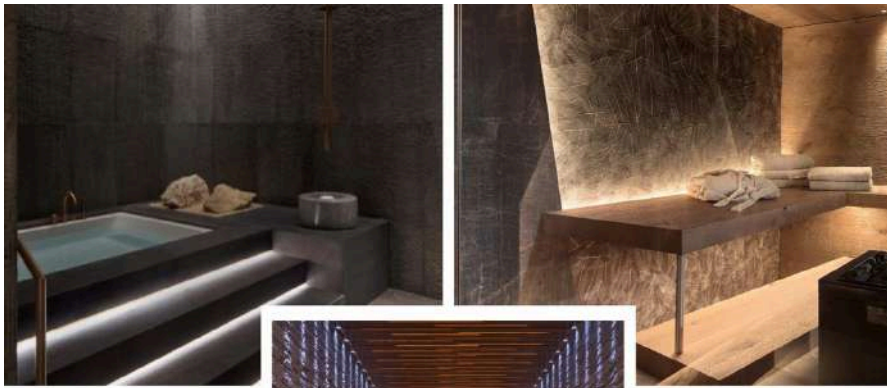
The Doctor's suit in Act 4 was inspired by the stoic marble columns characteristic of many judicial buildings, which represent his pursuit of truth. Horster's look (worn by Sara Alvidrez) is filled with thoughtful details that reflect their work on the water and their worldly travels. As a comedic and friendly character type, I collaged their costume pieces to feel thrown together instead of streamlined and deliberate. This stands in sharp contrast to the Mayor's, portrayed by Leah Urzendowski, sharp and striking green suit, symbolizing money dictating the bottom line. As Aslaksen, portrayed by Dale Leonheart, begins to shift her allegiance toward the Mayor, her color palette evolves from blue and light peach—originally aligning her with Dr. and Mrs. Stockmann—to lime, reflecting her changing loyalties.

ASST. COSTUME DESIGN BY CHELSEA PRESTIEN

Hovstad's vintage costume pieces, worn by Raphael Thomé, were exclusively sourced from the University's costume stock, including both the blue shirt and plaid shacket, which date back to the 1950s.

By fusing modern minimalism with vintage touches, this design balances functionality and style, bridging the past and present to suit today's way of life. Similarly, Ibsen's social commentary in his 19<sup>th</sup> century plays resonates with many of the societal challenges we continue to confront in contemporary times.

**Cathy Parrott**  
Costume Designer  
[Cathyparrott.com](http://Cathyparrott.com)



Design Research by  
Cathy Parrott





COSTUME DESIGN BY CATHY PARROTT

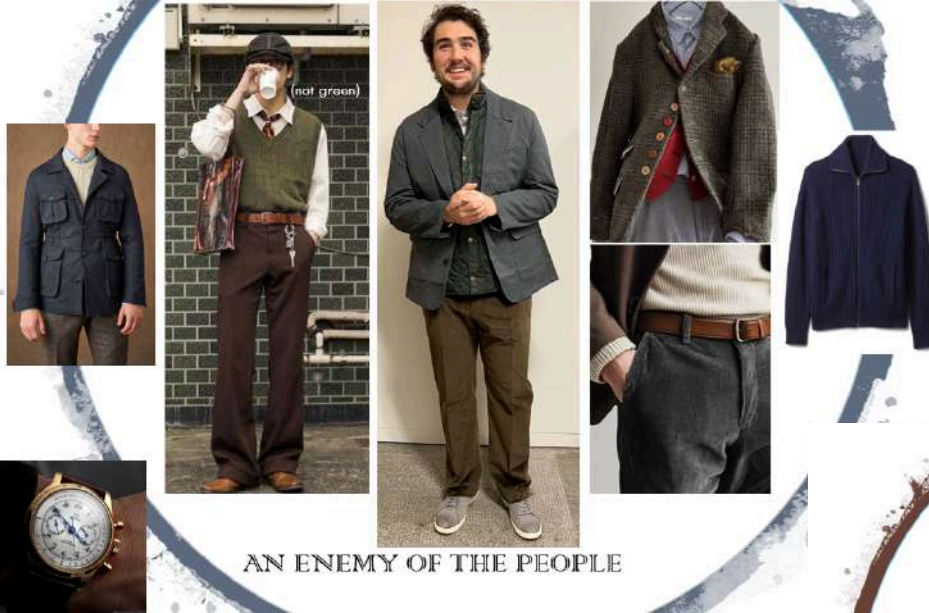
Dr. Stockmann	K. Stockmann	Mayor Stockmann	Hovstad
Horster	M. Kiil	Billing	Aslaksen

Character  
Color  
PaletteResearch for  
Costumes**Townpeople****At the Baths****Pops of Color amongst  
the Earth Tones**



COSTUME DESIGN BY CATHY PARROTT

DR. STOCKMANN – Head of the Baths  
Joey Lepire



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## Dr. Stockmann

DR. STOCKMANN



ACT 1, 2, 3

Research for  
Costumes

#03 - P. STOCKMANN

- the Mayor / Dr. Stockmann's Sibling -  
Leah Urzendowski



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## P. Stockmann



COSTUME DESIGN BY CATHY PARROTT

#08 - HORSTER - the Outsider - Dr.'s friend  
#Sara Alvidrez

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# Horster

Research for  
Costumes#02 - KAT STOCKMANN  
- Principal / Dr.'s Wife -  
Alicia Philadelphia

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# K. Stockmann

#05 - HOVSTAD - Newspaper Editor  
Raphael Thomé

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# Hovstad



COSTUME DESIGN BY CATHY PARROTT

## Billing

Research for  
Costumes

#06 - BILLING - the Journalist  
Abby Paul



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#07 - ASLAKSEN  
- Newspaper Printer / Townhall Chairperson  
Dale Leonheart



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## Aslaksen



**Cathy Parrott** (2001 B.A.) joined Iowa's theatre faculty as Assistant Professor of Costume Design in the fall of 2024. Before returning to Iowa, she spent nearly two decades as a New York City-based costume designer. Cathy's Broadway associate design credits include: Alicia Keys' *Hell's Kitchen*, Berry Gordy's *Motown*; the Musical, *On Your Feet! The Story of Emilio & Gloria Estefan*, and *Diana: The Musical*. Her film assistant design credits include: *The Greatest Showman*, Lin Manuel Miranda's *In the Heights*, and *Spirited* starring Will Ferrell and Ryan Reynolds. A native of Manchester, Iowa, Cathy earned her BA from the University of Iowa and MFA. from the University of Georgia. She is a proud union member of United Scenic Artists Local 829. Special thanks to her student design team Chelsea and Ro!!



# **An Eerie Foreshadowing in Light and Sound: Creating a Container for Ibsen's Irony**

Ibsen's ironic choice to make a healing spa—or “baths”—the source of poison in the town served as the primary inspiration for both my sound and lighting designs in this production. I aimed to express the tension between opposing forces: healing baths versus sickly waters, poisonous stability versus healthy instability. The challenge was to generate a container capable of holding both realities simultaneously, mirroring the duality and cleverness of Ibsen's original work.

In lighting, I explored the Kelvin scale to honor Ibsen's realism, gradually introducing expressionist color choices as the production progressed. As the theatrical façade dissolved, the lighting became paradoxically more theatrical, emphasizing the unresolved conflict as it spiraled toward disorder. Visually, I drew from Scandinavian interior design, emphasizing shape, edge, verticality, and the boundaries between elements. Brightly lit, cool-toned interior spaces with off-putting warm lamps stood in stark contrast to the dim, warm, shadowed atmosphere of the spa upstaged by the cool boundary of the playing space.

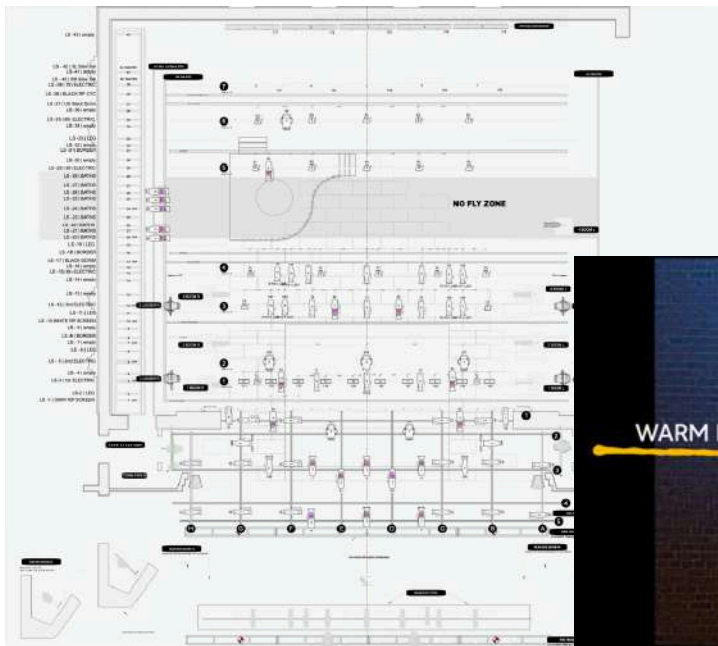
The sound design operated outside the diegetic world, functioning instead as a transitional score. I manipulated ambient instruments to evoke discomfort and used percussion to intentionally disrupt rhythmic expectations.

Long, ambient “healing” tones were layered with dissonant, syncopated rhythms to heighten tension. Breakbeats and arpeggiated patterns emerged at key moments, reflecting the protagonist’s overactive mind. The goal was to create a sonic environment that should feel soothing—but instead generates unease. Musical inspirations included the highly percussive work of *Aphex Twin*, *Vadoinmессico*, and the crystal healing bowl compositions of *Trysbe Dhevney*.

Together, sound and lighting served as the interstitial energy—a container for the work of the actor-playwrights. I intended the design to function as a subtle signal of the persistent friction in our lives between objective/subjective notions of right and wrong. These elements combined to create an atmosphere of eerie foreshadowing—where no one wins, no one loses, and lives are inevitably lost.

--Søren Olsen,  
Lighting & Sound Designer

Design Plot & Rendering by Søren Olsen





LIGHTING & SOUND DESIGN BY SOREN OLSEN, MFA CANDIDATE

Photos  
and  
Lighting  
by  
Søren Olsen





LIGHTING & SOUND DESIGN BY SOREN OLSEN, MFA CANDIDATE



Photos  
and  
Lighting  
by Søren Olsen



A WORD FROM ACTRESS, ALICIA PHILADELPHIA

*Through the process of devising, rehearsing, and staging this play, what has stood out to you the most about the world, the script, and/or the staging of this play?*

What stood out to me most during the process of staging and translating the script into modern language was the complexity and nuance on both sides of the central conflict. I found myself constantly shifting perspectives, unsure of where my loyalties lay, because each side presents compelling and valid arguments. I'm still not fully confident as to whose side I'm on. This ambiguity sparked rich conversations both in and out of the rehearsal room. I was also struck by how, despite being written over a century ago, the core issue remains deeply relevant and open to debate even today.

*What has pushed your practice as an actor throughout the process of this show?*

Johanna gave each of us significant creative freedom in shaping our characters, their backstories, how they arrived at the moment we met them in the play, and their relationships with each other. I've been a part of devising processes before, but never with this level of agency. At first, it was daunting, but it quickly became incredibly freeing. I found my voice in the room. I took the time to truly dive into the nuances of my character in a way I hadn't in past productions, which allowed me to walk into each rehearsal ready to contribute my character's point of view to the scene we were working. That kind of detail and emphasis on specificity is something I'll carry with me into future projects. When I know my character inside and out, I'm no longer focused on what I need to say- I have the freedom to connect with my fellow actors on stage and enjoy the moment.

A WORD FROM ACTRESS, ALICIA PHILADELPHIA

*What do you hope the audience took from seeing this show?*

“Ultimately, I hope the audience enjoyed their experience with our production, but more than that, I hope it left them reflecting on the ideas raised during the town hall scene. While Dr. Stockmann certainly pushes boundaries, he also delivers some truth bombs that are worth sitting with. Personally, I love when a show sparks a debate- when you leave the theater unsure of who was right, who was wrong, and find yourself diving into conversations that go well beyond what was said on stage. That’s what I hope this show does: inspires discussions that linger, grow, and dig deeper than the two and a half hours we shared together.”

**Alicia Philidelphia**



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer

Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer





## A WORD FROM ACTRESS, DALE LEONHEART

*Through the process of devising, rehearsing, and staging this play, what has stood out to you the most about the world, the script, and/or the staging of this play?*

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I was constantly struck by just how eternal and poignant this play, written almost 150 years ago, remains. The central issue is almost scarily relevant; the characters are all so human. Their desires, needs, and fears are just like ours. I think that the incorporation of mixed media allowed for audiences to immerse themselves in the world of the play and realize it is the same world that they inhabit today. The story is so complex and so enduring and filled with the same questions we are faced with today. How do we care for one another? Who decides what is determined to be right or wrong?

”

*What has pushed your practice as an actor throughout the process of this show?*

“

I feel like working on this show taught me so much about ensemble work and strengthened my abilities to not only be an actor but also a collaborator. I cannot express how much every person in the room was valued; so often as an actor I've felt like I haven't been given the agency to have input or share ideas about my character, the show, etc. In this process I was not only encouraged to think out loud, but it was imperative.



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer

## A WORD FROM ACTRESS, DALE LEONHEART

There's also something so special about a script being in process and subject to change. It forces a joyfulness and a sense of perpetual play, as well as an enhanced presence and focus. Because the lines were often in flux, we were really called to be constantly alert and alive in the present moment. It was a brilliant reminder that as an actor you must never lose your curiosity and imagination. I had to be open and allow myself to move and be moved - and find the game in every moment!

— ” —

*What do you hope the audience took from seeing this show?*

— ” —

I can only hope that the audience left with an expanded consciousness of the concept of “truth” and the varying forms it can take. We are all so tied up in what we personally believe that we forget that things are rarely ever black and white; instead, we live in the moral grey area, where this play takes place. I hope that *Enemy* provoked audience members to question their own biases and predetermined ideas of “right” and “wrong,” “good” and “evil.”

— ” —

### Dale Leonheart



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer



## CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

**CREATIVE TEAM**

Director | **JOHANNA KASIMOW**  
 Dramaturg | **MARGARET SMITH**  
 Stage Manager | **MAGGIE MCLELLAN**  
 Asst. Stage Manager | **ELLA CROSBY**  
 Intimacy Director | **CHRISTINA GOYENECHÉ**  
 Fight Choreographer, Director | **PAUL KALINA**  
 Scenic Design | **CJ JOHNSON**  
 Costume & Makeup Design | **CATHY PARROTT**  
 Asst. Costume Designer | **BRODY KIVETT**  
 Lighting & Sound Design | **SØREN OLSEN**  
 Asst. Sound Designer | **ADAM DETTERS**  
 Media Design | **CHLOE COBB**  
 Script Assistant | **ANTHONY COURANT**



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer

**CAST**

P. Stockman | **LEAH URZENDOWSKI**  
 Dr. Stockman | **JOEY LEPIRE**  
 K. Stockman | **ALICIA PHILIDELPHIA**  
 Hovstad | **RAPHAEL THOMÉ**  
 Horster | **SARA ALVIDREZ**  
 Alasken | **DALE LEONHEART**  
 Billing | **ABBY PAUL**  
 M. Kill | **ANDREW REECE**  
 Townsperson | **MARY MAYO**  
 Townsperson | **AVA SLATER**  
 Townsperson | **FABIENNE RINK**  
 Townsperson | **GLEISSON SANTOS**



Photo Credit: Miranda Meyer