



WORCESTER
STATE
UNIVERSITY

WORCESTER STATE UNIVERSITY AND THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT PRESENT

EXIT

PURSUED BY A BEAR

BY LAUREN GUNDERSON

A ZANY REVENGE COMEDY ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

NOV. 21, 22, 23 AT 7:30 P.M. + NOV. 24 AT 2 P.M.

FULLER THEATER
Shaughnessy Administration Building
2nd Floor
Worcester State University Campus

TICKETS
\$7 students / \$10 seniors / \$15 general
Worcester.edu/VPABoxOffice
VPABoxOffice@worchester.edu
508-929-8843

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Tickets are also available at the Student Center
Information Desk and at the door.

Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc. (www.playscripts.com)



BUY TICKETS

**Worcester State Theatre and
the Visual and Performing Arts Department present**

EXIT, PURSUED BY A BEAR

Written by
Lauren Gunderson

Director: Adam Zahler*
Scenic Design: Kayleigha Zawacki
Costume Design: Aiden Bourdeau
Lighting Design: Jay Zawacki
Sound Design: Lys Pepler
Projection Design: Angel Sotomayor
Dramaturg: Sam O'Connell
Stage Manager: Katerina Pacheco-Wolf
Dialect Coach: Paul Michael Valley

*member, Stage Directors and Choreographers

Cast in Order of Appearance

Nan..... Delaney DeNorscia
Kyle..... John McAuliffe
Sweetheart..... Ashley Harvey
Simon..... Quinn Willshire-Rogers

Setting: A house somewhere in rural Georgia
Time: 2012

For More Information Please Check Out Our Online Program



This production is registered with the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to 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.
www.kcactf.org

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Production Staff

Assistant Stage Manager: Kailee (River) McManaman

Technical Director: Becki Gray

Master Electrician: Kayleigha Zawacki

Assistant Master Electrician: Jack Bullock

Lighting Programmer: Jack Bullock

Props Coordinators: Theo Bailey and Dakota Ducey

Costume Shop Supervisor: Susan Johnson-Hood

Dance Captain: Delaney DeNorscia

Fight Captain: John McAuliffe

Phone Toss Captain: Quinn Willshire-Rogers

Box Office/Front of House: Sheila Badu, Katherine Wagner, Aidan Joyce, Mandy Blouin, Walker Coughlan, Cam Quigley

Running Crew

Light Board Operator: Alexa James

Sound Programmer/Operator: Simon Abdal-Khabir

Run Crew: Nic Adams, Jaclyn Morrison, Rhiannon Mansur, Paige Burke

Wardrobe: Chantel Gonzalez, Ariana Polimeno

Hair/Makeup: Kellan Rahming

Carpentry

River McManaman, Ramon Gonzalez, Alexa James, A Willoughby, Cam Quigley, John McAuliffe, Scotty Foley, Mandy Blouin, Alexander Leon-Smith, James Ferreira, Ileana Bernier, Simon Abdal-Khabir, Alexander Ramos

Painting

Ramon Gonzalez, Hann-Emily Rivière, Ileana Bernier, James Ferreira, Kaylie Rivas

Lighting installation

Jack Bullock, River McManaman, Alexa James

Costume construction: Theo Bailey, Bailee Benevelli, Mandy Blouin, Walker Coughlan, Falcia ElKarim, Susan Johnson-Hood, Stephanie Kubuye, Hann-Emily Rivière, A Willoughby

Box Office

Lulu Kizilcan, A Willoughby, Mandy Blouin, Walker Coughlan, Cam Quigley, Alexander Ramos

Special Thanks

Thank you to Newton North High School and the Zawacki family for lending properties and lighting equipment to Worcester State University for this production.

Thank you to the Worcester State University Facilities Department for all their help with branch storage and acquisition.

Meet the Artistic Team



Delaney DeNorscia (she/her) (Nan) will be graduating in 2025 with a major in Theatre, as well as minors in English and Communications. Past theatre credits include: Nasty Interesting Man in Eurydice, Schwartzky in 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, and Berdine in Psycho Beach Party. Other credits include being the writer and director of the upcoming short film Temp Son. Delaney is beyond thrilled to be able to share Nan's story, and hopes you enjoy the show!



John McAuliffe (he/him) (Kyle) is a class of 2027 Theatre and Communications Major. Previous Worcester State acting credits include Dr. Chasuble in The Importance of Being Earnest and Big Stone in Eurydice. Other acting credits include Ambrose Kemper in Hello Dolly at Mount Wachusett Community College. John is so excited to help tell this beautiful story. Enjoy the show!



Ashley Harvey (she/her) (Sweetheart), a Class of 2025 English and Spanish major, is playing Sweetheart. Ashley has been involved in theatre as an actor, director, writer, stagehand, and light board operator. Ashley is currently the Vice President of Almost Off Book, Worcester State's student-run drama club. Exit, Pursued by a Bear is Ashley's first acting role in a Worcester State University VPA production.



Quinn Willshire-Rogers (they/he) (Simon) is a class of 2027 communications major with a theater minor. Some of their credits at Worcester State include Mr. Prism in The Importance of Being Earnest and The Lord of the Underworld in Eurydice. Other notable credits include Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Michael Banks in Mary Poppins.

Adam Zahler (Director) is Professor of Theatre at Worcester State University, where he teaches acting and directing. He has directed over 30 plays at WSU, and productions at Clark University, UMass Lowell, and the University of Virginia.

In the professional theatre, Professor Zahler served as founding Artistic Director of two companies in Vermont - Second Stage and The Open Stage - as well as interim co-Artistic Director of Vermont Repertory Theater. In the Boston area, he was Producing Associate at New Repertory Theatre. As a stage director in the greater Boston area he has been honored with Elliot Norton Awards for Outstanding Production (Stonewall Jackson's House, 2001) and Outstanding Director (Permanent Collection, 2005), and he has twice been nominated for Best Director awards by the Independent Reviewers of New England. He has directed for New Repertory Theatre, The Underground Railway Theatre, The Nora Theatre, Lyric Stage Company of Boston, Speakeasy Stage Company, Lyric Stage West, The Titanic Theatre and others, as well as productions in New York, New Jersey, Vermont and Virginia.

Internationally, his production of The Patriot Act was a sellout at the Edinburgh Fringe. In 1993 he presented the first American production (To Bed With Betsy) at Volkov Theatre in Yaroslavl, Russia's oldest national company.

As an actor, he has appeared in commercials, voice-overs, small films and on stage. He was seen most recently at the Huntington Theatre Company in Come Back Little Sheba, directed by David Cromer, which received an Elliot Norton award for Outstanding Ensemble.

Professor Zahler holds an M.F.A. in Directing from the University of Virginia. He is a member of Stage Directors and Choreographers, the professional stage directors union. His collection of 19th and early-20th century theatre anecdotes can be found at www.americantheatreanecdotes.org

Kayleigha Zawacki (Set Designer) teaches theatre design at Worcester State University. In addition to designing lighting professionally for theatre and dance in the greater Boston area, she is the resident lighting and scenic designer at Boston University Academy. Outside of theatre, Professor Zawacki is a mixed-media and installation artist. Her recent designed experience, *Panthera tigris*, debuted in the Joan & Edgar Booth Theatre in Boston. She holds a BFA in Theatre Design and an MFA in Lighting Design, both from Boston University.

Aiden Bourdeau (they/them)(Costume Designer). Currently a theater major with a communications minor at Worcester State University, Aiden is set to graduate in 2025. This is Aiden's first time costume designing here at Worcester State.

Jay Zawacki (Lighting Designer) is a Massachusetts-based lighting designer. He is the Lighting Director for TheatreInk at Newton North High School. Jay holds a BFA in theater design from Boston University with a concentration in lighting design.

Paul Michael (Dialect Coach) Valley Paul is a teaching artist who has recently moved to eastern Massachusetts. As an actor, Paul has worked on and off Broadway including *Hurrah At Last*, *Arms and the Man*, *Silence! (The Musical)*, *Any Given Monday* as well as the Tony nominated Broadway revival of *1776*. Regionally, Paul has appeared at the Shakespeare Theatre of Washington DC, The Old Globe of San Diego, The Goodspeed Opera House, The Denver Center and the Wellesley Rep Theatre. He has appeared extensively on television including *Blue Bloods*, *Elementary*, *Third Watch*, *Ed*, *Another World*, *Guiding Light* and *One Life to Live*.

As a teacher and vocal coach, Paul has taught at the Juilliard School, Queens College, Wellesley College, American University, Louisiana State University and Virginia Commonwealth University. Internationally, Paul has taught at the New York Film Academy in Shanghai, Florence, Beijing and New York.

Paul received his MFA in Vocal Pedagogy from VCU, his BFA from American University and trained as an actor at The Juilliard School where he also maintained a professional teaching observership for two years in Voice and Speech.

Katerina Pacheco Wolf (they/them) (Stage Manager) is a Biology and Theater major graduating in 2025. They are delighted to be making their stage management debut with this production. Previous credits include props manager for Eurydice, soundboard operator for The Importance of Being Earnest, and acting as Gregory Salazar in The Vampire Lesbians of Sodom. For more information, visit www.theaterwithkpw.net!

Kailee (River) McManaman (she/her) (ASM) is a Biology major who is graduating in 2028. She is the assistant stage manager for this production. In high school, she was the director and playwright for her drama club.

Becki Gray (Technical Director) is Adjunct Faculty at Worcester State University, teaching Introduction to Stagecraft. With a background in teaching that spans pre-K through graduate students, in public and private school settings, Becki has supported the production of educational performances as Director, Designer, Actor, Production Manager, Stage Manager, Consultant, and the most important role, audience member.

Having graduated with a BA in Theatre from the University of New Hampshire with an emphasis in Theatrical Design & Technology, several credits in Early Childhood Education and Engineering, and some graduate coursework in Theatre for Special Education, Professor Gray took a few years to work with Pre-K through 5th graders, inculcating in those students a love of creative problem solving and storytelling.

Becki's next move was to co-found a commercial scenery production company, which led to numerous non-independent professional production credits, as well as collaboration on large scale art installations for the deCordova Sculpture Park & Museums in Lincoln, Massachusetts.

Professor Gray has a variety of independent professional production credits, recently as Props Coordinator for The Glass Menagerie and Twelfth Night (2023 and 2024 respectively, The Brick Box, Worcester, Massachusetts), Technical Director on The History of Empires (2022, La Mama Experimental Theatre Club, NYC, New York), and Costume Designer for The Liberator (2022, independent film).

Program Note, *Exit, Pursued by a Bear*

By Sam O'Connell

“Exit, Pursued By A Bear” is famously and originally a stage direction from William Shakespeare’s play *The Winter’s Tale*. The direction comes from Act 3, scene 3, and it serves as an interjection into the story of the play in which a minor character Antigonus is confronted without warning by a bear in the wild and chased offstage, presumably to his death. We in the audience don’t know what happens to him; he’s never seen again, nor is the bear. Though the most famous and comic stage direction in Shakespeare’s plays, it might also be his most realistic despite its absurdity. As theatre artists and often as audiences, we either know or can predict what’s going to happen and how things are going to end in reading a script or attending a performance. But life does not work that way. We have so many interjections or interruptions in life that come without warning or explanation and make no rational sense at the moment. These interjections may come in the form of phone calls we never hope to receive and are never prepared for if we do, or as relationships we never asked for but find ourselves in. A question this play asks, arguably, is how do we face our bears? How do we process trauma and move forward?

Asked to comment on this play in November, 2024, our Director Adam Zahler writes, “I’m giving away nothing when I say that this play is about domestic violence and the treatment of women within a traditional male world. The rhetoric of the 2024 election puts that issue in even starker relief. So it pays to ask....Bear?”

Zahler’s comments highlight the contemporary urgency and relevance of Nan’s story and her situation. Working on this play, though, I am reminded of theatrical productions I worked on more than twenty years ago. There was a period from the summer of 2001 through 2002 or 2003 during which multiple productions I worked on incorporated the revenge song “Goodbye, Earl” by The Chicks (formerly The Dixie Chicks) into their house music, their soundtracks, or their rehearsals. The song tells the story of two high school friends who plot their murderous revenge against an abusive partner. It was relevant then, and it is relevant now. So, too, is Lauren Gunderson’s play. The song, like Nan’s revenge, presents a stand, not a stunt. Nan’s story is relevant, but sadly, it is nothing new. Gratefully, theatre offers a way forward to recast our stories and face our bears.