VILLANOVA THEATRE PRESENTS

THE INVISIBLE ONES
BY ALY GONZALEZ

LAUNDRY
BY MEGAN SCHUMACHER

DIRECTED BY
KIMBERLY S. FAIRBANKS

December 2nd & 4th, 2021
VILLANOVA THEATRE PRESENTS

THE INVISIBLE ONES
BY ALY GONZALEZ

LAUNDRY
BY MEGAN SCHUMACHER

STAGE MANAGER
JAY KNARR

DRAMATURG
PAUL GORACZKO

DIRECTED BY
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THE INVISIBLE ONES' CAST

ANGELICA .................................................................................................................................... RYAN HENRY
CHANCE ..................................................................................................................................... SHELDON SHAW
STAGE DIRECTIONS .............................................................................................................. TOMÁS A. TORRES

LAUNDRY CAST

MADAM ...................................................................................................................................... VESHONTE BROWN
207 .......................................................................................................................................... MARISSA KENNEDY
239 ........................................................................................................................................... RACHEL O'HANLON-RODRIGUEZ
495 ............................................................................................................................................ AUTUMN BLALOCK
395 ............................................................................................................................................. ANNA SORRENTINO
VOICE.......................................................................................................................................... TOMÁS A. TORRES
STAGE DIRECTIONS ................................................................................................................ KENZIE LYNN BRADLEY

ALY GONZALEZ (Playwright, The Invisible Ones) is a second-year MA in Theatre student currently finishing her final semester, and who recently designed costumes for WHITE in fulfillment of her graduate thesis. Aly’s scholarships include the Joseph C. Franzetti, Jr. ’78 and Patricia M. Franzetti ’78 (2021-2022) and Susan Trimble Schaeffer (2020-2021). Aly’s adaptation of an epic poem, Descent, appeared as a staged reading during the 2021 Student Studio Show. As a performer, Aly has appeared at Villanova in Last Seen: Voices from Slavery’s Lost Families; a staged reading of scenes from The White Card (Charlotte); An Impossible Animal (Young Berkie) by Ian Notte; and Corpus (Stage Directions) by Effie Kammer.

MEGAN SCHUMACHER (Playwright, Laundry) is a Philadelphia-based playwright, director, and dramaturg. She is a member of The Foundry at PlayPenn and Simpatico Theatre’s Jouska PlayWorks. Past works for Villanova Theatre include her play Dionté and Khai Do Dinner, an adaptation of Euripides’ The Bakkhai, which premiered virtually as part of Villanova Theatre’s Bakkhai Variations during the 2020-21 season. Her work in and around Philadelphia includes Lowndes, which debuted at the Philadelphia Women’s Theatre Festival in the fall of 2020, and her play Superlosers, which was produced for the 2018 Philadelphia Fringe Festival.

KIMBERLY S. FAIRBANKS (Director) is a professional actor, proud member of SAG/AFTRA and AEA, and a dedicated advocate of new plays. Kimberly’s work can be seen and heard regionally, nationally, and internationally across the performance mediums of television, film, theatre, and voice-over. Kimberly holds an MA in Theatre from Villanova University and is the recipient of The National Partners of the American Theatre Classical Acting Award, the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre Mad River Festival Scholarship, and the Shaw Festival Scholarship.

About the Sue Winge Playwriting Award

The Sue Winge Playwriting Award was established in memory of beloved Villanova University employee Sue Winge, who served the University for many years in the Theatre Department and the President’s Office. The award annually supports the creation and development of new plays at Villanova University, including the recent Bakkhai Variations commissions and workshop of Julia Izumi’s Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea. Previous winners of the Competition include m4m by Mark Costello (MA ’10), Reveille by Jessica Bedford (MA’10), Pancake Queen by Brie Knight (MA’14), Fluttering Pulses by Patrick Walsh (BA ’16) and Fondest Wish by Kevin Esmond (MA ’17).
On Making the Unseen, Seen
By Paul Goraczko

As our world adjusts to a new normal, it is important to remember the problems that the Coronavirus has forced us to confront, the conversations it urged, and the lessons that it offered. These plays—Laundry and The Invisible Ones—encourage just that; they push us to think about the people in our society who are marginalized, swept aside, and forgotten. In essence, these plays are both about “invisible ones,” and in a world emerging from a pandemic, telling their stories feels more urgent than ever.

Megan Schumacher’s play Laundry immerses us in an industrial laundry room where five women of color toil away at washbasins and washboards. Like all good fictional worlds, this one feels utterly plausible. After all, we currently find ourselves in a world where we ever-so-briefly acknowledged the sweat, the labor, and the back-breaking work undertaken by “essential workers”—grocery store clerks, retail workers, servers, delivery drivers, etc.—only to have the cruellest among us degrade and debase these workers. Workers have reported attacks and aggressive customers in restaurants, big box stores, on flights, and in other settings. For instance, early in the pandemic a cashier in Leicester, Massachusetts was sprayed with Lysol after she told a customer there was a limit on the number of Lysol products she could buy. Just last week poor treatment at the hands of customers prompted the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union to put out a statement imploring customers to treat workers with dignity and respect ahead of the holiday shopping season. For a moment in time though, these people, engaged in the menial labor that makes our society function, were not just cogs in a machine, nameless and easily interchanged; we applauded these workers whose labor before the pandemic was often all but invisible to us. In the domestic setting, that “invisible work” often falls upon the shoulders of women.

The pandemic has been burdensome for most of us, but for women this time has been especially taxing. In addition to their day jobs, many women became home school teachers, toilet-paper hunters, barbers, mask-makers, interpreters of CDC guidelines and, yes, launderers. This time-consuming, uncompensated, “invisible work” was already inescapable for most women before COVID-19, but the pandemic only exacerbated these—and other—inequities. For instance, the economic fallout from the Coronavirus disproportionately affected women, wiping out decades of job gains made by women. Unlike previous recessions that primarily impacted men’s jobs, this bout of job losses swept sectors—retail, restaurants, hotels, and hospitality—that affected more women than men. And at the intersection of ethnicity and gender, women of color have been especially vulnerable to the effects of this public health crisis. They have fared worse than white women on nearly every social and economic metric, in large part because of the historical and structural inequities that existed pre-pandemic. Additionally, we cannot ignore the role their labor has played throughout these last twenty months; women of color who managed to hold onto their jobs throughout the pandemic were more likely to be frontline laborers than many other groups. Their labor fueled our economy, and many never had the option of working from home in safety at any point during the pandemic, yet the role they play in our society is often overlooked and underappreciated.

Our present moment ripples through Schumacher’s piece, which is set in a not-too distant future, while Aly Gonzalez’s ten-minute play The Invisible Ones situates itself in the present beneath the underpass of a bridge to draw attention to a different population of unseen people—the unhoused. Her play quite literally shines a light on this often-overlooked population at a time when that light is more needed than ever.

According to data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the nation’s unhoused population grew last year for the fourth year in a row. On a single night in January 2020—when HUD conducted its annual Point-In-Time count—it is estimated there were more than 580,000 individuals who were homeless in the United States. This represents a 2% increase from the previous year and a 30% increase from 2015. In this era of COVID-19, the existing crisis is predicted to worsen. With 8 million people behind on their rent, more than 2 million homeowners behind on their mortgages, and the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision to end the CDC’s moratorium on evictions, the “tsunami of evictions” that economists have been warning about is underway. Families that have been able to weather the storm during the pandemic, with the help of government aid and eviction moratoriums, are finding themselves vulnerable. The Invisible Ones humanizes this crisis by giving us two teens plotting a better future with a resolute positivity and an unrelenting optimism.

Despite their bleak subject matter, that optimism permeates both of these plays; they don’t just shine a light on these problems, they point us towards a solution, encouraging us to acknowledge those who have been relegated to the margins and urging us to see the dignity and humanity in those who are all too often invisible. The question that you must grapple with as you hear these plays is: will I heed the call?
THE Revolutionists

by Lauren Gunderson / Directed by Valerie Joyce

February 9-20

Curtains

a musical who-dunnit

Book by Rupert Holmes | Music by John Kander | Lyrics by Fred Ebb
Original Book and Concept by Peter Stone
Directed by Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD

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