

ARTS

CRITIC’S TAKE: Theater-makers set to stage defiance

BY CAMERON NYE
STAFF REPORTER

Authoritarianism is on the minds of Yale’s theater-makers. At least, that’s what the upcoming season of shows would suggest.

Theater, at its core, has always been about power — who has it, who wants it and what happens when it’s taken away. That timeless preoccupation feels newly urgent, as the stories we tell on stage increasingly

echo the unrest unfolding beyond it.

In a world where democratic institutions teeter and protests dominate the headlines, it’s perhaps no surprise that this year’s campus theater offerings feel especially charged. Even before the full lineup is announced, student directors and actors seem to be gravitating toward stories of resistance.

Take the Dramat’s upcoming fall mainstage, “Urinetown: The Musical,” a satirical comedy that lampoons

unchecked capitalism and environmental decay with jocular potty humor. In a drought-stricken dystopia, private toilets are outlawed, and the monopolistic “Urine Good Company” charges citizens to relieve themselves. Public urination is criminalized, violators banished to the ominously titled “Urinetown,” a place shrouded in mystery and presumed death.

Beneath its absurd premise, “Urinetown” is a scathing commentary that holds up more than two decades after its Broadway debut. Corrupt senators greenlight price hikes, corporate greed runs unchecked and rebellion brews behind dilapidated urinals. Nowadays, the show feels less like a farce and more like foresight. Between resource scarcity and turning human needs into cash cows, audiences may look past the comedic exaggerations and see a world that looks eerily similar to their own.

Come spring, two senior theses will take audiences back to 1930s Germany, a period increasingly invoked in comparisons to our own. “Cabaret,” a thesis in choreography for Sadie Pohl ’26 and one in acting for Hannah Kurczeski ’26, transports viewers to the twilight of the Weimar Republic. While many of its characters are “sleeping” — blissfully ignorant to the rise of the Nazi party hap-

pening outside the walls of the seedy Kit Kat Club — the show asks us, earnestly and urgently, when will we finally “wake up.”

Shortly after, Sophie Dvorak’s ’26 senior thesis in music, “The Sound of Music,” might offer a seemingly sunnier, though no less politically charged, counterpoint. What begins as a family drama about discipline and love evolves into a story about interrogating complacency. As the von Trapp family escapes Nazi occupation, resistance takes the form of familial love, music and moral clarity.

These selections, while adored staples, feel particularly topical, as if chosen to reflect the world offstage. “Cabaret” and “The Sound of Music” stand among the most recognizable pieces of anti-fascist work in the musical theater canon, and their continued revival speaks to how aptly these stories still resonate. They will undoubtedly resonate with Yale audiences too.

Perhaps the most unexpected production that has been unveiled is Zeph Siebler’s ’26 rock opera “Overman” about the life of Friedrich Nietzsche. The 19th-century philosopher’s deeply influential writings on power, morality and the will to overcome have both propelled anti-establishment movements and been used to justify far-right ideolo-

gies. Though Nietzsche himself was critical of nationalism and authoritarianism, his ideas were later appropriated by the Nazi regime. How this production chooses to navigate that legacy remains to be seen.

What unites these productions is not a singular political message, but a collective impulse to confront power head-on. Whether through satire or song, these shows ask: How do we respond when our world becomes untenable? And who gets to lead the charge? In choosing these stories, student artists aren’t merely staging entertainment, but participating in a broader cultural conversation about the right to resist. Theater and politics go hand in hand. Not just in content, but in its very act of gathering, storytelling and disrupting the status quo. The existence of these shows is proof enough.

It’s too soon to say if this thematic through-line will continue once shows funded with Yale’s Creative and Performing Arts grants, or CPAs, are announced. But in a moment where global and campus politics alike are steeped in tension, the choice to tell stories of resistance seems deliberate — and is necessary.

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TIM TAI
The News’ theater critic shares first thoughts on the upcoming theater season.

Exhibit shows work of overlooked female architects

BY MAXINE CHEN
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Architecture’s great love stories — and rivalries — are now on display at the “Paparazza Moderna” exhibit at the Yale School of Architecture.

The exhibit, which will be on display until Nov. 29, intertwines photography and architecture to highlight the work of overlooked female architects from the 1920s to the 1960s. Put together by Lake Verea, a duo of queer artists Francisca Rivero-Lake Cortina and Carla Verea Hernández, the exhibition pointed toward the intimate and emotional aspects of architecture.

“The exhibition focuses on buildings that a lot of us who study architecture are very familiar with,” Andrew Benner ARC ’03, the director of exhibitions at the architecture school, said. “Seeing it through their eyes and in the way that they show their projects gives us a new look that allows us to think about these things differently, not as static objects, but as things that are still alive.”

In the spring, the two artists travelled through 11 countries in 11 weeks and shot 55 rolls of film, according to a description displayed in the gallery. They started in Barcelona and ended in Saint-Tropez, taking many detours and unexpected surprises throughout their journey. If a house was unavailable, they’d try to figure out a way to gain access or have to reroute their research to another site.

Lake Verea’s method was as daring as it was playful. They photo-

graphed the homes paparazzi-style, often without giving prior notice, to capture them in their everyday state — sometimes cluttered or weathered but full of life.

“It’s a little bit of a joke,” Benner said. “But it lets them uncover things that a staged photoshoot would miss.”

The result was a show that reframes architecture as an interconnected web of human relationships and living, changing spaces, rather than as a discipline consisting of formal, rigid objects. The exhibit invites viewers to see architecture as a multifaceted discipline that embodies conflict, intimacy and reinvention.

The series features the work of 14 female architects, including Eileen Gray, Charlotte Perriand, Aino Marsio-Aalto and Elissa Aalto. Many of the women worked alongside male partners, only to be overshadowed by them in architectural history, according to a displayed description.

“It is the least they could do!” Kathleen Wimer, a former New Haven resident who now lives in California, was drawn into the gallery while passing by the advertising outside the building, said.

The prequel to the exhibition — Paparazza Moderna: Frenemies — ran from 2011 to 2018. Frenemies focused on single-family houses designed in the United States by iconic Modernist architects. The series told the story of architects who started out as friends, serving as



MAXINE CHEN / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

“Paparazza Moderna: Lovers & Frenemies” is on display at the Yale School of Architecture gallery until Nov. 29.

inspiration to one another, then falling into dispute and later reconciling. This exhibition originated at the Vitra Design Museum in Germany.

Benner was intrigued by the initial exhibition. The architectural themes in the photography drew his interest, he said, which led him to reach out to Lake Verea with an offer to collaborate with the architecture school on the Paparazza Moderna exhibition.

In the exhibition, photographs are hung from the ceiling of the gallery in a layout that invites viewers to weave their way

through the fourteen chapters. Viewers will find themselves enclosed between large sheets covered with photographs, each focused on a different color scheme and architectural style.

The intimacy of the physical gallery space reflects the raw, emotional feel of the photographs themselves. One might feel the coziness found within the snow-covered roofs of Charlotte Perriand’s Personal Châlet, or the curiosity invoked by the angular light coupled with bright blue tiles amidst the vast woods of the Aalto House.

“Architecture is a deeply personal, embodied practice,

something we experience all the time,” Julia Edwards ARC ’26 said. “But the way it’s done professionally is so disembodied and removed from personal relationships with building and I feel that the personal relationship is on display in the show.”

Benner hopes that visitors will appreciate the stories behind the buildings shown in the exhibit.

“Paparazza Moderna: Lovers & Frenemies” will be on display until Nov. 29.

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Drama school celebrates centennial at outdoor event

BY KIVA BANK
STAFF REPORTER

Catherine Sheehy DRA ’92 DRA ’99, the chair of dramaturgy and dramatic criticism at the David Geffen School of Drama, was recently tasked with condensing the school’s 100-year history into a 20-minute speech. On Monday, speaking to students, faculty and staff of the Drama School gathered on Library Walk, she delivered.

The attendees were celebrating the centennial anniversary of the Drama School, which was founded by Edward S. Harkness, class of 1897, in 1924.

“Somehow, even amid radical changes and across a century, there is something immutable about the Drama School,” Sheehy said.

Sheehy, who is already working on a book about the history of the David Geffen School of Drama throughout the century, said that project influenced why she was invited to speak at the event.

Sheehy quipped that she has been working at the school for a third of the period during which it has existed, adding that even as

students, faculty and “the name of the joint” have changed, “there is something essential at the heart” of the school that “remains steady.”

Dean James Bundy DRA ’95 kicked off the event with a speech of his own,

expressing similar sentiments about the heart of the Drama School.

“We make art to inspire joy, empathy and understanding, all of them sorely needed in the world,” Bundy said to the crowd, which was

seated underneath tents. “Our privilege extends beyond basking in the glow of past accomplishments here at Yale and in the field, to stretching ourselves and risking future failures so as to extend the legacy of the school and even reinvent it each day, week, month and year.”

In his speech, he referenced the renovations for the new dramatic arts buildings planned for construction on the corner of Crown and York streets, which is set to finish in summer 2029.

Emily Bakemeier, the vice provost for arts and faculty affairs, spoke after Bundy on behalf of the University. As a provost at Yale for over two decades, she acknowledged the role that the Drama School has played in shaping Yale’s legacy.

“We, gathered here, all know and dedicate our lives to acknowledge that the arts and drama teach people to empathize, understand opposing viewpoints and perspectives, reflect on different cultures and engage in difficult topics and conversations as humans,” Bakemeier said. “DGSD offers an education and experience that help all of us understand and have hope for

our common humanity. A university without these offerings can be great, but it cannot be world class.”

She added that the ability of arts educators to embody these principles is becoming increasingly important “each day.”

Bakemeier referred to the Drama School as “a jewel in the crown of the arts” at Yale, as she commemorated the century of excellence in both theatrical education and productions. She emphasized its role in producing engaged citizens and leaders who leave their mark on the world.

After the speeches concluded, Associate Deans Florie Seery, Chantal Rodriguez, Nancy Yao SOM ’99 and Carla Jackson DRA ’99 joined Bundy to cut a cake that was distributed to attendees. Referencing the school’s 100th anniversary, Bundy remarked that “no birthday party is complete without a cake-cutting.”

The David Geffen School of Drama is located on 222 York St.

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KIVA BANK / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The David Geffen School of Drama hosted a private event Monday to celebrate its 100th anniversary with its students, staff and faculty.