

ARTS

“October sky never looked more charming nor the
sublime leaves of the trees so graceful.”
AVIJEET DAS POET

Dramat fall experimental show explores movement and wordplay

BY SOFIA GAVIRIA PARTOW
STAFF REPORTER

A lighthouse is being erected in Iseman Theater as the space prepares to host four performances of “Exclamation Point & An Act Without Words,” an original play by Soleil Piverger ’27 premiering Thursday evening.

The play follows the journey of Leela Lo Lottle through the fantastical world she inhabits. The fourth part of a series by Piverger, the play was selected as the Yale Dramatic Association’s fall experimental show, and incorporates various mediums, including film, within the larger play structure. It is composed of two acts and a final experimental section titled “An Act Without Words” that functions as a postscript.

“I was looking at the ends of sentences, so that’s how I came upon ‘Exclamation Point’ as this sort of title,” Piverger said. “What does it mean to start something with the idea of an end, or what does it mean for the end to represent a beginning?”

The procession from beginning to end is embodied in the configuration of the stage, with Leela’s family apartment located on one end of the theater and the lighthouse on the other.

The audience is arranged in parade-style seating between the two structures to serve as a physical manifestation of the journey described in the narrative. Leela begins the show trapped in her family’s apartment, but is led to the Exclamation Point lighthouse throughout the course of the play.

“Leela is born allergic to dust and that is the reason why her world is cruel to her. At the end when her world turns to dust, she gets out because she’s aller-

gic and she remembers what unifies her body with her voice and who she is,” Piverger wrote.

Throughout the play’s first act, Leela remains trapped in her family apartment by her brothers. She can only observe the outside world through a tiny peephole in the wall.

The second act revolves around Leela’s adoption by a woman named Drusilla who is mourning the loss of her daughter, Lula. Leela effectively becomes Lula in the eyes of the grieving family.

The play utilizes myriad storytelling devices throughout the production, including video projections.

The videos — which will be projected onto a screen during the performance — act as visual representations of Leela’s internal dialogue and psychic abilities, which contrasts the actions Leela observes onstage through her peephole during the first act.

The video and live performances differ in their tangibility. The videos expose the subconscious of different characters in the play, according to Tybee Feiler ’27, the play’s associate director. Characters on stage observe themselves projected onto a screen, allowing the audience to witness the characters’ interaction with their own minds and thoughts.

“Sometimes the actors are in sync with the film, and sometimes they’re out of sync. We can tell when they’re suppressing their thoughts and when they’re working through the different ideas happening in their minds,” Feiler said.

Feiler and Piverger met when they were 5 years old and have been involved in theater and playwriting together ever since, they said. Feiler joined Piverger’s



COURTESY OF TYBEE FEILER

Soleil Piverger’s ’27 “Exclamation Point: An Act Without Words” will premiere Thursday at the Iseman Theater.

er’s team as associate director over the summer, during which they worked together to develop the visual and narrative design of Leela’s world and to edit the script.

Feiler underscored the wordplay and Seussian utilization of language that was essential to Piverger’s writing process as well as their joint editing work. Inspired by poet Emily Dickinson, Piverger incorporates adapted versions of her poems to tell an original and unique story.

“It’s Emily Dickinson, but some of the lines have been changed. I maintain the rhyming pattern, but it’s recontextualized — same themes, different story,” Piverger said.

In addition to the wordplay, Feiler and Piverger both highlighted movement and the physical embodiment of language as critical to the narrative arc of the

play.

Camille Chang ’26 is working as the play’s movement director. Her practice is primarily founded on the score-based work that emerged from 1960s modern dance. The scripted scores function as short prompts that inspire movement from actors.

“The idea that me and Soleil were talking about is this idea of freedom in the play. What does it mean to have the freedom to do what you want?” Chang said. “So it’s basically giving the actors a prompt, but not a set movement, to determine what they want to do on stage, and tweaking the aesthetics of it.”

One of the prompts that Chang wrote for the play asks actors to recall an injustice done to them, a friend or a neighbor. The prompts encourage actors to draw from their own experiences while also

allowing them the creative space to interact with the characters they are portraying.

Chang also highlighted the importance of pushing the actors beyond graceful, measured performances of movement, encouraging them instead to move their bodies extremely strangely. She further described the play as itself a prompt to the audience.

“The play prompts the audience to think about themselves a lot,” Chang said. “What this play inspires, I think, is how do you take what you have seen and felt and take it out into the outside world, and how you interact with other people outside of this theater and black box?”

The show is running Thursday through Saturday at the Iseman Theater.

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After the Hunt’ draws mixed reactions at advanced campus screening

BY ANGEL HU AND SIMRAN RANDHAWA
STAFF REPORTER AND
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Students packed a campus auditorium Tuesday evening for an advanced screening of Luca Guadagnino’s new film “After the Hunt,” which tells a fictional story about a group of characters at Yale.

“After the Hunt,” which will open nationwide on Oct. 17, tells the story of a Yale philosophy professor named Alma Olson, played by Julia Roberts, whose student Maggie Price, played by Ayo Edebiri, accuses her colleague and close friend Hank Gibson, Andrew Garfield, of sexual assault.

Exploring the fraught relationships between mentor and student, institutional power within academia and the roles of gender and race within prestigious institutions, the public screening encouraged viewers to “share their thoughts and feelings on the film openly,”

according to Film Programming Manager Marc Francis, who introduced the screening.

“I predict this is going to be a bizarre and maybe surreal experience for us watching this kind of film in the institution which is set,” Francis said.

After the opening scene, the film cuts to a black screen with the words, “It happened at Yale.”

While the film was not shot at the University, it depicts many familiar landmarks on campus and around New Haven — including Phelps Hall, Old Campus, Beinecke Plaza and Chapel West Liquor Shop.

The Yale logo was also featured on sweatshirts, posters and faculty ID cards that were shown at various points throughout the film.

After the screening, Crystal Feimster, a Black studies professor, and Joe Fischel, a women’s, gender, and sexuality studies professor, led a conversation on the racial and gender politics in the film.

Feimster praised the “brilliant acting” in the movie and the ambitious subject matter but said the plot development was “inconsistent.”

“I think it captured something about our political and cultural moment that is uncomfortable. There were moments of cringe, there were moments of truth and there were moments that made you think, ‘Really? We’re going there?’” Feimster said.

Feimster said that the primary tension of the movie focused on the dynamic between Alma and Maggie, exploring the relationship “between Black and white women when it comes to sexual narratives — who is believed and who isn’t.”

The movie focused on the misaligned motives of the three leading characters and how that impacted each character’s actions.

“At the end, we get this kind of battle between Black and white women for resources,” Feimster said, referring to the context of a patriarchal society in which both

women are vying for success in predominantly male, predominantly white spaces.

Feimster emphasized that, for her, the movie’s primary value comes from asking students and staff at Yale to “reckon” with their place at the University amid the complex interplay of social dynamics.

Fischel praised the commitment to recreating the University. “The director went so hard on the Yale ID and Yale scenes — all that stuff was accurate,” he said.

Additionally, Fischel echoed praise for the performances of the star-studded cast, mentioning the strength of Julia Roberts’ performance in many intense scenes.

However, Fischel also criticized the movie for being “libelous toward Black women” due to what he saw as poorly executed commentary on class and an overt focus on Julia Roberts’ character.

Throughout the movie, Alma’s suffering and perspec-

tive is emphasized over Maggie’s experience with her own sexual assault. Fischel also argued that, at many points in the film, the “portrayal of Maggie and her trans/nonbinary partner are so much a spectacle.”

In an email to the News, Fischel added that the film’s faithful adherence to imitating Yale was undermined by the fact that none of it was filmed on campus, hindering “the viewer’s confidence in ‘what happened.’”

“It seems to me a rather embarrassing flaw of the film that for all of its effort to make Yale a main character, there is nothing at all added to the film — emotionally or politically — by its taking place on our campus,” Fischel wrote.

Luca Guadagnino also directed “Challengers,” which came out in 2024.

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KAMINI PURUSHOTHAMAN / CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

The Yale Film Society hosted an early screeningw of Luca Guadagnino’s film “After the Hunt,” which tells a fictional story about characters at Yale.

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