

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE PRESENTS

LARRY KRAMER'S THE NORMAL HEART

DIRECTED BY **WESLEY LONGACRE**

FEB. 24–MAR. 5, 2023



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY



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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and 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 involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

PLEASE BE ADVISED

THIS SHOW CONTAINS STRONG ADULT THEMES AND MATERIAL, INCLUDING CONVERSATIONS OF SEX AND SEXUALITY, SUICIDE, AND DEATH/DYING, AS WELL AS A DEATH DEPICTED ONSTAGE.

THE NORMAL HEART

BY LARRY KRAMER

DIRECTOR—Dr. Wesley Longacre

SCENIC DESIGNER—Bo Burkhardt

LIGHTING DESIGNER—Jake Mosier

COSTUME DESIGNER—Lilly Griffin

SOUND DESIGNER—Ruby Duka

PROPS MASTER—Avi Miller

STAGE MANAGER—Annie Hennen

CAST

Ben Weeks—Matthew Berman

Dr. Emma—Arina Bratkovska

Bruce Niles—Ethan Bowman

Craig Donner/Grady/Orderly—Matt Bush

Tommy Boatwright—Kaleb Chaney

Hiram Keebler/Examining Doctor/Orderly—Ben Nordbrock

David/Orderly—Nathan Skenderian

Felix Turner—Trey Wallen

Ned Weeks—Peter Young

Mickey Marcus—Eric Zertuche

DRAMATURG NOTES

The Normal Heart was written by Larry Kramer and first premiered in April of 1985, Off-Broadway at The Public Theatre. The play takes place in New York City between 1981-1985 and is a largely autobiographical play about what Larry Kramer saw and experienced during the first years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many of the characters are based on real people in Kramer's life, including Ned Weeks, acting as Kramer's eyes and perspective throughout the play. Arthur Kramer, Dr. Linda Laubenstein, Rodger McFarlane, and Paul Graham Popham also feature fictionalized representations of themselves within the play and were all important people in Larry Kramer's life. Many, if not all, of the events that take place throughout the story are also based on experiences Kramer witnessed within his community.

During this time in U.S. history, there were no protections preventing discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community, making it difficult for many queer folks to be out and proud with the possibility of homelessness and financial instability being a looming threat. The slow response of both Mayor Ed Koch of N.Y.C and President Ronald Reagan, as well as the lack of financial support for research and treatment given to the few medical professionals willing to treat this disease, showed the depth of systemic homophobia present in a time in history where being gay was still classified as a psychiatric condition requiring treatment.

HIV/AIDS – first referred to as “Gay Cancer,” and then “Gay Related Immune Deficiency” or GRID – was the cause of thousands of deaths in the United States alone and was declared an epidemic by the CDC in 1981. Many of these deaths could've been avoided had the government and health professionals taken the virus seriously at the start; however, its dismissal by government officials led to no significant steps forward for those infected until 1987, when the Food and Drug Administration approved AZT to help control HIV-infected cells.

The disease started with 5 dead in June of 1981 but has killed over 40.1 million people worldwide as of 2021, and at least 38 million people are living with HIV today. The course of this play traces the foundation of The Gay Men's Health Crisis, started by Larry Kramer, Nathan Fain, Larry Mass, Paul Popham, Paul Rapoport, and Edmund White, the real-life inspiration for the characters in the play. Kramer's exit from GMHC also informed his role in the formation of ACT UP, or AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. The well-known symbol of ACT UP is a pink or black triangle pointed upwards. This came from a rotation of the downward-pointed pink triangle used in Nazi Germany to identify queer folks in concentration camps. This connection, and many references to the Holocaust that occur in the play, are due to the fact that both Kramer and other organizers were Jewish. While these stories are incredibly important to uplift, it is often the case where the stories we remember and center are those with predominantly privileged identities. We honor and recognize the black and brown trans women of color as our First Heroes. Although often erased from history, organizations such as The Gay Men's Health Crisis, ACT UP, and other grassroots groups would not have been possible without the activism at Compton's Cafeteria Riots and The Stonewall Uprising.

As you witness our work on stage tonight, think about the following questions:

What does this play bring up for you - in your body? your heart? your mind?

How does having gone through the collective trauma of a worldwide pandemic starting in 2020 resonate with you?

What is the role of art (theatre) in telling stories about marginalized populations? How might art speak truth to power? inspire conversation? move us to advocate for our fellow human beings who are suffering?

As you exit the theatre after the show, there will be printed copies available of a letter written by Larry Kramer, that he requested would be read or distributed to all audiences after a performance of this play. We invite you to join us in honoring this request by engaging with this material as you leave and continuing the conversations started for you by this production.

— Dramaturgy team, *The Normal Heart*

DIRECTOR NOTES

Why this play, now? That's the question I am always trying to answer when directing a play. For *The Normal Heart*, it quite simply is a story that we need to continue to tell. It is a part of our history that needs to be seen, known, reckoned with, and paid tribute to. Through this production, we remember the lives that were lost during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We acknowledge those currently fighting HIV and AIDS across the globe. We honor the heroes that fought and continue to fight the battles towards greater representation, greater access, greater acceptance, greater love, and greater awareness. The play derives its name from a W.H. Auden poem, *September 1, 1939*. The final line of that poem so accurately, so succinctly, so powerfully sums up the heart of this play: "We must love one another or die." And I hope that we can realize that more and more, every day. Love sets us free. Love heals. Love helps us truly live.

CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

Wesley Longacre (Director) Wesley is thrilled and humbled to direct this production of *The Normal Heart* after making his CSU directorial debut last year with *She Kills Monsters*. Dr. Longacre received his PhD in Theatre from the University of Colorado-Boulder, completing his dissertation in the spring of 2017. He was named a Richter Scholar at Wake Forest University where he received his MA in English Literature, focusing on dramatic literature, and holds a BA in Journalism and Political Science from Baylor University. He is an active theater scholar and practitioner, having recently directed area productions of *Our Town*, *Rabbit Hole*, and *Red*. Wesley has also served as a dramaturg and assistant director for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. He is currently an Instructor of Theatre at Colorado State University and has previously served as an Adjunct Instructor of Theatre at the University of Colorado and in CSU's Honors Program. Wesley currently serves as a regular contributor and bibliographer for *The Thornton Wilder Journal* and formerly as an editor for *PARTake: The Journal of Performance as Research*. By far, Wesley's greatest joy is living life with Amanda and their kids, Davy and Wilder.

Bo Burkhardt (Set Designer) Bo is a Senior double major studying Set Design and History at CSU. *The Normal Heart* is Bo's final design with CSU before she graduates in Spring 2023. Bo's previous work through CSU includes designs for *Spring Awakening* (2022), *Così fan tutte* (2022), *These Seven Sicknesses* (2021), and other credits. After graduation, she plans to begin working in the local theatre workforce right away! Bo would like to give a sincere thank you to her parents for all their hard work, sacrifice, and support that have allowed her to pursue this passion.

Ruby Duka (Sound Designer) Ruby is beyond excited to be designing her first show here at CSU. She is a Sophomore majoring in Theatre with a dual concentration in Musical Theatre and Design & Tech (Sound Design Focus). She found her love for sound only a year ago and has worked as the Assistant Sound Designer for *Spring Awakening*, A1 Mixer for *The Wolves*, Sound Board Operator for *Lysistrata*, and continues to work in the audio shop for both the Music and Theatre Department. In addition to this, she will be performing in the upcoming show, *Machinal*, directed by Debbie Swann. Ruby is incredibly grateful for all the opportunities CSU has given her to fulfill her love for the arts both on and off stage, and thanks her friends, family, and the amazing audio crew for all of the constant love and support.

Lilly Griffin (Costume Designer) Lilly is thrilled to be apart of *The Normal Heart*. She is currently a sophomore Design and Merchandising major with a minor in Global Environmental Sustainability. Some of her past shows include Associate Costume Designer for *Rocky Horror* (CSU), Costume Designer for *YellowJackets* (Booker T. Washington HSPVA) She is very grateful for Elise, Rebecca, and Erin for supporting her during this production and to all of the actors who trusted her to cut their hair for the show.

Annie Hennen (Stage Manager) Annie is excited to be working on *The Normal Heart*. She is currently a 3rd year theatre major with a concentration in Stage Management. They have previously worked on *Così fan tutte* and the Fall '22 Dance Concerts. He sends his thanks to his friends and family.

Avi Miller (Props Designer) Avi is ecstatic to be designing their first show! They are currently a junior theatre major with a general theatre concentration and a minor in American Sign Language. Their past credits include working in the prop shop for *Spring Awakening*, *The Wolves*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Così fan tutte*, and *She Kills Monsters* (CSU). They would like to thank their family, friends, and their cats.

Jake Mosier (Lighting Designer) Jake is very excited about his first CSU main stage Production. He is a second-year student studying Projection and Lighting Design with a minor in Computer Science. Some of his past designs are *Fall Dance Concert* (CSU), *Fall Dance Capstone* (CSU), and *The Rocky Horror Show* (CSU). Jake would like to thank his friends and family for all of their support.

CAST BIOS

Matthew Berman (Ben Weeks) Matthew is a third year Theatre Performance and Film Studies student here at CSU. Matthew is honored by the opportunity to be a part of Larry Kramer's "*The Normal Heart*" and being able to tell the history of the men and woman involved in bringing awareness to the history of where we came from and how far we've still left to go. He has been in two other productions here at CSU *Lysistrata* (Spartan/Ensemble) directed by Debbie Swann, and *She Kills Monster* (Narrator/Ensemble) directed by Wesley Longacre. He thanks all of his family, friends, and professors for supporting him and helping him grow throughout his three years.

Ethan Bowman (Bruce Niles) Ethan is thrilled to be in another production at CSU. He is currently a Sophomore musical theatre major and has been performing since the age of ten. Some of his past credits include Frank n Furter in *Rocky Horror Picture Show*, Billy in *Carrie the Musical*, Lloyd Dallas in *Noises Off*, Hanschen in *Spring Awakening*, and more. He wants to thank his friends, family, and teachers who have helped and supported him through this amazing experience.

Arina Bratkovska (Dr. Emma) Arina is a senior Theatre Performance major and is excited to be performing in her last production at CSU. In the fall, Arina assistant directed *Spring Awakening*, and this semester she is happy to be back under the stage lights. Some of her past credits include Phantom in *The Rocky Horror Show*, Calonice in *Lysistrata*, and Liesl in *The Sound of Music*. She would like to thank her parents and Ben for their unconditional support, and hopes you enjoy the show!

Matt Bush (Craig/Grady) Matt is theatre performance major here at CSU, in his third year. He is thrilled to be a part of this production, and to help bring this incredibly important piece of theatre to life. You may have previously seen him in On The Brink's *Shadow of the Son*, as Hyacinthus, and in *Spring Awakening* as Ernst. Matt would like to thank his friends and family for their continued support.

Kaleb Chaney (Tommy Boatwright) Kaleb is happy to be performing in his first non-musical as Tommy Boatwright in *The Normal Heart*. He is currently in his third year of school majoring in Theater Performance and minoring in Film studies. Some of his past credits include being a Phantom in *The Rocky Horror Show* (Colorado State) and a part in the verbatim theater play called *It Doesn't Happen Here* (Colorado State). He thanks his parents, his sisters, and friends for their support.

Ben “Nords” Nordbrock (Hiram Keebler/Examining Doctor/Felix US) Nords is thrilled to have his debut on the CSU stage. He is a fourth year Ecosystem Science and Sustainability student with a deep love for theatre. Some of his past credits include *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Crucible*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. Besides doing theatre whenever he can, Nords is also a member of the CSU Marching Band. He would like to thank his cast for being so friendly and welcoming, and hopes you enjoy the show!

Nathan Skenderian (David) Nathan is grateful to be making his theatre debut at CSU. He is a first-year theatre major. Some of his past credits include *The Laramie Project* (Saddleback College), Robby Hart in *The Wedding Singer* (Ovation Performing Arts Conservatory), and ensemble in *The Jungle Book* (Saddleback College). Thanks to the cast and crew and his loved ones for their ongoing support and care.

Trey Wallen (Felix Turner) This is the sixth show that Trey has been a part of at CSU and he is extremely excited to be performing in this meaningful story that needs to be told. Trey is a Senior theater and pre-med major and cannot be more honored to be a part of this wonderful department. Some of his past credits include participation in *Billy Bud* (Central City Opera), *She Kills Monsters* (CSU) & *Spring Awakening* (CSU). He wants to thank his family, his friends, and all of his mentors at CSU for their support!

Eric Zertuche (Mickey Marcus) Eric is a fourth-year student studying theatre performance with a minor in leadership. He is grateful to have participated in bringing this amazing production to life and would like to thank his friends and classmates for their consistent encouragement and support and the crew, management, and creative team for their fantastic work. Eric's past credits include Dieter/Ensemble in *Spring Awakening* (CSU), Phantom in *The Rocky Horror Show* (CSU), Eteocles/Nurse in *These Seven Sicknesses* (CSU), *The H.O.P.E. Project* (CSU), and Curtis in *Sister Act* (Rocky Ford Grand Theatre). Eric would especially like to thank the cast and director for their warmth and understanding, and for keeping him going.

Peter Young (Ned Weeks) Peter is a Third Year performance major with a Creative Writing Minor. He goes by He/Him/His pronouns and lives in Denver, Colorado graduating from Thunderridge High school in 2020. He is extraordinarily excited to share this story with people as he believe it to be one of the most important stories he had ever told. He would like to thank his family and friends for constantly supporting him.

CSU THEATRE PRODUCTION STAFF

PRODUCER/ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/DRAMATURGY ADVISOR—Dr. Megan Lewis

PRODUCTION MANAGER/TECHNICAL DIRECTOR—Steven Workman

ASSISTANT TECHNICAL DIRECTOR—Joe Shelly

COSTUME SHOP MANAGER—Elise Kulovany

CUTTER/DRAPER—Rebecca Evans

MASTER ELECTRICIAN—Wes Halloran

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER—Matt Grevan

SCENIC CHARGE ARTIST—Heidi Larson

MASTER CARPENTER—Johnie Rankin

PROPS MASTER—Jay Duckworth

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/DRAMATURG—Charlie Williamson

ASSOCIATE SCENIC DESIGNER—Thomas Ray

ASSOCIATE LIGHTING DESIGNER—Lily Morelock

ASSISTANT SOUND DESIGNER—Audrey McCrea

WARDROBE HEAD—Lilly Griffin

HAIR AND MAKE UP HEAD—Kayleigh Owen

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER—Jessie King

ELECTRICS SHOP TEAM—Spencer Ammon, Ava Barbieri, Katherine Barr,
Catie Harris, Jessie King, Laurel Ladzinski, Patrick Middlebrook, Jake Mosier,
Alaina Noble, Katie Simonson

PAINT SHOP TEAM—Faith Buckley, Bo Burkhardt, Mya Coca, Peyton Farnum,
Hailey Kennedy, Dani Ranisate

COSTUME SHOP TEAM—Spencer Ammon, Jasper Day, Maddie Engeman,
Callie Hartel, Helen Jewart, August Mayer, Adie Sutherland, Annecy Wood

SCENIC SHOP TEAM—Mya Coca, Doster Chastain, Terran Flynn,
Thomas Ray, Logan Volkert

PROP SHOP TEAM—Juniper Crago, Annie Hennen, Jessie King, Avi Miller, Rachel Ross

AUDIO TEAM—Ava Barbieri, Ruby Duka, Jacob Joachim, Patrick Middlebrook,
Joshua Moore, Tessa Snyder, David Walters

SOUND BOARD OPERATOR—Robert Longo

LIGHT BOARD OPERATOR—Henry Ledbetter

WARDROBE CREW—Ashy Campbell, Cheri Garrett, Lia Quebbemann

DECK CREW—Nyssa Justice, Nessa Pause, Chandler Webb

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NIGHT WE CUT
OFF GRANDMA'S
BRAIDS AND SOLD
'EM TO THE ARMY
FOR BARBED
WIRE?"

directed by **LAURA JONES**

FEBRUARY 17 — MARCH 5, 2023

PERFORMANCE TIMES/DATES:

FRI. FEB. 17, 2023 - 7:30PM (PREVIEW PERFORMANCE) | SAT. FEB. 18, 2023 - 7:30PM (OPENING NIGHT) | SUN. FEB. 19, 2023 - 2:30PM

FRI. FEB. 24, 2023 - 7:30PM | SAT. FEB. 25, 2023 - 7:30PM | SUN. FEB. 26, 2023 - 2:30PM

FRI. MAR. 3, 2023 - 7:30PM | SAT. MAR. 4, 2023 - 7:30PM | SUN. MAR. 5, 2023 - 2:30PM (CLOSING PERFORMANCE)

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