

Graduate Student News

The department welcomes two new PhD students, **Alison Mahoney** and **José Alba Rodriguez**. Alison Mahoney completed her BA in Theatre and Gender Studies from Northwestern University and an MA in Contemporary Performance Practices from Ulster University, Magee. She is the recipient of a George J. Mitchell Scholarship and the American Alliance for Theatre and Education Winnifred Ward Award for Outstanding New Children's Theatre Company. She has worked as an actor, playwright, director, deviser, and producer and is a co-founder and past artistic director of the Bluelaces Theater Company in New York City. Her research focuses on devised work that is shaped by the inclusion of neurodivergent performers. She also explores how the dynamics between neurodivergent audiences encountering performers who are disabled/neurodivergent and nondisabled/neurotypical impact our understandings of audience theory, immersive theatre, and disability and performance. José Alba Rodriguez received a BS in Marketing at the West Chester University of Pennsylvania and an MA in Dramatic Writing, Theater, and Performance Studies from the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University. José worked as a director and playwright/screenwriter, among other roles. Their research focuses on how dramaturgical theories intersect with politics and art as a practice of freedom, especially for people facing injustice.

This summer, **Nicholas Barilar** made progress on his dissertation writing and research. He organized the panel "Fizzles, Flops, and Frustrations: Failure in Theatre History and Theory" for the Association of Theatre in Higher Education's annual conference at the end of July. For the panel, he presented his paper "The Politics of Inaction: Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words I* and the Algerian War." He completed work on a book chapter that will be published in the collection *Beckett Beyond the Normal* this October and revised a dissertation chapter into an article.

Courtney Colligan was awarded a Humanities Engage Immersive Summer Fellowship in Pittsburgh. She worked for the Women and Girls Foundation's social advocacy group, GirlGov, to create an innovative and creative report about the long-term effects of the GirlGov Program on its students. You can read more about Courtney's work with GirlGov here (can you link here to <https://www.humanitiesengage.pitt.edu/blog/summer-immersive-fellowship-courtney-colligan>)

Victoria LaFave was awarded a Humanities Engage Curriculum Development Opportunity Grant for creating collection-based modules for undergraduate courses. She worked on a module for the undergraduate course Enjoying Performances that puts Pitt Theatre History at the forefront of conversations about race, gender, and sexuality through the Cap and Gown Club Archive and the Kuntu Repertory Theatre Archive. The project focuses on developing a module that asks students to rethink their understanding of themselves as spectators, both presently and historically. You can read more about Victoria's work here (can you link here to <https://www.humanitiesengage.pitt.edu/blog/curricular-development-opportunity-victoria-lafave>)

Christopher Staley trained with SITI Company for a master class and week-long intensive, Theatre Nohgaku for a month of Noh chanting, The Alexander Center of Cambridge for a week long digital retreat, and Yoga Nidra for a 25-hour long certification program towards his Yoga Alliance membership. He submitted an accepted article on Suzuki and deixis to *PARtake* and

chapter on *Fun Home* and TMT to the collection *Theatre and the Macabre*. He was the recipient of the Japan Studies Doctoral Research Award from Pitt's Asian Studies Center, which helped supported his summer work and training related to his dissertation. He also was awarded a Humanities Engage Pitch Your Own Summer Immersive Fellowship for an internship with the Walpole Children's Theatre in Walpole, MA. His internship focused on grants and fundraising, archival projects, and narrating the theatre's history. He also worked with the theatre to respond to the current moment, including their taskforce on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. You can learn more about his work here (can you link here to <https://www.humanitiesengage.pitt.edu/blog/summer-immersive-fellowship-christopher-staley>)