

THE MONMOUTH COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

PRESENTS

# The Revolutionists

By Lauren Gunderson



FEBRUARY 17-20, 2022  
WELLS THEATER



1853



## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Vanessa Campagna, Ph.D.

# The Heartbeat of Humanity

CREATIVE TENSION IS THE AXIS on which Lauren Gunderson's 2018 feminist-comedy-meets-historical drama spins. The relationship between art and activism figures prominently as "four beautiful, badass women" living in Paris, France, at the height of the French Revolution's Reign of Terror consider how they will play the role of revolutionist. Among them is playwright and writer Olympe de Gouges, an historical figure celebrated for feminist philosophies on citizenship and the rights of women, as well as for her advocacy for the abolition of slavery.

Gunderson's protagonist, Olympe, aims to "write a play that is the voice of this revolution...[that] says to the held breath of a rapt audience...something...profound." The plot's central conflict of writer's block is ubiquitous among People of the Pen. Distinctive to *The Revolutionists*, however, are the terrorizing stakes that undergird Olympe's creative impasse. Madame Guillotine is omnipresent in Paris, in Olympe's consciousness, and consequently in this production's sumptuous scenic design by Patrick Weaver.

Keenly aware that an act of "artistic defiance" will come with the price of her head, Olympe's desire to be revolutionary is complicated by her reluctance to sacrifice—whether it be the comforts of her office, art for the sake of art, or her very life. I suspect that, like me, most audiences will find at least somewhat familiar Olympe's conflicting impulses.

Marianne Angelle (a freedom fighter from Saint-Domingue), Charlotte Corday (a young assassin from rural France), and Marie Antoinette (former Queen of France) serve as a collective *voix de la raison* and aid Olympe in writing a story that is brave, true, and of consequence, in every sense of the word.

I adore Gunderson's use of metatheatricality. Featuring a playwright protagonist, a plot centered on writing a play, and self-referential dialogue peppered with theatre jokes, *The Revolutionists* is a delight! Yet, what I find irresistible about the play is the specific end to which metatheatricality is the means. **Gunderson advances a poignant theme on the power of the arts and humanities: "Story is the heartbeat of humanity and humanity gets really dark when the wrong stories are leading the people."**

I initially selected this play for our 2019–2020 theatre season, a time in which American social/political life was experiencing significant unrest. (The production was cancelled due to COVID-19.) The 2020 presidential election cycle was exceptionally divisive, with the rights of women, immigrants, and LGBT people hotly contested in public discourse. The Black Lives Matter movement was increasingly urgent as violent crimes unfolded across the nation. Deeply resonant for me was (and is) the play's central dramatic question, "What is the artist's role in a revolution?"

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THE MONMOUTH COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE

PRESENTS

# THE REVOLUTIONISTS

BY LAUREN GUNDERSON

Directed by Vanessa Campagna

February 17–20, 2022

Thursday-Saturday 7:30 pm | Sunday 2 pm

Wells Theater

Produced by Special Arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc.

There will be one 10-minute intermission.

This production is dedicated to the memories  
of Professors Gary Willhardt '59 and David Suda.

*"Culture is civilization. It's definitive. It lasts."*

—GUNDERSON

Please silence all electronics.

Restrooms and drinking fountains are located in the lobby.

Photography and recording of any kind is prohibited.



**COMING APRIL 7–10**  
**to Wells Theater**

In this beautifully haunting play based on Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, the former residents of Spoon River examine life and the longing for what might have been.

**Directed by Professor Todd Quick**

## THE CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

<b>OLYMPE DE GOUGES</b> .....	Emma Wohlstadter
<b>MARIANNE ANGELLE</b> .....	Gabriela Madu
<b>CHARLOTTE CORDAY</b> .....	Allie Bryan
<b>MARIE ANTOINETTE</b> .....	Celeste Lythgoe

## THE TIME AND PLACE

Paris, The Reign of Terror (1793)

A safe place, a study, a prison cell, the Tribunal.  
Then the scaffold.

## ACT I

### PROLOGUE

**SCENE 1.** In Olympe's study

**SCENE 2.** Marat's home, July 13, 1793

**SCENE 3.** The next day in Olympe's study

**SCENE 4.** A prison cell

—INTERMISSION—

## ACT II

**SCENE 1.** In Olympe's study

**SCENE 2.** At the scaffold later the same day July 17, 1793

**SCENE 3.** Olympe's study some time later

**SCENE 4.** Revolutionary Tribunal, Oct 13, 1793

**SCENE 5.** Some weeks later in Olympe's study

**SCENE 6.** The trial of Olympe

**SCENE 7.** Nov 3, 1793. A conversation with ghosts

## THE CREATIVE TEAM

Director .....	Vanessa Campagna
Technical Director .....	Doug Rankin
Stage Manager .....	Drew Cliffl
Assistant Stage Manager .....	Bekkah Gebe
Scenic Design .....	Patrick Weaver
Lighting Design .....	Doug Rankin
Costume Design .....	Vanessa Campagna and Vincent Scassellati (Kansas City Costume)
Music Design .....	Vanessa Campagna and Carolyn Suda
Cellist .....	Carolyn Suda
Dramaturgy .....	Bekkah Gebe
Props Design .....	Grace Cornelius and Reese Hill
Costume and Makeup Crew .....	Olivia Matlock and Rosa Roa
Poster Design .....	Grace Cornelius
Box Office Manager .....	Catherine Bozarth
Box Office Assistants .....	Meghan Bird, Brook McCormick and Diamond Rideout
Run Crew .....	Briggs Bossert Ian Castellanos Grace Cornelius Jermaih Glenn Louis Charles Luke Hunter Riley Jennings Collin Morris Rosa Roa Matthew Shimko Skylar Shumaker Owen Wolfe

## SPECIAL THANKS

President Clarence Wyatt and First Lady Lobie Stone  
Dean Mark Willhardt  
Dean Michelle Merritt and Dean Karen Ogorzalek  
Professor Todd Quick  
COVID-Operations Group

## THE CAST



Emma Wohlstadter

**EMMA WOHLSTADTER (Olympe de Gouges)** is a senior theatre and international business double major from Macomb, Ill. Monmouth College credits include Kayleen in *Gruesome Playground Injuries*, Martha Crachit in *A Christmas Carol*, FusionFest 2020 and 2021. Other Monmouth College activities include cross-country, track and field, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Stockdale Fellows, Order of Omega Honor, and Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society. Emma would like to thank her family for always encouraging her to find her passion and her professors who have guided her and taught her that theatre is so much more than what is happening on stage.



Gabriela Madu

**GABRIELA "GABBAY" MADU (Marianne Angelle)** is a junior computer science and theatre double-major from Montego Bay, Jamaica. Previous Monmouth College Theatre credits include Moon in *The Real Inspector Hound*, Meg in *Little Women*, Hermia in *Dead Man's Cellphone*, and Aunt Eleri in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. She has also stage-managed and assistant-directed for *Gruesome Playground Injuries* and sound-designed for *Dead Man's Cellphone*. Other Monmouth College activities include Residential Life, CVOP, International Club, Chorale, Chamber Choir and Scots Student Senate. She would like to thank her professors and family for pushing her to achieve her full potential and the friends who have supported her throughout her Monmouth career.



Allie Bryan

**ALLIE BRYAN (Charlotte Corday)** is a senior theatre major from Abingdon, Ill. Previous Monmouth College credits include Beth in *Little Women*, Dead Body in *The Real Inspector Hound*, Bet in *Oliver!*, Brenda in *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, #11 in *The Wolves* and Villian in *Almost, Maine*. Other Monmouth College activities include Chorale and APO.



Celeste Lythgoe

**CELESTE "ZESTY" LYTHGOE (Marie Antoinette)** is a sophomore history education major and theatre minor from Lafayette, Colo. Monmouth College credits include Mrs. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, Ensemble in *Little Women*, and Mrs. Fred in *A Christmas Carol*. Other Monmouth College activities include participation in the Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA). Celeste would like to thank their mother, Amy, and their two siblings, Calista and Corinne, for always being their biggest fans and for supporting their passions.

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

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This question emerges from the juxtaposition between Olympe and the other characters, who have competing needs for her authorship:

- Marianne, the Haitian Revolution's spy-on-the-inside, needs pamphlets and treatises.
- Charlotte, the vigilante, needs last words to speak from the scaffold.
- Marie Antoinette, the infamous Citizen queen, needs a revisionist history.
- Olympe needs a play worth dying for—and living for.

By the final blackout, Gunderson offers four distinct portraits of a revolutionist.

## DRAMATURGY NOTE

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Revolution lasted into the 19th century, and culminated on January 1, 1804. By the end, Saint Domingue was renamed Haiti, and France was the first to recognize Haiti as an independent nation. These historical circumstances are represented in *The Revolutionists* by Marianne Angelle, a free woman who has come to France to fight for a better life for her people in Saint Domingue, bringing the concerns of decolonization to the attention of the former queen and other revolutionaries.

The historical figure Charlotte Corday also features prominently in the play. A well-read young woman who was inspired by authors such as Plutarch, Corday dreams of a republic like those of ancient Greece and Rome. Her nemesis is Jean-Paul Marat, the radical Jacobin journalist who has called for mass violence and beheadings.

It is my sincere hope that our audiences will discern their own revolutionary spir-its and leverage them for good. Through the characters' entwined lives, Gunderson also reveals a portrait of sororité, reminding us of the need for alliances and collective action. To that end, the play's metatheatre accretes to celebrate the artist's "fundamental" role in the revolution—one of fostering kindness, creativity and shared humanity.

It has been an honor to consider *The Revolutionists's* questions and themes with my collaborators. We have thought deeply, felt sincerely and played joyfully. I am exceedingly proud of the students for their work on this production and, more importantly, for who they are in this world. Each of them is a beautiful badass.■

Corday, a Girondin, believes that Marat is too radical and obstructs France's potential, and for this, she assassinates him on July 13, 1793. Corday is swiftly arrested and executed on July 17, 1793. Even though she took agency and acted of her own volition, there is massive speculation that the assassination was a crime of passion committed on behalf of a man with whom she was in love. Regardless of her actual motives, Corday impacted the Revolution.

These four women, described by the playwright as "badasses," prove that "a revolution needs a woman's touch" (Gunderson, 26). Each woman made a valuable contribution to the Revolution. Without them, questions about the Revolution's outcome linger. For modern audiences—women in particular—this gives a glimpse into how historical women participated in revolutions, and history in general. These women did not let history pass without their notice, and due to this, they became and are remembered as The Revolutionists.■

## DRAMATURGY NOTE

BY BEKKAH GEBE '22

Lauren Gunderson's *The Revolutionists* opens on the backdrop of the Reign of Terror. The French monarchy has been dissolved, King Louis XVI has been beheaded, and France is being ruled through fear and violence by the radical Jacobins who overthrew the Girondins in the National Assembly. With a vise grip over France, Jacobins begin executing those who were deemed a threat to their republic. Madame Guillotine looms largely, and citizens fear losing their heads. Among them are Olympe de Gouges, a prolific playwright of the era who has written more than 40 plays, even though only 10 have been published. These plays reveal her to be a politically-oriented person, as they deal with themes of women's agency and abolition. In addition to plays, De Gouges has penned a poster titled "The Three Urns," which causes her to be arrested on the grounds of sedition. While she is on trial, it is discovered that De Gouges has an unfinished play extending sympathies toward the former queen, Marie Antoinette. De Gouges is beheaded on November 3, 1793.

The former queen of France was born with the expectation of creating political alliances with Austria and other European countries. As a child, Marie Antoinette was well-educated in the ways of court life, as well as in French culture. She was married to King Louis XVI of France in 1770 and was expected to soon produce a male heir. As public sentiment turned against her husband, Antoinette became the center of much gossip, and faced accusations of overspending and adultery. After the execution of her husband on January 21, 1793, she is separated from her children and sent to prison for being a traitor. She bravely faces the guillotine and dies on October 16, 1793. In life, Marie Antoinette had to answer for the socio-political strife in France; this remains true in Gunderson's play.

During the French Revolution, Saint Domingue, a very prosperous French colony located in the Caribbean, experienced the Haitian Revolution. Slaves in this colony mobilized and fought back. This

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The Kennedy Center

**AMERICAN  
COLLEGE  
THEATER  
FESTIVAL**

### **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.

By entering this production, our Theatre Department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theatres across the nation.