



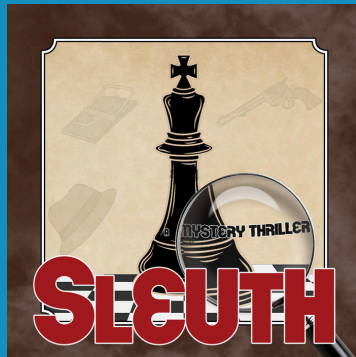
by David Ives

Directed by Emily Gray

SEPTEMBER 19 - OCTOBER 20, 2024



Our 24-25 Season



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Venus in Fur



Photo by Jeffrey Schmidt



Venus in Fur

Written by David Ives

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Catherine D. DuBord*

THOMAS

Carson Wright

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STAGE MANAGER

Emily Mordecai*

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Photo by Jeffrey Schmidt

Bios

David Ives, he/him (Playwright) is probably best known for his evenings of one-act comedies called *All in the Timing* and *Time Flies*. *All in the Timing* won the Outer Critics Circle Playwriting Award, ran for two years Off-Broadway, and in the 1995-96 season was the most performed play in the country after Shakespeare productions. His full-length plays include *The School For Lies* (adapted from Moliere's *The Misanthrope* and a major hit at New York's Classic Stage Company last spring); *The Heir Apparent* (an adaptation of J-F Regnard's comedy that was an audience and critical hit at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. this past fall); *New Jerusalem: The Interrogation of Baruch de Spinoza*, which won the prestigious Hull-Warriner Award; *Is He Dead?* (adapted from Mark Twain); *White Christmas*; *Polish Joke*; and *Ancient History*. He has translated Feydeau's classic farce *A Flea in Her Ear*, Yazmina Reza's drama *A Spanish Play*, and Pierre Corneille's 1643 comedy *The Liar* (also an enormous hit at the Shakespeare Theatre Company two years ago). David Ives is the author of three young-adult novels: *Monsieur Eek*, *Scrib*, and *Voss*, and he has adapted 32 American musicals for New York City's beloved *Encores!* series. A graduate of the Yale School of Drama and a former Guggenheim Fellow in playwriting, he lives in New York City.

Emily Gray, she/her (Director) New York, off-Broadway: *Millamant* in 'The Way of the World', 'The Phantom Lady', 'Blithe Spirit' (u/s), 'The Oresteia' (u/s), 'The Duchess of Malfi', 'Henry VI parts I, II, & III', 'Yes is for a very young man', 'Too Rustic!', 'How to be a Red Hot Shakespearean Lover' (also Philadelphia). Regionally: 'Heroes of the Fourth Turning' for Second Thought Theatre; 'Popcorn', 'House and Garden' and 'Seasons Greetings' at Theatre 3, 'Hay Fever', 'The Miser' and 'Lysistrata' (director) for Oklahoma City Rep. 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Twelfth Night' for Trinity Shakespeare Festival. She served for 4 years as Co-Artistic Director of Classical Acting Company, where she appeared in the following productions: 'Much Ado About Nothing', 'A Flea in Her Ear', 'The Gift of the Magi', 'The Cherry Orchard', 'The Hypochondriac', 'No Exit', 'Every Trick in the Book'.

Other Dallas theatre includes: 'Kindertransport' at Echo Theatre; 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Eat, It's Not About Food', 'Best Christmas Pageant Ever', and 'Anne of Green Gables' at The Dallas Children's Theatre; 'The Norman Conquests' at Stage West. Emily is an experienced narrator and voice over artist, she has narrated 75+ audiobooks across many genres, she also voices several characters in the very popular video game *Borderlands 3*. Emily directs and teaches at Dallas College. Emily is represented by The Campbell Agency and trained at Drama Studio London.

Landry Strickland, he/him (Lighting Designer) is a Partner of Luminary Technology and Productions, providing turnkey production services to arts in the DFW metroplex. He graduated from Oklahoma City University with a BFA in 2021. He currently serves as the production manager for Avant Chamber Ballet & Pegasus Contemporary Ballet, Lighting Designer for The Hockaday School, as well as the Production Electrician for Bruce Wood Dance. His past credits include Lighting Supervisor for Flamenco Vivo Carlota Santana's national tour *Fronteras*, Lighting Designer for Echo Theatre's *Founders, Keepers & Belle Sauvage's The Last Flapper*, Assistant Lighting Designer for Public Works Dallas' *The Little Mermaid* and *The Odyssey*, and Master Electrician for Amphibian Stage. Electrician credits include Oklahoma City Ballet, Dallas Theater Center, Theatre Three, Tinc Productions, Dallas Children's Theater, Uptown Players, Proformance Systems, Diversified Media Group, Lighting Guy Enterprises, and Wylie ISD. See more at LuminaryTechnology.Productions

Liz Helfrich, she/her (Costume Designer) is thrilled to be making her Theatre Three debut. Growing up in Dallas, she interned at Shakespeare Dallas and the Dallas Children's Theater. After working on Harvard's storied *Hasty Pudding* Theatricals, she embarked on a career designing and creating costumes for opera, theater, and film across the U.S. Favorite credits include *The War Anthology* (Curious Theater Company), *I Hate Hamlet* (Aurora Fox), and *A Christmas Carol* (Northern Stage).

Bios

Dr. Danielle Georgiou, she/her, (Intimacy Director) is a multi-disciplinary artist who is a director of theatre, dance, and opera and a choreographer of movement, fights, and intimacy. She has worked at numerous DFW theatres, including Theatre Three, Dallas Theater Center, Undermain, Kitchen Dog, Stage West, Second Thought, Echo Theatre, the Dallas Opera, and on films and commercials. She was the Associate Artistic Director of the Undermain Theatre from 2019-2022. Since 2011, she has been the Artistic Director of the Danielle Georgiou Dance Group. She is a Professor of Dance, Humanities, and Visual Art at Dallas College-Eastfield campus and is based in Dallas, TX.

Emily Mordecai, she/her, (Stage Manager) is thrilled to be making her Theatre Three debut with *Venus in Fur!* Regional credits include Dallas Theater Center: *The Little Mermaid* (PA), *A Christmas Carol '23* (PA), *The Rocky Horror Show* (PA), *The Odyssey* (SM Fellow); Teatro Dallas: *Cloud Tectonics* (PSM); Lyric Stage: *Sweeney Todd* (PSM); Theatre Under the Stars: *The Secret of My Success* (Youth Sup.); Rec Room Arts: *Wolf Play* (PSM); and the world premiere of *His Story: The Musical* at the Broadway Tent (Asst. Company Manager). In 2023, she moved to Dallas after earning her B.F.A. in Stage Management from the University of Houston. Much love to her family and Dylan for their endless support. IG: @emily_mordecai

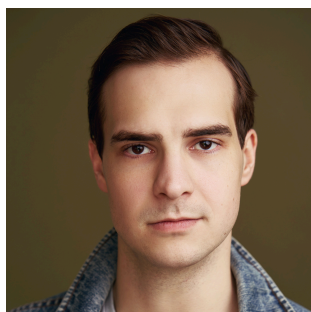


Photo by Jeffrey Schmidt

Bios Continued



CATHERINE D. DuBORD, she/her (Vanda) is thrilled to be back at Theatre Three, after first appearing in *Noises Off*, *Susan and God*, *The Farnsworth Invention* and *Popcorn*. B.F.A. in Acting from SMU. Last seen in the international smash hit - *The Last Flapper*. NYC: The Modern Stage. Selected Dallas/Ft. Worth: *Belle Sauvage*, *Stage West*, *One Thirty Productions*, *Circle Theatre*, *WingSpan*, *Kitchen Dog*, *Shakespeare Dallas*, *Contemporary Theater of Dallas* and *Classical Acting Company*. Catch Catherine next in *Box* at Undermain Theatre in early 2025. As always, much love to Mom, Dad, Robert and Guthrie. Ms. DuBord is represented by The Mary Collins Agency and a proud member of Actors' Equity.



Carson Wright, he/him, (Thomas) is grateful to be working with Theatre Three. Recent regional credits include *Imposter!* *Hypocrite!* *Tartuffe!* and *Artemisia* with Circle Theatre, *The Magician's Nephew* and *A Charlie Brown Christmas* with Dallas Children's Theater, *The Odyssey*, *King Lear*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth* and *Othello* with Shakespeare Dallas, *One Flea Spare* with Second Thought Theatre, *Harvey* with WaterTower Theatre, and *The Thrush* and *the Woodpecker* with Kitchen Dog Theater. He holds a B.F.A. in Theatre from Southern Methodist University and is represented by the Kim Dawson Agency. You can follow Carson's work at www.carsondwright.com and on Instagram at @carsondwright.

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"Peep show purposeful" - that's how Dallas-area director Emily Gray refers to David Ives's 2010 play Venus in Fur. Venus, the steamy, claustrophobic two-hander, debuted at Classic Stage Company in New York City; it starred Wes Bentley as Thomas, a writer-director for the stage, and Nina Arianda as Wanda, an auditioning actress who is much more than meets the eye. It is the opening play of Theatre Three's 2024-25 season, in a production directed by Gray.

Venus takes its title from Venus in Furs, an erotic 1870 novella by the Austrian writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch; it was to be a piece of a grand cycle of prose called The Legacy of Cain. The novella concerns Severin von Kushemski and Wanda von Dunayev, whose relationship is quite literally tortured: Dunayev is physically, sexually, and psychologically cruel to Kushemski, a fact which gives Kushemski great pleasure. Reactions to the book were mixed. Venus in Furs was denounced in the press as a work of pernicious influence, and Sacher-Masoch as a nihilist. Readers, on the other hand, were enthralled, one reader so much that she was compelled to take on the name of Wanda von Dunayev and write to Sacher-Masoch; she eventually became the writer's wife.

It's from this author that today we derive the word "masochism" - taking pleasure in the brutality one is dealt - and it is this book that gives Ives's play its inciting incident. Thomas has adapted Venus in Furs for the stage, and is auditioning actresses for the role of Dunayev. After watching dozens of unsatisfactory performances, Thomas finally sees Wanda, who is as ruthless in her pursuit of a role as the Wanda of the book. Reviews were wise to the "peep show" part of Gray's formulation: positive or negative, critics remarked on the interplay between Thomas and Wanda as being a game. But the "purposeful" part only seems to have become more apparent with time.

Ives, Gray says, does "a brilliant job with the power struggle moments." And *Venus the play*, she adds, raises questions about "gender equality in the art of theatre - which has never been." What are the social mores of the nineteenth century, she asks, compared to those of today?

Is it for this reason, intellectual and literary honesty, that Thomas calls *Venus the book* a "central text of world literature"?

If so, Sacher-Masoch is in good company: the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries are rife with authors whose works were censored, pilloried, or otherwise rejected because what they had to say was thought too inflammatory, because they pushed too hard against the prevailing ideas of the day. Are boldness and honesty the same thing?

Whatever the answers, the questions are plenty dramatic. In a piece for *Broadway Buzz*, Ives himself suggests that the way in which we encounter difficult subjects - like imbalances of power, cruelty, and domination of one gender by another - is just as compelling as the subjects themselves. After an unsuccessful attempt at directly adapting Sacher-Masoch's book, Ives was inspired to "strip away everything but my two lovers and create a frame story set today in an audition room where a playwright seeks an actress to play Vanda in his adaptation of, what else, *Venus in Fur* [sic]. In fact, the writing went quite swiftly and I finished a new draft in 10 days or so."

But Gray adds that in the midst of these questions, there's room in the script for levity. "I want them all to laugh," she says, "lots and lots, all the way through." Which compels one to ask in turn: can challenging, shocking work coexist with laughter? Put another way, what moral responsibility does a work of art have? Does it have any? To Gray, a work of art has the responsibility, "if nothing else, of being clear." It has to speak truthfully about the situation at hand, and, crucially, "not to tell the audience what to think."

-Dante Flores, Dramaturg