

The DU Prison Arts Initiative and Sterling Correctional Facility Present:



UNIVERSITY of DENVER

COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
Prison Arts Initiative

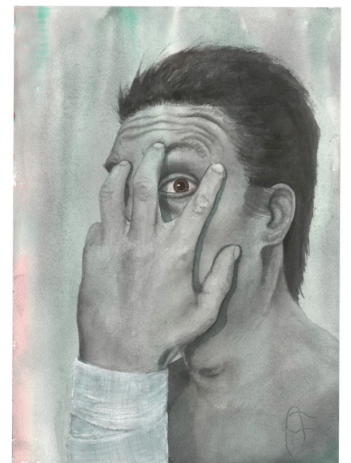
ONE FLEW OVER THE

CUCKOO'S NEST

Directed by:
Dr. Ashley Hamilton
Co-Created by:
Julie Rada, MFA

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28TH, 2019

AT 6 PM IN VISITING



A performance for the West Side of the Facility

- This play contains mature content.
- Please sign-up to confirm your attendance.
- A talkback will follow the show.

Portraits by Christopher Shetskie McAllister

Director's Note

Welcome to the Sterling Ward. A full-blown state-run mental institution. It is 1959. And, we are in North East Oregon. Welcome to the inner lives of a group of people that are as complicated, messy and real as anyone – they have a story they need you to hear.

What does it mean to do a play about mental health, institutionalization, power and freedom in a prison? Not one ounce of the irony or complexity is lost on me. I have been creating theatre, art and educational experiences in prisons for almost a decade and I've wanted to direct *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* in a prison for years. Why? Yes, because it is a story that so many already know and are drawn to. But, mostly because it is a story that is both separate from but also completely tangled up in the space you are sitting in right now – prison. I knew that to do this show properly, inside, I would need the perfect group of people and the perfect facility because this play is arguably one of the hardest you can do in a prison because of its themes. I knew after coming to Sterling Correctional Facility and meeting the group of DU PAI students listed in this program, and also the SCF administration, that it was time. These were the right people. This was the right space. This was the right moment.

For those of us who spend a lot of time in the Colorado Department of Corrections, we know that the current moment in this system is a very important one. I personally spend five to six days a week in facilities around the state, with both incarcerated people and staff. And, it cannot be denied - we are in the middle of a time of massive change. And, it's not just in Colorado, but in the whole United States. I, personally, believe that Colorado is and will be a leader in a change that will impact our country's prison system for centuries. So, what better time to tell a story that asks us to look back at the way institutionalization has functioned in the United States? Yes, this is a mental institution and not a prison, but the systems are deeply intertwined --- particularly with the close of the majority of state-run mental health facilities in the US over the past fifty years since this play was written. What better time to look backward so we can decide where we want to go and who we want to be next.

It is also not lost on me that to do a play like this in prison, in the way we have done it, is actually us saying where we want to go and who we want to be. The amount of support, care and accommodation that the Sterling Correctional Staff and the CDOC Executive Staff have allowed this production is an absolute testament to how they want to function as a system. They have worked extra hours, made so many phone calls, helped build the set, picked up paint brushes, accommodated schedules and worked so closely with the DU PAI team to pull this off. And, CDOC Executive Staff have invited us to go on tour with the play to other prisons in the state (yes, with this team of actors and crew). This is the first time, to my understanding, that this will have happened in this country. How can I ever thank you all enough? Thank you for showing us your deep commitment to innovation.

To my cast, crew and co-creator, Julie, - how can I put into words what this experience has meant? I added it up. We have spent over 250 hours of rehearsal together. We have driven over 22,000 miles in the past five months just for this production. And, I would drive every single mile again to dive into and create this complicated, fascinating world with you all. You have been a dream of a team to work with in every capacity and the exact right group of people to tell this story in this moment in time. It couldn't have been anyone else.

Thank you all for looking back with us, so we can all look forward. We are so glad you are on the ward.

Ashley Lauren Hamilton, PhD
Director of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
Founder and Director of the DU Prison Arts Initiative

PS. It's important for you to know that every design element of this production was created by our incarcerated team with the support of SCF staff. Our students dreamed up every thing - the set, props, sounds, costumes and lights. DU PAI just held the container for their work and guided the process.

Co-Creator's Note

Ashley said, “Let’s do *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*,” at Sterling and I said, “Whew, that’s loaded!” This was last March and as we sat in that coffee shop discussing plays for production at SCF, I was concerned that the content of the show was perhaps *too* relevant. In about 7 years of making theatre in prisons, I’ve heard two conflicting ideas about what it means for incarcerated artists to do this work: 1. That the opportunity to share, authentically, about their lives and experiences—even the difficult stuff such as diminished freedom, how power operates, and institutionalization—is immensely valuable. Or...2. That doing theatre inside allows for an “escape” from the day-to-day reality of living in a prison, another world to live in, far from prison politics. I knew this script would address #1. I was concerned about #2. But I trusted that it is in the *making* of the art itself, the creation of an artistic product, and the development of a strong ensemble that builds “another world,” separate from the daily struggles of living in in a prison. I know that making theatre is intrinsically valuable because it has been in my own life. I trusted the creation process. I trusted Ashley. I trusted this group of artists. I knew that we could gracefully weather any turbulence that may arise from doing such charged material and that we would come out the other side of the creation process fierce and proud.

I also knew that this would be a huge endeavor. Ashley would direct and I would fill in all the gaps, hence my amorphous title, “Co-Creator.” Ashley loves deep psychological scene-work. I love creating sensorial compositions of movement and design. I thought about the extreme states of mind experienced by people with mental health diagnoses and how those states live in bodies and, from this, the Bromden “movement moments” were born, countering the gritty reality of the *Cuckoo’s Nest* ward. With a team of inside researchers, I completed dramaturgical research and facilitated discussions about

the time in which this book was written, how much our world has changed since then (especially in regard to identity), about power, and about living in institutions. I sat alongside our DU PAI tech team and designers in the dark theatre space, as they took their ideas for this world from their minds into the theatre space in the form of light and sound. I’ve marveled at the Sterling staff who have put in extra hours and continued to say yes. I’ve never encountered a prison staff so willing to support the arts. It’s blown me away. And all these months and hours later, we complete the process. I’ve trusted and learned it was right for me to place my trust in this process and this DU PAI team.

It’s now time for us to trust our audience: you. No work of live performance is complete without the reception of an audience, the final piece in the complicated puzzle of creation. We have created a *big* work of theatre, an aesthetically-rich, emotionally-charged, abstract, gritty, dark, beautiful world populated by troubled and complicated humans, striving to live lives of meaning and freedom. This is both a world from another time and place, as well as a world of the here and now. In the 60 years since Ken Kesey wrote his iconic book, so much has changed. But what hasn’t changed is that all people, regardless of their confinement or their mental states, are moving toward wholeness and wellness, even if the road is rocky and nonlinear. We invite you to watch with an open mind and an open heart and, most importantly, to enjoy the show.

Julie Rada, MFA

Co-Creator of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*
Program Manager & Affiliate Faculty of the DU Prison Arts
Initiative

Dramaturgy Team's Note

During our work on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, some themes and ideas rise to the surface that we'd like to share with you. --Coy Dunn & Nathan Ybanez

Rabbit and Wolf

“The world belongs to the strong. The rabbit recognizes the strength of the wolf...He doesn't challenge the wolf to combat.” This is something every prisoner knows. They are made to feel they must conform or suffer the wolf's (system's) power.

Soft/Hard Power

In *Cuckoo's Nest* the mental ward mirrors prison, but it also mirrors society. Under the oppressive effects of hard or soft power, people are encouraged to censor aspects of themselves and their actions. When have you censored yourself?

“Hard” power is the use of force and coercion. “Soft” power is indirect and manipulative—it uses persuasion to get others to take on the preferences and interests of the power wielder. The “therapeutic community” in *Cuckoo's Nest* is an extreme manifestation of soft power.

Panopticon

Another type of power is “panopticism”—the automatic power of unceasing surveillance. This type of power doesn't reside in individuals, but in situations and mechanisms. It is like a machine (“Combine”), continuous and consuming.

Mental Illness as Power/Sanity

Critics of the traditional view of mental health have argued that mental illness is a sane attempt to deal with an insane society. Similarly, “institutionalization” can be viewed as a sane attempt to deal with the unnatural and abnormal conditions of prison life.

Context of this Performance

Just as the patients in this play are more than their disorders, prisoners are more than their criminal offenses. This performance at this time, in this space, demonstrates that the corrections system is changing. It is more than just a machine. This production shows it can take chances and envision “offenders” responsibly engaged in artistic creation. Machines don't take chances because they do not have hope or courage. Those are human qualities and, in this case, *humane* qualities.

This play asks that we reflect on the root of criminal dysfunction and what it means to be “rehabilitated.”

Cast

Randle McMurphy – Brett Phillips
Nurse Ratched – Reanna Magruder (DU Undergraduate Theatre Student)
Chief Bromden – Douglas L. Micco
Dr. Spivey – Christopher Shetskie McAllister
Billy Bibbit – Nathan Ybanez
Dale Harding – Anthony Shapiro
Cheswick – Matthew LaBonte
Scanlon – Torriano Davis
Martini – Terry W. Mosley Jr.
Ruckley - John T. Saindon
Aide Warren – Felicion Alexander Charles
Aide Williams – Michael J. Clifton
Aide Turkle – Emiliano D. Urioste
Nurse Flinn – Grady Hicks (DU Undergraduate Theatre Student)
Candy Starr – Ashley Lauren Hamilton
Sandra – Grady Hicks (DU Undergraduate Theatre Student)
Bobby B (Ensemble) - Terrance Shervel Wilder
Henry Harry (Ensemble) – Vernon McKinnie
Robbie Ray (Ensemble) – Mike Severson

Design/Crew

Director and Producer – Ashley Lauren Hamilton, PhD
Co-Creator and Producer – Julie Rada, MFA
Stage Manager – Stephen Sparks
Assistant Stage Manager – Michael Clifton
Dramaturgy – Nathan Ybanez and Coy Dunn
Lighting Designer – Mannie Legrand, Shakiel Madden-Vaughn with mentorship by Shannon McKinney
Music and Sound Designers – Luke M. Barela, Jose Ricky Sarabia-Martinez, Diego Blaze Gonzales, Emiliano D. Urioste and Douglas L. Micco
Props Designer and Creator - Coy Dunn
Costume Designer – Leroy Maestas
Costume Forman - Madalyne Heiken
Set Concept and Design Ideas - Christopher Shetskie McAllister
Assistant Set Designer – Vern Moter
Set Foreman – Timothy Nicholls
Run Crew – Dante Owens, Phillip L. Board Jr., Gintear Howard, Vern Moter

Set Build and Paint Crew – Craig Forbes, Christopher Shetskie McAllister, John Wiles, Jason Sloan, Charles Garlick, Nathan Peters, Ryan Stone, Andrew Draper, Ryan Shenek, Dave Williams, Rick Anderson, Mike Severson
Videography and Photography – Andrew Draper, Angel Lopez and Chuck Martinez

What is DU PAI?

DU PAI generates creative and collaborative learning experiences that enrich the lives of incarcerated people and shift the conversation about prison.

DU PAI...

- Provides therapeutic, educational creative arts programming to incarcerated people and their families in Colorado state prisons;
- Facilitates dialogue and storytelling between incarcerated people and their communities via exhibits, performances, media, and commissioned works;
- Creates caring communities for students characterized by learning, creative expression, and authentic human connection;
- Delivers shared arts-based learning experiences to incarcerated people, correctional staff, and DU students;
- Engages leadership of incarcerated people in the development and delivery of programming;
- Offers training and consulting on the use of the arts to liberate people and transform spaces in correctional settings;
- Conducts rigorous research to examine the impact of the arts on personal and social narratives of crime, incarceration, harm, and healing.

Special thanks to

CDOC Director Dean Williams, Deputy Director Matthew Hansen, Warden Jeff Long, Captain Cris Clare, Major Kelli Reyes, Lieutenant Shawna Nygaard, Susan Fuller, Sargent Noah Toops, CCI at Sterling Facility (Phil McCormick, Kenneth Enslow, Greg Carwin, and T.J. Rittenhouse), Dr. Shannon Sliva, Dr. Jeff Lin, Dr. Apryl Alexander, Rachael Zafer, Shannon McKinnie, Public Information Officer Annie Skinner, Dr. Clare Hammor, Janice Lacek, Kelly Gregson, Madalyne Heiken, Warden Ryan Long, Warden Terry Jaques, Karen Lausa, Theatre Artibus

What's Next?

DU PAI now offers workshops, classes and programming in 10 CDOC facilities in the state. Keep your eyes peeled for our flyers and sign-ups! Or, talk to a DU PAI group leader in our facility for more information!

We created a podcast inside! DU PAI and CDOC have collaborated on a podcast called *With(in): Shifting the Conversation on Prison* -- it will be available on iTunes, on thisiswithin.com and inside CDOC facilities in September 2019.

Interested in getting your work published? We launched a newsletter to go with our podcast *With(in)* called *Reverberations from With(in)* and we are looking for writing and work from you on the topics and themes in our podcast! Check out our flyer in the programs building and on the units for more information!

Join us for *A Christmas Carol* at Denver Women's Correctional Facility in December 2019

Visit us online at <https://www.du.edu/ahss/prisonarts/>

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