

# The CONVENT

2025-26 PERFORMANCE SEASON



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University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance  
Department of Theatre & Drama presents

# The Convent

Written by **Jessica Dickey**

THE CONVENT was produced by Rising Phoenix Repertory and Weathervane Productions, in association with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in New York, New York from January to February 2019.

Director  
**Halena Kays**

Movement & Choreography  
**Naomi Parr †**

Scenic Designer  
**Lauren Streng †**

Costume Designer  
**Christianne Myers**

Hair & Makeup Designer  
**Brittany Crinson**

Lighting Designer  
**Eliza Anker †**

Sound Designer  
**Kate Hopgood**

Voice & Speech Coach  
**Jeremy Sortore**

Dramaturg  
**Karin Waidley**

Resident Intimacy Choreographer  
& Cultural Consultant  
**Raja Benz**

Production Stage Manager  
**Frannie Walton †**

† SMTD Student  
‡ SMTD Guest

**Setting:** The play takes place in an old convent somewhere in the south of France. A place where as long as you've got, the Truth has longer.

**There will be no intermission.**

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break. As a courtesy to others, please turn off cellular phones and refrain from texting during the performance. Photography, audio recording, and videotaping of any kind are not permitted.

THE CONVENT is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals.

The performers in this production are students in the Department of Theatre & Drama. The designers for this production are students, faculty, and/or guests of SMTD. Scenery, costumes, properties, sound, and lighting were realized by the students and staff of University Productions, the producing unit of SMTD. Thank you for supporting our educational mission.

## **Statement on the Anishinaabe Land Transfer**

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Anishinaabeg gaa bi dinokiiwaad temigad manda Michigan Kichi Kinooaagegamig. Mdaaswi nshwaaswaak shi mdaaswi shi niizhawaaswi gii-sababoonagak, Ojibweg, Odawaag, minwaa Bodwe'aadamiig wiiba gii-miigwenaa'aa maamoonjiniibina Kichi Kinooaagegamigoong wi pii-gaa aanjibiigaadeg Kichi-Naakonigewinning, debendang manda aki, mampii Niisaajiwana, gewiinwaa niijaansiwaan ji kinooaagaazinid. Daapanaming ninda kidwinan, megwaa minwaa gaa bi aankoosejig zhinda akiing minwaa gii-miigwewaad Kichi-Kinooaagegamigoong aanji-daapinanigaade minwaa mshkowenjigaade.

The University of Michigan is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe people. In 1817, the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadami Nations made the largest single land transfer to the University of Michigan. This was offered ceremonially as a gift through the Treaty at the Foot of the Rapids so that their children could be educated. Through these words of acknowledgment, their contemporary and ancestral ties to the land and their contributions to the University are renewed and reaffirmed.

## **Freedom of Expression Statement**

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Thank you for attending this program. The University of Michigan strives to create a truly open forum, one in which diverse opinions can be expressed and heard. You can see our full Freedom of Expression policy at [smtd.umich.edu/FOE](https://smtd.umich.edu/FOE)

## Cast of Characters

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Mother Abbess

**Kaylin Gines**

Bertie

**Micah Webster-Bass**

Dimlin

**Maya Guacci**

Jill

**Audrey Andrews**

Patti

**Mary-Kate Sunshine Mahaney**

Tina

**Annika Juliusson**

Wilma

**Faith Park**

## About the Cast

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**Audrey Andrews** (*Jill*) Senior, BFA Acting/Dance minor, Denver, CO

**Kaylin Gines** (*Mother Abbess*) Senior, BFA Acting, Orlando, FL

**Maya Guacci** (*Dimlin*) Junior, BFA Acting/Playwriting and Education for Empowerment minor, Sayville, NY

**Annika Juliusson** (*Tina*) Junior, BFA Acting/PAME minor, Winnetka, IL

**Mary-Kate Sunshine Mahaney** (*Patti*) Senior, BFA Acting, New York, NY

**Faith Park** (*Wilma*) Sophomore, BFA Acting, Lakewood, WA

**Micah Webster-Bass** (*Bertie*) Sophomore, BFA Acting/Dance minor, Jacksonville, FL

## Director's Note

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The process of building the surprising and revolutionary world of *The Convent* has been transformative. Thank you for coming; we are thrilled to share the joy we've found in this story with you. We hope you leave with some new ideas, laughs, and perhaps, clarity about what you might want for your life and world in the coming years.

The ritual of coming together in a shared space is a cornerstone of a thriving community; thank you for supporting live performance (it is very punk rock of you).

—Halena Kays

## About the Author

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**Jessica Dickey** (*Playwright*) is an award-winning playwright whose writing was hailed by the *New York Times* as having “freshness, economy, cheeky vulgarity, with a fine measure of poetic insight,” and by *New Yorker* magazine as “funny, smart, deep and sad.” Jessie is most known for her award-winning play *The Amish Project*, which premiered Off-Broadway at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater and has since been produced around the world. Jessie’s most recent premiere, *Galileo’s Daughter*, premiered in Chicago at Remy Bumppo, and her play *The Convent* premiered Off-Broadway with Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, Rising Phoenix, and WeatherVane. Jessie’s play *The Rembrandt* had a sold-out run at Steppenwolf starring John Mahoney, and her plays *Charles Ives Take Me Home* and *Row After Row* both premiered Off-Broadway in New York and have been produced around the country. *Nan and the Lower Body* had its world premiere at TheatreWorks Silicon Valley and was originally commissioned by the Sloan Foundation and Manhattan Theater Club. In TV and film, Jessie is currently writing a feature film, with Sharon Horgan producing (*Catastrophe*, *Divorce*) and Susanna Fogel directing (*The Flight Attendant*, *Book Smart*); she is also developing a series for Netflix. Jessie co-wrote a book with her sister, published by Pilgrim Press, called *Sistering: The Art of Holding Close and Letting Go*. A proud member of New Dramatists, Jessie divides her time between Brooklyn, LA, and the south of France.



—excerpted from **LA Theatre Works** ([www.latw.org](http://www.latw.org))

## Dramaturg's Note

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### The Queer and the Divine, the Profane and the Sanctified

“The whole of life is capable of being sanctified. The means by which its sanctification is brought about are various, but the result is always the same: life is lived on a twofold plane...”

—Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*

Eliade leads us not to a destination but to a doubling, an awareness that life is always lived in tension with something else—the sacred with the profane, the profane with the sacred. The divine and the earthly aren't opposites; they are overlapping realities, always bleeding one into the other. In that sense, queerness might also share the same spiritual and spatial architecture—a faith in something beyond what has been named or felt but always in relation to it. To live queerly is to live in devotion to another possibility, to believe in ways of being that have not yet been made fully legible. Queerness, like faith, demands imagination. It asks us to trust in what cannot always be proven and to love what cannot always be spoken.

Dickey's “convent” becomes a microcosm of this yet-to-be belonging. The women within it reach toward transcendence, but their pathways and obstacles differ. Some pray for union with God, others for freedom from the body, and some for a wholeness they can't yet define. The result is a spiritual, primal, and erotic charge that blurs the line between revelation and rebellion. The sacred and the profane cease to be separate in this space—they become reflections of each other, mirroring the same hunger, like that of the mystics they learn from, to know what lies beyond comprehension.

In this light, queerness is not merely a matter of sexuality but a posture toward the unknown. It mirrors faith's paradox. Leaps of faith and sexuality here are acts of surrender—to a mystery, to an unnameable truth, to a sense of self that might always be in flux. But as faith has historically demanded obedience from women, queerness resists such containment. It claims the unseen as a place of power rather than punishment. The convent walls, once

## Dramaturg's Note

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meant to enclose, now become thresholds—spaces where the ineffable might be touched and transcended, even for a moment.

May we consider in this convent, then, that the divine and the queer are not so different after all? Both dwell in the margins of understanding. Both demand courage to reach for something more expansive than what the world outside allows. And both remind us that what is unseen does not mean unreal; it means what is still becoming understood.

Throughout history, women's relationships to faith have been shaped by confinement as much as by devotion. Monastic living has often been both a refuge and a restraint, where women could learn, lead, and love one another, but only under the conditions of the patriarchal church and an ever-present God. Sanctity was contingent on submission. Even the mystics who achieved spiritual ecstasy were punished or silenced when their revelations outshone the men interpreting them. The line between holiness and heresy became, for women, razor-thin.

Dickey's play doesn't just acknowledge that history; it calls it into conversation and confronts it. The women of *The Convent* inherit centuries of defiant expectation: to be pure, to be quiet, to be vessels of faith rather than its architects, yes, but also to resist. Their struggle is not only spiritual but generational; it carries the weight of women who were told that submission is sacred, that obedience is love, that the body is a site of temptation to subdue. And yet, through Dickey's dramaturgy, we watch them push back as far as they can to search for belief that doesn't require self-erasure.

What's striking is how little this quest has changed. The same cultural forces that kept medieval women cloistered still manifest today, only dressed in new vocabulary: respectability, professionalism, modesty, independence, motherhood. Dickey threads this linguistic tapestry into the texture of her play. Each woman's story feels both ancient and immediate, as though the centuries between them have folded in on themselves. Their yearning for

## Dramaturg's Note

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freedom, whether that be spiritual, sexual, or emotional, is timeless, as if their rebellion is inherited.

In this way, our story breaks from constructed constraints in the most cloistered of places. Yes, it asks how much progress have we really made when structures of faith, politics, and gender still police female and queer bodies. But it also offers a kind of hope: that the act of questioning and naming and screaming profanity at what has been forbidden is instead a sacred practice. These women aren't seeking sainthood; they're seeking selfhood. And that, perhaps, is the holiest thing of all.

—Carter Van Erp, Associate Director and Honorary Dramaturg

To peer behind the walls of *The Convent*, scan here:



## About the Creative Team

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**Eliza Anker** (*Lighting Designer*) is a junior pursuing a BFA in theatre design and production with a concentration in lighting design and a minor in Judaic studies. Design credits include *Tick, Tick... Boom!* and *I and You* (Basement Arts). Assistant design credits include *Titanic* (UProd), *Attempts on Her Life* and *Stop/Kiss* (Rude Mechanicals), and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (MUSKET). Production electrician credits include *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Gloria* (UProd) and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (MUSKET). Special thanks to her mom, dad, and sister.

**Brittany Crinson** (*Hair & Makeup Designer*) is the Wig, Hair, and Makeup Studio manager for all of UProd. She takes on the roll of designing for each production. Crinson spent several years in Chicago building her portfolio and skill set as a wig, hair, and makeup designer. She is thrilled to be back for her 2nd full year at UMich. Break legs, cast and crew of *The Convent*!

## About the Creative Team

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**Kate Hoppood** (Sound Designer) is thrilled to be joining the team for *The Convent*. Credits: Broadway: *Birthdays Candles* (Roundabout's American Airlines Theater). Regional credits include: *Mrs. Harrison* (Williamston Theatre); *Nora, 8 nights, Clyde's, Soft Target* (Detroit Public Theatre); *Julius Caesar* (Play-Maker's Repertory Company); *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* (Detroit Public Theatre); *The Tempest, Richard III, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Love's Labour's Lost* (Michigan Shakespeare Festival). Chicago: *Into That Darkness: The Corrosive Hours of Edgar Allan Poe* (The Edge Off Broadway); *Love's Labour's Lost* (Lifeline Theatre); *Titus Andronicus* (Babes with Blades); and *The Electric Baby and Wrens* (Rivendell Theatre Ensemble).

**Halena Starr Kays** (Director) is a founding member of the artistic collaborative the Ruffians, an artistic affiliate of American Blues Theatre, a former member of the Big Apple Circus Clown Care unit, past artistic director of the Hypocrites, former co-artistic curator for Theater on the Lake, and co-founder and former artistic director of Playmakers Lab. Kays is an artistic associate with the Neo-Futurists Chicago, where she co-created and directed *Comfortable Shoes, Pop/Waits, 44 Plays for 44 Presidents, Burning Bluebeard, Daredevils, Daredevils Hamlet, Fake Lake, and Wildcat!* (Jeff-nominated for Best Direction, Best New Work, and Best Actor). Kays primarily makes professional work in Chicago but has directed across the country, from LA to Portland to NYC. She has been nominated for Jefferson awards for Best Supporting Actress, Best Direction, Best New Work, and Best Production; named one of the top 50 "players" in Chicago theater by NewCity; is a recipient of the prestigious 3Arts Award; and received a signed letter from Mr. Rogers saying she was "special" in 1978. She is a UT-Austin and Northwestern grad, a proud member of SDC, and head of directing at the University of Michigan. Thanks to her mystical dad.

**Christianne Myers** (Costume Designer) is the Claribel Baird Halstead Collegiate Professor in the Department of Theatre & Drama. More than 50 productions at U-M; favorites include:

## About the Creative Team

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Elizabeth Cree; *Bernarda Alba*; *La Bohème*; *Candide*; *Night and Day*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *Clybourne Park*; *Henry IV, Part I*; and *Caroline, or Change*; among others. New York: *Running Man*, *Oedipus*, *American Dreams: Lost & Found*; *Theatreworks/USA*, the *Public Theatre & Ma-Yi Ens.*, *Irondale Ens.*, *Lincoln Center Institute*, the *Juilliard School*. Regional Theatre: *Santa Fe Opera*, *Detroit Public Theatre*, *Florentine Opera*, *Indiana Rep*, *Vermont Stage Co.*, *Clarence Brown Theatre*, *Syracuse Stage*, *Opera Memphis*. Other: *BFA*, *Pace University*; *MFA*, *New York University*.

**Naomi Parr** (*Movement & Choreography*) is pursuing a BFA in directing and a BA in Judaic studies, with a minor in playwriting. In her time at U-M, Naomi has directed *Falsettos* (*Basement Arts*) and *The SpongeBob Musical* (*Pioneer Theatre Guild*) and assistant directed *John Proctor Is the Villain* (*UProd*), *Pippin*; *Her Life and Times* (*MT New Works*), and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (senior directing thesis). Dramaturgy credits include *Tick, Tick... Boom!* (*Basement Arts*), *Jesus Christ Superstar* (*MUSKET*), and *The Grown Ups* (senior directing thesis). She's thrilled to be a part of this production and grateful for Halena and the incredible team!

**Jeremy Sortore** (*Voice & Speech Coach*) (he/him) is an associate professor in the Department of Theatre & Drama. Regional: *American Repertory Theater*, *Utah Shakespeare Festival*, *Colorado Shakespeare Festival*. Member, *National Alliance of Acting Teachers*; associate faculty, *Theatrical Intimacy Education*; associate teacher of *Fitzmaurice Voicework*; certified teacher of *Knight-Thompson Speechwork*; certified *Vocal Combat Technique Trainer/Coach*; *PAVA*-recognized *vocalist*; editorial board, *Journal of Consent-Based Performance*; associate editor, *Voice & Speech Review*. Education: *Moscow Art Theater School/ American Repertory Theater Institute at Harvard University*. [www.JeremySortore.com](http://www.JeremySortore.com)

## About the Creative Team

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**Lauren Streng** (*Scenic Designer*) is a fourth year student pursuing a BFA in Theatre Production and Design, as well as a BSE in Mechanical Engineering. *The Convent* is Lauren's debut design with UProd. Her other designs with the University of Michigan include *Every Brilliant Thing*, *Plano* (Senior Directing Thesis), *33 Variations* (Basement Arts), *Golden Boy* (Senior Directing Thesis), and *Blood at the Root* (Senior Directing Thesis). She was also the scenic design assistant on *Turn of the Screw* (UProd). Lauren is very grateful to have worked on *The Convent*, and has appreciated the collaboration with everyone on the team.

**Carter Van Erp** (*Associate Director*) is a master's student at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and an alum of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance, where he earned his bachelor of theatre arts degree with concentrations in performing arts management and theatre studies. At Michigan, he has worked on developmental productions including *Loud Nite* by Gavin Creel, *Kill the Boy Band* by Kerrigan + Lowdermilk, and his own short film *Bound*. Van Erp plans to move to the East Coast post-grad to pursue a career blending artistic development with business strategy. He is very grateful to have been pulled into this process as, to quote Halena, the Walgreen's "local gay Catholic," and hopes you enjoy your stay at the convent.

**Frannie Walton** (*Production Stage Manager*) is a fourth-year student receiving her BFA in theatre design and production with a concentration in stage management. Other U-M credits include: UProd—*The Government Inspector* (PSM), *A Little Night Music* (1st ASM), *Intimate Apparel* (1st ASM); MUSKET—*Catch Me If You Can* (Rehearsal SM); Golden Theatre Co—*A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (PSM); Basement Arts—*Orion and the Goatman* (PSM); OPEN—*Painless: The Opioid Musical* (ASM). She would like to thank the entire team, especially her ASMs and PAs, for such a wonderful experience!

## **Production Staff**

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Associate Director **Carter Van Erp**

Assistant Director **Adilynn Cardenas**

Assistant Costume Designer **Rachel Pfeil**

Assistant Dramaturgs **Kendal Bazerman, Joe Guzon**

Assistant Stage Managers **Brook Galsky, Shelby Holloway**

Production Assistants **Kendall Brisco, Laney Carnes**

## **Production Crews**

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Costumes **Iliana Beauchamp, Katy Dawson, Sarita Gankin, Lucy Knas, Alex Li, Maya Liu, Rachel Pfeil, Isabella Pruter, Kayti Sanchez, Ellie Van Engen & 250/252/262 students**

Lighting **Eliza Anker, Morgan Gomes, Ethan Hoffman, Brandon Malin, Tate Zeleznik, Gabriela Ribeiro Znamensky & 250/252/262 students**

Paint **Gretchen Brookes, Miles Hionis, Norah Klocke, Ren Kosiorowski, Yuchen Ma, Ceri Roberts, Seri Stewart<sup>^</sup>, Amber Walters, Landon Wouters, Angela Wu & 250/252/262 students**

Scenery **Kelly Burkel, Ren Kosiorowski, Aiden Heeres, Soph Irfani, Hannah Kryzhan, Josi Middaugh, Luke Moyer, Michael Russell, Nathaniel Steever & 250/252/262 students**

Props **Andy Blatt, Kendall Brisco, Brook Galsky, Alex Heskett, Sam McLaughlin, Leah Stchur, Reese Stevens & 250/252/262 students**

Wigs/Hair/Makeup **Gretchen Brookes, Christine Chupailo, Miles Hionis & 250/252/262 students**

Production Management **Shelby Holloway, Esther Hwang, Greta Steever**

## **Running Crews**

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Light Board Operator **Sarah Lau**

Sound Operator **Yuchen Wu**

Deck Crew (Scenery) **Yuchen Ma, David Roden**

Deck Crew (Props/Electrics) **Taylor Strilesky**

Deck Crew (Props) **Cecilia Bermudez, Lewis Jackson**

Wardrobe Crew **AJ Dagenais, Aspen Kinomoto<sup>^</sup>, Patrick McCaffity, Elby Schader**

Hair & Makeup Crew **Lilly Geer, Tiffany Nagano**

Backup Crew **Jasmin Rhymes**

## **Faculty Advisors**

---

Stage Management Advisor **Jenn Rae Moore**

Scenic Design Advisor **Jungah Han**

Lighting Design Advisor **Heather Gilbert**

## **Acknowledgements**

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Special Thanks to David “Mystical” Kays, Ripley Spatafora, Props Manager Christopher Lewis, and the Kalamazoo Civic Theatre for their support.

Additional thanks to the Society of Props Managers (S\*P\*M) for their continued support.

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# **M** | MUSIC, THEATRE & DANCE

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## Theatre & Drama Alumni

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Rachael Albert (2012), Stage Manager, *Just for Us* Regional, Broadway, Tour, HBO

Martijn Appelo (2018), Disney Theatrical Group, Senior Manager, Technical Production, New York, NY

Lindsay Balaka (2016), Walt Disney Imagineering/Live Entertainment, Artist/Illustrator-Costume Design & Development, Anaheim, CA

Matthew Eggers (2024), Seattle Rep, Costume Design Associate, Seattle

Jennifer Gazdecki (2008), Disney Live Entertainment, CAD Drafter, Walt Disney World

Emily Hanlon (2022), MDQ/Paramount Theatre/ASM/Chicago

Jenn Jacobs (2014), Harris for President Campaign, Program Manager

Rachel Kaplow (2016), Freelance AEA Stage Manager, NY

Berit Keller (2019), *Christmas Spectacular Starring the Radio City Rockettes*, 1st Assistant Stage Manager, NYC

Elana Lantry (2015), USA Associate Director, Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), New York, NY

Katie Lantz (2014), *Avatar: The Last Airbender* for Netflix, Casting Director, LA

Gee Hoon Lim (2013), The Joffrey Ballet, Director of Finance, Chicago

Chazz Malott (2013), Freelance Dimmer Tech for Touring Concerts

Bri Reed (2021), The Talent, Talent Booker, Los Angeles

Kate Shattock (2008), *Death Becomes Her* Pre-Broadway World Premiere, Dresser for Megan Hilty, Chicago

Joel E. Silver (2002) Visa Payment Forum 2025, Lighting Designer, Arlington, TX; HPE Discover Las Vegas 2025, Lighting Designer, Las Vegas, NV; Ford Pro Fleet 2025, Lighting Designer, Michigan Central Station Detroit

Aaron Tacy (2014), Associate Lighting Designer: *Dead Outlaw*, *Glen-garry Glen Ross*, *Eureka Day*, *JOB* (Broadway 24-25)

Michayla Van Treeck, Wardrobe Supervisor, Geffen Playhouse, Westwood, CA

Elaina Veasey (2020), Virginia Opera 2023-2026, ASM and PSM, Norfolk, VA

Sam Vettrus (2014), Kimberly Akimbo National Tour, Flyman

Anton Volovsek (2017), *Bowl EP*, Co-Scenic Designer, Vineyard Theatre NYC

Samantha Weiser (2020), *Mystic Pizza*, Associate Lighting Designer, PaperMill Playhouse

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 the  
**PurpleRose**  
theatre company

# **NORMA** & **WANDA**

*BY* **JEFF DANIELS**  
*DIRECTED BY* **RHIANNON RAGLAND**



**SEPT 25 - DEC 21, 2025**

***PurpleRoseTheatre.org***



## FALL 2025 EVENTS

**Sunday, November 23**

**Orpheus Singers**

7:00 pm | Stamps Auditorium

**Small Jazz Ensembles**

7:00 pm | Arthur Miller Theatre

**Monday, November 24**

**Small Jazz Ensembles**

7:00 pm | Arthur Miller Theatre

**Concert Band**

8:00 pm | Hill Auditorium

**Thursday, December 4**

**Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Lab Ensemble**

8:00 pm | Rackham Auditorium

**Friday - Saturday, December 5 & 6**

**Chamber Opera: *La Tragédie de Carmen* ★**

7:30 pm | McIntosh Theatre

**Monday, December 8**

**University Symphony Orchestra**

8:00 pm | Hill Auditorium

**Saturday, January 17**

**Collage Concert 2026 ★**

8:00 pm | Hill Auditorium

*Events marked with a ★ are ticketed.*



For a full list of events,  
visit [smtd.umich.edu/events](https://smtd.umich.edu/events)  
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