

USC School  
of Dramatic Arts

## **New Works Festivals**

MFA Dramatic Writing  
Year Three

### **Lena Passes By**

By Amanda L. Andrei

Directed by Giovanni Ortega

### **Nan**

By Noa Gardner

Directed by Alison M. De La Cruz



Presented Digitally as a Zoom Webinar **May 22-23, 2020**

# Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing

The **Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing (MFADW)** is an intensive, intimate, mentor-based, practicing literary arts program for today's dramatic writer. The MFADW, centrally housed in the School of Dramatic Arts at USC, an elite research university, is designed to mine the literary potential of the artist, and prepare the artist to engage meaningfully in global society and the profession. In association with the USC School of Cinematic Arts, specific cinematic writing courses are available in the MFADW.

The MFADW approaches dramatic writing through its critical roots in playwriting; and then supports investigation beyond this foundation into adaptation, screenwriting, television writing, and new media. This includes curricular projects in dramatic arts, certain specified associative cinematic arts curricula, special workshops, and visiting artists, but with playwriting as the primary emphasis and a professionally promising play as the culminating thesis.

The program aims to help students utilize their innate artistry to build excellence and to discover their authentic voice. Included are production opportunities in a three-tiered New Works Festival (staged readings, workshop productions, and a capstone concert readings festival utilizing professional directors, professional actors, and professional dramatists as dramaturges and taking place at a major regional theatre company). In addition, as they make their professional transitions, graduating students are provided with the opportunity to meet leaders of prominent theatres in the region one-on-one.

MFADW also supports opportunities for collaboration with acting students, internships, and exposure to a wide array of celebrated guest artists who have included the late Edward Albee, Tony Kushner, the late Amiri Baraka, David Henry Hwang, Christopher Hampton, Timberlake Wertenbaker, Alexandra Billings, Paula Vogel, Tony Shaloub, Danny Strong, and others in theatre, film, television, and new media.

Graduates of the program have found success in many arenas of dramatic writing. MFADW provides resources for writers to enhance their work toward professional engagement.

USC School of Dramatic Arts presents

## New Works Festivals

MFA Dramatic Writing / Year Three

Presented Digitally as a Zoom Webinar **May 22-23, 2020**

## Lena Passes By

Friday, May 22 | 7:30 p.m.

## Nan

Saturday, May 23 | 2:30 p.m.

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Artistic Director **Velina Hasu Houston**

Festival Supervisor **Alex Rehberger**

Producers, Pasadena Playhouse **Danny Feldman, Kristen Hammack**

Producer, USC **Elsbeth M. Collins**

Casting **Raul Staggs**

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### SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Naysan Mojgani, Elisa Bocanegra, and Amy Levinson. The many others we would like to thank are listed elsewhere in the program.

### For *LENA PASSES BY*

**From Amanda:** Merisi mult & salamat Missy, Adriana, and Codin for Romanian translations; Professor Galateanu for language & literature. Artists At Play, Metaphor Club, and Dorland Arts Colony for creative space. The teachers and fellow artists who believe in me; the diasporic Romanian and Filipino/a/x communities. The Briones-Tira, Andrei, & O'Connor family clans, muses, & ancestors. Colton & the anaks. My amazing parents.

**From Giovanni:** Special thanks go to Velina Hasu Houston and Paula Cizmar for this opportunity.

### For *NAN*

**From Noa:** Special thanks to Velina Hasu Houston, Paula Cizmar, Oliver Mayer, Luis Alfaro, Boni Alvarez, Kelly Younger, and Alison M. De La Cruz.

**From Alison:** Special thanks to Kumu Clarice Wahineali'i Nuhi and Keali'i Ceballos.

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These productions use the Artist Engagement Services of the University Resident Theatre Association.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Performers' Unions:  
**ACTORS' EQUITY ASSOCIATION, AMERICAN GUILD OF MUSICAL ARTISTS,  
AMERICAN GUILD OF VARIETY ARTISTS, SAG-AFTRA**

through Theatre Authority, Inc. for their cooperation in permitting the Artists to appear on this program.

# Lena Passes By

By Amanda L. Andrei

Directed by Giovanni Ortega\*\*\*

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

*Lena Bala*

**Jessica Andres\*\***

*Lupu Bala, Corneliu Bala, Wolf/Man*

**Time Winters\***

*Auntie Ursa, Curioasa, Triantafilla*

**Thea Mercouffer**

*Diavol Doi, Pâcală, Officer*

**Ben Hogoboom**

*Diavol Unu, Tândală, Younger Lupu*

**Tudor Munteanu\*\***

*Wolves*

**All**

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Stage Directions **Nicole Royster**

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Time:

**Once upon a time**

Place:

**America** — Lena and Lupu's house

**Romania** — The Bucharest airport, a rented flat, Pâcală and Tândală's house, a bizarro church, a trail, the Gilort river, Corneliu's house

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Stage Manager **Jamie Salinger**

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

scriu greu. vâr vârful creionului în piele până unde dau sub ea de mine. scriu cât de-adânc simt eu că trebuie să scriu. zgârii țesăturile, scormonesc în vene, râcâi în os până-aud grafitul cum îi trece prin sicriu.

i write with difficulty. i jab the tip of the pencil into my skin until i meet myself underneath. i write as deep as i feel i should write. i scratch the tissues, i dig in the veins, i scrape at the bone until i hear the graphite penetrating her coffin.

(Ioan Es. Pop, trans. Nathaniel Smith, K. Shaver, and Ion Crețu)

(inhale)

I dig her out, I dig them out, I dig you out, and I say, family, be blessed by the graphite and bless me back. I'm fixated on something dodging in and out of doors and countries, and I need your help to find it. Amen and amen.

(exhale)

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## PLAYWRIGHT'S BIO

With roots in the Philippines and Romania, **Amanda L. Andrei** hails from Virginia/Washington D.C. and currently resides in Los Angeles. Other plays include *Black Sky* (Madison New Works Lab; Semifinalist 2019 ScreenCraft Stage Play Competition; Finalist 2020 New American Voices Festival), *Crocodile (The Last Escape)*, and *Every Night I Die* (Winner 2010 International Bottle Tree Award). Her work has been read and/or developed by Playwrights Arena, La MaMa, Artists at Play, Son of Semele, Relative Theatrics, Bucharest Inside the Beltway, La-Ti-Do, and others. She is a member of the Echo Young Playwrights group, Playground LA's Writers Pool, Dramatists Guild of America and a proud alum of VONA and Atlantic Center for the Arts. She has taught playwriting and creative writing to students, artists, and engineers across the country and online. College of William & Mary (BA), Georgetown University (MA), University of Southern California (MFA). Say hello at [www.amandalandrei.com](http://www.amandalandrei.com)

## DIRECTORS'S BIO

**Giovanni Ortega** (SDC) is honored to direct *Lena Passes By* by Amanda Andrei. Additional directing credits include: *Scrimmage* (East West Players), *The Last Firefly* (Artists at Play/Center Theatre Group), *Pogi Boy*, *Allos*, *The Carlos Bulosan Story*, *The Hotel Play* (Associate Director, CTG/ Playwrights' Arena), *Benches*, *Palindromes* (Poetry Festival Singapore) *La Madre de Todos los Exilios* (Bogotá), *Cabaret*, *The Musical*, *Spring Awakening*, *Urinetown*, *In the Next Room*, *The Government Inspector*, *The House of the Spirits*, *Upon the Fragile Shore* (LA Asian Pacific Film Festival). Giovanni is currently producing *Kanto Cuentos*, a series of short films in response to the pandemic in collaboration with Theatre Without Borders. For more info: [www.giovanniortega.com](http://www.giovanniortega.com)

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**WARNING** Please be advised that this production contains strong language, violence.

\*Members of Actors' Equity Association, The Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

\*\*Members of The Screen Actors Guild — American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

\*\*\*Member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a national theatrical labor union.

# Nan

By Noa Gardner

Directed by Alison M. De La Cruz

## CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

*Nan*

**Marlene Yamane-Chau\*\***

*Alice*

**Mapuana Makia\*\***

*Maddi/Keiki*

**Chloe Madriaga**

*Mrs. Hannity, Dr. Bell, Mama*

**Hiwa Chow Elms\***

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Stage Directions **Ezekiel Goodman**

Time:

**Hurry up! Please!**

**Before it's too late.**

Place:

**Waimanalo, Hawai'i.**

NAN's plantation-style house is small and modern but the wooden steps out front, the clothesline in the backyard, and the jalousied windows to let in the cool air all recalls itself to a simpler time.

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Stage Manager **Damaris Eddy**

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

I was told by my playwriting professor in my very first playwriting class in undergrad that good plays come from a place of fear.

The fear in this play has do with my grandmother. See, she died when I was 15. She died before I could get to know her—really get to know her, because, really, I don't know much about her. I don't know how she grew up or what her parents were like. I don't know whether she liked her poi sweet or sour. I don't know anything about her of consequence. And this fills me with a lot of shame because I should have asked. I should have but I didn't. I guess I thought I would have time.

When I moved to California for college, there was an older woman named Alice (an old, old ex of my grandfather's) that took care of me when I moved out here, made sure I had everything I needed for college, helped me to get settled in my dorm and whatnot. We quickly got to know each other over a very short amount of time. I asked her how she grew up and what her parents were like. She told me this one story about herself and about her mom and that story inspired the play that you are about to see.

Sadly, Alice died a few years ago before she could see what this play ended up being. But I did get to know her. I got to know her just a little bit. So I dedicate this play to her, and to my grandmother, and to all of you and your Nans.

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## PLAYWRIGHT'S BIO

**Noa Gardner** is a Native Hawaiian poet and playwright born and raised in Kaimuki on the island of O'ahu. Over the course of his time spent in the MFA Dramatic Writing program, Noa has enjoyed exploring the many different imaginary alternative bodies within himself, and being able to learn the craft of playwriting in order to best tell the indigenous stories of Native Hawaiian people. Noa has been a national finalist for the Gary Garrison Ten Minute Play award (2016) and has had his one act and full-length plays read in collaboration with the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, the Son of Semele, and the Los Angeles Theatre Company.

## DIRECTORS' BIO

**Alison M. De La Cruz** is a cultural space cultivator, producer, multi-disciplinary theatre artist, facilitator, and educator. De La Cruz has spent 20 years working with queer, youth, immigrants, and artists of color to develop original work. Directing: World premiere of Nathan Ramos' *As We Babble On* (2018), Claudia Rodriguez's *Midnight Steel* (2016); Post Natyam Collective's *Super Ruwaxi* (2014), East West Players' EVOKE FESTIVAL (2013 & 2012), TeAda Productions' TEADAWORKS (2010 & 2008). De La Cruz's individual work includes: *L.A. Malong Malong* (2011), *Where You Stay?* (2006), *Naturally Graceful* (2005), and *Sungka* (1999). De La Cruz is currently the Vice President of Programs at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center and has served as Executive Producer of the LA premiere of *Allegiance* (2018) and the world premiere of *Tales Of Clamor* (2019).

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\*\*Members of The Screen Actors Guild — American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

# USC School of Dramatic Arts

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## ADJUNCT LECTURERS

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Courtesy Joint Appointments: Thomas G. Cummings, Larry E. Greiner (Emeritus), Bruce Smith  
Emeriti Faculty: Don Llewellyn, Eve Roberts, Andy Robinson, Robert R. Scales, Eric Trules, James Wilson

## STAFF

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## ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Located in Los Angeles, a city synonymous with artistic innovation and excellence, the top-ranked **USC School of Dramatic Arts** is a leader in dramatic arts education. The School uniquely blends artistic training in a conservatory environment with world-class faculty artists and the full academic experience found only within a major research university. This close-knit, supportive environment offers students the freedom to explore their artistic passions. Through programs of the highest caliber, as well as initiatives that provide access to professional experience, students are prepared for leadership in every facet of dramatic arts. For more information, please visit [dramaticarts.usc.edu](http://dramaticarts.usc.edu).

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