



Exes

By Kassie Dunaj

Director
Sophia Cannella

Scenic Elements & Prop Coordination
Sophia Cannella & Amanda Pordon

Costume Designer
Nadia Klug

Faculty Advisor
David Gram

Stage Manager
Amanda Pordon

Friday, April 30, 2021 at 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Outdoor Festival Stage

THE COMPANY

Veronica	Ever Liedel
Marney	Alessia Fionda
Ben	Austin Bickel
Eliza	Sam Torres
Charlie	Jarvis Pitts

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

My journey to this production you are about to see has been a long, invigorating one. The creation of *Exes* came long before I entered the picture, when playwright Kassie Dunaj wrote the play for one of her playwriting classes. I first stumbled upon Kassie's work during a reading of her ten-minute play, *Why We Broke Up*. I was amazed by the talent in Kassie's voice, and later went on to direct a Zoom production of the show.

When the time came to pick my capstone, I knew it had to be a directing project. Even more, I knew it was Kassie's work I wanted to explore. I inquired with Kassie on her other works and was thrilled when I got my hands on *Exes*. From there, the work had only just begun.

This show, as a new work, has been a completely unique experience for me. We went through several readings, a complete overhaul of the text, a workshop week with more edits to the script, and a full-blown production process ending with the performance you are about to see. Throughout the process, Kassie never failed to surprise and delight us with her changes to the show. Implementing them was a challenge the actors rose to and above.

This show has been a lot of firsts for me: my first time directing a full-length show, my first new work developmental process, and my first time directing for an outdoor venue. Through this process, I learned what it means to be a director, artist, and dreamer. Veronica talks about her dreams in this show, and struggles to achieve them. She battles obstacle after obstacle in search of her perfect writing job. I think we all have been in her situation, or maybe still are there. We dream, we want, we pursue, and sometimes we fail. As you watch this show, I encourage you to consider your own dreams, what's standing in your way, and how you can rise above any obstacle in your path by being your authentic self.

Kassie has written a beautiful play about resilience, braving life's challenges, and embracing the uncertainty of the future. I think these are all messages we can continue to absorb into our daily lives. So, I invite you to lean forward and enjoy *Exes*, and the wonderful story Kassie and these artists have to tell.

- Sophia Cannella

DRAMATURG'S NOTE

What do you do for a living? Ah, the age-old question. The go-to inquiry when first making another's acquaintance. Commonly asked out of politeness, this question stands as a staple of our society, probing another on what it is they do for work.

To ask this of a creative, the ordeal can be more than daunting. They often stumble to find their answer.

It is within *Exes* where playwright Kassie Dunaj poses this very question to Veronica, a freelance magazine writer who struggles to find work in New York City. As she finds herself in-between jobs and on a frantic search for opportunity, matters are made more complicated when her personal life is thrown directly into the mix.

Within this grappling to balance the professional with the private, Veronica questions herself: Is it time to give up? Time to pack a suitcase and head back home to Indiana? At what point do our ambitions fade away... into forgotten dreams? In facing the trials that come with making it in the writing world, Dunaj explores the fears associated with growing up, change, and finding independence. Throughout that very exploration comes the realization of where one's biggest support lies: within themselves.

It is the discovery to accept the past, live in the present, and go forward into the future.

Exes presents a world no different than our own - a world filled with hesitations, doubts, and insecurities. It accounts for these obstacles, then displays what's more important: the persistence to overcome them. It is a story of growth, acceptance, and perseverance in pursuing our passions. Our dreams.

- Emily Nichter

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