

THE COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY
APPRENTICE CLASS OF 2024 PRESENTS

DIRECTED BY HAL CROPP

the
EFFECT

by Lucy Prebble

MARCH
8 - 23

A HEART-WRENCHING,
MIND-BENDING
DRAMA



THE EFFECT is presented by special arrangement with Broadway Licensing, LLC, servicing the Dramatists Play Service collection. (www.dramatists.com)

THE COMMONWEAL THEATRE'S 2024 Apprentice Class



Synth
Gonzalez



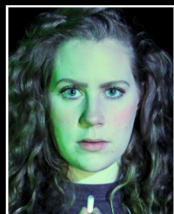
Josie
Ramler



Joseph
Sheridan



Thomas
Teeter



Hannah
Heil

p r e s e n t s

the **EFFECT** by Lucy Prebble

Time: now, spring **Setting:** Cambridge, Massachusetts

CAST

Dr. Lorna James.....Josie Ramler
Connie Hall.....Hannah Heil
Tristan Frey.....Joseph Sheridan
Dr. Toby Sealey.....Thomas Teeter

Designers & Administrators

The capstone mirrors the Commonwealth's Artist/Administrator model, providing the apprentices with the opportunity to expand their work in every aspect: on stage, off stage, and administratively.

Production Stage Manager, Technical Director, Set Designer,
Intimacy Director, Dramaturg.....Synth Gonzalez

Costume Designer, Projections Designer, Graphic
Designer.....Hannah Heil

Sound Designer, Marketing Director.....Josie Ramler

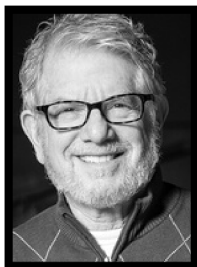
Lighting Designer, Company Manager.....Joseph Sheridan

Props Designer, Development Manager.....Thomas Teeter

Apprentice Advisor.....Laurie Roberts

Director.....Hal Cropp

A Note from the Director



I am deeply honored and filled with joy to be directing the 2024 Apprentice Capstone for several reasons.

First, of course, is Lucy Prebble's fascinating, compelling story. The play, through the lens of a pharmaceutical trial, raises a number of serious questions: the ethics of drug trials, the role of depression in the pantheon of mental health, the nature of human love, and ultimately how deeply we, as humans, can trust, rely upon, and act on our own perceptions.

All of this is portrayed in a very realistic, very modern idiom, making the story seem as fresh as this morning's news.

Then, there is the honor of working with these incredibly talented young theatremakers on their valedictory effort with the Commonwealth. This class of apprentices has demonstrated a deep sense of responsibility, an ingrained work ethic, and an admirable unwillingness to procrastinate any task, no matter how mundane it may appear.

Finally, there is the sheer joy of sharing with you, the audience, an evening in the theater which will give you hours of thought, conversation, and reflection, which is the heart of what we are after here at the Commonwealth.

**So lean in, contemplate, and explore.
Thanks for joining us.**

- Hal Cropp, Producing Artistic Director



The Commonwealth has been a significant part of our lives for over 30 years. In addition to producing excellent shows, the Commonwealth also has an important mission to nurture and sustain the vital role of theater in the community.

The Apprenticeship Program is an important part of this mission, providing the opportunity for talented young actors to develop their talents. Supporting the program provides us with an opportunity to participate in this mission, and it's a pleasure to follow their later careers.

- David & Julie Warner, long-standing friends of the Commonwealth and frequent supporters of the Apprentices Program



♡ Thank you, thank you, thank you!



We are so thankful for your support towards our capstone production, *The Effect*. This show culminates over ten months of an unforgettable, hands-on learning experience and we are so proud to finally share it with you.

We hope this piece thrills, excites, and surprises you just as it did for us in every step of this spectacular process.

The 2024 Apprentice Class

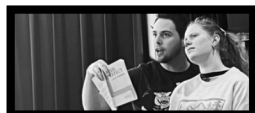
Synth Gonzalez (they/them) is a recent graduate from Augustana College with a B.A. in Theatre History and Theatre Tech & Design. Their favorite stage management credits include *Faustus*, *Lightning Thief*, *The Mountaintop*, *Ride The Cyclone*, and *Cabaret*. Other credits include 2021-2022 Augustana Dance Co. recitals (lighting design), *The Threepenny Opera* (assistant director), *The God of Vengeance* (director and set design). This past season at the Commonweal, their credits included *She Loves Me* (performance stage manager, sound designer), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Women in Jeopardy!* (asst. stage manager).

Hannah Heil (she/her) is so thankful for her time at the Commonweal as an acting apprentice! Hannah grew up in the beautiful Colorado mountains and graduated from NYU Steinhardt with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance: Music Theatre. You may recognize Hannah from her roles last season in *Women in Jeopardy!*, *She Loves Me* (asst. music director), and the *Decked!* play reading. Other favorite credits include *The Wild Party*, *Assassins*, and *EDGES*. Endless thanks to her mentor Alex; her besties Sonali, Josie, and Synth; and her loving supportive family. This project has been a whirlwind and a dream come true all at once. hannahheil.com <3

Josie Ramler (they/them) is from Chanhassen, Minnesota and recently graduated with a B.A. in Theatre from Luther College. Some of their favorite credits include playing the title role in *Macbeth*, Somebody in *Everybody* by Brandon Jacob-Jenkins, and the title role in *Antigone* by Lulu Raczka. At the Commonweal, Josie performed in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *She Loves Me*, was involved in several play readings, and co-hosted the Commonweal podcast. They would like to share a heartfelt thank you to the company members of the Commonweal who helped make their experience as an apprentice so wonderful!

Joseph Sheridan (he/him) from Columbus, Ohio, Joseph graduated last May with a B.A. in Theatre and Arts Management from Miami University, where he ran the new work development organization New Wave Theatre Company. This year as an apprentice he was assistant stage manager for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Mr. Keller/Ensemble in *She Loves Me*. After *The Effect*, Joseph will return to Ohio where he will perform in the ensemble of *Ruth* at Ohio Star Theatre.

Thomas Teeter (he/him) is overjoyed to have been a part of the Commonweal Apprentice program. Hailing from Topeka, KS, Tom has been a performer his entire life. A proud graduate of Carleton College and the National Theatre Institute, his favorite projects include Louis XVI in *Marie Antoinette* at the Emerging Professionals Ensemble, *If I Should Die*, a play he wrote and starred in, and *That Wilderness of Glass*, a devised performance. At the Commonweal, Thomas played Trenner in *Women in Jeopardy!* and was in the ensemble of *She Loves Me*.



A Program that Values Your Support

Dear friends and patrons,

From the bottom of our hearts, we apprentices would like to share our immense gratitude for your support. Regardless of whether this is your 50th time attending a performance at the Commonweal or your first, we are honored to host you in this theater. This program has shaped our careers. We have had incredibly valuable experiences working within this company as we've gained administrative experience, performance and stage management credit, and phenomenal personal development as we grow into our artistic identities. It cannot be overstated how valuable experiences like this are for young theatre professionals. We can easily say that this apprenticeship will benefit us for years to come.

That being said, I would like to talk candidly about finances. The Commonweal is above many theaters in providing both a stipend and housing to apprentices, but it feels important to note how the salary still presents a financial burden to many apprentices and would-be applicants, especially those that come from disadvantaged backgrounds. The majority of apprentices use EBT, work second or third jobs, and rely on support from friends and family. We do this because we love it, but the financial stresses of this life preclude many talented souls from creating all that they could. Please consider supporting the Apprentice Program to ensure that no young artist needs to turn down this position as a result of finances.



**If you would like to *make a contribution* or *become an apprentice sponsor* for a season, please contact
Jeremy van Meter at
jeremyvm@commonwealththeatre.org**

Sincerely,

Thomas Teeter,
Apprentice Class of 2024

Testimonial from a Former Apprentice

The Commonweal gave me true insight into how a theatre company works. It gave me the language and tools to understand all the aspects of creating a professional show...

...As I've gone from job to job, I realize how the apprentice program taught me to **let go of ego**. You hear this advice all the time from people in the industry, and yet you still run into people who refuse to be open, who refuse to take part in an ensemble - whether it's moving a set piece or listening to other ideas...

...The Commonweal taught me that it isn't about me. It's about what's best for the piece.

- Caroline Hawthorn,
Apprentice Class of 2020



What is a Dramaturg?

Preparing for *The Effect* was unique in many ways, but one of the most notable is that my fellow apprentices were able to delve into the material of the play in a deeper way as I had the privilege of functioning as the dramaturg for *The Effect*.

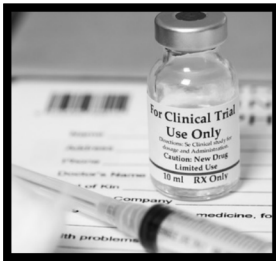
A dramaturg can have many different roles, but a performance dramaturg provides the cast and crew with vital knowledge, research, and interpretations about the theatrical work in question so that they are—in turn—better equipped to tell the story of the play. At the beginning of our process, I created a digital casebook for the cast that provided detailed information in multiple departments to help guide and specify our story.



Some highlights from the casebook of *The Effect* include:

- The production history of the play
- A glossary of the medical language in the play
- Statistics on antidepressant prescriptions and depression
- Research on the stigmas surrounding mental health and prescription drugs
- An exploration of “poor theatre,” in which performances have less support from props and set
- Research on how dopamine and antidepressants can impact relationships
- The history of drug trials and antidepressants

A dramaturg brings information like this to the creative team in hopes of *grounding our storytelling in reality and better understanding the world we are creating.*



One of the most interesting things I found through my research was that *The Effect* was inspired by a real drug trial. The Northwick Park drug trial was a clinical trial that took place in March of 2006. The trial was testing a potential drug for treating autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis and leukemia. Six participants experienced severe adverse reactions after receiving the drug which resulted in multiple organ failure and life-threatening conditions. The incident received widespread attention and raised significant concerns about the safety of early-phase clinical trials and the risks associated with testing new drugs.

This trial echoes some of the issues presented in *The Effect*. The play delves into the ethical implications of manipulating emotions through drugs. It examines the impact of pharmaceuticals on personal life experiences and long-term health, echoing some of the ethical dilemmas and consequences highlighted by incidents like the Northwick Park drug trial.

So, although this work often goes unseen by our audiences, its impact on the show is monumental. A dramaturg has an ability to enrich the creative process for the cast - and I hope this little glimpse into the program provides enrichment to audiences as well!

- *Synth Gonzalez*,
Apprentice Class of 2024

Medicating Depression:

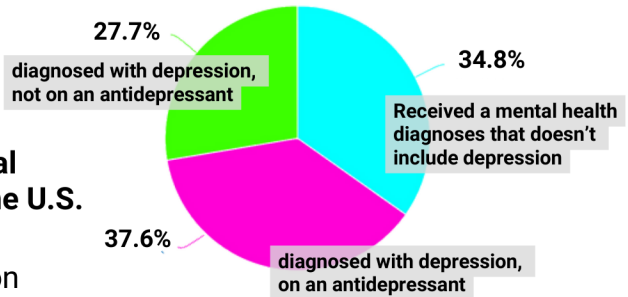
A Complicated Discussion

by Josie Ramler

The subject matter of *The Effect* is more relevant and valuable than ever in our post-pandemic world. According to a report from *Gallup*, depression has become more prevalent in the U.S. following the COVID-19 Pandemic, as the number of people in the U.S. who have reported living with depression has risen to 30%, a full ten points higher than it was in 2015.

How are people interacting with these diagnoses? Many people use antidepressants - around 10 million people have an active antidepressant prescription. That means 60% of people diagnosed with depression are medicated.

The chart to the right represents the entire population of individuals with mental health diagnoses in the U.S.



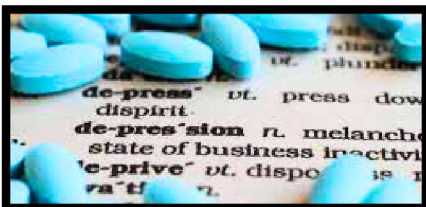
One of the most common types of antidepressants is a...

...selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor or an "SSRI," which increases levels of serotonin in the brain. Medications like *Prozac*, *Zoloft*, and *Lexapro* are SSRIs.

Based on nationwide survey results, it was found that a majority of people on antidepressants experience an elevated mood and increased energy level while taking them. In another study, the effectiveness of antidepressants was compared against placebo. It was found that people on an SSRI improved by 9.6 points on a depressive scale, and those on a placebo improved 7.8 points, meaning that **80% of the improvement rate was due to placebo effect**. The study also highlighted that psychotherapy had a similar rate of improvement, and those who received therapy instead of medication were less likely to have a severe depressive episode occur in the future.

Additionally, antidepressants can have negative side effects and withdrawal symptoms. Antidepressant withdrawal includes functional issues with the digestive system, balance and control of physical movements, and painful phantom sensations like "brain zaps." If one stops taking their antidepressants too soon or too quickly, it could even result in a sort of relapse of depression as the body can mistake withdrawal symptoms for a depressive episode.

While the above information reveals the complexities of medicating depression, antidepressants still do help people. Regardless of whether or not placebo is in play, people feel as though their mood is improving. Antidepressants can help move people through a mental health struggle in the short term, **but is medication the right choice for everyone?**



Unless noted otherwise, all statistics are from a research article titled, "Antidepressants and Health Related Quality of Life (HRLQoL) for Patients with Depression: Analysis of the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey from the United States," which was published in 2022 and written by Omar A. Almohammed, among others.

The report from Gallup was released in May 2023, titled "U.S. Depression Rates Reach New Highs" and was written by Dan Witters.

...now that you've seen the **EFFECT**,
we hope you'll enjoy the entire *2024 season!*

commonweal

theatre

2024 SEASON

UGLY LIES THE BONE

a drama of hope and healing

by Lindsey Ferrentino
APRIL 6—JULY 6

THE OUTSIDER

a non-partisan laugh-fest

by Paul Slade Smith
MAY 18—AUG 31

RUMORS

an outrageous farce

by Neil Simon
JULY 13—NOV 2

DOUBT

— A PARABLE —
a searing drama

by John Patrick Shanley
SEPT 7—NOV 10

MISS BENNET: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY

a romantic Christmas comedy

by Lauren Gunderson
and Margot Melcon
NOV 16—DEC 22

