

EMMA DENSON



DIRECTING

PORTFOLIO

Emma Denson is a **Brooklyn**-based stage director and playwright.

Her work creates, explores, and engages with **community**.

She primarily develops **new works** that **challenge audiences** to not only enjoy the comfort of live theatre, but to embrace the **moment of transformation** the form demands.

Her plays are grounded in

feminism, activism, and experimentation.

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Her taste is greatly influenced by the

international, intercultural,

and intergenerational collaborations she's

formed in New York. By examining what's

broken in our world, her stories shine through

the cracks and make what's old new again,

offering audiences an

arresting, audacious awakening.

arresting, audacious awakening.

about

EMMA

ALABAMA MISSISSIPPI

DENSON

NEW YORK LONDON



ALABAMA

- Born & Raised in Decatur, AL
- Discovered and nurtured my love of Theatre through local classes and involvement in Community Theater
- First time assistant directing (*Fiddler on the Roof*) and directing (*Dinner with Friends*)
- Co-directed an immersive staging of *Hedda Gabler*

MISSISSIPPI

- Attained a Theatre Degree from Mississippi State University
- Co-founded an award-winning TYA company that wrote, directed, and produced original works (*The Basket Cases*)
- Wrote my honors thesis, "Motion Elicits Emotion", which furthered my practice as a movement-based director
- Studied abroad at Oxford University, where I studied Directing British Plays, interviewed for Royal Holloway (unintentionally!) and fell in love with British Theatre

NEW YORK

- Moved in August of 2020 after graduating from undergrad
- Built a network of artists and collaborators, produced and directed shows, found a Directing mentor who thrust me into the international and downtown directing scenes
- I've built a network of artists and collaborators, produced and directed shows, and am constantly challenged to improve my craft

LONDON

- During my time at Oxford, spent time in London as well and was transfixed by the shows I saw
- Formed relationships with other artists there
- Embedded myself into the communities of Oxford and London, where I gained a better understanding of international politics and culture
- Discussing Shakespeare with my favorite Shakespeare professor in a pub that Shakespeare used to stay in was, by far, one of the top ten moments of my life



OTIS & ANNA

June 2023

Peter Jay Sharp Theater
at Playwrights Horizons



Dramaturgy by: **Kelleen Moriarty**
Lighting Design by: **Mikelle Kelly**
Original Composition &
Sound Design by: **Eli Denson**
Scenic Design by: **Emma Denson**

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— WINNER —
BEST SHORT 2023

Directed by **Emma Denson**

When Otis, a talented NYC scenic designer, is diagnosed with dementia and dumped by his partner, Matthew, his world implodes. Anna, his former student, moves in with Otis to help him cope.

During the eight years that she serves as his carer, they develop their own language through a shared love of art, allowing them to communicate even as Otis is slowly robbed of his speech.

RUNAWAY HOME

September 2023
Staged Reading at Theatre Row, NYC

Featuring:

*Olivia Hardy
Michael Park
Melissa Gilbert
Abigail Breslin*

Seven years ago, 13-year-old Aleah's song went viral. One year later, after her mother exploited her fame, selling her body to countless male fans, she ran away. Now, at twenty-one, Aleah fights for a way out of the human trafficking ring she's been taken into, and the freedom to breathe. Runaway Home is a new pop/rock musical that gives voice to the countless teens who run away every year, and the power to be found when they use those voices, together.

Books and Lyrics by **Darren Butler**
Lyrics and Music by **Judy Rodman**
Music Direction and Arrangements by **Sean Pallatroni**
Choreography by **Kayla Friend**
Directed by **Emma Denson**

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I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE

August 2022

Stagedoor Manor

Music Direction by **Drew Baker**
Scenic Design by **Corey Jones**
Lighting Design by **Delaney McLaughlin**
Costume Design by **Lora Marshall**
Directed by **Emma Denson**

DINNER WITH FRIENDS

January 2018

The Princess Theatre

Scenic Design by: **Emma Denson**
Costume Design by:
Heather Kalonick Gillikin
Props Design by: **Emma Denson**
Photography by: **Carolyn Bild**



27 WAGONS FULL OF COTTON

April 2019

McComas Mainstage
Mississippi State University

Scenic Design by:
Kathleen Ritter
Costume Design by:
Jamie Taylor
Props Design by:
Chris Hillhouse



THE TAMING OF KATE

September 2022

Directed by **EMMA DENSON**
WAXWorks Festival

In September 2022, Emma directed *The Taming of Kate*, which puts Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* in conversation with Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the Italian immigrant experience.

Choreography by: **Luca Villa**
Dramaturgy by: **Chris Moran**
Costume / Scenic
Design by: **Emma Denson**

NEW YORK

Triskelion Arts

THE TAMING OF KATE

September 2022

Triskelion Arts

The Taming of Kate was originally part of an assignment for a course in directing Emma took at **Oxford University** when she studied abroad in Summer 2019.

Each week, she received an assignment to pick a different British play and write director's book detailing her directorial concept for that piece.

If you would like to watch the **works-in-process** video of "The Taming of Kate" from WAXWorks in Brooklyn (2022), you may find that link here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XH6MFNFsIA>

"When violence and brutality are used as agents of compliance, the 'taming of the shrew' is often at the expense of silencing a soul."



HEDDA GABLER

HEDDA GABLER

By Henrik Ibsen

Translated by Zola and Gosse and William Archer

Directed by **EMMA DENSON**
Summer 2020

In the summer of 2020, Emma and her frequent collaborator, Ryan Rorick, co-directed an **immersive** production of Hedda Gabler set in the 1970s. The play was staged in her family's farmhouse, and presented to limited, socially distanced audiences.

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing room, in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the front room, a folding door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a verandah outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned foot-rest, and two footstools. A settee, with a small round table in front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back a whatnot with terra-cotta and magnolia ornaments.—Against the back wall of the inner room a sofa, with a table, and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp, with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.

MISS JULLIANA TESMAN, with her bonnet on a carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by BERTA, who carries a

bouquet wrapped in paper. MISS TESMAN is a comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a grey walking-outfit. BERTA is a middle-aged

MISS TESMAN.
[Stops close to the door.]
BERTA.
[Also softly.]
MISS TESMAN.
Well well—
BERTA.
[Beside the door.]
MISS TESMAN.
So you've
BERTA.
[On the point of entering.]
MISS TESMAN.
We must
to look after him.
BERTA.
Ah but, Miss Tesman, you must take proper care of yourself.
MISS TESMAN.
Oh, I shall.
BERTA.
Well, but—
MISS TESMAN.
Oh well—
BERTA.
Most like—
MISS TESMAN.
Well, you must remember how
BERTA.
Yes, indeed—
MISS TESMAN.
Nor I.—
BERTA.
Yes, the young mistress spoke of that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss Tesman?
Yes, indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad, you understand. I hadn't heard a word about it, until he told me himself upon the pier.
BERTA.
Well well, he's clever enough for anything, he is. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people.
MISS TESMAN.
No no, it's not that sort of doctor he is. [Nods significantly.] But let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.
BERTA.
You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?
MISS TESMAN.
[Smiling.] H'm—wouldn't you like to know! [With emotion.] Ah, dear dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! [Looks around.] But bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz covers off all the furniture.

8 BERTA.



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rn here, Miss. [She

Miss Rina. (1)

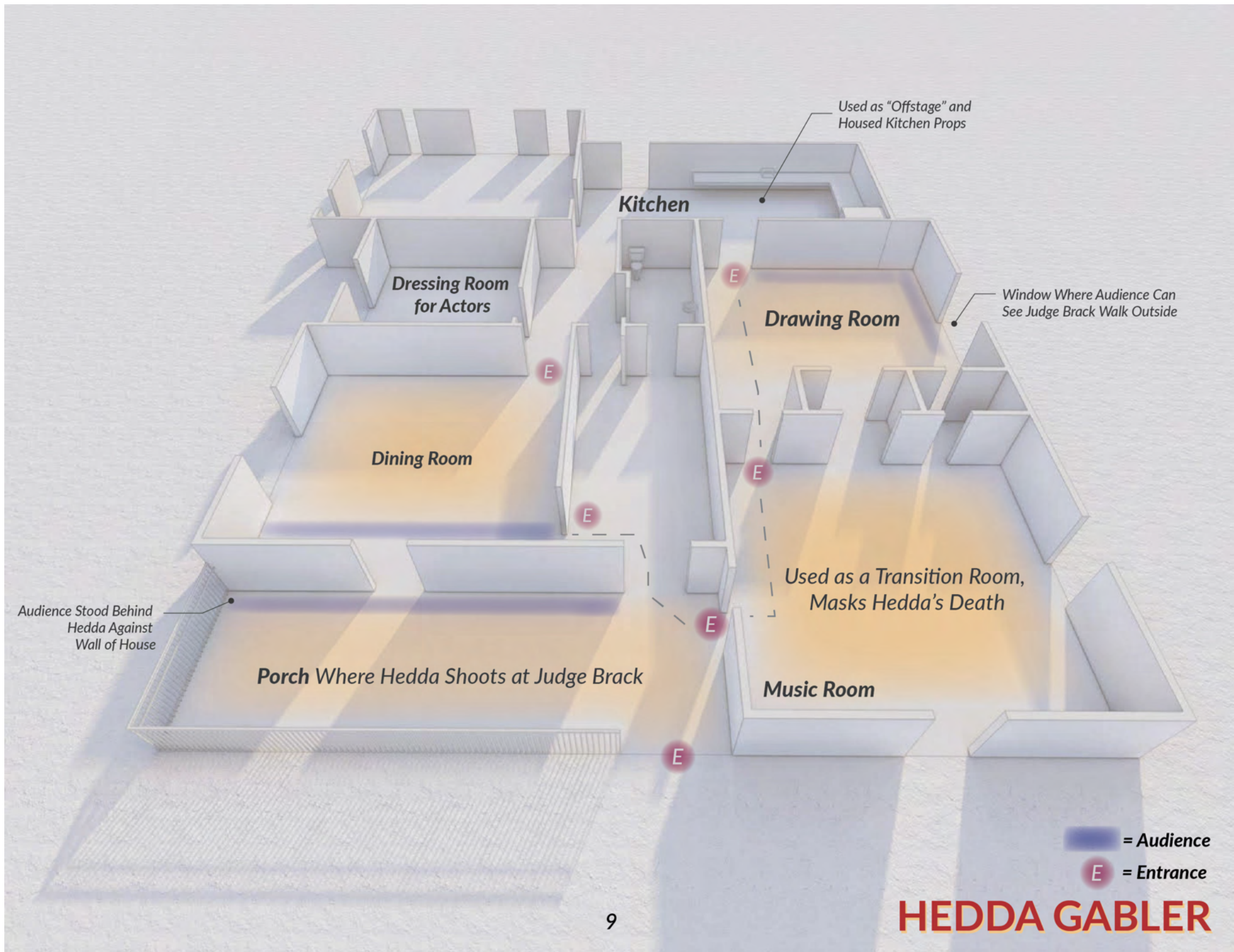
t. He has had you

he'll never learn to

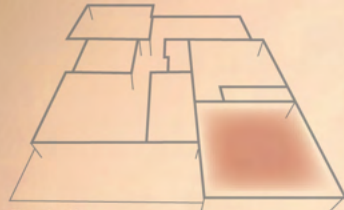
oor sister, my dear

s time. Don't you
at?

rge would make a



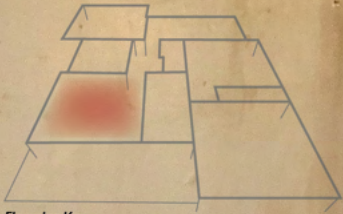
MUSIC ROOM



Floorplan Key



DINING ROOM



Floorplan Key

Hedda & Mrs. Elvsted



Aunt Julia &
Portrait of
Aunt Rina



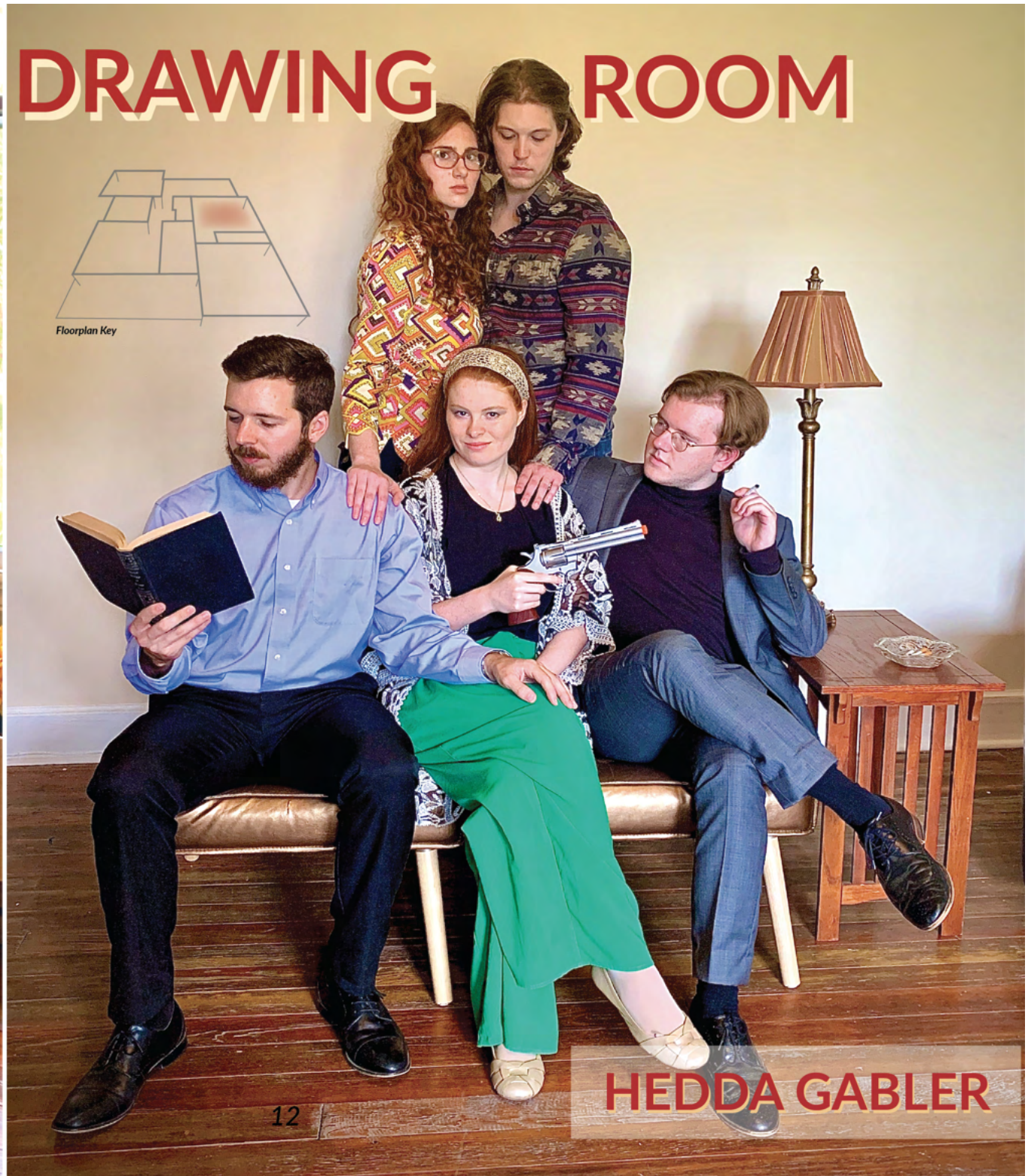
Marta, Who Guided the Audience



Eilert



HEDDA GABLER





RESIDENCIES

BERKELEY REP GROUND FLOOR

August 2023
Berkeley, CA



THE KEENING

Originated by **Colm Summers and LeAnne Howe**
Co-devised by
Colm Summers, Leanne Howe, and Emma Denson
Directed by **Colm Summers**
Associate Directed by **Emma Denson**

BRIC BROOKLYN

April 2023
Brooklyn, NY

THE MESSAGES

Written by **Colm Summers**
Directed by **Austin Tooley**
Assistant Directed by **Emma Denson**

IRISH ARTS CENTER

November 2022
New York, NY

IRISH ARTS CENTER



THE KEENING

Originated by **Colm Summers and LeAnne Howe**
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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

March 2023
Starkville, MS



HUNGER

Written by **Bohdan Boychuk**
Adapted by **Maria Rewakowicz and Emma Denson**
Directed by **Emma Denson**

CATSWALK

BARBIES

Written by **A. A. Brenner**
Directed by **Colm Summers**
Dramaturgy by **Austin Tooley**
Assistant Directed by **Emma Denson**

October 2022
Catskill, NY

GARDEN LANE ARTS CENTER/ FISHAMBLE

June 2022
Co. Waterford
and
Co. Dublin, Ireland

PURGATORY: AFTER YEATS

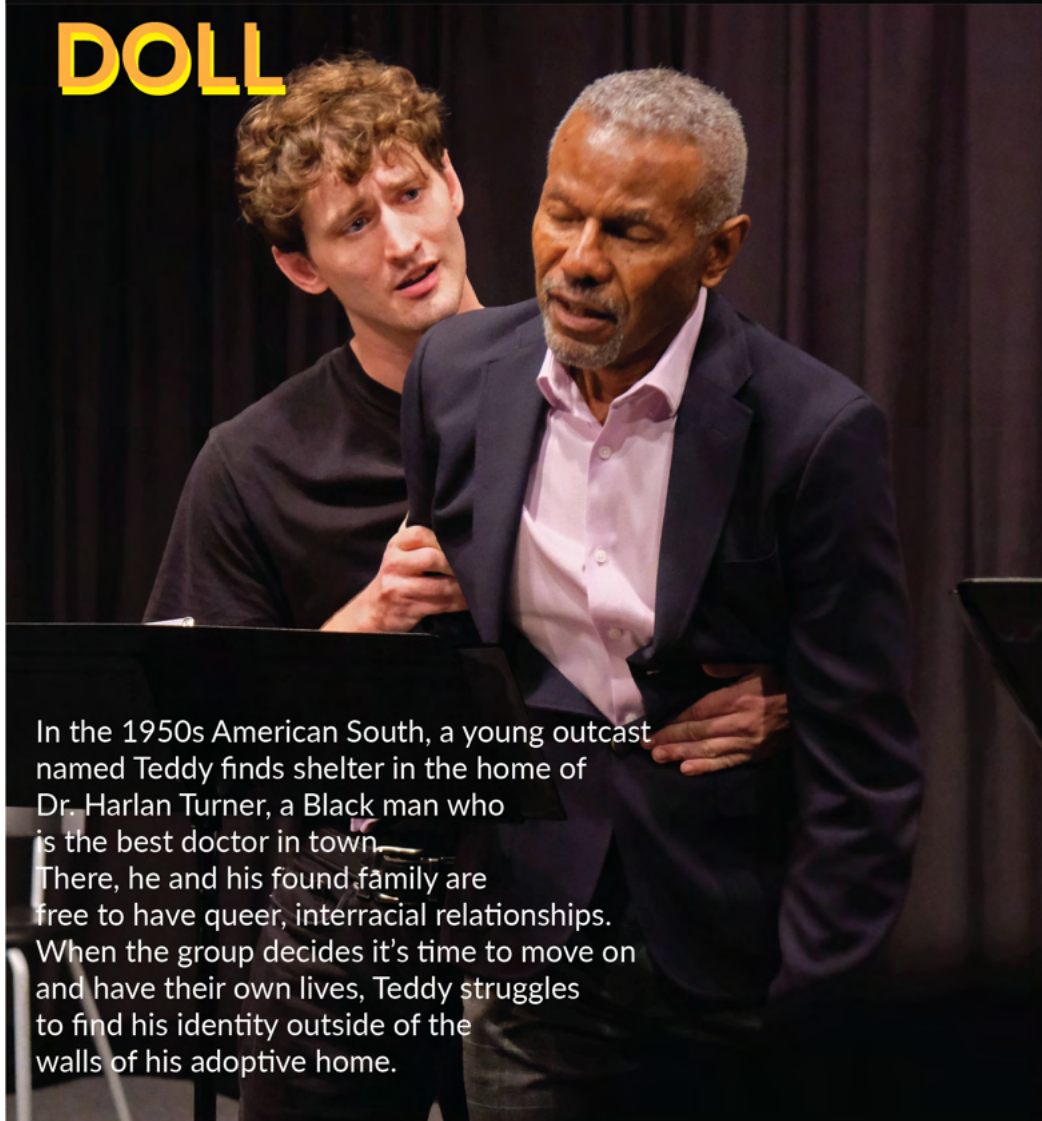
Written by **Colm Summers and Ciara NiChuiric**
Directed by **Colm Summers**
Assistant Directed by **Emma Denson**



READINGS

WEDDING OF THE PAINTED DOLL

August 2023
Polaris North



In the 1950s American South, a young outcast named Teddy finds shelter in the home of Dr. Harlan Turner, a Black man who is the best doctor in town. There, he and his found family are free to have queer, interracial relationships. When the group decides it's time to move on and have their own lives, Teddy struggles to find his identity outside of the walls of his adoptive home.

Written by **A.L. McCormally**
Directed by **Emma Denson**

TOP HATE

March 2022
Arts on Site



A rollicking romp through Old Hollywood, *Top Hate* follows the dashing Fred Astaire as he races to solve the mystery of who is sending him death threats. Along the way, the not so secret underbelly of Hollywood's mostly white, mostly male Golden Age is unveiled by those who helped make these movies legendary.

Written by **Joe Queenan**
Directed by **Emma Denson**

HUNGER

in February 2022, Emma stumbled upon a long-lost gem of a play: Hunger, by Bohdan Boychuk. Soon after, Emma set out to assemble a team of Ukrainian and American artists (including some with a direct relation to Boychuk) to tell the seldom-portrayed history of Holodomor, the genocide, via famine, imposed on Ukrainians by Stalin in 1932-1933



MARCH 2023- Emma directs a second reading of Hunger at Mississippi State University with the current theatre and honors students. The reading is followed by a Q&A led by Professor Stephen Brain

JANUARY 2023- Hunger is selected as one of the readings put on at Irish Arts Center as part of Origin 1st Irish Festival

MAY 2023- Emma directs a third reading of Hunger at the Ukrainian Museum, where Boychuk's son, George, is in the audience

NOVEMBER 2023- To honor the 90th anniversary of Holodomor, the team of Hunger is awarded a development grant by the UNWLA

Sponsors _

