



asolorep
ASOLO REPERTORY THEATRE
PRESENTS

DIAL M FOR MURDER

MARCH 20 – APRIL 25

23-24 SEASON

65th
ANNIVERSARY

DIAL M FOR MURDER

Adapted By **JEFFREY HATCHER**
From the original by **FREDERICK KNOTT**
Directed by **CÉLINE ROSENTHAL**

Scenic Design
ANTONIO TROY FERRON

Costume Design
TRACY DORMAN

Lighting Design
JAMES E. LAWLOR III

Sound Design
SHARATH PATEL

Original Music Compositions
ROBERT ELHAI

Hair, Wig, & Makeup Design
MICHELLE HART

Fight Choreographer
MARK ROSE

Intimacy Consultant
SUMMER DAWN WALLACE

Voice & Dialect Coach
PATRICIA DELOREY

Cultural Competency Consultant
DEWANDA SMITH SOEDER

Dramaturg
DRAYTON ALEXANDER

Chicago Casting
CLAIRE SIMON CASTING

New York Casting
MURNANE CASTING
CHAD ERIC MURNANE, CSA

Resident Casting Director
CÉLINE ROSENTHAL

Production Stage Manager
NIA SCIARRETTA*

Assistant Stage Manager
KRISTIN LOUGHRY*

Dial M for Murder is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

Originally commissioned and produced at The Old Globe
Barry Edelstein, Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director Timothy J. Shields, Managing Director

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Susan Dweck • Annie Esformes and Raul Muñoz • Mike and Ellen Esposito • Ann and Larry Garberding

Dr. Alan and Claudia Porter • Gail and Skip Sack • Marcia Jean Taub and Peter Swain, in loving memory of Ethel and Ron Taub

Mary Lou and Edward* Winnick • Joan H. Wood

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CAST

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

MARK BENNINGHOFEN*.....INSPECTOR HUBBARD
TONY CARTER*.....TONY WENDICE
ZIA LAWRENCE*.....MAXINE HADLEY
MIKHAIL ROBERTS#.....LESGATE
BROOKE TURNER.....MARGOT WENDICE
ADELIN PHELPS*.....MRS. VAN BUREN

*Members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.
#Appears courtesy of Actors' Equity Association

Directors are members of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society; Designers are members of the United Scenic Artists Local USA-829; Backstage and Scene Shop Crew are members of IATSE Local 412.

UNDERSTUDIES

Understudies never substitute for listed players unless a specific announcement for the appearance is made at the time of the performance

For Maxine Hadley: CHRISTINA MEI CHEN; for Tony Wendice: ALEX HATCHER; for Inspector Hubbard: BILLY LYONS;

for Margot Wendice: SHARON PEARLMAN#; for Lesgate: JACKSON PURDY

THE SETTING

The living room of the Wendice flat in London. 1952.

There will be one fifteen-minute intermission.



THE CAST

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



Mark Benninghofen

(Inspector Hubbard) Actors Equity Association. Mark is delighted to return to the Asolo stage after his turn as Henry Drummond in *Inherit the Wind*. Other credits include: *Juno and the Paycock*, *Born Yesterday*, *Appomattox*, *Time Stands Still*, *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide*, *Great Expectations* and *St. Joan* at The Guthrie Theater. *Sweeney Todd*, *A Little Night Music*, *Six Degrees of Separation* and *To Let Go and Fall* at Theater Latté Da. *Tyrone and Ralph* and *Lord Gordon Gordon* for The History Theater and *The Hot House* at Dark & Stormy. TV and film credits include *Movie Stars*, *Frasier*, *Drew Carey*, *Chicago Hope*, *The Public Domain*, *Wilson*, *Older Than America* and *Herman U.S.A.*



Tony Carter He/Him

(Tony Wendice) Tony is excited to be making his Asolo Rep debut! While he's based in Chicago, he loves bouncing around the country for work. Some of his favorite credits include Lumiere in *Beauty and the Beast* (Drury Lane Theatre), Chris in *The Play That Goes Wrong* (Oregon Cabaret Theatre), Freddy in *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels* (Actors Theatre of Indiana), and Oliver in *As You Like it* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre & Milwaukee Rep). He's also proud to have worked at the Utah Shakespeare Festival, PCPA: Pacific Conservatory Theatre, Chicago Children's Theatre, and Utah Festival Opera. Follow him on instagram @tonycarter.



Christina Mei Chen She/Her

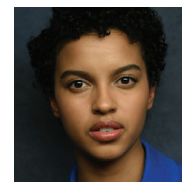
(U/S Maxine Halliday) Originally from Beijing, Christina has spent the past 10 years in Boston and Manhattan, where she made her off-Broadway debut in *Flying Tigers Flying Away* (Theatre at St. Peter's Church). Regional: *Vietgone* (Company One Boston) and *The Wolves* (Lyric Stage Boston). Other NYC Theatre: *girl power sex positive joy ride* (SheNYC festival), *Measure for Measure* (Backroom

Shakespeare Project), *Thirteenth Night* (New York Theatre Festival). Education: Northeastern University, LAMDA, American Conservatory Theatre. FSU/Asolo Conservatory MFA Candidate Class of 2026.



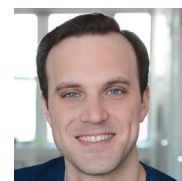
Alex Hatcher

(U/S Tony Wendice) Alex is a current MFA Acting candidate at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training and is thrilled to be making his Asolo Rep debut this season! He holds a BFA in Acting from Boston University with a concentration in Musical Theater and Dance. Favorite stage credits include *West Side Story* (Milwaukee Rep), *1776* (New Rep), *Hamlet* (LAMDA), and *Mr. Burns: A Post-Electric Play* (BU). alexanderhatcher.com



Zia Lawrence They/She

(Maxine Hadley) Thrilled to be making their Asolo Rep debut. Credits Include: *Alls Well That Ends Well*, *Cymbeline*, *Pipeline*, *Cloud Nine*. Off Broadway: *Where the Men Work* (Prague Fringe Festival) *42nd Annual Harriet Holland* (New Georges) Film: *Gossip Girl* (HBO) Proud NYU Grad Acting alum. She thanks her family endlessly for always being down to love and make art.



Billy Lyons He/Him

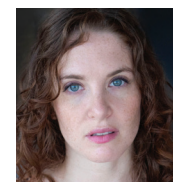
(U/S Inspector Hubbard) Billy, from NYC, is a first-year student with FSU / Asolo Conservatory. Off-Broadway: *Dancing at Lughnasa* at The Irish

Rep and *The Things They Carried* with The American Place Theatre; Regional credits include *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, and *The Time of the Cuckoo* at the Schoolhouse Theatre. He directed a documentary, *It Takes a Lunatic*, about his acting teacher and mentor, Wynn Handman, which is streaming on Netflix. BFA Ithaca College.



THE CAST

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER



Sharon Pearlman She/Her

(U/S Margot Wendice) Sharon was last seen on the Mertz stage in *Inherit the Wind* as Mrs. Bollinger/Reuters Reporter/Vocal Captain. She also

understudied in *Our Town*, *Knoxville*, and *Eureka Day*. Other credits include Rudolph in *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* (National Tour), Crissy in *Hair*, and *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter* in Osaka, Japan (original cast). Sharon is a third-year M.F.A. student at the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. B.F.A. from NYU (Tisch). sharonpearlman.com



Jackson Purdy He/Him

(U/S Lesgate) Jackson was born and raised in Bellows Falls, Vermont, and is a recent graduate of Temple University (B.A. Theater). He

has enjoyed working with the Philadelphia New Playwrights Festival, and locally in Sarasota with Asolo Rep and Florida Studio Theatre. He is currently in the FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training. Much love to all his friends and family!



Mikhail Roberts He/Him

(Lesgate) Mikhail first worked with Asolo Rep in the 2021/2022 season, as Understudy for *Our Town*, *Grand Horizons*, *Hood*, and *Eureka Day* --

the last of which he stepped in for the role of Don during intermission. This season at Asolo, Roberts performed the role of Bertram Cates in *Inherit the Wind*. Other credits can be viewed in his website: mikhailroberts.com



Brooke Turner She/Her

(Margot Wendice) Brooke is an FSU/Asolo M.F.A. candidate and intimacy director from Cleveland, OH, where she earned her B.F.A. in

Classical Acting from Baldwin Wallace University. Some previous credits include: *Inherit the Wind* (Mrs. McLain) and *Our Town* (Wally U/S) at Asolo Rep, *Pride and Prejudice* (Elizabeth U/S) and *Misery* (Annie U/S) at Great Lakes Theatre, and *Richard III* (Lady Anne) with The Idaho Shakespeare Festival. She is grateful to Dad, Christian, her friends/family, and Asolo Rep.

summer CAMPS asolorep

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THE CREATIVE TEAM

Drayton Alexander He/They
(Dramaturg) Highlights at Asolo Rep include *Cabaret* (transfer to The Old Globe), *Man of La Mancha*, *Chicken and Biscuits*, and workshops of *Stellar Atmospheres* and *Dancing in the Blue Light*. Other dramaturgical highlights include *Spin* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (Theatre Weekly Award, Best Solo Performance), Taylor Mac’s ball-pit play *The Fre* (world premiere), *Not My Monster* (OBA nomination, Best Family Entertainment), *Syncing Ink*, *Scraps* (world premiere), and *good friday* at The Flea Theater. Drayton was the Co-Artistic Producer of *Serials* for two years and has worked with such theater companies as The Vineyard, The New Group, New Earth Theatre, and Singapore Repertory Theatre. He received an Olwen Wymark award from the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain and holds an M.F.A. from NYU Tisch Asia.

Summer Dawn Wallace She/Her
(Intimacy Consultant) Summer is a playmaker: a versatile theatre professional working as producer, director, actor, intimacy coordinator and educator. Summer is the Producing Artistic Director at Urbanite Theatre, which focuses on contemporary new works and has produced over 50+ new plays. She is happy to be returning to Asolo Rep after playing Mrs. Gibbs in *Our Town* in 2022. Regional Credits include: 1st Stage, Vashon Repertory Theatre, Cumberland County Playhouse, Dog Day’s Theatre, FSU/Asolo Conservatory for Actor Training, New College of Florida and the list goes on. She is a proud member of AEA and Sag-Aftra and would like to express her deepest gratitude to the incredible Sarasota patrons and the Asolo Repertory Theatre team.

Patricia Delorey She/Her
(Voice & Dialect Coach) Asolo Rep favorites include: *Knoxville* (world premiere), *Silent Sky*, *Crazy For You*, *Cabaret*, *Sweat*, *The Cake*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Gloria*, *Ragtime*, *Rhinoceros*, *Roe*, *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity*, *The Great Society*, *Josephine* (world premiere), *All The Way*, *West Side Story*, *Sotto Voce*, *Other Desert Cities*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Vanya and*

Sonia and Masha and Spike, *Clybourne Park*, *The Innocents* (world premiere), *Twelve Angry Men*, *Bonnie & Clyde* (world premiere), *Doubt*, *Equus*. Other credits include *Judith* (world premiere Urbanite Theatre), *Pitmen Painters* (American Stage Theatre), *The Smuggler* (Urbanite Theatre), Studio Six’s production of *Plasticine* (The Baryshnikov Arts Center), *Saturday Night Fever* (Royal Caribbean International Cruises), *Stone Cold Dead Serious* (world premiere American Repertory Theatre), and *Nocturne* (world premiere American Repertory Theatre).

Tracy Dorman She/Her
(Costume Design) Tracy has designed numerous productions at the Asolo Rep including last season’s *The Three Musketeers*. She has designed productions at regional theater and opera companies around the country including at Syracuse Stage, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, The Cleveland Play House, GEVA, Milwaukee Rep, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Drury Lane (Chicago), Kansas City Rep, Gulfshore Playhouse, Maltz-Jupiter, Manhattan School of Music, Virginia Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Omaha, Chicago Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass, and New York City Opera. From 2005-2008 she was an associate costume designer on the CBS daytime drama *As the World Turns*, for which she won an Emmy Award for Costume Design. Please visit www.tracydorman.com for a more extensive listing of production credits.

Ross Egan
(Managing Director) Ross is the Managing Director at Asolo Rep. Ross’ arts administration career began in Chicago where he was a co-founder of Jeff-award-winning Refuge Theatre Project. Ross has served as Managing Director at Barter Theatre, the nation’s longest-running professional theatre, and as Director of Marketing & Operations at Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Ross holds a B.F.A. in acting from Michigan State University and an MBA from Illinois State University. He lives with his family in Lakewood Ranch and proudly serves as a den leader for the Boy Scouts of America.



THE CREATIVE TEAM

Robert Elhai He/Him
(Original Music Compositions) Robert is a Tony and Drama Desk nominee for his work on Broadway’s *The Lion King*, is based in Minneapolis where his theater music has been performed by Theatre Latté Da, Jungle Theater, The History Theatre, and Nautilus Music-Theater, among others. His arrangements have been heard in many theaters, concert halls, and even arenas (*The Who* and *Metallica*) around the world. He has orchestrated nearly 200 film scores including those by Elliot Goldenthal (the Oscar-winning score to *Frida*), Michael Kamen (*Band Of Brothers*) and Brian Tyler (*Fast and Furious* franchise). robertelhai.com

Antonio Troy Ferron He/Him
(Scenic Design) Antonio is returning after designing *Chicken & Biscuits* with Asolo Rep last season. He is a designer for stage and screen based out of Los Angeles and raised in nearby Ocala, FL. He is the Assistant Art Director for the series *Bel-Air*, streaming on Peacock. Additional television credits include *Archive 81* (Netflix), and *Disco Inferno* (Netflix). Theatre work includes assisting for Broadway and regional productions with Shakespeare Theatre of NJ, Geffen Playhouse, and Second Stage Theater, as well as set design for productions including, *I Hate Hamlet* (Ocala Civic Theatre) and *The Fantasticks* (Jean’s Playhouse).

Michelle Hart She/Her
(Hair/Wig & Make-up Design) Michelle designs for Asolo Rep and FSU/Asolo Conservatory. Other credits: Sarasota Ballet, Palm Beach Drama Works, Free Fall Theatre, Urbanite Theatre, Florida Studio Theatre, West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, Banyan Theatre, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Venice Theatre, Dorset Theatre, Barrington Stage and Open Stage Theatre. She has also done hair and/or make-up for Joan Rivers, Doris Roberts, Martin Short, Jane Russell, Arlene Dahl, Soledad Villamil, Jane Pauley, Richard Dreyfuss, Castille Langdon, Christopher Higgins, Mary Mara, Heather Robb, Lauren Sweetser, Justin Long, Paul Downs, Douglas Sills, and Nia Hills. Music videos “Second Chance”

by Shinedown, “Reverse Cowgirl” by T-Pain. Film and television: *Lady Of The Manor*, *Paradise, FL*, and *The Real Stephen Blatt*.

Jeffrey Hatcher
(Playwright) Broadway: *Never Gonna Dance* (Book). Off-Broadway: *Three Viewings* and *A Picasso* at Manhattan Theatre Club; *Scotland Road* and *The Turn of the Screw* at Primary Stages; *Tuesdays with Morrie* (with Mitch Albom) at The Minetta Lane; *Murder By Poe*, *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Spy* at The Acting Company; *Neddy* at American Place; and *Fellow Travelers* at Manhattan Punchline. Other Plays/Theaters: *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, *Mrs. Mannerly*, *Murderers*, *Mercy of a Storm*, *Smash*, *Armada*, *Korczak’s Children*, *To Fool the Eye*, *The Falls*, *A Piece of the Rope*, *All the Way with LBJ*, *The Government Inspector*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and others at The Guthrie Theatre, Old Globe, Yale Rep, The Geffen, Seattle Rep, Cincinnati Playhouse, Cleveland Playhouse, South Coast Rep, Arizona Theater Company, San Jose Rep, The Empty Space, Indiana Rep, Children’s Theater Company, History Theater, Madison Rep, Intiman, Illusion, Denver Center, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Milwaukee Rep, Repertory Theater of St. Louis, Actors Theater of Louisville, Philadelphia Theater Company, Asolo, City Theater, Studio Arena and dozens more in the U.S. and abroad. Film/ TV: *Stage Beauty*, *Casanova*, *The Duchess*, and episodes of *Columbo*. Grants/ Awards: NEA, TCG, Lila Wallace Fund, Rosenthal New Play Prize, Frankel Award, Charles MacArthur Fellowship Award, McKnight Foundation, Jerome Foundation and Barrymore Award Best New Play. He is a member and/or alumnus of The Playwrights Center, the Dramatists Guild, the Writers Guild and New Dramatists.

James E. Lawlor III
(Lighting Designer) Jimmy is a Scorpio, father, cat owner, and a music enthusiast, who enjoys scotch and bourbon. He only runs when chased. Jimmy designs lighting for opera, theatre, dance, corporate



THE CREATIVE TEAM

clients, architecture, interiors, and more. At Asolo Rep: *The Three Musketeers*, *Eureka Day*. New York works include Broadway, Off Broadway, and beyond. Regional work includes Opera, Theatre, and Dance. Jimmy's work has been seen internationally in Abu Dhabi, Sydney, Mexico, Canada, Austria, and Germany. MFA from NYU Tisch. Member USA 829. lawlordesign.com

Kristin Loughry She/Her

(Assistant Stage Manager) Kristin is thrilled to be back in sunny Sarasota! Previous Asolo Rep credits include *Inherit the Wind*, *Silent Sky*, *Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, *The Cake*, *Grand Horizons*, *Eureka Day* and the unopened production of *The Great Leap* in the Cook. Additional credits include shows with Baltimore Center Stage, Hangar Theatre Company, Infinity Theatre Company, Lyric Stage Company of Boston, NewArts, New London Barn Playhouse, Primary Stages, Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, Soho Playhouse, Virginia Stage Company, NYU Grad Acting, and The New School. Proud AEA member and Ithaca College alum. Mucho mucho amor para Gaby (y Turbo).

Sharath Patel He/ Him

(Sound Design) Based in Portland, Oregon, Sharath works nationally and internationally focusing on experimental, commercial, academic, political, and socially conscious theatre. Recent designs: Asolo Rep, Cleveland Play House, The Alley Theatre, The Alliance, Theatrical Outfit, TheatreWorks of Silicon Valley, Portland Center Stage, Seattle Children's Theatre, A.C.T., American Rep, Artists Rep, Seattle Rep, Yale Rep, Indiana Rep, Milwaukee Rep, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Dallas Theatre Center, The Contemporary American Theatre Festival, and Alabama Shakes. Additional work: New York City, San Francisco, L.A., India, France, England, Germany, and Romania. Affiliations: USA829, Theatrical Sound Designers and Composers Association, Arts Envoy for the U.S. Department of State, National Respondent for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, Resident Artist at Artists Rep. BFA: Ohio University.

MFA: Yale School of Drama. sharathpatel.com

Mark Rose He/Him

(Fight Choreographer) Mark is a NY based fight choreographer, stuntman, actor, and Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors. Fight Choreography credits: Asolo Rep: *Dial M for Murder*, *Intimate Apparel*, *Crazy for You*, *Cabaret*, *Camelot*, *Into The Breeches*, *Lifespan of a Fact*, *Rhinoceros*, *The Motherf**ker with the Hat*, *Romeo & Juliet*. Trinity Rep: *Sweeney Todd*, *The Good John Proctor*, *Fences*, *Becky Nurse of Salem*, *Tale of Two Cities*, *Sueno*, *A Christmas Carol* (2022). Legoland NY: *The Big Test Stunt Show* (2022). Idlewild & Soak Zone Theme Park: *Frontier Follies Stunt Show* (2018-2019). Sparta NJ Renaissance Faire: *The Kings Tournament* (2017-present), *Misfits of Fortune Pirate Show* (2021-present). You can see more at mark-rose.com or on Instagram: @Mark.Rose.Stunts

Peter Rothstein

(Producing Artistic Director) Peter is the Producing Artistic Director for Asolo Rep where he directed *Inherit The Wind*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Ragtime*. He works extensively as a director of theater, musical theater, opera, and new work development. For 25 years Rothstein served as the Founding Artistic Director of Theater Latté Da, a Minneapolis based company dedicated to new and adventurous music-theater. Other collaborations include the Guthrie Theater, Children's Theatre Company, Ten Thousand Things, and Seattle's 5th Avenue, as well as the Minnesota Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater. Rothstein is the creator of *All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914*, which had its Off-Broadway debut in 2018 receiving the Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatrical Experience and has been seen around the globe airing on PBS. Rothstein served on the board of directors for the National Alliance for Musical Theatre, Alive and Kickin', and the Twin Cities' Ivey Awards. He has been a panelist and evaluator for the Playwrights' Center, the McKnight Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, and

the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's Festival of New Musicals. He holds degrees in music and theater from St. John's University and an M.F.A. in directing from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Céline Rosenthal

(Associate Artistic Director; Resident Casting Director; Director) Céline is a Tony®-nominated producer, "Key"; member of The Ring Of Keys and New Georges Affiliate Artist. At Asolo Rep they directed *Grand Horizons*, *The Incident At Our Lady Of Perpetual Help*, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, *Camelot*, the Educational Tours of *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, and served as AD to Frank Galati on *Knoxville*. Céline developed new work with NYMF, New Georges, MTF, Kidoons, and National Queer Theatre, and helms Asolo Rep's new work series, The Ground Floor. Other Recent Projects: *In The Next Room*, *Angel Street*, *A Doll's House*, *Spike Heels* (Studio Theatre); *Trayf* (New Rep); *Drowning in Cairo* (N.Q.T); the Award-Winning short film *Wildflower*. They are an Alumnus of CTI and BMI Lehman Engel Workshop. celinerosenthal.nyc

Nia Sciarretta She/Her

(Production Stage Manager) Selected Asolo Rep credits include PSM for *Knoxville*, *Cabaret*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Silent Sky*, *Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, *The Great Leap*, *The Sound of Music*, *Into the Breeches*, *The Music Man*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Sweat*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Roe*, and the 2020-21 Terrace Stage season, as well as assistant stage manager for *Rhinoceros*, *Guys & Dolls*, *All the Way*, *South Pacific*, and *Hero: The Musical*. Previous off-Broadway credits include work on *Jesus Hopped the A Train*, *In the Blood*, and *The Wayside Motor Inn* at the Signature Theatre. Nia has also worked with Creede Repertory Theatre, the Hangar Theatre, the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, the Flea Theatre, and Penguin Rep. Member of AEA.

DeWanda Smith Soeder

(Cultural Competency Consultant) President of Smith-Soeder Enterprises, LLC. In addition to providing cultural competency for all Asolo productions, DeWanda is the (IDEA) Specialist for the Asolo supporting organizational culture change and development. Her cultural competency process is based on her research and thesis, "Theatre as a Diversity Intervention". Other cultural competency consulting engagements include; Hadestown (Broadway and Tour), Little Shop of Horrors, Off-Broadway, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, RCI Productions, LDK Productions, Martians Productions, other regional theaters, playwrights and actors. She holds a M.A. in Psychology, and a B.S. in Health and Human Services. In addition to being a Certified Diversity Professional (CDP), her credentials include; Prosci Certified Change Practitioner, Instruction Design and Development, Human Behavior and Interaction, Emotional Intelligence and Adjunct Professor of Psychology.

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First Hand
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Sarah Cox

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Stage Manager Apprentices
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Dial M for Murder

New York Casting Assistants
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RAYSHAUN SANDLIN**

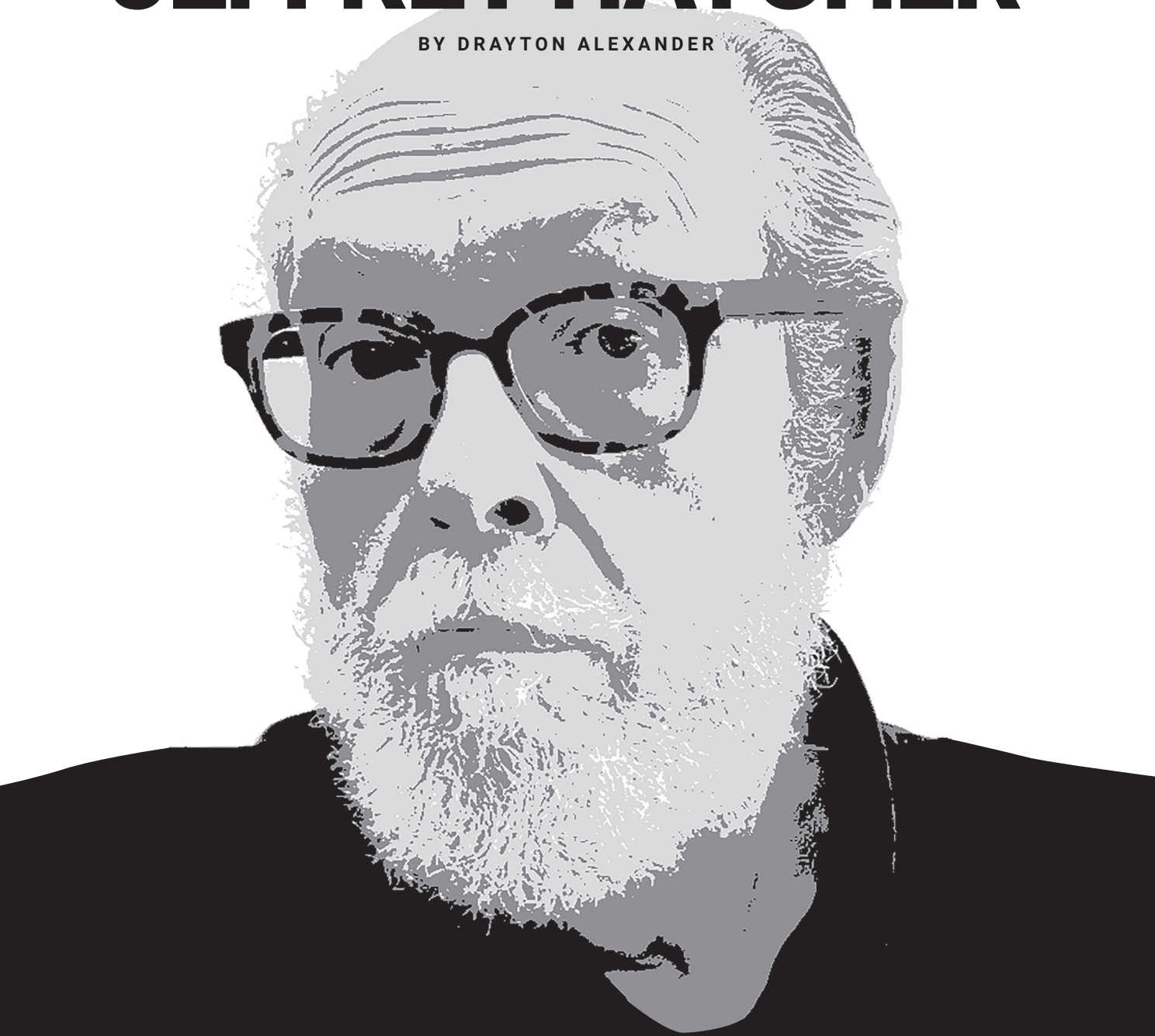
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A CONVERSATION WITH PLAYWRIGHT JEFFREY HATCHER

BY DRAYTON ALEXANDER



Appropriately enough, Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation of Frederick Knott's *Dial M for Murder* began with a phone call. It was 2019, and Barry Edelstein, Artistic Director of The Old Globe, rang Hatcher to suggest the classic play was ripe for reexamining in a way that would focus on the female perspective. In a recent chat with Asolo Rep Literary Manager Drayton Alexander, Hatcher shared how this simple challenge opened up the play.

Jeffrey Hatcher: I saw an opportunity to up Margot's agency, so to speak. I love Knott's original, but Margot is kind of a doormat. Even in the film version, Grace Kelly doesn't have a lot to do.

Drayton Alexander: That surprised me when I watched the Hitchcock - Margot disappears as a character. She doesn't make any choices or take action, she's just there to be the victim. You do this wonderful job of making her an active participant in her own story.

Jeffrey: The key is that you want her to have a role in her own fate. Without giving anything away, I'll just say that I started by looking at the end of the play and working backwards to find moments where she could take some risks that allow her to be the arbiter of how events play out. It doesn't change the overall structure of the story, but it puts her in the driver's seat. In the original, she sits in the back.

Drayton: When you're working with a play as beloved as *Dial M*, how do you navigate the original while bringing your own voice? How do you decide where to intervene without erasing the original playwright?

Jeffrey: The first rule is don't screw it up. Any ideas you get that upend the original's mechanism, those you throw out. But if you stare at a script long enough, you see little gaps, openings that the original author may have overlooked, and you see if there are possibilities there. In terms of voice, I used to be an actor, so I think of it as character acting. For example, I'll think, "I'm doing Shaw today, so everything I write will have a Shavian feel." *DIAL M* is very much a cocktail thriller, it has elements of Noël Coward, so slipping into that wasn't very difficult for me. And because Maxine is an American writer, if you want to switch gears from British high comedy, you can suddenly slam it into her world, like

splashing tea with seltzer water.

Drayton: That is such a lovely way of putting it. I think changing the character of Max to Maxine, was an incredibly smart choice. She brings this brashness and spunkiness that slices through Margot's posh, polished, and polite world. Maxine is also incredibly funny, which makes your version more rollicking than I expected.

Jeffrey: People who've only seen the Hitchcock might be surprised to know that Knott's original was quite funny as well. I think most plays are funnier than their film versions, because theater demands more laughs as release points for the audience. Humor binds the audience to a character, even a villain. Tony probably has most of the laugh lines, which helps to put the audience on his side, so in a weird way they end up rooting for the murderer, which is terribly important with a play like this.

Drayton: This adaptation premiered only last season at the Old Globe, and it's going to be one of the most produced plays in the country this season. Why do you think it is resonating so much right now?

Jeffrey: *Dial M* is a kind of comfort food, and a lot of people want comfort food right now. This version serves that up, but with some twists and surprises. I don't give people exactly what they remember or expect, but I give them something close to it that still delivers all those memories and comfort. Also, at a time in which fact and truth are malleable and hard to pin down, thrillers and mysteries make a promise to the audience: *we're gonna tell you whodunnit, and we're gonna make sure somebody is punished.* That's a great salve to audiences who have been going through hell the last eight years. A good thriller brings the audience relief and release, which is especially appreciated right now.



IN CONVERSATION WITH ALFRED HITCHCOCK

BY DRAYTON ALEXANDER

Jeffrey Hatcher isn't the only artist on *Dial M For Murder* who is adapting and interpreting a classic drama. Director Céline Rosenthal, set designer Antonio Ferron, and costume designer Tracy Dorman started their process with an eye on Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 movie.

"Hitchcock's film is iconic," Rosenthal says. "So rather than ignoring his images and aesthetics, it's important to be in conversation with them.

Especially with *Dial M*, we have a movie whose marketing campaign took off like wildfire. When people imagine the film, they are often thinking of the poster – with the scissors, and the phone, and Grace Kelly – and so we're thinking about how to play with that, how to amplify and subvert their associations."

The starting point for Rosenthal lay in understanding Hitchcock's approach to storytelling. "This is what I find so intriguing about him," Rosenthal continues. "He's famous for making these terrifying films, and yet he didn't lean into the tropes of the horror genre. There are no monsters or ghouls in his work; what he found most terrifying was humanity itself."

This led Rosenthal and their design team to envision a world that seems, at first glance, warm and cozy, but then reveals its sinister side. Rosenthal explains how the look of *Dial M For Murder* leans into many of Hitchcock's visual signatures of architectural elements, color, and clothing.



DIRECTOR CÉLINE ROSENTHAL

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES WITH CÉLINE ROSENTHAL

On stage, **windows** are often how we look out onto the world, they offer a sense of escape. But in this play, where someone is attacked in their own home, we reverse that: these windows look in. They are menacing, they offer no protection. In our design, we never get the chance to see a fully realized world beyond the windows, but we can experience shadows and light through them. We can't necessarily identify it, but we know there's something out there, a force coming towards us.

A running thread through Hitchcock's movies is a sense of voyeurism, and that was a key for us in understanding what makes Margot and Maxine feel so unsafe: they live with an ever-present sensation of being watched. Even in private spaces, they never have true privacy.

Think about movies like *Psycho* and *Vertigo* where **stairs** play such an important role. They give us a liminal space, where you're passing from one location to another, but with a sense of danger: they're precarious and they cause you to feel off balance. Especially when there's a curve in the staircase, there's always the potential that somebody is going to fall, possibly to their death. That danger is also present in the furniture and the finishings: this is a beautifully appointed sitting room, but it's full of sharp corners.

We made a choice to surround Margot's world with red fabric, both to isolate the home and as a nod to Hitchcock's theories around **color**. He appreciated how the same color can, in different contexts, flood a story with joy, lust, love, or suddenly become incredibly menacing, and red is a color that he particularly wielded in that way. That was a guide for us as we thought about how we could make an encasement for this room that would move from feeling lovingly enveloped to surrounded by danger.

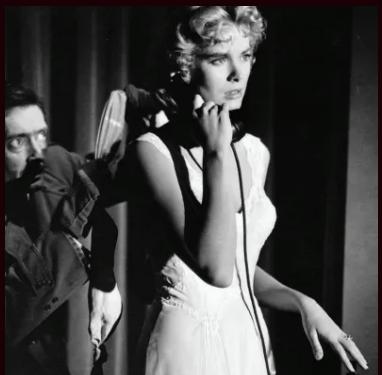
In his films, Hitchcock tends to feature women as beautiful objects and victims, so we use **clothing** to bring in the feminist perspective. In the original, Margot is dressing for the men to look at her, but in this version, she's dressing for Maxine. The raciest

outfit she wears is when she and Maxine are going to the theater – that's when Margot's showing off, though subtly, so her husband won't suspect that there's a deeper relationship between them.

That also changed how we approached the all-important phone call scene. In the film, Grace Kelly wears a tight-cut, lacy negligee, but we have her wearing a fuller gown, something she would be more comfortable wearing if she wasn't thinking of impressing her husband. This garment makes her more vulnerable, because there more fabric that could catch on the furniture, or which an attacker might grab. It heightens the danger and makes the story more interesting.



A scene from Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*.



Anthony Dawson and Grace Kelly in Hitchcock's *Dial M For Murder*, 1954
John Kobal Foundation / Getty Images



Dial M For Murder
costume designs by
Tracy Dorman for
the character Margo
Wallace.



Rendering of the set *Dial M For Murder*, designed by ANTONIO TROY FERRON

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