

*The Department of Theatre Arts + Dance Presents*  
Sort of Adapted from *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov

# LIFE SUCKS.

BY AARON POSNER

*Director*  
Aimée Hayes

Lower Depths Theatre

Preview February 7 at 7:30 p.m.

February 8, 9, 14, 15, 16 at 7:30 p.m.

February 10 at 2 p.m.

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P R E S E N T S



The Department of Theatre Arts + Dance Presents

# LIFE SUCKS.

By Aaron Posner

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Please note that the performance lasts roughly 2 Hours with one 15 minute intermission. Photography or recording of any kind is strictly prohibited. No late entry and no re-entry during the performance is allowed.

LIFE SUCKS. is presented through special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service (DPS). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by DPS. [www.dramatists.com](http://www.dramatists.com)  
The videotaping or other video or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

## CAST

Vanya .....	Leland Ensminger
Sonia .....	Kathryn Miesse
Babs.....	Emma Schillage
Ella .....	Esme Hill
Dr. Aster.....	Cameron Maas
Pickles .....	Jada Williams
The Professor .....	Max Piper

## ARTISTIC STAFF

Director .....	Aimée Hayes <sup>+</sup>
Assistant Director .....	Emma Lovas
Scenic Designer .....	Marty Aikens
Lighting Designer .....	Josh Courtney
Student Dramaturg.....	Victoria Owsley
Costume Designer.....	Kellie Grengs*
Fight Choreographer .....	Alex Smith

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Technical Director .....	Marty Aikens
Costume Director.....	Kellie Grengs*
Stage Manager .....	Abby Trahan
Assistant Stage Manager .....	Gabby Falgoust/Caitlyn Richie
Public Relations Coordinator .....	C. Patrick Gendusa*
Master Electricians .....	Asia Allen, Cecile Johnson
House Manager.....	Sophia Christilles

## CREW

Light Board Operator .....	Grace Borello
Wardrobe/Make-Up Crew.....	Brandon Bui, Nyla Jacobs
Electricians .....	Jonathan Henderson, Zack Boylan
Scene Construction.....	Stagecraft I Class & Scene Shop Work Study Students
Carpenters .....	Kharissa Newbill, Lizzie Odell, Vivian Bulleit, Zach Tujague
Prop Crew .....	Jen Lepore

\*Denotes Alpha Psi Omega Membership  
 + Denotes SDC (Stage Directors & Choreographers)

# PLAYWRIGHT: AARON POSNER



Aaron Posner is a Helen Hayes and Barrymore Award-winning director and playwright. He is a founder and former Artistic Director of Philadelphia's Arden Theatre, an Associate Artist at both the Folger Theatre and Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, and has directed at major regional theatres from coast to coast including the Folger, Seattle Rep, Portland Center Stage, The Alliance, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, Arizona Theatre Company, Milwaukee Rep, California Shakespeare Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Roundhouse Theatre, Studio Theatre, Signature Theatre, Theatre J, American Player's Theatre and many more. His adaptations include Chaim Potok's *The Chosen* and *My Name is Asher Lev* (both of which have enjoyed successful runs at more than 50 other theatres across the country and the latter of which ran for ten months off-Broadway in 2012-2013 and won both the Outer Circle Critics Award for Best New off-Broadway play and the John Gassner Award), as well as Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion*, Mark Twain's *A Murder, A Mystery, and a Marriage*, an adaptation of three Kurt Vonnegut short stories, entitled *Who Am I This Time? (and other conundrums of love)*. His Chekhov-inspired *Stupid F\*\*\*ing Bird* debuted at Woolly Mammoth and received eight Helen Hayes nominations. Posner was raised in Eugene, Oregon, graduated from Northwestern University, is an Eisenhower Fellow, and lives near Washington, D.C.

# CAST

## LELAND ENSMINGER (Vanya)

is a sophomore at Loyola. His passion is to tell stories about the many ways life sucks through his work in acting, sound design, and directing. He is a firm believer that life does, in fact, suck; how boring would it be if it didn't?

## KATHRYN MIESSE (Sonia)

is a junior theatre arts major. She most recently appeared in *The Christians* at Loyola and in *[title of show]* with New Orleans Theatre Factory. She completed the Southern Rep internship in 2017. She has also taught youth theatre at Southern Rep in New Orleans and Playhouse on the Square in Memphis.

## EMMA SCHILLAGE (Babs)

is a senior Theatre Arts major. This is her ninth production at Loyola. Previous shows include *The Christians*, *Richard III*, and *EVERYBODY*. Emma is also an apprentice company member at Southern Rep Theatre and a literary intern for The NOLA Project. She would like to thank her family.

## ESME HILL (Ella)

is a Theatre Arts freshman at Loyola. She graduated from high school at the Alabama School of Fine Arts, where she was recently in a production of *Innocent Flesh*. She is also in the film, *The Immortal Jellyfish*, which is set to premiere this year.

## CAMERON MAAS (Dr. Aster)

is excited to perform in his second production at Loyola, *LIFE SUCKS*. A thank you goes out to the cast and crew for the incredible work and positive atmosphere that was created during the production. A special thanks goes out to the designers and the director, Aimée Hayes.

## JADA WILLIAMS (Pickles)

is a Freshman in the Theatre Arts Program at Loyola and is excited to be performing as Pickles in this production, which is her first role in a play at the university. She hopes to grow in her next four years as a well rounded performer and looks forward to the many opportunities that await her in the future.

## MAX PIPER (The Professor)

is a sophomore at Loyola University. Originally from Texas, he's a graduate from the theatre magnet at Richardson High School. His previous works in New Orleans include *The Christians*, *Richard III*, and *Pygmalion*. He thanks his family and fellow students.

# ARTISTIC/PRODUCTION STAFF

## AIMÉE HAYES<sup>+</sup> (Director)

Since being named Southern Rep's Producing Artistic Director in 2007, Hayes has focused on new play development, including Southern Rep's Lagniappe Series including 6x6, a new play slam, 3x3: *THE ONE ACTS*, New Orleans' only live, ongoing soap opera, *DEBAUCHERY!*, and *THE NEW PLAY BACCHANAL*, an annual two-day new play festival that includes honoring a new play by a female playwright of color with the Ruby Prize.

## KELLIE GRENGS\* (Costume Director/Designer)

Kellie teaches a variety of courses and supervises the Costume Studio at Loyola. She oversees costume design and construction for the Department productions with over 60 of her designs on the Loyola stages. Her freelance work includes photography for local publications and managing two small businesses. Kellie is a board member of the Freret Improvement District and Development Director of Zeus' Rescues. Both are non-profits in New Orleans that benefit our communities. She earned her M.F.A. in Costume Design from Tulane University and holds a B.S. in Apparel Design from the University of Wisconsin Stout.

## MARTY AIKENS (Technical Director/Scenic Designer)

Marty has worked with many performance companies including Cirque du Soleil and the Utah Shakespearean Festival. He holds a B.A. in Acting and Directing from the University of Tennessee and an M.F.A. in Theatre Design and Production from Tulane University. He served as Artistic Director of Atlanta's critically acclaimed Jack in the Black Box Theatre Company. Marty then moved into Atlanta's Magnet School for Performing Arts and North Springs Charter High School as faculty, resident designer, and technical director. In television, Marty has worked with NBC, Fox, and CBS. Currently, Marty produces and directs a lifestyle / foodie magazine show called "A Taste of the Good Life". His New Orleans design work includes *Woyzeck* (Tulane / New Orleans Fringe Fest), *Totalitarians* (Southern Rep), *Pterodactyls* (Promethean Theatre Co.), and *The Producers* and *Into the Woods* (Rivertown Theatres).

## JOSH COURTNEY (Lighting Designer)

received his B.A. in Theatre and Film from The University of New Orleans in 2014. Recent credits include: *The Pillowman* (Lighting Designer, The NOLA Project); *Satchmo at the Waldorf* (Lighting Designer, Le Petit Theatre); *Foreign to Myself* (Lighting Designer, Goat in the Road); *Caligula* (Lighting Designer, Cripple Creek Theatre Co.) He is a proud ensemble member of Goat in the Road.

EMMA LOVAS\* (Assistant Director)

is a senior at Loyola University with a Major in Theatre Arts and a minor in Art History. She has been in multiple productions in the Theatre Department and hopes to use what she has learned here to make a living as a successful actress.

ABBY TRAHANT (Stage Manager)

is a Theatre Arts major and Latin American Studies minor at Loyola. She is proud to work with this team. Abby would like to thank Aimée and everyone in the Theatre Arts and Dance Department for their constant support and everything they've taught and continue to teach her.

GABBY FALGOUST (Assistant Stage Manager)

is a Theatre Arts major with a minor in Business at Loyola. She was on stage for *Informed Consent* as Jillian and worked backstage as props crew in *These Shining Lives*. This is her first time Assistant Stage Managing with Loyola and hopes to continue working backstage on Loyola productions.

CAITLYN RITCHIE (Assistant Stage Manager)

is a Theatre Arts major with a minor in Mass Communications at Loyola. This is her first time Assistant Stage Managing but you may have seen her act in last spring's *Richard III* as Lady Grey. She is so thrilled and honored to be a part of this production, and hopes everyone enjoys the show.

VICTORIA OWSLEY\* (Student Dramaturg)

Victoria is thrilled to be the dramaturg for *LIFE SUCKS*. She is a huge fan of Anton Chekhov's work and is also a fan of Aaron Posner's more modern adaptations. She loved working with the cast and crew for this production. Thank you for the opportunity, Aimée!

SHELBI COPAIN (Publicity Manager) is a Musical Theater and Mass Communications sophomore. Her stage credits include *The Christians*, *Informed Consent*, and *These Shining Lives*. She is thrilled to be the Publicity Manager for *LIFE SUCKS*, as well as *Violet*. Thanks to everyone involved, for making every show a labor of love.

SOPHIA CHRISTILLES (House Manager) is a sophomore Theatre major with a Business minor. Loyola credits include: *The Christians* (assistant stage manager) *Richard III* (props assistant), *Informed Consent* (sound designer), and *Pygmalion* (stage manager). Sophia would like to thank her mentor Marty Aikens for his continuous guidance and support.

MADELINE READ (House Crew) is a senior Theatre Arts major. This is her ninth production at Loyola. Previous shows include *The Ladies Man*, *39 Steps*, *Richard III*, and *EVERYBODY*. Madeline is also an apprentice company member at Southern Rep Theatre and a literary intern for The NOLA Project.

KEVIN AGUILAR (House Crew) is a senior Theatre Arts and Economics major. This is his seventh production at Loyola. Previous shows include *Beyond the Horizon*, *Caroline or Change*, and *Informed Consent*. He is excited to be working on this show and hopes that you, the audience, will enjoy it.

SARAH SCHULER (House Crew) is a Theatre Arts sophomore, and this is her fourth Loyola production. Previously, she has worked on wardrobe and makeup crew for *Richard III* and *These Shining Lives*, and she would like to thank all her major professors for encouraging her growth both as an artist and as a person.

TAIYA CULBERTSON (House Crew) is a senior Theatre Arts major. This is her fifth involvement with Loyola productions. Previous shows include *These Shining Lives* and *Caroline, or Change*. She is more than excited to conclude her last year at Loyola and would like to thank all of her major's professors for their patience and lessons.

GRACE BORRELLO (Light Board Operator) is a New Orleans native and Sophomore Theater Major. This is her first time as light board operator, however previously she has worked as master electrician. She would like to congratulate the cast on all their hard work.

BRANDON BUI (Costume/Makeup Crew) is currently pursuing a B.A. in Theatre Arts, is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. He has taken part in multiple productions in performance and tech at Loyola University as well as productions outside of school.

NYLA JACOBS (Costume/Makeup Crew) is currently in her second semester of college as a theatre arts student. This will be her third production working behind the scene as part of a costume and makeup crew. Nyla hopes to better her skills in stage makeup and costume design.

JEN LEPORE (Props Crew) is a freshman Musical Theatre Major at Loyola. This is her first time being a part of a backstage crew at Loyola and she is very excited to be a part of this production. She recently worked on build crew for *Pygmalion*. She's looking forward to the upcoming productions in her college career at Loyola.

ASIA ALLEN (Master Electrician) This is the last show that Asia will be working on in her career as a Loyola undergraduate student and she is so excited to be continuing to do what she what she loves even after graduation!

CECILE JOHNSON (Master Electrician) Cecile Johnson is a theatre major here at Loyola and will be graduating this May. She hopes to pursue a career in both lighting design and acting.

ZACH BOYLAN (Electrician) is a Freshman at Loyola and is very excited to be able to participate in *LIFE SUCKS*. as an electrician and try something new! Past Loyola productions include *Pygmalion* (Colonel Pickering). Zach would like to thank his loving family, incredible friends, and dedicated theatre department!

JONATHAN HENDERSON (Electrician) is a freshman in Loyola's Theatre Department, and he is so excited to be here. This semester, he was fortunate enough to work on this production of *LIFE SUCKS.*, directed by Aimee Hayes. Jonathan would like to thank his friends and family for their continued love and support.

KHARISSA NEWBILL (Carpenter) is a Theatre Arts major. Her most recent credits include those of Student Dramaturg for *Pygmalion*, Acting Coach and Assistant Costume Designer for *Heathers: The Musical*, and acting in the role of Radio 3 in *Caroline, Or Change*.

LIZZIE ODELL (Carpenter) is a Theatre Arts major aspiring to become a stage manager. She is excited to work on *LIFE SUCKS.* as a carpenter. Catherine Novella (Carpenter) is a junior Theatre Arts and Criminology double major. She is proud to participate in *LIFE SUCKS.* as a carpenter.

VIVIAN BULLEIT (Carpenter) Freshman Vivian Bulleit is thrilled to be a carpenter in *LIFE SUCKS.* Her resumé includes starring roles in *42nd Street*, the American premiere of *Charge*, along with film roles in *Addicted* and *Smoketown*. She served with the Teen Council at Actors Theatre Louisville and taught theatre senior year at Floyd Central High.

ZACH TUJAGUE (Carpenter) Is a Theatre Arts major freshman. He worked as an electrician for *These Shining Lives*. He studied musical theatre at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.

Key: \* Denotes Alpha Psi Omega

+ Denotes SDC (Stage Directors & Choreographers Members)

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## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Dean Kern Maass

Dr. Meg Frazier

Mrs. Cheryl Conway

Ken Weber

Alex Smith (Southern Rep Theatre)

Eric Porter (Rivertown Theatre)

Fairfax Fabric Company

Pepperoni's Cafe

The Faculty, Staff, and Students of the Loyola University

Department of Theatre Arts & Dance

Southern Rep Theatre

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## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

“If you are afraid of loneliness, do not marry.”

“What can we do? We must live our lives. Yes, we shall live, Uncle Vanya. We shall live through the long procession of days before us, and through the long evenings; we shall patiently bear the trials that fate imposes on us; we shall work for others without rest, both now and when we are old; and when our last hour comes we shall meet it humbly, and there, beyond the grave, we shall say that we have suffered and wept, that our life was bitter, and God will have pity on us. Ah, then dear, dear Uncle, we shall see that bright and beautiful life; we shall rejoice and look back upon our sorrow here; a tender smile—and—we shall rest. I have faith, Uncle, fervent, passionate faith. We shall rest. We shall rest. We shall hear the angels. We shall see heaven shining like a jewel. We shall see all evil and all our pain sink away in the great compassion that shall enfold the world. Our life will be as peaceful and tender and sweet as a caress. I have faith; I have faith. My poor, poor Uncle Vanya, you are crying! You have never known what happiness was, but wait, Uncle Vanya, wait!

We shall rest. We shall rest. We shall rest.”

-Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*

## WHY THIS PLAY NOW?

By Student Dramaturg: Victoria Owsley

The characters in both *LIFE SUCKS.* and the original play, *Uncle Vanya*, are quite relatable and the characters are easily seen as normal people. Posner and Chekhov did not dramatize the characters but rather left them as ordinary people that we, the audience and readers, can more easily relate to. They have common problems that people can easily grab onto and understand. One topic that the play addresses is love. People say that love is the most powerful thing in the world. Whether or not one believes that this is the case, love is certainly something that pretty much everyone seems to desire in some way. The characters in *LIFE SUCKS.* are all chasing after someone (or have done so in their past). There is a tangled web of emotions among one another that they want to solve. There is also an emphasis on longing. The characters often want something that they cannot have, letting it dictate their decisions and how they live their lives. People are often viewed as greedy and wanting more than what they have. One message that the play can bring is to be happy with what you have, as greed can make one more miserable. The characters debate on whether or not life sucks and have these conversations throughout the whole play, even inviting you, the audience, to give their input at some points! In a world full of hate, people are still striving to make the best of it and of what they have. There is certainly at least one character that you can relate to in this play, and that is what is so special about the dialogue and characterization that Posner put behind this work. Overall, *LIFE SUCKS.* is a thrilling play that modernizes *Uncle Vanya* for those who do not understand it. It is relatable to both younger and older audiences and teaches valuable lessons about love and life.

## UNCLE VANYA AND LIFE SUCKS.

The original play by Anton Chekhov is called *Uncle Vanya*. The original title of that play was called *The Wood Demon*, written in 1888. There was a main protagonist in *The Wood Demon*, but there is not a specific antagonist for *Uncle Vanya*. Instead, the characters struggle with themselves and with the world around them, which is something that is what many of us are doing today. Similarly, Posner has adopted the same notion of struggling with each other and facing the world beyond in *LIFE SUCKS*. There is no specific antagonist besides each other (different depending on each character) and the nuts and bolts of the world around them. Well, life itself could be considered the antagonist. Or a guiding protagonist. Or both. This play tries to grasp the question of life: does it suck or not? Obviously, it's not so simple as a yes or no answer, and people have different ways that they respond. Think of this play as a philosophical and enlightening way to see what life is, except with more laughs and with nudges to your neighbor as you say, "Haha, that character is so like me." Posner has created such a vibrant play full of rich characters and issues that are common to basically everyone.



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# UPCOMING CMFA EVENTS

## **Capriccio: A Valentine's Music Celebration**

Sunday, Feb. 17, 3:00p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium  
Free Admission

## **Guest Artist: Dr. Tian Tian, piano**

Friday, Feb. 22, 7:30p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium  
Free Admission

## **Masterclass: Dr. Tian Tian, piano**

Saturday, Feb. 23, 12:00p.m. | Nunemaker Auditorium  
Free Admission

## **For Allen: A Concert to Honor Allen Nisbet**

Saturday, Mar. 9, 3:00p.m. | Roussel Hall  
Free Admission

## **Loyola Chorale/NOVA VOCE with the LPO: Auerbach's The Infant Minstrel and His Peculiar Menagerie**

Thursday, Mar. 14, 7:30p.m. | Orpheum Theatre  
Ticket required

## **Loyola Chambers/NOVA VOCE with the LPO:**

### **Bach, St. John Passion**

Thursday, Mar. 28, 7:30p.m. | Orpheum Theatre  
Ticket required

## **Violet by Crawley and Tesori**

Mar. 28-31 & April 4-6 | Marquette Theatre  
Ticket required

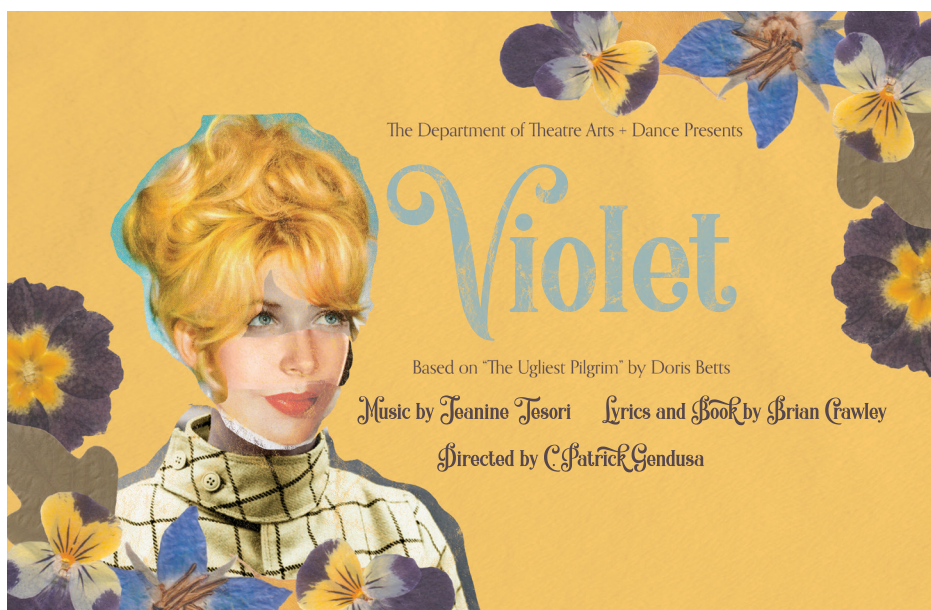
## **Loyola Symphony Orchestra**

Saturday, Apr. 27, 7:30p.m. | Roussel Hall  
Free Admission

## **One Act Play Festival**

Apr. 29-30, 7:00p.m. | Lower Depths Theatre  
Free Admission

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