



OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

Department of Communication and Theatre Arts

Recent ODU Theatre Show Brings Arts Inclusivity and Accessibility to Local Students

On November 22, ODU's Theatre Program put on a performance of *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience* at ODU's Goode Theatre for local students in an effort to foster inclusivity and accessibility for diverse theatre audiences. In attendance were students from ODU's SECEP program and Tidewater Tidewater Autism Society of America (ASA) as well as 90 kindergarteners from Virginia Beach's Linkhorn Elementary.

Before the performance, the theatre was emptied to allow visiting students to acclimate in the quiet space. Students toured the stage, touching and exploring props and meeting the cast members in costume before the show began. During the lively musical, lead actor Larry Lewis engaged the very involved young audience in group participation as his character Wilber grappled with tough personal choices.

JoAnna Bryant of Tidewater ASA, a community integration group for young adults, was particularly impressed that the Theatre Program provided "every attention to detail regarding accommodations," saying this performance of *Naked Mole Rat* "provided our young adults the opportunity to become familiar with the actors up close and on stage prior to the performance. The warm welcome, engaging and inclusive environment set the stage for a successful and enjoyable time. The smiles, laughter and clapping along with their peers said it all!"

Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed: The Rock Experience, produced by ODURep and ODU Opera, performed many sold out

shows in its November run and featured an anti-bullying theme: Be yourself and embrace differences. Mo Willems, author of three children's books that have earned Caldecott Honors, wrote the script and lyrics for the production. Debra Wicks La Puma composed the music. ODU's Katherine Hammond directed the production with Brian Nedvin providing the musical direction.

Elise Grybos, a teacher in ODU's SECEP program, appreciated the focus on accessibility: "The students enjoyed being able to experience the theater in such a welcoming environment, where they could truly be themselves. It is so encouraging that the ODU Theater Program is so accepting and fosters a community that freely includes all."

Linkhorn Park Elementary teacher Michelle Houlihan agreed, saying of her students' experience, "The sparkle in our students' eyes said it all. They were engaged, on the edge of their seats and actively participated in the musical. Truly an experience they will never forget."

ODU's Theatre Program, a part of the Department of Communication & Theatre Arts, hopes to provide more performances in the semesters to come that are inclusive and accessible for all audiences, to extend Arts appreciation outreach to diverse communities, in the hopes of sparking a desire in young audience members to participate on stage in the future. Raising awareness and taking successful steps to inclusivity in the Arts is a great first step.



Here's a Student Who Began Pursuing a Master's Degree Before Completing Her Bachelor's Requirements

November 26, 2019 - by Joe Garvey



ODU Student Kayla Davis

Kayla Davis vividly remembers her very first class at Old Dominion University - Music in History and Culture. "I was very nervous that the material would be too advanced for me and that the professor would seem inaccessible," she recalled. To say Davis overcame her uneasiness would be an understatement. It took her just 3½ years to earn her Bachelor of Science degree - and to begin working on her master's.

Davis, a double major in psychology and communication with an emphasis in public relations and advocacy, will graduate Dec. 14 during the University's 131st Commencement Exercises at Chartway Arena in the Ted Constant Convocation Center.

Davis is participating in a linked program, which allows undergrads to take graduate courses while still completing their degree. She's taking two classes master's classes this semester as she pursues a degree in lifespan and digital communication. She wants to work as a public relations counselor in crisis communication.

A graduate of Grassfield High School in Chesapeake and the daughter of an ODU alum, Davis split her time between taking classes on campus and online. She said she generally took three classes on campus and two online per semester, which allowed her to juggle a busy schedule.

As a freshman and sophomore, she taught music theory and dance at a studio in Chesapeake. For the past year and a half, she has worked as an ePortfolio assistant with ODU's Center for High Impact Practices (CHIP). She called that the "best job ever." In that role, she helps faculty and students build websites to they can create an online digital identity, which is especially valuable for prospective employers.

"When you have that ePortfolio versus just, like, Twitter, when people search for you, that's a really, really good way to present yourself," she said. The job has also benefited Davis greatly. "That's been probably the greatest experience I've had here because it's taught me hands-on skills I can use for my career in the future," said Davis, who will be studio manager, a position for graduate students, in the spring.

Carla J. Harrell, communication undergraduate program director and chief departmental advisor for communication and theatre arts, praised Davis' work. "Her demeanor is energetic, and students respond incredibly well to the information she shares, which has positively impacted the ePortfolios that are created," Harrell said.

Also within CHIP, Davis participated in workshops for the federally funded TRiO Student Support Services (SSS) program, which provides services to students from first-generation and limited-income families as well as students with disabilities, and ROPES Experiences, which supports students' transitions to and through college. Davis also interned last summer with the Meridian Group, a public relations firm in Virginia Beach. Carol Branch, a senior lecturer in communication and theatre arts, encouraged Davis to apply for the internship.

"ODU helps students get those opportunities that they wouldn't have known about otherwise," said Davis, who is also a member of ODU's Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) and the Psi Chi psychology honor society group. She praised the professors for always being accessible, either on campus or online and for not "just teaching out of a textbook."

Recently one of her professors gave students artichokes to take home and plant because, he said, "I want you to be more in tune with nature and just sitting outside and enjoying the Earth as it is," Davis said. "I'm like, this is totally not a traditional class."

So, did her trepidation about that first music class turn out to be warranted? "Luckily, I was wrong," she said. "Her class introduced me to so many different forms of music as well as related historical backgrounds. Because I enjoyed the class content and the sincerity of the professor, it is one of my favorite classes to date."

[Original Article Link](#)

KUDOS!

KATHERINE HAMMOND was selected as a State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and Dominion Energy nominee for the 2020 Outstanding Faculty Awards.

TED GOURNELOS received a \$10,000 PURS grant to conduct research with undergraduate student, **KATHERINE COATES**, on the use of social media to spread misinformation on climate change. This is the second year in a row one of our faculty and students has been a recipient of this award, with Allison Page and Carmen Jones earning the recognition last year.

ALLISON PAGE has been named a Discovery Distinguished Fellow with University College Dublin's Interdisciplinary Research Institute. In February 2020, she will be a scholar-in-residence at UCD, giving guest lectures and a keynote talk.

Homies, a film by **DAVID MALLIN**, has ended its festival run and will be released online for streaming soon. Follow announcements for upcoming releases on the film's [Facebook page](#).

ALLISON PAGE'S co-authored article with Jacquelyn Arcy was published in *Communication, Culture and Critique* titled "[#MeToo and the Politics of Collective Healing: Emotional Connection as Contestation](#)."

JAMES MORROW performed in the 77th International Choreographers Showcase, a Jury Selected Show in Guatemala on November 27 & 28, 2019.

ODU alum **CARMEN JONES** and **ALLISON PAGE** presented their PURS research at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in San Francisco, CA, in late November 2019.

ODU COMMS Student Wins Two Awards from the Hampton Roads Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America



Samaria Bingham with Past PRSA Hampton Roads Chapter President, Sally Kirby Hartman.

Old Dominion University received two Excellence Awards and one Best-in-Show Award from a local public relations organization on Nov. 19. The honors recognized the work of a student as well as ODU's magazines.

Samaria Bingham, a soon-to-be graduate of Old Dominion, won two Pinnacle Awards from the Public Relations Society of America's Hampton Roads chapter. The annual awards honor the best in local public relations efforts.

Her social media work for the Rotary Club of Norfolk's 2019 Suds & Buds party received an Excellence Award in social media tactics at a ceremony at the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club. Bingham also received Best in Show for student submissions.

"Samaria's good ideas and social media expertise helped make the 2019 Suds & Buds party the best attended in its five-year history," said Sally Hartman, vice president for communications with the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. "More than 600 guests helped raise nearly \$30,000 to benefit Norfolk Botanical Garden, the Rotary Club of Norfolk and Lee's Friends, which helps people living with cancer."

Bingham, from Richmond, will graduate in December with a degree in communication from ODU. She will start work after graduation in membership services with Norfolk's Town Point Club.

This was the second consecutive year an Old Dominion student won a Best in Show Pinnacle Award. In 2019, Hang Tran received Best in Show for student submissions, for her work organizing and helping stage the ODU COMM ePortfolio Five-Year Reflections Event, held in the Learning Commons @ Perry Library.

Both Bingham and Tran were executive board members of the University's public relations student organization, ODU PRSSA. [Original Article Link](#)

DECEMBER

12/12. A&L Holiday Reception. 3-5 PM at the Gordon Art Gallery.

12/13. Department Holiday Party. 2-4 PM in BAL 9024. All are welcome.

Please share accomplishments such as publications, awards, conference and festival acceptances, reviews, and other recognitions, and we will publish them in future bulletins:

[Submit content here.](#)

BROWN BAG
WORKS-IN-PROGRESS
LUNCH SERIES



09/24: Brittany Harris, MFA and Dr. Annemarie Navar-Gill (University Theatre 1002)

10/31: Priya Vashist, MFA and Dr. Ted Gournelos (BAL 9024)

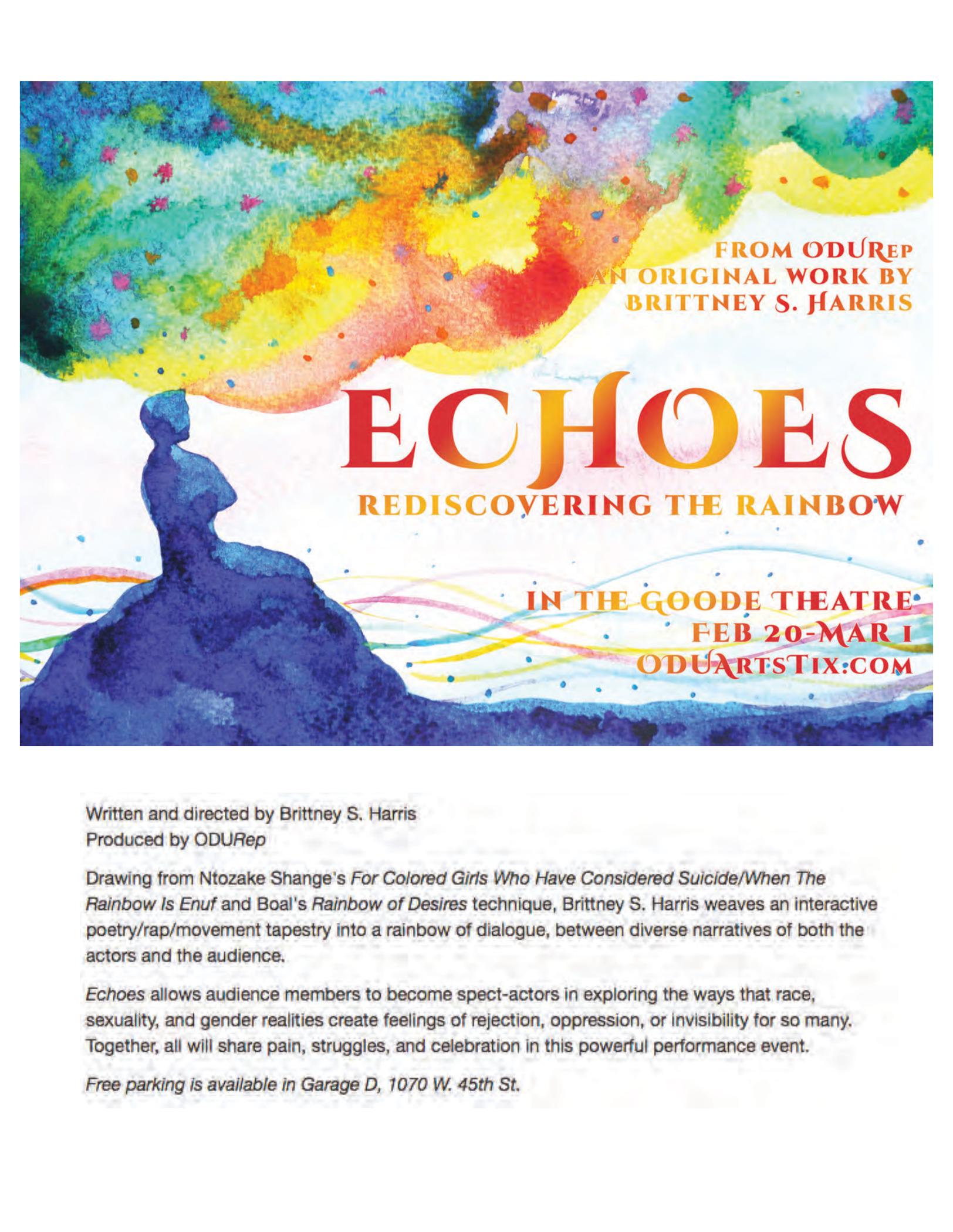
11/26: Marilyn Marloff, MFA and Dr. Victoria Jennings (Diehn 1202)

01/30: Dr. Brendan O'Hallarn and Dr. Danielle Jackson (BAL 9024)

02/27: Jim Lyden, MFA and Dr. Fran Hassencahl (University Theatre 1002)

03/26: Dr. Carolina Conte and TBA (Diehn 1202)

04/23: Dr. Kyle Nicholas and Carla Harrell (BAL 9024)



FROM ODUREP
AN ORIGINAL WORK BY
BRITTNEY S. HARRIS

ECHOES

REDISCOVERING THE RAINBOW

IN THE GOODE THEATRE
FEB 20-MAR 1
ODUARTSTIX.COM

Written and directed by Brittney S. Harris

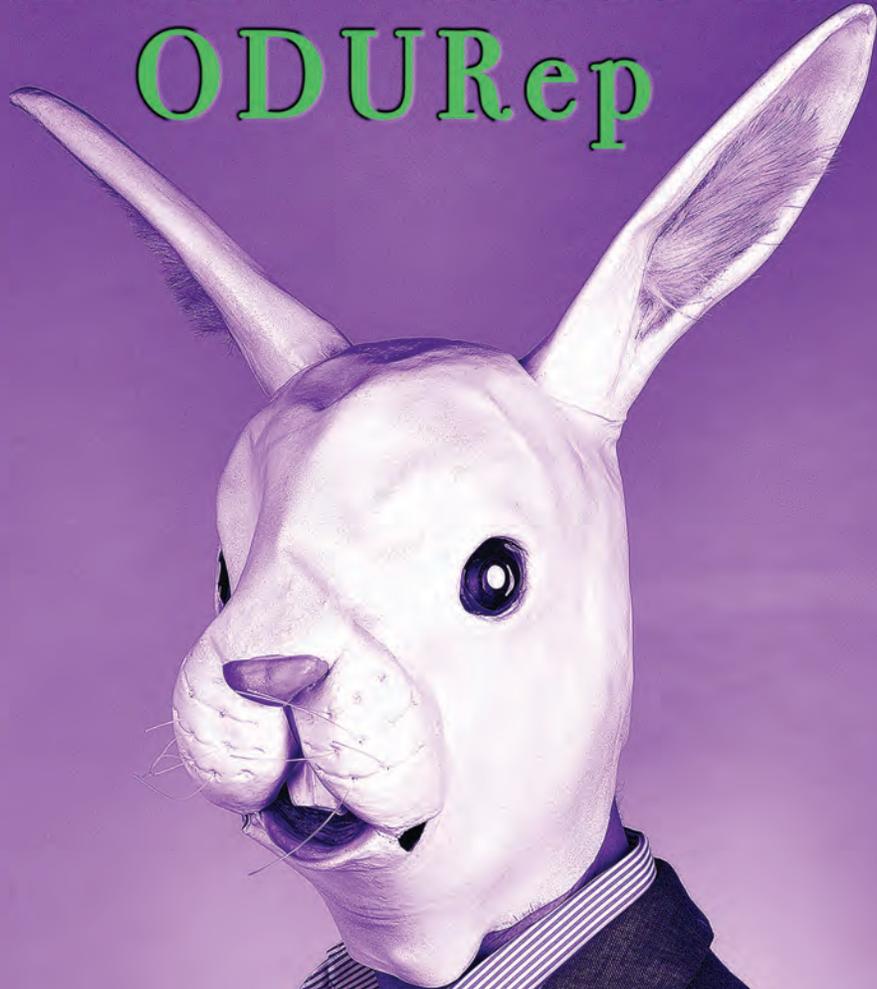
Produced by ODUREP

Drawing from Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When The Rainbow Is Enuf* and Boal's *Rainbow of Desires* technique, Brittney S. Harris weaves an interactive poetry/rap/movement tapestry into a rainbow of dialogue, between diverse narratives of both the actors and the audience.

Echoes allows audience members to become spect-actors in exploring the ways that race, sexuality, and gender realities create feelings of rejection, oppression, or invisibility for so many. Together, all will share pain, struggles, and celebration in this powerful performance event.

Free parking is available in Garage D, 1070 W. 45th St.

April 2-12 - Goode Theatre
ODURep



HARVEY

a comedy by Mary Chase
directed by Chris Hanna

ODUArtsTix.com