

SPECIAL THANKS

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Anna Gvodas

Ayaz Muratoglu

Ben Campbell

Caveh Zahedi

Dani Lever

Emily Bark Brown

Grace Abler & Callan Thomas

The Staff at Herbert Von King

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Jesse Speight

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Mary Hope Ballou

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Samori Etienne

Sarah Groustra

Shir Zahavi

Tanya Marie

**Thank You to the Herbert Von
King Cultural Arts Center!**

By the Fire Presents:

FRIENDS & STRANGERS



**December 6, 7 & 8th 2023
Herbert Von King Cultural Arts Center**

FRIENDS & STRANGERS

Allen's Front Porch: a Midwest Showdown *Episode 1*

Written by Franny Weed
Dir. Lulu Guzman
ALLEN: Oriana Mejer
FRANNY: Franny Weed

We Are Not Well

Written by Jessica Speight
Dir. Jada Weedon
JESSICA: Jessica Speight
WASHINGTON: Samori Etienne

Allen's Front Porch: a Midwest Showdown *Episode 2*

ALLEN: Oriana Mejer
FRANNY: Franny Weed
REILLY: Jessica Speight

Triage

Written by Frances McClain
Dir. Shannon Lyons and Frances McClain
JOHN: Peter Rinaldi
HANNAH: April Heliotis
NURSE: Annie Unger

Oriana Mejer (“Allen” / “The Girl”) is a Mexican actress, filmmaker and writer based in New York. A recent graduate of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting, Oriana hopes to put out as much original work as possible. She has traveled the world, from running around Valparaíso, Chile to touring Spain and India with a gang of poets. Inspired by the artists she grew up around, she now writes and produces her own ‘poem films.’ This is her first self-produced theater production and collaboration with By the Fire writers group. She is passionate about working with artists in all their different forms. Oriana loves comedy, improv, and for some reason, gut-wrenching dramatics. Credits include: *The Blood in the Walls* (Stella Adler Studio of Acting), *Alt. Lena* (Babehoven), and *To Be A Bear*.

Peter Rinaldi (“John”) is a filmmaker and host of the Back To One podcast where he talks to actors about their work, which has inspired him to get back into acting. He is currently rehearsing for Adult Film & Theater’s exciting new production of *The Seagull*. Most challenging role to date is “Peter Rinaldi” in Caveh Zahedi’s series “The Show About The Show.”

Samori Etienne (“Washington” / “Patron 3”) is a theater and film maker from New Jersey. This is his first time on stage in over three years. He would like to sincerely thank all involved in Friends & Strangers and everyone who helped him get here.

Shannon Lyons (*Triage* Co-Director) is a writer/director born and raised in North Carolina and living in New York. Having worked primarily in film she is thrilled to expand her practice into the theater alongside this incredible team of storytellers.

Willow Funkhouser (*Call Me Buck Intimacy*/Fight Coordinator) is a Brooklyn-based director, movement choreographer and intimacy coordinator. She holds a degree in Drama from Syracuse University and has completed over 60 hours of training with leading intimacy organizations. Willow has been part of works developed and performed at Delaware Rep, MCC Theater, Sewanee University, NYU, Good Apples Collective, The Tank, 938 Collective and New Relic Theatre. She has served as the intimacy coordinator for dozens of short films and is a member of the literary management team at Primary Stages.



Annie Unger (“Nurse”) Film/TV: *The Blacklist*, *Dodie Goes Boom Boom*, *Ten Dollar Funeral*, *Drugstore Lipstick*. Theatre: *Electra* (ATA) *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (Shakespeare’s Globe), *Sardanapalus* (MGSA), *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich* (MGSA), *Romeo and Juliet* (Baltimore Performance Kitchen). Annie received her BFA in acting from Rutgers University.

April Heliotis (“Hannah”) is a Brooklyn-based artist and actor/comedian who is excited to be performing after years of merely flirting with the concept — mainly through absurdist babbling Instagram stories. She can be seen starring in Boothe Carlson’s short film *“Total Transportation,”* streaming for free on NoBudget.com, and is currently gathering material to make a comedic short inspired by point-and-click adventures.

Danya Levy (Stagehand) is a data engineer born and raised in Brooklyn who loves to be creative-adjacent. She is thrilled to be playing a part in this fantastic event.

Eliana Kahn (Producer and Stage Manager) is a writer and researcher living in Brooklyn. Her work can be seen in the National Geographic docu-series *UFOs: Investigating the Unknown*. She loves to watch her friends create brilliant art and is so very excited to be working on this show. Currently her favorite word is “untethered.”

Frances McClain (Triage Playwright / Co-Director) is a writer and filmmaker living in Brooklyn, New York. She likes bringing sidewalk objects inside and playing games she’s good at. This is her first play (of many, God willing).

Franny Weed (Allen Playwright / “Franny” / “Lo”) is a playwright, actor and filmmaker living in Brooklyn. Her selected projects are: *Parking Lot Fairies* (2023, writer & actor, Chain Theatre), *Touch, Smell, Taste, Sound* (2023, writer & director, Tit For Tat), “Benjy” (2022, writer & director, Blue Zebra Productions), *Jean* (2021, writer & actor, Bowdoin College), and *Adaptation* (2020, director, Bowdoin College). Franny co-runs a screen/playwriting workshop in Brooklyn called By the Fire. Her writing has also been featured in *Reductress* and *Hot Pink Mag*. Right now, Franny wants to tell stories about aging, compromise, and fools.

Gal Yosepov (“Patron 2”) is an actor and producer based in NYC He’s a recent graduate of the Stella Adler Studio of Acting professional conservatory (class of ‘23), trained in classical and contemporary acting. Credits include various sketch comedy shows, *The Torchbearers* (Black Orchid Theatre Group), and the upcoming (January 2024) production of *Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow*, an adaptation of *The Three Sisters*.

Grace Abler (Call Me Buck Sound Designer) is an audio and visual artist based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. When Grace isn’t too busy yearning, she’s longing, and when she’s not too busy longing, she’s in Adobe Audition.

Jada Weedon (We Are Not Well Director) is so excited to be making her New York directorial debut with this outstanding story and cast. She is a recent graduate from Albright College with a dual degree in theatre and political science. Her recent work includes assistant directing *Freaky Friday: A New Musical* at the Axelrod Performing Arts Center and *Little Women* at the Yocum Institute of Art. Jada would like to thank her parents for all the support on her creative journey as well as the cast for an amazing experience!

Jessica Speight (We Are Not Well Playwright / “Jessica” / “Reilly”) is an actor/writer born and raised in Brooklyn, New York to a Southern-Caribbean household. Some of her writing credits include “GRLZ MAKE GIRLZ MAKE GRLZ,” a poem published in ISSUE V of *Flurry Mag* (a NY based zine). Her recent acting credits include *Pretense* by Tamara Aileen (City College Thesis Film), *Parking Lot Fairies* by Franny Weed (The Chain Theater) and *Sweat* by Lynne Nottage (Bowdoin Pickard Theater). Jessica is a co-host on *Damned If We Do*, a black-centric podcast on art and adulthood. Special thanks to Jessica’s mama for always encouraging her writing despite her fears; her father for sending her away with a full heart; and to Franny and Lulu for being the gracious masterminds behind *By The Fire*.

Claudia Conte Buenrostro (Call Me Buck Understudy) is a Mexican actress based in New York City. She has a B.A. in Audiovisual Media from the University of Baja California in Mexico and is a recent graduate from Stella Adler Studio of Acting. Her latest credits are Netflix’s *Monarca* and Amazon Studio’s *Un Papá Pirata*.

Lulu Guzman (*Call Me Buck* Playwright and Director / *Allen* Director) is a Brooklyn based theater artist and director who sometimes writes about queer kisses and tangled feelings. Directing credits include: *PRIDE: A Southern Haunting* (NYU MFA Musical Theatre Thesis Workshops); *As Long As The Light* (NTI at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center); *Collective Rage: A Play In Five Betties* (Sarah Lawrence College). Assistant Directing credits: *The Liar* (American Players Theater), *At The Wedding* (Lincoln Center LCT3); *Is Edward Snowden Single* (The Pool Plays), *Letters That You Will Not Get* (American Opera Projects).

Louisa Judge (*Triage* Set and Costume Design) is a Set Designer and Prop Master based in New York City. She is obsessed with objects and the role they play in storytelling. Her work on feature films includes: Set Decorator on *Stress Positions* (2024), Prop Master on *Bad Shabbos* (2024), and Graphic Designer on *Story Ave* (SXSW 2023). She also assisted in the Set Decoration department on Showtime's *Ripley*, a period limited series. Louisa's work on *Triage* is her first time designing for the stage.

Mary Tomei (*Allen* Musical Director) is an early career director in New York with a B.A. in Theater from Northwestern University. Recent directing credits include *Night of New Work* at Green Room 42 and a staged reading of *The Angel Makers*, a new folk-rock musical by Amanda Freedman and Lorenzo Pipino. Other directing credits: *Bright Star* at Ghostlight Theater Camp, Jordan Knitzer's *Itchin' for an Itch: The Mosquitical*, awarded BEST PRODUCTION SHORT at New York Theater Festival, and assisting on *King of Pangaea* by Martin Storrow (dir. Richard Israel) at NAMT's 34th Annual Festival of New Musicals, the Dramatists Guild Foundation and Straighten Your Crown Productions.

Megan Bitchell ("Angela") is an actress and comedian from Texas. You've seen her in Men's Health Magazine and on Twitter!

Natalie Braye ("The Girl She Likes") is a writer, producer and dramaturg born and raised in Chicago, Illinois and living in Brooklyn, New York. This is Natalie's New York acting debut and they are grateful to the By The Fire Collective for the opportunity to explore the stage.



Call Me Buck

Written & Directed
by Lulu Guzman
THE GIRL: Oriana Mejer
THE GIRL SHE LIKES: Natalie Braye
*Claudia Conte Buenrostro (u/s)

Allen's Front Porch: a Midwest Showdown Episode 3

ALLEN: Oriana Mejer
FRANNY: Franny Weed
REILLY: Jessica Speight
ANGELA: Megan Bitchell
PATRON 1: April Heliotis
PATRON 2: Gal Yosepov
PATRON 3: Samori Etienne

Producers

Lulu Guzman
Franny Weed
Eliana Kahn
Oriana Mejer
Jessica Speight

Herbert Von King Team

Alex Bartenieff
Ben Campbell

Graphics and poster by Julie Morris

Program by Eliana Kahn

