



October 2023

Welcome Class of 2026!

In August, David Geffen School of Drama welcomed the Class of 2026. This talented group of 80 artists and managers traveled to New Haven from across 17 states and 14 countries.

“I came to DGSD because I wanted to be in collaboration with some of the industry’s greatest thinkers and artists, examining and reimagining the current models of making theater,” says **Claudia Campos ’26**, a first-year Theater Management student from Miami. “It’s such a gift that we’re not just in conversation about the future of theater, we’re building it every day.”

Gretta Marston-Lari ’26, a first-year Acting student, echoed the importance of the education that the School provides. “I want to bring back as much knowledge and artistic wisdom as I possibly can to Peru,” says Marston-Lari. “I feel like I’m on an important mission to raise artistry in my community to a new level and being here is the way I’m doing that.”



The incoming class of TD&P students at orientation. TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: **Matthew Phillips '26, Shannon Dodson '26, Yun Wu '26**; MIDDLE ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: **Lilliana Gonzalez '26, Steph Lo '26, Cathy Ho '26, Mara Bredovskis '26**; BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: **Steven Blasberg '26, Thomas Minucci '26, T Morris-Thompson '26, Katie Chance '26**.



Marcus Gardley '04 (Faculty)

A Familiar Face...in a New Place

Marcus Gardley '04 has been appointed Co-Chair of Playwriting and will serve with current Co-Chair **Anne Erbe '11**. He succeeds **Tarell Alvin McCraney '07**, who will continue to teach at the School while serving as Artistic Director of Geffen Playhouse.

Gardley is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter whose work includes *The House That Will Not Stand*; *X: Or, Betty Shabazz v. the Nation*; *black odyssey*; *dance of the holy ghosts*; and *On the Levee* (commissioned by Yale Rep). His television credits include *Maid* (Netflix), which received a 2022 WGA Award for best adapted longform series; Boots Riley's *I'm a Virgo* (Amazon), *The Chi* (Showtime), and *Foundation* (Apple TV+). He wrote the screenplay for the upcoming film adaptation of the musical *The Color Purple*, which is scheduled for theatrical release this December.

Gardley brings a wealth of teaching experience to this new position. He has taught at Brown University, Columbia University, the University of Massachusetts, the University of San Francisco, and the National Theatre Institute.

"I am honored to co-chair the playwriting program alongside my colleague, Anne Erbe," said Gardley. "Our shared goal is to encourage students to write plays that spark conversation and spread joy."

“I Learned at Least 20 New Things Every Day”: Development Studio 49 Keeps the Good Vibes Going

The 2023 Yale Summer Cabaret was led entirely by Theater Management students for the first time in its history. Classmates **Sarah Machiko Haber '25**, **Adrian Alexander Hernandez '25**, **Maya Louise Shed '25**, and **Mikayla Michelle Stanley '25** worked collaboratively as co-executive artistic directors. Each brought experience as community leaders, educators, and producers to the creative process.

The season opener, *the betrayal project*, was devised by **Jisun Kim '22**, **Stefani Kuo '24**, and **Bobbin Ramsey '24**, in collaboration with a cast of DGSD actors. It was followed by *pride 365*, a musical celebration meant to foster joy and healing among the LGBTQ+ community. The final production, *play @ the cab: a 6x10 new works festival*, featured original 10-minute plays written by community members from Yale and New Haven.

Development Studio 49 was committed to cultivating a gathering space that broke down barriers and expanded the meaning of what theater can be. Their philosophy of “low stakes, high risks, good vibes” was at the core of their mission. Maya Louise Shed shared that it was important for them to run a “values-based theater that both supports the art and the people making it.”



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT: **Sarah Machiko Haber '25**, **Mikayla Michelle Stanley '25**, **Maya Louise Shed '25**, and **Adrian Alexander Hernandez '25**.

Casting Light on the Industry

Brian Mann '79 and his wife, Renee, hosted a dinner and panel discussion at their home before this year's L.A. showcase for fourth-year actors. The panel featured casting directors Deb Aquila, Carmen Cuba, Claudia Lyon, Kim Williams, and producer Shana C. Waterman YC '94, LAW '00. They generously offered valuable insight to the actors as they embark on their professional careers.



The graduating actors with DGSD Board members **Courtney B. Vance '86** and **David Marshall Grant '78**.

Camelot and Conversation

The set and costume designers of Lincoln Center Theater's revival of *Camelot*, **Michael Yeargan '77 (Faculty)** and **Jennifer Moeller '06**, participated in a behind-the-scenes panel discussion led by director Bartlett Sher at a reception for invited guests. Yeargan, Moeller, and Sher all received Tony Award nominations for the production. The conversation was

followed by a performance of the musical, starring **Andrew Burnap '16** as Arthur and featuring **Solá Fádíran '22** in the ensemble cast. In attendance was Lincoln Center Theater Board Chair David Solomon YC '88, event hosts Vice Chairs Rob Pohly YC '94 and Jonathan Cohen, and their spouses Julie Turaj YC '93 and Julia Pershan YC '92.



David Solomon YC '88, LAW '92; Rob Pohly YC '94; Julie Turaj YC '93; Bartlett Sher; **Michael Yeargan '77 (Faculty)**; **Jennifer Moeller '06**; Jonathan Cohen; and Julia Pershan YC '92.

Tori's Story

Tori Sampson '17 defines herself as a “Black woman storyteller.” Nearly a decade ago, she set out to tell the story of Huey P. Newton, the Black Panther co-founder tried for killing a white police officer in Oakland, California. It was one of the most notorious prosecutions of the turbulent 1960s. Newton was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and served time in prison, but his conviction was overturned on appeal, and two later trials ended in hung juries.

This Land Was Made, Tori's play, presents the Panthers, not merely as historical figures, but as real people, passionate about their fight for freedom. Newton is a character in the play, which the playwright set in a fictional Oakland bar called Trish's. In 2015, it was part of the School's Langston Hughes Festival of New Work. Sarah Stern, Artistic Director of Vineyard Theatre, saw *This Land Was Made* at Yale and took note. This past spring, the play made its Off-Broadway debut with a five-week run at Vineyard Theatre.

Many DGSD alumni were attached to this production. The Vineyard cast included Drama School graduates **Antoinette Crowe-Legacy '18**, **Leland Fowler '17**, **Sean Patrick Higgins '16**, **Julian Elijah Martinez '16**, and **Curt Morlaye '18**. **Wilson Chin '03** designed the sets, **Fan Zhang '17** was the sound designer, and **Anne McPherson '05** served as stage manager.

Tori's other work includes *If Pretty Hurts*, *Ugly Must Be a Muhfucka*, produced in 2019 at Playwrights Horizons, and *Cadillac Crew*, staged at Yale Rep. She has also written for the Netflix series *His & Hers*.

We know this storyteller has more stories to tell.



The cast of *This Land Was Made* at Vineyard Theatre featuring Ezra Knight, Libya V. Pugh, Yasha Jackson, **Leland Fowler '17**, Matthew Griffin, **Antoinette Crowe-Legacy '18**, **Julian Elijah Martinez '16**, **Curt Morlaye '18**, **Sean Patrick Higgins '16**, and Oliver Palmer.

DGSD...DC

Ethan Heard '13, YC '07 was named Associate Artistic Director of Signature Theatre in Arlington, VA; **Elizabeth Dinkova '17** was appointed Artistic Director of Spooky Action Theater in Washington, DC; and **Danilo Gambini '20** is the now Associate Artistic Director at DC's Studio Theatre. To honor the achievements of these three bright lights of the Washington theater community, director Gillian Drake hosted a celebration at her home in DC. Congratulations, all!



Drew Lichtenberg '08, DFA '18; Ethan Heard '13, YC '07; Deborah S. Berman (Staff); Elizabeth Dinkova '17; Emika Abe '16, SOM '16; Danilo Gambini '20; and Sammy Zeisel '24.

Send in the Clowns

DGSD alumni and friends in New York enjoyed an uproarious evening of laughter and cutting-edge social commentary at New York Theatre Workshop where **Frances Black '09** presented the School's Commedia Project production of *for the honey, you gotta say when*. The annual "ruckus," as **Christopher Bayes (Faculty)** describes it, featured DGSD actors **Sam DeMuria '23, Shimali De Silva '23, Anthony Grace '23, Tavia Hunt '23, Maggie McCaffery '23, Nomè SiDone '23, Abigail C. Onwunali '23, and yao '23**, and was directed by Bayes.

"Sharing this gem of a production is a win-win for audiences and for the graduating actors making their NYC debut," said Frances. "It was my absolute honor to transfer this show from Yale to the East Village, and I thank DGSD and NYTW for collaborating with me to make it happen. It's good to be alive and well in the theater!"



DGSD grads and friends gather to celebrate *for the honey, you gotta say when* at New York Theatre Workshop.

Making Hamlet His Own

Ato Blankson-Wood '15 played the title role in *Hamlet* at The Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park this summer. Ato remarked on the collaborative spirit that the Delacorte Theater audience brings, saying, "Theater in its purest form is a communal act," and that the community engagement allowed him to "access a sense of impact," which he carried into his work.

On making such an iconic character his own, Ato felt prepared. He recalls memorizing two *Hamlet* soliloquies for class, stating that "the seeds of Hamlet were planted when I was in school. I really feel so grateful to have had the training and the experience at the School of Drama that I did." His time at Yale taught him to "respect everyone's discipline, eliminating the hierarchy, which carried me through every single show."



Ato Blankson-Wood '15, Mitchell Winter '14, and Brandon Gill in The Public's Free Shakespeare in the Park production of *Hamlet*, directed by Kenny Leon.

A Class Act

The pandemic presented the Class of 2023 with many unusual challenges, but nothing could stop this group of exceptional students. They all deserve a standing ovation!



The Class of 2023 at David Geffen School of Drama at Yale.

Dean James Bundy
Associate Dean Florie Seery

Associate Dean Chantal Rodriguez
Assistant Dean Carla Jackson

invite you to the annual
DGSD Alumni Party

Monday, October 16, 2023, 6-9pm



The Yale Club of New York City
50 Vanderbilt Avenue
Grand Ballroom, 20th Floor
Click to RSVP

The Yale Club dress code has been waived for this event.

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Stay connected

[Join the DGSD Alumni Facebook group!](#)

In addition to the public page, we have a private Facebook group for DGSD alums, where you can share your news and connect with the DGSD community.

[Register with YAA](#)

For access to the wider Yale alumni community, register with Yale Alumni Association to be included in the University-wide directory.

[Sign up for Cross Campus](#)

YAA is offering a new way to connect to fellow alumni and the entire Yale community: Cross Campus, Yale's online networking and mentoring program.

Sign up today and join this dedicated forum for members of our School community—the DGSD Cross Campus group—where you can find mentors, exchange ideas, and share resources with alumni and current students.

Send us your news!

We are now accepting alumni notes for the 2023-24 *David Geffen School of Drama Annual Magazine*.

Please submit your note by **Friday, October 13, 2023** to:

dgsd.alumni@yale.edu

If you choose to send a photo, please:

- Attach a high-resolution photo as a .jpg file.
- Include a caption (which includes all names) and appropriate photo credit information.
- Be sure to send only photos you have permission to publish.

Questions about alumni notes should be directed to Maya Louise Shed at dgsd.alumni@yale.edu or (203) 432-4853. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Photo credits: TD&P Class of 2026 photo by T. Charles Erickson; Development Studio 49 photo by Allyse Corbin; L.A. Actor Party photo by **Deborah S. Berman (Staff)**; *Camelot* photo by Jessica Fenner; *This Land Was Made* photo courtesy of Vineyard

Theatre, by Carol Rosegg; *for the honey, you gotta say when* photo by Leonard Sorcher; *Hamlet* photo by Joan Marcus; Class of 2023 photo by Defining Studios.



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