



BY
**CHRISTOPHER
CHEN**
PASSAGE



Department of Theatre Arts and Dance

Scenic Design
GABRIELLE MALBROUGH

Costume/Co-Lighting Design
KRISTINA ORTIZ MILLER

Sound Design
TYLER HAWS

Co-Lighting Design
JACE GITHENS

Director
SEBASTIAN TRAINOR

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UTA respectfully acknowledges the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes upon whose historical homelands this University is located. Their ancestors resided here for generations before being forcibly displaced by U.S. settlers and soldiers in the mid-1800s. We recognize the historical presence of the Caddo Nation and other Tribal Nations in the region; the ongoing presence and achievements of many people who moved to the area due to the Indian Relocation program of the 1950s and 1960s; and the vital presence and accomplishments of our Native students, faculty, and staff.

Any video and/or audio recording of this production is strictly prohibited.

*PASSAGE had its New York Premiere at Soho Rep
(Sarah Benson, Artistic Director; Cynthia Flowers, Executive Director).*

Originally produced by the Wilma Theater, Philadelphia, PA

*(Blanka Zizka, Artistic Director) PASSAGE was presented as part of the Contemporary American
Voices Festival at Long Wharf Theatre, 2017*

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

A Note from the Director:

As the Director of UTA's production of *Passage*, I find myself in a curious position in regard to composing a welcoming note for the program for this show. It turns out that pretty much anything I would wish to include in this statement has already been communicated to you by one of the Tour Guides who brought you into the theatre this evening. I would, for example, mention that Christopher Chen's 2018 play is inspired by E.M. Forster's 1924 novel *A Passage to India*. Then I'd point out that the story's most important scene takes place in a mystical cave. And I'd emphasize that the overarching theme of this drama is the surmounting of (and also the failure of attempts to surmount) the cultural barriers to true human connection. In this production the opposing cultural poles of humanity — the extremes which could benefit from more connectedness — are represented by "cavemen" and "robots." Our production team felt that this choice matched well with the abstraction of Chen's universalizing "Country X" and "Country Y" cultures (in place of Forster's India and England) for the telling of the story of his play. This is one of the significant ways in which the playwright departed from his source material . . . and yet the main sentiment of the overall parable remains the same for both authors (and for our production). It is Forster's famous refrain: "only connect". Or, as he put it more fully:

"Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its highest. Live in fragments no longer."

But, having reiterated these key points from the pre-show "dark-ride" style entrance experience, I now turn the remainder of this program note over to the creator of that pre-show tour, Kate Thompson, our Assistant Director for this production.

— Dr. Sebastian Trainor, Director

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

A Note from the Assistant Director:

You've all heard the phrase "only connect" many times already this evening, but I'm emphasizing it again because it is the responsibility handed to us by playwright Christopher Chen and it derives from E. M. Forster's original work. "Connection" is the challenge for our story and the challenge we present to you, the audience.

Within this play, the central characters seek to answer the question of whether people across different cultures and different social strata can truly understand and befriend one another. It is the question we seek to answer here together. During our rehearsal explorations of Chen's *Passage*, we've continually asked ourselves: how might this connection be achieved for our audiences? We found some helpful ideas in the dramatic theories of the German modernist playwright and director, Bertolt Brecht — particularly in his concept of *Verfremdungs*, which means "to make the familiar, strange." Done right, this "defamiliarization" or "strangification" prevents an audience from becoming so emotionally invested in a play's characters that they lose sight of the greater "big-picture" message. As Brecht reasons, for an audience to be engaged more fully . . . for them to be interested and consciously "connected" . . . for them to be inspired to think upon the message . . . a play must constantly remind its audience that they are witnessing prose rather than reality. So, in this production, we've attempted this through many means — especially with our cavemen and robots — and, while jarring, these choices create a space for critical thinking.

Brecht wrote that "a theatre which makes no contact with the public is a nonsense," and so we have created an immersive backstage tour, we break the fourth wall, and we "strangify" the story in many ways attempt to engage you, the audience, fully with the ideas contained in the prose. We've opened every door to connection we can find. The rest is up to you. We hope you will eschew passive consumption . . . and become an active spectator.

As Dr. Trainor mentioned above, the Cave of Confrontation is the heart of this story. Even though only one scene of the play takes place inside the Cave, its presence is felt throughout the whole show. Similar to Aristotle's "Allegory of the Cave," truth and lies manifest and challenge the spectator in this space. The Cave knows our deepest fears and presents them to us, asking if we will conquer or remain imprisoned by them; if we can overcome in order to connect to others or live our lives hiding in the darkness behind the walls we build. The theatre you are in now is this Cave, and the show you will see is manifested by it. All the scenes and elements are formed from the Cave. The lies and truth fed to the Cave are twisted and echoed back with the Cave's own voice as it asks: can we connect? The world today tells us "no." Still, stay with us.

— Kate Thompson, Assistant Director

CAST

Country X

B.....	Thaddeus Veranga
G.....	Jennifer Martinez
H.....	Julia Hall
M.....	Malik D'Shawn
S.....	Gabrielle Perez

Country Y

D.....	Jaysson Jackson
F.....	GeCamri Amberay
J.....	Ana Arellano
Q.....	Callie Taylor
R.....	Hayes Walker

Ensemble

1.....	Jaedyn Henderson
2.....	Alisa Martinez
3/Mosquito.....	Tylie Sabbatini
4.....	Jeremiah Peikert
5/Gecko.....	Raine Smith

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director.....	Sebastian Trainor
Assistant Director.....	Kate Thompson
Stage Manager.....	Laz Jarrell
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Bernadette Washburn
Stage Management Faculty Advisor.....	Hailey Green
Voice and Movement Coach.....	Megan Noble
Scenic Designer.....	Gabrielle Malbrough
Costume & Co-Lighting Designer.....	Kristina Ortiz Miller
Co-Lighting Designer.....	Jace Githens
Sound Designer.....	Tyler Haws
Properties Designer.....	Justin Miller
Production Manager.....	DJ Badon
Technical Director.....	Wyatt Niemietz
Master Electrician.....	Brooke Ford
Lead Electrician.....	Ash Wilson
Light Board Op.....	Loren Mediana
Sound Board Op.....	Jasmine Suarez
Spot Op.....	Gisela Garcia, Justin Siegmund
Wardrobe Crew.....	Elisabeth Hotard (H), Scarlett Halloway, Marcus Mendoza, Edith Lara, Madison Jackson
Backstage Crew.....	Vie Walker (H), Matilda McSpadden, Jason Winkler, Sean Monroe
Dramaturgy Mentor.....	Jeanmarie Higgins
Scenic Studio Supervisor.....	Benjamin Phillips
Costume Studio Supervisor.....	Billy Blue

CAST BIOS

THADDEUS VERANGA - B

Thaddeus Jan (TJ) Veranga is thrilled to make his stage debut in *Passage*. He is a BFA Acting student at UTA and an aspiring voice actor. TJ is deeply grateful for the encouragement and support of his family and friends.

JENNIFER MARTINEZ - G

Jennifer is a BFA Acting senior. Last year she starred as Hilda in UTA's production of *Room Service*. She is very excited to be a part of a dedicated ensemble and meaningful play. She also wants to thank her friends and family for all their support.

JULIA HALL - H

Julia is a current BFA Acting junior and Dance minor who is extremely excited to act in this production. She was last seen as Lucky Mickey in UTA's production of *Treasure Island*. She wants to thank her Mom, Dad, brother William and amazing boyfriend Parker for supporting her!

MALIK D'SHAWN - M

Malik D'Shawn, originally from Detroit and now based in Texas, is an actor, rapper, writer, and gamer. He has performed in productions such as *Room Service* and *Cinderella*. With a passion for storytelling across stages, Malik D'Shawn brings humor, creativity, and dedication to every performance.

GABRIELLE PEREZ - S

Gabrielle is thrilled to make her UTA debut in *Passage*! As a freshman, she previously performed in *Summer and Smoke*, appeared in local short films, and starred in a "Make it Movement" commercial. She thanks her family and sorority sisters for their endless support in her achievements.

JAYSSON JACKSON - D

Jaysson Jackson is currently in his sophomore year of his BFA Acting degree. *Passage* is his first UTA show. He hopes that this is just the beginning of even more opportunities. He'd like to thank his mom, dad, and sister for supporting his dreams. Follow him at @itsjaysson!

GE CAMRI AMBERAY - F

GeCamri Amberay, a junior in UTA's BFA Acting program, recently appeared in *Treasure Island* (Red Ruth) and London Crawford's *Cinderella* (Cinderella). On screen, she stars in *Through the Ghost* and the upcoming pilot *Pressed*. She gratefully thanks God, her family, friends, and especially her parents, sister, grandfather, and the Cullors family. gecamriamberay.com, [@gecamriamberay](https://www.instagram.com/gecamriamberay)

ANA ARELLANO - J

Ana Arellano is a BFA Acting student at UTA. Her stage credits include: Sandrine in *Almost, Maine* at Theatre Coppel and Georgette in *Bonnets: How Ladies of Good Breeding are Induced to Murder* at UTA. She sends thanks to her family, friends, and partner, Trevor, for always supporting her dreams.

CALLIE TAYLOR - Q

Callie Taylor is a junior BFA Acting student. She is thrilled to share the story of *Passage* with you. A recent credit she enjoyed being in was *Bonnets*, where she played a Bonnet. She would like to thank her parents, family, directors, and all those who continue to inspire her.

HAYES WALKER - R

Hayes is a BFA Acting major and is excited to be able to perform. This is his second performance at UTA after *Treasure Island*. He would like to thank his friends and family for their support as well as his professors and peers.

JAE HENDERSON - Ensemble 1

Jae Henderson is a junior in UTA's BFA Acting program. She is thrilled to be a part of *Passage* as her first production with UTA, as a transfer from Collin College. She would like to thank her friends, family, and her dog Angus for all their love and support.

CAST BIOS

ALISA MARTINEZ - Ensemble 2

Alisa's ecstatic to be in her first UTA production as an ensemble member. Her last role was Fruma Sarah in *Fiddler on the Roof* during high school. Outside of acting, she enjoys drawing and writing. She would like to thank her family for letting her have fun in life.

TYLIE SABBATINI - Ensemble 3/Mosquito

Tylie Sabbatini is a junior in the BFA Acting program at UTA. Previous adventures include *Treasure Island* and *As You Like It*. They are thrilled to join you in the journey through *Passage*.

JEREMIAH PEIKERT - Ensemble 4

A U.S. Army veteran who got his foray into theatre while in service and is now pursuing his dreams at UTA. Has performed in plays such as *She Loves Me*, *Newsies* and *9 to 5*. He is excited for his journey and ready to learn more about theatre.

RAINE SMITH - Ensemble 5/Gecko

Raine is a sophomore and is thrilled to participate in his first main season production at UTA. His previous credits include the BA studio's *Space Brigade* and *Mustard* at the SFA Summer Theatre Workshop. He would like to thank his father for his unending support and hard work to get him here.

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

SEBASTIAN TRAINOR - Director

Sebastian Trainor is a theatre historian, theorist of theatre historiography, stage director, and part of the UTA Theatre Faculty. He is a member of the Mellon School for Theatre and Performance Research, the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, associate member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, a former associate artist at the Medicine Show Theatre Ensemble in New York City, and has been the recipient of a multi-year E.J Noble Arts Administration Fellowship as well as multiple directing fellowships. He received his MFA in directing from the California Institute of the Arts and his Ph.D. in Theatre History, Theory, and Criticism from the University of Washington. His scholarship has appeared in the journals *Theatre Symposium*, *Text & Presentation*, and *The Journal of American Drama and Theatre*; in the collections *Fifty Key Stage Musicals*, *Women in the Arts in the Belle Epoque: Essays on Influential Artists, Writers and Performers*, the *Fandex Field Guide to Shakespeare*..

KATE THOMPSON - Assistant Director

After having performed in the last three UTA shows, Kate is excited to try her hand at assistant directing in her last semester at UTA. Writing and directing the entrance tour has been an invaluable experience for her, and she is so grateful to Dr. Zip for all his help. The Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program has allowed her to develop the tour to investigate the theme of the show: "only connect." Kate would like to thank her family and friends for their endless support. All glory and praise to God!.

LAZ JARRELL - Stage Manager

Laz Jarrell is a senior at UT Arlington, and is so excited to stage manage their fifth production! They most recently worked on *Onstage in Bedford's Sherwood: The Tales of Robin Hood* and UTA's *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*. They look forward to the new challenges ahead of them and are extremely thankful for their family and friends' unwavering support!

BERNADETTE WASHBURN - Assistant Stage Manager

Bernadette is a freshman at UT Arlington and is very excited for her first time working as part of the stage management team.

PRODUCTION TEAM BIOS

GABRIELLE MALBROUGH - Scenic Design

Gabrielle Malbrough is a Scenic Designer and artist based in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, currently pursuing a BFA in Design and Technology at the University of Texas at Arlington. Her design and co-design credits include *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* (UTA), *On the Town* (UTA), *Sometimes It's Hell Getting to Heaven* (New Works), and *Bright Star* (UTA), the latter earning her a Kennedy Center Regional Award for Excellence in Assistant Scenic Design.

Gabrielle is currently designing for UTA's repertory productions of *Passage* and *Seize the King*, as well as Bob Marley's *Three Little Birds* at Jubilee Theatre and SheDFW's 2025 Theatre Festival. She is also the founder of UTA's Black Theatre Society, where she advocates for representation, equity, and accessibility in the performing arts. www.gabriellemdesigns.com

KRISTINA ORTIZ MILLER - Costume Designer/Lighting Designer

Kristina Ortiz Miller is a costume, scenic and lighting designer, based out of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Practice in Costume Design in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance at the University of Texas at Arlington. She holds a Master's of Fine Arts in Theatrical Production Design from Michigan State University. Select Texas credits include the Dallas Children's Theatre, Fort Worth Opera, Stages (Houston), A.D.Players at the George (Houston) and Teatrix (Houston).

TYLER HAWS - Sound Designer

Tyler Haws is a multimedia artist based in Dallas, Texas. His work explores the representation of reality in art through audio recordings, image manipulation, and physical structures. Using software such as ProTools, Logic Pro, Ableton, and the Adobe Suite, he edits sound and visuals to create unexpected narratives often crafting audio that conveys a meaning distinct from its original context. Tyler earned his BA from the Digital Arts Program at Stetson University, where he served as a teaching assistant in multiple undergraduate courses and frequently collaborated with fellow artists. He went on to complete his MFA in Creative Practice at The University of Texas at Dallas. Currently, Tyler teaches sound art at The University of Texas at Arlington while continuing to create and exhibit work for galleries and live events throughout North Texas.

MEGAN NOBLE - Voice and Movement Coach

Megan Noble serves as an Assistant Professor for UTA's Department of Theatre & Dance, teaching Acting, Voice & Speech, and Movement. She is an actor, director & dialect coach in the DFW area, certified in Knight-Thompson Speechwork & Miller Voice Method, as well as a member of Actors' Equity.

DJ BADON - Production Manager

DJ joined the department in June of 2008. He has served as Technical Director since 2015 and became the Production Manager in 2018. He received Associate degrees in Construction and Design Drafting as well as a Bachelor's degree in Theatre from Southeastern Louisiana University. He then attended Western Illinois University where he received an MFA in Scenic Design. As a scenic designer, his previous credits include *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *See What I Wanna See*, and *Night of the Living Dead* at UTA.

JEANMARIE HIGGINS - Dramaturgy Mentor

Jeanmarie chairs the Theatre Arts & Dance Department. Her creative practice includes new works dramaturgy for such companies as Martha Graham Dance Company, Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and People's Light. She is the 2021 recipient of the Oscar Brockett Teaching Award from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

BENEFACTORS

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PLEASE...

- Be sure to turn off all cellular phones or similar electronics prior to the show beginning.
- Avoid the temptation to send text messages during the performance!
- For your and the performers' safety, we ask that you remain in your seats and keep all personal items out of the aisles.
- No photography or recording of the performance is permitted.
- Please do not bring food or drinks into the theatre.

THANK YOU AND ENJOY THE SHOW!