



# CAST

## IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Elinor Jones '21  
Nikita Belyaev '21  
Ezra Nayagam Muthiah '24  
Miles Latham '24  
Aela Morris '22  
Zahara Spilka '21  
María Isabel Arreola '21  
Faith Milon '22

## *Portals* Artistic Staff

Beth Cleary, Director, THDA  
Adam Clark, Stage Manager '21  
David Zierott, Videographer, Guest Artist  
Dameun Strange '95, Composer, Guest Artist  
Thomas C. Barrett, Scenic & Lighting Designer, THDA  
Lynn Farrington, Costume Designer, THDA  
Cheryl Moore Brinkley, Voice & Speech Coach, THDA  
Thomas C. Barrett, Technical Director, THDA  
Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento, Department Chair, THDA  
Johanna Lorbach, Publicity and Coordination, THDA  
Angus Fraser, Poster Designer, '22

Special thanks to: Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento; Macalester Music Department; East Side Freedom Library; Brian Buuck



**Elinor Jones...found Fleta Woolsey of Waco, Texas, who survived the Influenza Pandemic of 1918.**

**Nikita Belyaev ...found a newspaper article about teachers losing their jobs during the Red Scare of the 1950s**

**Ezra Muthiah...looked into The Martyrs Mirror for stories of faith despite extreme persecution: this is Elizabeth Dirks's story, 1549**



**Miles Latham...found testimonies of U.S. soldiers who served in Vietnam, speaking against war as any kind of solution**

**Aela Morris...wrote a letter to nineteenth century poet Emily Dickinson**



**Zahara Spilka...hails the courage of sisters in struggle through a living chain of poems**

**María Isabel Arreola...interviewed a storyteller named Amparo about separations and reunions across borders and generations**



**Faith Milon...walked back through her own life-changing year of 2020**

**Elinor Jones...completes our Portals passage with words by a nurse who might be your neighbor, your sister, your mother, you --**

# Cast Bio

## Elinor Jones '21

she/they



Elinor is a senior THDA and Music double major. Upon graduating, she plans to continue working in the arts scene in the Twin Cities. They would like to wholeheartedly thank Beth for everything, as well as the rest of the creative team.

Their two-part piece depicts two medical professionals – a doctor who lived through the 1918 Flu Pandemic and a nurse in the present day COVID-19 Pandemic. Fleta recalls her time in medical school in the early 1920s and her stories from the Flu. Kori reflects on our present moment. The horror movie that isn't ending, its credits aren't rolling.

## Ezra Muthiah '24

he/they



Ezra Nayagam Muthiah is a first year from Pasadena, CA currently planning to double in Theater and Dance/English (Creative Writing). They would like to thank Beth and the entire Portals team for helping make this process and production so inspiring, transformative, and fun.

Their piece depicts 1549 account from the Martyr's Mirror (or The Bloody Theater) of Elisabeth Dirks, an early Anabaptist, as Catholic lords tortured and interrogated her before condemning her to death by drowning.

## Nikita Belyaev '21

he/him



I'm a Russian studies major with theater minor. Graduating in spring 21 I'm excited to take part in my first play ever (not counting kindergarten). I love storytelling and I'm excited to share the marriage of my two fields of expertise.

My piece is a court trial depiction of a red scare accusation.

## Maria Isabel Arreola '21

she/her



Maria Isabel Arreola is a Sociology & Political Science major and a recently declared THDA minor who really loves playwriting. She hails from Blue Island (not Chicago), Illinois. This whole experience has been a whirlwind of emotions and it couldn't have happened without the support of some really crucial people. Above all, thanks to Amparo who is such a wonderful, inspiring person and an amazing storyteller and musician. And thank you to the production team and the other performers for all their hard work.

This piece is an ode of sorts to oral history. Through a process of interviews, transcription, and memorization this piece came to be. Not all of it is verbatim from the interviews conducted, my memory doesn't work that way (neither does my Spanish).

## Aela Morris '22

she/her



Aela Morris is majoring in English and Theater and Dance with a Spanish minor. She is grateful for the opportunity to research and write her own piece for this production, and wants to thank the cast and creative team for making this a great experience, despite all of the challenges of creating a virtual show.

I have always loved the poetry of Emily Dickinson and have found a lot of solace in her work throughout my life. I started off my research for this production by reading Emily Dickinson's letters, which are wonderful creative works in their own right, and this piece is my response to her.

## Miles Latham '24



Miles Latham is a current first-year at Macalester and prospective English or Theater and Dance major. This is Miles's first production at Macalester, and it's been a fun and meaningful experience! Many thanks to the cast and production team for their hard work in making Portals come to life.

This piece is an oral history from a young man who grew up in a place and time where military service was expected of him and his peers. Over the course of the monologue, he tells of his own experience with the social pressures of his neighborhood and upbringing and the story of what happens when his best friend tries to resist the draft.

## Faith Milon '22

she/her



I'm a junior here at Macalester, majoring in Neuroscience, Theater and Dance, and minoring in English. This is my second production at Macalester. The Portals project is different from anything I've ever done before and I'm more than grateful for the opportunity to share my story with those watching the program.

My piece is my own story about loss – an abridged version of my mother's death and how it has impacted me.

## Zahara Spilka '21

she/her



Zahara is a senior Computer Science major with a Psychology and Studio Art minor. Resilience is Zahara's first show at Mac, and she is incredibly grateful to take part in such a powerful production. Thank you to everyone for their flexibility and understanding as we navigate this digital world.

Her piece is a compilation of Poems/Spoken words entitled "Dear Black Girl"

# Director's Notes

When the writer-activist Arundhati Roy posted her essay, “The Pandemic is a Portal,” in early April of 2020, people the world over were shuttering inside their homes, watching grim television news from China’s locked-down province, Italy’s major cities, New York’s hospitals. The coronavirus was already everywhere. It had started to ravage India, where Roy lives, and the official shutdown triggered a dangerous walking migration among millions of urban work-seekers, back to their hometowns hundreds of miles away. In the essay, Roy calls the migration “biblical” — though she says the Bible couldn’t have imagined numbers this big. She also declares that the virus, and lockdowns, “suddenly illuminated hidden things.”

Roy’s is a truth-telling voice, and millions of people on social media worldwide started to distribute the essay, and ponder the image of the pandemic as a “portal.” From where have we come? Into what will we emerge? When? Roy wrote:

“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past, and imagine their world anew.”

In the process of creating our show, Portals, we have made a little world together. It is modest — under one hour, simple circumstances of solo performance on video — but it didn’t exist at all in January. It is a new, if temporary, thing. Making Portals has allowed us to draw together stories, memories of family, instances of courage from different places and times in our shared human history. In rehearsal, even on zoom, we have rediscovered the emotional currents in spoken stories, we’ve cultivated empathy by embodying the hardships of forebears. Art makes its way, even in these times of diminution.

Art is a torch for illuminating the hidden things, for passing through and beyond this portal together.

–Beth Cleary, February 2021

# Macalester Theater and Dance Department

## Faculty and Staff

### Faculty

Cláudia Tatinge Nascimento (Chair), Patricia Brown, Beth Cleary, Wynn Fricke, Jill Lile, Mina Kinukawa, and Harry Waters, Jr.

### Staff

Tom Barrett, Lynn Farrington, and Johanna Lorbach

### Visiting Artists and Faculty

Cheryl Moore Brinkley, Miranda Rose Hall, Krista Langberg, Justin Leaf, Jenn Pray, Randy Reyes, Harrison David Rivers, Bob Rosen, Marciano Silva dos Santos, and Darrius Strong

### Student Staff

Malyn Banitt-Moore, Asa Benjamin, Aidan Endo, Betsy Foy, Luka Fraase, Angus Fraser, Tinsley Glenn, Jennifer Huang, Joe Jessop, Elinor Jones, Ezra Kline, Ndunzi Kunsunga, Olivia Nyman, Skye Reddy, Maya Schaefer-Fiello, Elliot Wareham, and Aleah Wong



# Theater and Dance Department

The Theater and Dance Department at Macalester College prepares the next generation of performers, directors, choreographers, designers, researchers, technicians, and playwrights. Our department offers small academic and studio courses in which students are closely mentored by expert faculty. In our class schedule, you will find a variety of theater and dance courses at all levels. We encourage students without previous experience to try a beginning course in acting, dance, design, or playwriting.

Macalester College is in a privileged location for students interested in the arts. The Twin Cities have the second highest number of theater companies per capita in the United States, after New York City, and Theater and Dance Department courses commonly bring students to on and off-campus theater and dance productions. Many Theater and Dance alumni continue to work and produce art in the Twin Cities, where the Minnesota State Arts Board provides crucial funding and support to artistic work. Current students often have the opportunity to meet influential local alumni, leading to exciting and unique opportunities for internships, mentorship, and collaborative projects.

# Ruth Easton Endowment for Dramatic Arts

The Theater and Dance Department is grateful to the Ruth Easton Endowment for the Dramatic Arts for its support of many Theater and Dance Department activities.

Ruth Edelstein Easton, Macalester Class of 1921, was born and raised in North Branch, Minnesota. After graduation, Ruth studied for a year at Macalester before leaving the Midwest to pursue an acting career in Los Angeles. From there, she moved to New York City, where a friend introduced her to producer Oliver Morosco. Soon after, Ruth was on Broadway, acting with stars such as Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks, Ethel Barrymore, Judith Anderson, Walter Huston, and Al Jolson. She was also actively involved in radio dramas, performing in such shows as “The Rudy Valle Hour” and “The Fleischmann’s Yeast Hour.”

Later inheriting the fortune of her brothers—Dave and Jack Edelstein, who invented a paper-coating process considered the predecessor of plastic wrap—Ruth donated both time and money to acting programs throughout the country. She served as a benefactor for many Twin Cities theaters, including the Ordway, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and the Playwrights’ Center.

When Ruth Edelstein Easton passed away in 1998, the Ruth Easton Endowment Fund was her gift to Macalester. The fund supports cooperation between the Theater and Dance Department and educational sites in the community, as well as bringing guests to campus.

The following sources and sites were consulted by director and cast during *Portals* research:

Appy, Christian (2004) *Patriots: the Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*. Penguin Books Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Fariello, Griffin (1995) *Red Scare: Memories of the American Inquisition: An Oral History*. W.W. Norton.

Johnson, Thomas J. (ed.) (1976) *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Back Bay Books.

Kingsbury, Alex, "How the Red Scare Destroyed a Small-Town Teacher," *The Boston Globe*. Feb. 4, 2016.

Nicholas-Lippman, Candace et.al. (contemp.) "Dear Black Girl" and ensuing poems.

Van Bragt, Thieleman and J. Sohm (1938) *Martyrs Mirror: The Story of Seventeen Centuries of Christian Martyrdom, from the Time of Christ to A.D. 1660*. Herald Press.



For more information on *Portals'* performers & staff, sources, and process, visit the Theater and Dance website:  
<https://www.macalester.edu/theater-and-dance>

To listen to more music by Dameun Strange '95:  
<http://www.dameunstrange.com/>