

Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend all University of Iowa-sponsored events. If you are a person with a disability who requires a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact Department of Theatre Arts in advance at 319-335-2700 or theatre@uiowa.edu.

IOWA

Theatre Arts

How to Defend Yourself

By Liliana Padilla

Directed by Meredith G. Healy

David Thayer Theatre | UI Theatre Building

Approximate run time is 1 hour and 30 minutes, with no intermission.

How to Defend Yourself takes place after a sexual assault. It discusses, but does not depict sexual violence. Please be advised that this production includes other mature themes, loud sudden music, and flashing lights. This production is not recommended for those under the age of 16. For a detailed content advisory, please [click here](#).

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault, you are not alone. Local, free, confidential support is available 24/7 through the hotline operated by DVIP&RVAP at (800) 228-1625.

This is something that is collectively held and therefore can be collectively transformed.
-Playwright Liliana Padilla

In the immediate aftermath of an assault, a group of college students gather for a DIY self-defense class. This setting quickly becomes a space for channeling their anger, anxiety, trauma, confusion, and desire. In navigating these feelings, the group of strangers unites as a community and works to move forward together. Using humor and candor, Liliana Padilla's *How to Defend Yourself* asks us to look beyond the labels of 'perpetrator' and 'survivor,' and to examine the complexities that exist in each of us.

Special thanks to Sydney Becker, Kyleigh Clampitt, Emily Hurst, Linda Kroon, Alton Poole for your support to this production and our community; to Millie Kelchen and Clara Kelchen for their invaluable research assistance and generous loan of select costume pieces; and to Charm Hairston for her support in the final moments of the play.

Performances:

Friday, February 6 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, February 7 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, February 8 at 2 p.m.

Wednesday, February 11 at 8 p.m.

Thursday, February 12 at 8 p.m.

Friday, February 13 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, February 14 at 8 p.m.

Tickets:

Purchase your tickets in advance through Hancher Box Office by calling 319-335-1160 or online through [their website](#).

The Box Office at the Theatre Building opens one hour prior to the performance, with tickets on an as-available basis, unless the production is sold out.

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"How to Defend Yourself" is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com
How To Defend Yourself had its Off-Broadway Premiere at New York Theatre Workshop
Patricia McGregor, Artistic Director | Jeremy Blocker, Executive Director

How To Defend Yourself

World Premiere Production at the 2019 Humana Festival of New American Plays At Actors Theatre of Louisville and at Victory Gardens Theater

Developed by:

UC San Diego, Wagner New Play Festival 2018 Production directed by Kim Rubinstein
Mentored by Naomi Izuka, Kim Rubinstein, Deborah Stein, Allan Havis, Dramaturgy: Gabe Greene, Dylan Key; Script Consultants: Ali Viterbi

Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, Illinois

Chay Yew, Artistic Director, Erica Daniels, Managing Director

IGNITION Festival of New Plays 2018

Workshop and productions at Victory Gardens and Actors Theatre directed by Marti Lyons

Developed at the Ojai Playwrights Conference

Robert Egan, Artistic Director/Producer

Workshop directed by Danya Taymor

Dramaturgy: Sasha Emerson

How To Defend Yourself was supported by residencies at the Blue Mountain Center and the Anderson Center at Tower View

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<https://concordtheatricals.com/resources/protecting-artists>

BOSS BITCH

Written by AMALA ZANDILE, IMAD ROYAL, ASHTON CASEY, SKY ADAMS

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NO BROKE BOYS

Written by ERIC FREDERIC, TINASHE KACHINGWE, MICHAEL EDWARD NEIL, THADUS LABUSZEWSKI

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LOOK WHAT YOU MADE ME DO

Written by TAYLOR SWIFT, RICHARD PETER JOHN FAIRBRASS, ROBERT FRANCIS MANZOLI, CHRISTOPHER ABBOT BERNARD FAIRBRASS, JACK MICHAEL ANTONOFF

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ROAR

Written by KATY PERRY, MAX MARTIN, LUKASZ GOTTWALD, BONNIE LEIGH MCKEE, HENRY RUSSEL WALTER, BONNIE MCKEE, MARTIN MAX, HENRY WALTER, MAX MARTIN

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LEVITATING

Written by CLARENCE COFFEE, SARAH HUDSON, STEPHEN KOZMENIUK, DUA LIPA, JONATHAN KIRK

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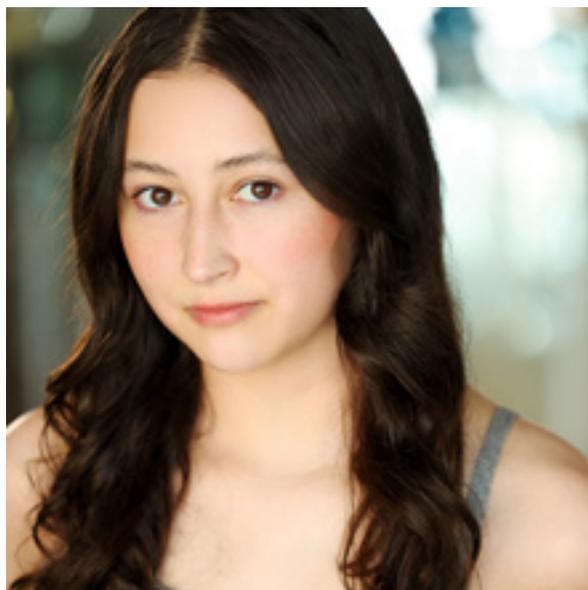
How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Cast

HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF

BY LILIANA PADILLA

DIRECTED BY MEREDITH G. HEALY

MEET THE CAST



Diana | MADELINE RODRIGUEZ*

Madeline Rodriguez (she/her) is a fourth-year undergraduate majoring in theatre arts and ethics & public policy with a certificate in social justice in the performing arts at the University of Iowa. Her previous works at the university include *Argonautika* (Andromeda, Eros), *salt tongue* (Niamh), *Far Away* (Joan), *Marie Antoinette* (Polignac), *Anti-Hero: Revenge of the Swifties* (Cora), *Dance Nation* (Zuzu), *Men on Boats* (Seneca), *Braided Sorrow* (Yadria), and *Mother:Knife* (Maria). She is deeply honored to close this chapter of her life at Iowa with such a meaningful piece. She wants to thank Meredith, the cast, and

the creative team for their invaluable support, laughter, and fearless dedication to this play.



Mojdeh | IMAAN SHAH*

Imaan Shah (she/her) is a first-year undergraduate majoring in theatre arts and neuroscience. This is her first show here at the University of Iowa. She has been incredibly honored and grateful to be a part of such a wonderful cast and a wonderful show. She hopes you enjoy!

*Undergraduate student.

**Graduate student.

†Member of the United Scenic Artists, Local 829.

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Cast



Brandi | DALE LEONHEART**

Dale is a second-year MFA candidate in Acting. She is extremely thankful to the wonderful creative team, cast, and crew for all of their devotion and support. Dale is thrilled and honored to tell this important story alongside such talented and thoughtful artists.



Kara | KAYLA LEACOCK**

Kayla Leacock is beyond thrilled to be in *How to Defend Yourself!* Select credits include: National Tour: *PAW Patrol Live!* (Rocky), *Rosie Revere Engineer & Friends* (Ada Twist) Regional: *The Color Purple* (Nettie), *Hurricane Diane* (Renee), *Bad World: A New Musical* (Linnea), *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* (Lily Polkadot), *Hairspray* (Dynamite) University of Iowa: *Earthus Terminus* (Madame President), *Adaku* (Mma), *Far Away*(Harper). Special thanks to my family and friends!

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Nikki | ISABELLE VALLINA*

Isabelle Vallina (she/her) is a first-year undergraduate student double majoring in theatre arts and communication studies, and she is very excited to tell this wonderful story with an amazing group of people. She hopes people will recognize aspects of themselves and people they know within the show and enjoy the experience.



Andy | CHARLIE DUFFY*

Charlie Duffy is a super-senior here at the University of Iowa, double majoring in theatre arts and psychology. This is his fifth show through the university, previously performing in *Fathers and Sons* (Arkady), *In This Sepulcher, We Are Fed* (Sacha), *Into the Woods* (Narrator), and *American Rusałki* (Jack). He is grateful to work with such a wonderful cast and creative team. Enjoy the show!

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Eggo | PRESTON COLEMAN**

Preston Coleman is a second-year MFA Actor in the UI Theatre Department. At Iowa, he's played Clay in *Dutchman* by Amiri Baraka for the Iowa Director's Festival and Duru in *Adaku* by Sixtus Chetachi Igbokwe during the New Play Festival in Spring 2025; IDMON/GHOST in the Mainstage production *Argonautika* in Fall 2025—all three wonderful productions from graduating MFA Director Josh Turner. He has now had the pleasure of working on this production of *How to Defend Yourself* with graduating MFA director Meredith G. Healy as the character Eggo. He thanks Meredith for the wonderful space she created for the

cast to help create and tell this story, bring it to life and close to home for our audiences.

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Creative Team

HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF

BY LILIANA PADILLA

DIRECTED BY MEREDITH G. HEALY

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM



Director | MEREDITH G. HEALY**

Meredith is a third-year directing candidate at the University of Iowa. Originally from Lexington, KY, Meredith made her way to Iowa by way of Wellesley, MA; Providence, RI; and Portland, ME. Past credits at the University of Iowa include *Jellyfish Baby* by Darrin Terpstra, *The Words of Ants* by Xiaoyan Kang, *Far Away* by Caryl Churchill, *Anti-Hero: Revenge of the Swifties* by Derick Edgren Otero, and *Brother-Brother* by Sixtus Chetachi Igbokwe. Meredith would like to thank her cohort for keeping her grounded, her mentors for helping her dig, the cast and team for infusing the space with laughter

every day, and her family for their unwavering support!



Dramaturg | ANI JILAVYAN**

Ani Jilavyan is from Yerevan, Armenia and graduated from the University of Iowa with an MFA in literary translation. Currently she is doing her MFA in dramaturgy. She was the dramaturg for *The Words of Ants* by Xiaoyan Kang and directed by Meredith G. Healy in the New Play Festival and *Jellyfish Baby* by Darrin Terpstra and directed by Meredith G. Healy. She is thankful to Meredith for the opportunity to work on this amazing production with a wonderful team!

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Creative Team



Stage Manager | **BONNIE RUBBLE****

Bonnie Ruble is a freelance stage manager currently in their 2nd year as an MFA stage manager at the University of Iowa. Some of their more recent credits include Stage Management intern for *Tosca* at Cincinnati Opera, Production Manager at the Waterloo Community Playhouse, Stage Manager for *Bright Star* and *Newsies* at Theatre Cedar Rapids, Production Stage Manager for *Elephant and Piggie's: Were in a Play* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Waterloo Community Playhouse, Assistant Stage Manager for *Side Show* at the University of Iowa. They are so excited to be a part of this production with such a

wonderful creative team and cast.



Fight and Intimacy Director | **CRISTINA GOYENECHÉ**

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Creative Team



Scenic Designer | CJ JOHNSON**

Cj Johnson is a third-year MFA candidate. Some of their past scenic credits include *An Enemy of the People*, *for colored girls(...)*, *salt tongue*, and *American Rusalki*. They are incredibly honored to have been a part of this process, and they would like to thank everyone on the team for making this show come to life!



Costume Designer | JENNY NUTTING KELCHEN

Jenny Nutting Kelchen (Costume Designer) is a costume designer and visual artist, as well as the Resident Costume Designer, Costume Studio Director, and Lecturer for the Cornell College Department of Theatre and Dance. Jenny received her BA in studio art from the University of Northern Iowa and her MFA in theatre design from the University of Iowa. She has designed costumes for over 110 productions, including ten seasons of Iowa Summer Rep as well as designs for Riverside Theatre, Old Creamery Theatre Company, UNI, Cornell College, Grinnell College, Coe College,

Working Group Theatre, Theatre Cedar Rapids, and La MaMa Etc. Jenny's most recent collaborations with Performing Arts at Iowa are *Men on Boats* for the Department of Theatre Arts, and her creative debut with the Department of Dance as Costume Designer for the 2025 Dance Gala at Hancher Auditorium. She has enjoyed a wonderful season of collaboration with old and new colleagues, artists, and friends at the University of Iowa.

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Sound Designer | MARISA RODRIGUEZ*

Marisa Rodriguez is a third-year theatre arts major and digital arts certificate student. Their previous design credits at Iowa are lighting and media design for *Ten-Minute Play Festival 2025*, sound design for *salt tongue* in the 2025 New Play Festival, and lighting and media design for *Drill DrillDrill* in October 2025. They've also stage managed and co-sound designed for *Myocardium*; *Graphite* with Dreamwell Theater. They're grateful for the opportunity to work on their first mainstage production and for the support that they receive from their instructors, friends, and family.



Lighting Designer | BRYON WINN †

Bryon is a professor of design and serves as the Director of Theatre for the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Iowa. He has designed lighting, scenery, projections, and/or media for theatre, opera, and corporate events throughout the country. This includes over 300 productions and over 50 premieres of new plays. Previous work with the Department of Theatre Arts includes designs for *In the Red and Brown Water*, *Ugly Lies the Bone*, *The Bacchae*, *String*, *Our Lady of 121st*, *People Before the Park*, *Iphigenia Point Blank*, *Fun Home*, *American Idiot*, *Crescendo*, and *Spring Awakening*.

Bryon is also member of United Scenic Artist 829.

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Creative Team



Assistant Stage Manager | SAMMI LEWIS*
Sammi Lewis is a third-year undergraduate stage manager. She recently spent the summer at SSMT working on *Little Women* the musical. Her recent University of Iowa theatre credits include *salt tongue* and *Romeo and Juliet*. She can't wait for people to come see this amazing show. She had so much fun working with this team! She wants to thank her family for always showing up for her, the cast and crew for being awesome to work with!



Assistant Costume Designer | JOHANNA SPECHT**

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Creative Team



Assistant Costume Designer | ALEXANDRA RUNNELS*

Alexandra Runnells is a senior undergraduate student here at the University of Iowa, double majoring in screenwriting arts and history, with a minor in theatre arts. Otherwise known as, “there’s an excellent chance she’s going to be a bartender for the next five years.” This is Alexandra’s second mainstage production, having been one of the assistant costume designers under Cathy Parrott with last semester’s *Romeo and Juliet*. She has had such a blast working with Jenny and Johanna and cannot wait to work on other productions after she graduates in May.



Lighting and Media Assistant | ELLA SWYERS*

Ella is a third-year student at the University of Iowa, majoring in cinema and minoring in theatre arts. She was raised not too far from Iowa City, growing up in Cedar Rapids, IA. She worked as a part of the lighting crew for *3 Cubes and a Ghostlight* at the New Play Festival last year and is excited to help with *How to Defend Yourself*.

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How to Defend Yourself – Meet the Crew

HOW TO DEFEND YOURSELF

BY LILIANA PADILLA

DIRECTED BY MEREDITH G. HEALY

MEET THE CREW

Crew Captain	Ella Sirna*
Light Board Operator	Hannah Siefken*
QLab Operator	Daniel Weber*
Run Crew – Deck	Lee Baker* Grace Ziomek*
Run Crew – Wardrobe	Aleesa Lavrenko* Charlotte Larsen* Sarah Morgan* Stephanie Decker*
Production Lab TA	Maggie McClellan**
Wardrobe Associate	Sasha Hildebrand

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