Somewhere in America, an army of pre-teen competitive dancers plots to take over the world.

dance

N.A.T.I.O.N

by clare barron
directed by kelly russell
choreographed by sarah gonzalez
Dance Nation
by Clare Barron

The Cast

Dance Teacher Pat.................................................................Mason Todd
Amina.....................................................................................Julia Massey
Zuzu....................................................................................Allison Major
Connie..................................................................................Clarissa Ramos
Luke....................................................................................Isaiah Choice
Maeve..................................................................................Marina Medellin
Sofia.....................................................................................Harper Lee
Ashlee..................................................................................Ashlyn Evans
Vanessa..............................................................................Grace Schlimmer
The Moms...........................................................................Miranda Dean
The God Mic.........................................................................Javonta Guyette
Minda....................................................................................Mac Mclendon
Understudies.................................................................Javonta Guyette, Mac Mclendon

“Dance Nation” is presented by arrangement with Concord Theatricals on behalf of Samuel French, Inc. www.concordtheatricals.com

DANCE NATION received its UK premiere at the Almeida Theatre, London, September 2018. Playwrights Horizons, Inc., New York City, produced the World Premiere of DANCE NATION in 2018 with support from an award by the National Endowment of the Arts, and a generous gift from Scott M. Delman.
Special thanks to The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Trust for supporting new plays at Playwrights Horizons, and special thanks to the Time Warner Foundation for its leadership support of New Works Lab at Playwrights Horizons.
DANCE NATION was developed at the Perry-Mansfield New Works Festival, June 2015, with the Atlantic Theatre Company, and presented as part of the Contemporary American Voices Festival at Long Wharf Theatre, September 2016.
DANCE NATION was written, in part, in residence at SPACE on Ryder Farm, and received extensive workshop time and space as part of New Dramatists’ Jerry A. Tishman Playwrights Creativity Fund.
A Note from the Dramaturgs:

Recording *Dance Nation* in the
Time of COVID-19

Life under quarantine has been difficult for theatre artists. Many are completely out of work. Some are trying to reopen theatres with ⅔ of the seats ripped out to allow for social distancing. We here at TAMUCC have embraced the digital. Our last production, *The Book of Will*, was rehearsed and recorded via video conferencing software; the actors learned to interact with each other despite the fact that they were in different rooms across the city. While that imposed some limitations, it freed up others. Most notably, we got to see everybody’s lovely, unmasked face.

With *Dance Nation*, we have gone another route. Early conversations among the production team led to the decision to rehearse and film in person, embracing the very real world of COVID-19 in which we all find ourselves. Our actors are masked, not because university rules require them to be (which they do), but because these characters would in reality be wearing masks today.

This has allowed more direct interaction than other modes of quarantined theatre would allow. More intriguing, though, are the possibilities that masking has given our production of a play that straddles a fine line between reality and stylization. Our production team has taken this opportunity to explore the theatricality of the play: heightened, intimate, and age-defying character moments are marked by selected removal of masks (safely done, of course).

Throughout this program, we hope to give you more insight into both our process and the unique nature of this play. TAMUCC’s wonderful theatre and dance artists have created for you a fitting version of this Pulitzer-nominated work. We hope you enjoy viewing it as much as we have enjoyed creating it.
## PRODUCTION STAFF

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Kelly Russell</td>
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<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>River Thompson</td>
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<td>Choreographer</td>
<td>Sarah Gonzalez</td>
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<td>Stage Manager</td>
<td>John-Michael Sadleir</td>
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<td>Dramaturg</td>
<td>Thomas A. Oldham</td>
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<td>Assistant Dramaturg</td>
<td>Nico Montalvo</td>
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<td>Scenic Designer</td>
<td>Alyssa Armstrong</td>
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<td>Costume Designers</td>
<td>Birdie Bird, Adam Nombrano</td>
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<td>Kamryn Lewis, River Thompson</td>
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<td>Master Electrician</td>
<td>Jewels Uherek</td>
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<td>Wardrobe Run Crew</td>
<td>Hannah Anderson, Enne Dawson, Chase Passow</td>
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<td>Hair &amp; Makeup Run Crew Head</td>
<td>Gracyn Scholz</td>
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<td>Hair &amp; Makeup Run Crew</td>
<td>Katie Baker, Raya Wright</td>
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<td>Light Board Operator</td>
<td>Davis McDaniel</td>
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<td>Video Editors</td>
<td>Sydney Aviles, Brandon Bankston, Jacob Martinez, Paige Woelke</td>
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### Special Thanks

Teffany Comeaux-Ibarra,  
Teffany’s Dance Studio
PRODUCTION STAFF (CONTINUED)

Scenic Build Crew
Joan Albor, Grace Beikirch, Shalynn Blevins,
Braeden Brotherton, Isaiah Choice, Mary Cundiff,
Katarina Cunningham, Cora Daniel, Sarah Eckhoff,
Riley Gilbert, Lanie Gullette, Javonta Guyette, Rachel
Havlice, Samuel Ingram, Luke Leal, Kamryn Lewis,
Tyler Lewis, JJay Madrid, Alex Morales-Ryan, Carlos
Morales-Ryan, Hunter Pittman, Colby Pyle, Nic
Sears, James Williams

Scenic Charge
Alyssa Armstrong

Paint Crew
Sydney Aviles, Sarah Eckhoff, Mac McLendon, Car-
ley Perez

Costume Shop Supervisor
Kyle Everett

Costume Crafts
Jordan Derouen, Kyle Everett, Rosa M. Lazaro, Ad-
am Nombrano, April Salazar

Lead Alterations
Kyle Everett, Rosa M. Lazaro, April Salazar

Stitches
April Salazar, Mason Urias, Jedidiah Barker, En-
rique Cabrera, Allyssann Cook, Jordan Derouen,
Kathryn Hawkins, Jett Hebert, Madison Holder,
Naomi Medina, Paulina Orellana, Devin Ray, Grace
Schlimmer

Marketing / Graphics Designer
Alison Frost

Box Office Faculty Supervisor
Meredith Melville

Box Office Student Workers
George Miguel Salcido

Front of House Student Worker
Kyler Brooklyn, Ethan Inglis, George
Miguel Salcido

SAMC Event Specialist/Box Office
Wes Jones

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Designing Dance Nation

I grew up dancing so I was personally inspired by the dance studio I went to for 12 years and the environment there. I researched a lot of impressionistic paintings because that almost hauntingly soft innocence is merged with dance studios in my mind. The set wasn’t ever going to be the main focal point so creating something that could easily “disappear” into the background was the goal. Especially because I didn’t want people to know that the back wall would be climbed on until it was actually happening. The floor was my favorite part but the research for that was just finding images of dance studio flooring and then sampling paint and creating a process to make the floor look like a real wooden floor on camera.

-Alyssa Armstrong, Scenic Designer

Silhouette lighting was my major inspiration for the whole show. It highlights the body and exposes shapes regular front lighting doesn’t, so you could say the silhouette lighting is just like the show: unapologetic, natural, and real.

-April Salazar, Lighting Designer

Set photo: Edgar de la Garza; Lighting renderings: April Salazar
I pulled inspiration from many things. I know for the Gandhi piece I was able to pull from my background of Buddhism, and even though Gandhi himself was never of that religion I was still very familiar with the culture of that area of the world. I really used my makeup design to pull the elegance out of the culture and adapt it for the stage. As for all the other dance pieces I wanted something fun and colorful on stage that I know the actors as well as the characters themselves would have loved to wear on stage.

-Carley Perez, Hair & Make-up Designer

The design team for Dance Nation faced a series of challenges. First, one thing that all designers must wrestle with is honoring the words of the playwright. Clare Barron has created a world in which older actors are required to play prepubescent youths. She also gives us thrilling yet intimidating instructions to create “pagan feral-ness and ferocity,” filled with vengeful, ancient gods, animalistic fangs, and, yes, baby sexy robots.

Next, our production team was tasked with dealing with social distancing and coronavirus. They had to create a world that was both safe (including necessary spacing and specially designed masks) and looked good on camera (something that not all theatre makers typically take into consideration). Plus, none of our design meetings happened in person. We all had to get on the same page via video conferencing software.

Closely (yet virtually) collaborating with the director and each other, our costume, sound, scenic, lighting, hair, and makeup designers created a unique, stylized reality for Dance Nation. This setting is not purely naturalistic, yet it is still absolutely informed by the real world, from Dance Moms to COVID-19, from Gandhi to Britney. It may not look exactly like you thought it would, but it is, in many ways, a much truer representation of the reality of being a 13-year-old girl.

Make-up schematics: Carley Perez
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST & CREW

Isaiah Choice (Luke)
- Year: 1st-Year
- Home: Austin, TX
- Favorite role: Dance Nation (Luke)

Miranda Dean (The Moms)
- Year: Junior
- Home: San Antonio, TX
- Favorite role: Dance Nation (The Moms)

Ashlyn Evans (Ashlee)
- Year: Junior
- Home: San Angelo, TX
- Favorite role: Hamlet (Ophelia)

Javonta Guyette (The God Mic)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: DFW, TX
- Favorite theatre experience: A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (running crew)

Harper Lee (Sofia)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Carrolton, TX
- Favorite role: Marie Antoinette (Dauphin)

Allison Major (Zuzu)
- Year: Junior
- Home: Corpus Christi, TX
- Favorite role: Dance Nation (Zuzu)

Julia Massey (Amina)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Conroe, TX
- Favorite role: A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (ensemble)

Mac McLendon (Minda)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Lampasas, TX
- Favorite role: Dance Nation (Minda)

Marina Medellin (Maeve)
- Year: Senior
- Home: Laredo, TX
- Favorite role: This is Me Dance Island Demo

Clarissa Ramos (Connie)
- Year: Junior
- Home: San Antonio, TX
- Favorite role: Dance Nation (Minda)

Grace Schlimmer (Vanessa)
- Year: 1st-Year
- Home: Corpus Christi, TX
- Favorite role: The Sound of Music (Maria)

Mason Todd (Dance Teacher Pat)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Damon, TX
- Favorite role: Dance Nation (Dance Teacher Pat)

Kelly Russell (Director)
- Professor of Theatre
- MFA (Baylor University)
- Kelly teaches classes in Acting, Directing and Theatre Education. He has received four A&M Chancellor’s Awards for Teaching Excellence and is past-president of the Texas Educational Theatre Association (TETA). In 2012, he was named TETA University Educator of the Year. Each summer, he serves as the Director for the TAMUCC Summer Theatre Workshop for High School Students: Camp on the Coast.

River Thompson (Assistant Director)
- Year: Junior
- Home: San Antonio, TX
- Favorite experience: Cross Planes (director)

Sarah Gonzalez (Choreographer)
- Assistant Professor of Dance
- MFA (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)
- Sarah has taught throughout the Corpus Christi community for over a decade and has performed and trained nationally. Her mission of ensuring growth and sustainability of the dance arts in South Texas continues to drive her forward as she pursues her major goals of creating low-cost, highly accessible visual performance art to increase dance appreciation and to cultivate future, well-rounded educators in the field. She is also a proud mommy to her wonderful son, Greyson.
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST & CREW

John-Michael Sadleir (Stage Manager)
- Year: Senior
- Home: Port Lavaca, TX
- Favorite experience: Dance Nation (Stage Manager)

Thomas A. Oldham (Dramaturg)
- Assistant Professor of Theatre
- MFA (Columbia University); PhD (Indiana University)
- Tom teaches courses in theatre history, playwriting, script analysis, and dramaturgy. He has been published in a variety of journals and holds dramaturgy credits from professional and educational theatres in Nebraska, Maine, New York, and Indiana.

Nico Montalvo (Assistant Dramaturg)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Conroe, TX
- Favorite role: A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (ensemble)

Alyssa Armstrong (Scenic Designer)
- Year: Senior
- Home: Houston, TX
- Favorite experience: Marie Antoinette (Scenic Designer)

Birdie Bird (Costume Designer)
- Year: Junior
- Home: San Antonio, TX
- Favorite experience: The Tempest (stitcher)

Adam Nombrano (Costume Designer)
- Year: 1st-Year

April Salazar (Lighting Designer)
- Year: Junior
- Home: Laredo, TX
- Favorite experience: Bailando (Lighting Director)

Autumn Lutkenhaus (Sound Designer)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Hillsboro, TX
- Favorite experience: The Love of the Nightingale (Lighting Designer)

Carley Perez (Hair & Makeup Designer)
- Year: Junior
- Home: Seguin, TX
- Favorite experience: The Love of the Nightingale (Scenic/Props Designer)

Philip Johnson (Video Faculty Advisor)
- Professor of Theatre
- MFA (Michigan State University)
- Phil teaches courses in Lighting Design, Technical Direction, Drawing, and Rendering. He has enjoyed teaching at TAMUCC for 34 years.

Jordan Bohl (Technical Director)
- Departmental Technical Director
- MFA (University of Alabama)
- Jordan has worked professionally in seven different states. Credits include The Importance of Being Earnest (TD), Little Women (Scenic Designer), and The 39 Steps (TD).

Brandon Bankston (Video Supervisor / Video Editor)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Lewisville, TX
- Favorite experience: Hamlet (scenic run crew)

Kamryn Lewis (Properties Master)
- Year: Sophomore
- Home: Kemp, TX
- Favorite role: Savage in Limbo (April)
WHO’S WHO IN THE CAST & CREW

Jewels Uherek (Master Electrician)
-Year: Junior
-Home: Austin, TX
-Favorite experience: TAMUCC 40- and 10-minute play festivals (Production Manager / Assistant Production Manager)

Hannah Anderson (Wardrobe Run Crew)
-Year: Sophomore
-Home: Canton, TX
-Favorite role: The Love of the Nightingale (Hero/Phaedra)

Enne Dawson (Wardrobe Run Crew)
-Year: Sophomore

Chase Passow (Wardrobe Run Crew)
-Year: Sophomore
-Home: Keller, TX
-Favorite experience: A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (set and costume construction)

Gracyn Scholz (Hair / Makeup Run Crew Head)
-Year: Junior
-Home: Katy, TX
-Favorite role: Anton in Show Business (Ralph/Wikewitch)

Katie Baker (Hair / Makeup Run Crew)
-Year: Senior
-Home: Ennis, TX
-Favorite role: The Love of the Nightingale (Philomele)

Raya Wright (Hair / Makeup Run Crew)
-Year: Senior
-Home: Houston, TX
-Favorite role: A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder (featured ensemble)

Grace Beikirch (Properties Run Crew)
-Year: Sophomore
-Home: College Station, TX
-Favorite role: Be Here Now (Luanne Cooper)

Davis McDaniel (Light Board Operator)
-Year: Junior
-Home: Dallas, TX
-Favorite role: Let the Right One In (Oskar)

Sydney Avilés (Video Editor)
-Year: Junior
-Home: Lewisville, TX
-Favorite role: Marie Antoinette (Mrs. Sauce)

Jacob Martinez (Video Editor)
-Year: Junior
-Home: San Antonio, TX
-Favorite role: Punk Rock (William)

Paige Woelke (Video Editor)
-Year: Sophomore
-Home: Lewisville, TX
-Favorite role: Marie Antoinette (Revolutionary/Head Video Editor)

Kyler Brooklyn (Front of House)
-Year: Senior
-Home: Fort Worth, TX
-Favorite role: Fuddy Meers (Heidi)

Ethan Inglis (Front of House)
-Year: Junior
-Home: Elkhart, IN
-Favorite role: Let the Right One In (Police Commissioner Halmberg)

George Miguel Salcido (Front of House)
-Year: Sophomore
-Home: Tomball, TX
-Favorite role: The Book of Will (Richard Burbage/William Jaggard)
In 2011, the world was taken by storm by a reality television show entitled *Dance Moms*. The Lifetime channel series follows choreographer Abby Lee Miller’s studio as they rehearse for competitions around the country. Highlighting the rigorous training that Abby Lee puts her dancers through, the show examines both the relationships on the dance floor and the backstage drama that caused so many people to fall in love with the show: overbearing moms, public meltdowns, and clean dancing, of course. *Dance Moms* shaped the public’s image of these cutthroat dance troupes with obsessive, lifelong commitment to the craft.

But what about the dancers themselves? As a troupe’s pre-teens mature into young adults, factions inevitably emerge: spending nearly every hour of every day with the same people takes its toll. Rival dancers compete for the solo or featured part, and choreographers like Abby Lee create entire numbers based on who they perceive to be the strongest dancer. These often becomes the choreographer’s favorite. Competition judges place strong emphasis on the featured dancer, and view the other dancers in terms of how they highlight the central story.

Although dancing is typically regarded as a feminine art with a surplus of women, competitive dance choreographers are well served by having at least one boy on the team. Judges of all backgrounds favor male dancers, giving them what *Dance Moms* refers to as “penis points,” enticing them to remain in the field.

Playwright Clare Barron took all of these factors into account when penning *Dance Nation*. She blends a clear appreciation of this world with a healthy dose of non-realism in order to convey the ferocity that young dancers have when they begin to gain recognition. The dynamics between the “favored” dancer and the “background” dancers is almost too much to bear, and tensions spill out onstage. Some may think that the only way to leave a legacy is to dominate the field, but this show asks us to look at the impact we have on other people and how this may last the rest of our lives.
The Playwright

Interviewer: Tell me, if you will, a story from your childhood that explains who you are as a writer or as a person.

Clare Barron: It was the last day of seventh grade, and a group of girls and I wanted to hold a mud wrestling competition to celebrate. We didn’t have any mud so we each whipped up a big batch of chocolate pudding and carted it over to Jennifer’s house in tupperwares and dumped it in this little kiddie swimming pool. I forgot my swimming suit and so I had to borrow one of Jennifer’s. Jennifer was athletic and golden brown and wore bikinis that were much higher cut than my sad, floral tankini so my pubic hair was tufting out all over the place. Everyone wrestled. It was super fun and I kept falling down and it was hot and the pudding was beginning to stink. A car circled past Jennifer’s yard once. Then it circled again and stopped. The man inside rolled down the window. ‘What is that?’ he asked. I sauntered over to the car — covered head-to-toe in brown goo and so, so proud — and told him it was pudding. He looked at me and then he reached his arm out the car window and said, ‘Come closer. I wanna touch it.’ There was a moment and then we were all screaming and shrieking and the whole pack of 12 girls was sprinting down the middle of the road covered in brown goo. I remember pushing my way to the front of the pack and my legs felt so strong and the asphalt was so hot against the bottom of my feet and I was filled with total terror and total glee. Running away from Pudding Man was one of the shining moments of my adolescence. I don’t think I’d ever felt that powerful.

https://www.playwrightshorizons.org/shows/trailers/american-voice-no-pudding/

Clare Barron is a playwright and performer from Wenatchee, Washington. Her play Dance Nation recently received its world premiere at Playwrights Horizons in May 2018 and subsequently its UK premiere at the Almeida Theatre in London. It was a 2019 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama and is the recipient of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize and The Relentless Award established in honor of Philip Seymour Hoffman. Other plays include: You Got Older (Page 73; Steppenwolf) which received two Obie Awards for Playwriting and Performance, a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Play, and was a Susan Smith Blackburn finalist and the #1 most-recommended play on the Kilroys' List; I’ll Never Love Again (The Bushwick Starr); and Baby Screams Miracle (Clubbed Thumb; Woolly Mammoth). She is the recipient of a Whiting Award for Drama, the Paula Vogel Playwriting Award at The Vineyard, and the Page 73 Fellowship; and is a member of New Dramatists. (Biography and photograph courtesy of Concord Theatricals)
Clare Barron on...

...Dance Moms:
I just fell in love with the girls. They were so talented and so fiercely competitive but also so kind to each other. I just got sucked into their world.

...creating a play about 13-year-olds...for adults:
things that happen to us at 13, which I feel is an important moment for our identity, push us to the precipice of becoming a miniature adult...So while you’re watching the play, I wanted you to see who these 13-year-olds grow up to be. You’re kind of having a dual experience.

...dance competition’s relation to life:
vicious competition, not really the girls between each other but against this idea of being the best and being the star and really pushing their bodies. It was kind of incredible to see these incredibly young women pushing their bodies and their brains so far. That made me think about ambition and what it means to be successful and does your success come on the backs of other people or how can you be as successful in a way that is life-affirming and kind to other people.

...teenage sexuality:
I felt a little bit frustrated with how it was depicted in the media. And that’s why the play deals with 13-year-olds as opposed to, like, 16-year-olds. Cause I wanted to go right back to the character’s sexual awakening when they’re just starting to discover their sexual feelings and themselves as sexual creatures separate from any sort of partner.

...the pagan feral-ness and ferocity of the play:
And it’s somewhere between the intersection of that little pussy energy—that little sexual energy — and the ferocity of Zuzu’s fangs, then like all the girls get fangs. And they sort of do this weird feral dance of sexual energy and rebellion, and they scare the teacher away. And out of that comes this monologue where this 13-year-old girl basically says everything that she likes about herself, and how she’s gonna make you her bitch basically.

...recognition:
I think lots of us grapple with, “This thing that I thought I wanted to do makes me fucking miserable. How long do I keep doing the thing that makes me miserable?”

FULL INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE AT:
https://www.playwrightshorizons.org/shows/trailers/artist-interview-clare-barron/
https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/12/16/21025158/dance-nation-clare-barron-steppenwolf
https://youtu.be/c7ySdId3-I8
https://youtu.be/5EEVak92HG0
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Sarah Gonzalez, Assistant Professor of Dance
Meredith Melville, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Marco Muñoz, Assistant Professor of Theatre
Thomas A. Oldham, Assistant Professor of Theatre
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Kate Burrill, Adjunct Professor of Dance
Leann Criswell, Adjunct Professor of Dance
Jordan Bohl, Technical Director
Kyle Everett, Costume Shop Supervisor
Clarissa Ramos, Student Office Assistant
Birdie Bird, Student Shop Assistant
Blake Cooper, Student Shop Assistant
Adam Nombrano, Student Shop Assistant
Carley Perez, Student Shop Assistant
April Salazar, Student Shop Assistant
Mason Urias, Student Shop Assistant

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The Student Government Association
The Marketing and Communications Department of TAMUCC
Kim Newlin, Videographer

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Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,500 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.
OUR VIRTUAL THEATRE & DANCE SEASON
SPRING 2021

A VIRTUAL BAILANDO
PRODUCED BY
JILISSA COTTON & SARAH GONZALEZ

BLOOD AT THE ROOT
BY DOMINIQUE MORRISEAU
DIRECTED BY MARCO MUÑOZ

THE 2021 SEED PROJECT
SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS
BY BESS WOHL
DIRECTED BY KAT WILLIAMS

A LOVE SONG FOR CORPUS CHRISTI
PRODUCED BY ALISON FROST

A 40-MINUTE PLAY FESTIVAL
PRODUCED BY KELLY RUSSELL