

## Free Speech and First Amendment: Alfred University student production asks the tough questions

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Alfred University students rehearse for their upcoming production

Alfred University students want to open a conversation about free speech and First Amendment rights with a devised theater production, “Who is Freedom and Why Should We Speech?” Performances are Thursday-Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in the C.D. Smith II Theater in the Miller Performing Arts Center.

Tickets may be purchased at the door or are available in advance by calling the box office at 607-871-2828.

Dara Malina is guest director for the production, which she says was created by the students “from a prompt, teamwork and a lot of creativity. We have constructed a fractured response to this complication and difficult topic as the current debate around Free Speech continues to grow and change every single day in the United States.”

The students are asking “How did this happen? In a post-logic world where facts are feelings and news is fake, and institutions and ideals are being dismantled, how do we construct meaning?”

Malina says she came to Alfred University as a guest director “knowing I wanted to make something happen with students that felt inspired by our current politics. When I visited in the spring for a week-long workshop, the students and I fully jumped into a post-logic state, using Dada and nonsense as the driving inspiration to create a collaged piece of American politics where nothing seemed to make sense anymore. It was a hysterical response to feelings not yet processed.”

Instead, students are now asking, through their production, pointed questions: How did we get here? What are American values? What are the tenets on which our country was founded and how are they affecting our contemporary moment? Should Free Speech be protected? Should Free Speech be limited? Why?

Malina says students “invite the audience to consider our topic, our performative response and have a conversation.”

Malina is a director of theater, performance, opera and video. Her experiments in performance include Muller&s “HamletMachine,” “Lilith,” “Blanche in a Box,” “Hysteria Project/Beautiful Women Eating Cake,” “Les Boudoirs Des Deux Femmes,” and “The Post-Structuralist Utopia: Now, With Cats!”

A graduate of the Master of Fine Arts program in theater directing at Columbia University, she adapted and directed Clarice Lispector&s “The Hour of the Star” as a durational solo performance and grotesque vaudeville play. Her work received an Anna Sosenko Assist Trust Grant.

As a director of new work, she has collaborated with playwrights at Ensemble Studio Theater, The Tank, Dixon Place, The Flea and Rattlesticks Playwrights Theater. She recently directed “Cosi,” an experimental film featuring Mozart&s “Cosi Fan Tutte” with The Pleiades Project. She is currently directing a second opera film with the company featuring the Ophelie mad scene from Thomas& “Hamlet,” while developing “This is a Protest of What Happened “ at The Brick in Brooklyn.