

UCLA School of
Theater, Film & Television

INTERMISSION

A MONTHLY COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



Dean Celine Parreñas Shimizu at Orientation during TFT's inaugural Welcome Week. Dean Shimizu shared memories of her orientation session as a TFT student in 1992, as well as her hopes for the year with both incoming and returning students at the undergraduate and graduate level.



A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

September 24, 2025



DEAR BELOVED UCLA TFT COMMUNITY,

I draw strength from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of a beloved community—a society bound by care and compassion—and from our Chancellor Julio Frenk's call for One UCLA, our beloved university. These visions remind us that we are stronger when we act together. Let us step into this year ready to do extraordinary things.

Welcome to a new academic year at the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television! At a time when democracy demands protection and polarization demands repair, storytelling stands as our most powerful unifying force. Each of us is composed of infinite stories—and at TFT, we transform those stories into art that uplifts, questions, and connects.

As an alumna, I know this truth personally: the questions I first wrestled with here continue to shape my work today, in languages and practices born from these halls.

As your new dean, I return with reverence for our shared journey of learning and growth. This year we unite under the theme *Your Voice, Our Story*. When you speak, your voice carries beyond yourself, becoming part of a larger chorus.

Every perspective—shaped by history, imagination, and craft—enriches the stories we create. At TFT, inclusion is not only our value, it is the source of stronger, braver, more transformative art.

In this newsletter, you'll encounter what TFT brings to life both on and beyond campus: stories of collaboration, experimentation, inclusive excellence, and social impact. You'll also find opportunities to gather and grow together—quarterly town halls, screenings and performances, fireside chats and alumni celebrations that honor the Ripples of the LA Rebellion legacy, and our Next Generation speaker series.

Let us embrace the power of our distinct voices while listening deeply and lifting others. Together, we will craft stories that inspire and reimagine what the future can hold.

With joy and anticipation, I look forward to seeing you at our first Convocation tomorrow.

Celine Parreñas Shimizu

Dean, UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television

Distinguished Professor of Film, Television and Digital Media



STUDENT NEWS

Our students showcase their talent and vision through projects and performances that push boundaries and redefine entertainment.



135G Duets students gather with residents at Belmont Village Senior Living community after an evening of performances. At the conclusion of the musical program, the student performers and residents enjoyed refreshments and socializing.

Photo courtesy of Dan Belzer

BRUINS AT BELMONT: THEATER STUDENTS SHARE DUETS WITH SENIOR COMMUNITY

For the second year in a row, students of theater Professor Dan Belzer's 135G Duets class spent an evening with the residents of UCLA neighbor Belmont Village Senior Living community sharing a program of musical theater duets, accompanied by Belzer on piano. The intergenerational community outreach visits gave the students an opportunity to share their class work in performance, while providing an evening of entertainment for the appreciative residents.



ALUMNI NEWS

TFT alumni continue to shape the future of theater, film and television with groundbreaking work and inspiring achievements across the globe.



Duarte (left) with intern mate and collaborator Adriana (right)

RECENT GRAD JOINS DISNEY IMAGINEERING

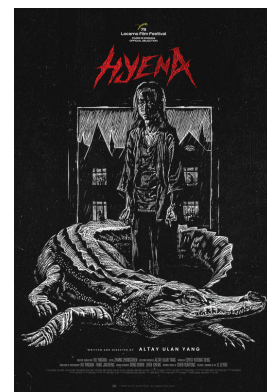
Michaela Duarte (BA Integrated Studies, '25) began a Creative Producing internship with Walt Disney Imagineering this summer! She is supporting the expansion of the Disney cruise line portfolio as they develop their fleet over the next few years.

At her internship, she is joined by Alyssa Adriana (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, '25), her collaborator from the UCLA Theater production of *Xanadu* in Spring 2025.

BRUIN PRODUCER WINS GOLD AT LOCARNO FOR *HYENA*

Edyta Yutong Deng (MFA Producers Program, '25) produced *HYENA*, winner of Best International Short Film (Pardino d'Oro Ars3 Foundation Award) at the Locarno Film Festival. Directed by Altay Ulan Yang (USA), the film has been widely acclaimed.

> [Read more in *The Hollywood Reporter*.](#)



ACTING ALUMNA HONORED WITH 2025 PRINCESS GRACE AWARD

Taji Senior (MFA Acting, '21) was awarded the 2025 Princess Grace Award (Gant Gaither Theater Honor). Taji's extensive body of work spans Off-Broadway and regional theater, as well as original solo performances.

> [Read more about the award.](#)



FACULTY NEWS

Faculty are pushing boundaries in teaching, research, and creative practice, bringing innovation and artistry to the world stage.



Still image from *Bloodless* (Gina Kim, 2017).

EXPLORING GHOSTS & MEMORY: KRISS RAVETTO EXAMINES GINA KIM'S VR WORK

Kriss Ravetto published an article in *Differences* spotlighting fellow faculty member Gina Kim and her haunting VR trilogy about US military comfort women in South Korea. From the abstract: "Rather than attempt to make a case for identifying with ghosts or being able to feel their trauma, this essay considers how the sense of being immersed within such uncanny spaces produces its own sense of

distance and proximity, a critical as well as an emotional understanding that does not rely on the creation of any form of individual subjectivity."

[> Read more.](#)

HECTOR GUERRERO JOINS CREATIVE TEAM OF NEW MUSICAL *PERFECT WORLD*

Hector Guerrero is Associate Choreographer for the new musical *Perfect World*, directed/choreographed by Kay Cole with music direction by Darryl Archibald. The show features TFT alumni Erica Schindele, Michael Deni, Michael Wells, and Sammy Linkowski. The show will run November 1-9, 2025 at the El Portal Theatre, North Hollywood.

[> Learn more.](#)



Still image from *Everything to Me*, starring Victoria Pedretti

CERTIFIED FRESH: TOM NUNAN'S NEW FEATURE FILM HITS THEATERS

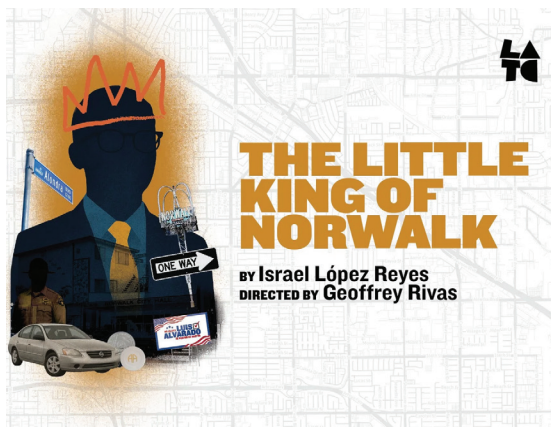
Tom Nunan is lead creative producer of *Everything to Me*, an independent feature film with a nationwide theatrical release beginning Sept 5. Produced by Bull's Eye Entertainment and directed by Kayci Lacob, the film is Certified Fresh on Rotten Tomatoes! About the film: A girl raised in Silicon Valley in the shadow of Steve Jobs' successful return to Apple, and his huge influence on her imagination, her aspirations and relationships.

[> Film site](#) | [> Watch the trailer.](#)

GLORIA, DIRECTED BY JUDITH MORELAND, OPENS SEPT. 26

Judith Moreland will direct *Gloria* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins at the University of Michigan. This funny and provocative play follows an ambitious group of editorial assistants at a Manhattan magazine. When an ordinary, humdrum workday becomes anything but, the stakes for who will get to tell their own story become higher than ever.

> [Learn more.](#)



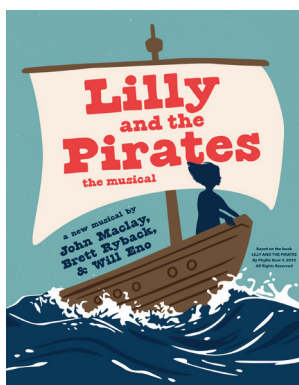
TFT FACULTY AND ALUMNI COLLABORATE ON THE LITTLE KING OF NORWALK

J. Ed Araiza will perform in *The Little King of Norwalk* at the Los Angeles Theatre Center with the Latino Theater Company, opening September 25. The production includes several UCLA alumni, including director Geoff Rivas, playwright Israel Lopez, production manager May Fei, lighting designer Johnny Garofalo, and actors Esperanza America and Ruth Livier.

> [Get tickets.](#)

NATIONAL HONOR: SEAN METZGER RECOGNIZED FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

In July, Sean Metzger received the 2025 Betty Jean Jones Award from the American Theatre and Drama Society. The award honors and remembers Dr. Betty Jean Jones, a founding member of the American Theatre and Drama Society and highly respected and admired educator. Awardees are individuals who have achieved excellence as college/university teachers and mentors in the profession.



CHRISTIAN BARILLAS TO DIRECT NEW MUSICAL IN 2026

Christian Barillas will direct *Lilly and the Pirates*, a new musical by Will Eno, John MacLay, and Brett Ryback, at Orlando Family Stage (Feb–Mar 2026). *Lilly and the Pirates* is an epic adventure filled with swashbuckling humor, clever wordplay, and unexpected heart. It's a story about bravery, self-discovery and love of family, with a sweeping musical score. It's also a joyful ode to libraries and the importance of access to books.

KRISTY GUEVARA-FLANAGAN’S BODY PARTS LAUNCHES EDUCATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

Kristy Guevara-Flanagan’s feature documentary *Body Parts* launched its educational distribution with Media Education Foundation, accompanied by a new study guide. Praised as a “fantastic primer” on Hollywood’s representations of women, the film acts as a crash course of the on-screen history of sex and women’s agency.



**INTERNATIONAL
ASTRONAUTICAL
FEDERATION**

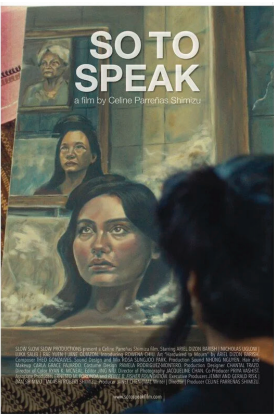
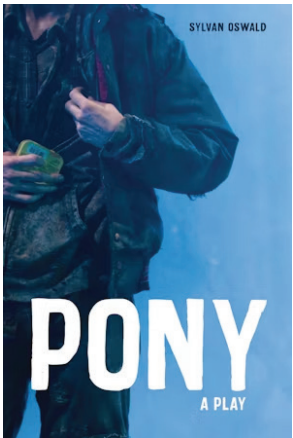
FELIPE CERVERA BRINGS PERFORMANCE TO SPACE WITH GRANT; COMMITTEE

Felipe Cervera was awarded a new UCLA Global Research Award seed grant. The project is titled *Imagining Space Otherwise*, and its aim is to assemble an international working group to research contemporary arts, with a special emphasis on the performing arts and the space industry.

Partners include leading scholars from the Universities of Toronto, Manchester, Utrecht, Iberoamericana, and Western Sydney. Additionally, In July 2025, Cervera was elected a voting member of the Committee for the Cultural Utilization of Outer Space at the International Astronautical Federation (ITACCUS / IAF). This committee gathers industry leaders, artists, and academics from around the world to discuss the cultural implications of space exploration. The committee formulates frameworks to define and protect heritage in space and on the Moon, and proposes initiatives to international bodies to foster critical and cultural perspectives on and in the space industry.

SYLVAN OSWALD DIVES INTO CREATIVE PROJECTS WHILE ON SABBATICAL

Sylvan Oswald, Professor in Playwriting, is on sabbatical writing the libretto of *Untitled Feminist Sci-Fi Musical*, a collaboration with composer/lyricist Tova Katz in preparation for a workshop through the Dean’s Innovation Fund. While he is away, Sylvan is an artist-in-residence at Bard College’s Center for Human Rights and the Arts. Over the summer, Sylvan’s play *Pony* was published by Northwestern University Press and featured in the annual reading series *Pride Plays* (NYC) with readings in NYC at MCC Theater and in DC at Woolly Mammoth. Both readings were directed by Will Davis, Artistic Director of Rattlestick Theater. The new book contains an introduction by Sylvan titled “Soft Butch Landing” and an afterword by scholar Miriam Felton-Dansky.



CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU BLENDS ACADEMIA WITH PRACTICE IN NEW PUBLICATIONS; HISTORIAN LECTURES; FILM FESTIVAL PARTICIPATION

Dean Celine Parreñas Shimizu is making waves, not only on campus at TFT, but in the film and academic communities at large. In September, she published two articles online with Amerasia Journal regarding her new film, *So To Speak*. The [first article](#) follows the screenplay of the film, in which Morena, a Filipina American college student, uses art to explore the sexualities of herself and other Asian American women. The [second article](#), “On *So To Speak*: Authorship and Authenticity, Collaboration and Community” features a conversation between Dean Shimizu as director/writer/producer, producer Janet Chen (Ma), and costume designer Pamela Rodríguez Montero, as they explore the film’s community-centered production through the lenses of feminist and queer critique. Additionally, Dean Shimizu was selected for the [Distinguished Lectureship Program](#) as part of the Organization of American Historians. Her featured lectures include “Making Movies About Asian American Families and Histories Across Generations and Continents;” “The Movies of Racial Childhoods: Screening Asian American Representations of Growing Up;” and more. Finally, Dean Shimizu served as a judge for the documentary feature category of the 20th annual Harlem International Film Festival, which ran from September 17-21, 2025.



STAFF NEWS

Behind the scenes, our dedicated staff members drive innovation, collaboration, and excellence throughout the TFT community and in their own creative endeavors.



Anna Watts (left) and Staci Mize (right) on stage at Edinburgh Fringe Festival with their production of *[the feminine urge to disappear]*

BRUIN DUO'S FRINGE RUN SHINES WITH CRITICAL ACCLAIM

In August, Anna Watts (Theater Facilities Coordinator, and MFA Playwriting '23) and Staci Mize (MFA Directing, '23), performed Watts' hyper-feminine hot-pink play, *[the feminine urge to disappear]*, at Edinburgh Fringe Festival. This ode to the #basic bitch had such a successful run that even gained a glowing four star review from a local newspaper, [The Scotsman](#). This production was made possible through a grant from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts and fellow TFT Alumni Yuval Zehavi and Allison Fry.



Josalynn Smith (right) on set of *Ride or Die*

TFT FILMMAKER SMITH BRINGS ANTI-ROMANCE INDIE FILM ABROAD

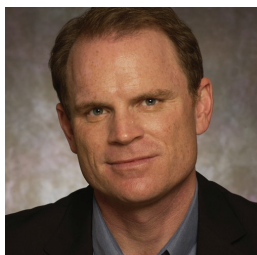
Josalynn Smith's (Instructional Designer and Technologist, TFT Online) feature directorial debut *Ride or Die*, after having its world premiere at Tribeca Festival in June, will have its international premiere at Leiden International Film Festival in the Netherlands alongside an incredible selection of American indies that Josalynn herself is fangirling over. Josalynn's [favorite review](#) calls their anti-romance thriller "a sleazy elegy of all the crushes that you've

loved before, stylish and swaggy." Hit Josalynn up in East Melnitz (it's okay if they have headphones on) to talk about why they wish they lived the 90s and about where you can catch *Ride or Die* next.



TFT IN THE MEDIA

From headlines to features, UCLA TFT is making waves in the cultural conversation through the creativity and impact of our community.



PEACOCK'S BET ON 'THE PAPER': CAN 'THE OFFICE' SPINOFF JUMPSTART THE STREAMER'S SCRIPTED EVOLUTION? | ANALYSIS - THE WRAP

Featuring FTVDM faculty member Tom Nunan.

[> Read the article.](#)

DRESSING INDIANA JONES: THE WOMAN BEHIND THE FEDORA - BBC

Deborah Nadoolman Landis shared highlights from her career as a 1980s pop culture maker.

[> Listen here.](#)



FESTIVAL UFO TERBESAR DI INDONESIA KEMBALI DIGELAR (INDONESIA'S LARGEST UFO FESTIVAL RETURNS) - INEWS MALAM

Felipe Cervera shares the impact that Indonesian artist Venza Christ has on the space sector in Southeast Asia.

[> Watch the interview.](#)

ON HATS AND HISTORY: THE COLORFUL WORLD OF UCLA'S FILIPINO DEAN - RAPPLER

Celine Parreñas Shimizu shares her vision for TFT and the story of her Filipina roots in this in-depth interview.

[> Read the story.](#)



NEW UCLA THEATER, FILM AND TELEVISION DEAN CELINE PARREÑAS SHIMIZU FACES CHALLENGES HEAD-ON: 'WHEN MORE DIVERSE VOICES ARE REPRESENTED, THE GREATER THE ART.' - VARIETY

Among industry challenges, Celine Parreñas Shimizu discusses her philosophy for creating an inclusive, diverse, and forward-thinking environment at TFT.

[> Read the story.](#)



UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

Discover what's ahead at TFT, UCLA, and beyond with events, workshops, and opportunities that connect, inspire, and empower our community.

TFT CONVOCATION

SEPTEMBER 25, 2025 | 4:00 P.M. | FREUD PLAYHOUSE

You're invited to the inaugural TFT Convocation! Learn more about Dean Celine's vision for the school and honor award recipients who have made an impact on the theater and film community.

> [RSVP.](#)

UCLA PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM ORIENTATION

OCTOBER 3, 2025 | 9:00 A.M. | KAUFMAN 230

The UCLA Prison Education Program hosts its Fall 2025 orientation for interested faculty and students on Oct 3, 2025 from 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. with an optional lunch from 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m. in Kaufman Hall - Room 230.

> [RSVP.](#)

SO TO SPEAK SCREENING AT AWARENESS FILM FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 26, 2025 | 2:30 P.M. | 1418 4TH ST, SANTA MONICA, CA 90401

Join Dean Celine Parreñas Shimizu for a screening of *So To Speak* as part of the Awareness Film Festival in Santa Monica. TFT is offering complimentary tickets to students, faculty, and staff on a first-come, first-served basis.

> [Get tickets.](#)



SHARE YOUR STORY

Intermission is a monthly newsletter highlighting the achievements, stories and opportunities of UCLA Theater, Film and Television.

Have a news item you'd like to share? Email communications@tft.ucla.edu with a 100-word description and headline about your newsworthy items about your work. Don't forget to share any relevant photos or links, too!

Items submitted by the 10th of every month will be included in the following month's edition of the newsletter.



SUPPORT TFT

Your contribution to UCLA TFT, regardless of size, helps equip the next generation of storytellers with state-of-the-art facilities, distinguished faculty mentorship, and industry connections essential for their creative development.

Join us in empowering the future of artistic expression—every tax-deductible gift makes a significant impact on our students' journeys.

Give to the UCLA School of Theater, Film & Television

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