BOOKED AND BLESSED

OR BUST!

Written by Alexander Perez







NIU School of Theatre and Dance presents

Booked and Blessed ... OR BUST!

Written by Alexander Perez

Director/Choreographer: Frankie DiCiaccio
Assistant Director: Matthew Chagoya
Scenic Designer: Eric Brockmeier
Costume Designer: Elias Dennis
Lighting Designer: Aidan Murphy
Technical Director: Tracy Nunnally
Properties Designer: Alicia Margerum
Fight Choreographers: J. Cody Hunt, Stanton Davis
Sound Coordinator: Timothy Peters
Dance Choreographer: Frankie DiCiaccio
Dramaturg: Alexander Thomas

Stage Manager: Autumn Dancy
Assistant Stage Manager: Madie Barnas

This show is approximately one hour forty minutes and has no intermission.

Shannon Gina Cioffi

LucilleAudrey GeysbeekPiotnikDavid MortensonTrudySkylee PierceWalterDavid AlvaradoBrigTyler PageStuFinn Stumpf

RufflesJulia Isabella PrietoEvelynRaeanna Tremethick

Noodle 1/Voice/GerrieChloe KonieczkiNoodle 2/O'Hallahan/TerrieAvery FloresNoodle 3/Judge/LarryGino HernandezNoodle 4/GoolsbyRyn Aston

Noodle 5/Limbowictz Madeline Demuth

Director's Note

I attended my first New York audition when I was 17. A friend and I set our alarms for an excruciatingly early hour, dragged ourselves up to Midtown and got to the Eighth Avenue building at about 6:30 a.m. We put our names on the unofficial, nonunion list, and for the next couple of hours took turns running to the coffee shop around the corner to warm up. Remarkably, we were both seen that day. I remember the experience with painful precision: narrow hallways lined with beautiful, limber, strong actors. Lots of cheekbones and jawlines, lashes and lips. I was in over my head. When they called my name, I walked into the room with unease, sang my 16 bars and scurried out. That was it. Hours of prep, nerves, waiting in the cold and then a 45-second interaction with people who were never going to cast me in a million years. I wanted to vomit — but I also wanted to do it again. And again. Forever.

Alexander Perez captures this push-and-pull of life in the theatre, with all of its absurdity, gravitas, humor, hope and heartache. It's a ridiculous business we've sashayed into — but one taken ridiculously seriously by the people involved. Perez's zany depiction bubbles with non sequiturs, surreal stage directions and bizarre motifs alongside biting critique of the professional theatre world. His characters try to accomplish something that very few ever will: to get through the gates of the power holders and do the thing that they know they were meant to do. Booked and Blessed...OR BUST! encourages us to broaden our definition of success beyond glittering marquees and Broadway debuts.

At a moment when numerous, compounding crises demand our attention, I feel renewed gratitude for the privilege of getting to play. These talented student-artists have welcomed the wackiness with waggish spirit. We invite you to settle into our little corner of New York-in-DeKalb, embrace the belly laugh and celebrate our successes — nearly a thousand miles from Broadway but "blessed" nonetheless.

-Frankie DiCiaccio, Director/Choreographer

Dramaturg's Desk

Booked and Blessed ... OR BUST! by Alexander Perez, a playwright with productions in major cities like New York, London and Chicago, is seeing this latest work receive its world premiere at NIU's School of Theatre and Dance. In an interview conducted by dramaturg Alex Thomas, Perez shared insights on acting, playwriting, and the play.

Alex Thomas (AT): How did you get into acting and playwriting?

Alexander Perez (AP): My mother was an actress until her late teens, so she encouraged me to audition for roles in school. Eventually, after a couple community theater productions and a microscopic role in an Equity show at my local rep, I decided to make it my major. Fast-forward to graduating from acting school, I got into the audition grind and quickly found that I was much more interested in making stuff than chasing roles for minimal pay. That's when playwriting started for me. Seeing that self-producing seemed to be the way to go, that's what I did and still do.

AT: What inspired you to write Booked and Blessed ... OR BUST!?

AP: I worked at the front desk of Pearl Studios for a year and change. One of the perks was being able to be around professionals actively working in the industry. Not just actors, but the busy bees behind the scenes. To most of us, the idea of abandoning the creative only in favor of an adjacent desk job smacks of watered-down fulfillment with a dash of shame. The reality is, behind the cigarchomping crusties thrives a fledgling ecosystem of passionate individuals whose ambitions deserve more narrative real estate.

AT: Can you discuss any specific influences or inspirations from your own experiences that shaped the play?

AP: While at Pearl, I got to know the cast of a Broadway-bound show. The cast boasted a couple Tony winners/nominees but also had many making their Broadway debuts. I saw them cry and embrace upon receiving their very first paychecks; it was a lovely thing to witness and aspire to. One of their last days renting the space before moving into the theater, I am met with a truly miserable vibe. Long story short; bad producer, no more production. This caused an existential crisis. I thought getting to Broadway meant "making it," a secure paycheck. Yet there I was earning \$12 an hour while the industry vets faced sudden unemployment because someone else sucked with money.

AT: What challenges did you encounter writing *Booked and Blessed ... OR BUST!*, and how did you overcome them?

AP: I was thoroughly convinced it was unproducible. Given the resource intensity and niche themes, it would be a cold day in hell indeed that anyone would be foolish enough to take it on such (my deepest respect and gratitude to the NIU School of Theatre and Dance). I credit having read the play *I Wanna F*ck Like Romeo and Juliet* by Andrew Rincon with helping me overcome this block. It is not only an excellent play, it is a gold-plated middle finger to creative fear. There are angels, shotguns, explosions and other forms of divine interdimensional insanity. I cried. Why should I, anyone, limit their imagination because of an imaginary budget? That's the one place a budget shouldn't hold sway! If I can't have courage in my heart, what makes me think I'll have it on the page?

AT: What message or takeaway do you hope the audience will take from watching this play?

AP: An education in the arts is an education in how to effectively transmute our circumstances into something that moves people. There will never be an end to the conflict between capital and creativity; past a certain point, it ain't your fight. Save yourself and as many as you can doing what you do best. Enjoy the show!



David Alvarado (he/him) Walter is a second-year B.F.A. acting candidate from Elgin, Illinois. He was last seen as Cobweb in NIU's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Melanie Keller. He's enjoyed working on this silly and whimsical show greatly and hopes it shows through his performance. Thank you to Frankie, the cast, the crew and of course thank you to my family for supporting me! Instagram:@Damniitdavid



Ryn Aston (they/them) Noodle 4/Goolsby are a second-year B.F.A. acting candidate. This is their second show at NIU after playing Mother Georgia in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. They would like to thank all the cast and crew along with the director, Frankie, who made this play so fun to work on.



Gina Cioffi (she/her) Shannon is a second-year M.F.A. acting candidate from San Diego, California, with a bachelor's degree in theatre from University of California, San Diego. NIU Credits: Thyona in Big Love, Natella and Others in The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and New Student Jamboree (2022 and 2023, co-director). Other notable credits include Teresa in Italian American Reconciliation (Scripps Ranch Theatre), Elle Woods in Legally Blonde: The Musical, and Des in SERE (UCSD), in addition to staged readings of 53% Of and Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill Fill. Thank you, Rick for running alongside me and my artistry, and Colette for every collaboration and unconditional support.



Madeline Demuth (she/her) Noodle 5/Limbowictz is a freshman theatre studies minor, and this is her first production here at NIU. She would like to thank her director, Frankie, as well as the cast and management team for making this such an amazing experience. She would also like to shout out her family for always supporting her. Thank you. I love you guys!



Avery Flores (he/him) Noodle 2/O'Hallahan/Terrie is a third-year B.F.A. acting candidate and psychology minor at Northern Illinois University. His recent acting credits include Steve in *She Kills Monsters*, Oed in *Big Love*, and Philostrate in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is honored and privileged to be able to share his artistry along with his cast and wants to thank everyone who has worked on this production. This summer, Avery hopes to intern and get his certificate to be an ACE Certified Personal Trainer. Avery would also like to dedicate his performance to his family, friends and professors for helping him along this journey. He hopes you enjoy this amazing performance.



Audrey Geysbeek (she/they) Lucille is a second-year M.F.A. acting Candidate from Grand Rapids, Michigan. She received her B.F.A. in acting from Western Michigan University. Go Broncos! Some of Audrey's most memorable theatre credits include, Puck/Hermia in A Midsummer's Night Dream, #8 in The Wolves, Helen in The Women of Troy, William Dunn in Men On Boats, and Martha in The Children's Hour. You may also see her in some Zoom commercials and ads with Rhino Productions. Audrey would like to thank her family and friends for their endless love and support. Instagram: @audaudiee



Gino Hernandez (he/him) Noodle 3/Judge/Larry is currently a senior majoring in political science and minoring in English and theatre studies. He has been a part of a variety of theater opportunities at NIU, including the Third Onion Factory Games, last semester's The Caucasian Chalk Circle, and now his second and last production at NIU Booked and Blessed ... OR BUST! He's very grateful for his time in the School of Theatre and Dance, and for the wonderful opportunities and friends he's made along the way. He hopes that you enjoy this production and the hard work that was made to make this show a reality.



Chloe Konieczki (she/her) Noodle 1/Voice/Gerrie is a junior B.F.A. acting candidate. Her most recent performance was Rage Play (Cece) here at NIU and Oliver! at Starlight Theatre. Some other notable works include The Children's Hour (Rosalie Wells), The Little Mermaid and How I Became A Pirate (Jennifer Jacobs) among over 25 other plays/musicals, along with a few short films and a TV series, The Deadersons. She thanks her mom for always supporting her in her many adventures!



David Mortenson (he/him) Piotnik is a junior at NIU working toward a dual major in history and theatre arts. He is able to be here and pay for college thanks to the GI Bill and his time serving in the Navy. His acting experience comes from his community college, RVC, in Rockford, where he mostly was in Shakespeare plays such as Macduff in Macbeth, Antipholus of Syracuse in Comedy of Errors, and Berowne in Love's Labour's Lost. Seven years as a sailor has taught him several lessons, such as how not to repair a boat engine, pepper spray does not taste good, and don't get into a Humvee full of wasps. The final one and the most important piece of information he would like everyone to know is this: "Do not join the Navy, go into the Air Force. They pay better."



Tyler Page (he/him) Brig is thrilled to be returning to the NIU stage as a part of this production. In the midst of his second-year of his M.F.A. acting training, Tyler holds a B.F.A. in acting from the Oregon Center for the Arts at Southern Oregon University. You may have seen Tyler on the NIU stage as Bottom in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Constantine in Big Love. Some of Tyler's professional credits include Feste in Twelfth Night, Bernard in Death of a Salesman, as well as Hugh Whitbread in Mrs. Dalloway at the Rogue Theatre in Tucson, Arizona. Some of Tyler's other credits include Demetrius in Titus Andronicus where he was nominated for an Irene Rvan Acting Award. Martin Heller in Angels in America: Millennium Approaches, Richard Greatham in Hayfever, Josh in If / Then, Judas in Godspell, Walter Gifford in The Farnsworth Invention, among others. Tyler would like to thank Frankie and the entire team for this wonderful journey. He would also like that thank his family for coming and supporting his dream as well as Trevor Soper for keeping the heartbeat of rock 'n' roll beating. For more on Tyler you can visit Tylerpageactor.com and follow him on Instagram @heyyy tpage.



Skylee Pierce (she/her) Trudy is a second-year B.F.A. acting candidate here at NIU. This is her second show here after last semester's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which she played Hippolyta and First Fairy. Other previous roles include Mayzie La'Bird in *Suessical*, Marcy Park in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and many more. She would like to thank her family and friends for their endless support, her boyfriend for his never-ending love, her cohort and professors for helping her grow, and the cast and crew of BBB for their hard work. A special thank you to Frankie DiCiaccio for giving her the opportunity to bring Trudy to life. She hopes you all enjoy this crazy yet wonderful show.



Julia Isabella Prieto (she/her) Ruffles is a second-year M.F.A. acting candidate from Fresno, California. She obtained a B.A. in theatre arts from California State University, Fresno. Recently seen in NIU's The Caucasian Chalk Circle directed by Alex Gelman last fall. Some memorable credits include The Thanksgiving Play, Lydia, and The Rocky Horror Picture Show. She sends so much love to her family and friends back home.

Cast Bios



Finn Stumpf (they/them) Stu are a fourth-year B.A. in theatre studies student, and this is their fourth show here at NIU. Their previous NIU shows include *The Children's Hour* (Agatha) directed by Andrea Dymond, *She Kills Monsters* (Orcus) directed by Kendra Holton, and *The Conference of the Birds* (Owl) directed by Cecilie Keenan. Finn would like to thank everyone for coming out to see the show and asks, "What's the deal with airplane food?" and reminds everyone that they will be here all night.



Raeanna Tremethick (she/her) Evelyn is a third-year B.F.A. acting candidate. She is incredibly grateful to work alongside this wonderful cast and crew as they share their artistry. Her recent credits at NIU include Starveling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Evelyn Munn in *The Children's Hour*, and Evil Gabbi in *She Kills Monsters*. Raeanna would like to thank her parents for their endless amount of love and support for her during this journey.

Production Team Bios

Madie Barnas (she/her) Assistant Stage Manager is a first year B.F.A. theatre design and technology major. A few of her past productions include being the assistant stage manager for Rodgers and Hammerstein's Cinderella at Starlight Theatre, she stage managed It's a Wonderful Life [A Live Radio Play] with Pec Playhouse Theatre, and she was the assistant stage manager for the Fall Dance Concert last semester here at NIU. She enjoys listening to music and spending time with friends and family in her free time. Madie would also like to thank her friends and family for their love and constant support.

Eric Brockmeier (he/him) Scenic Designer is a third-year M.F.A. scenic design graduate student. He is excited that this is his last show at NIU and grateful for the group of talented artists and collaborators on this production. His previous credits include scenic designer for Julie and Jane (Artist's Ensemble 2024), scenic designer for A Midsummer Night's Dream (NIU 2023), scenic designer for Melancholy Play (NIU 2022), scenic designer for Exit the King (Rockford University 2023), scenic designer for Hecuba (Beloit College 2022), assistant scenic designer for She Kills Monsters (NIU 2022), scenic designer for the Fall Dance Concert (NIU 2021), scenic designer for The Game's Afoot (Elgin Community College 2022), assistant scenic designer for The Conference of the Birds (NIU 2022), charge artist for Twelfth Night (NIU 2021), and scenic designer for the University of Northern Colorado's production of The Heiress (2020). He would like to thank his friends, family, and professors for their support in getting to this point. Enjoy the show!

Matthew Chagoya (he/him) Assistant Director is senior B.A. theatre student with a lot of experience. Using it, he's been allowed to implement various ideas to produce a colorful environment and work with actors to bring out their best.

Autumn Dancy Stage Manager is a third-year design and technology student with a minor in psychology. She has previously stage managed *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Big Love* here at NIU and has been working professionally in various positions for the past six years. After graduating in May, Autumn will be a stage manager at Coeur d'Alene Summer Theatre in Idaho. She would like to thank her family and friends for being a constant support system and always encouraging her to go above and beyond. Thank you for coming out tonight, I hope you enjoy the show.

Stanton Davis (he/him) Co-Fight Choreographer serves as the head of voice speech and dialects at Northern Illinois University. He studied at the Professional Theatre Training Program at the University of Delaware. He has acted, directed, coached and taught at theater institutions across the United States.

Frankie DiCiaccio (they/he) Director/Choreographer are an actor, theatremaker, educator and social advocate. Frankie splits their time between New York City and northern Illinois. As a director/choreographer, Frankie infuses their work with music and dance, and explores themes of fluidity, ambiguity and unexpected connections. Professional directing and choreography credits include The Drunken City (directed by John Michael Diresta at Steppenwolf Theatre Company), Short Shakespeare! Romeo and Juliet (directed by Mikael Burke at Chicago Shakespeare Theater), The Same Day (directed by John Michael DiResta at Laguardia Performing Arts Center), and An American Variety (co-created with Joey Donnelly and workshopped as part of The Dare Tactic's FactorEEE festival.) Frankie has taught and directed/choreographed at multiple universities, including The Theatre School at DePaul (Pink Milk by Ariel Zetina), Northwestern (Violet, directed by Mikael Burke), and Adelphi (A Taste of Shakespeare, an adaptation of Twelfth Night and A Midsummer Night's Dream by Emily Lyon). Frankie has served as an instructor in performance and history, literature and criticism in the School of Theatre and Dance at Northern Illinois University, where they also previously directed The Walk Across America for Mother Earth by Taylor Mac; Love and Information by Caryl Churchill; and Frankie's adaptation of Edward II, originally by Christopher Marlowe. Frankie studied theatre and Spanish as a Northwestern University undergraduate and acting as a graduate student at the American Repertory Theater/Moscow Art Theatre School Institute at Harvard University. More info at FrankieDiCiaccio. com.

Elias Dennis (they/he) Costume Designer are a third-year M.F.A. costume design student. They have a bachelor's in theater from Southern Illinois University. Their credits include costume design for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2023), *She Kills Monsters* (2022), and *Hit the Wall* (2022) at Northern Illinois University; and costume design assistant for *The Three Musketeers* (2023), *Measure for Measure* (2023), *King Lear* (2022), and *Twelfth Night* (2022) at Montana Shakespeare in the Parks. Elias is looking forward to designing costumes for MSiP's summer production of *The Winter's Tale*. They are grateful for the grace and guidance of their mentors and peers. Elidennis.com

J. Cody Hunt (he/him) Fight Choreographer is proud to be pursuing his M.F.A. in acting. NIU credits include Sir Arthur in Witch, Azdak in The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Demetrius in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Man in In A Word. Regional credits include Unto These Hills at The Mountainside Theatre, North Carolina; Sleeping Beauty at Birmingham Children's Theatre, Alabama; Blue Gate Musicals, Indiana. Cody was a fight choreographer, stunt performer and fight captain for shows like SAMSON at Sight and Sound Theatres, and played the role of Jesus in JESUS, PA and MO. His Chicago credits include Chicago Kids Company; Lost In Time, Magnified Gift Theatre; Low Hanging Fruit, Fearless Fiction Productions. He received his B.A. in drama with a concentration in performance at Jacksonville State University in Alabama. Cody would like to thank his wife Elena and daughter Emerson for their endless support.

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Alicia Margerum (she/her) Properties Designer is a second-year M.F.A. student at Northern Illinois University studying scenic design. Credits include *Big Love* and *Witch* at Northern Illinois University as well as *Red, Once on this Island* and *All-American Boys* at Mississippi State University where she completed her undergraduate degree.

Aidan Murphy (he/him) Lighting Designer is a third-year lighting design M.F.A. candidate at NIU. His previous design work at NIU includes *The Conference of the Birds, Three Sisters* and *Edward II*.

Tracy Nunnally (he/him) Technical Director is the technical director and head of the design and technology area at the Northern Illinois University School of Theatre and Dance; the owner, president and system designer at Vertigo™ and has worked in professional theater since the 1980s. His professional credits span the full spectrum of genres, continents and spaces, and include the world tour and Broadway production of *Medea* directed by Fiona Shaw, the Broadway production of *Curtains* directed by Scott Ellis, the Broadway tours of *Camelot*, *Dr. Dolittle*, *Tarzan*, and 9 to 5, the world tour of Nickelodeon's *Spongebob Squarepants*, the Sponge Who Could Fly, Machine Gun Kelly's *Sold Out Tour* concert in Cleveland, and the Splashdown Party for Space X's Inspiration 4 astronauts in Orlando. He is an ETCP certified rigger, recognized trainer, and recognized employer; a certified trainer for lift trucks and MEWPs; a long-term member of IATSE, USITT, ESTA, NSC, and the EdTA; and a member of the board of directors of URTA and the ITA.

Alexander Thomas (he/him) Dramaturg is a fourth-year B.A. student at NIU. His previous work has been as assistant prop director for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He has also participated in the 72 Hour Film Fest and background work. He is grateful for the opportunity to dramaturg the play and hopes the audience enjoys the performance.

Scenery

Scenic Coordinator - Sahin Sahingolu Scene Shop Supervisor - Adam Rager Scene Shop Employee - Hernan Acosta-Contreras Scene Shop Graduate Employees - J. Cody Hunt, Paul Lang, Alicia Margerum, Tyler Page

Scene Shop Undergraduate Employees - Jade Doherty, Mike Kozel, David Mortenson, Sasha Norman Student Technicians - THEA 295 Students Run Crew - Matthew Killinger, Cristian Onate

Costumes

Costume Design Advisor - Jeremy W. Floyd
Costume Director - Lori Hartenhoff
Costume Shop Supervisor - Elizabeth Galba
Costume Shop Graduate Employees - Elias Dennis, Ski Sciaraffa
Costume Shop Employees - Alyssa Altadonna, Alix Burkhardt, B. Leni
Costume Shop 395 Students - Alix Burkhardt, Emily Christanson,
Danisha Gilmore. Elizabeth Karth

Costume Crew Supervisor - B. Leni Student Technicians - THEA 210, 235 and 295 Students Costume Crew - Kyara Chisolm, Sonya Dunn, Jamel Hill, B. Leni, Seth Patterson, Jalen Presley, Katie Rapinac

Lighting

Lighting Design Advisor - Brandon Wardell
Resident Head Electrician - Chris Kurszewski
Assistant Head Electrician - Mike Kozel
Lighting Shop Graduate Assistants - J. Cody Hunt, Paul Lang, Tyler Page
Lighting Shop Students - Logan Bryant, Conall Doherty, Tim Peters
Student Electricians - THEA 210, 295 and 395 Students
Light Board Operator - Kateri Pfeiffer
Sound Board Operator - Antonio Houston

Properties

Properties Director - Dave Doherty

Properties Graduate Assistants - Eric Brockmeier, Alicia Margerum, Ski Sciaraffa
Properties Shop Employees - Sarah Blickem, Elizabeth Nowak
Properties Shop 295/395 Students - Lizzie Ciszczon,
Myles Mohammed, Dave Mortenson, Sasha Norman
Properties Crew - Logan Blake

Production Management
Technical Direction Advisor - Tracy Nunnally
Production Assistant - Jordan Clifton
House Management Supervisor - Cornelia Hayes

School of Theatre and Dance Faculty and Staff

Alexander F. Adducci (Emeritus) Richard Arnold (Emeritus) S.Alan Chelser (Emeritus) Judith Chitwood (Emerita)

Gibson Cima
Roxanna Conner
Stanton Davis
David Doherty
Lila H. Dole (Emerita)
Jeremy W. Floyd
Paula Frasz (Emerita)

Elizabeth Galba Kent Gallagher (Emeritus) Kathryn Gately (Emerita) Alexander Gelman Richard Grund Lori Hartenhoff

Jennifer Ingle-Grund Paul Kassel Chris Kurszewski Marc Macaranas Bethany Mangum-Oles Lorri Marshall Kay Martinovich

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Adam Rager

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Sahin Sahinoglu Stephanie Sailer

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Willa Taylor Emily Vitrano Brandon Wardell

2023-24 NIU

Theatre and Dance Productions

NIU students admitted free of charge.



Rage Play Sept. 29-Oct. 1 and Oct. 5-7



The Caucasian Chalk Circle Oct. 13-15 and 19-21



A Midsummer Night's Dream Nov. 10-12 and 16-18



Fall Dance Concert Nov. 30-Dec. 3



Anxious People! Feb. 16-18 and 22-24



Witch Feb. 23-25 and Feb. 29-March 2



Booked and Blessed... April 5-7 and 11-13



Spring Dance Concert April 25-28



Scan for tickets.

