



# ***Rx Machina***

by CAITY-SHEA VIOLETTE

directed by BLAIR CADDEN

February 17-27 | Tickets: [BostonPlaywrights.org](http://BostonPlaywrights.org)

Boston University College of Fine Arts  
School of Theatre and  
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences



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# A WELCOME FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our fourth production in our Season of New Plays—*Rx Machina* by Caity-Shea Violette! We have been waiting to put this show on its feet ever since Caity-Shea inked her first draft some two years ago. As you remember, the COVID quarantine prevented us from producing it last year, but Caity-Shea and her director Blair Cadden—along with the talented students at the School of Theatre (“SOT”)—used this year-long “respite” to continue exploring that other epidemic—the on-going personal and national drama that is the opioid crisis. Unfortunately, this crisis, too, remains in our minds and hearts as it affects so many of us across America.

The five women you will meet tonight on stage are all on the frontlines of this epidemic, whether they want to be or not, and each one of them has a part to play in the challenges it presents and, hopefully, in its solution. Inspired by Caity-Shea’s personal experience with chronic pain (read her letter in this Playbill), the play is not just a clinical treatise about the heart-wrenching losses opioids have spawned in this country; it’s a personal commentary on the various dramatis personae the crisis has affected. The play is not dispassionate, it is personal.

We’re grateful to the gifted actors, designers, and technicians at the School of Theatre, along with *Rx Machina*’s wonderful director Blair Cadden, for their outstanding work last year and this. And collaboration is at the heart of our Theatre, so we want to thank YOU, our trusted audience of new work, who continue to collaborate along with us in bringing these visions into the world. Thank you!

Please don’t forget to join us in April for the last production of our Season of New Plays—*Beasts*, written by Cayenne Douglass and directed by Kelly Galvin. We look forward to seeing you, and then...it will be Spring!

With warmest regards,



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# ***Rx Machina***

by CAITY-SHEA VIOLETTE  
directed by BLAIR CADDEN

*A BU New Play Initiative production, produced by Boston Playwrights' Theatre  
and the Boston University College of Fine Arts School of Theatre*

Scenic Design	Alyssa Jewell
Lighting Design	Qian Chengyuan
Sound Design	Feitong Wang
Costume Design	Nia Safarr Banks
Properties Design	Steven Doucette
Stage Managers	Brian M. Robillard*, Renee E. Yancey*
COVID Safety Manager	Jay Eddy
Technical Directors	Danielle Ibrahim, Elliott Purcell, Steve Vieira
Assistant Sound Design	Katie Chen
Intimacy Choreography	Jesse Hinson
Production Assistants	Jay Eddy, Catherine Giorgetti
Master Electrician	PJ Strachman
Crew	Makenna Harnden, John Holmes, Sam Kisthardt, Matt Leal, Isaak Olson
House Manager	Makenna Harnden
Front of House Staff	Makenna Harnden David L. Caruso, Matt Leal, Fatima A. Maan, Mavis Manaloto, J.C. Pankratz, Elise Wien

## **CAST**

Maren	Anastasia Olowin
Nina	Robyn Unger
Deb	Lisa Tucker*
Stevie	Lila Heller
Hannah	Isabel Van Natta

***Rx Machina* runs 110 minutes. There will be a 10-minute intermission.**

**Please be aware that a strobe light is used in this production.**

\*Appearing through an Agreement between Boston Playwrights' Theatre  
and Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors  
and Stage Managers in the United States.

The video and/or audio recording of this performance by  
any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited.

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## A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

I'm seventeen the first time it happens. As I fidget on the loud wax paper covering the exam table and attempt to convince a specialist of what is happening inside my body, I suddenly realize my ability to function is completely dependent on whether or not this stranger believes me.

I'd been in a car accident a few months earlier, rear-ended by a taxi driver going 60mph while I was at a dead stop. My mom's car was totaled, but I walked away with only mild whiplash and a two-week prescription for opioids. My family and I spend the next few months feeling unbelievably lucky.

Then the pain starts. The accident had been the only change in my otherwise unremarkable health history, but my pain is getting worse in ways that don't make sense. It feels like I can't fit into my own body, like my skeleton is bursting through my muscles—but every blood test and X-ray and MRI and CT comes back completely normal. I begin my new monthly routine: Go to specialists. Get trigger point injections. Get told my muscles are doing things they shouldn't be and no one knows why. Get another opioid prescription to survive until next month.

This continues on and off for the next nine years, meanwhile the increasing prescribing restrictions leave me feeling more unwelcome and untrustworthy at each appointment. I know my care plan isn't great, but abruptly losing my ability to manage my pain could mean losing my job, my loved ones, my life. It's becoming clear that staying on this care plan could mean the same thing. On a whim, I apply for an in-depth evaluation at an out-of-state hospital renowned for its integrated care. I get accepted, I finally get the right diagnosis, and though managing chronic health conditions will always be part of the deal, I regain agency in my life. Years later, I still feel unbelievably lucky.

There are plenty of compelling dramas and documentaries about the infamous billionaire family who manufactured the opioid crisis—but this play isn't one of them. Instead, *Rx Machina* aims to see the medical-industrial complex through the eyes of five people living inside it and asks who gets to get better and who gets left behind.

A play can't solve an epidemic, but it can remind us of the humanity that falls through the cracks in our healthcare system—the humanity our healthcare system was designed not to see.

—Caity-Shea Violette

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## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

On the morning of our second tech rehearsal, I opened my email and saw the usual daily newsletter from the New York Times. The first sentence? “Good morning. Overdoses are increasing at a troubling rate.”

I was struck, not for the first time, by how little progress we’ve made since 2015, when our play takes place...or even from the 1990s, when the advent of OxyContin sparked the first wave of what we now call the Opioid Crisis. The nature of the problem has evolved as the subsequent waves rolled over us—prescription drug abuse made way for heroin, which then made way for fentanyl—but we haven’t made much progress toward a real solution. Nor have we made much progress, as a society, in how we view individuals who battle opiate addiction.

*Rx Machina* doesn’t presume to suggest a solution to the crisis, but it does invite us to question how we see the very real human beings fighting to survive within it. Who do we see as trustworthy, as suspect, as redeemable, as a lost cause? Who do we try not to see at all?

What if we could see them differently?

—Blair Cadden

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## CAST & CREW

**NIA SAFARR BANKS (Costume Designer)** is from Richmond, Virginia. She graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University with a BFA and is currently studying to receive her MFA at Boston University. She was nominated in 2019 for Richmond Critic Award for Outstanding Achievement in Costume Design in a Play for *An Octoroon* (TheatreLab). Her credits include *Pipeline* (Virginia Repertory Theatre), and the world premiere of *A Christmas Kaddish* (Richmond Triangle Players). [niasafarrbanks.com](http://niasafarrbanks.com)

**BLAIR CADDEN (Director)** is a Boston-based director, dramaturg, and teaching artist. She is the co-founder of 5th Wall Productions in Charleston, S.C., where she served as artistic director for five seasons. Favorite credits include *Red Bike*, *Time Stands Still* (Boston University); *Spring Awakening* (5th Wall Productions); and *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Flowertown Underground). Most recently, she served as dramaturg and artistic director for Arlekin Players' *WITNESS*. Blair is an alumna of Boston University School of Theatre (MFA 2021) and of Wofford College (BA 2013), a proud associate member of SDC, and the owner of an overprotective chihuahua/dachshund named Moe. Thank you to Caity-Shea for entrusting me with your words, and to this amazing team for helping bring them to life. [www.blaircadden.net](http://www.blaircadden.net)

**KATIE CHEN (Assistant Sound Design) (she/her)** is a sophomore Boston University sound design student with a minor in Marine Science. Recent works include *Aurora Borealis*, *Assistance*, *Red Bike*, and is in the process with *If I Were You*. She hopes to continue exploring artistically and make new discoveries on the way.

**QIAN CHENGYUAN (Lighting Design)** is a professional lighting designer. He has served as a lighting designer for productions of dramas, movies, and TV shows in China. He used to work in different theatres and participated in plays in the Chinese National Centre for the Performing Arts and National Theatre of China. From fashion shows to exhibitions, he has multiple experiences in lighting design. For more information please visit [www.qcydesign.com](http://www.qcydesign.com).

**STEVEN DOUCETTE (Properties Design)** is a theatre artist local to Boston. As a props artisan, he has apprenticed/interned with the Huntington (2019-2020), Des Moines Metro Opera (2018), and the Central City Opera (2017). He has since worked with companies like the Wheelock Family Theater (*Little Women*, 2019), The Greater Boston Stage Company (*All is Calm*, 2021), and the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company (*The Tempest*, 2021). Steven holds a BFA in scenic design from BU and also sews, writes, and dabbles in puppetry and drag.

**JAY EDDY (Production Assistant, COVID Safety Manager)** is a writer, composer, and performer. They are a recent composer in residence at Yaddo, Jonathan Larson Grant finalist, New York Foundation for the Arts fellow in playwriting/screenwriting, and Connecticut Office of the Arts fellow in music composition

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and production. They earned their MA in music theatre from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London, and they are currently pursuing their MFA in Playwriting at Boston University.

**LILA HELLER (Stevie)** is so excited to be working on *Rx Machina!* She is thrilled and honored to be a part of this production. She is currently a student at Boston University working toward a BFA in theatre arts with a minor in history, and has been exploring different elements of theatre-making. Recently, she was the dramaturg for *Machinal* (Boston University), assistant director and performer in *In The Play Lab* (Central Square Theatre), and assistant director for *The Frank Show* (Boston University).

**JESSE HINSON (Intimacy Choreography)** is a Boston-based actor, educator, and choreographer. He is a Resident Acting Company member with Actors' Shakespeare Project. Recent credits include *Incels and Other Myths* (Boston Playwrights' Theatre), *The Merchant of Venice* (ASP), *The Thanksgiving Play* (Lyric Stage), *Shakespeare in Love* (SpeakEasy Stage), and *Cymbeline* (Commonwealth Shakespeare). Jesse is an Associate Teaching Professor and the Undergraduate Coordinator for the Department of Theatre at Northeastern University.

**ALYSSA JEWELL (Scenic Design)** is a Boston University scenic design student (MFA 2023) who dances between the worlds of theatrical performance and video installation. She has had the pleasure of designing *Patterns of Wind* (Booth Theatre), directed by Ty Defoe and Kate Freer; *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* (BU Studio One), directed by Dayna Cousins; *Grounded* (CFA 106), directed by Shamus McCarty; and *Motion*. (Guggenheim Museum Bilbao), directed by Gabriela Bila in collaboration with MIT Media Lab. With a general interest in activism through performance and visual art, Alyssa's work continues to highlight her drive to spark conversation and build community.

**ANASTASIA OLOWIN (Maren)** is a Brooklyn-based actor and producer, and very pleased to be making her BPT debut. Off-Broadway: *The Killer* (Theatre for a New Audience). Other NY includes *A Chronicle of the Madness of Small Worlds* (NYTW Next Door Series); *Stitches, Mechanics of Love*, and *Marie Marie Marlene* (To-By-For Productions); Distant Observer (LaMama); *You On the Moors Now, Set in the Living Room of a Small Town American Play*, and *Three Seagulls, or MASHAMASHAMASHA!* (Theater Reconstruction Ensemble); *Plum de Force* (The Bushwick Starr); *Last Call* (Built4Collapse); *Obskene* (The Talking Band), and Target Margin's Lab Series. She has appeared in numerous short films including festival favorite *Tourists* (Nantucket, Bushwick Film Fest, CAAMFest, NJFF, SDAF) and *The Club* (upcoming). Co-producer at To-By-For Productions. BFA: NYU Tisch, Experimental Theatre Wing.

[www.anastasiolowin.com](http://www.anastasiolowin.com)

**BRIAN M. ROBILLARD\* (Stage Manager)** is making his BPT debut. Recent area credits include *Young Frankenstein*, *Jersey Boys*, *Grumpy Old Men*, *An American in Paris*, and *Smokey Joe's Café* (Ogunquit Playhouse); *Hair*, *Oliver!*,

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1776, *We Will Not Be Silent*, *The Bakelite Masterpiece*, *Lonely Planet*, *Ideation*, *The Gift Horse*, and *Brecht on Brecht* (New Repertory Theatre); *The Half Life of Marie Curie*, *The Crucible* (The Nora/Bedlam); *The First Pineapple and other folktales*, *Bedlam's Pygmalion*, and *A Christmas Carol* (Central Square Theater); *The Tempest*, *Cymbeline*, and *Romeo and Juliet* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company). Proud member of Actors' Equity Association and serves on the Boston Area Equity Liaison Committee. Brian received his BFA in stage management from Boston University. Up Next: *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Lyric Stage)

**LISA TUCKER\* (Deb)** is happy to be making her BPT debut. She is a founding member of Beau Jest Moving Theatre ([www.beaujest.com](http://www.beaujest.com)), and has co-created and appeared in all their shows, including the title roles in their Elliot Norton-winning *Krazy Kat* and IRNE-winning *The Remarkable Rooming-house of Mme Le Monde*. Other credits include *Plays in Place*, *Next Door Theater*, *Aim Stage*, *Centastage*, *Fort Point Theatre Channel*, *New Century Theatre*, *Foothills Theatre*, *Greater Boston Stage* (Stoneham Theater), *Shear Madness*, *Lyric Stage*, *Tempest Productions*, *Wheelock Family Theatre*, *Durham Center Stage*, *Threshold Theatre*, *City Stage*, and the *Boston Theater Marathon*, as well as voice over, commercial, and industrial work.

**ROBYN UNGER (Nina)** is very excited to be making her Boston debut! Her recent credits include *Native Gardens* (Eagle Theatre), *A Ribbon About a Bomb* (Exquisite Corpse Company), *KillJoy* (ECC), *Breaking Legs* (Gretna Theatre), *Ubu Roi* (Garage Theatre), and *I am not I* (Fringe NYC). Robyn studied at Playwrights Horizons Theatre School and Experimental Theatre Wing while getting her BFA in drama at NYU. When she's not performing, Robyn works as an urban farmer and dog walker in Brooklyn. Thanks to Parental Units, Sarah, Rox, Gregory (her Brussels Griffon), and the whole team at Boston Playwrights' Theatre.

**ISABEL VAN NATTA (Hannah)** is a senior acting major at Boston University and this is her debut at Boston Playwrights' Theatre! It is an honor to be a part of such an important story, and she is beyond thankful for everyone on the *Rx Machina* team! She wants to thank her family for being her rock and also shoutout to Mya, Gigi, and Trav. "I love you all so much!"

**CAITY-SHEA VIOLETTE (Playwright)** is a national award-winning playwright and screenwriter whose work explores invisible disabilities, sexuality, and learning how to belong to yourself. She is a winner of the Jean Kennedy Smith Playwriting Award, The Clauder Competition Gold Prize, Samuel French Off Off Broadway Festival, Gary Garrison National Ten-Minute Play Award, Susan Glaspell Playwriting Festival National Award, and National Partners of the American Theatre Playwriting Award. Her plays include *Rx Machina*, *Reap The Grove*, *Slow Jam*, *Credible*, *Gaslight Supernova*, *Target Behavior*, and others. Her work has been developed or presented at Roundabout Theatre Company, Portland Stage, The New Harmony Project, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Boston Playwrights' Theatre, and more. She has been a finalist for the Judith Royer Playwriting Excellence Award, Screencraft Stage



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Play Competition, and Risk Theatre's Modern Tragedy Competition, as well as a semifinalist for The Lark's Shakespeare's Sister Fellowship, Blue Ink Playwriting Award, SPACE at Ryder Farm Creative Residency, and the Future of Playwriting Prize. She is a writer-in-residence in Echo Theatre Company's 2021-2022 Los Angeles Young Playwrights. Originally from the Midwest, Caity-Shea has a BFA in Acting from University of Minnesota, Duluth, and an MFA in Playwriting from Boston University. [www.caitysheaviolette.com](http://www.caitysheaviolette.com)

**FEITONG WANG (Sound Design)(she/her/hers)** is a third-year grad student at Boston University where she is majoring in sound design. She is an alumna of Communication University of China, Nanjing (BA, 2014) in sound design for film and television. Favorite experiences include working in Star Time Company as a sound engineer for bilingual dubbing, and sound design assistant at Boston Playwrights' Theatre.

**RENEE E. YANCEY\* (Stage Manager)** is a stage manager, production manager and theatre educator. Credits in New England include stage manager for *Willy Wonka* (Wheelock Family Theatre); *Frankenstein* (The Nora/Underground Railway Theater); *Heartland*, *Still Standing*, *Ripe Frenzy* (New Repertory Theatre); *The Fantasticks* (Opera House Arts); *The Honey Trap*, and *Faithless* (Boston Playwrights' Theatre); and production manager for *Cymbeline* and *Richard III* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company). Originally from Texas, Renee spent 10 years based in the Washington, D.C., area where she performed stage, production, and events management for Olney Theatre Center, Studio Theatre, theatre Washington/Helen Hayes Awards, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Velocity DC, and AFI Silver Spring. Renee is a lecturer and management programs head for the School of Theatre at Boston University. Education: BFA Texas State University; MFA Boston University. Proud member of Actors' Equity Association. [renee-e-yancey.com](http://renee-e-yancey.com)

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## LISTEN TO TYPECAST

Episode 5 of **Typecast: Boston's New Play Podcast**—about the process of bringing a new play into the world—features *Rx Machina* playwright Caity-Shea Violette. Listen: <https://www.bu.edu/bpt/community/typecast/>

or [BostonPlaywrights.org](https://www.bostonplaywrights.org) > Community > Typecast



Actors' Equity Association ("Equity"), founded in 1913, is the U.S. labor union that represents more than 51,000 professional Actors and Stage Managers. Equity fosters the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, improving working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans. Actors' Equity is a member of the AFL-CIO and is affiliated with FIA, an international organization of performing arts unions. #EquityWorks

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# *Beasts*

by CAYENNE DOUGLASS

directed by KELLY GALVIN

April 7-17 | Tickets: [BostonPlaywrights.org](http://BostonPlaywrights.org)

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Huntington Theatre Props Department, Earthworm, Inc. Recycling Center,  
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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

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.

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 **Boston PLAYWRIGHTS' Theatre**

Boston Playwrights' Theatre is an award-winning professional theatre at Boston University dedicated to new works. Founded in 1981 by Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott, the heart of BPT's mission is the production of new plays by students and alumni of BU's MFA Playwriting Program—a collaboration with BU's renowned School of Theatre. The program's award-winning alumni have been produced in regional and New York houses, as well as in London's West End. BPT's productions have been honored with numerous regional and Boston awards, including awards from the Independent Reviewers of New England (IRNE) and Boston Critics' Association (Elliot Norton Awards).

From class workshops to our Season of New Plays, BPT employs the best of New England's professional actors, directors, and designers to bring each playwright's vision to its first audiences.

Each spring we produce New Noises: Massachusetts Young Playwrights' Project. Area high schools work with professional playwrights, directors, and actors to see student works on stage for the first time.

Fifty local theatre companies join us annually for the Boston Theater Marathon, a showcase of new ten-minute plays by New England playwrights chosen each year from hundreds of entrants. Each play is produced by a different New England theatre company in a single ten-hour event with all proceeds going to charity.

When we are not producing plays, we continue our mission through the New Play Odyssey Program, which makes theatre space available to other New England theatre companies and playwrights for readings and festivals of new plays.

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