Welcome to the Department of Theatre & Dance
2022-2023 Season!

The UWSP Department of Theatre & Dance is fully accredited by the
National Association of Schools of Theatre and the
National Association of Schools of Dance.

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Professor, Theatre

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Laurie Schmeling

Luke Shepherd

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Michael Estanich
Professor, Dance

Parke Fech

Mark Hanson

Jeannie Hill
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Pamela Luedtke

Tyler Marchant
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ACDA
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Indiana Dance Education Organization
balanced body

Advocating Dance Education in the Arts

National Association of Schools of Dance
Indigenous Peoples Land Acknowledgement

The Department of Theatre and Dance would like to recognize that the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point occupies the unceded lands of the Ho Chunk and Menominee people. Please take a moment to acknowledge and honor this ancestral Ho Chunk and Menominee land and the sacred lands of all Indigenous peoples.
About the Playwright

Renowned English novelist and playwright Agatha Christie (b. 1890–d. 1976) wrote her first detective novel during the first World War. Published in 1920, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* marked the first appearance of Hercule Poirot, the Belgian detective who would eventually feature in thirty-three novels, two plays, and fifty short stories within Christie's body of work. Her incisive brilliance was continuously on display in her intricate mysteries, earning her titles such as "Queen of Crime" and "Queen of Mystery." With its focus on psychological analysis and acute observation in crime-solving, her work helped to establish high specificity in the emerging mystery genre and became a cultural phenomenon. Poirot is her most popular subject and series. Other significant works include *And Then There Were None*, the *Miss Marple* collection, and *The Mousetrap*, the longest-running production in the history of London's West End. The prolific Christie remains the best-selling and most-translated novelist in history.

Dramaturg's Note

*Murder on the Orient Express* is an exemplar of the closed-room style of mysteries at which Agatha Christie excelled. Christie's weaving of layered lies and the subsequent untangling of them, often in a complete explanation of the crime towards the end of a piece, hold lasting influence on the structure and conventions of the genre. Interest in such stories has persisted through the 20th century and has recently experienced a significant resurgence with the success of productions like *Knives Out* (2019), *Only Murders in the Building* (2021), and, of course, continuing adaptations of Christie's own works for the big and small screen alike.

Riding the Orient Express was a childhood dream of Agatha Christie's. She first boarded our titular train in 1928 and frequented the Express in her travels to Middle Eastern excavation sites with her archaeologist husband—whom she met on one of her early trips. This familiarity with the Express inspired Christie's choice of location for the literary tale that has become, through the hands of adaptor Ken Ludwig, the play you will see tonight.

*Murder on the Orient Express* remains one of the most famous examples of Christie's classic structure and style, with the attention to detail and careful craft in mystery storytelling especially characteristic of cases centering on Hercule Poirot. This story examining the morality of revenge arose amid grave political upheaval in Europe as fascists and dictators took power preceding the second World War. The moral and ethical questions it raises are as enduring as the situational intrigue of her mystery-making method: What is the value of the law, and who are its arbiters? How far will and should a person go to find justice? What do we do when the difference between right and wrong is anything but black and white?

Through our production, we invite you to accompany Hercule Poirot as he confronts these questions and unravels the mystery of *The Murder on the Orient Express.*

Serena Alexander, Dramaturg

Sophomore BA Drama student
Agatha Christie’s Murder on the Orient Express

adapted for the stage by Ken Ludwig

was originally staged by McCarter Theater Center, Princeton, NJ
Emily Mann, Artistic Director, Timothy J. Shields, Managing Director.
The production subsequently transferred to Hartford Stage, Hartford, CT
Darko Tresnjak, Artistic Director, Michael Stotts, Managing Director.

Directed by Laurie Schmeling

Music Direction by Luke Shepherd
Murder on the Orient Express Cast

Hercule Poirot ................................................. Parke Fech *
Monsieur Bouc .................................................. Zachary Dolinar
Mary Debenham ................................................ Sophie Pitsch
Hector MacQueen .............................................. Kole Mallien
Michel the Conductor ......................................... Josh Verish
Princess Dragomiroff ........................................ Evaya Gonzalez
Greta Ohlsson .................................................. Cara Langhauser
Countess Andrenyi ........................................... Kaia Fitzgerald
Helen Hubbard ................................................ Emily Ruth
Colonel Arbuthnot/Samuel Ratchett ..................... Gage McKnight
Head Waiter/Stage Directions .............................. Monica Kuhn

* Appears by permission of the Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.
^ UWSP Faculty/Staff member
Meet the Company

Alexander, Serena (Dramaturg, She/Her) Sophomore Drama and Psychology - Human Services Major from Nashville, TN. Recipient of the Anne Gilfry Schierl Fine Arts Award in Drama.

Dolinar, Zachary (Monsieur Bouc, He/Him) Junior Acting Major from Waukesha, WI. Recipient of the James Mueller Award.

Fech, Parke* (Hercule Poirot, He/They) Lecturer of Theatre at UW-Stevens Point, teaching courses in Acting for the Camera, Dialects, Movement for Actors, Senior Showcase, Stage Combat, and Voice & Articulation. Member of the Actors Equity Association.

*denotes UWSP Faculty/Staff member
Meet the Company

Fitzgerald, Kaia (Countess Andrenyi, She/Her)
Recipient of the Sentry Talent Scholarship and Stages to Equity Scholarship.

Gonzalez, Evaya (Princess Dragomiroff, She/Her)
Recipient of the Arts Bash Scholarship and Lawson Grant.

Kuhn, Monica (Head Waiter/Stage Directions, She/Her)
Recipient of the Presidential Gold Scholarship.

Langhauser, Cara (Greta Ohlsson, She/Her)
Recipient of the Sentry Scholarship and the Spring 2022 University Leadership Award.

Mallien, Kole (Hector MacQueen, He/Him)
Recipient of the First-Year Theatre Arts Scholarship in Musical Theatre and the Presidential Purple Scholarship.

Ruth, Emily (Helen Hubbard, She/They)
Recipient of the Anne Gilfry Schierl Fine Arts Award in Acting and the Arts Bash Scholarship.

Verish, Josh (Michel the Conductor, He/Him)
Recipient of the Presidential Gold Scholarship.

Weber, Rachel (Stage Manager, She/Her)
Recipient of the Presidential Gold Scholarship.
CONTRIBUTE TO BACKSTAGE

The Department of Theatre & Dance welcomes financial support for educational and artistic activities through a variety of programs, including existing scholarships and endowments, special projects support, bequests and planned gifts. For more information about contributing to the Department of Theatre & Dance, please contact Michael Estanich, Chair of the Department of Theatre & Dance, at mestanic@uwsp.edu or 715-346-3978. You may also donate online at https://give.uwsp.edu/give-backstage or by scanning the QR code found on the bottom of this page.

Angel ($1000+)

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Lani Tierney
Carol Watkins
Stage Manager ($50+)

Gregg Aiken
Kathy Hermann
Sharon Williams

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The mission of the Department of Theatre and Dance is to serve:

• Its majors and minors through curricular offerings and performance/production activities that heighten intellectual, artistic, cultural, and humane sensitivities.

• The general student population through curricular offerings and stage productions that engender an appreciation and understanding of the performing arts and their contribution to the cultural and aesthetic enrichment of life.

• The university community and general central Wisconsin population through the production of quality stage performances.

You are part of what makes the College of Fine Arts and Communication so vibrant and vital. Your generosity elevates our programs and encourages student success, helps attract and retain dedicated faculty members, and enhances the student experience.

Make a gift to COFAC today!

STAGES TO EQUITY SCHOLARSHIP

In an ongoing effort to broaden and enrich our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity practices in the Department of Theatre & Dance, we’ve established the new Stages to Equity Scholarship. This award supports students who come from historically under-represented populations within the theatre, dance, and arts management student body at UW-Stevens Point. This academic year, we hope to grow the Stages to Equity endowment to support two annual scholarships for our students. We hope you might consider a gift to the endowment today! Scan the QR code with your mobile device, or visit www.give.uwsp.edu/stages-to-equity.

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