

CONCORD FLORAL, Digital Theatre/Film, CSU 2020

Link to complete film:

[Concord Floral](#), password: CovidTheatreRocks2!

I also applied for the “14'er” Provost Award, supported by me work on *Concord Floral*. The evidence dossier is included.

Within CSU praise and marketing for Concord Floral:

Congratulations to all involved in the outstanding production of Concord Floral. This would be a crowning achievement under any circumstances, but is monumental in this environment. The level of creative artistry and professionalism exhibited by students, faculty, and staff has been extraordinary.

Thank you for your commitment to maintaining the viability of the performing arts throughout this challenging year.

Dan

Dr. Daniel Goble
Director, School of Music, Theatre, and Dance
Program Head, Department of Music
Professor of Music
Colorado State University
<https://smt.d.colostate.edu>

Professor Emeritus of Music,
Western Connecticut State University

Pull quotes from the KCACTF response with Mace Archer, Mount Hood Community College:

*“This is a great production. I always think about how to think about how to start one of these talkbacks, and when it got done, I didn’t want to join your Zoom call, like ‘I don’t want to talk to you people’, and not because of these characters and their awfulness... but I didn’t want to talk to you because I was so moved... This was f**king awesome. I think what you all achieved here is admirable on so many levels. I think you capture this play, and the spirit of this play and horror of this play and pathos of this play, just in spades.”*

“I don’t think I was fully prepared to be as moved. I’ve seen too much zoom theatre and too much online theatre, I’ve satisfied that itch for the rest of my life. So, to be quite honest, to come to your show and watch another one, was not on the top of my list of things to do at the end of the semester... but watching it? This is one of the best translations of a theatre piece in this format that we are living in that retains its theatricality. That’s my big kudos and big applause.”

“Your play worked for me... Having worked in film and worked in theatre, and thinking about you all putting this together in the course of a semester, seems Herculean to me. So I compliment everybody for that work as well. Wow, just wow.”

Evidence of Nominee Impact for
Saffron Henke
Provost's 14'er Award

Collegian:



Frame by Frame: CSU theatre department's play-turned-film



NOVEMBER 17, 2020 BY ANNA TOMKA

Grey Sercl Williamson's *Nearly Wild* explores the rooms of the greenhouse Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian) Colorado State University theater performance majors are accustomed to acting on stage in front of a live audience; however, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the seasonal production had to be filmed.

This year, CSU theater assistant professor Saffron Henke directed a play called ["Concord Floral" by Jordan Tannahill](#), which is centered around a group of teenagers' past decisions and the consequences that follow.

"People should tune in to this film because it's something the theater program has never done before," CSU senior and assistant director Alexandra Ruth said. "I think this play-turned-film says a lot about character, resolution, bullying and conflict that is often found in teen relationships."

The cast and crew of the production were composed of CSU theater students and faculty members. Filming began in early October and took place at various set locations in Northern Colorado.

The film will livestream Dec. 16, 18 and 19, and all CSU students will have free access. A link will be sent to those who get tickets through the theater department.

See behind-the-scenes images shot over the span of two days at multiple set locations below.



Stage manager Lorna Stephens and director Saffron Henke examine a "Concord Floral" script at the set of the farm Nov. 8. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Director of "Concord Floral" Saffron Henke instructs cast members before a scene Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



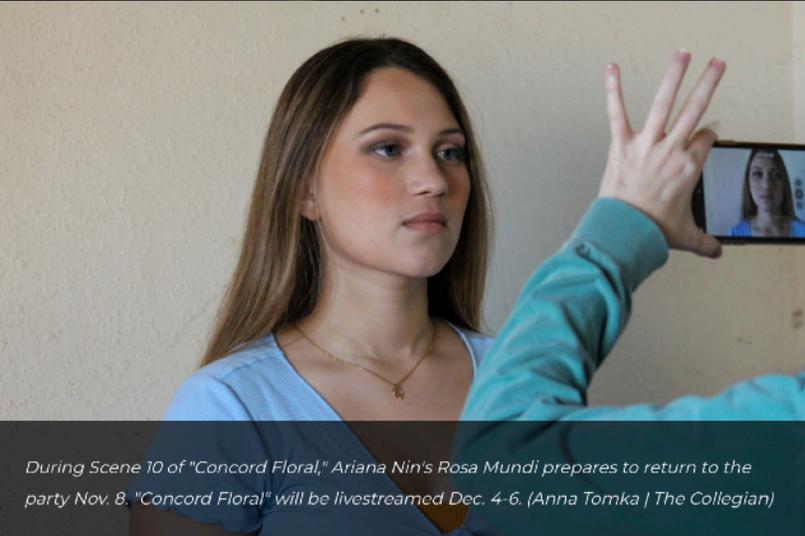
Production designer Roger Hanna prepares his camera to shoot a scene at the farm set of "Concord Floral" Nov. 3. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Rachel Bennett's Bobbie James brings a wine bottle to a scene of a high school party Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Kaitlin Kennedy's Forever Irene looks to Garrett Hannigan's Just Joey in a scene at a parking lot set Nov. 3. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



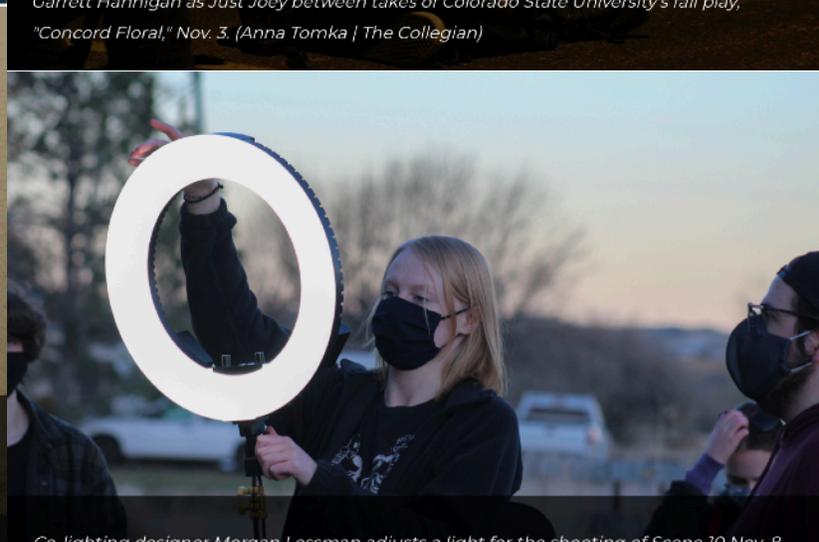
During Scene 10 of "Concord Floral," Ariana Nin's Rosa Mundi prepares to return to the party Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Garrett Hannigan as Just Joey between takes of Colorado State University's fall play, "Concord Floral," Nov. 3. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Abigail Porter acts as a teenager, Fox, in Scene 8, "Nothing's Wrong with Nearly," Nov. 8. Colorado State University's "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Co-lighting designer Morgan Lessman adjusts a light for the shooting of Scene 10 Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Colorado State University's fall play, "Concord Floral," will be live-streamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Ariana Nin's Rosa Mundi talks to Rachel Bennett's Bobbie James in scene 10 Nov. 8. Colorado State University's "Concord Floral" will be live-streamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Grey Serci Williamson acts in a scene as Nearly Wild with Rachel Bennett as Bobbie James and Ariana Nin as Rosa Mundi on the farm set Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Grey Serci Williamson acts in a scene as Nearly Wild with Rachel Bennett as Bobbie James and Ariana Nin as Rosa Mundi on the farm set Nov. 8. "Concord Floral" will be live-streamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Ariana Nin's Rosa Mundi talks to Rachel Bennett's Bobbie James in Scene 10 Nov. 8. Colorado State University's "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Garrett Hannigan acts out Scene 9 of "Concord Floral" as Just Joey Nov. 3. "Concord Floral" will be livestreamed Dec. 4-6. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)



Crew members Kylie Barger and Jamie Chenhall explore the film location for Colorado State University's fall play "Concord Floral" Nov. 8. (Anna Tomka | The Collegian)

Anna Tomka can be reached at photo@collegian.com or on Instagram [@tomka.jpg](https://www.instagram.com/tomka.jpg).

Source:



COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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Thursday, February 11



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Concord Floral: CSU Theatre makes innovations out of limitations

11

Dec, 2020

By [Jennifer Clary](#)

CSU Theatre is engaging with technology and audiences in new ways, continuing to tackle the challenges the pandemic throws at the performing arts. This fall, CSU Theatre brought streamed content to CSU students, family, friends, and arts patrons.

Now, the CSU community is invited to watch CSU Theatre's first-ever full-length film — *Concord Floral* by Jordan Tannahill, directed by acting professor Saffron Henke. The movie streams Dec. 16-19 and tickets can be accessed at [CSUArtsTickets.com](https://www.csuarts.com/tickets).

Concord Floral is a one-million-square-foot abandoned greenhouse and a refuge for neighborhood kids, a place all to themselves in which to dream, dare, and come of age. But hidden there is a secret no one wants to confront, and when two friends stumble upon it, they set off an unstoppable chain of events, from shadows in parking lots to phone calls from the grave. It's time for the teens of Concord Floral to start talking.

Major pivot

When it was clear that mainstage theatre productions at the University Center for the Arts would not be possible this year,

THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE PRESENTS

"Masterfully blends naturalistic dialogue, poetic lyricism and magic realism. Concord Floral is an ensemble choral piece that packs a theatrical and emotional punch"

—JON KAPLAN, NOW TORONTO

AN SMTD LIVE-STREAMED PERFORMANCE

Dec. 16

OPENING

CONCORD FLORAL

by Jordan Tannahill
directed by Saffron Henke

Colorado State University

DEC. 16 through DEC. 19

Wednesday 12 / 12
Saturday 12 / 12
Sunday 12 / 12

at 7:30k

Sunday Matinee 12 / 12 at 2:00k

University Theatre
University Center for the Arts
1400 Remington Street,
Fort Collins, CO

FOR STREAMING INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT [CSUARTSTICKETS.COM](https://www.csuarts.com/tickets)

[CSUArtsTickets.com](https://www.csuarts.com/tickets)
(970) 491-ARTS (2787)

DIRECTED BY SAFFRON HENKE

the director, Saffron Henke, selected *Concord Floral* for its mostly two- or three- person scenes and monologues.

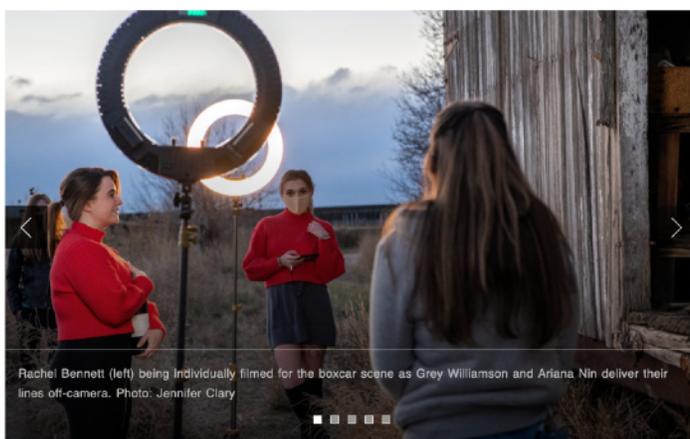
This flexibility continued to build on what was possible, given current restraints, as was the case with *Boy Gets Girl*, the department's Zoom production, directed by Walt Jones earlier this fall.

"Building on what was achieved by the cast and crew of *Boy Gets Girl* — and as the script grew on us — it became more possible to view *Concord* as a film," said Henke. Together with theatre professors Roger Hanna (director of photography/production designer) and Price Johnston (editor/VFX supervisor/2nd unit photography), Henke has been working since August to make the film a reality.

"*Boy Gets Girl* showed us that we could do it, although it's super challenging," said Hanna. "We're not a TV or film school, we don't have formal training in it, or even all of the right equipment. We even had to ask permission of the playwright to film the whole thing."



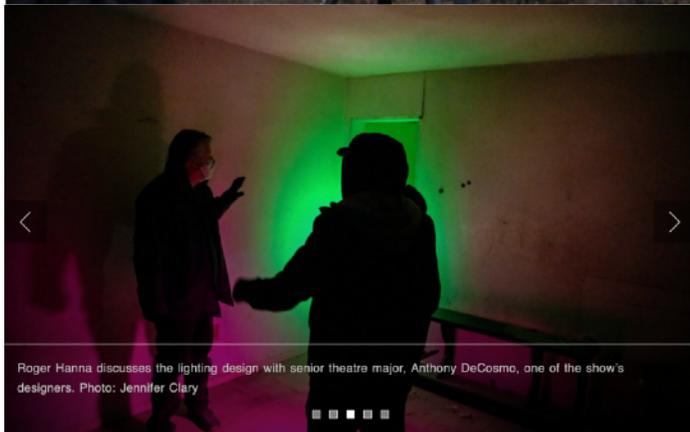
With its technical creativity, riveting performances, and film noir aesthetic, CSU Theatre achieved something very special with its live-action Zoom production of Boy Gets Girl by Rebecca Gilman and directed by Walt Jones.



Rachel Bennett (left) being individually filmed for the boxcar scene as Grey Williamson and Ariana Nin deliver their lines off-camera. Photo: Jennifer Clary



Saffron Henke and Roger Hanna discuss blocking for the boxcar scene. Photo: Jennifer Clary



Roger Hanna discusses the lighting design with senior theatre major, Anthony DeCosmo, one of the show's designers. Photo: Jennifer Clary

Concord Floral works in the pandemic context because other than one brief moment that Johnston created in post-production, there is no physical contact between the characters. This practical aspect, paired with the plan to film outside, allowed the project to be approved by the CSU Pandemic Preparedness Team. Hanna's personal connection made during the run of "Driving Miss Daisy" at Bas Bleu Theatre in 2019 led to securing Jim Miller's local family farm as the main filming location. Additionally, Poudre High School's theatre director, Joel Smith, provided access to the school's new greenhouse as a secondary set.

"It was such a boon for us to have such generous location donations that could have cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to create. The sets not only naturally stimulated our creativity, but made it possible to film outside, which was good in the circumstances," said a thankful Henke.

There's been a learning curve

Instead of feeling the loss from not presenting a traditional play, Henke feels fortunate about CSU Theatre's foray into feature filmmaking. As an actress, Henke has been in many movies, but this is her first time directing one. "The pedagogical value that was gained is massive," the director said about the opportunity for the students to learn about movie-making. "This was bigger than we expected — somewhere between a legit independent film and a student film."

"And, in many ways, now that we've made the

movie, we're ready to make a movie," she added.

Hanna agreed, with a chuckle. "Like by the time we got done filming with the green screen, I figured out what settings would make the green screen easy to edit with. We've learned a lot."

The push-pull of the pressure to learn and adapt versus the excitement about new opportunities was prevalent for the students as well.

Senior theatre major Rachel Bennett had to quickly adjust to the fast pace of filming. "You show up to set, and you're jumping into costume ... and you learn exactly what your blocking is, and then you're filming less than five minutes later," she explained. "Filming days were absolutely a whirlwind, but they were always so much fun."

For costume, hair, and make-up designer Abby Allison, setting up her shop on location was a masterclass in organization.

"We were on set every single day for a month and a half, making sure every actor had every piece they needed, that we had every material we may need in any case, and keeping track of continuity as we were filming several scenes throughout the day. In the beginning, we were definitely feeling that learning curve and making notes of the things we needed to prep for the next filming."

Overcoming the challenges

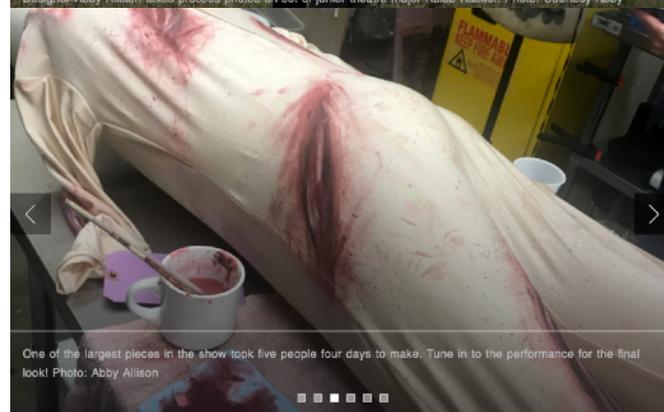
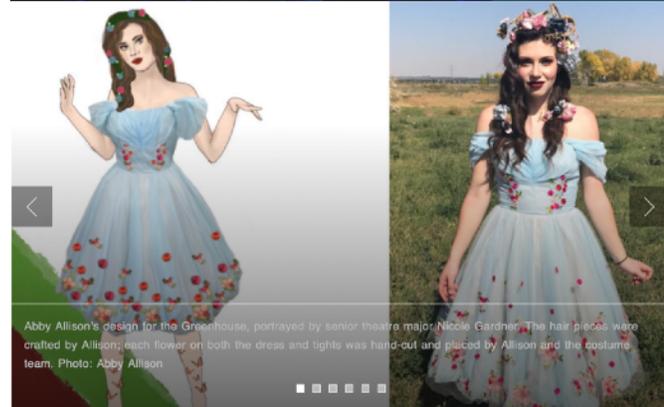
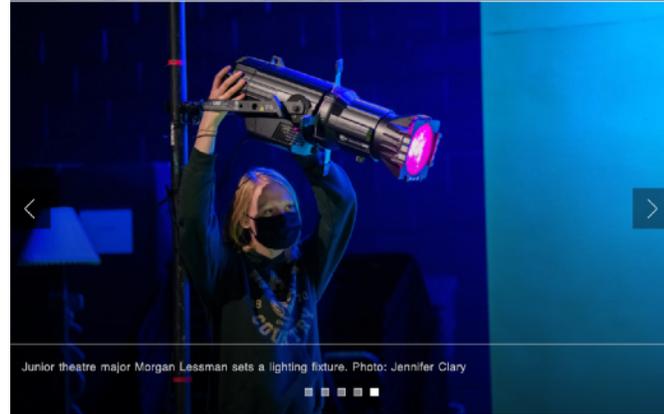
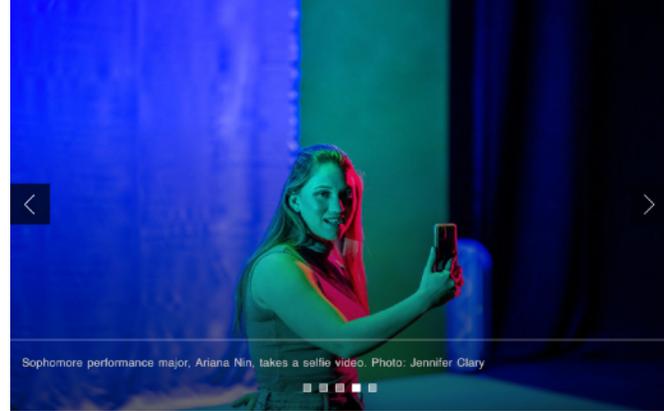
"The movie is the way it is, with mainly only one person on-screen at a time, because we're following rigorous compliance protocols," said Henke.

Instead of filming a scene with three actors together on-screen, each actor was filmed separately, with cast members delivering their lines off-camera. The individual cuts were then edited together by Johnston to create the full scene.

"It was hard because our actors aren't robots, and they don't necessarily deliver the scene exactly the same way each time," said Hanna. "It makes the editing process more tedious, but Price is more than capable."

Another technical challenge was the limit of one electrical outlet on the farm, a half-mile away from the film site. Hanna explained that "instead of capturing audio the 'right way,' by recording multi-track simultaneously, each actor recorded audio on their phone to be matched up later by our sound designer, [sophomore theatre major] Ashley Schountz."

Freshman performance major Grey Williamson found that mitigating COVID policy was difficult, but everyone was committed to it. "When some of our cast and crew were put in quarantine after being exposed off of the set...we lost core aspects of our film for two weeks at a time. I think we're all just feeling lucky to still be able to make art



despite the virus, and we care about each other a lot and want to keep each other safe.”

COVID compliance also impacted Allison, who had to make do with much shorter fitting time slots and filmed YouTube tutorials in lieu of make-up fittings.

“We [also] had to incorporate nude and character-esque masks to the costumes, which also affected the storyboard of how we would shoot the scenes,” she explained.

“We just kept going,” said a determined Henke. “We had to constantly adapt and make accommodations. In a way, as performing artists, we did the apotheosis that our craft and skill requires!”

Crushing it

Henke is proud of her cast and crew, who demonstrated their willingness to make adaptations. Contrary to their previous training, these stage actors were asked to adapt their acting for the camera. “But it’s an actor’s play, and there are really compelling performances in it,” she said.

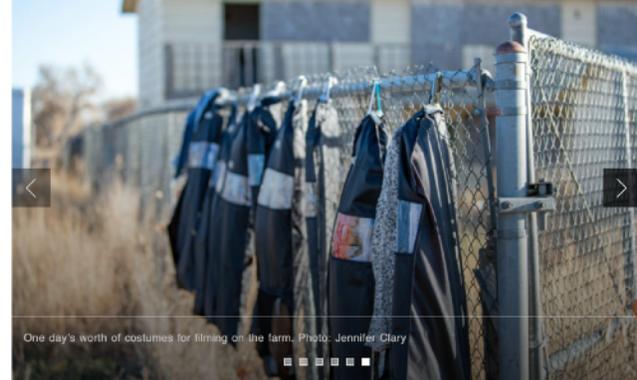
In preparing for her role as Nearly Wild, Williamson focused on reconciling acting techniques to a film script, two very different art forms. “I love film because the possibilities are endless, and I love theatre because of the intimacy, especially in a play like this, where there is a lot of narration and meta theatrical aspects. We tried to combine those things, making a film that was supernaturally charged, and connected to the audience as well,” she said.



Cast member Anna Poelma as #7 Couch, and Roger Hanna, videographer. All unmasked scenes were shot with 12 feet of distance or as selfie videos shot by the actors themselves. Photo: Abby Allison



A wig distressed by Abby Allison. Photo: Abby Allison



One day's worth of costumes for filming on the farm. Photo: Jennifer Clary



ConcordFloralSet8



Grey Williamson (#6 Nearly Wild) and Ariana Nin (#5 Rosa Mundi) doing their take of the boxcar scene, one at a time. Photos: Jennifer Clary

As Henke and Hanna kept the ball moving forward, their admiration for *Concord Floral's* crew increased. As is usual for a CSU production, all sets, lights, sound, props, and costumes are designed by students mentored by faculty and staff. "It was remarkable how our staff stepped up," remarked Hanna. "Every week they were more responsive and quicker to identify problems and solutions. We're lucky we have the people we have," he said.

Bennett agreed.

"I worked with an extremely talented group of people, and I am so grateful for this opportunity. The crew especially deserves a special thank you; they have really worked so hard to make this movie special, and I can't wait for everyone to see what we've created!"

For Henke, the process has been both personally and artistically very gratifying. "It's been a great experience, but I haven't looked up yet," she noted. "It's been a wonderful yet really intense time — hopefully at the finish line it all looks effortless!"



Stage Manager Lorna Stephens takes during filming at the farm. Photo: Jennifer Clary

Take-aways

My biggest take-away from this show was being able to see the similarities and differences between film and theatre. It's made me really appreciate theatre but also film and being able to work through this new experience. I don't think I'm going to drop theatre and become a film major but it was an experience I will carry with me moving forward.

Lorna Stephens, Stage Manager Senior, Theatre Design and Technology/ Women's Studies

The biggest take away from this experience is really the massive importance of communication. Being online instead of in person made the passing of information really difficult sometimes. Instead of being all together in a room, it was a lot of emails where people or pieces of information easily got missed. Not to mention that this show required so many more people to get involved and was always rotating who was working when. We had a lot of bumps, but I think we're going to be able to develop a much better way of delivering information to the whole team because of it.

Abby Allison, Costume, Hair, and Make-up Designer

Junior, Theatre Design and Technology

My biggest take-a-way from this experience would be, there is never such a thing as too much preparation. In the movie, I play a wide range of characters, which made my prep before filming days a bit more challenging. I would do my best to iron out every scene and do as much groundwork as I could, so when I got on set, I wasn't stressing, and I could focus on giving a full performance for the camera and take notes quickly to get the shot right.

Rachel Bennett, Cast #10 Bobbie James Senior, Theatre Performance



Director Saffron Henke scouts the farm location. Photo: Jennifer Clary

Don't miss the show

As CSU concludes this semester that has been like no other, please join in and support the hard work of CSU Theatre students and the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance.

"I hope everyone enjoys the show as much as we all did making it," added Lorna Stephens, senior theatre major. "I am so thankful to still be able to practice my craft even through a pandemic, because it's so important that we keep creating art, especially during this time."

Concord Floral streams on Dec. 16, 18, and 19 at 7:30 p.m., with a matinee on Sunday, Dec. 19 at 2 p.m. CSU students, don't forget about your NO CHARGE access to tickets. All CSU faculty and staff receive two no-charge tickets each academic year.

CSU faculty and staff, have you used your Commitment to Campus ticket benefit yet?

Tickets can be reserved at [CSUArtsTickets.com](https://www.csuarts.com/tickets). **PLEASE NOTE:** Ticket sales for streamed events end 15-minutes prior to the start of each performance.



The crew wraps up a day of filming at the farm. Photo: Jennifer Clary

Internal Departmental Praise from Chair of SMTD:

Congratulations to all involved in the outstanding production of Concord Floral. This would be a crowning achievement under any circumstances, but is monumental in this environment. The level of creative artistry and professionalism exhibited by students, faculty, and staff has been extraordinary.

Thank you for your commitment to maintaining the viability of the performing arts throughout this challenging year.

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Dr. Daniel Goble
Director, School of Music, Theatre, and Dance
Program Head, Department of Music
Professor of Music
Colorado State University
<https://smtd.colostate.edu>

Professor Emeritus of Music,
Western Connecticut State University

External Evaluation:

Mace Archer responded to the show as part of the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival. The production received three Certificates of Merit:

- Abby Allison for Costume and Makeup Design
- Roger Hanna for Production Design and Art Direction
- Acting Ensemble for recognition of their work

More about these honors can be found [here](#).

The entire response to the production can be viewed [here](#).

Below, some of Professor Archer's comments.

"This is a great production. I always think about how to think about how to start one of these talkbacks, and when it got done, I didn't want to join your Zoom call, like 'I don't want to talk to you people', and not because of these characters and their awfulness... but I didn't want to talk to you

*because I was so moved...This was f**king awesome. I think what you all achieved here is admirable on so many levels. I think you capture this play, and the spirit of this play and horror of this play and pathos of this play, just in spades.”*

“I don’t think I was fully prepared to be as moved. I’ve seen too much zoom theatre and too much online theatre, I’ve satisfied that itch for the rest of my life. So, to be quite honest, to come to your show and watch another one, was not on the top of my list of things to do at the end of the semester... but watching it? This is one of the best translations of a theatre piece in this format that we are living in that retains its theatricality. That’s my big kudos and big applause.”

“Your play worked for me...Having worked in film and worked in theatre, and thinking about you all putting this together in the course of a semester, seems Herculean to me. So I compliment everybody for that work as well. Wow, just wow.”

External Evaluation:

External Evaluation of Concord Floral

Inspired by *The Decameron*, a story of the young and privileged attempting to escape fourteenth century death and disease, *Concord Floral* links ancient plague to the decay of our modern humanity. Instead of a chateau, the kids of *Concord* take to an abandoned greenhouse—a place once filled with growing things, now inhabited only by the stunted emotions of suburban teens and their meaner impulses. The piece is a timely choice given our collective outrage at anyone who dares not to meet our expectations, of generations growing up in a world where our value is determined by likes and subs—but to produce it during an actual plague amps the stakes.

I haven’t been shy about most online “theatre” made during the COVID-19 pandemic. I’ve hated it. Watching actors speak to their webcams in Brady Bunch view doesn’t compare to electricity of actual theatre. And those that I’ve bothered to attend either bore me or were produced by organizations with massive budgets and are, for all intents, films. That’s not the case with Saffron Henke’s production of *Concord*. As much as anything asynchronous can be theatre, this piece is.

Where many producers of online theatre have given up on much of what makes a play into a production, *Concord* remembers that theatre is more than actors saying words. The direction has a concept, one that emerges from the text logically and satisfyingly, in a way that makes the audience feel as though Jordan Tannahill wrote it to be performed this way—and that, without changes to the script. Leaning into, rather

than fighting, the constraints of online theatre, Saffron and her students create a real *production*. This isn't a film, though it was filmed; it is absolutely a play. Using straight up Zoom rooms, formal cinematic scenes, found footage, verité-style video, double-exposures, along with well-chosen lighting and music, the production immerses the audience into the devices of these kids. It helps that the play's central conflict involves a cellphone potentially lost in the guts of a dead girl—but using these devices as the confessionals into which these struggling teens pour their anxieties, lusts, confusion, and dread creates a tension not in the script, but without overshadowing the script. Watching the kids of *Concord* do and say, with complete conviction, the most horrible things, and record them onto these devices for all of posterity makes the play scarier than it already is. It reminds us how much of ourselves, how many of our secrets, we've given to the technology we trust so mindlessly so often.

I've always said that, in theatre, constraints breed creativity. It's a lesson I wish more folks learned. When creators lean into the struggles rather than fight them, magic happens. That's what's happened in this piece. And that is such a valuable lesson for Saffron to have taught her students, because it underscores why a theatre education is valuable. It teaches students not to be cowed by obstacles, but to transcend them; it teaches them how to make the best from limited resources, rather than sitting and wishing more money and time were available. And while theatre programs so often have to justify their existence in a STEM-obsessed nation, experiences like *Concord Floral* are going to send students into the world with resilience and tenacity regardless of whether they make theatre their life or move into other fields. It's a perfect example why STEM should become STEAM—adding an A for arts.

There are no silver linings in a global health crisis, and I hate when people try to find them. That said, there are people who take the constraints placed on all of us during the shutdowns and use them to create lessons for students that, whether or not they even know it, will stick with them. This production of this play—a plague play produced in the middle of a plague—is one of them.

Ultimately, the script of *Concord Floral* shows its cards as mildly hopeless. But this production of a play examining hopelessness made me feel hope—because it reminded me that even under the bleakest of conditions, theatre can still happen and still create something like electricity. That was a pretty helpful lesson for me, too.

Ben Jolivet, Playwright and Dramaturg
B.A., English and Creative Writing – Southern New Hampshire University
M.F.A., Playwrighting – The Playwrights Lab at Hollins University
www.benjolivet.com

External Evaluation:



**COLLEGE OF
LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES**

Theatre Arts Department

107 Theatre Building
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1705
319-335-2700 Fax 319-335-3568

December 16, 2020

We are living through a historically difficult time, as academics and as theatre artists. The pandemic has cut through our discipline in shocking, profound ways. Yet we can also look back at this time as a period of exciting experimentation and artistic growth, provided we have the courage to throw out the rule book and truly embrace what it means to be interdisciplinary. For an example of that kind of courage, I need to look no further than Colorado State University's thrilling production of Jordan Tannahill's *Concord Floral*, directed by Saffron Henke.

The script, written in 2016 by a Canadian playwright, could not have possibly predicted the perils of America in 2020. Yet the story of a group of teenagers haunted by their own cruelty and left vulnerable by the world around them feels breathtakingly prescient.

The production is a technical marvel. Boxed in by pandemic safety protocols, a more timid production might have limited itself to Zoom theatre, a well-meaning but static enterprise. But under Assistant Professor Saffron Henke's fearless direction, *Concord Floral* blossoms into a frenetic, tense, and bone-chilling experience. It is a true interdisciplinary work: more theatrical than a film, yet availing itself of so many cinematic tools to become something that could not exist in a traditional black box.

It's an all the more staggering feat when we understand that the actors filmed their parts separately, and were edited together to create a heightened collage of horror, foreboding, and yearning vulnerability. Henke's vision needs to be lauded here: in creating this vivid hybrid form, she and her collaborators are literally breaking new ground, creating something that Tannahill surely couldn't have predicted, but would hopefully approve. How did Henke coax such tender and intimate performances out of her college actors, when none of them could be in the room together? And yet, she did: this ensemble felt real, the environment felt lived-in, and the relationships rang painfully true. Particularly vivid was the performance by James- Rachel Bennett as Bobbie, the heartbreaking figure at the center of the mystery.

Roger Hanna, the production designer and director of photography, captures a technicolor suburban hellscape, helped along by the team of designers: Sarah Lepiere (art director), Abby Allison (costume, hair and makeup), Anthony Decosmo and Morgan Lessman (lighting), and Ashley Schountz (sound). Projections and video designer Price Johnson gave it all a patina of unworldliness.

Where will theatre go in 2021 and beyond? How will we reinvent ourselves in a post-pandemic world? It's unknowable. But watching Colorado State's latest tour de force, it's like watching the future write itself. It's breathtaking. *Concord Floral* is a triumph for Saffron Henke and her artistic team.

Megan Gogerty
Lecturer, Playwrights Workshop
University of Iowa

External Evaluation:



The Young-Howze Theater Journal

<https://rickyyoung-howze.tumblr.com/post/638179340439453696/growing-up-can-be-scary-with-concord-floral-by>

Even though it's Christmastime this production gave me the creeps like it was Halloween again.

By Ricky and Dana Young-Howze

Colorado State University @csuoca

Venmo: @rndyounghowze

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It's funny that the Colorado State University Center for the Arts calls this a film because this had a lot of the hallmarks of digital shows that we've seen over this year. We do applaud their attempt to add some multimedia elements in the production too. In a way, Saffron Henke's direction reminded us a lot of what Gorilla Rep's Macbeth was doing in the beginning. However, over its exceptionally long runtime (over 90 minutes is a lot to ask of a digital theatre audience) there seemed to be a lot more digital trickery involved to make everyone look like they're in the same room. I'll say the same thing that I've said before in other productions: sometimes just using the Zoom or Streamyard windows frees up performers to perform, the director to direct, and the audience to receive a powerful performance.

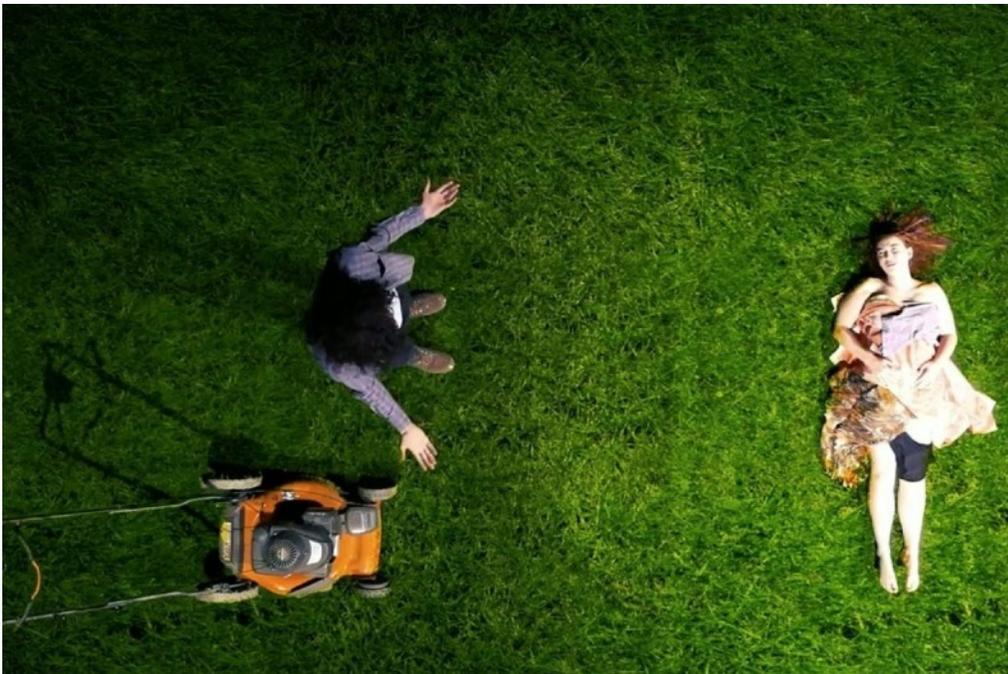
Concord Floral's parallel narrative style is one that I've always attached to. Okay, I'm using my five-dollar words (bad Ricky!). What I mean is that all of the characters are storytellers and they narrate what they're doing as they do it. It's always great to use it to convey a heightened spooky mood as this horror story does. Jordan Tamanelli makes this style work and I could dig into the story. It can be done wrong with too much exposition but this one picked the right balance.



This group of actors made my night! They bit into each of their roles and refused to let go. Imagine that you're already having to adjust to a new school year and a new format for the department AND then you have to reinvent the wheel and do a show. I made it through a theatre program during the H1N1 pandemic and I remember now that it barely disrupted our lives except that a few actors got sick during our show but the show still went on. This is far scarier and it has disrupted everything for

these actors and they still they seemed to have thrown themselves into the new style with gusto and made it their own.

Speaking of reinventing the wheel, I can't imagine the pressure on schools right now to innovate and try to give their students just as much enrichment and opportunities as they would have had with in-person lessons. The head of the Colorado University theatre department alluded to this fact when she said that they had to become a film department overnight. However, with all the growth that digital theatre has seen in its infancy, a lot of the best advancements have been in conventions of acting and directing which this program excelled at.



I'd argue that simplicity, not multimedia green screen tricks and techno voodoo make a great show. Too much flash can drown out the text of the play and leave the audience guessing. This is not the first time that I have said that I just wished for Zoom windows, probably won't be the last. I would rather sacrifice some production value to feel a connection with the performers and let them "break the fifth wall" as we say than to feel like I was watching



a blockbuster movie. All it takes is this already amazing production team to trust their awesome students and the text of the play to create a wonderful piece of digital theatre.

The ultimate goal of a scary story is to give us some spine chilling moments to take home with us at the end of the night. This story and the actors' interpretation are still giving me the willies. I'm also taking home the amazing cast and some of the amazing imagery. Most of it I still have no

clue how they did it. I'm also taking home the dedication of this faculty and their hard work to make this show work. Theatre is alive right now because of all these artists' hard work.

Learn more about the program [here](#).

External Evaluation:

Concord Floral Received three nominations from the Young-Howze Theatre Journal (winners announced February 21).

I've been nominated for a
YOUNG-HOWZE THEATRE AWARD
8:00 PM EST | Sunday February 21st
Facebook event:
www.facebook.com/events/220153806325954
For a full list of nominees, the Young-Howze YouTube page, and other info, visit: www.linktr.ee/rndyounghowze

YOU OUGHTA BE IN PICTURES
FOR FILM OF THE YEAR
"CONCORD FLORAL"
NOMINEE
PRESENTED BY JORDAN TANNAHILL AT
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR

SAFFRON HENKE
"CONCORD FLORAL"



NOMINEE
PRESENTED BY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL THEATRE PROGRAM OF THE YEAR



NOMINEE
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
FORT COLLINS, CO

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February 11, 2021

Faculty Excellence Awards – 14'er Award
Nomination for Prof. Saffron Henke, Department of Theatre

Dear members of the committee,

I write in wholehearted support of the nomination of Prof. Saffron Henke for the 14'er Award Faculty Excellence Award. As Director of Theatre, I can confirm Prof. Henke's eligibility for the award: she is an Assistant Professor in Theatre on the tenure track.

I second Roger Hanna's eloquent endorsement of her outstanding work on our Fall 2020 production of Jordan Tannahill's *Concord Floral*. I urge you to view the work at:

<https://vimeo.com/504508798>

Password to view: CovidTheatreRocks2!

and see for yourself the highest caliber production and design I have yet to see on a non-professional digital production during this pandemic year. Saffron's deft direction, preparation of student actors as they pivoted from live performance to film and digital production, and her can-do spirit throughout it all, were outstanding.

This was Prof. Henke's directorial debut at CSU, and she vividly embodied what I believe is the spirit of the 14'er award – to strive for great heights and set the bar high for her students and colleague-collaborators.

Her efforts were affirmed with glowing praise she received for her production from external reviewers. Megan Gogerty of the Playwrights Workshop at the University of Iowa called the production “a technical marvel,” adding that “under Assistant Professor Saffron Henke's fearless direction, *Concord Floral* blossoms into a frenetic, tense, and bone-chilling experience. It is a true interdisciplinary work: more theatrical than a film, yet availing itself of so many cinematic tools to become something that could not exist in a traditional black box.”

(<https://theatre.colostate.edu/news/concord-floral-called-a-triumph/>)

Playwright Ben Jolivet emphasized the value of the entire process for our students when he wrote that Henke's production “underscores why a theatre education is valuable. It teaches students not to be cowed by obstacles, but to transcend them; it teaches them how to make the best from limited resources, rather than sitting and wishing more money and time were available. And while theatre programs so often have to justify their existence in a STEM-obsessed nation, experiences like *Concord Floral* are going to send students into the world with resilience and tenacity regardless of whether they make theatre their life or move into other fields. It's a perfect example why STEM should become STEAM— adding an A for arts.”

Henke and her team's process was featured in an article in *The Source*:



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<https://libarts.source.colostate.edu/concord-floral-csu-theatre-makes-innovations-out-of-limitations/>

I am immensely proud to lead a department with such creative talent driving our productions, teaching our students and preparing them for careers in both theatre and film, and telling stories in such unique, engaging, and innovative ways.

Professors in the performing arts are not always recognized for their research and creative endeavors, but the impact of Prof. Henke's grit, commitment, and talent on our students, and on our audiences, deserves the highest accolades.

Thank you for considering her for this lofty honor.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Dr. Megan Lewis
Director of Theatre





Re: Letter of Nomination for Saffron Henke for the 14'er Award

Dear Selection Committee:

I am writing to nominate Saffron Henke for the 14'er Award for her work on the feature film written by Jordan Tannahill, *Concord Floral*.

When the CSU Faculty discussed creating our 2020-21 season, we decided that instead of taking it easy or just cancelling our season because of the pandemic, that it provided a unique opportunity to re-create ourselves as theatre makers. Together we decided we could continue to make evocative works of art while commenting on the world at large. One of the leading creative minds of the CSU Theatre faculty, Saffron Henke, came up with a very innovative coloring-outside-the-lines sort of idea and suggested several ways we could explore making works of theatre outside of the usual live theatre arena. One of these ideas happened to be shooting a feature film of Jordan Tannahill's play *Concord Floral*. This was no easy task as *Concord Floral* was not written as a screenplay, rather it was created to be performed live on stage. From the moment Saffron mentioned her idea of the film format it was obvious her wheels were turning and her excitement was mounting. As she began to pitch ideas her energy was fluid and contagious. Soon the rest of the faculty were on board.

As the Head of Design of CSU Theatre and the resident costume design faculty, I am involved in all aspects of design and production with our theatre program and *Concord Floral* was no exception. I mentored the student costume designer, assistant designer, and wardrobe crew and was present at almost all filming. This gave me the opportunity to observe the unique process, commitment, creative spark, and infectious energy of Saffron Henke in her role as Director. The number of hats and moving parts Saffron had to engineer and navigate on this film was truly astonishing. As well as observing Saffron's directing prowess on set, I was able to really understand the careful crafting Saffron employed as a one-woman screenplay team. She was able to arrange the play in a way that made sense on film, providing backstory to the actors or inroads for the actors to discover their own backstories to connect with their characters. IN addition, Saffron was also a continuity team of one, maintaining energy from shot to shot, even though they were often filmed weeks apart because of unforeseen circumstances with Covid-19. She was ready and prepared to continue scenes as though they were shot continuously.

The typical commitment of a director to making a play is about 5 weeks of rehearsal and a week and a half of tech. Saffron spent three months on location, in the studio, and over zoom in her

role as director, pulling the best out of novice actors and leaving them as practiced artists. Her commitment to her role as director was unusual on this project in the way that she acted as constant visual collaborator to the director of photography, Roger Hanna, and the B-roll camera man/lighting mentor/projections professor. These meetings took a considerable amount of time averaging at least 12 hours a week. Her continued drive and determination to make this innovative work propelled her forward to make exciting decisions and to continue to push and inspire the cast to give their best performances. She persevered through cold temperatures, snow, wind, covid outbreaks, isolations, and any other wild-card thrown at her and stayed calm and collected in her role. This is Saffron's true grit- her perseverance and placid demeanor in face of adversity that kept her actors and crew calm and focused. If a director in stage or film is panicking and unsteady the whole cast and crew absorb the energy and the work is thrown off kilter. As a true professional in stage and film, Saffron knew this well and made her choices very wisely. The fantastic reviews and awards *Concord Floral* has garnered are evidence that others see the brilliance in Saffron's direction and speak to her ability to bring the best out of inexperienced actors, and a mixed team of faculty, staff, and students.



Saffron Henke (in blue jacket) illustrating how actress Grey will act in the scene. Freezing temperatures out on a farm East of Fort Collins.

Saffron was a force of nature in directing, crafting, and molding the storytelling of *Concord Floral*. Her collaborative spirit paired with the drive to create the most excellent work possible created a springboard for collaborators involved in this project to be inspired and catalyzed to make great work. Saffron showed true grit, determination, creativity, and ingenuity in her role as director of *Concord Floral*, which now seems too small a title for the number of mountains



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Saffron moved to create this work. It is for these reasons; I nominate Saffron Henke for the 14'er award.

The very best,

Erin Carignan



SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE, AND DANCE COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

8 February 2021

Selection Committee:

For her brilliant and tireless efforts crafting the film [Concord Floral](#), I nominate Professor Saffron Henke for the 14'er Award (use this password at the following link to watch the film in its entirety: CovidTheatreRocks2!).

When the pandemic made us reconsider our plan for live performance, Professor Henke proposed Jordan Tannahill's *Concord Floral* for reasons both practical (it contained mainly monologues, which could be rehearsed and performed socially distant) and pedagogical (it speaks to experiences that our students could relate, as well to as well as larger social issues such as bullying, as well as the ultimate issue du jour, pandemic itself).

The genius of this script proposal was that it would work as Professor Henke originally proposed—staged outside and in various walk-to locations for small groups—and, when our COVID policies changed, as a Zoom production. In peer institutions, faculty directors in a similar situation were content with directing on Zoom, essentially creating a staged reading, but Professor Henke proposed instead a unique vision (and something our department had never attempted): a feature film. This film created opportunities not only for our performance concentration students, but our design concentration students as well. All that it took to do so was meeting all of the criteria for the 14'er Award: unique vision, creativity, and grit. And yes, a bit of good luck.

Directing a film is fundamentally different than directing a play. Professor Henke stepped up. Drawing on her professional experience as an actress, she was able to prep the students for a different style of production for which they had no training.



While she had a strong vision for the production going in, Professor Henke set ego aside to hear the rest of the creative team's ideas (not only from colleagues, but from students as well), and quickly incorporated creative contributions into a whole that was larger than the sum of its parts.

But the huge task of directing a film still is normally easier than what Professor Henke took on: directing a film during a pandemic. With strict SMTD protocols (as well as university, county, and state protocols, as well as wild fires), creativity came firmly into play. Actors had to shoot scenes in isolation that would then be cut together, but still deliver performances that often had a challenging emotional or taxing physical element without anyone off of whom to play... sometimes in front of a green screen, where they didn't even know what the final setting of the movie looked like. Professor Henke created safe spaces for the cast to explore and prepare prior to shooting, allowing us to get each scene filmed with a cast better-prepared than I've ever seen in any college production.

Many theatre departments understandably gave up when live performance was impossible... either they lacked the creativity to find a solution in these unprecedented times, or they had the clarity to realize the first film that a theatre department has ever produced in the middle of a pandemic was simply too colossal a challenge to take on.

The bit of luck we had on this production is named Saffron Henke. No one else in our department could have succeeded so thoroughly. When one of the principal actors was quarantined, she immediately proposed revisions to the shooting schedule to make productive use of the time. When that same actress was quarantined *again*, Professor Henke *again* found ways to keep moving the production forward and focus on what we could while we could. Hanging over the entire shoot was the realistic expectation that at some point the plug would be pulled, and Professor Henke was able to set aside any frustration with the constant changes and limitations to keep the whole team positive, focused on doing our best in an absurd situation.

This undertaking was particularly challenging because most of our department staff and faculty has little experience in film, and many of us took on responsibilities with little training or time to plan. There were understandable doubts



about being able to pull this off, but seeing how hard Professor Henke was working to keep things moving forward smartly was inspirational.

In the fall, our student morale was at an understandable low, with scheduled productions already in rehearsal (and in some cases completely designed and built) being postponed indefinitely or outright cancelled. In bright contrast, as we enter the spring, morale has soared: we may not be performing live theatre this term either, but we have leveraged what was learned on this first film through Professor Henke's commanding vision as we prepare a spring filmed production, and the students working on it are energized by the success that Professor Henke led us all to collaboratively achieve.

Additionally, it's worth pointing out that Professor Henke isn't tenured, so she had to navigate taking charge of a huge new effort knowing that were it to fail, that result might follow her into promotion considerations. It would have been far more reasonable choice for Professor Henke to stage a Zoom reading of this play. Sometimes the reasonable choice, however, isn't the best choice for the entire team. Our department has benefitted by Professor Henke jumping into this calculated risk.

The success of this production has been transformational for our department. *Concord Floral* not only succeeded artistically, as evidenced by three national nominations from the [Young-Howze Theatre Journal](#) (the awards include Professor Henke as Director of the Year, *Concord Floral* as Film of the Year, and Colorado State University as School Theatre Program of the Year) as well as other [national praise](#), but it demonstrated unequivocally that when facing unlikely challenges that could fill our students with despair, they can make the braver choice embodied by Professor Henke to nonetheless take charge of their circumstances and make art.

On a personal level, working with Professor Henke on this film was transformational for me, as well. Professor Henke generously encouraged my input beyond my role as Director of Photography: I was encouraged to propose alternative approaches to each scene, collaborate on editing sequences, and debate the merits of soundtrack choices to best tell the story. The hard work of making a film in a pandemic gave me purpose during the darkening days of the fall, and the realization that my new colleague and I had formed a great creative collaborative team that can do freaking anything. Just wait.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ryan Han", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.