

The Survivors !!!!!

Hello dear actors, how I wish I could turn back time and see your beautiful faces breathing in a circle in my class. But until we are at our showcase warm-up and there WILL be a showcase , when the madness abates, and it WILL abate, we want to take time to celebrate you and your beautiful journeys through all our classrooms and theatre spaces here at UCSD. Make no mistake, dear families and fellow graduates -this is a team of superheroes . They have been defying gravity and performing super human tasks from their first months at UCSD. Two rounds of brand new faculty, one or two or three or five disgruntled upper classmates , a regular buffet of movement teachers, one deep tragedy , and oh yes, a global pandemic are among the wonders in the wild Marvel Universe known as UCSD MFA ACTORS 2020

Before we introduce our MARVELous heroes , on behalf of the acting faculty at UCSD, I want thank the parents, friends and family of our superstars for their incredible support- financial, physical , emotional , and spiritual. They could NOT , WE could not ,have done it without you.

Mary Rose Branick – Our Irish Captain Marvel ! graceful , gentle, kind, and mysterious – Mary Rose soared into our hearts with one surprisingly fierce performance after another – from her first chilling portrayal a month after she arrived at UCSD as Helena In Marie Irene Fornes “ What of the Night” to her gorgeous badass performance as Rosaura in “Life is a Dream” to her charming complicated New York working girl in Stephen Bueschers’ astonishing “Man in Love” she was always surprising , always riveting to watch. But it was your poignant story of your grandmother’s Alzheimer’s in your self-created one person show, Mary Rose, that revealed your true superpower – step-dancing right into our hearts.

Xavier Clark , our very own Professor X , Xavier is a true performance maker. Through his time at UCSD, he has been an actor, director, writer, public speaking champion , wonderful teacher and man of wisdom and grace. I think of his elegant turn as Joseph Asagai In Kim Rubinstein’s brilliant “Raisin in the Sun “ to the sad and delightful clown in “Tambo and Bones’ to his very sweet and moving portrayal of ‘ David Harris’ in “Everybody Black “ both by Dave Harris , to his lithe and bone-freezing work as Paul in “Man in Love “ , Xavier is always strong and clean, clear and full and present. And this past Winter , his marvelous lab production of his original play , “Retrofits” was not only chocked full of wonderful characters and plot twists, but also full of wonderfully creative staging and choreography. Professor X has many many more x-citing adventures in store for us. We just have to sit back and wait for you, Xavier, to make your magic.

Amara Granderson has so many superpowers she is a Marvel universe unto herself. Whether she is bringing us the hilarious and unstoppable Beneatha in “Raisin in the Sun” , or the terrified and terrifying corporate mother in Anna Moench’s “Mothers” or her kaleidoscopic set of performances as the many characters in Dave Harris’s “Everybody Black” including an absolutely definitive Obama , to the sexy and ridiculous and oh so dangerous Clytemnestra in this year’s “Electra” – she is always on fire – she is as funny as she is moving , she is as clear as she is complicated , she sings, she dances , she could play Bat Girl or even Batman! I am going

to call her Iron Woman ! – a true leader – sweet and petite by day , one of the earth’s most powerful metals by night. ! We love you Amara – there is really nothing you can’t do.

Assata! Assata has a laugh that could shake a building. When she hits a stage , you sit up and lean forward because the room is about to burst into flames . From her first year explosion in “Revolt she Said Revolt Again”, to her delightful wildness as ‘Cheesecake’ in Vanessa Stalling’s wonderful, “A Beautiful Day on the Great Lakes” , her many tremendous characters in Dave Harris’s “Everybody Black” including our very own Oprah, the sweet terror of her agoraphobic young woman in “Man in Love to her show-stopping take -no- prisoners portrayal of Helen in “Orestes 2.0” . Assata has always claimed her space, and then filled that that space with power and lightning. You are our “STORM “, Assata.

Christine Penn is Wonder Woman, from her early years jumping into college courses at sixteen and hungrily jumping into graduate school at nineteen, she has never wavered in her tenacity and fortitude. We think of her wild and free stream of consciousness work in “Revolt she said Revolt again”, her incredible strength and simple truth in both new plays in our New Play Festival ‘Sere” and “The Gradient’ and her charming rock your soul luminous depth and grace as Darlene in Kim Rubinstein’s brilliant “Balm in Gilead” Always passionate, always creating , we haven’t even seen the wealth of this wondrous actress – her clown work, her directing, her many years ahead of fierce creation. Wonders await you, Christine, and for those of us who will be lucky enough to watch you work.

David Price came to us as a mild-mannered stable presence in this class of magic and mayhem makers. But it wasn’t long before we realized that when he went into his metaphorical phonebooth, he emerged time and again as our personal SUPERMAN! He first stopped locomotives with his hand in his tremendous performance in “Mothers “ in the Wagner play festival where he absolutely stopped the show with his stay at home DAD aria. He was faster than a speeding bullet as one of the hilarious ferocious radio announcers in “ A Beautiful Day on the Great Lakes” . He went on to delight us as the arch-villian, Mr. Whitney , the hilarious middle school principal in Mara Nelson Greenberg’s wonderful new play , “The Jefferson Middle School Monthly.” And then of course, he enchanted us with his incredible creation of Dopey in “Balm in Gilead” where he was at once an ethereal spirit, a grotesque gargoyle, and our eyes and ears as the soulful narrator who guided us through the mosaic of the restless lives of the Gilead world. And as of several weeks ago, he was able to leap tall buildings in a single bound and FLY in “FLY” Kind , calm, modest, and insanely good, David, you are truly a SUPER actor and a super man.

Michael Rishawn could absolutely follow in the footsteps of Chadwick Boseman , but I like to think of him as ‘The FLASH” - sleek , deep, dangerous, razor sharp ,simultaneously light and powerful, Michael is a force of nature. From his incredibly moving glorious work as Walter Lee in the amazing “Raisin in the Sun” to the delightful and dark but also impishly playful clown in Dave Harris’s “Tambo and Bones’ to the many hilarious characters including the wild and sexy “Mamalicious” in Dave Harris’ “Everybody Black “ to the mercurial mover and shaker Tig in last Fall’s “Balm in Gliead “ with his penetrating powerful voice ringing above the fray. We are only

sad that the Lab closing kept us from hearing his new play , another place for his voice to ring out . Michael is always gorgeous to watch, a thrill to listen to , and like our own San Diego Green Flash, your powerful performances, Michael, will stay with us long after the curtain comes down.

Garret Schulte – Well we had already called Garret Captain America before he came to UCSD - as soon as he left our audition room in New York City. Kind, wildly Intelligent, scarily handsome and strong, he could walk into a room and Americans felt safe and taken care of . But when Garret came to UCSD, we also found he could be both dangerous and charming in Lily Padilla’s ground-breaking “How to Defend Yourself “in the Wagner Play Festival, vulnerable and savage in a complete physical transformation as Segismundo in “Life is a Dream” and incredibly moving and rich as the tortured Joe in “Balm IN Gilead “. He also had two extra superpowers – fight captain extraordinaire and film archivist for our department productions. We know the world is waiting for your grace and his strength , Garrett, your truth and your light -whether in the skies of celluloid or the wooden boards of the theatre or behind the camera as you create the stories you want to tell.

Thank you, brilliant acting faculty, for all your dedication and support, particularly Richard Robichaux for his divine leadership through these superhuman times.

Ursula Meyer