

POTUS

(Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are
Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive)

by **Selina Fillinger**

Directed by Emily A. Rollie



Photo credit:
Shanna Paxton
Photography

Actors (from left): Kimberlee Wolfson, Edsonya Charles, Mykahla George, Amy Danneker, & Chelsey Sheppard

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POTUS

(Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are
Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive)
by **Selina Fillinger**

CAST

Harriet.....Kimberlee Wolfson
JeanAmy Danneker
Stephanie.....Kathryn Stahl
DustyGabby Roarty
BernadetteChelsey Sheppard
ChrisMykahla George
MargaretEdsonya Charles

SETTING

The White House. Perhaps not the current administration, exactly—but broad strokes of past presidents, combined with stress dreams of future ones. And, if we're being honest, an amalgamation of them all...

RUN TIME

One hour and 50 minutes with one 20-minute intermission.

CREATIVE TEAM

DirectorEmily A. Rollie
Fight DirectorChelsey Sheppard
Scenic Design Jeannie Beirne
Costume Design Jason Kramer
Lighting DesignChristina Barrigan
Sound DesignMichael Gray
Properties Design..... Gail Thomason

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Manager..... Ashley Winrod
Assistant Stage ManagerTommy McGee
Light/Sound Board OperatorRichard Wheeler
Wardrobe ManagerCorrine Higdon

Special thanks to: Paula Vanlandingham, Ramiro Gomez, Esmeralda Sanchez, Theo Ernesti and Vicki Steigner

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There is power and necessity in laughter. Laughter helps us navigate life's challenges, allowing us to laugh at absurdity and find joy in the darker moments. Laughter also functions as a tool of engagement, as a salve, as a biting reflection, as an offering of what could be. In *POTUS*, playwright Selina Fillinger's combination of political

satire with farce and a dash of feminism is clever and impactful. (I think of it as a mash-up of the TV show *VEEP* with the classic backstage farce *Noises Off*.) If theatre functions both as a window, offering perspectives different than our own, and mirror, reflecting the world as it is (or could be), then *POTUS* captures the current zeitgeist and it flips it on its head, offering us a new perspective - with plenty of laughs along the way.

While the play, with all its doors (a tried-and-true sign of a farce!), physical comedy, and fast paced banter, is farcical, it is more than farce; it boldly reimagines power dynamics and pokes back at the patriarchy and hierarchy of politics. Even amid the absurdity of their situation, the women of *POTUS* are authentic, complicated, and true. Similarly, *POTUS* asks hilarious yet profound questions and prompts us to consider what is true and how to be true to ourselves.

Dedicated to "any woman who has ever found herself the secondary character in a male farce," *POTUS* centers women and their actions, even while men (and, by extension, the patriarchy) loom around them. As noted in the play's character descriptions, these women are "fast, fierce, and fucking hilarious." While I love and deeply appreciate the hilarity, it's the "fierce" that strikes me most profoundly. Although their work happens behind the scenes, these are fierce, gutsy women whose actions make a difference - especially when they come together.

In an increasingly complicated and often divisive political moment, it is also important to remember that, as Fillinger offered in several interviews, the play is political but it's not partisan. It's timely but not *only* of this time. This is an "amalgamation" of presidents past, present, and future. The play really asks us to consider the people and voices who exist on the margins or behind the scenes. What would happen if we recognized their work and gave their voices power?

This season's theme is "Hope and Heroes," and *POTUS* offers us just that: even with its hilariously absurd hijinks, the play offers us a look at the gutsy heroes who work behind the scenes and presents us with a hope for a unified voice and strength as we imagine a powerful, courageous future.

– Director Emily A. Rollic

PLAYWRIGHT



Selina Fillinger

Selina Fillinger is an LA-based writer and performer. Original plays include *The Collapse*; *Something Clean*; *Faceless*; and *The Armor Plays: Clinched/Strapped*. Selina recently made her Broadway debut with her seven-woman farce, *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive*. Her plays have

been developed at Roundabout Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre, Williamstown Theatre

Festival, Old Globe Theatre, Alley Theatre, St. Louis Repertory Theatre and Northlight Theatre. She's currently commissioned at South Coast Repertory and Roundabout.

She was a Hawthornden Fellow and a resident of McCarter's Sallie B. Goodman Artist's Retreat; *Something Clean* is the recipient of the 2019 Laurents/Hatcher Award and *Clinched/Strapped* received the 2019 Williamstown Theatre Festival's L. Arnold Weissberger New Play Award. *POTUS* was on the 2019 Kilroys List. Selina writes for the third season of Apple TV's *The Morning Show* and is developing a feature for Chernin/Netflix.

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'WHY ISN'T SHE PRESIDENT?' Links for Activism & Inclusive Political Engagement

The characters in *POTUS* frequently ask, "Why isn't SHE president?" and "Why aren't YOU president?" Indeed, we all can and should have a voice in the ways our governments are run, and there are many ways for each of us to get involved in our local, state, and national arenas, including:

POTUS Coalition: potus.moretotalkabout.com

In 2022, *POTUS* opened on Broadway. In addition to being the first all-female comedy on Broadway, the production also offered a space for public engagement and activism:

Supermajority Ed Fund: supermajorityedfund.com

A sister organization to Supermajority, this organization is dedicated to helping build women's power through research, education, and leadership development programs that support women in growing their innate skills.

Vote Mama Foundation: votemamafoundation.org

An organization dedicated to conducting research about the political participation of mamas and caregivers,

She the People: shethepeople.org

Founded in 2018, She the People is a national organization dedicated to building power for women of color to lead America to a new political era.

Ignite: ignitenational.org

Founded in 2010, Ignite focuses on igniting young women's political power by building community, teaching leadership skills, cultivating young women's ambition, and increasing their political engagement.

ERA Coalition: eracoalition.org

Self-described as "a movement of movements," the ERA Coalition brings together nearly 300 partner organizations across the country to advance equality in the country and politics.

Bekah Walsh & the #POTUSTrail: [@broadwaybekahchica](https://twitter.com/broadwaybekahchica)

In summer 2023, theatres across the country embarked upon the #POTUSTrail, during which she zig zagged across the US, seeing regional and community theatre productions of *POTUS* as a way to highlight the work itself and bring attention to the importance of regional and local theatres.

League of Women Voters of Washington: lwvwa.org

A nonpartisan political organization, the League of Women Voters has local, state, and national structures. The organization is dedicated to empowering voters, particularly women, to take an active part in democracy.

National Women's Political Caucus of Washington:

nwpcwa.org This organization is dedicated to recruiting, training, supporting, and electing women and nonbinary candidates across the state.

Women of Color in Politics (WA): wocips.com

A Washington-based organization of minority women who are motivated toward community activism, possible political candidacy, and a desire to support others seeking these same goals.



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CAST



Kimberlee Wolfson (she/her)
- *Harriet*

Kimberlee is thrilled to be a part of this production and back at Harlequin, where she was in *The Women* in 2019. She was last seen as Titania/Hippolyta with Animal Fire Theatre. Other theatres she has worked with in the Washington area are SPSCC Theatre Collective, Centerstage, Greenstage, Driftwood, OFT, and Seattle Public Theatre. Some favorite roles in other regions are Agnes in *Bug* with Seenosun Productions, DC and Lady M. in *Macbeth* with RTA in NY. Thank you to the entire cast and crew!



Amy Danneker (she/her) - *Jean*

Amy is honored to return to her artistic home at Harlequin Productions. Seattle credits include *A View from the Bridge* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Seattle Repertory Theatre), *How I Learned to Drive* (Strawberry Theatre Workshop), and *The Cat in the Hat* (Seattle Children's Theatre), as well as performances with Book-It Repertory Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Annex Theatre, and The 14/48 Projects. A graduate of the Central Washington University Theatre Program, Amy sends love to her family and to you, the audience, for supporting the arts.



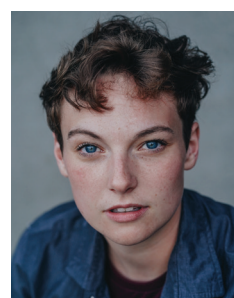
Kathryn Stahl (she/her)
- *Stephanie*

Kathryn is making her Harlequin debut. After graduating with her MFA from Michigan State University, she is back in WA working as an actor, director, teaching artist, and university professor. Highlighted credits include *Venus in Fur* (MSU), *Significant Other* (Summer Circle Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Changing Scenes Theatre), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Valley Center Stage). Kathryn has focused much of her scholarship toward developing experiences for neurodiverse participants and loves any chance to devise sensory stories. She thanks her family for their love and support of the arts for all.



Gabby Roarty (she/her) - *Dusty*

Gabby is thrilled to be making her Harlequin debut! Gabby graduated from Central Washington University in 2021, with her Musical Theatre BFA. A proud Filipino American, she is committed to telling stories that expand beyond stereotype. After growing up in the very lakey, very woody, Lakewood, Washington, she moved Midwest and is currently based in Chicago, Illinois (singular GIANT lake, no woods). She thanks her friends and family, for their endless support. For the women in her life and her mom, especially, who have shown her what it means to be a funny, empowered, and resilient woman.



Chelsey Sheppard (she/they/he)
- *Bernadette*

Chelsey is a Seattle-based actor, stage combatant, and emerging fight and intimacy director. Chelsey is excited to be returning to the Harlequin stage after appearing in *Romeo and Juliet* as Mercutio. Other recent credits include *The Three Musketeers* (Icicle Creek Center for the Arts), *Men on Boats* (inD Theatre), *Macbeth* (Seattle Shakespeare), and *Athena* (Strawberry Workshop). Chelsey holds a B.F.A. in Theatre Performance from Central Washington University and is an Intermediate Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors.



Mykahla George (she/they/he)
- *Chris*

Mykahla is excited to be back at Harlequin! She most recently appeared at Harlequin as Benvolio in this season's *Romeo & Juliet*. Other recent credits include Haemon in *Antigone*, and Leigh Fondakowski and others in *The Laramie Project*. She would like to thank her family and friends for supporting her in all she does.



Edsonya Charles (she/her)
- *Margaret*

Edsonya has appeared in dozens of film, television, and theatre productions across the country. She is thrilled to return to the Harlequin stage. She previously appeared at Harlequin as Ann Collier in *The 1940s Radio Hour* (2018), Calpurnia in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (2015), and as Zoe Mitchell in *The Stardust Christmas Commotion* (2014). Favorite roles include Luttiebelle in *Purlie Victorious*; the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*; and Hecuba in *Trojan Women*. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Vanderbilt University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Washington School of Law.

CREATIVE TEAM

Emily A. Rollie (she/her) - Director

Emily A. Rollie is a director and intimacy choreographer returning to Harlequin after directing *Pride & Prejudice* in 2024. Emily has directed in venues around the country, including productions of *The Wolves*, *Everybody*, *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson*, *Into the Woods*, and *Footloose*. She is the former artistic director for Independent Actors Theatre, a “purposefully nomadic” company known for its *short Women’s Play Festival* (the plays are short, not the women!). Emily teaches performance at Central Washington University and is faculty with Theatrical Intimacy Education, a founding member of PNW Theatrical Intimacy Collective, and a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

Chelsey Sheppard (she/they/he) - Fight Director

Chelsey Sheppard is a Seattle-based fight director and emerging intimacy director. Chelsey strives to balance story, safety, and the agency of the actors to create exciting, bold, and character-driven choreography. Chelsey holds a BFA in Theatre Performance from Central Washington University and is an Advanced Actor Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors. Select fight direction Credits: *As You Like It*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Seattle Shakespeare Company), *Oliver!* (Reboot Theatre Company), *Romeo and Juliet* (Theatre Battery). Select intimacy direction credits: *Oliver!* (Reboot Theatre Company), *Proof* (inD Theatre). Endless love to Jeryn, Cash, Tom and Jodi for their support.

Jeannie Beirne (she/her) - Scenic Designer

Jeannie has worked with Harlequin since 2014 and is delighted to be returning this season. Past favorites: *Sweeney Todd*, *Cabaret*, *Falsettos*, *Hundred Days*, *Building Madness*, *Fun Home*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, 2021 Fall Repertory Season including *A Christmas Carol*, *Noises Off*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol*, *Man of La Mancha*, *A Doll’s House*, *August: Osage County*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *First Date*. Jeannie has also enjoyed working with The Olympia Family Theatre, Saint Martin’s University, and South Puget Sound Community College. In Missouri, she has designed *Urinetown* and *The Music Man* with Missouri Western State University, and *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *She Loves Me*, and *Damn Yankees* for Tent Theater. In Arizona, Jeannie designed *Mama and Jack Carew* and the world premiere of *Suocera* by Hal Corley at the Theatre Artists Studio, as well as *Big Love* with Kim Weild at Arizona State University. Jeannie holds an MFA in Performance Design from Arizona State University and a BA in Set Design from Western Washington University.

Jason Kramer (he/him) - Costume Design

Based in Seattle, this is Jason’s second show at Harlequin, having just costume designed for *RENT*—and he’s thrilled to be here. He’s a costume designer who loves collaboration, believes joy is essential, and aims to make everyone feel seen (and maybe a little fabulous).

Christina Barrigan (she/her) - Lighting Design

Christina Barrigan is delighted to be back with Harlequin Productions with this design for *POTUS*. Past work with Harlequin includes *RENT* (2025), *What the Constitution Means to Me* (2024), *Cabaret* (2024), *This Flat Earth* (2022), and *Blackbird* (2019). Her other work includes The Actors’ Theatre of Louisville’s *La Egoista*, B Street Theatre’s *Pickelball*, *Prince of Lightning: The Story of Young Nicola Tesla Boy Genius*, *Insertion*, *The Last Wide Open*, *Lovers and Executioners*, *Byhalia, MS*, and *Holmes and Watson* and The Village Theatre’s *Welcome Back Holiday Concert*; Seattle Gilbert and Sullivan Society’s *Pirates of Penzance*, and with Wyoming Theatre Festival: *The Resolute*, *Another Roll of the Dice*, and *Hollywood, Nebraska*. She is also a resident teaching artist at Central Washington University, where she works on MainStage shows and new works. @barrigandesign

Michael Gray (he/him) - Sound Design

Michael is returning to Harlequin, having served as Sound Designer for *What the Constitution Means to Me*, *Falsettos*, and Sound Engineer for *RENT*, *Cabaret*, *Falsettos*, *Hundred Days*, *Murder for Two*, *Tenderly*, and *Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill*. He has run sound in Olympia for over a decade for local groups and organizations. Besides sound, Michael enjoys spreading pun jokes to all who can stand them.

I heard they made the world’s strongest suction cup. I’m not quite sure how they pulled that off.

Gail Thomason (she/her) - Properties Design

This is Gail’s fourth show with Harlequin, having previously designed properties for *The Highest Tide* (2020), *Man of La Mancha* (2018), and *Little Shop of Horrors* (2016). Gail has worked professionally for more than thirty years in a variety of theatrical roles in the greater Seattle area, most recently as Production Stage Manager for Puget Sound Revels and Production Manager for Tacoma Opera. She has created properties for Intiman, Seattle Rep, Civic Light Opera, Seattle Shakespeare and the Village Theatre among others. More recent properties work includes *Agamemnon* at Dukesbay Theatre, *My Name is Asher Lev* at Lakewood Playhouse and Theatre on the Square, and *The Rape of Lucretia*, *La Boheme*, and *Tosca* with Tacoma Opera.

Listen to the POTUS
Spotify playlist

Which includes songs
that inspired our actors!



PRODUCTION TEAM

Ashley Winrod (she/her)
- Stage Manager

Since last season, this is Ashley's seventh show with Harlequin. Select stage management credits include *RENT*, *Is This a Room*, *A Christmas Carol*, *What the Constitution Means to Me*, and *Pride and Prejudice* (Harlequin); *Footloose* (Central Theatre Ensemble), being awarded a certificate of merit from the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival. Ashley holds a BFA in Theatre Design and Production from Central Washington University. She sends her love and thanks to her family, friends, and this lovely ensemble.

Tommy McGee (he/him) - Assistant Stage Manager

Tommy is ecstatic to be working for Harlequin once again. Tommy has been working with Harlequin since 2016 and has been backstage doing everything from spotlight to sound cues to assistant stage managing. When Tommy is not backstage at Harlequin, he can be found indulging in his hobbies of writing and creating culinary delights.

IN THE GALLERY

Featured Artists

CELERY JONES

Celery Jones, an artist since her childhood in Appalachia, now thrives in Olympia's creative community. Her artwork celebrates notable individuals, experiences, and music in vibrant color.

Jones's diverse career spans craft paint manufacturing, decorative painting, event design, murals, film, and television art direction—her work appearing on HGTV, Netflix, FX, HBO and other international networks .

A self-described creative chameleon, she embraces any style or challenge, from lightning-storm barbarian scenes to immersive interior design. For Jones, art is about bringing people together, expressing energy through color, and finding joy in every creative opportunity.

LYNETTE CHARTERS

Charters has been a professional, practicing artist since the late 80s and has shown internationally.

The Matilda Effect Series celebrates women's history and achievements which are generally less documented, less compensated, and frequently appropriated leading us to believe that women are only useful in supporting roles and domestic settings. Painted on repurposed household objects to provide context to the tension between how women are traditionally represented and the trailblazers they really are. The Matilda Effect named for Matilda Joslyn Gage, (who was a columnist and suffragist publicizing the forgotten achievements of women) by historian Margaret Rossiter.

The Missing Women Series references famous paintings in history while erasing the women depicted in the originals to demonstrate how women are missing from Museums and documented history, and how their achievements are being erased as we breathe.





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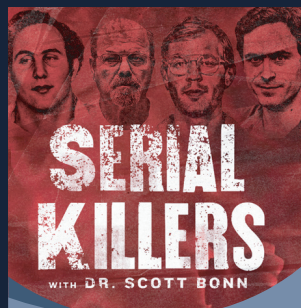
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If you have a friend or family member in the cast with whom you wish to visit, please wait in the lobby following the performance where your person will find you. Notes, flowers, gifts and messages may be sent backstage through the House Manager.

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Please help us avoid disruptions that may affect others' enjoyment and the actors' performance. Disruptive children should be escorted to the lobby. No babes in arms, please. Some productions may not be appropriate for younger children, though discretion is left to the parent. Please call the Box Office with any questions concerning a play's content.

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