

WRITTEN BY
Alexis Roblan

INSPIRED BY THE RESEARCH OF
Dr. Heidi Boisvert



AFFINITY

NOVEMBER 12, 2021



SCIENCE IN THEATRE FESTIVAL

THE CELL THEATRE

Written by ALEXIS ROBLAN

Based on the scientific research of DR. HEIDI BOISVERT

With

TAY BASS, ANDREA LOPEZ, DOUG BARRON

Directed by BRYN HERDRICH

Sound design by JUSTIN MATHEWS

Lighting design by MATT LAZARUS

Set and costume design by TSUI C WANG

Panel: The role of AI in Arts and Society

Panelists: Dr. Moran Cerf, Daanish Masood, Dr. Heidi Boisvert, Alexis Roblan, Karen Ingram

In Affinity the main protagonist Netta questions whether translating experience really creates understanding, if none of the details of that experience remain intact.

Plot

As the myriad ways we interact with media become more and more individualized, crafted to meet each person's emotional makeup, biases, biorhythms, and points of empathy, the capacity of one individual to understand another's internal life grows exponentially. But in this not-too-distant future, where you can tell your story clearly in someone else's emotional language, Netta questions whether translating experience really creates understanding, if none of the details of that experience remain intact.

Heidi Boisvert, an MIT research affiliate currently developing the first media genome: an open-source biometric lab and AI system to isolate the narrative ingredients that move us to act, as discussed in her popular TED-Talk, inspired a WGA-Award Nominee screenwriter and O'Neill's finalist Alexis Roblan to write Affinity.

Cast



Tay Bass | Netta

TAY BASS is a New York based Actor and Educator hailing from Michigan. Her work has been seen Off Broadway (The Directors Comp, The Flea, The Tank, Noor Theatre), in Regional productions (WTF Non-Eq, Texas Shakes), independent films and animation VOs. She is currently a teaching artist with Girl Be Heard, using socially conscious theater-making to uplift and empower young women and gender non conforming youth in the city. She is honored to be back on stage again with such incredible artists and changemakers at the Science in Theater Festival. For more, www.taybass.com & @taybass.

Andrea Lopez | Eniko

ANDREA LOPEZ is a Puerto Rican actress who has appeared on stages in New York City, London, and Puerto Rico, playing a wide assortment of roles from classical to surrealist and all the fun things in between. Her film work has been shown in festivals around the world and she recently won a grant to screen her own feature film. She is thrilled that theatres are open again and that she gets to continue to play make-believe.



Doug Barron | Father

DOUG BARRON, (Joshua) Stage: Major Barbara, Merry Wives of Windsor, Hamlet, The American Clock, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Leaves of Grass, Oedipus Rex, The Great White Hope, To Kill a Mockingbird, Sessions, Iken's Perversion, Berlin, Deux Mariages: Romola & Nijinsky, Salt, Close Enough For Jazz, The Swan. As a dancer in Labyrinth Dance Theatres Come Back Once More So I Can Say Goodbye. He also danced with Arizona Ballet, San Francisco Ballet and San Diego Ballet. Film: Go Down Death, Across Dot Ave, Shutterbug, The House of Women, Anate-ma, Just Visiting, Office Killer, Jacobs Ladder, Mr. Destiny, One Good Cop, The Mambo Kings, The Cowboy Way, Stonewall, Reckless, Blue Steel. TV: House of Cards, Blindspot, Zero Hour, Law & Order, Law & Order Criminal Intent, The Sopranos, Sex And The City.

Bryn Herdrich | Direction

BRYN HERDRICH creates storytelling events and directs new theatrical work. Recent credits include: BUST (Soho Rep), IS IT SUPPOSED TO LAST (PlayCo), PENNY THOUGHTS (Prelude Festival), MY LIFE HAS BEEN EXTRAORDINARY (Joe's Pub), and VARIATIONS ON THE MAIN (JACK). She has been the Associate Director of THE SOUND INSIDE by Adam Rapp at Studio 54. Member of Soho Rep's Writer/Director Lab, MTC Directing Fellow 2018-2020, WTF Directors Corps, and the SDC Observership Class of 2018-2019, and serves on the Artistic Advisory Council of JETco. Film: LEG ROOM.





Alexis Roblan

Alexis Roblan is a playwright and WGA Award-nominated screenwriter. Her plays have been produced worldwide and she has gotten 6 New York Innovative Theatre Award Nominations for *Red Emma* & *The Mad Monk*, which was also the New York Times Critic's Pick. She is a 2020 Audrey Resident at New Georges, the recipient of the 2018 Thomas Barbour Playwrights Award and a founding member of NYC company The Autonomists.

Heidi Boisvert

Dr. Heidi Boisvert is an artist, scientist and creative technologist. Heidi is currently Director of Emerging Media Technology at CUNY and an MIT research affiliate. She has previously been a TED Resident, and is a New Inc member currently developing the first media genome: an open-source biometric lab and AI system to isolate the narrative ingredients that move us to act.



Panelists



Daanish Masood

Since 2007, Daanish has been working with the UN Alliance of Civilizations pursuing experimental projects to investigate the role of identity in violent conflict. Daanish has run projects in multiple regions around the world to address religious, cultural, and ethnic tensions. In May 2014, he joined BeAnotherLab to develop conflict resolution applications for *The Machine to Be Another*, a system that merges interaction protocols from neuroscience research in embodiment with performance, storytelling, and virtual reality to give users the illusion of seeing themselves in the body of another person. Daanish studied analytic philosophy at New York University and speaks Arabic, Farsi, and Urdu.

Moran Cerf

Moran Cerf is a neuroscientist and business professor at the Kellogg School of Management and the neuroscience program at Northwestern University. Recently, his research has addressed questions pertaining to the neural mechanisms that underlie decision-making, thereby offering a new perspective on predicting future choices and investigating how much free will we have in our decisions. In his acclaimed work, Prof. Cerf studies patients undergoing brain surgery by recording the activity of individual nerve cells using electrodes implanted in the patient's brain. Thus, his work offers a novel way to understand our psyche by observing the brain directly from within. Dr. Cerf holds a Ph.D. in neuroscience from Caltech, an MA in Philosophy and a B.Sc. in Physics from Tel-Aviv University. He holds multiple patents and has published over 60 academic papers in journals such as *Nature*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, and the *Journal of Neuroscience*, as well as popular science journals such as *Scientific American Mind*, *Wired*, *New Scientist* and more.





Karen Ingram

KAREN INGRAM is a creative director with a focus on biotechnology. She runs a NY-based consultancy with clients ranging from education to startups to a water utility.

She is a co-author of "BioBuilder: Synthetic Biology in the Lab," recognized as a universal reference for synbio. As an Emerging Technology Fellow at Stanford's d.school, Ingram contributes to REP, a K-12 magazine whose mission is to drive equity in tech design. She's an affiliate with Bio.Polis (Bio Policy & Leadership in Society, Stanford Department of Bioengineering), supporting projects that guide biological innovation in the public interest. As part of the founding team of the Empiricist League, described by FiveThirtyEight as "ad-hoc, small-scale TED Talks for scientists and the New Yorkers who adore them," Ingram helped it grow into a recognized name. She led sessions on creative strategy for NYU's graduate program on "Entrepreneurial Journalism" and is an instructor for Genspace's "Synbio for Creatives." As a SynbioLEAP fellow, Ingram worked with a bioethicist to create "Fallacy Bingo," a game for identifying fallacies. Ingram was also a Simons Foundation Science Sandbox/New Lab Fellow. This fall, she is a co-instructor for "Future (Im)perfect - Exploring the hidden ethics of emerging technologies" at SVA.

Links: <http://www.kareningram.com/>

About Festival

The Science in Theatre Festival is a three-day women-driven festival in residency with Nancy Manocherian's the cell theatre that will take place on November 12-14. The event features science-infused plays, discussion panels, and an exhibit of theatre technologies. More at <https://www.transformatheatre.com/festival/>

Science in Theatre Festival's goal is to align forms of theater with current scientific research in neuroscience, artificial intelligence and epigenetics, and communicate this knowledge of technological possibilities to audiences through innovative storytelling. Each night will feature a fully staged theatrical work, followed by presentations and panels consisting of scientists and artists. During the day, different innovation technology brands will present their latest multi-purposed inventions such as haptics, EEG devices, and wearables.

The Science in Theatre Festival is produced by Transforma Theatre, a New York based not-for-profit with a mission to create interactive theatrical experiences at the nexus of consciousness, science and ritual. More at <https://www.transformatheatre.com/>

About Transforma Theatre

Transforma Theatre is pioneering a new form of theatrical expression and developing a close community of artists and scientists.

Founding Members of TRANSFORMA THEATRE:
Jacob Sebag, Natalie Kacinik, Tjaša Ferme



Special thanks

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Nancy Manocherian's the cell theatre and the whole team: Nancy Manocherian, Kira Simring, Brian Reager, Jonah Levy, and Ricardo Romaneiro. The Cell's mission is to curate, incubate and develop new works in the arts.



Camp David and Ashley Roberts

Team

Founder and Creative Director: Tjaša Ferme
Co-founder and Marketing director: Irina Nazarova
Set and Costume Design: Tsui C Wang
Light Designer: Matt Lazarus
Sound Design and Composition: Justin Mathews
Videography: Darpan Joshi
Stage Manager: Terysa Malootian
PR by Victoria Zavyalova, CEO/Founder, V Startup Agency
Marketing Team: Sakshi Bharwani, Rohit Fernandez,
Svetlana Semenova, Alex Webster

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