

*Failure:  
A Love Story*



# Failure: A Love Story

by Philip Dawkins

Directed by Jeremy Ohringer

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## Director's Note

Many of us are grieving at this moment. We grieve for those who have died from Covid-19, for those others whose lives have been seriously affected by it, and we grieve for our inability to congregate and be with each other like we once did.

In the face of this collective grief we try to find ways of moving forward. *Failure: A Love Story*, by Philip Dawkins, paints a picture of working through grief. The play shows us how the Fail family, in the face of daunting personal challenges, lives daringly and loves fully.

I look up to these characters. They bravely lead with their hearts and help us see how even through tragedy; life is worth living.

This piece has been a grand experiment, and its success is in large part due to our brave ensemble, exceptional production team, and the enthusiastic support of Governors State University. We cannot wait to share this labor of love with you!

## Cast In Alphabetical Order

Gaston Beltran	Chorus
Susan Cohen DeStefano	Chorus
Kevin Kohn	John N. Fail
Destiny Martino	Jenny June Fail
Manuel Reza	Mortimer Mortimer
Lanie Shannon	Chorus
Breigh Starkey	Nelly Fail
Nina Sundsten	Gertrude Fail
Jermaine Tyler	Chorus

## **Production Team**

Direction  
Jeremy Ohringer

Assistant Direction  
Alex Pavloski

Production Management  
Michelle Medvin

Costume and Prop Design  
Rachel M. Sypniewski

Sound Design and Engineering  
Matthew Chapman

Stage Management  
Christopher Tinoco

Puppetry Construction  
Tyler Riemenschneider

Producers

GSU's College of Arts and Sciences and Division of Arts and Letters



# WHO'S WHO IN THE CAST



**Gaston Beltran**



**Susan Cohen DeStefano**



**Kevin Kohn**



**Destiny Martino**



**Manuel Reza**



**Lanie Shannon**



**Breigh Starkey**



**Nina Sundsten**

## Profiles

**Gaston Beltran** (Chorus) is a senior TAPS Major at Governors State University. He previously appeared in *Alice in Wonderland* and did various backstage work for *The Laramie Project*. He's very grateful for the amazing TAPS program that has given him many glimpses and exposures to the world of theatre and performance studies. This has allowed him to learn not just the necessary aspects of performance but also the technical skills, communication and teamwork needed to help run productions, and therefore highly increased his interest and passion for theatre. He can't wait to have audiences see just how *Failure: A Love Story's* production team works around the social distancing restrictions and makes use of great technical skills to still pull off a fantastic production.

**Matthew Chapman** (Sound Design and Engineering) is a sound designer, composer, and engineer who has designed for *Earthquakes in London*, *The Few, The Proud*, *The Cheats*, *The Life and Sort of Death of Eric Argyle*, *Motortown*, *If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet*, *The Knowledge*, *2000 Feet Away*, *Harper Regan* (Steep Theatre Company where he is an ensemble member); *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, *You Got Older*, *The Burials* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company); *Give It All Back*, *Mai Dang Lao* (Sideshow Theatre Company); *Prowess* (Jackalope Theatre); *Doubt*, *Body and Blood*, *Suicide Inc.* (The Gift Theatre); *Chicago Voices* (Lyric Unlimited), *Kill Floor* (American Theatre Company); *Balm in Gilead* (Griffin Theatre). He is also Steppenwolf's LookOut Production Supervisor.

**Susan Cohen DeStefano** (Chorus) most recently appeared as Betty in *Emergency: A Medical Musical* (Summerfest, NYC), *Heidi Schiller in Follies* (Astoria PAC), and Sister Mary Lazarus in *Sister Act* [White Plains PAC] Susan has a lifelong interest in the music and dance of the Balkans, and has been a cantor in synagogues since 1989. Her favorite roles include the Mother Abbess in *The Sound of Music* and Widow Paroo in *The Music Man*. [www.susancohendestefano.com](http://www.susancohendestefano.com)

**Kevin Kohn** (John N. Fail) is excited to return to GSU! His recent performance highlights include *The Laramie Project*, *Alice in Wonderland* (Center for Performing Arts, GSU), *The Addams Family*, *Suite-hearts* (Country Theatre Workshop), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (Sugar Creek Opera). He is a voice student of Dr. Neal Woodruff. Thank you to Mom and Dad for your unconditional love and support!

**Destiny Martino** (Jenny June Fail) is excited for her first performance with GSU. She most recently played Prospera in *The Tempest* and Nora in *A Doll's House*, both at Theater on the Hill, and is a student at Acting Studio Chicago. Destiny is also a dancer, acrobat, costumer, and a lover of fashion and all things Disney.

**Michelle Medvin** (Production Management) is in her fifth year with the TAPS program. As a stage manager, Michelle has worked with Steppenwolf Theatre for seventeen years, and credits include the world premiere of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *August, Osage County*. She has also stage managed at Northlight Theatre, Drury Lane, Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago Children's Theatre, Hartford Stage, Dallas Theater Center, and Portland Center Stage. Michelle is proud to be a member of Actors' Equity, a graduate of Smith College, wife to Mary, and mama to Elliott, Lena, and Samuel.

**Jeremy Ohringer** (Direction) is a director and teaching artist around Chicago. Directing credits include *Raymondo* (The Cartographers), *Angels in America: Perestroika* (Boston University), *Five Encounters* (Pride Films and Plays), *Who Walked All Night...* (Rhino Fest), *Salve Regina* (Center on Halsted), *Sad Songs for Bad People* (Rough House Theater), *Who Rowed Across Oceans* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival) and a new adaptation of *Spring Awakening* (Fearless Theatre). He holds an MFA in directing from Boston University. As a Teaching Artist, Jeremy works with Steppenwolf, Chicago Youth Shakespeare, Writers, and Lookingglass, among others. He would like to thank the cast, crew, and GSU for all of their hard work on this project!

**Alex Pavloski** (Assistant Direction) a senior at GSU majoring in Independent Film and Digital Imaging. She enjoys working with the theatre and has been involved in several TAPS productions both on stage and behind the scenes. Her true passion is filmmaking and she has created numerous short films in her career. She is grateful to have the opportunity to work on this virtual show and would like to thank the family, friends, and cast members that have supported her in this process.

**Manuel Reza** (Mortimer Mortimer) is a graduate student in GSU's English program. This is Manuel's third production with the GSU TAPS program. Previous GSU productions are *The Laramie Project* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Manuel is super excited to be involved in such a unique production. He is looking forward to providing an entertaining show for people who are watching at home. He hopes it brings a smile to your face!

**Tyler Riemenschneider** (Puppetry Construction) is a transfer student to Governors State University. He is a Theatre and Performance Studies major in his senior year. Tyler was in a number of performances during his high school years. He worked as the sound board operator for the GSU TAPS production of *The Laramie Project* and this is the second GSU performance that he is participating in.

**Lanie Shannon** (Chorus) has performed live theatre across New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Tennessee. People can hear her in the Paw Island children's audiobook series and see her on-screen in the sketch comedy troupe Full Body Wag and in PAX TV's *It's a Miracle*. Some of her favorite roles have been Golde in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Killer Queen in *We Will Rock You*, Mariah Duchess of Dean in *Me and My Girl*, Othello in *Othello*, and Kate Parr in *Royal Gambit: Henry the VIII and His Six Wives*. She would like to thank Tony, her co-star in life, for all his love and support.

**Breigh Starkey** (Nelly Fail) is a senior at Governors State University and will graduate in the Fall of 2020. She will receive her Bachelors in Business Administration with a minor in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. *Failure: A Love Story* will be her second performance at GSU! Her debut at GSU was her role in *Alice in Wonderland* as the White Rabbit. When Breigh is not acting, she enjoys playing video games, singing, and spending time with her two cats. She is grateful for her friends and family for all of their love & support!

**Nina Sundsten** (Gerty Fail) is an actor based in the San Francisco/Bay Area. She is delighted to be working virtually with this wonderful bunch of people to bring to life the story of the Fail Family. Nina also performs regularly with an improv troupe (currently online) at Pan Theater in Oakland.



**Rachel M. Sypniewski** (Costume and Prop Design) is thrilled to be returning to GSU for this new adventure, previously designing *Almost, Maine* and *The Scarlet Letter*. Other companies she has worked with include Goodman, Trap Door, Broken Nose, Black Button Eyes, Jackalope, The New Colony, Emerald City, Lifeline, Haven, Griffin, CityLit, Oak Park Festival Theatre, Chopin, Promethean, Strawdog, Vitalist, Rasaka, the Factory, Red Tape and Redtwist. She also has designed at Wheaton College, North Central College, St. Patrick's High School, Indiana University Northwest, and the Chicago Academy for the Arts. She is a seven time Non-equity Jeff nominee, having been awarded one for *La Bete* at Trap Door. More info at [www.rachelsyp.com](http://www.rachelsyp.com).

**Christopher Tinoco** (Stage Management) is a junior at Governors State University and is glad to be working on this production. He previously graduated from Joliet Junior College in 2020. He is normally an actor but is studying to work backstage. Some of Christopher's previous work includes *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (Chorus), *Mamma Mia* (Pepper), *All My Sons* (Stage Manager).

**Jermaine Tyler** (Chorus) is a currently a first-year student at Governors State University. His major is Theatre and Performance Studies with a minor in Communications. Jermaine recently received his Associates Degree at South Suburban Community College. Jermaine has previous performing experience with church, school, and other outside programs. He is truly excited to learn more about theatre and seeing where theatre can take him. His biggest motivators are his mother and his family.

## Spring 2021 Theatre and Performance Studies Courses

### ++DANCE++

DNCE 1100: Dance Appreciation (W 1-3:50; Remote Live OR In-person; Lindsay)

DNCE 3000: Dance for the Camera (M 4:30-7:20; Remote Live OR In-person; Oussenko)

DNCE 4100: Choreography (W 4:30-7:20; Remote Live OR In-person; Lindsay)

### ++MUSIC++

MUS 2202: Rock and Roll History (Online Only; Staron)

MUS 2500/3500/4500: Choral Performance (W 4:30-7:20; Remote Combination; Eckert)

### ++THEATRE & PERFORMANCE++

TAPS 1100: Theatre Appreciation (Online Only; Santoro)

TAPS 2000/4000: Puppetry Performance (Online Only; TBD)

TAPS 2252: Performance of Literature (W 10-12:50; Remote Combination; Gamboa)

TAPS 3250: Performing Culture and Identity (TR 11:30-12:45; Remote Combination; Walls)

TAPS 4390: Theatrical Adaptation and the Revisioning of the Classics (M 4:30-7:20; Remote Combination; Wells)

TAPS 4900: Capstone in Theatre and Performance Studies (T 4:30-7:20; Remote Live; Santoro)

## Acknowledgments

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Tonika Todorova

Faculty across campus encouraging students to attend the production  
And to all those who have for some reason gone unnamed here... thank you!

## **Upcoming Productions**

GSU Dance Company Presents

**From Tina to Beyonce'**

**50 Years of Female Empowerment**

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Live Streamed from GSU's Center for Performing Arts

Theatre & Performance Studies Presents

**bobrauschenbergamerica**

by Charles Mee

Directed by Patrick Santoro

April 8-10, 2021

Live Streamed from GSU's Center for Performing Arts

To stay informed of TAPS audition announcements, upcoming productions, course information, and campus and community happenings, like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/TAPSGSU](https://www.facebook.com/TAPSGSU)

For further information about the Theatre and Performance Studies program at GSU, contact Program Coordinator, Dr. Lara Stache: [lstache@govst.edu](mailto:lstache@govst.edu)