

**Butterfly Effect Theatre of Colorado Presents:  
Science Shorts: air fire water earth  
Creative Team for workshop/reading**



**Valerie Bernstein (Researcher)** is a fifth year Aerospace Engineering Sciences PhD candidate at CU Boulder and a space sustainability enthusiast! She explores aerodynamic drag and atmospheric density modeling, which advances our satellite drag forecasting capabilities and protects technology in space, especially as we navigate the space junk problem. She promotes engagement with Earth and space science, especially for non-technical or younger audiences. Ask her about her space plasma mini-golf design! On campus, she runs an annual science communication workshop and an interdisciplinary STEM seminar series for CU graduate students. She loves to hear what people find inspiring about their scientific fields.



**Heather Beasley (BETC Associate Artistic Director; Project Director)** has worked with BETC as a dramaturg, literary manager, director, playwright, and grant writer since 2007. She oversees the BETC Writers Group, the Science Shorts program, the Generations new play development program, and the (inter)Generations playwriting program. She is also an instructor of Dramatic Writing and Arts and Cultural Leadership for the University of Denver. Her play *Bone Records* will premiere at Relative Theatrics in Laramie, WY in February 2022. Her play *The Gentle Life-Changing Magic of Burning it All to the Ground* will premiere at Benchmark Theatre in December 2022. She has also worked with Imagination Makers Theatre Company, Seattle Public Theatre, the University of Colorado Boulder's Eklund

Opera, and Nebraska and Colorado Shakespeare Festivals.



**Megan Cattau (Researcher)** is an ecologist and movement artist. She is an Assistant Professor in Human-Environment Systems at Boise State University, and she directs the aerial dance project Flight Collaborative. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting at the University of Georgia, a Master of Environmental Management from Duke University, and a PhD from Columbia University, and worked as a Research Scientist at the Earth Lab, University of Colorado Boulder. She specializes in using remote sensing and geospatial analysis to answer theory- and management-relevant questions about ecological disturbance. She focuses in particular on the human contributions

to fire disturbance and restoration / recovery dynamics. She is an advocate for making environmental science more accessible through inclusive pedagogical approaches, stakeholder involvement in research, and collaborations with artists that bring science to the public. Her mind is always on the trees.



**Rita DiSibio (Actor)** can be found doing a variety of different work for theater companies around town. They have previously performed with Miners Alley Children's Theater (*Rumplestiltskin*), BETC (*InterGenerations*), Curious Theatre Company (*Curious New Voices*), and Bas Bleu Theater Company (*Harvey*). Upcoming productions include *Shakespeare In Love* (John Webster) with Vintage Theatre in February 2022, and *Metamorphoses* (Phaeton) with Factory Five Five in June 2022. When not onstage, you can find Rita teaching and playwriting for Factory Five Five, as well as stage managing and being a production assistant for Miners Alley Theater. To learn more about Rita, you can follow them on instagram @ritadisibio.



**Fly Jamerson (Playwright)** is a playwright, director, and dramaturg based in Nebraska. Their play *FROZEN FLUID: An Antarctic Gender Non-Conforming Creation Myth* was a semi-finalist for the O'Neill and the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, and a finalist for new play initiatives at Kitchen Dog Theater and Unicorn Theatre. Fly's current project *HOT MONEY: A Zoological Quest for Immortality in the Madagascar Vanilla Boom*, was originally supported by a New Now Commission from Lauren Gunderson with additional support provided by the Network of Ensemble Theatres and Great Plains Theatre Commons in Omaha, where they are a resident playwright with The Commoners. Fly is currently developing *Tillage!*, a new musical about the global environmental and socioeconomic impacts of agriculture. Fly is a member of LMDA and The Dramatists Guild, and they have an MFA from

the University of Arizona.



**James (Jim) Kennedy (Actor)** has been performing on stage and screen since he was a child. At age 7, he played Michael in *Peter Pan* at a university in Minnesota. His family moved to Los Angeles when he was 10, where he began acting professionally. Jim appeared on various television shows, in national television commercials, and in several independent films. He performed various roles on stage in local theaters, including the role of Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*. Jim has performed nationally as a member of a successful singing quartet and in amusement parks on both coasts. Jim also enjoyed a successful career as an educator and school leader

in underserved communities of L.A. He earned both his master's degree and doctorate in education leadership from UCLA. Jim moved to Boulder last year where he is returning to his first love: performing.



**Colette Mazunik (Playwright)** is a writer and educator living in Denver, CO. Her plays include *A Danger to Yourself and Others*, *Ravening*, and *Shelter in Place*. Short films include *Thanksgiving Dinner* and *Match*. A member of the Dramatists Guild, Colette's plays have been produced and/or developed at festivals, theatres, and schools across the country. Her short films have been official selections for the Madrid International Film Festival (Best Story nominee), and the Bermuda International Film Festival among others. She was a finalist in the Samuel French Off-Off Broadway Short Play Festival. Recently, she was an inaugural Playwright Fellow at the

Denver Center for the Performing Arts. She received her MFA in Playwriting at the Actors Studio Drama School at New School University. As a teacher, she loves to create safe spaces for students to hone their skills and shape their unique and diverse stories. Scripts available at [newplayexchange.org](http://newplayexchange.org).



**Selena Milewski (Actor)** is a multidisciplinary artist and writer based in Boulder, Colorado, and originally hailing from the "great place on a Great Lake," Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She earned her MFA in Theater: Contemporary Performance from Naropa University, and is invested in devised theatre, writing for and from the body, and developing innovative modes of art-making for our times. Her artistic passions include environmental advocacy, trauma processing, and layering systems of thought in order to play in the discourse. Her background includes professional improv comedy, copy editing, and arts criticism. She makes her way through wordsmithing endeavors of all kinds, and

in her art-making, too, language is essential. She's a playwright and poet, committed to divinatory practice in creative expression. In addition to her artistic endeavors, Selena works as a bookseller and content writer serving clients in the addiction recovery sector. Learn more about Selena at [selenamilewski.com](http://selenamilewski.com).



**Kristen Okorn (Researcher)** earned her PhD in Environmental Engineering from the University of Colorado-Boulder in 2021. There, she studied the air quality effects of oil and gas operations using low-cost sensors. She previously completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering at Stevens Institute of Technology in 2018, and became interested in air quality through internships with the Department of Energy. Okorn will shift her attention to emissions from wildfires in her postdoctoral work.



**Helena Pliszka (Education Coordinator, Researcher)** is pursuing a Master of Research in Environmental Engineering with a focus on air quality at the University of Colorado - Boulder as well as earning the Mortenson Center's Certificate in Global Engineering. She is a part of the air quality research and community outreach efforts of Dr. Michael Hannigan's group, applying her drive for action-oriented engineering work to the group's low-cost sensor package (Y-Pod). She is currently serving as Technical Assistant in a year-long Air Quality Inquiry (AQIQ) course based around the Y-Pod that facilitates environmental STEM engagement with students in rural

Colorado schools and at the National University of Mongolia. Helena is also helping prototype a soil quality inquiry-based course to pair with AQIQ. In her spare time, Helena is studying the potential of low-cost landfill methane emission detection, deploying Y-Pods at various Waste Management sites.



**V.B. Rankin (Playwright)** has directed over 45 shows and has had 12 of her original scripts produced in Colorado. Some of her favorites were *Echoing Hills* at Funky for 24/7, *The Last Snow of the Season* for Our Shorts are Showing/Craft Production Resource and *Mayhem at the Museum* with the Academy of Children's Theatre. As an actress, she has performed in over twenty-five professional and community theatre productions, including for the entertainment departments of Walt Disney World and Disneyland. She was a 2007 Denver Post Ovation Award Nominee for Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy for *Not Now Darling!* and enjoyed being part of the cast of the 2010 Denver Post Ovation Award Nominee for Best Comedy, *Getting Married*. Lastly, she is proud to have served in the Peace Corps in Armenia from 2008-2010.



**Vishal Ray (Researcher)** has just completed his PhD in Aerospace Engineering and Sciences, funded by NASA's FINESST grant. His research is on modeling of atmospheric drag effects on satellite orbits to improve orbit prediction of satellites around Earth and other planetary atmospheres as well as extracting atmospheric density information from tracking data. His hometown is Agartala, in north-Eastern India, but he spent his childhood in different parts of the country. He loves living near the mountains in Boulder and spends the warm summers hiking and camping around Colorado. When not finishing his PhD, you can find him exploring the wonders of the night sky with his telescope. His love for stargazing overpowers his hate for the freezing Coloradan nights.



**Erica Sodos (Actor)** is a professional magician, psychic entertainer, speaker, theater educator and a rare gem, one of only a handful of female mentalists in the world. Erica has been featured on NPR in a story exploring why female magicians are so rare, and is currently writing a comprehensive herstory book about women in magic. Due to continuous packed houses, her monthly show *The Magic Within, Psychic Explorations with Erica Sodos*, is one of the longest running solo shows in Denver still running after eight years. Some of Erica's favorite acting roles include Blanche in *Brighton Beach Memoirs* at Coal Creek Theater, Costard in *Loves Labors Lost* and Snout in *Midsummer Night's Dream* at

Valley Shakespeare Festival, and Truvy in *Steel Magnolias* at the Exit Theater. She is happy to be a part of this reading combining two things she loves: science and theater.

**Special thanks to:** The CU Office of Engagement and Outreach, and Boulder County Arts Alliance, for their support of the planning and development of this program; to the members of the first Art + Science + Action cohort, for sharing your thoughtful contributions and your creative endeavors with our shared goal of moving people to take environmental action; to BMoCA, for generously offering us the space for today's event; to our wonderful "Science Shorts" program sponsors, Elizabeth Barrekette and Jonathan Steinberg; and to our season supporters, the Shubert Foundation, SCFD, Colorado Creative Industries, and Boulder Arts Commission.

*There will be one ten-minute intermission between the play reading and the interactive workshop.*