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'I am woman, hear me roar': 'POTUS' debuts at the Hippodrome

The local theater collaborates with UF to bring an acclaimed 'feminist farce' to Gainesville.

By [Bonny Matejowsky](#)

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An Oval Office filled with presidential portraits and a neatly organized desk sets the stage for a professional and serious production to the unknowing eye.

But the Hippodrome's latest production subverts the idea of an orderly presidential office from the moment the play begins when a four-letter expletive reverberates through the theater's halls, kicking off an unapologetically witty and feminist performance.

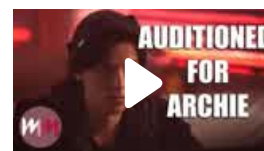
The theater debuted the first show of its 51st season, "POTUS: Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive," Sept. 6.

As the title suggests, the show centers around a group of seven women in the White House dealing with a presidential public relations crisis.

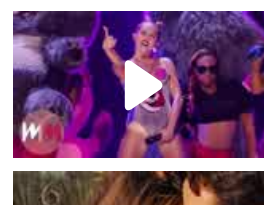
It is a chaotic, messy and comical look into the struggles of the women closely involved with the leader of the U.S., that does so without ever showing the president. Each comedic scene is inter-spliced with songs by renowned female singers, such as Taylor Swift and Demi Lovato.

The play originally debuted last year on Broadway to critical acclaim, with multiple Tony award nominations under its belt. Now, the Hippodrome is bringing the show's satirical charm into the heart of Gainesville.

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roduction is the first in a lineup of plays and musicals set to be put on during the Hippodrome's current aptly titled "EMPOWER." Each production will showcase themes of strength, perseverance and of course, erment.

;" was directed by the creative director of the Hippodrome, Stephanie Lynge.

ssional actor with experience on Broadway and national tours, Lynge came to Gainesville to obtain her 's degree in acting at UF. She found a permanent position as the creative director at the Hippodrome and en has worked with the company for almost ten years.

the things the Hippodrome believes in is widening the scope of who experiences theater, Lynge said.

ippodrome is very much of and part of our community here," Lynge said. "And part of that community is

lone with previous productions, The Hippodrome partnered with the UF School of Theatre and Dance, two UF students to work alongside established actors in the industry.



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Although it's her second time working with the Hippodrome, this production has been a different experience than what she's previously done, Paige said.

"It's a really cool opportunity to be put into a world that is going to be similar to what we have after we graduate," Paige said. "Working with these really strong and hilarious women [...] I learned so much from watching them every day."

Another student starring in "POTUS" is Paulina Machado, a 20-year-old UF junior. Machado stars as "Stephanie," the president's frenzied press secretary who power-poses her way through the White House.

The show is Machado's first production at the Hippodrome and her first experience performing in a farce. She has enjoyed stepping into a dramatic character and grounding her in her performance, Machado said.

"I think now we're in a day and age where we can be women and be proud about it," Machado said. "I feel like this play does a really good job in showing that women can be proud of the things that they do."

The Hippodrome's collaboration with UF is not limited to acting students. The production's costume designer and lighting designer are both MFA design students at the University.



Last Thursday, the crowd erupted in laughter and applause at the Hippodrome's second showing of "POTUS". The show ended with a standing ovation and supportive cheers from the audience.

"POTUS" will be showing at the Hippodrome's stage until Oct. 1. The "feminist farce" does not hold back on any material and adult language and is recommended for mature audiences 17 and older.

Paige sees the unrefined and nontraditional portrayal of women in "POTUS" as an opportunity to explore the issues women face every day.

"It's important because it allows women to be full characters on stage, the good, the bad, the ugly," Lyne said. "We don't have to be pretty, we don't have to be a thing. There is no male gaze on the stage."

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Matejowsky

Matejowsky is a third-year journalism major and a Fall 2023 Avenue Reporter. When she's not writing you can find her thrifting or watching *Twin Peaks*. 



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