



**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**
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**VERVE PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS OFF-BROADWAY REVIVAL OF
MERCURY
AT THE PLAYERS THEATRE**

**By Jayson McDonald
Directed by Lil Malinich
Original Song by Sonnet Whitaker**

Cast includes Nelia McNicol, Avery Baxter & Emily Pazmino

NEW YORK, NY — Spring 2026 — Verve Productions presents **MERCURY** at **The Players Theatre** as part of their **Spring 2026 Artists-in-Residence season**. The play first premiered Off-Broadway at **Theatre Row** in **December 2024**, receiving critical praise.

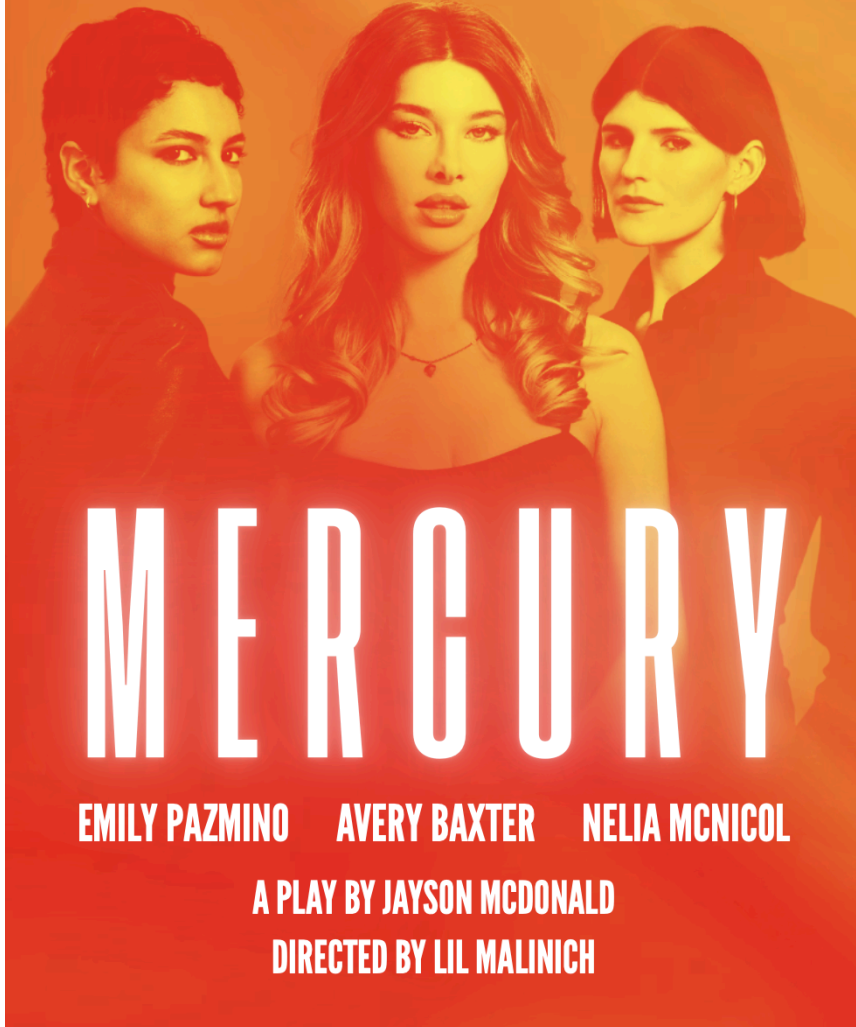
This spring, as the **MERCURY** rises in the middle of a summer heat wave, a trio of women play a game of whodunit – each a key figure in a murder that has happened, or will happen, or is happening right now. Written by award-winning playwright **Jayson McDonald** and directed by acclaimed director **Lil Malinich**, **MERCURY** is an absurdist exploration of identity and desire in a world where boundaries of time blur, exposing the instability of fact, memory, and truth

Names change, details differ, locales vary, but the event remains fixed: someone has been murdered. A crime of opportunity or a crime of passion? It's a tragedy which, through the telling of it, slowly transforms itself from event into urban legend.

The narrative is non-linear and each actor plays a variation of each character, illustrating the mutability of fact and giving the story an increasingly familiar but unknowable feeling, like a recurring dream.

VERVE PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTS

PEOPLE GET WEIRD WHEN IT'S THIS HOT



MERCURY

EMILY PAZMINO AVERY BAXTER NELIA MCNICOL

A PLAY BY JAYSON McDONALD

DIRECTED BY LIL MALINICH

APRIL 30 TO MAY 17
THURSDAY - SATURDAY 7 PM | SUNDAY 3 PM
THE PLAYERS THEATRE

“Intriguing and captivating. MERCURY leaves an indelible impression that lingers long after the play's conclusion” — *Paula Thomson*

“The lines and distinctions are slippery, but the acting is impressive” — *Laurie Lawson*

“Thrilling, Sexy, Provocative” — *Lil Malinich, Director*

MERCURY delves into the human desire for connection and authentic relationships, while exposing the fleeting nature of news and sensationalism. It highlights how public consciousness swiftly moves on, even from severe crimes. The women, stuck in a cycle of anticipation for a future that always feels out of reach, reveal the struggles of living fully in the present. Through live performance, **MERCURY** invites audiences to reflect on perceptions of time, connection, and the urgency of existence.

VERVE PRODUCTIONS — Mission Statement

Our mission is to present high-caliber, intelligent, and affordable theater, with a particular emphasis on dynamic and challenging characters. We are dedicated to showcasing the talents of exceptional up and coming female artists through provocative storytelling that captivates audiences.

BIOS:

Jayson McDonald (Playwright) is an award-winning Vancouver-based playwright, director, and performer with over 30 years of experience. He's been creating theatre for thirty years and is celebrated for his unique voice in solo shows like **Giant Invisible Robot** and **Underbelly**, and his work has been produced across North America and internationally, from New York to Mexico City. He's the creator of the serial stage and radio show *The Boneyard Man*, and the podcast *Phantom Signal*, which you can hear on your favorite podcast channel.

Lil Malinich is an American - Canadian director, producer, actor and acting coach based in NYC, known for her versatile work on both sides of the camera and in the rehearsal room. Her love of performance and orchestration began in elementary school where she directed classmates in scenes from the tv show *Fame* and became a member of repertory company *The Toony Loons*. In her teens and 20s, Lil worked in regional theatre and co-founded award-winning company *Theatre Soup*; directing, producing, and acting in classic and contemporary plays. She and the company received several Brickenden Award nominations and wins for their bold work. *The Deluxe Illustrated Body*, a play Lil co-wrote, received the Brickenden Award for Best Original Script. Malinich holds an Honors BA in English and Dramatic Arts and a Bachelor of Education from Western University. She has trained with masters Susan Batson, Terry Schreiber, Maggie Flanigan, Peter Markham and Moises Kaufman. Lil coached actors at the Susan Batson Studio and is currently the acting instructor at the Joffrey Ballet School and Broadway Rise. She coaches talent including Jackie Burns and Forest Whitaker: Projects include *Big George Foreman*, *Havoc*, "Andor," "Emperor of Ocean Park" and "Godfather of Harlem." Beyond performance, directing and coaching, Lil serves as a juror for the New York, Hollywood, Venice and Cannes Indie Shorts Awards, reflecting her ongoing commitment to nurturing emerging voices in independent film. Lil's diverse body of stage work includes *Uncle Vanya*, *Timberlake: American Pulp*, *Life Without Parole*, and the biographical play *Fruits Unheard Of* in which she portrayed American photographer Diane Arbus. Feature film and TV credits include *Construction* and *Paradise*, "All My Children," "Gotham," "Law & Order" and "Godfather of Harlem." Passionate about bold and meaningful storytelling, Lil directed and produced the NYC premiere of *The Way I Am*, a one-woman show inspired by the life and work of Barbra Streisand as well as *They Called Me Rita* inspired by Rita Hayworth which premiered at the United Solo Festival. For the Verve Project she directed *Laundry & Bourbon* and *Mercury* at Theatre Row. For the New York Theatre Festival, Lil directed *Lucy & Lucy* which won Best Production and Best Actress Awards, and for the Edinburgh Theatre Festival one-woman show *Adrienne: An American in Paris*. Lil is a director and producer for short films "The Main Event," and "NIMBY."

Nelia McNicol (Actor 1) is an Australian actress, dancer and producer based in New York City. Her artistry blends her training in dance and drama, resulting in her distinctive approach to performance grounded in depth and nuance and is shaped by a fascination with emotional complexity and the human condition. She earned her BFA in Dance at Joffrey Ballet School under Artistic Direction of Angelica Stiskin and is trained in the Susan Batson method and Meisner technique. Theatre credits include: *Laundry and Bourbon* (Nubox Theatre), *Mother Tree* (The Tank) and her one-woman show, *They Called Me Rita* (Theatre Row, United Solo Festival Fall 2023), *TAPE* (Arts on Site), *News From Home* (East Village Basement) & *MERCURY* (Theatre Row).

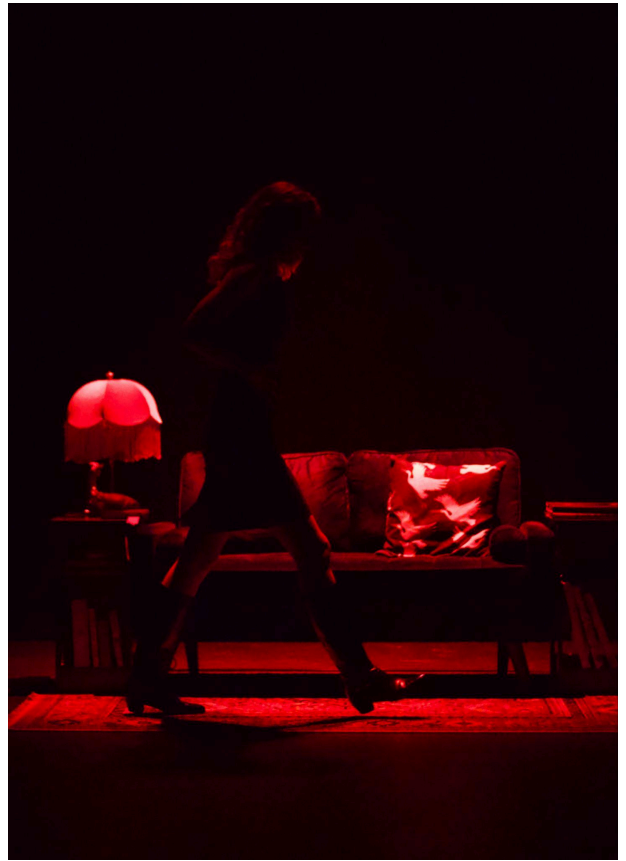
Avery Baxter (Actor 2) is a rising star in the New York theater scene, Avery Baxter trained at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She has a rich background in classical training, off-broadway experience and a strong foundation in dance and psychology. Avery is uniquely positioned to offer both depth and versatility in her performances. Her previous theatre credits include *Laundry and Bourbon*, *Dance Nation*, and *Othello*.

Emily Pazmino (Actor 3) is a New York-based Latina actress and recent graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts. She trained at the Meisner Studio studying contemporary and classical works, Stonestreet Studios studying screen acting, and Stanislavsky and Brecht during an intensive in Berlin, bringing a global perspective to her performance work. Her recent credits include the U.S. premiere of *We Want You To Watch* by Alice Birch at Playwrights Horizons, *Read My Lips* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and the residency show *WIGS: The Play* at The PIT.

Edu Diaz (Stage Manager & Graphic Designer) is a Fulbright-awarded actor, performer, theater producer, and writer with a background in marketing and communications from the Canary Islands based in New York City. With over ten years of experience in performing arts, he is the creator and performer in the acclaimed *A Drag Is Born* and *Fantastic Mr. S*.

Jen Leno (Lighting Designer) (she/they) is a Lighting Designer, Photographer, and Generative Artist based in Brooklyn, NY. She obtained an MFA in Lighting Design from Brooklyn College in 2023. Recent lighting design projects include: *The Prom* (SCSU- New Haven), *Sophie Blanchard's High-Flying Rock n Roll Extravaganza* (IRT Theater), *Jeff Goldblum and the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra* (Brooklyn Opera House), *Prejudice and Pride* (59 E 59 Theater A), Sasha Velour's *Nightgowns the Musical* (The Connelly Theater), *When Jesus Divorced Me* (Carnegie Stage-Pittsburgh) *Is My Microphone On* (Center at West Park).

Sonnet Noel Whitaker (Original Song) has always found music to be her primary source of creative freedom and artistic expression. With "Inana & The Band" her new creative project, she creates a vibe, taking a tender, melodic approach to rock. "NSF," the debut album released in 2022, reflects deep life experiences and introduces a compelling, resilience-infused sound that lingers in the mind. "Lovers in the Diner" is a story patch of sound developed by "Inana & The Band" for the play *MERCURY* by writer Jayson McDonald and directed by Lil Malinich. With this theme, Sonnet Noel Whitaker and Alex Price rebirth a new lovers rock for the next generation, reminding listeners of the memories of sweet nothings you want to hear.



Nelia McNicol, Avery Baxter & Indiana Robinson-Dawes (Theatre Row, 2024)
Photos by Jen Leno

TICKET INFORMATION

MERCURY begins performances at **THE PLAYERS THEATRE** Thursday, April 30 and runs through Sunday, May 17

Tickets are now available and can be purchased at
<https://ci.ovationtix.com/277/production/1247888?performanceId=11678147>,

Performances will run Thursday through Saturday at 7:00pm, and Sunday at 3:00pm.

The full performance calendar can be accessed at
<https://web.ovationtix.com/trs/cal/277/177501600000>

WHERE

THE PLAYERS THEATRE

115 MacDougal St, New York, NY 10012

Box Office Hours - available in person and by the phone

Tuesday - Sunday: 12am - 5pm

(212) 475-1449

<http://www.theplayerstheatre.com/about.html>

CONNECT WITH US

Instagram | [@mercury.play](#)

Website | MERCURY.com

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