

BATHTUB GIN



THISTLE dance

PRESENT

POISON  
& PEARLS

PHOTO BY ANDREW MAUNEY

# POISON & PEARLS

CREATED BY



**DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER**

KRISTEN BROOKS SANDLER  
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CAST

**COMPOSER**

STEPHEN MURPHY

**CO-PRODUCER/  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR**

PETER MARINARO

**ASSOCIATE  
CHOREOGRAPHER**

AUBRIE' KNAPP

**COSTUME  
DESIGNER**

MEGAN QUARLES

**STAGE  
MANAGER**

MEGAN MCGEE

**MAKE UP  
DESIGNER**

JEANETTE JAVORE

**CAST**

ALICE

GABBIE BALLESTROS

QUEEN OF HEARTS

MAYA KITAYAMA

CHESHIRE CAT

MORGANA MAUNEY

MAD HATTER

SARAH BUSCAINO

SWING

AUBRIE' KNAPP

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



BATHTUB GIN

# CAST

ALICE



QUEEN OF  
HEARTS

MAD  
HATTER



GABBIE  
BALLESTEROS



MAYA  
KITAYAMA



SARAH  
BUSCAINO

CHESIRE CAT

SWING



MORGANA  
MAUNEY

AUBRIE'  
KNAPP

PHOTOS BY ANDREW MAUNEY

# MEET THE CAST

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### Gabbie Ballesteros (Alice)

Gabbie Ballesteros is a Filipino performer, choreographer, and arts administrator. A '22-'23 recipient of the SDCF Professional Development Program, she received her SDC Associate Membership after shadowing the choreography team for *Here Lies Love* on Broadway. In addition to working as the Education Programs Manager at Manhattan Theatre Club, Gabbie's recent performance and choreography credits include gigs at 54 Below (*For Once In My Life...*, *Dusk*, *BREATHE*), Payanam AlMuhajir (*Bai-Ka/University Settlement*), and *Bandstand* (NYU). After appearing in *UNBOUND* and *The Art of Sin*, Gabbie is thrilled to return to Thistle alongside incredible and wonderfully wild collaborators. Special thanks to Kristen for welcoming her into this world, and much gratitude to her family and friends for their love and support – mahal ko kayo. [www.gabbieballesteros.com](http://www.gabbieballesteros.com), @gabbie.martina



### Maya Kitayama (Queen of Hearts)

Maya Kitayama (she/her) is originally from the Bay Area and currently based in NYC. Credits include *Beauty and the Beast* (Drury Lane), *Cole Porter's Can-Can* (Porchlight Music Theater), *Love's Labour's Lost* (Scranton Shakes), and *Holiday Inn* (Mill Mountain Theatre). Maya is currently in the cast of *Hypnotique*; a new, late-night immersive show hosted by The McKittrick Hotel. She earned a BFA in Dance & Political Science from Fordham University and is represented by LDC Artist Representation.

# MEET THE CAST



## Sarah Buscaino (Mad Hatter)

SARAH BUSCAINO is a Brooklyn based artist. She is thrilled to be back grooving with Thistle Dance. Some of her favorite credits include - New York City Opera (Pigmalion) Regional: On Your Feet! (Paper Mill Playhouse )Chicago (Riverside Theatre) 42nd Street (Riverside Theatre) Saturday Night Fever (WBT) Memphis (Riverside Theatre, Walnut Street Theatre). Outside of performing, Sarah loves teaching at conventions all over the country. So much love to my family and friends, your support fills my heart! Follow her journey @sarahbuscaino



## Morgana Mauney Cheshire Cat

Morgana Mauney is excited to dive into the world of Poison & Pearls at Bathtub Gin! Stage: Holiday Inn, Sweet Charity, Joseph, Awaited, Christmas on Broadway, and Le Grand Cirque. She has also freelanced with companies throughout NYC. Morgana is a principal dancer and spooky founding member of Thistle Dance. Outside of the arts, Morgana is a certified personal trainer, health and nutrition coach, avid reader and peanut butter and chocolate lover. A huge hug and thank you to Andrew and family. Always spread kindness. More at [morganamauney.com](http://morganamauney.com).



## Aubrie' Knapp Swing / Associate Choreographer

Aubrie' Knapp (they|she|he) is thrilled to be the Associate Choreographer & Swing of POISON & PEARLS. Born and raised in the Steel City, Knapp is always grateful for new opportunities to expand their horizons as a creative here in the Big Apple. Recent performance credits include: Sunset Boulevard (The Kennedy Center), The Art of Sin (SLOTH, Thistle Dance), and EXIST: A New Musical (JULIE, first staging workshop). Choreography: Urinetown (Pace University), The Beholden (an new play), and "Criminal"(Emergence, original work). Love and eternal gratitude to Kristen and the whole Thistle team. IG: @aubriesimonee

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ON THE CREATION OF  
**POISON**  
& PEARLS

Dear Audience,

Creating this show has been a beautiful journey - a bewitching descent down the enigmatic rabbit hole. When we joined forces with Bathtub Gin, we sought to intertwine our distinct vibes: their 1920s aesthetic, our ooky spooky magic, and the alluring charm you'd expect from a late-night show in a speakeasy. I never could have predicted what we'd create as a result.

As a mission, Thistle's work challenges our codified perception of history and lore. When we began exploring the story of Alice - representing societal expectations and the notion of proper femininity - it became apparent that she required a rewilding, and that to bring her world to life, we needed to infuse the narrative with our personal experiences. Through a series of interviews, I asked each artist about the poison and pearls of being a woman. Many of the concepts of the show, and the lyrics from the end song, are devised from these interviews.

This show is a deliberate and ritualized metamorphosis: an alchemy of thoughts, emotions, and explorations woven into movement and scattered throughout Wonderland. We invite you to immerse yourself in the tantalizing blend of the provocative, the eccentric, and the assertive- for in our Wonderland, change is not witnessed, it is experienced.

*- Kristen Brooks Sandler*

Thistle Dance

# ABOUT THISTLE DANCE

Thistle Dance creates movement based storytelling for the stage and screen that celebrates the misunderstood, unexamined or overlooked. We use movement as our primary language, conjuring wonderfully strange creations that challenge our codified perception of history and lore.

Now, more than ever before, our audiences and communities are calling out for stories that reflect the nuance and complexities in the world around us. The cannon is being re-evaluated for biases, and as we re-examine our facts, we should re-explore our fiction.

Our work elevates characters over caricatures and explores the myriad of circumstances that lead to a moment of choice.

We tell stories you know,  
but have never heard before.

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[Instagram @thistle\\_dance](https://www.instagram.com/thistle_dance)

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## CREATIVE TEAM

### KRISTEN BROOKS SANDLER

Director & Choreographer  
Thistle Dance Founder & Artistic Director

Kristen (she/her) is an award winning director and choreographer whose work can be seen on screen and stage. Purple haired & proudly queer, Kristen is committed to physical storytelling, believing in movement as the universal language that bridges the gap between audience and artistry. By employing narrative in tandem with an avant-garde aesthetic, Kristen's hope is that our histories and lore can be refocused and re-centered for artists and audiences alike.

On stage, she has directed and choreographed musicals and original dance creations at regional and international theaters. Her screen credits include work on set with Nickelodeon, International Film Channel, and Hallmark, and her films have been featured in festivals in over 30 countries. Her first original creation, "Gilded", won the award for Best Dance and Physical Theater at the Capital Fringe Festival in Washington D.C., and she has since been nominated for and won many awards for her work. Before leading her own rehearsal rooms, Kristen worked as a performer alongside such creators as Andy Blankenbuehler, Savion Glover, Karma Camp & Connor Gallagher.

Select Credits: Magic To Do (Fredericia Theater, Denmark, with DDSKS), Shimmer & Shine (Nickelodeon), Your Alice (BAM, Edinburgh Fringe), Lysistrata Jones (NYITA Nom - Best Choreography), Gilded (BAM, Capital Fringe), Sunny Day (Nickelodeon Jr), Sweatsgiving (International Film Channel), Associate: Hunchback of Notre Dame (Gothenburg Opera), Jesus Christ Superstar (Signature Theater. Helen Hayes Nomination). IG: [@KristenBrooks19](https://www.instagram.com/KristenBrooks19) / [KristenBrooksSandler.com](http://KristenBrooksSandler.com)





## PETER MARINARO

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Co-Producer / Associate Director

Peter Marinaro is a New York City native! With a Master's in Arts and Culture Management, he is deeply passionate about innovative theatre. With over nine years in theatre production leadership & acting instruction, Peter's background showcases his commitment to both the creative and educational aspects of the arts. He serves as a Casting/Talent Producer for NBC's *The Voice* & *Dancing With Myself* & leads background casting for shows like *American Horror Stories*, *Up Here* & *The Blacklist*. He is thrilled to be working with Thistle Dance again and looks forward to collaborating on many more projects in the future! @petermarinaro



## STEPHEN MURPHY

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Composer

Stephen Murphy is a Composer/Performer/Music Director based in NYC, having composed works for the screen, stage, and concert hall. This is his second collaboration with Thistle after 2022's *Unbound*. He is the frontman for the indie pop/rock band *Modern Ties* (@moderntiesmusic), and a proud alum of Carnegie Mellon University and NYU.

You can hear more of his work at [stephenmurphycomposer.com](http://stephenmurphycomposer.com).



## MEGAN QUARLES

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Costume Designer

Megan Quarles is a Costume Maker, Wardrobe Supervisor, and Costume Designer originally from Savannah, GA. Her work spans many forms of entertainment, including circus, burlesque, classical and modern dance, opera, drama, film, and tv. *Poison and Pearls* is her 3rd collaboration with Thistle Dance, and she is delighted to be working with these incredible artists.



## JEANETTE JAVORE

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Make Up Designer

Jeanette Javore is a makeup artist and stylist, with a penchant for dark elegance.

Her journey began as a makeup artist for theater, film, and print, leaving an impactful presence in immersive productions such as the post-Apocalyptic zombie nightmare *Survive! Survive!*, and in many glamorous worlds presented by The McKittrick Hotel, home of *Sleep No More*. She has crafted FX makeup for Billboard, and beauty makeup for real-life Barbies TM; she has worked on

celebrity faces (Cassandra Clare, Andy Karl, Regis Philbin) for publications such as the *Hollywood Reporter*, and events such as the *Glamour Woman of the Year Awards*.

In the post-2020 era, Jeanette embarked on a new chapter as a stylist. Renowned as a corsetry expert, she dresses people and ties knots at Gothic Renaissance in NYC. Jeanette's passion lies in supporting and enabling individuals to express themselves through makeup and clothing, and in contributing to the impact of performance through the visual creation of characters.



# THISTLE TEAM

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## KRISTEN BROOKS SANDLER

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Director & Choreographer  
Thistle Dance Founder & Artistic Director



## KAITLYN SCHIRARD

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Thistle's Director of Development

Kaitlyn Schirard (she/her) is a New York based artist. The daughter of a farmer and a teacher, she hails from Florida and is dedicated to sharing her passion for storytelling in all its forms. For Thistle, Kaitlyn works as a wordsmith, grant writer, and creative collaborator, often from a dramaturgical capacity. When on stage, if she's not performing Shakespeare, she's part of developing new works and "next classics". Her work is passionate and playful with a penchant for language. She has worked as an actor in New York (BAM, Sheen Center, OTG), regionally (Shakespeare Theater of NJ, Riverside Theater, SSF, OTGWest), and

internationally (Edinburgh Fringe, Arcola Theatre). When not onstage, Kaitlyn works as a creative consultant and grant writer. She's had the pleasure of working and crafting text with such companies as Pinkhouse Productions and Scranton Shakespeare Festival as well as with individual artists.



## ERIN KEI

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Thistle's Associate Artistic Director

Erin (She/Her/Hers) is a professional actor, creator, and teaching artist based in NYC. Originally from Fort Worth, Texas, she attended Syracuse University's Musical Theater program. Erin has been incredibly fortunate to perform in New York at BAM, MMAC, and in the New York Musical Theater Festival. Some of her favorite regional theater credits include: A solo Rep, Syracuse Stage, Dallas Theater Center, Phoenix Theatre and Casa Mañana. Film/TV/Commercial credits include:

The Path (Hulu), Olay Whips (Commercial), and the new short film SC7NARIO (available on BroadwayHD). Working both onstage as well as on creative teams. She currently serves as the Associate Artistic Director of Thistle Dance under the direction of Kristen Brooks Sandler. Erin enjoys bringing all aspects of a project together from inception to performance. She is a passionate storyteller who believes art has the power to invite new perspectives.



## BROOKE SCHALK

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Thistle Intern

Brooke Schalk (she/her) is a dancer and performer based in NYC. She moved here from Colorado to attend Marymount Manhattan College where she is a Senior double majoring in Dance and Fashion Marketing. Brooke is captivated by the ability to connect with audiences through movement and performance. She is thrilled to join Thistle to explore the intersection of her passions and the interworkings of a company.

## ABOUT OUR HOSTS

# BATHTUB GIN



Created by Brooklyn-born entrepreneur Dave Oz, Bathtub Gin is a Roaring Twenties-inspired speakeasy, named after the homemade alcohol that was watered down in bathtubs during the years of Prohibition.

After opening its doors in 2011 behind Stone Street coffee shop in Chelsea, it quickly grew to become a New York institution, inviting visitors to delve in the glamour of the 1920s with its emblematic decor, live jazz and burlesque, and craft cocktails with a strong gin focus. What happens in the Bathtub (or even outside of it), stays in the Bathtub, by the way.

## SPONSORS

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## SPECIAL THANKS

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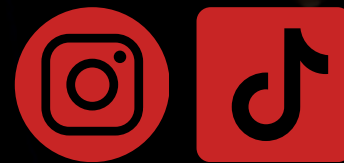
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