

## **Unstable Connection Audition Packet**

Thank you so much for your interest in auditioning for *Unstable Connection*! Please find below most of the details you'll need to prepare for auditions/callbacks for the show, and feel free to email one of our co-producers ([n.perez@yale.edu](mailto:n.perez@yale.edu) or [lily.perez@yale.edu](mailto:lily.perez@yale.edu)), our director ([catherine.alam-nist@yale.edu](mailto:catherine.alam-nist@yale.edu)), or one of our associate directors ([beza.tessema@yale.edu](mailto:beza.tessema@yale.edu) or [hank.graham@yale.edu](mailto:hank.graham@yale.edu)) with any questions/concerns you may have.

### What is *Unstable Connection*?

*Unstable Connection* is the working title for a devised piece of virtual theater we are super excited to be creating in Spring 2021. This project seeks to use the theatrical medium which our present moment necessitates - Zoom - to tell the stories of our time. It is clear to many of us that we are living in a unique moment - isolation, fear and claustrophobia intersecting daily with intermittent moments of hope, opportunity, and exploration. What does it mean to come together in a time when we all have to keep physically apart? Is it possible? And, looking ahead to the future, what unique opportunities could the breakdown of our 'normal' way of doing things possibly bring about?

This piece will be devised collaboratively by an ensemble composed of a directorial team, a dramaturgical team, and of course the cast. The current team members anticipate going into the rehearsal process with some potential ideas for characters and stories that can be explored, but without a full script in place. We want our cast members to feel empowered to tell the story they want to tell, provided that it relates to the general theme of the piece: whether this be a story pre-existing in literature, a story inspired by historical events, or even a story from the life of someone they know - or their own.

We anticipate auditioning in January, with a cast of 4-6 actors. BIPOC, people of marginalised genders, and LGBTQ+ theatremakers are particularly encouraged to get in touch, as well as those who may not have been involved in theatre before but would like to.

***You do not need to be currently enrolled and/or living on campus or in New Haven to participate. The entirety of this production will be conducted in a remote, socially-distant manner.***

Performance dates and times are subject to change depending on cast/crew's availability, but are currently scheduled for May 6-8 2021.

This production will be a 'live' Zoom show, in that we do not plan on pre-recording much (if any) of the performance; we believe there is a particular joy to sharing the same space as an

ensemble - even virtually - and creating a unique performance each night, so we therefore plan to perform the show live and synchronously each night of our run. The show will probably be viewed by the audience via Zoom webinar.

### How are auditions going to work for this show?

We know that a lot of people might be new to auditioning for a virtual production, or even for Yale productions in general! We therefore want to make this process as accessible and non-intimidating as possible for everyone. We also want to conduct auditions in a way that reflects the collaborative, ensemble-based nature of this production: our aim is not to create a polished, 'professional'-looking show, but rather facilitate a process that focuses on collective joy and creativity, which we believe will be reflected in our end result in the best of ways. Our audition process is therefore going to reflect both the spirit of collaboration and of the focus on the ensemble - and on having fun :)

#### **First round:**

We're very curious to see what sort of material you might be interested in bringing to the devising process, so therefore for the first round of auditions, we want to invite you to read anything that you feel speaks to our current moment/has been helpful for you in feeling connected and fulfilled during quarantine! This could be a poem, part of a short story, text from a pre-existing play, or even your own work - whatever excites you as a creator or performer.

However, we know that being asked open-endedly to find your own audition material can be challenging/stressful for some, so we also are giving the option of reading pre-selected bits of text from texts that we're interested in potentially including in the show! Your decision to read the materials provided or bring your own will in no way affect whether you are cast or called back. Please do whatever makes you feel more comfortable/inspired!

You also do not need to have your text memorised (although being somewhat familiar with it will probably make it more exciting/enjoyable to perform)

Because we find self-taping can often make the auditionee feel like they're sending their tape to a faceless group of people who they are unable to see or interact with, we plan to hold all of our auditions 'live' over Zoom, to allow auditionees to get to know us and ask any questions you may have! Please find the link to sign up for an audition slot below:

<https://collegearts.yale.edu/opportunities/auditions/audition-unstable-connection>

*(However, as we know this is a very chaotic time for everyone and some auditionees may have issues attending both a live audition and callback, if you would for any reason prefer to do the first round of auditions via self-tape, please reach out to one of our producers and we will do our best to accommodate you.)*

## **Second round/callbacks:**

After we have held all of the initial auditions, we will be asking some auditionees to attend live Zoom callbacks. If we do call you do not get asked to attend a callback, this in no way means that you are not cast in the show. However, we might want to see a few people in small groups to get a better sense of how you might work in a collaborative ensemble setting. If we do ask you to attend a callback, here's what you can expect:

- Our directors will all introduce ourselves again (name, pronouns, year/college, location, etc.) , then ask you to introduce yourselves to each other!
- We'll probably start off with some chill theatre games to get everyone grounded/focussed as a collective sharing virtual space together. (let us know if you have any suggestions!)
- We'll then start going through a few devising prompts/exercises, similar to those we will be using in the production process to generate material. These will be a combination of conversation-based activities and practical performance exercises.

There is no need to prepare anything, or to worry about whether you're doing the exercises 'right'. We are not looking for any in-depth knowledge of devising or high-level acting training; the only thing we want is for you to feel free to explore and collaborate creatively with the people around you, so that we can create a piece that is equally meaningful/fulfilling for all of us. If you're enjoying yourself, you're doing perfectly!

### Are you planning to hold audition workshops?

Yes! We will be holding two audition workshops, on Wednesday Jan 13 at 4pm EST + Thursday Jan 14 at 7pm EST. These will be a chance to hear more about what we're envisioning for this show going forward, meet some of us on the team, and hear more about what we'll be looking for during the audition process. And of course, a chance for us to answer in-person (ish) any questions you may have! Please find the Zoom links below for both workshops:

Wednesday link: <https://yale.zoom.us/j/99554185936>

Thursday link: <https://yale.zoom.us/j/94039819567>

### What if I don't get offered a part?

Because we want this to be an intimate and supportive creative environment, and we also recognise that large groups trying to hold conversations on Zoom can be challenging, we plan to probably only cast 4-6 actors. This most likely means that we will not be able to cast every actor who auditions. This is not because we do not think that you are beautiful and wonderful and talented and amazing, and it also doesn't mean we don't all hope to work with you in the future. It really just comes down to whether you're a good fit for us, and if we're a good fit for you as well. We're a very specific kind of production, and whilst the approach we're taking might be a

perfect fit for some actors, we definitely get that it won't be for everyone. This is no way a comment on your talent or awesomeness as a human (we promise!)

We're also still looking to fill a whole lot of prod positions, and are especially hoping to include people who haven't done these roles before (but are excited to try!) Please check out the Tech and Design Opportunities page on the Yale College Arts page for more information:

<https://collegearts.yale.edu/opportunities/tech-design-opportunities>

#### What we want to see from you:

Definitely:

- A desire to explore new + exciting creative paths
- Openness to + respect of others' creative instincts and opinions, even if they may differ slightly from your own
- An enjoyment of working within a collaborative ensemble
- Kindness towards everyone involved in the production (including yourself! Self-care is *extremely* important, especially now, and your wellbeing always comes before the show every time)

Definitely *not*:

- A performance that is in any way 'polished'/super well-rehearsed
- Any fear of 'doing things wrong' or not impressing the audition panel - this process is just as much about us impressing you, and making you feel comfortable working with us :)

#### What you can expect from us:

- Transparency about the audition process + what we're looking for from you - we've tried to list it all above, but if there's anything else you're wondering about, please feel free to reach out to any of us at any point!
- Compassion for actors + a wellbeing-centred approach: again, our main goal for this show is for it to be mutually creatively fulfilling + joyful for everyone involved, so if anything comes up that makes this show start feeling like a burden as opposed to something fun, please let us know! Especially as this is a crazy time and nobody is really able to predict all the circumstances that may come up, we will absolutely never hold this against you, and just want you to feel that you can be open + honest with us, as we will also aim to be with you :)
- An emphasis on respecting every actor's individual needs/boundaries - if at any point during the audition, callback or production process, you feel like you're being asked to do something that makes you uncomfortable, we absolutely want you to tell us to make sure

this never happens again. And if you don't trust the production team member who you feel is asking this of you, please feel free to reach out to any other member of the team who you feel safe with.

Sample audition pieces for first-round individual auditions (feel free to read one of these, but no pressure to do so!)

1) From *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures. John is a physician, and perhaps—perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see, he does not believe I am sick! And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do? My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing. So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to “work” until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. But what is one to do?

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more. He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. “Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear,” said he, “and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time.” So we took the nursery, at the top of the house. It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playground and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls. The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

2) From *Proportion Surviving* by Renee Gladman

Long before the fresh apple crisis, my life had some form to it. I would wake in the mornings—I would perform something. For example, the day I tried, as one with acute passion might, to win one woman over but accidentally won another—that whole time I had been living like someone. Though I can't remember his name. His model of optimism provided me with a certain geography that I inhabit in time of need. This time the need was surprising. People tend to have

faith that the juice they drink in the morning is the same juice they have always drunk. And apples take their shape naturally. The guy, whose name escapes me now, taught me to look upon others' concerns as mine to make at home. I was fond of doing many things at home, but my favorite was drinking juice. When my friends came by—they liked to suddenly show up with all kinds of breads in their hands, thinking they knew what I needed and planning to force it on me—I had to tell them I was busy with my juice. Two weeks before the crisis, I had been writing some poems about it. It was a warm day, not entirely different from other warm days in San Francisco. People were on the street. Pale people were on the street, making it to the park and lying there such that the next day they were a little browned. The poems I had written were failures, but dense ones. It seemed appropriate to think the person's attempt at wholeness was a series of missteps, which if drawn across an afternoon might prove interesting to other people. I had a way of reminding my friends that we were all in pain, but a fruit tart kind of pain strangers can't help but enjoy. That day I had, in a sense, gathered all my possessions and gone out onto the street with them. I awoke that morning with an urgency to prepare myself for something—not anything life threatening, but definitely personal.

### 3) From *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine

To live through the days sometimes you moan like a deer. Sometimes you sigh. The world says stop that. Another sigh. Another stop that. Moaning elicits laughter, sighing upsets. Perhaps each sigh is drawn into existence to pull in, pull under, who knows; truth be told, you could no more control those sighs than that which brings the sighs about.

The sigh is the pathway to breath; it allows breathing. That's just self-preservation. No one fabricates that. You sit down, you sigh. You stand up, you sigh. The sighing is a worrying exhale of an ache. You wouldn't call it an illness; still it is not the iteration of a free being. What else to liken yourself to but an animal, the ruminant kind?

You like to think memory goes far back though remembering was never recommended. Forget all that, the world says. The world's had a lot of practice. No one should adhere to the facts that contribute to narrative, the facts that create lives. To your mind, feelings are what create a person, something unwilling, something wild vandalizing whatever the skull holds. Those sensations form a someone. The headaches begin then. Don't wear sunglasses in the house, the world says, though they soothe, soothe, sight, soothe you.