

# Writer collaborates with cast and crew of play to revise script

*Those involved in Western's production of "Mad About You" work with playwright and alumni Jessi Pitts to revise the script*

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*The cast and crew of "Mad About You" // Photo by Eliane Rodriguez*

By [Emily Bishop](#)

On March 30, over four months after the final production of "Mad About You," the cast and crew joined together on a Zoom call to read a newly revised version of the script.

"The draft that we read in the Zoom call, I want to say, was draft five. The one that we performed was mostly draft four," said Kaylyn Ledvina, a Western student and the director of "Mad About You."

The play was written by Western alumna Jessi Pitts. The Zoom call in March was in part so that the cast and crew could see the new iterations of the characters, but also so that Pitts could get feedback on the newest revision.

"They definitely helped me answer a lot of questions I had about this new draft," Pitts said. "They would read certain things and say, 'Hey, that's not something this character would do,' and I'd be like, 'Oh yeah, you're right. You know this character better than I do at this point.'"

In November 2019, "Mad About You" was performed for Student Theatre Productions. This was the first performance of Pitts' play, which she started working on during her sophomore year at Western. Pitts said it was a class in the English department on time travel literature and a class on texts outside of North America that initially inspired her.

"We read a book called, 'Wide Sargasso Sea,' and that was a take on 'Jane Eyre' that was Bertha's story and it was her background, and it was the events of the book from her perspective and I thought that was really interesting," Pitts said. "I thought, 'Oh, wow. I would love to write something like this.'"

Pitts' website describes "Mad About You" as "an exploration on the Victorian 'madwoman in the attic,' the aftermath of heartbreak and a healthy dose of pop music from the 1980s."

When Ledvina, a long-time friend of Pitts, read through the initial draft, she knew that it was a production she wanted to direct.

"'Mad About You' is interesting because it's mixing old ideals with new ideals and how people from different times have to negotiate their worldviews, but within a context that might not be their own," Ledvina said. "I love a good emotional or logical negotiation, which is what I feel like I got from 'Mad About You.'"

She submitted the play to Student Theatre Productions during fall quarter of 2019 and was approved for a performance in November.

The show rehearsed for just over a month, starting October 7 and continuing through to November 15, opening night

Corinne Charbonneau, who played Mary, the "madwoman in the attic" character in the production, said that the first week of rehearsals primarily focused on establishing their characters. Rehearsals were about forming character relations and deciding how the characters felt about each other. Charbonneau said the time spent character building in rehearsal helped her find her footing.

"I did find myself finding out the right level of like, she's a little deranged, and she's also very smart and she's also very cunning. But she's also very vulnerable," Charbonneau said.

The following weeks of rehearsal focused on blocking the production and tidying it up, with full run-throughs of the show starting the week before opening night, which, Charbonneau said, "is pretty normal."

"Mad About You" was performed at Western's Old Main Theatre and ran three performances from Nov. 15 through Nov. 17, 2019.

After seeing the production performed for the first time, Pitts was better able to visualize certain changes she wanted to make to the script.

Ledvina said that the cast and crew were still invested in the story so long after its final production, that everyone wanted to know what was next for the characters in the new rendition. Pitts was grateful that the actors were available for a read-through of her most recent draft.

"You cannot write a show on your own. It is absolutely impossible to write a good show just coming out of your own head," Pitts said. "You have to have different people give you different perspectives, have actors kinda become the roles and help you to understand who the characters are because you're never gonna get it on your own. You're always going to need help."

Although "Mad About You" is not the first full length play Pitts has written, it is the first of hers to be performed. She is still working on revisions to the script and considers "Mad About You" to be her main focus for a long-term project.