

# arts & life



## saywhat?

I speak Spanish to God, Italian to women,  
French to men and German to my horse.  
• Charles V Holy Roman Emperor

## Learning through improv

**Meerna Homayed**  
GAZETTE STAFF  
@uwogazette

Théâtre L'On Donne, a theatre troop from the department of French studies at Western, opens their play *De mal en pis* this upcoming Saturday at McManus Studio Theatre.

*De mal en pis* is a comedic play by Mariel Ouelette Mauvia performed entirely in French and by improvisation. The play focuses on selfish characters and their humorous social interactions.

The cast consists of a multitude of student personnel, ranging from a first-year undergraduate student to PhD students and everything in between. Western professors in the department of French studies are also involved, including the stage director Servanne Woodward as well as Paul Venesoen, who arranged the music, sound and promotions.

First-year student Kristen Nadal is the youngest cast member, playing the character Diouana Dieng. After viewing advertisements for auditions, she joined in hopes of improving her French skills and credits the improvisation aspect as having the greatest impact.

"When you're memorizing just lines it's the only thing that you know but if you're actually improvising, then you're speaking French like how you would if you actually went to France," she explains.

In addition, she says that conversing with cast members also helped to improve her French due to many of them being native French speakers.

Despite the difficulties of having to perform impromptu dialogue in another language, Nadal welcomes the improvisation as it adds spontaneity and fluidity to the play, producing stronger emotions from the actors.

Marie-Simone Raad, a PhD student studying French literature and



Courtesy of Sébastien Ruffo

a veteran to Théâtre L'On Donne, echoed this sentiment. In the play, Raad plays both the first wife Maty Dieng and a scammer.

"You explore a different world. It's very different," she explains. Noting that in comparison to Théâtre L'On Donne's interpretation of *Don Quixote* last year, which was entirely scripted, *De mal en pis* gives more opportunities to the actors.

Raad is a native French speaker. She traces her enjoyment of acting back to a childhood dream of acting in theatre. As a teenager, she was taught theatrical improvisation by one of her teachers when she joined the school play.

"For me, it's not very hard because I have a lot of imagination," she laughs. "I can improv everything."

However, she admits that working in tandem with the other cast members and always making sure to cover your partner if they've forgotten something or if they blank out on stage can be tricky.

Like Raad, Mansour Bouaziz is another PhD student studying French literature involved with the play. This is his first time

participating in a production by Théâtre L'On Donne, where he plays the character of Ibrahima Dieng.

"I like the challenge, and as a future professor, speaking in front of an audience is important — actually it is a part of the profession," he says citing his reasons for joining. "So, I took this opportunity as a practice for my future career."

For Bouaziz, acting in French isn't challenging, as he's fluent in the language. It would be a greater task for him to perform in English, as it's his third language.

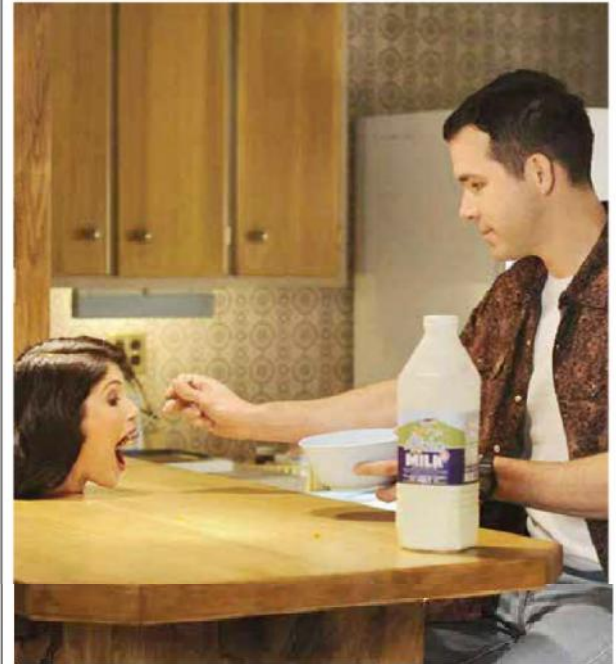
"The most challenging part is to give a spirit to the play; it's not easy. We're all non-professional actors with different personalities," he explains.

As for the play itself, he's most looking forward to the public's reaction and to see how they will respond to the play.

"Even if the play may not be a big success, I want to say that I learned something and met wonderful new people," he adds.

*De mal en pis* runs March 14, 15, 18 and 19 at the McManus Studio Theatre. Tickets can be purchased at the department of French studies or online.

## >> IN THEATRES > THE VOICES



Courtesy of Lions Gate Entertainment

## Reynolds carries The Voices

**Maddy Richard**  
VOLUNTEER  
@uwogazette

★★★★☆

*The Voices*

**Director:** Marjane Satrapi

**Starring:** Ryan Reynolds, Anna Kendrick, Gemma Arterton and Jacki Weaver

It's fascinating to watch a leading man play a darker role. Done well, the actor can be both charming and disturbing. *The Voices* may be marketed as a black comedy, but be warned. This movie focuses more on mental health and morals than humour.

voices.

Reynolds captures the struggles of a man with a mental illness. He switches between carefree and childlike to violent and unstable. By also voicing all the animals in the movie, each voice appears to be very much a part of Jerry's own mind. Jacki Wilder, who portrays Jerry's psychotherapist, does a great job by being a voice of reason. Kendrick and Arterton both hold their own, however Reynolds dominates in his role with a terrifying, but terrific performance.

Without medication, Jerry's narrative becomes unreliable. He sees butterflies and angels, rather than bodies and blood. At one point,