

# From Script to Stage: *Dead Man's Cell Phone* to open at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside this Friday

Janet Jurado  
March 3rd, 2025

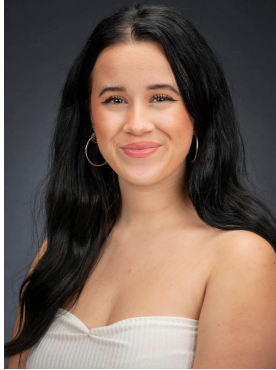
*Dead Man's Cell Phone*, a play by Sarah Ruhl surrounding the theme of connection and alienation through technology, is the next upcoming production offered by UW-Parkside's Theatre Arts department. The show will run March 7-16 in the Blackbox Theatre at the Rita Tallent Picken Center for the Arts and Humanities. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors 60+, and \$10 for students at the box office or online using this link: <https://uwparksidetickets.universitytickets.com/w/>.

Playwright Sarah Ruhl is an award-winning American playwright as well as an author, essayist, and professor. Some of her most popular plays you may have heard of include *Eurydice*, *The Clean House*, and *In the Next Room*. First performed in 2007, *Dead Man's Cell Phone* is a winner of the Helen Hayes Award for Best New Play (a play award organization recognizing excellence in professional theatre based in the Washington D.C. area).



*Dead Man's Cell Phone* is a dark comedy centering around a woman named Jean who picks up the ringing phone of a man who died just minutes earlier at his table in a café. This simple act of sympathy towards a stranger results in her entanglement into his mysterious past. Back-to-back lies, falling in love, and uncovering secrets are just some of the many things Jean undertakes throughout the show. Through Sarah Ruhl combining

suspense, humor, and unexpected surprises, this play explores the daunting consequences that come with the infatuation of using someone's phone to keep them spiritually alive.



Theatre arts junior Alyssa Ritacca, the actress playing Jean in the show, has learned a lot more about herself and the people around her through portraying the lead role of a woman who wants the best for everyone and tries her hardest to keep a deceased man's soul alive. She says, "[Jean] is such an observant character and she notices little things about people and will try really hard to get to know more about people. And so I think my favorite part about her is how observant she is".

Amy Bates is the director of this show, also a student within the theatre arts major at UW-Parkside. Although the two main stage productions that occur each semester are usually directed by a theatre arts faculty member, Amy has had many years of professional directing experience and was therefore given the opportunity to direct this production. When asked what she would like the audience to take away from this show, Amy said the following:



I want audiences to really take away a sense of the importance of connecting with loved ones; how much we rely on our technology, the use of cell phones to act as connectors, when really it's about taking the time to sit down, talk, to be present, physically present with each other. Another important thing is how we miss out on people in our lives because we don't connect while we have them and how important it is to really value the time we get together. I hope audiences leave going, 'You know what? Tomorrow night when I have dinner with my family, I'm going to put my phone down and have a conversation.'

More information about the UW-Parkside Theatre Arts program and its opportunities can be found at: <https://www.uwp.edu/learn/programs/theatrearts.cfm>

## Theatre Arts

**Creative. Professional. Award-Winning. Connected.**

Misti Bradford, Theatre Arts Dept. Chair, [bradford@uwp.edu](mailto:bradford@uwp.edu)

By Janet E. Jurado

[j.e.jurado2002@gmail.com](mailto:j.e.jurado2002@gmail.com)

## References

Ruhl, S. (n.d.). *About Sarah Ruhl*. Sarah Ruhl Playwright.

<https://www.sarahruhlplaywright.com/about>

Theatre Washington. (n.d.). *Helen Hayes Awards*. Theatre Washington.

<https://theatrewashington.org/helenhayesawards>