

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

COHORT 2029

MFA ACTING



ANANYA DUGAR

Ananya (she/her) is an actor, writer and obsessed dog mom to her son Leo. She grew up in Bombay and studied filmmaking in London. After graduating she worked in the film, tv and theatre industry in Bombay. Ananya has also lived in Seoul for a year, where she studied Korean. One of her big dreams is to be in a musical (even though she can't really sing). Bringing stories to life, training at Columbia, and living in New York is a dream come true for Ananya and she's so excited for this new adventure to begin!



AUVEEN DEZGARAN

Auveen Dezgaran [she/her] is an Iranian-American actor originally from Los Angeles and currently residing in New York City. Auveen's passion lies in bringing to life a variety of original work made by female artists and Middle Eastern creatives like herself. Standout Projects: English (The Alliance Theatre), A Distinct Society (Firehouse Theatre), The Civilians: An American Feast (Joe's Pub), and Horse Girls (Playwrights Horizons Theatre School). BFA: NYU Tisch (Playwrights Horizons Theatre School and Stonestreet Studios). She is honored and excited to embark on this Columbia MFA acting journey.



BRAXTON RICHBURG

Braxton “B-Rich” Richburg is a versatile artist whose talents span acting, stand-up comedy, photography, and videography. Born in Columbia, South Carolina and raised in Atlanta, he brings a blend of Southern authenticity, athletic discipline, and creative drive to every project. His notable stage performances include Walter Lee Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* and Lank in *Detroit '67*. As a comedian, B-Rich has performed at Uptown Comedy Corner and Atlanta Comedy Theater, two well-known venues in the Atlanta comedy scene. An accomplished photographer and videographer, B-Rich brings a storyteller’s eye to every frame. He shot a brand photoshoot for In Motion Casting, highlighting his creative vision behind the camera.

Before pursuing the arts, Braxton competed as a Division I athlete in football and track, even entering the record books with double-digit receptions in a single game. He is thrilled to attend Columbia University as part of the Acting Cohort for the Class of 2029, where he will continue developing his craft and commitment to storytelling.



CLAIRE DE LOS RIOS

Claire (she/her) is an actor and artist from Los Angeles, California. As a child, she was part of a youth circus group where she did trapeze, contortion, and clowning. In 2024, she received her Bachelors in Studio Art from Bard College. At Bard, when she wasn't painting, she explored the theatre department. There she was in a production of Lungs by Duncan Macmillan. Bard's theatre program inspired her to attend the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Arts' classical acting program in 2025, where she played Annie in Tom Stoppard's The Real Thing and Claudius in Shakespeare's Hamlet. After that experience, she knew she wanted to keep honing her craft. She is so excited to continue learning at Columbia's MFA Acting Program!



DAIJA MONET

Daija Monet (She, Her, Hers) is an artist born in Detroit and raised in Murfreesboro, TN. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) from the American Musical Dramatic Academy (AMDA) while attending both the New York and Los Angeles campuses. After graduating, she moved to Chicago to be a professional actor where she worked extensively in comedic theatres such as: Second City, The Annoyance, and iO. You might also catch her on a couple of episodes of Chicago PD. She is beyond excited to continue to hone her craft and build community with other artists at Columbia.



IZZY ELLIS

Izzy Ellis (he/him) is an actor, singer, and songwriter from Grand Rapids. He received his bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Marketing from Taylor University. He is very excited to be part of the Class of 2029 acting cohort!



JAKE KELLY

Jake Kelly (he/him) is an actor and writer from New York City and Block Island. He received dual Bachelor's degrees in International and Public Affairs and East Asian Studies from Brown University. During his time at Brown, Jake was cast as the lead in multiple films that received recognition at numerous festivals including the New York Shorts Film Festival and Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival. Outside of acting, Jake has studied Chinese for 14 years and lived abroad in Shanghai for 4 months. Jake is a musician and has played piano for 14 years and trumpet for 12 years. Jake is a lifelong athlete, was a member of the Brown Club Men's basketball team, and currently trains Jiu Jitsu and Boxing. He has also worked in entertainment and finance internships with Omaha Productions, United Talent Agency, Brown University Investment Office, and Goldman Sachs Investment Banking. Jake is thrilled to join the Columbia School of the Arts Class of 2029 acting cohort.



JEAN TUGANGUI

Jean Tugangui is an actor from California. Regional credits include: Antigone (Antigonick), Christmas Eve (Avenue Q), Little Red (Into the Woods), and Death/Prince Sirki (Death Takes A Holiday). TV: Law & Order: Organized Crime.

She has also performed at renowned comedy institutions including UCB, Magnet Theater, and Brooklyn Comedy Collective. She holds a BA in Computer Science from Lewis & Clark College.



KATHERINE BANOS

Katherine Banos is a bi-coastal actor/writer/producer originally from Long Island, NY. Katherine is thrilled and honored to be part of the Class of 2029 acting cohort at Columbia! She has her BFA in acting from NYU Tisch [Experimental Theater Wing & Stonestreet Studios]. Katherine's acting training also includes: Terry Knickerbocker Studio, BADA's Midsummer in Oxford, Shakespeare & Company's January Intensive, Upright Citizens Brigade, the Groundlings, and clowning with Christopher Bayes. She has over a decade of industry experience, including working for NBCUniversal, Glickmania Entertainment, Scott Rudin Productions, Shakespeare Center of LA, and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Her original short film, RING OF FIRE, was an official selection of over 25 film festivals nationally and internationally, nominated for over 30 awards, and won 14.



NATHAN RODRIGUEZ

Nathan Rodríguez (he/him/his) is a Brazilian actor and fine artist from Rio de Janeiro and a graduate of Brown University, where he studied Theater Arts & Performance Studies alongside Visual Arts. His work spans theatre and film, with performances in independent short films, university productions, and stage works developed through Brown's artistic community, including collaborations with Brown Motion Pictures, Brown Original Series, and productions connected to Trinity Repertory Company, where he premiered on a regional theatre main stage, and Rhode Island Latino Arts, where he is also part of the theatre collective. Passionate about storytelling from an early age through his father's love of cinema, Natan approaches acting as a deeply human and transformative craft, focusing on emotionally grounded performances that explore identity, vulnerability, and connection across cultures.



PABLO AKIRA RICHTER

Pablo Akira Richter (he/they) is an actor and writer from Baltimore City. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Public Policy at Brown University, and began his acting training there, performing a lead role in a new play by Julia May Jonas. After college, he continued his training at The Atlantic Acting School, working closely with Karen Kohlhaas. Since then he has been performing on stage and film in LA, The Bay Area, and Baltimore. He recently wrapped filming for a short that he wrote and starred in, and is eager to keep growing as an actor, writer, and perhaps director.



PRINCE ANTHONY HALL

PrinceAnthony Hall is a Brooklyn-native actor and writer. He refined his craft at Marymount Manhattan College, where he received his BFA in acting, and complemented his training with a deep dive into classical text at Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts. PrinceAnthony's most recent theater credits include Fear and Misery in the Third Reich, Julius Harlem Caesar (in which he played Julius Baptiste), and the role of Zeus in The One With Flowers in Her Lap, which premiered at The Flea in New York. His recent TV and film credits include the role of Junior in the web series The People Police, an Intel officer on Blue Bloods, and the short film Since Last We Talked, which debuted at the Touchstone Independent Film Festival.



VANESSA MAZHANGARA

Vanessa Mazhangara is a Zimbabwean American actor who earned her Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences, with a minor in Theatre, from The Ohio State University. She continued her training at the Atlantic Acting Conservatory and has spent the past several years performing throughout Michigan. Most recently, she appeared professionally in Detroit Public Theatre's production of *Confederates* (Luanne/Jade). In addition to her work on stage, Vanessa enjoys exploring photography. As she returns to New York, she is honored to begin this new chapter as an incoming first-year MFA Acting student at Columbia, where she will continue to hone her craft.



WILDER MARSDEN

Wilder Marsden (he/they) is an actor and writer originally from Los Angeles, currently based in New York City. He received a BFA in Acting from UC Santa Barbara, where he founded the sketch comedy troupe: Between The Couch Cushions. Favorite acting credits include King Lear, Hay Fever, and The Government Inspector. Offstage, Wilder can be found at Third Rail Coffee, pouring lattes for NYU students.



WILL GROWDON

Will Growdon (him) is an artist from Nashville Tennessee. He received his Bachelor of Arts (Theatre) from Vanderbilt, and he is filled with gratitude towards all of the many people who have guided him up to this point in his life. To be chosen as part of this program really is a dream come true. He hopes to learn and live well in these next three years, and as for the rest, to hopefully bring other people joy, in some form or another.



ZACHARY MCDEVITT

Began his career in A Christmas Carol at the McCarter Theater. Was introduced to film acting and an ensemble driven acting program at Chapman College in Orange CA where he graduated last year with a BFA. Acting has given him purpose, community and a way to connect with others. Zach believes storytelling has the power to offer comfort, reflection and escape. It is a belief he holds that continues to guide him as an artist and person.

