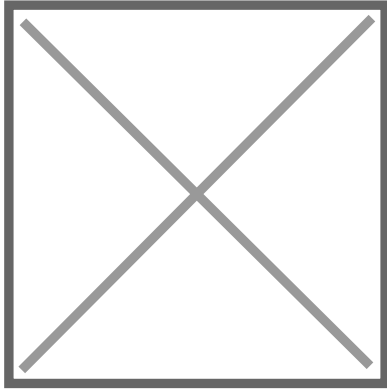




Spotlight: Power, Consent, and Seduction Take the Stage in Voodoo Theatre Company's *Venus in Fur*

Description

SALT LAKE CITY, UT—Voodoo Theatre Company is closing in on five years of producing plays that actors want to be in, and audiences want to see, as founder and director Patrick Kibbie puts it—and its latest offering, opening on July 17th 2026, may be the boldest test of that mission yet. David Ives' *Venus in Fur*, adapted from Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novel, arrives as a taut, R-rated two-hander billed simply as *Power, Desire, Control*. I had the opportunity to sit down with director Patrick Kibbie and assistant director Sophia Van Nederveen—you can watch the interview below.

A Script That Keeps Giving

Kibbie, a Salt Lake City-based director and stage actor who trained at Weber State University and later earned an MFA in Theatre Directing from East 15 Acting School in London, first encountered the play as a Weber State undergraduate, where a theater professor's love for the script planted the seed. It stayed with him for years, waiting for the right cast and the right moment. That moment has come, paired with assistant director Nederveen, a Westminster University graduate returning to Voodoo, who calls the collaboration *a dream* and describes a production that has clicked from day one: a rarity, she says, even for seasoned theater artists.

Both directors describe a script so dense with intention that new details surface at nearly every rehearsal. *There is not a word that is not meant to be in there*, Kibbie says of Ives' writing, a quality that keeps the discovery process alive well past the point most productions settle into routine.

The Setup

In the dim, charged space of a rehearsal room, two strangers collide in a battle of wit and will, where performance blurs into reality and control shifts with every line. Playwright-director Thomas Novachek (Jaden D. Richards) is ready to give up after a day of disappointing auditions for his stage adaptation of

Venus in Furs — until Vanda Jordan (Deena Marie Manzanares, who has called the role a dream ever since seeing the play on Broadway) bursts in late, disheveled, and seemingly all wrong for the part. What begins as a simple audition spirals into a seductive game of power, desire, and domination, unraveling the dynamic between playwright and actress and revealing how easily their roles can be reversed.

The role carries some serious pedigree behind the footlights. Manzanares trained at the Atlantic Theater Company Acting School with additional work at Juilliard, and is an Actor's Equity member whose local credits include Arkadina in *The Seagull* and Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*; Salt Lake audiences may also know her as a host on ABC's *Good Things Utah*. Richards, trained at Westminster University and Snow College, brings stage credits including *The Antipodes* and *Our Town*. Kibbie says the chemistry between the two was non-negotiable, since the entire show rests on their ability to hold each other up scene after scene, with no blackout or costume-change breather to reset.

Handling Intimacy with Care

Given the material, both directors say building trust and clear boundaries with the cast was as important as the staging itself. Van Nederveen's background in criminal justice and prior work around sexual health consultation made her instrumental in shaping a rehearsal process where actors could try bold choices without fear. Kibbie says he leaned heavily on that expertise throughout, calling her work on the show's more intimate moments outstanding.

That groundwork started in the audition room, where casting hinged as much on a sense of safety and chemistry as on talent. Both directors say they could tell almost immediately which auditioners understood the boundaries the material demands, a quality Kibbie Van and Nederveen describe as something that has to already be there, even if they hope it can also be taught. Once cast, the leads came to rehearsal ready to collaborate, regularly proposing their own ideas for approaching the show's more vulnerable scenes rather than waiting to be directed through them.

Resident stage manager Taylynn Rushton rounds out a small team the directors credit with making that work possible, helping hold a rehearsal room where cast members felt safe enough to try choices that might not land — and to say so when they didn't.

What to Expect

Asked what genre the show fits into, both directors paused. Van Nederveen landed on comparisons to recent films exploring power, love, and sexuality: *Obsession*, *Baby Girl*, *Saltburn*, *Wuthering Heights*: a loose, still-unnamed category she says audiences are hungry for, with a psychological edge that tips toward horror. It's a fitting description for a play both call a choose-your-own-adventure experience: take it at face value, or dig into its layers on power and consent; the deeper you go, they say, the more it rewards you.

Venus in Fur is rated R for adult language and content, and both directors are candid that it isn't for everyone. — If you're easily offended, this might not be the show for you, — Kibbie says. Neither director considers the show heavy on themes like domestic abuse specifically, but they encourage anyone unsure whether the content is right for them to read up on the play beforehand — the goal,

they say, is for every audience member to feel as comfortable and safe as the cast does on stage.

Above all, both directors describe a show built for rewatching, one where new layers reveal themselves each time. As Kibbie puts it, he hopes that audiences leave the theater already planning their next visit, eager to catch what they missed the first time around.

Venus in Fur, presented by Voodoo Theatre Company, is recommended for adult audiences only.

[Tickets](#)

Show Info

Voodoo Theatre Company presents *Venus in Fur*

Dates: July 17-26, 2026
Venue: Studio 5400, Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center, Taylorsville, Utah 84129

Enigmatic actress Vanda Jordan appears unannounced for an audition with director Thomas Novachek. She's determined to land the leading role in his new production despite seeming wrong for the part. *Venus in Fur* is an intoxicating dark comedy of desire, fantasy, and the innate love of fur.

Directed by: Patrick Kibbie
Assistant Director: Sophia Van Nederveen

Featuring:

- Deena Marie Manzanares as Vanda Jordan
- Jaden D. Richards as Thomas Novachek

Run Time: 75 minutes, no intermission

Rating: Recommended for mature audiences ages 16 and up. Infants not admitted. All patrons require a ticket.

Bios of Patrick Kibbie and Sophia Van Nederveen with their headshots, from the *Venus in Fur* program

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