

A.C.T. OUT LOUD

CLASSIC PLAYS.
VISIONARY DIRECTORS.

A VIRTUAL PLAY
READING SERIES

The Thornton Wilder's **Matchmaker** Directed by Dawn Monique Williams

A.C.T. AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

WELCOME TO A.C.T.

Welcome to our third and final Out Loud play!

“Pudding!”
“Pudding.”
“Pudding.”
“Puddin’.” “Pudding!!!” “Pudden.”
“Pudding.”
“Pudding.” “Pudding!”
“Pudding!!!”
“PUDDING!”
“Puddin’.” “Pudding.”
“Pudding.”
“Pudding!!!!!”

As voiced by our cast of fifteen actors, nine of whom are A.C.T. third-year MFA students, this code word between the delightfully wide-eyed characters Cornelius and Barnaby becomes absurdly fun and meaningless. Say it fifteen times aloud yourself to see. Yet, we are certainly on an adventure with this rollicking play about staying present and true to your heart.

I so appreciate the humor of Thornton Wilder’s *The Matchmaker*. He makes me laugh out loud. I also love the feeling of inertia and drive toward our matches and eventual couples. It’s a familiar story, even if one doesn’t know it or its progeny *Hello Dolly!*; its fun inevitability is a hook. And who can’t use or deserve some fun these days. I personally look forward to more adventures in the city, as we continue to re-open. Hopefully this spring will be a time of reconnecting and joyous surprises.

This company of actors under Dawn Monique Williams’s direction had four days to begin an exploration of this big, heartwarming play. When we first scheduled the Out Loud reading series, we thought surely by May we could be together in one of our theaters. We had hoped this all local-to-the-Bay-Area company would perform the reading live in front of you, our audience, but here we are still on Zoom, but still having fun. As Barnaby, played by third-year MFA Zahan Mehta, says to close this play: “We all hope that in your lives that you have just the right amount of sitting quietly at home and just the right amount of . . . ADVENTURE.”

Enjoy!



Pam MacKinnon
Artistic Director

Welcome to *The Matchmaker!*

American Conservatory Theater is San Francisco’s premier nonprofit theater. We exist to bring artists and communities together to inspire and provoke joy, connection, reflection, curiosity, and so much more. Thank you for joining us!

We’re delighted to conclude our Out Loud series with Thornton Wilder’s *The Matchmaker*, directed by Dawn Monique Williams. This uproarious comedy explores the limitations of wealth and the necessity of generosity, and we’re thrilled to be working with some of our favorite local actors for this reading—Michael J. Asberry, Aldo Billingslea, Joy Carlin, Catherine Castellanos, Will Dao, and Leontyne Mbele-Mbong. Also featured are members of our MFA class of 2021. After *The Matchmaker*, our twelve talented MFA students will embark on their showcase, taking the next step in their artistic careers.

Up next at A.C.T. is Heather Christian’s *Animal Wisdom*, a dazzling, original film experience adapted from the stage production that had a sold-out run at The Bushwick Starr. It is an extraordinary musical experience that fuses blues, gospel, and folk, as Heather invites us all to raise a glass to the unseen forces that shape our lives. And we have just announced *Communion*, a new play we have commissioned from Obie Award-winning San Francisco playwright Christopher Chen. Through the Zoom video conferencing platform, you’re invited to “connect” with celebrated Bay Area actor Stacy Ross, who is looking to commune with a private audience. The tale she has to tell is from the heart—but can you trust a person whose professional career has been spent making you believe she is someone that she is not? This truly interactive experience is directed by our very own Pam MacKinnon, and you will have the opportunity to influence the story’s outcome.

Then we cannot wait to welcome you back to the theater in person. We’re thrilled to announce our in-person season beginning again in January 2022. We are sharing an unprecedented trio of Bay Area premieres with you—the Broadway hit *Freestyle Love Supreme*, the National Theatre production of *The Lehman Trilogy*, and the greatly anticipated world-premiere musical *Soul Train*. We’re also producing one of the most influential plays of the 20th century, María Irene Fornés’s *Fefu and Her Friends*. These plays reflect our mission and values and represent everything we hold dear about our art form and our community. To subscribe to our season, you can contact our box office at 415.749.2228 or visit act-sf.org.

The best ways you can help us navigate this time is to continue your commitment as a ticket buyer, as a donor, and to spread the word to your networks. We’re so grateful for your continued participation, and we can’t wait to see you at the theater.

Enjoy the show,



Jennifer Bielstein
Executive Director

**PAM
MACKINNON**
Artistic Director

**JENNIFER
BIELSTEIN**
Executive Director

A.C.T. AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

PRESENTS

Thornton Wilder's
The Matchmaker
Directed by Dawn Monique Williams

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THANK OUR GENEROUS
SUPPORTERS INCLUDING OUR**

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Thornton Wilder's **The Matchmaker** Directed by Dawn Monique Williams

THE CAST

JOE SCANLON / MALACHI STACK	MICHAEL J. ASBERRY
CABMAN	CLINT BIDWELL
HORACE VANDERGELDER	ALDO BILLINGSLEA
GERTRUDE	JOY CARLIN
DOLLY LEVI	CATHERINE CASTELLANOS
RUDOLPH	JOHN CHUKWUDELUNZU
CORNELIUS HACKL	WILL DAO
MINNIE FAY	ASHLEY J. HICKS
AUGUST	JORDAN MAIA
MRS. IRENE MALLOY	LEONTYNE MBELE-MBONG
BARNABY TUCKER	ZAHAN F. MEHTA
MISS VAN HUYSEN'S COOK/STAGE DIRECTIONS	MĀKENA MILLER
ERMENGARDE	RACHEL MORRISON
AMBROSE KEMPER	CHRIS STEVENS
MISS FLORA VAN HUYSEN	KAIY WATTS

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DIRECTOR	DAWN MONIQUE WILLIAMS
VIDEO DESIGNER & EDITOR	LUIS GARCIA
PRODUCTION DESIGNER	RANDY WONG-WESTBROOKE
DRAMATURG	ALLIE MOSS
VOCAL SUPPORT	CHRISTINE ADAIRE
CASTING	ALLIE MOSS
STAGE MANAGER	ELISA GUTHERTZ

THE MATCHMAKER STAFF

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INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER	AMY DALBA
COMPANY MANAGER	SABRA JAFFE
VIDEO CONTENT PRODUCER	BERYL BAKER

A.C.T. PRODUCING TEAM

ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR	ANDY CHAN DONALD
GENERAL MANAGER	LOUISA LISKA
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION	MARTIN BARRON

The Actors and Stage Manager employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.

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ABOUT A.C.T.

American Conservatory Theater is an essential gathering place that brings artists and communities together to inspire and provoke. Our mission is to engage the spirit of the San Francisco Bay Area, activate stories that resonate, promote a diversity of voices and points of view, and empower theater makers and audiences to celebrate liveness. We value inclusion, transformational learning, participation, and rigorous fun.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As part of our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion at A.C.T., we are in the process of building a meaningful relationship with the local Indigenous theater community. As part of this we begin by honoring the lands upon which we do our work. We would be proud to offer deep gratitude to the tribal band of Ramaytush Ohlone peoples and their lands that cover Northern California and down the Pacific coastline. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 1700s, the Ramaytush Ohlone numbered approximately 1500 persons, and made their life on the sacred lands. Only a few families survived and still remain. Those descendants make up the membership of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone (ARO) today. We honor the Ohlone as a people, their resilience, and all they have done and continue to do in maintaining sacred and ancestral lands, ceremony, and communities to this day.

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WHO'S WHO IN THE MATCHMAKER



MICHAEL J. ASBERRY (Joe Scanlon/Malachi Stack) made his A.C.T. debut with *Father Comes Home from the Wars* (Parts 1, 2 & 3). Asberry most recently appeared in *The Bluest Eye* with Aurora Theatre Company. Other theater credits include *Las Meninas* (Profile Theater); *The Rotten Orchard* (San Francisco Mime Troupe); Best of Playground Festival; *Red Speedo* (Center REPeratory Company); *Fences* (Pacific Conservatory Theatre);

When We Were Colored—A Mother's Story, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *The Whipping Man*, and "Master Harold" ... and the Boys (Sacramento Theatre Company); *Nora* (Shotgun Players); *The Box* (Z Space); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* (San Francisco Shakespeare Festival); *Landless* (Alter Theater); *Seven Guitars* (Artists Repertory Theatre); *Day of Absence*, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, *King Hedley II*, and *Fabulation*, or the *Re-Education of Undine* (The Lorraine Hansberry Theatre); *Superior Donuts* (TheatreWorks Silicon Valley); *Topdog/Underdog* (6th Street Playhouse); and *Satellites* (Aurora Theatre Company). Film appearances include *San Andreas*, *Mr. Incredible and Pals*, *Chasing Rodriguez*, and *Portable Storage*. Television credits include *Chance* (Hulu), *Trauma* (NBC), and *Nash Bridges* (CBS). Asberry has recorded voiceover spots for Pixar Animation, Pine Sol, Sweetos, General Motors, and Electronic Arts.



CLINT BIDWELL (Cabman) is in his third year of A.C.T.'s MFA program. Favorite MFA roles include Vic in *Ironbound*, Crick in *Late: A Cowboy Song*, and Mrs. Jennings in *Sense and Sensibility*. He wants to give a big shoutout to his friends and family in Honolulu, Walla Walla, and the Bay Area! He loves his Mom, Dad, and Tata very much. (he/him)



ALDO BILLINGSLEA (Horace Vandergelder) is an actor, director, and founder of the Juneteenth Theatre Justice Project. Favorite roles include: Othello, Troy Maxson, Paul Robeson, Tshembe in Lorraine Hansberry's *Les Blancs*, Pa Siddin' in Marcus Gardley's *Black Odyssey*, and John Merrick in *The Elephant Man*. Billingslea is in his 23rd year at Santa Clara University where he teaches acting. (he/they)



JOY CARLIN (Gertrude) has been an actor and director in the Bay Area since 1969. She spent 25 years as member of the company at A.C.T., where she was associate artistic director for five years. From 1981–84 she was the resident director and interim artistic director at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She graduated from the University of Chicago and Yale School of Drama, studied with Lee Strasberg in New York, and has roots in Chicago's The Second City.

She often acts or directs at Aurora Theatre Company, San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, Shotgun Players, San Jose Repertory Theatre, and Jewel Theatre in Santa Cruz. She has been seen on TV and in films, including most recently in Woody Allen's *Blue Jasmine*.



CATHERINE CASTELLANOS (Dolly Levi) made her A.C.T. debut as Church Lady in *Between Riverside and Crazy*. From 2016 to 2020, she appeared at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in *Bring Down the House, parts I and II; Mother Road; La Comedia of Errors; Destiny of Desire; The Book of Will; The Merry Wives of Windsor; The Odyssey; Roe* (Helen Hayes nomination); and *Richard II*. She is an associate artist with California Shakespeare Theater and

a company member with the San Francisco-based theater Campo Santo. Regional credits include Magic Theatre, Shotgun Players, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, Arena Stage, Portland Center Stage at The Armory, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Arizona Theatre Company. She has taught restorative justice through theater arts with formerly incarcerated young women at Community Works West—Rising Voices, and with the men at San Quentin State Prison.



JOHN CHUKWUDELUNZU (Ruldolph) possesses a BA degree in strategic legal communications and a minor in theater arts from Howard University, and has also had the honor of training through British American Drama Academy's Midsummer in Oxford program. It has been a privilege for him to continue his practice of the craft over these past three years at A.C.T., and he looks forward to continuing his maturation in this compelling artform. (he/him)

WHO'S WHO IN THE MATCHMAKER



WILL DAO (Cornelius Hackl) is thrilled to return to A.C.T. where he previously participated in the New Strands Festival. Bay Area credits include Atung in *The Chinese Lady* (Magic Theatre) and Actor 3 in *King of the Yees* (San Francisco Playhouse). His four seasons at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival include *The Merry Wives of Windsor* directed by Dawn Monique Williams, *Snow in Midsummer*, and *Vietgone*. His recent virtual performances

include workshops of Stefani Kuo's *The Conservation of Parity* (Kitchen Theatre Company, Ma-Yi Theater Company) and *Final Boarding Call* (Ma-Yi, WP Theater, Playwrights Foundation). Find out more at www.willdao.com and @thewilldao on Instagram. (he/him)



LEONTYNE MBELE-MBONG (Irene Malloy) most recently appeared in *The Half-Life of Marie Curie* (TheatreSquared, Aurora Theatre Company), and *Bull in a China Shop* at Aurora, where she also appeared in *Breakfast with Mugabe*. Favorite projects include *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, the title role in *Medea* (TBA Award), and Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra* at African-American Shakespeare Company

where she also production-managed. Other credits include *Watch on the Rhine* (Guthrie Theater/Berkeley Repertory Theater); *Top Girls* (Shotgun Players); *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (Aluminous Collective); *Fences* (Altarena Playhouse); *Andromache* (Central Works); *Intimate Apparel* (Solano College). leontynembele-mbong.com (she/her)



ASHLEY J. HICKS (Minnie Fay) is a native of St. Louis. She received her BA in theater from the University of Missouri-Columbia and will be graduating with her MFA this spring from A.C.T. Recent roles/collaborations include: Petrushka (*Moon Man Walk*, A.C.T.), *it's not a trip, it's a journey* (Chautauqua Theater), and *We Are Here #RepresentationMatters* (Salesforce). She is very excited to be a part of this farcical favorite!



ZAHAN F. MEHTA (Barnaby Tucker) is a third-year student in A.C.T.'s MFA program. Born and brought up in Bombay, he graduated with a BFA in acting from Northeastern University before spending a life-changing semester at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in the National Music Theater Institute program. His past roles include Melchior in *Spring Awakening* and Maks in *Ironbound*. Mehta is also a multi-instrumentalist with a passion for Prog Rock. (he/him)



JORDAN MAIA (August) is a third-year acting student from Connecticut. Before coming to A.C.T., Maia studied drama at the University of Virginia. Since then, Maia has participated in a variety of projects here in San Francisco and will be filming for a web series called *Black Enough* this summer! (he/him)



MĀKENA MILLER (Miss Van Huysen's Cook/Stage Directions) grew up in Honolulu, Hawai'i. She graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA in 2014. Miller is a mover and has trained with the American Ballet Theatre, Ballet Hawaii, and the San Francisco Ballet School. While living in New York, Miller performed improv on a weekly basis with her musical improv teams Charlie, Club Monika, and Bronson, as well as

sketch comedy, and has co-hosted shows at The Slipper Room, Peoples Improve Theater NYC, Legion Bar, and Broadway Comedy Club. She's also an editor and loves to produce musical parodies! (she/they)

WHO'S WHO IN THE MATCHMAKER



RACHEL MORRISON (Ermengarde) is excited to be back on the A.C.T. virtual stage after her role as Christmas Past in *A Christmas Carol: On Air*. Originally from South Dakota, she holds a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. She is currently in her third year in A.C.T.'s MFA program. (she/her)

THORNTON WILDER (Playwright) was an American playwright, novelist, and educator. He was a three-time Pulitzer Prize recipient for his novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* and his plays *Our Town* and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Born in Madison, Wisconsin in 1897, Wilder studied at Oberlin College and Yale University. After publishing his first novel *The Cabala* in 1926, he continued writing both novels and plays, garnering financial and literary success. His works explored universal themes of the human condition, such as mortality, religion, and history. In 1968, he earned the National Book Award for his novel *The Eighth Day*. He died in 1975 at his home in Hamden, Connecticut.



CHRIS STEVENS (Ambrose Kemper) is excited to be a part of this team of virtual performing artists in *The Matchmaker!* He is a third-year MFA student at A.C.T. Some of his recent favorite A.C.T. credits include playing Tiny Tim, Dick Wilkins, and Narrator 1 in a radio-play adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, Tommy in *Ironbound*, and Mercutio in a Bay Area tour of *Romeo and Juliet*. He holds a BA in drama from Kenyon College, where he won the Paul Newman

DAWN MONIQUE WILLIAMS (Director) is the associate artistic director at Aurora Theatre Company in Berkeley, CA. Her recent directing credits include an audio version of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (Aurora), *The Half-Life Of Marie Curie* (TheatreSquared), *Letters To Kamala* (American Stage Theatre Company), *Bull In A China Shop* (Aurora), *Earthrise* (Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts), *The Merry Wives Of Windsor* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Moon Man Walk*, *Tijean and His Brothers*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (A.C.T. MFA), an audio version of *Las Meninas*, *The Secretaries* (both at Profile Theatre), *Romeo and Juliet* (Chautauqua Theater Company), August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* (Le Petit Theatre), and *By The Way, Meet Stark* (Douglas Morrisson Theatre). Awards include: Princess Grace Theatre Fellowship, TCG Leadership U[niversity] One-on-One program, and a Drama League directing fellowship. She holds an MA in dramatic literature and an MFA in directing. Williams is a proud member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). (she/her)

Award for his work in *Dying City*. @oddstevens, website: chrisstevens.work (he/him)



KAIY WATTS (Miss Flora Van Huysen) is a Guyanese African-American actress from Long Island, New York. She holds a bachelor's degree from The George Washington University in theatre and is expecting her master's from American Conservatory Theater this May. Her most recent A.C.T. credits include Natalie in *Next to Normal*, Esther in *Moon Man Walk*, Miranda in *Rough Magic*, and Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, among others. Other Bay Area

performances include work with the Bay Area Playwrights Festival, TheaterFirst, and First Fifteen L.A. (she/they)

WHO'S WHO IN THE MATCHMAKER

LUIS GARCIA (Video Designer & Editor) is a Peruvian-American lighting and video designer. His design work has been seen in productions at Theatre Forward, American Conservatory Theatre, Theatre Bay Area, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among others. Recently, Garcia has developed his skills as a livestream programmer and consultant for many productions and fundraisers such as Theatre Forward's 2021 Virtual Gala and A.C.T.'s *Blood Wedding*. In 2018, he was recognized as one of *Live Design's* 30 Under 30 as someone "changing paradigms, looking at things from new angles, and rapidly rising to the forefront of their field." (he/him)

RANDY WONG-WESTBROOKE (Production Designer) is primarily a scenic designer born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. Driven by their own mixed identities, they seek opportunities to work with diverse creative teams to tell relevant, impactful, and intersectional stories. They have designed sets for A.C.T.'s MFA program, TheatreFIRST, Crowded Fire Theater, Shotgun Players, Ferocious Lotus, New Conservatory Theater Center, San Francisco Playhouse's Sandbox, The Custom Made Theatre Company, Cutting Ball Theater, PlayGround, as well as many other independent projects and world premieres. They are proud to be part of Oregon Shakespeare Festival's FAIR and United States Institute for Theatre Technology's Gateway cohorts. They hold a BFA from Ithaca College. rwwestbrooke.com (they/them)

ALLIE MOSS (Dramaturg/Casting) is A.C.T.'s literary manager and casting associate, as well as a freelance director and dramaturg in the Bay Area. Her casting work for A.C.T. includes several plays in development, A.C.T.'s annual New Strands Festival, and the 2020 production of *A Christmas Carol: On Air*. Recent dramaturgy credits include *Toni Stone*, *Top Girls*, and *The Realistic Joneses* (American Conservatory Theater); *The Birds of Empathy* (Bay Area Playwrights Festival); and *You'll Not Feel the Drowning* (The Custom Made Theatre Company). As a director, she has worked at San Francisco Playhouse, Cutting Ball Theater, The Custom Made Theatre Company, FaultLine Theater, Playwrights Foundation, Left Coast Theatre Company, and in A.C.T.'s Conservatory. Moss holds a BA in theater from Goucher College. (she/her)

CHRISTINE ADAIRE (Vocal Support) is head of voice at A.C.T. She is a Designated Master Linklater Voice Teacher, and has worked as an actor, voice coach, and director in many American regional theaters, including The Old Globe, Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, the Guthrie Theater, Chicago Shakespeare, Goodman Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Theatre for a New Audience (NYC), Santa Cruz Shakespeare, La Jolla Playhouse, and Shakespeare & Company. Adaire has taught at DePaul University, National Theatre School of Canada, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Roosevelt University. Her current area of research and writing is gender affirming voice. (she/her)

ELISA GUTHERTZ (Stage Manager) has been a Bay Area stage manager for over 28 years. She was head stage manager at American Conservatory Theater for 16 years where her most recent credits were *Toni Stone* and *Testmatch*. She stage-managed *A Thousand Splendid Suns* at A.C.T., The Old Globe, and Theatre Calgary. Her numerous other productions for A.C.T. include *Seascape*, *Sweat*, *Heisenberg*, *Hamlet*, *A Night with Janis Joplin*, *Love and Information*, *Testament*, *Major Barbara*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *Arcadia*, *The Normal Heart*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, *Clybourne Park*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *The Rainmaker*, *A Number*, and Eve Ensler's *The Good Body*, among others. She has also stage-managed *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Rhinoceros*, *Big Love*, *Collected Stories*, and *Cloud Tectonics* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *The Good Body* (Broadway); *Big Love* (Brooklyn Academy of Music); and *The Vagina Monologues* with Eve Ensler (Alcazar Theatre).

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A.C.T. gratefully acknowledges the following list of Bravo Circle supporters who have pledged their commitment to the organization for the next two years. Their philanthropic generosity and investment in A.C.T.'s future through multi-year giving have played an invaluable role in ensuring the theater's strong rebound from these unprecedented times, helping make productions like this one possible. Thank you, truly!

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