



# Virtually Speaking

Conversations Hosted by **Pam MacKinnon**

Featuring  
**Ken Ruta**

Livestream: **Apr 16, 2021**

On-demand: **May 1–Jun 30, 2021**

# WELCOME TO A.C.T.

## Welcome Friends,

A.C.T. exists to bring artists and communities together to inspire and provoke joy, connection, reflection, curiosity, and so much more. Having you here with the talented Ken Ruta does just that! Thank you for joining us.

Ken is an original company member of A.C.T., appearing in founder William Ball's productions at the Geary in 1967. This was when A.C.T. was a repertory company, and Ken would act in multiple shows concurrently throughout the season. On our stages, he has been in everything from *Tartuffe* to *The Elephant Man* to *A Christmas Carol*. In the words of A.C.T. Director of Dramaturgy and New Works Joy Meads, a Bay Area native, "If you saw that Ken Ruta was in the cast, you knew it was going to be good."

Ken was also a dedicated teacher in our conservatory, and has been in over 70 productions around the world. He has worked with some of the most prestigious and venerated theaters in the country, and appeared in numerous Broadway productions. He was last seen at the Geary as Jacob Marley in 2019's *Carol*. We are delighted that he is joining us in the digital realm for this conversation.

We are enjoying creating theater together virtually. We are currently in the midst of our Out Loud reading series, bringing you classic works by Alice Childress, George Bernard Shaw, and Thornton Wilder. Our work in our education and community programs remains active as ever, with A.C.T. teaching artists bringing arts education to students throughout the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD). And performers from our Young Conservatory continue to showcase their talent online.

Next in our mainstage season, we're bringing you a dazzling, original film experience with Heather Christian's *Animal Wisdom*, a musical séance about the unseen forces that shape our lives. And we have just announced *Communion*, an interactive play we have commissioned from Obie Award-winning San Francisco playwright Christopher Chen to be performed live over Zoom. In conversation with each small audience, this virtual gathering—as much as a play—directed by Tony Award-winner Pam MacKinnon and starring celebrated Bay Area actor Stacy Ross, will be different each performance and makes the opportunity for unexpected communion.

We are 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 are also mounting an immersive production of 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](http://act-sf.org).

One of 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. From the A.C.T. family, we are so grateful for your continued participation!

Stay safe,



Pam MacKinnon  
Artistic Director



Jennifer Bielstein  
Executive Director

To learn more about our 20/21/22 season, visit [our website](http://our website).



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Pam MacKinnon in a conversation with Ken Ruta

Livestream: **Apr 16, 2021**

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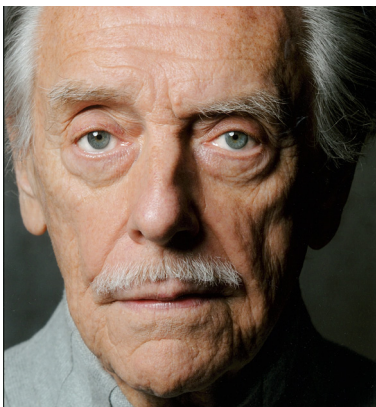
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\*\*deceased

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**Ken Ruta** moved to San Francisco in 1963, and became an original company member at A.C.T. He played Scrooge in A.C.T.'s original *Christmas Carol* from 1989 to 1991, and returned for the role of Jacob Marley from 2005 to 2019, while continuing as narrator (on tape!) for Center REPeratory's *Carol*. Since A.C.T.'s debut at The Geary, Ruta has participated in more than 70 productions. He is a founding member of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park and served for 12 seasons as actor, teacher, and associate artistic director at the Guthrie Theater. An associate artist with San Diego's Old Globe, he has enjoyed a 25-year association with Arizona Theater Company. On and off-Broadway credits include *Inherit the Wind*, *Separate Tables*, *Duel of Angels*, *Under Milkwood*, *Ross*, *The Three Sisters*, *Doctor Faustus*, and *The Elephant Man*. His 72 years of performing include work with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Minnesota Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony, not to mention most of the nation's leading LORT companies. Most recently, he performed in Actors Ensemble of Berkeley's *John Gabriel Borkman* and CounterPulse's *Adelia (or, the nose play)*.



**Pam MacKinnon** is in her third season as A.C.T.'s fourth artistic director. She is a Tony, Drama Desk, and Obie award-winning director, having directed upwards of 75 productions around the country, off Broadway, and on Broadway. Her Broadway credits include Beau Willimon's *The Parisian Woman* (with Uma Thurman), David Mamet's *China Doll* (with Al Pacino), Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* (with Elisabeth Moss), Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* (with Glenn Close and John Lithgow), Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, and Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park*. Her most recent credits include world premieres of Bruce Norris's *Downstate* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, London's National Theatre), Lydia R. Diamond's *Toni Stone* (Roundabout Theatre Company, A.C.T.), Kate Attwell's *Testmatch* (A.C.T.), and Edward Albee's *Seascape* (A.C.T.). She grew up in Toronto, Canada, and Buffalo, New York, and majored in economics and political science at the University of Toronto. (she/her)

## 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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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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