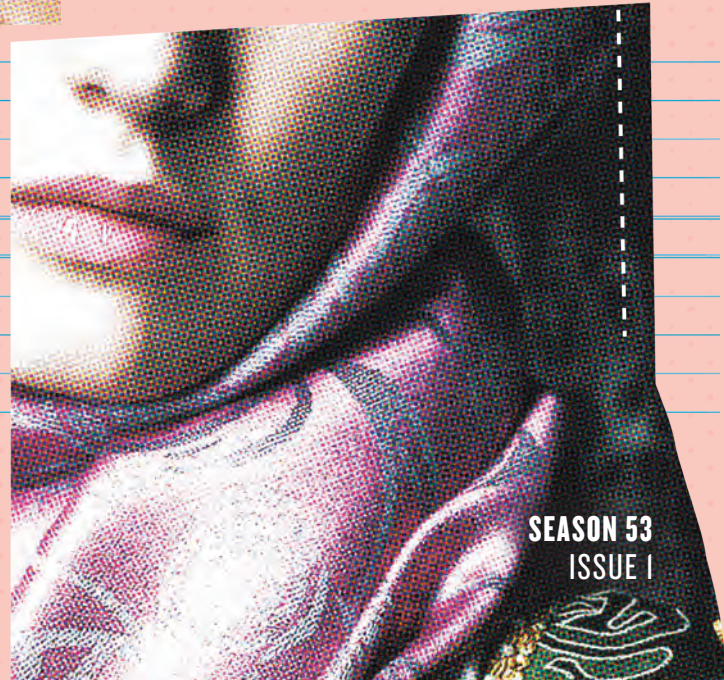


SEPTEMBER 2019

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TOP GIRLS



SEASON 53
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SAN FRANCISCO'S THEATER COMPANY

American Conservatory Theater is a Tony Award-winning theater and educational institution dedicated to cultivating the art of live theater through our dynamic productions, intensive actor training in our Conservatory, and an ongoing engagement with our community. Under the leadership of Tony and Obie award-winning Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein, we embrace our responsibility to refresh, renew, and reinvent the rich theatrical traditions and literatures that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and communities. Since opening our first San Francisco season in 1967, A.C.T. has presented more than 400 productions to a combined audience of more than seven million people. Today, A.C.T.'s performance, education, and outreach programs reach almost 250,000 people in the Bay Area each year.

A.C.T.'s Conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, is a three-year, fully accredited Master of Fine Arts Program consistently rated as one of America's top actor-training programs. Our Summer Training Congress attracts students from around the world, the San Francisco Semester offers a unique, immersive training opportunity for undergraduates, and Studio A.C.T. helps adults get in touch with their inner artist through part-time, professional-caliber classes. Our alumni are working theater-makers, writing, directing, producing,

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A key part of A.C.T.'s dedication to lifelong learning, our Education & Community Programs include our Young Conservatory (students ages 8–19), our Fellowship Program for emerging theater professionals, and our ACTsmart school and community programs, featuring the Student Matinee (SMAT) program, our touring Will on Wheels Shakespeare productions, teaching-artist residences, and workshops at schools and community-based organizations. Every year, these programs provide nearly 20,000 young people and educators from around the Bay Area with opportunities to experience the transformative potential of dramatic storytelling; develop creativity, critical thinking, and collaborative spirit; and foster the artists and audiences of the future.

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Testmatch

by Kate Attwell

Directed by
Pam MacKinnon

A scorching, time-traveling
world premiere

OCT 24-DEC 8
STRAND THEATER



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens Directed by
Peter J. Kuo
Adapted by
Carey Perloff
and Paul Walsh
Based on
the original
direction by
Carey Perloff

Music by
Karl Lundeberg

Choreography by
Val Caniparoli

NOV 29-DEC 24
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WAKEY, WAKEY

JAN 23-FEB 16
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Wakey, Wakey

by Will Eno

Directed by

Anne

Kauffman

Starring

Two-time
Emmy Award winner

Tony Hale



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Gloria
by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins
Directed by Eric Ting

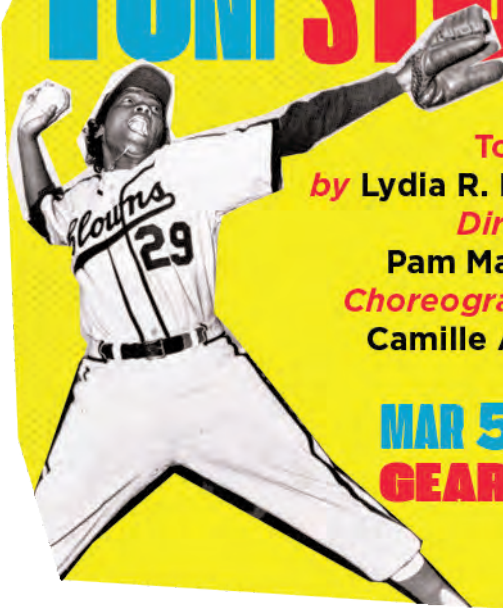
FEB 13-APR 12
STRAND THEATER



TONI STONE

Toni Stone
by Lydia R. Diamond
Directed by Pam MacKinnon
Choreographed by Camille A. Brown

MAR 5-29
GEARY THEATER

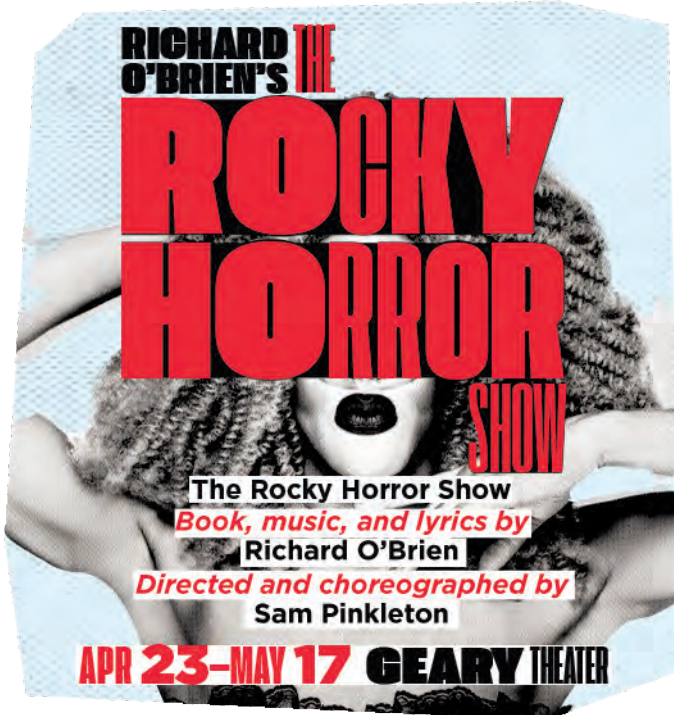


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ROCKY HORROR SHOW

The Rocky Horror Show
Book, music, and lyrics by
Richard O'Brien
Directed and choreographed by
Sam Pinkleton

APR 23-MAY 17 GEARY THEATER



POOR YELLA REDNECKS: VIETGONE PART 2

Poor Yella Rednecks:
Vietgone Part 2
by Qui Nguyen
Directed by
Jaime Castañeda

JUN 4-28
GEARY THEATER



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The Drinks & Drama Fridays schedule:

Testmatch, a world premiere about the rules of play on and off the field (Friday, October 25)

Wakey, Wakey, starring two-time Emmy Award winner Tony Hale (Friday, January 24)

Gloria, a scalpel-sharp dark comedy from MacArthur "Genius" winner Branden Jacobs-Jenkins (Friday, February 14)

Toni Stone, the unforgettable true story of a trail-blazing Bay Area athlete (Friday, March 6)

Richard O'Brien's *The Rocky Horror Show*, reimaged by Tony Award-nominated director-choreographer Sam Pinkleton (Friday, April 24)

Poor Yella Rednecks: *Vietgone Part 2*, the next chapter in playwright Qui Nguyen's rollicking *Vietgone* trilogy (Friday, June 5)

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The cast of A.C.T.'s 2019 production of *Top Girls*.

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19/20 SEASON



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and A.C.T. Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon



TESTMATCH

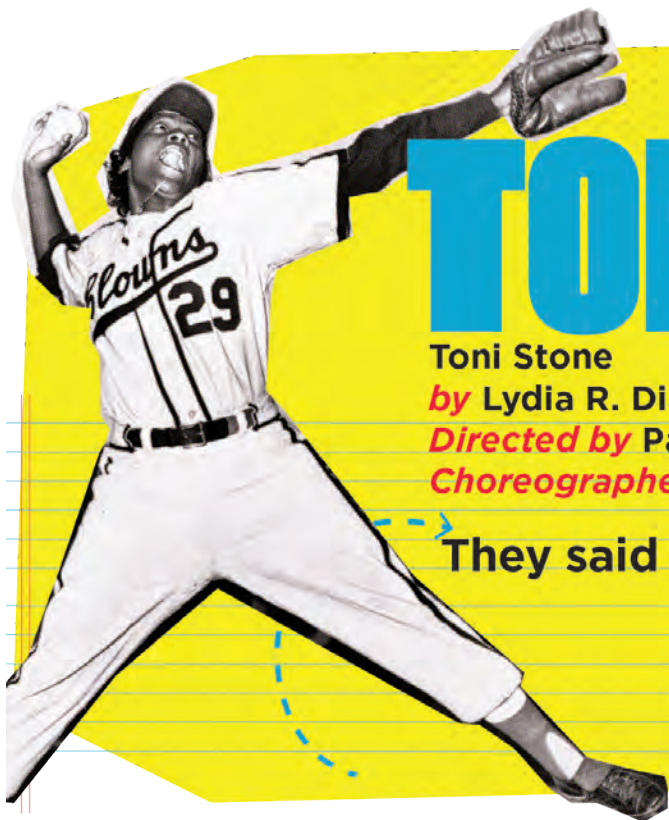
Testmatch

by Kate Attwell

Directed by Pam MacKinnon

A scorching, time-traveling
world premiere about
breaking the rules

OCT 24-DEC 8
STRAND THEATER



TONI STONE

Toni Stone

by Lydia R. Diamond

Directed by Pam MacKinnon

Choreographed by Camille A. Brown

They said she couldn't . . . so she did.

MAR 5-29
GEARY THEATER

Tickets on sale now at ACT-SF.ORG.

FROM THE ARTISTIC + EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

THE A.C.T. 19/20 SEASON explores the theme of “rules of play,” the struggle to transcend embedded systems. When thinking about *Top Girls*, I am reminded of my grandfather’s funeral. Not because of the story but because of the stickiness of “rules of play” in families.

My aunt and uncle assumed that my mother, their sister, would not want to speak at the memorial. My mother was the sibling who left home for college and only returned to visit; it was presumed that meant something larger than independence. It was assumed that she no longer had equal emotional or ceremonial status.

I remember the scene in my aunt’s living room. My aunt and uncle gave eulogies and then suggested we return to our conversations. My mother stood and focused the room toward her. She pitched herself as the one who went away because her parents emboldened her to do so. The world stretched beyond the Okanagan Valley and British Columbia. Her father made sure she knew that. Her move from the nest was not a slight but a consequence. She was passionate and eloquent.

A few years later when my grandmother died, my aunt and uncle spread their parents’ ashes off Salt Spring Island, BC. Again they neglected to include my mother in this ritual. “She was the one who went away. Why would she care?” was their attitude, a thought sprung not from hate but from family legacy, those silent “rules of play” made between them when they were teenagers.

Caryl Churchill’s masterpiece shows us that these family legacies and compromises always surface, even in fantasy. Deep in the mind of Marlene, in a dreamlike celebration of success, is a silent waitress who becomes Marlene’s sister, Joyce. The playwright is of course setting up the rules of play at every turn. *Top Girls* explores feminism against the patriarchy, ambition and talent against classism, sister against sister, and young Angie against the world. I hope it stirs up memories; makes you laugh and wince.



Pam MacKinnon, Tony Award winner and Artistic Director

MY, DOES TIME FLY! Just moments ago we were welcoming actors and artists into our Summer Training Congress, Studio A.C.T., and Young Conservatory programs for the summer. Now we’re thrilled to welcome you, our audience, as we kick off our season!

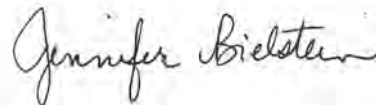
We’re excited to open the season with *Top Girls*, a fierce look at feminism in 1980s Britain, what it means to be a woman in a man’s world, and what our responsibilities are to each other. *Top Girls* is written by Caryl Churchill, one of our most important living playwrights. You may remember her work from A.C.T.’s production of *Love and Information* in 2015. *Top Girls* has much provocative material, which will definitely make for interesting conversation on the ride home, over postshow drinks with friends, or with colleagues at the watercooler.

At the same time, the second show of our season, *Testmatch*, is in rehearsals at the Strand Theater. We welcome playwright Kate Attwell into our midst to work on this lively, time-traveling piece that uses the sport of cricket to explore colonialism, gender, and power. I hope you’ll join us for this world premiere.

If you’re interested in seeing what our up-and-coming actors are working on, check out the MFA Program production of *Ti Jean and His Brothers*, featuring our third-year MFA actors. This poetic, musical fable—about three brothers who go out into the world to try and outwit the devil—will be playing the Strand September 26–28. Then in October, these MFA actors will present a cabaret of lyrical hip-hop at the Costume Shop Theater.

Also in October, our Young Conservatory is hosting our first Student One-Minute Play Festival, featuring plays conceived and written by teens across the Bay Area. Under the artistic direction of Dominic D’Andrea, founder of the national movement #1MPF, students will explore the issues that matter to them. Learn more about this project and the rest of our MFA and YC performances on our website.

Fill your fall schedule with A.C.T. and invite your friends to do the same! I hope to see you here.



Jennifer Bielstein, Executive Director



JENNIFER BIELSTEIN
AND PAM MACKINNON

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own Margaret Cho

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PRESENTS

TOP GIRLS

by **CARYL CHURCHILL**

Directed by
TAMILLA WOODARD

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POSSIBLE BY

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Donald J. and Toni Ratner Miller

Associate Producer

Dr. Allan P. Gold and Mr. Alan C. Ferrara

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Original New York production by the New
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Produced by Joseph Papp

Top Girls is presented by special
arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.,
a Concord Theatricals Company.

TOP GIRLS

CAST (in alphabetical order)

MONIQUE HAFEN ADAMS*
Patient Griselda/Mrs. Kidd

MICHELLE BECK*
Marlene

SUMMER BROWN**
Dull Gret/Nell

ROSIE HALLETT*
Pope Joan/Win

LILY D. HARRIS**
Kit/Shona

MONICA LIN**
Lady Nijo/Jeanine

JULIA MCNEAL*
Isabella Bird/Louise

GABRIELLA MOMAH*
Angie

NAFEESA MONROE*
Joyce/Waitress

UNDERSTUDIES

SUMMER BROWN**
Angie

VELINA BROWN*
Marlene, Joyce/Waitress

LILY D. HARRIS**
Louise

MELANIE ARII MAH*
Lady Nijo/Jeanine,
Dull Gret/Nell

JASMINE OSBORNE*
Kit/Shona, Pope Joan/Win,
Patient Griselda/Mrs. Kidd, Isabella Bird

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Stage Manager

CHRISTINA HOGAN*
Assistant Stage Manager

**HANNAH ROSE-
JING STOFFER**
Stage Management Fellow

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JAKE RODRIGUEZ
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ALLIE MOSS
Dramaturg

JANET FOSTER, CSA
Casting Director

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Associate Artistic Director

LOUISA BALCH
General Manager

MARTIN BARRON
Director of Production

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ONSTAGE NOW



PHOTO BY CLAIRE L. WONG

DEFINING YOUR SELF

CATCHING UP WITH TOP GIRLS DIRECTOR TAMILLA WOODARD

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

Each of us can remember the moment where we discovered an artist who forever changed the way we see the world. For director **Tamilla Woodard**, that artist was Caryl Churchill. “She’s one of the most exquisite writers of the contemporary theater,” says Woodard. “She understands theatricality.”

The same can be said for Woodard, whose directing credits include participatory carnivals (*3/Fifths*), game shows (*American Dreams*), and sports (*Yellow Card Red Card*). Now a year after bringing the rip-roaring adventure *Men on Boats* to the Strand and hot off the success of associate-directing this year’s Tony Award-winning musical *Hadestown*, this inventive theater-maker is back at A.C.T. with Churchill’s *Top Girls*.

Is this your first Churchill play?

Directing, yes, but I have acted in three: *The Skriker*, *Serious Money*, and *Mad Forest: A Play from Romania*. I love Caryl Churchill. I was in my first year at Carnegie Mellon when Mark Wing-Davey’s production of *Mad Forest* toured to Pittsburgh. Imagine a giant black box, and just a few chairs and the audience seating. The world was conjured entirely and profoundly within and with the actors’ bodies. That production was the most mind-blowing thing. The play did things I didn’t know plays could do. It was intense theatricality without grand-scale spectacle. It broke all the rules of the perfect play that I’d been learning about. I fell in love with Churchill in that moment.

What is it about Churchill that makes her writing so juicy for an actor?

Ooof. Churchill calls for a level of intensity that tips past naturalism, yet it has to be supremely grounded in truth. It was only when I was acting

in *Skriker* that I realized, “In *all* of her plays, people are encountering either their nightmare or their dream.” And mostly, it’s their nightmare. That’s the lens through which I’ve viewed her work ever since. Looking at it that way made the first scene of *Top Girls* come into focus for me. It’s a fever dream. In my mind, Marlene goes to sleep after a night of maybe one too many glasses of Frascati. She’s just gotten the news of her promotion and she dreams that all these rocking women show up at a dinner party to celebrate with her. These are women who have smashed their own proverbial glass ceilings. But this dream turns into a nightmare. They get drunk and then tell it like it really is. All the things that Marlene is most afraid of begin to be revealed—loneliness, abandonment, regret. It’s intense, but funny too.

Churchill plays with nightmares throughout *Top Girls*: the struggle of balancing career and family, and of living with the consequences of playing the system to your advantage.

These are women in a “man’s world,” outsmarting and outperforming the men around them. Taking up the mantle of “individual responsibility and self-sufficiency,” a motto of Thatcherism (to which the play is a direct response). The play asks, “Can a woman occupy a space of authority and status without perpetuating the oppressive structures of the patriarchy?” Does she have to be a woman *in a man’s world*? Can we imagine a different

world? How do you do that when all you’ve got is the patriarchy playbook as instructions on how to lead?

The patriarchy is almost a character in *Top Girls*.

Man-ness is ever present. Masculinity is present. Patriarchy is present. These women are under the weight of that, even if they can’t see it. They’re reacting to it, shackled to it, and, in some instances, affirming it. Each is not as free an agent as she imagines herself to be.

We’re talking about supremacy a lot in my circles. When the value or worth of something is defined by its proximity to the more accepted thing, that’s supremacy.

Supremacy takes on a whole different meaning in this production, too.

As Americans, we have a hard time seeing class, and we often conflate it with race. Having the central family of Marlene, Joyce, and Angie be working-class people of *color* clarifies the different supremacies at work. It’s also super important in the world of the office, where we see how (white) supremacy pervades the feminist movement as well. When women no longer need to define themselves in reference to maleness—not as “the opposite sex” or “a guy would never do it like this” or “man up”—when we can think outside of systems of supremacy, then we can imagine a new world. We have to be fearless about bringing forward a new way of doing. ■

BREAKING THROUGH

TOP GIRLS AND GLASS CEILINGS

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

THE GLASS CEILING: WOMEN AT S&P 500 COMPANIES

(PARITY.ORG)

- ENTRY AND MID-LEVEL MANAGERS: 36.9%
- BOARD MEMBERS: 21.2%
- CEOS: 4.8%
- CEOS OF COLOR: 2 PEOPLE

HAD A BABY?

(2014 REPORT BY UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS - AMHERST PROFESSOR MICHELLE BUDIG)

MAN'S SALARY: INCREASES 6%
WOMAN'S SALARY: DECREASES 4% FOR EACH CHILD

MORE COMPANIES ARE RUN BY MEN NAMED JOHN THAN ARE RUN BY WOMEN.
(THE NEW YORK TIMES)

HOW MUCH DOES THE PAY GAP REALLY COST US?

(THE NEW YORK TIMES)

\$403,440 per woman per lifetime

THE PAY GAP

(PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2016)

- WHITE MAN: \$1
- WHITE WOMAN: 80¢
- BLACK WOMAN: 64¢
- LATINX WOMAN: 54¢
- INDIGENOUS WOMAN: 57¢

CREDIBILITY QUESTIONED AT WORK?

(FORBES)

- BLACK WOMEN: 40%
- ALL WOMEN: 36%
- ALL MEN: 27%

“We’ve all come a long way,” says Marlene in *Top Girls*, raising her glass. “To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements.” In Marlene’s mind, progress has been achieved. She—a woman—has been promoted to a management position with the Top Girls Employment Agency, over a male colleague. She played the game and won. Yet looking from where we stand in 2019, Marlene’s words ring a little hollow. How much has really changed for women in the workplace?

On the surface, things have changed in the 37 years since *Top Girls* premiered. Women make up the majority (58 percent) of the US workforce. Women earn more degrees at every level of higher education. More and more women are pursuing a career and a family. Yet men continue to dominate positions of power in most professions and be paid more for completing the same tasks. Men do not encounter the same kind of discrimination for being a parent, for being dressed “provocatively,” or for being too assertive or not assertive enough. The glass ceiling that Marlene, Joyce, and the women in the Top Girls Employment Agency butt up against throughout *Top Girls* is still very much in place.

Marlene believes that “anyone can do it if they’ve got what it takes.” If an individual has the smarts, the grit, the determination, they will succeed. This same belief is still touted today. With her *Lean In* method, Facebook Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg provides women with the confidence-building tips and practical skills to advance within the status quo. It is up to each individual to learn and use the techniques available to their advantage. “Until the day comes where we can break our deepest gender stereotypes,” says an instructor in a *Lean In* video tutorial, “we’re giving you practical tips so that you can get the job done.”

While Sandberg’s training tips may help women shatter their individual glass ceiling, they don’t work to dismantle the glass ceiling for all women,

and especially not for women of color. Not only do women of color get paid less than white men and women in the same positions, but their work is also more frequently criticized and they are more frequently passed over for promotions. If they do get promoted, they are often viewed as a “diversity hire” and it is assumed that they have been given the position for reasons other than their qualifications and experience. Also, many women of color find themselves burdened with the expectation of speaking for their entire race, class, and gender while enduring countless other microaggressions.

In her seminal 1989 paper, African American feminist and lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw describes the experience of being a woman of color as the sensation of standing in the middle of an intersection, with traffic flowing around you from every direction. Discrimination, Crenshaw writes, “may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them.” She coined this concept intersectionality.

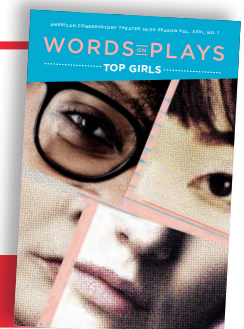
Intersectionality looks at how discrimination is experienced differently by people of different races, classes, and genders; how oppression is embedded in our systems of justice, education, and healthcare; and how the media treats and represents people of color and other marginalized groups. Looking at *Top Girls* through this lens shines a different light on Marlene’s feminism built on individual achievement and the world of the Top Girls Employment Agency. It asks us again, how much has really changed for women in the workplace? and encourages us to ask another question, what can we do to make a difference for women of all races, classes, and gender-expressions? For “I am not free,” says feminist and poet Audre Lorde, “while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own.” ■

WORDS ON PLAYS

Want to know more about *Top Girls*?

Words on Plays is full of interviews and original articles that give you a behind-the-scenes look. Proceeds from sales of *Words on Plays* benefit A.C.T.’s education programs.

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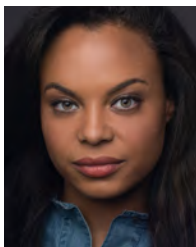


WHO'S WHO IN TOP GIRLS



MONIQUE HAFEN ADAMS* (**Patient Griselda, Mrs. Kidd**) is delighted to return to A.C.T.! She was last seen on the

Geary stage as Rhoda in the world premiere musical *A Walk on the Moon*. Other Bay Area credits include TheatreWorks (New Works Festival 2017 and 2018), San Francisco Playhouse (*Harper Regan, My Fair Lady, Company, City of Angels, She Loves Me, Noises Off, and Camelot*), Center REPeratory Company (*The Diary of Anne Frank, The Liar, and The Storytelling Ability of a Boy*), San Jose Stage Company (*Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, The Threepenny Opera, and Avenue Q*), and San Jose Repertory Theatre (*Spring Awakening*), among others. She is a humble recipient of several Bay Area Critics Circle Awards as well as a Theatre Bay Area Award. (she/her)



MICHELLE BECK* (**Marlene**) returns to the Bay Area, where her credits include *King Charles III* (A.C.T.) and *Proof*

(TheatreWorks; San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award nomination). Her Broadway credits include the Tony Award-winning revival of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Off-Broadway performances include *Hurricane Diane* (New York Theater Workshop); *A Kid Like Jake* (Lincoln Center Theater); *Richard III* and *Love's Labour's Lost* (The Public Theater); *Much Ado about Nothing* (Theatre for a New Audience); *Measure for Measure* (Epic Theatre

Ensemble); *Uncle Vanya* (The Pearl Theatre Company); and *As You Like It* and *The Tempest* (The Bridge Project at Brooklyn Academy of Music and The Old Vic). Regional performances include *The Wanderers* (The Old Globe); *Twelfth Night* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Hamlet* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *Tartuffe* (McCarter Theatre Center, Yale Repertory Theatre); and *The Winter's Tale* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival). Television credits include *Luke Cage, Manifest, Claws, Homeland, and Madam Secretary*. She is an alum of the State University of New York at Purchase Acting Conservatory. thisismichellebeck.com



SUMMER BROWN** (**Dull Gret, Nell**) makes her Geary stage debut as a third-year actor in A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts Program.

Most recently in the Bay Area, Brown performed as Emilia in *Othello* at Livermore Shakespeare Festival. Her A.C.T. Conservatory credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Medea, The School for Scandal, The Royale, Their Eyes Were Watching God, and The Bacchae of Euripides*. She also provides audio narrations for *Craftsmanship Quarterly*, a local online magazine that explores artisans and innovators from all over the world. Brown holds a BA in theater from University of Maryland, College Park. (she/her)



ROSIE HALLETT* (**Pope Joan, Win**) is delighted to be returning to A.C.T., where she was last seen as

Hall in *Men on Boats*, also directed by Tamilla Woodard. Her regional credits include *Red Speedo* (Center REPeratory Company); *peerless, Native Son, and The Way West* (Marin Theatre Company); *The Country House* (TheatreWorks); and numerous productions and tours to France with Word for Word Performing Arts Company, where she is an associate artist. She has participated in new work development at A.C.T., Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Classic Stage Company, TheatreWorks, and Ojai Playwrights Conference, among others. Hallett earned degrees in drama and English from Stanford University. (she/her) rosiehallett.com



LILY D. HARRIS** (**Kit, Shona**) is currently a third-year MFA student at A.C.T. and is thrilled to be making her

debut on the Geary stage as part of this inspiring cast. Her recent MFA Program credits include *Sense and Sensibility, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and The School for Scandal*. Other favorite roles include a one-woman production of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis* and Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar* (both at Reed College). Harris would like to send out a special thank you to all the incredible women in her life.



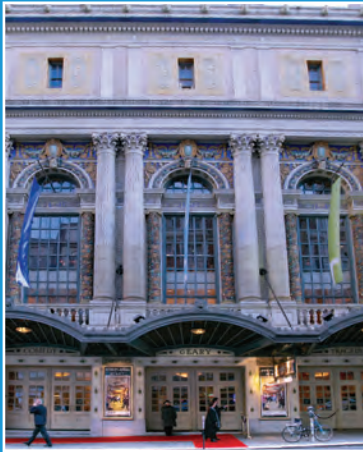
MONICA LIN** (**Lady Nijo, Jeanine**) is elated to make her Geary debut with *Top Girls*. She is a Bay Area actor and has worked with

California Shakespeare Theater, San Francisco Playhouse, San Francisco

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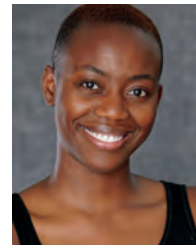
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Shakespeare Festival, Custom Made Theatre Co., Marin Shakespeare Company, Ferocious Lotus Theatre Company, and FaultLine Theater. She is the winner of the 2016 San Francisco Bay Area Critics Circle Award for Best Actress for her work in Custom Made Theatre's *In Love and Warcraft*. Lin is a graduate of Foothill College Theatre Conservatory and UC Berkeley, and is currently entering her final year of graduate school where she will earn an MFA from American Conservatory Theater.



JULIA MCNEAL* (Isabella Bird, Louise) is thrilled to be making her A.C.T. debut with *Top Girls*. In addition to numerous

productions in New York and Los Angeles, her Bay Area credits include *The Eva Trilogy*, *Fred's Diner*, *A Lie of the Mind*, and *Visible from Four States* (Magic Theatre); *The Events* (Shotgun Players); and *Gidion's Knot* (Aurora Theatre Company). She has appeared at San Francisco Playhouse, Marin Theatre Company, Porchlight Music Theatre, TheatreFirst, Center REPeritory Company, Pacific Alliance Theatre Company, Actors Theatre of San Francisco, First Person Singular, and PlayGround (where she is a company member). She was a founding member of the Obie Award-winning New York-based Cucaracha Theatre. Her film and TV credits include *The Unbelievable Truth*; *Flesh and Bone*; *Law & Order*; and *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. A guest artist at Tamalpais Union High School's internationally acclaimed Conservatory Theatre Ensemble program, McNeal also teaches "Playing Multiple Characters" at The Marsh Berkeley Arts Center and elsewhere. juliamcnealarts.com



GABRIELLA MOMAH* (Angie) is thrilled to make their American Conservatory Theater debut with *Top Girls*. They are

an actor, activist, and teaching artist based in Oakland. Regional theater credits include *Watch Me* (The Ground Floor at Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Vicious Cycle: The Musical*, *Pylar Terry*, *Stage Fright*, and *Barb* (Killing My Lobster); *Cardboard Piano* (New Conservatory Theater Center); *Sprint* (National Queer Arts Festival); *A Letter to My Ex, The Musical* (Spectrum Queer Media); *Inside Out & Back Again* and *She Persisted, the Musical* (Bay Area Children's Theatre); *They/Them* (Those Women Productions); *Token* (Crowded Fire Theater's Matchbox Reading Series); *FLEX* (Bay Area Playwrights Festival); *Can I Hold You, The Color Purple*, and *The Bluest Eye* (Stanford TAPS); and more. Momah holds a BA in reproductive justice from Stanford University and has trained with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Waterfront Conservatory, and The Actors Space. They dedicate this performance in honor of their mother, Arinola Omorinsola Lawson. (they/them) @gabriellamomah



NAFEESA MONROE* (Joyce, Waitress) is delighted to make her A.C.T. debut in *Top Girls*.

Monroe currently resides on the East Coast, but grew up in the Bay Area and is excited to be home! Her theater credits include the off-off-Broadway productions of *Proof* (directed by Johanna Day) and *Hello Herman* (directed by Thomas Kail). Regionally, her credits include

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Sweat (Pioneer Theatre Company), *The Wedding Gift* (Contemporary American Theater Festival), *Disgraced* (Pittsburgh Public Theater), *Julius Caesar* (Folger Theatre), and *Mother Courage and Her Children* (with Olympia Dukakis at Shakespeare & Company). Her screen credits include *The Punisher*, *Madam Secretary*, *Blue Bloods*, and *I'm Through With White Girls* (*The Inevitable Undoing of Jay Brooks*). As a poet, Monroe opened for Jewel and appeared on HBO's *Def Poetry* and alongside bestselling author Neale Donald Walsch. Monroe has a BA from Wesleyan University, an MFA from the Academy for Classical Acting, and is a graduate of the Sanford Meisner School of Acting. Monroe is founder and artistic director of Classics in Color: An INclusive Theatre Company (classicsincolor.com).



VELINA BROWN*

(Understudy) is pleased to return to A.C.T., where she appeared in *A Funny Thing Happened on the*

Way to the Forum, *Insurrection*, *Holding History*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Machinal*, and several seasons of *A Christmas Carol*. Her long-time artistic home is the Tony and Obie award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe, with which she has toured the Bay Area, nationwide, and internationally. Brown has toured France with *Word for Word*, Spain and Portugal with Brooklyn-based ensemble Barbez (in support of the album *For Those Who Came After: Songs of the Spanish Civil War*), and was last seen locally in *Black Odyssey* at California Shakespeare Theatre. Additional credits include Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Magic Theatre, Lorraine Hansberry Theatre, TheatreWorks, Shotgun Players, Central Works Theater Company, CenterREpertory Company, San



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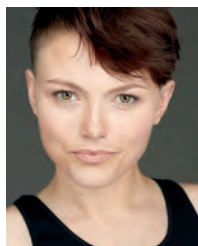
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Francisco Playhouse, New Conservatory Theatre Center, and Denver Theatre for the Performing Arts, as well as appearances in film, television, and commercials. She has also voiced video games, training films, and documentaries.
velinabrown.com.



MELANIE ARII MAH* (Understudy) is a native San Franciscan and honored to be making her A.C.T. debut in *Top Girls*.

Her other theatrical credits include *4000 Miles* at Lincoln Center Theater (u/s Amanda) and *Valley of the Heart* (Thelma “Teruko” Yamaguchi) at Center Theatre Group, El Teatro Campesino, and San Jose Stage Company. She graduated magna cum laude with a BFA from Boston University School of Theatre. She wants to thank the outstanding cast and crew for this wonderful experience and the Bay Area theater community for its encouragement. She dedicates this performance to her late parents, Melvin and Mary Mah. (she/her) @meliemahster



JASMINE OSBORNE* (Understudy) is grateful to be back at A.C.T. after working on *Vanity Fair* last season! Some Bay Area

credits include *The Jungle Book* (Marin Theatre Company), *The Wolves* (Capital Stage Company), and *Kano + Abe: A Daly City Bible Story* (PlayGround at Potrero Stage). Before relocating to California, she lived and worked in New York City, where she was in *Kris Kringle* (Manhattan Theatre Club). You can see her on screen in the feature film *How to Be a Man* (Fox Digital Studio), as well as in *One Life to Live* (The Online Network)

and *What Would You Do?* (ABC). Osborne holds a BFA in acting from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where she was awarded the Sarah Graham Kenan Scholarship of Excellence. She is grateful to her family, her 15-year-old cat Lulu, and her partner Jeff for their love and support.

TAMILLA WOODARD (Director)

is the associate artistic director of WP Theater. She is the co-founder of PopUP Theatrics, and currently the associate director of *Hadestown* on Broadway. She directed Jaclyn Backhaus’s *Men on Boats* at A.C.T. last season. Other recent work includes *American Dreams*, by Leila Buck (The Cleveland Public Theatre); the critically acclaimed immersive *3/Fifths*, by James Scruggs (3-Legged Dog); and *PolkaDots: The Cool Kids Musical* (Atlantic Theatre Company; Off Broadway Alliance Award). Her work has also been seen at Classical Theatre of Harlem, Working Theater, Salt Lake Acting Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and at many festivals and theaters internationally. She is a graduate of Yale School of Drama and a recipient of the Josephine Abady Award from the League of Professional Theatre Women. (she/her)

NINA BALL (Scenic Designer)

has designed here at A.C.T. (*The Birthday Party*, *Men on Boats*, *Monstress*, *Chester Bailey*, and *Underneath the Lintel*), as well as at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, California Shakespeare Theater, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Playhouse, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Center REPeritory Company, Z Space, and Santa Cruz Shakespeare, among many others. Recent honors include a Theatre Bay Area Award for *Blasted* (Shotgun) and *The Nether* (SF Playhouse); a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle

Award for *An Entomologist’s Love Story* (SF Playhouse); and a Shelley Award for *Tenderly: The Rosemary Clooney Musical* (Center REP), among many others. She is a company member of both Shotgun Players and TheatreFirst. In addition to theater, Ball also works as a production designer in film and television. Her current and upcoming projects include *Hairspray* (OSF), *Testmatch* (A.C.T.), *Vinegar Tom* (Shotgun), and *Bull in a China Shop* (Aurora). (she/her) ninaball.com

SARITA FELLOWS (Costume Designer)

is happy to be back at A.C.T. Her New York credits include *Native Son* (The Acting Company); *Original Sound* (Cherry Lane Theatre); *Hatef**k* (WP Theater); *Macbeth*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *Measure for Measure* (New York Classical Theatre); *A Chronicle of the Death of Two Worlds* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Mud*, *Prospect*, and *Fabuloso!* (Boundless Theatre Company); and *The Forbidden City*, *A Bright Room Called Day*, and *Hoodoo Love* (The Juilliard School). Regionally, she has designed *Her Portmanteau* (A.C.T.); *We Are Among Us* (City Theatre Company); *Ain’t Misbehavin’* (Signature Theatre); *Alvin and the Chipmunks Live* (2SBN); *The Haunted Life* (Merrimack Repertory Theatre); *Two Trains Running* (Weston Playhouse Theatre Company); and *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters’ First 100 Years* (Philadelphia Theatre Company). Fellows also designs for film, dance, and opera, and is a lecturer at Princeton University and New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, where she earned her MFA. (she/her) saritafellows.com

BARBARA SAMUELS (Lighting Designer)

is a New York-based lighting designer. Select designs include *In the Green* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Hurricane Diane* (New York

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Theatre Workshop, WP Theater), *Rags Parkland Sings the Songs of the Future* (Ars Nova, Lucille Lortel and Drama Desk award nominations), *Dance Nation* (Playwrights Horizons; Henry Hewes Design Award nominations), *Acquanetta* (Beth Morrison Projects, Bard SummerScape), *Caught* (The Play Company), and Kate Benson's Obie Award-winning *A Beautiful Day in November on the Banks of the Greatest of the Great Lakes* (New Georges/WP Theater). Samuels has designed regionally at Long Wharf Theatre, Alley Theatre, PlayMakers Repertory Company, L.A. Dance Project, Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, and Trinity Repertory Company. Samuels served as the general manager of Obie Award-winning 13 Playwrights, Inc. She has a BA from Fordham University and an MFA from New York University. She is a proud member of USA Local 829. (she/her) barbarasamuels.com

JAKE RODRIGUEZ (Sound Designer) is a sound designer and composer based in the San Francisco Bay Area. His recent credits include *Wink* (Marin Theatre Company); *Oedipus el Rey* (Magic Theatre); *Between Two Knees* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *The Great Leap*, *Her Portmanteau*, *Sweat*, and *Vietgone* (A.C.T.); *Women Laughing Alone with Salad* and *The Events* (Shotgun Players); *Everybody* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Angels in America* and *An Octoroon* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *we, the invisibles* (Actors Theatre of Louisville); *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (A.C.T., Theatre Calgary, Grand Theater, The Old Globe); *The Christians* (Playwrights Horizons, the Mark Taper Forum); *Girlfriend* (Kirk Douglas Theatre); and *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* (A.C.T., the Guthrie Theater). Rodriguez is the recipient of a 2004 Princess Grace Award.

CHRISTINE ADAIRE (Voice and Dialect Coach) is head of voice at A.C.T. She is a Designated Master Linklater Voice Teacher, trained by the world-renowned voice teacher Kristin Linklater. She has worked as an actor, voice coach, and director in many American regional theaters, including The Old Globe, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, the Guthrie Theater, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Goodman Theatre, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Court Theatre, American Players Theatre, Theatre for a New Audience, 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. She's taught workshops in Shanghai, Barcelona, London, Australia, and New Zealand. Her current area of research and writing is transgender voice. She works with transgender/gender-diverse individuals so they can modify their voice to more fully express their gender identity. (she/her)

ALLIE MOSS (Dramaturg) is a Bay Area-based director and dramaturg. Previous dramaturgy credits include *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 Co.) Upcoming projects include directing *Cloud Nine* at Custom Made Theatre and *Ways to Leave a Body* at Cutting Ball Theater. Moss has also worked at San Francisco Playhouse, FaultLine Theater, Playwrights Foundation, Breadbox Theatre, and Left Coast Theatre Company. Her favorite directing credits include *Hookman* (A.C.T. Young Conservatory), *The Vagina Monologues* (A.C.T. V-Day

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Project), *Bull in a China Shop* (A.C.T.'s Sky Festival), *American Hero* (Custom Made Theatre), and *The Foreigner* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Columbus Civic Theater). Moss is the Literary Manager/Artistic Associate at American Conservatory Theater, where she co-produces A.C.T.'s annual New Strands Festival. She holds a BA in theater from Goucher College. (she/her)

JANET FOSTER, CSA (Casting Director) has cast for A.C.T. for seven seasons, including *The Great Leap*, *Her Portmanteau*, Edward Albee's *Seascape*, *Men on Boats*, *Sweat*, *Hamlet*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *The Hard Problem*, *King Charles III*, *John*, *Arcadia*, *Stuck Elevator*, *The Orphan of Zhao*, *Napoli!*, and *Endgame* and *Play*. On Broadway, she cast *The Light in the Piazza* (Artios Award nomination), *Lennon*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *Taking Sides* (co-cast). Off-Broadway credits include *True Love*, *Floyd Collins*, *A Cheever Evening*, *The Monogamist*, and *Later Life*. Regionally, she has worked at Intiman Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Yale Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Old Globe, and American Repertory Theater. Film, television, and radio credits include *Cosby*, *Tracey Takes On New York*, *The Deal*, *Advice from a Caterpillar*, *The Day That Lehman Died* (Peabody, SONY, and Wincott awards), and "T" *Is for Tom* (Tom Stoppard radio plays, WNYC and WQXR). She also cast *LifeAfter*, a GE Theater podcast, and *Passenger List*, featuring Patti LuPone. (she/her)

DICK DALEY* (Stage Manager) has stage-managed many shows at A.C.T., including *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *A Little Night Music*, *Indian Ink*, *The Orphan of Zhao*, *1776*, *Gem of the Ocean*, *Happy End*, *Travesties*,

A Moon for the Misbegotten, *Waiting for Godot*, and the world premieres of *A Christmas Carol* and *After the War*. Other regional credits include *Dr. Faustus*, written and directed by David Mamet, and *The Opposite of Sex* (Magic Theatre); *River's End*, *Bus Stop*, *Communicating Doors*, and *The Last Schwartz* (Marin Theatre Company); *Macbeth* and *Henry V* (Commonwealth Shakespeare Company); *Twelfth Night* (Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company); *King Lear* and *Henry V* (The Company of Women); *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*; *Ain't Misbehavin'*; and *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*. Before moving to San Francisco, Daley was the production manager at Emerson College in Boston for seven years and oversaw the BFA production/stage management program. (he/him)

CHRISTINA HOGAN* (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to A.C.T. after working on Edward Albee's *Seascape*, *Men on Boats*, *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*, *Hamlet*, *Monstress*, and *Love and Information*. Her other theater credits include *In Old Age*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *runboyrun*, *And I and Silence*, *Se Llama Cristina*, and *Any Given Day* (Magic Theatre); *Ripped* and *Selkie* (Z Space); *It Can't Happen Here* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Skeleton Crew* and *The Wolves* (Marin Theatre Company); and *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Blithe Spirit*, and *The Pastures of Heaven* (California Shakespeare Theater). Hogan has a BA in theater arts from Saint Mary's College of California. (she/her)

DONALD J. AND TONI RATNER MILLER (Executive Producer) have been actively involved with A.C.T. for eight years, and Toni Ratner Miller has been on the MFA Board of Directors for six. They have produced some wonderful plays, including *Indian Ink*, *Venus in Fur*, *The Realistic Joneses*, and *Her Portmanteau*. Donald, a retired

entrepreneur, and Toni, a jewelry artist, support A.C.T. and many other arts-related organizations in the Bay Area. They are especially interested in organizations that have major education and outreach programs for young people. The Millers feel the best part of their involvement with A.C.T. and the MFA Program is their relationship with the students, three of whom are in the *Top Girls* cast.

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Karina Fox, *Assistant Director*
Masami Saisu, *KIMONO by Kamino*
Hiroko Sato, *Sato Kimono Class San Francisco*
Dave Maier, *Fight Director*
Scenic Construction, *F&D Scene Changes*
Brandon Gage, *Production Flyrail Operator*
Elliott Ehrlich, *Production Carpenter*
Thomas Bowersox, *Lighting Associate*
JoAnna Ben-Yisrael, *Production Electrician*
Corey Schaffer, *Lighting Programmer*
Danishta Rivero, *Vocal Chords*
Jake Rodriguez, *Patch Chords*
Jason Stamberger, *Power Chords*

PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDINGS

Audience members may take photos in the theater before and after the performance and during intermission. If you post photos on social media or elsewhere, you must credit the production's designers by including the following names:

Nina Ball (Scenic Designer),
ninaball.com

Sarita Fellows (Costume Designer),
saritafellows.com

Barbara Samuels (Lighting Designer),
barbarasamuels.com

Jake Rodriguez (Sound Designer),
@sounjaerk

Please note: Photos are strictly prohibited during the performance. Video recording is not permitted in the theater at any time.

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WELCOMING TO ALL

AN INTERVIEW WITH A.C.T. BOARD PRESIDENT KAY YUN

BY A.C.T. BOARD VICE CHAIR ROBINA RICCIHELLO

As *Top Girls* opens A.C.T.'s season of kickass women, we profile President of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees Kay Yun, who has been breaking glass ceilings for decades. Born in South Korea, she started her career at Hewlett Packard before switching gears, going to business school, and rising up the financial services ranks of Goldman Sachs in New York. Now a partner at Health Evolution Partners, an investment firm focused on the healthcare industry, she's bringing that financial acumen to A.C.T.

You're a partner at a leading private equity firm and a mom and a daughter. What made you take on the challenge of A.C.T.'s board?

My daughter loved being part of the Young Conservatory so when A.C.T. asked me to join the board, I said "yes" immediately. I've enjoyed serving A.C.T. and getting to know more about theater.

"When I go to productions here, I'm proud of our work. It's a diverse set of themes, characters, and actors. We are very mindful that everyone feels included and can see themselves represented onstage."

How have you been able to shape A.C.T.?

Creating an environment that's welcoming to all is important to me, and I relate to the challenges of diversity—not only in terms of women in organizations, but also minorities. When I was a young banker at Goldman Sachs, the guys had a leg up because they golfed or played tennis and at social outings they got information about deals. Even if women knew how to play golf or were good at tennis, they weren't invited. I believe strongly in being a mentor, particularly to other women, and I spend time with women throughout A.C.T., so they know they can reach out.

What are your own hopes for A.C.T.?

Together with the board and staff, we are working to build a business model that is sustainable and supports our aspirations to do more. There are a lot of San Franciscans who are not aware of what we really do at A.C.T.—we need to educate our community better. When I go to productions here, I'm proud of our work. It's a diverse set of themes, characters, and actors. We are very mindful that everyone feels included and can see themselves represented onstage. ■

If you're interested in learning more about leadership roles and supporting A.C.T., please contact Caitlin A. Quinn at cquinn@act-sf.org or 415.439.2436.

PHOTO BY ALESSANDRA MELLO



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CONSERVATORY TEACHER, MAINSTAGE COACH

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN



PHOTO BY RYAN MONTGOMERY

On A.C.T.'s Geary stage in front of you are three Master of Fine Arts actors, learning their craft every day and honing it alongside professional actors each evening. And behind the scenes are another three members of our Conservatory who are pulling double duty: voice, dialect, and movement coaches Christine Adaire, Lisa Anne Porter, and Danyon Davis. Each season, these three theater artists lead the faculty in our MFA Program *and* coach actors performing in our eight mainstage productions. In the last season alone, they brought the beautiful Ibibio language to life in Mfoniso Udofia's *Her Portmanteau*, captured the distinctive gait of lizards for Edward Albee's *Seascape*, and built up the vocal strength needed to tackle the heightened emotions of MFA spring show, *Medea*.

This symbiosis between the Conservatory and the mainstage has been at the heart of A.C.T. from the beginning. "A.C.T. was founded with the Conservatory as part of its mission," says Head of Text and Dialects Lisa Anne Porter, who is also an MFA Program alum. "We do *and* teach. This makes A.C.T. a dynamic place to study and practice the craft. Mainstage artists always remark on how refreshing it is to have the Conservatory students bustling around them. It recharges and revitalizes them."

As they move among the studios at 30 Grant from classroom to rehearsal room, Adaire, Porter, and Davis use the challenges and opportunities that teaching provides to inform their work on the mainstage, and vice versa. “I share with my students the vocal challenges that professional actors encounter in rehearsal and the problem-solving strategies we use to overcome them,” says Head of Voice Christine Adaire. “In *Heisenberg*, some of the scenes were very emotional and the actors were experiencing vocal stress and throat and neck pain because our tongues tense when we’re emotional. In class, we happened to be exploring exercises to stretch and release the tongue. It was great to have a very practical example to illustrate this problem to my students.”

Sometimes, the lessons are not so much about the technical aspects of a dialect or a piece of movement but about what it’s like to be a professional theater-maker. “A big part of our pedagogy is preparing students to value process and to contribute in a professional rehearsal room,” says Head of Movement Danyon Davis. “Last year, I took our first-year MFA Program actors to the first technical rehearsal for *Men on Boats*. We were there for a little over an hour and the cast and crew didn’t get through more than one minute of the play. It was great to see the students’ faces lighting up as they absorbed the values of patience, listening, cooperation, and attention to detail.”

“This relationship between the Conservatory and the mainstage is unique to A.C.T.,” says Associate Artistic Director Andy Chan Donald, “and makes it one of the coolest destinations for artists and teachers alike.” Our Conservatory teaching artists feature as actors, voice and dialect coaches, movement directors, and designers for our mainstage shows and for productions throughout the Bay Area. Ideas, tips, and tricks are constantly passed down from artist to artist, preserving our theatrical traditions and keeping our studios and stages abuzz with new ideas.

“The theater is like a campground,” says Davis. “Its survival requires that successive generations learn to be good custodians. You have to stay committed to taking care of it and to making sure that certain values, such as respect for craft, are modeled for those that follow.” Adaire agrees. “We’re like a teaching hospital. Both our professional actors and our very talented young actors inspire me and challenge me to continue developing my craft. The interplay between the roles of teacher and coach feeds me as an artist.” ■

For more information about our actor-training programs—including the Master of Fine Arts Program, the San Francisco Semester, and the Summer Training Congress—and the extraordinary faculty members who teach here, visit act-sf.org/conservatory.



PHOTO BY BERYL BAKER

OPPOSITE PAGE, LEFT Head of Voice Christine Adaire. OPPOSITE PAGE, RIGHT Head of Text and Dialects Lisa Anne Porter. RIGHT Head of Movement Danyon Davis.



WHAT ART CAN BE

A GLIMPSE OF A.C.T.'S SAN FRANCISCO SEMESTER

BY SIMON HODGSON

When actor Justin Genna looked at the theater training of the San Francisco Semester (SFS), he saw a trial run. As a former dancer with Milwaukee Ballet, Genna hankered for a different type of performing, but he wasn't certain about committing to three years of MFA classes. "My mother always said, 'Take it for a test drive before you buy it.' If you're interested in professional-level MFA acting training, the SFS is that test drive. Afterward I bought the car!" Genna was so convinced by the 15-week semester at A.C.T. that he followed up by completing an MFA here. One year after leaving A.C.T., Genna is appearing at Rattlestick Playwrights Theater in New York in the premiere of *Novenas for a Lost Hospital*.

SFS students come from all over the country and beyond (including France, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Argentina) to learn the fundamental technical aspects of being onstage. Those classes—encompassing voice, dialect, text work, acting, and physical theater—become the foundation for two additional layers of imaginative training. The first is a class on devising work together. "When I sit down with the students at the end of the semester, that's the class they rave about," says Conservatory Director Melissa

Smith. "The sense of collaboration, of learning how to be comfortable with not knowing, and of falling in love with the process—that's the essence of acting."

The second spark for actors' creativity is the Cultural Landscapes class, in which SFS students experience other extraordinary art forms around the Bay Area. This fall, the current class will interact with dancers from the Smuin Ballet, conjurers at the Marrakech Magic Theater, and musicians from SF Jazz at their performance in the Gothic nave of Grace Cathedral. "We want to excite their imaginations when they create a role," says Director of Academic Affairs Jack Sharrar, who teaches this class. "These performances open them up to the possibility of what art can be, and how this art could apply to their training as actors."

For Associate Conservatory Director Peter J. Kuo, who directs the study-away program, the SFS enables aspiring performers to answer one big question: Is acting something to which they truly want to make a commitment? "The SFS is like a gift of time," says Kuo. "When you're an undergraduate,

you're always taking other classes outside your major. In the SFS, however, you're solely dedicated to your craft as an artist, but with a whole semester, student actors have time to learn and time to process."

**"The San Francisco Semester gave me the tools I needed to take my career to the next level."
—SFS alum Taylor Iman Jones**

That deep dive was what brought actor Afua Busia to A.C.T. in 2015. As a theater-loving environmental science major from American University in Washington, DC, Busia harbored dreams of acting professionally. "I minored in theater and I'd grown to love performing," she says, "but I wasn't sure if a career as an actor was what I wanted. The SFS was like a theater sampler that left me wanting more. Being able to study a range of theater styles in SFS and learn from such wonderful teachers is what took my love for performance forward and made me eager to learn more." Busia graduated from our MFA Program in May and is currently auditioning and preparing for a move to New York.

While several young actors have graduated from the SFS to A.C.T.'s MFA Program, Taylor Iman Jones made the jump to the professional stage almost immediately. A year after completing her SFS training, Jones was cast in A.C.T.'s 2016 hit production of *The Unfortunates*. Three years on, she is currently starring in *Scotland, PA*, a new musical at New York's Roundabout Theatre Company. "The San Francisco Semester gave me the tools I needed to take my career to the next level," she says, "and it will always be a large part of my foundation and of the performer I am today." ■

To discover more about the San Francisco Semester, its curriculum, classes, and faculty coaches, visit act-sf.org/sfs.

OPPOSITE PAGE San Francisco Semester students working on their theatrical techniques. Photo by Alessandra Mello.

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP SFS and MFA Program alum Justin Genna (class of 2018) in the 2015 Creative Movement Project. Photo by Alessandra Mello; Associate Conservatory Director Peter J. Kuo working with SFS students. Photo by Beryl Baker; Actors James Carpenter, Catherine Castellanos, MFA Program actor Adam Donovan (class of 2019), and SFS and MFA Program graduate Afua Busia (class of 2019) in A.C.T.'s production of *A Christmas Carol* (2018). Photo by Kevin Berne.



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Jerry is president of Parnassus Investments and serves on the boards of San Francisco Opera and A.C.T. Thao and Jerry have established scholarships for music education at the San Francisco Symphony, undergraduate education at UC Berkeley, and high school education for 125 girls in Vietnam.

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Priscilla is a vice chair of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees and Development Committee chair. She is vice president of the SF Symphony, Grace Cathedral, and past chair of NARAL Pro-Choice America's Foundation Board. A principal of Francisco Partners, Keith is president of SF Opera's board of trustees and a board member of Episcopal Community Services.

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Past chair of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees, Toni is a retired partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman. Arthur was one of America's first venture capitalists. Along with other community endeavors, they are cofounders of the Arthur and Toni Rembe Rock Center for Corporate Governance at Stanford Law School.

ROBINA RICCIETIELLO^{◊†}

Robina is communications director for the Million Person Project, a company that helps people identify their core values to tell their personal story. She is involved with the UCLA Depression Grand Challenge, an effort to cure depression by the end of this century, and with NARAL Pro-Choice America.

MARY AND STEVEN SWIG^{◊†}

Steven has served on A.C.T.'s board since 1986 and is cofounder of Presidio Graduate School. Mary is on the Women's Leadership Board of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. They serve on the boards of the Solar Electric Light Fund and the Americans for Cures Foundation.

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Jeff is a founder of ValueAct Capital and a director of 21st Century Fox Inc. and Willis Towers Watson PLC. He serves on the boards of Duke University, Northwestern University, and the E. O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation. Laurie founded San Francisco's Bird School of Music.

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President of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees, Kay is a partner at private equity fund Health Evolution Partners. She is a trustee of Parnassus Funds and a board member of San Francisco University High School. Andre, the founder of On Tap Consulting, has held executive roles in startups and Fortune 500 companies.

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Janet Foster, *Director of Casting and Artistic Associate*
Joy Meads, *Director of Dramaturgy and New Works*
Allie Moss, *Literary Manager and Artistic Associate*
Ken Savage, *Associate Producer*
Gracie Brakeman, *Artistic Fellow*
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Danyon Davis, *Movement*
Dave Maier, *Danielle O'Dea, Fights*
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Jeremy Cohen and Dipika Guha; Eisa Davis; Lorena Feijoo, Alfredo Rodriguez, Damaso Rodriguez, and Caridad Svich; Casey Lee Hurt; Kate Kilbane and Dan Moses; Susan Soon He Stanton; Mfoniso Udofia

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Jack Horton, *Production Manager*
Marlena Schwartz, *Associate Production Manager*
Ariana Johnson, *Conservatory Production Associate*
Morgan Badillo, *Conservatory Design and Production Associate*
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Amanda Marshall, *Production Assistant*
Gabby Harper, Mika Rubinfeld, Hannah Rose-Jing Stoffer, *Stage Management Fellows*

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Callie Floor, *Rentals Manager*
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Maria Montoya, *Head Stitcher*
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Suzanna Bailey, *Head Sound*
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Diane Cornelius, *Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor*
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Executive Director

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Julie Douglas, *Beginning Mask*
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A.C.T. PROFILES



PAM MACKINNON (Artistic Director)

is celebrating her second season as A.C.T.'s fourth artistic director. She is a Tony, Drama Desk, and Obie award-winning director, having directed upwards of 70 productions around the country, off-Broadway, and on Broadway. Her Broadway credits

include Beau Willimon's *The Parisian Woman* (with Uma Thurman), *Amelie: A New Musical*, 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?* (Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, and Outer Critics Circle nomination), and Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park* (Obie Award, Tony and

Lucille Lortel nominations). Her most recent credits include Bruce Norris's *Downstate* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, London's National Theatre), Lydia R. Diamond's *Toni Stone* (Roundabout Theatre Company), and Edward Albee's *Seascape* (A.C.T.). She is an artistic associate of the Roundabout Theatre Company, an advisory board member of Clubbed Thumb, and an alumna of the Drama League, Women's Project, and Lincoln Center Theater's Directors' Labs. She is also the executive board president of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC). She grew up in Toronto, Canada, and Buffalo, New York, acted through her teens, but majored in economics and political science at the University of Toronto and briefly pursued a PhD in political science at UC San Diego, before returning to her true passion: theater. (she/her)



JENNIFER BIELSTEIN (Executive Director)

joined A.C.T. in 2018 with more than 25 years of theater management experience. She serves on the board of Theatre Forward, is a member of the International Women's Forum, and is president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT)—an

organization that represents 75 theaters nationwide—having previously served as LORT's vice president; chair of its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee; secretary; and on multiple union negotiating teams. Before relocating to the Bay Area, Bielstein was the managing director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, managing director of Actors Theatre of Louisville, and executive director of Writers Theatre in Chicago. She has also worked for

Steppenwolf Theatre Company, About Face Theatre, Northlight Theatre, and Lincoln Park Zoo, as well as served on the boards of the League of Chicago Theatres, the Arts and Cultural Attractions Council, and other civic boards. She has received the Center for Nonprofit Excellence's Pyramid Award of Excellence in Leadership, has been recognized in Louisville's *Business First's* 40 Under 40, and was named by *Twin Cities Business* as a Person to Know and a Real Power 50 member by *Minnesota Business* magazine. Bielstein is a graduate of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, attended Stanford's Graduate School of Business Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders in the Arts, and earned an MBA from Bellarmine University, where she received the MBA Faculty Merit Award and was inducted into Beta Gamma Sigma, the honor society for business programs. (she/her)



MELISSA SMITH (Conservatory Director, Head of Acting)

has served as Conservatory director and head of acting in the Master of Fine Arts Program at A.C.T. since 1995. During that time, she has overseen the expansion of the M.F.A. Program from a two- to a three-year course of study

and the further integration of the M.F.A. Program faculty and student body with A.C.T.'s artistic wing, while also teaching and directing in the M.F.A. Program, Summer Training Congress, and Studio A.C.T. In 2013, she launched the San Francisco Semester, a semester-long intensive that deepens students' acting. In 2016, she was honored by Theatre Bay Area as one of 40 individuals who have changed the face of Bay Area theater. Prior to assuming

leadership of the Conservatory, Smith was the director of the Program in Theater and Dance at Princeton University. She has taught acting classes to students of all ages in various colleges, high schools, and studios around the continental United States, at the Mid-Pacific Institute in Hawaii, New York University's La Pietra campus in Florence, and the Teatro di Pisa in San Miniato, Italy. She is featured in *Acting Teachers of America: A Vital Tradition*. Also a professional actor, she has performed regionally at the Hangar Theatre, A.C.T., the California Shakespeare Festival, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre; in New York at Primary Stages and Soho Rep.; and in England at the Barbican Centre in London and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Smith holds a BA from Yale College and an MFA in acting from Yale School of Drama. (she/her)

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

A.C.T.'s administrative and conservatory offices are located at 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94108, 415.834.3200. On the web: act-sf.org.

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

A.C.T. BOX OFFICE

Visit us at 405 Geary Street at Mason, next to the theater, one block west of Union Square; or at 1127 Market Street at 7th Street, across from the UN Plaza. Walk-up hours are Tuesday-Sunday (noon-curtain) on performance days, and Monday-Friday (noon-6 p.m.) and Saturday-Sunday (noon-4 p.m.) on nonperformance days. (For Strand Box Office walk-up hours, please visit act-sf.org.) Phone hours are Tuesday-Sunday (10 a.m.-curtain) on performance days, and Monday-Friday (10 a.m.-6 p.m.) and Saturday-Sunday (10 a.m.-4 p.m.) on nonperformance days. Call 415.749.2228 and use American Express, Visa, or MasterCard; or fax your ticket request with credit card information to 415.749.2291. Tickets are also available 24 hours a day on our website at act-sf.org. All sales are final, and there are no refunds. Only current ticket subscribers and those who purchase ticket insurance enjoy ticket exchange privileges. Packages are available by calling 415.749.2250. A.C.T. gift certificates can be purchased in any amount online, by phone or fax, or in person.

SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION DISCOUNTS

Full-time students, educators, and administrators save up to 50% off season subscriptions with valid ID. Visit act-sf.org/educate for details. Seniors (65+) save \$40 on 8 plays, \$35 on 7 plays, \$30 on 6 plays, \$25 on 5 plays, and \$20 on 4 plays.

SINGLE TICKET DISCOUNTS

Beginning two hours before curtain, a limited number of discounted tickets are available to seniors (65+), educators, administrators, and full-time students. For matinee performances, all seats are just \$20 for seniors (65+). Valid ID required—limit one ticket per ID. Not valid for Premiere Orchestra seating. All rush tickets are subject to availability.

GROUP DISCOUNTS

Groups of 15 or more save up to 35%! For more information, call Anthony Miller at 415.439.2424.

AT THE THEATER

A.C.T.'s Geary Theater is located at 415 Geary Street. The lobby opens one hour before curtain. Bar service and refreshments are available one hour before curtain. The theater opens 30 minutes before curtain.

ABOUT OUR PLAYS

Copies of *Words on Plays*, A.C.T.'s in-depth performance guide, are on sale in the main lobby, at the theater bars, at the box office, and online at act-sf.org/wordsonplays.

REFRESHMENTS

Full bar service, sweets, and savory items are available one hour before the performance in Fred's Columbia Room on the lower level and the Sky Bar on the third level. You can avoid the long lines at intermission by preordering food and beverages in the lower- and third-level bars. Bar drinks are now permitted in the theater.

CELL PHONES

If you carry a pager, beeper, cell phone, or watch with an alarm, please make sure that it is set to the "off" position while you are in the theater. Text messaging during the performance is very disruptive and not allowed.

PERFUMES

The chemicals found in perfumes, colognes, and scented aftershave lotions, even in small amounts, can cause severe physical reactions in some individuals. As a courtesy to fellow patrons, please avoid the use of these products when you attend the theater.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE

Leave your seat location with those who may need to reach you and have them call 415.439.2317 in an emergency.

LATECOMERS

Performances begin promptly, and late seating is at the house manager's discretion. Latecomers may have to watch the performance on a video monitor in the lobby until intermission. Latecomers and those who leave the theater during the performance may be seated in alternate seats (especially if they were in the first few rows) and can take their assigned seats at intermission.

LISTENING SYSTEMS

Headsets designed to provide clear, amplified sound anywhere in the auditorium are available free of charge in the lobby before performances. Please turn off your hearing aid when using an A.C.T. headset, as it will react to the sound system and make a disruptive noise.

RESTROOMS

Gender diversity is welcome at A.C.T. We invite audiences to use the restroom that best fits your gender identity or expression. If preferred, a single-user restroom can be found on the 5th floor.



Wheelchair Seating is located in Fred's Columbia Room on the lower lobby level, the Balcony Lobby, and the Garret on the uppermost lobby level.

A.C.T. is pleased to announce that an **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)** is now available in the house management closet in the lobby of The Geary.

LOST AND FOUND

If you've misplaced an item while you're still at the theater, please look for it at our merchandise stand in the lobby. Any items found by ushers or other patrons will be taken there. If you've already left the theater, please call 415.439.2471 and we'll be happy to check our lost and found for you. Please be prepared with the date you attended the performance and your seat location.

AFFILIATIONS

A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the nonprofit professional theater. A.C.T. is a member of Theatre Bay Area, the Union Square Association, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.



A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



The scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers in LORT theaters are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



The scenic shop, prop shop, and stage crew are represented by Local 16 of the IATSE.



A.C.T. is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

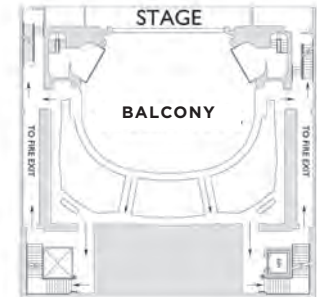
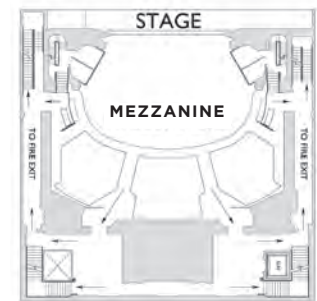
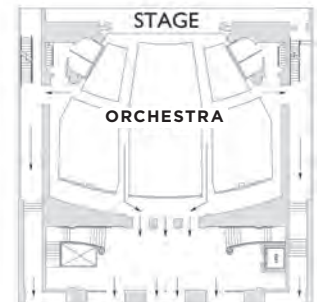


A.C.T. is supported in part by a grant from Grants for the Arts.



Support for Open Captioning is provided in part by TDF. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

GEARY THEATER EXITS



Dianne Wiest in the Yale Repertory Theatre production of Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*
PHOTO BY JOAN MARCUS



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Suzan-Lori Parks
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THE CAST OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL
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