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AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

SAN FRANCISCO'S
PREMIER NONPROFIT
THEATER COMPANY

MEN *on* BOATS



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OCT-DEC 2018
SEASON 52, ISSUE 3



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encore
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SAN FRANCISCO'S THEATER COMPANY

American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco's Tony Award-winning nonprofit theater, nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training, and ongoing community engagement. We embrace our responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent our rich theatrical traditions, while exploring new artistic forms and communities. Founded by William Ball, a pioneer of the regional theater movement, A.C.T. opened in San Francisco in 1967. We have since performed more than 400 productions to more than seven million people.

Hailed as the "perfect playhouse," the beautiful Geary Theater has been our home since the beginning. When the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake ripped the roof apart, San Franciscans raised a record-breaking \$30 million to rebuild the theater. The Geary reopened in 1996 with *The Tempest*, directed by Carey Perloff, who took over as A.C.T.'s third artistic director in 1992 after the retirement of Edward Hastings.

Perloff's tenure was marked by translations of classical works; cross-disciplinary performances and international collaborations; and theater made by, for, and about the Bay Area. Exploring powerful stories by celebrated artists and introducing audiences to extraordinary emerging voices in American theater continues under A.C.T.'s current artistic director, Pam MacKinnon.

A.C.T.'s 50-year-old Conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, is at the center of our work. Our three-year, fully accredited Master of Fine Arts Program is at the forefront of America's

actor training programs. Our Summer Training Congress attracts students from around the world, while the San Francisco Semester offers a unique study-abroad opportunity for undergraduates. Other programs include Studio A.C.T.—our expansive course of theater study for adults—and the Professional Development Training Program, which offers actor training for companies seeking to elevate employees' business performance skills. Our alumni often grace our mainstage and perform around the Bay Area, as well as on stages and screens nationwide.

A.C.T. brings the benefits of theater-based arts education to more than 17,000 Bay Area students and educators each year. Director of Education & Community Programs Elizabeth Brodersen oversees the world-famous Young Conservatory (students ages 8–19) and our ACTsmart education programs, including the Student Matinee (SMAT) program that has brought hundreds of thousands of young people to A.C.T. performances since 1968. We also provide touring Will on Wheels Shakespeare productions, teaching-artist residencies, in-school workshops, and study materials to Bay Area schools and community-based organizations.

With the appointment of Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein, our continuing commitment to the development of new work and new artists, and our increased presence in the Central Market neighborhood with The Strand and The Costume Shop theaters, A.C.T. plays a leadership role in securing the future of theater for San Francisco and the nation.

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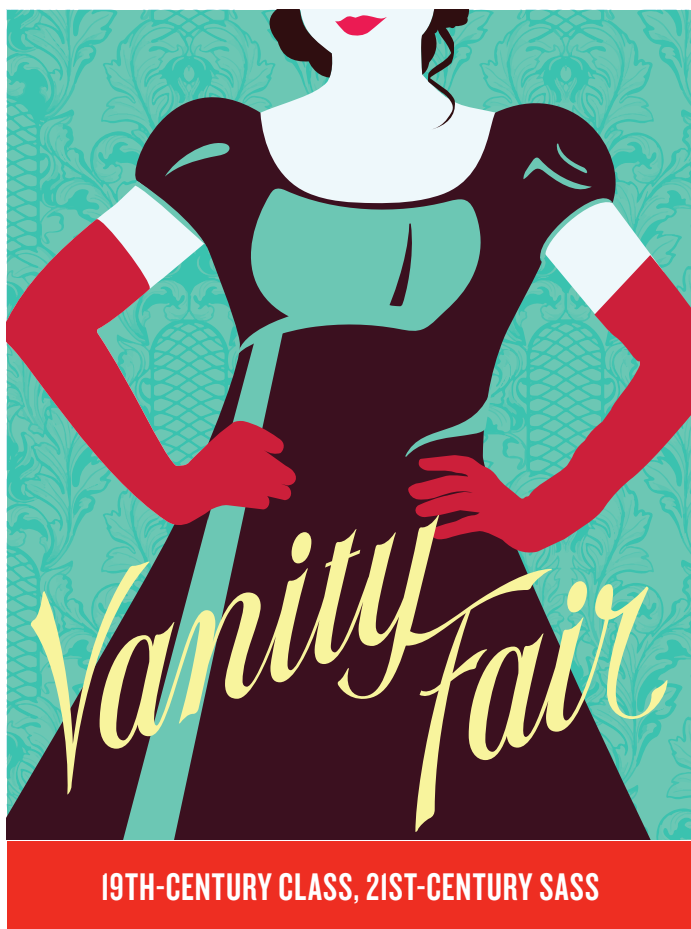
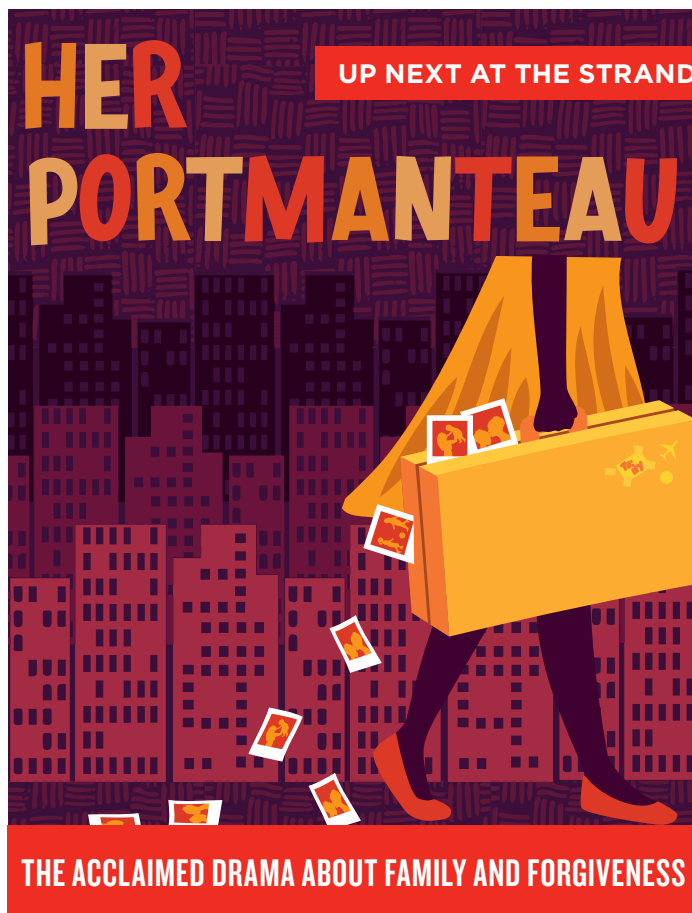
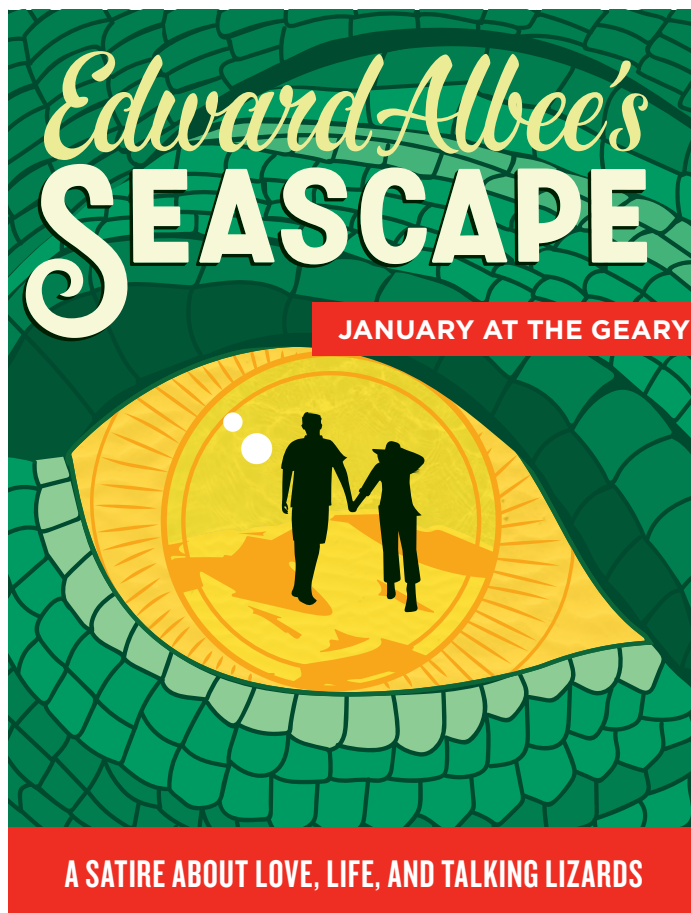
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The cast of A.C.T.'s 2018 production of *Men on Boats*.

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GET ANY BETTER."

Stark Insider

OPENS DECEMBER 6

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by **Charles Dickens** Adapted by **Carey Perloff** and **Paul Walsh**

Music by **Karl Lundeberg** Choreography by **Val Caniparoli**

Directed by **Domenique Lozano** Based on the original direction by **Carey Perloff**

The Bay Area's favorite holiday tradition—filled with sparkling music, gorgeous costumes, and deliciously spooky ghosts—returns to The Geary. Bring your family, bring your friends, and check your "humbugs" at the door!

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THE CAST OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL
(2017). PHOTO BY KEVIN BERNE.

FROM THE ARTISTIC AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Welcome to *Men on Boats*!

When I was 27, I moved to New York after remounting a large Broadway musical in Germany. I thought I'd step into the Broadway community, but instead I found an artistic home in the downtown scene. I use the word downtown, instead of the term off-off-Broadway, because our aim was not to be in conversation with Broadway, but to make theater specific to who we were in the moment, pushing how stories could be told with ambitious imaginations and small budgets.

I became the go-to director for a brand new company called Clubbed Thumb, led then by two actors who had just received their MFAs from UC San Diego, where we had met. Clubbed Thumb's mission was, and still is, to make "funny, strange, and provocative" plays with great roles for both men and women. Twenty years later, I was chair of Clubbed Thumb's board when the company developed Jaclyn Backhaus's *Men on Boats*—it became a festival hit and helped launch Jaclyn's career.

Men on Boats reminds me that the word "play" is a verb to be activated, wrestled with, and *enjoyed*. There are no men, there are no boats, but there they are in our imagination, vivid and strong. It's a play that piques my huge respect for the author's craft and platform for performance. It also makes me laugh out loud. I am thrilled to produce it at A.C.T. with an all-local cast of women, directed by the super-exciting rising star Tamilla Woodard.

Next up at The Strand is *Her Portmanteau*, by M.F.A. Program alumna (class of 2009) Mfoniso Udofia, directed by Victor Malana Maog. This is an immigrant story that reminds us that coming to America can be as much about what you leave behind as what you are coming to. It is the fourth play in a nine-play family cycle. We have partnered with Magic Theatre, which is producing the fifth, *In Old Age*, also directed by Victor. This spring, Bay Area audiences can "binge watch" these stories, seeing two actresses portray the mother character at different points in her life. I'm also excited to write that A.C.T. has commissioned Mfoniso to write the seventh play. This is an artist with a long-standing relationship with A.C.T., who is as thrilled for her homecoming as I am.

See you at The Strand,



Pam MacKinnon
Artistic Director

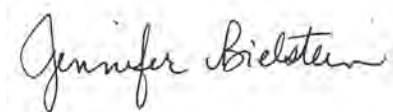
Dear Friends,

What I find so exciting about Jaclyn Backhaus's script for *Men on Boats* is how she has infused a sense of adventure at every turn. The (true!) story alone—a skilled, one-armed explorer teaming up with a ragtag band of pioneers to chart the great American West—is filled with enough adventure to power a big-budget, action-packed, thrill-a-minute movie. But Backhaus charged herself, and any set of artists taking on her play, to rethink the very conventions of modern theatrical storytelling. From inviting set designers to embrace an aesthetic of playful nonrealism to the proclamation that all actors are to be non-cisgender white men, *Men on Boats* demands that the artists—and audiences—take a leap into the unknown and prepare for a wild ride.

It is fitting that *Men on Boats* is having its Bay Area premiere at The Strand Theater, a venue with a wild past, and an even more adventurous future. As an historic movie theater, its near-final act was hosting infamous midnight showings of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*—a groundbreaking event that pushed gender identity to new heights in popular culture. Since its reopening as A.C.T.'s Market Street home in 2015, The Strand has played host to a series of boundary-pushing journeys. Whether through a surreal dive into the underworld in *The Unfortunates*; a continent-hopping, road-trip comedy in *Vietgone*; or the New Strands Festival—where dozens of new and in-process plays by the freshest voices in American theater have been presented—audiences who wander into our transparent lobby step into an adventure.

If this is your first visit to A.C.T., welcome aboard! For those returning to us as part of a multiyear journey through the American theater landscape, thank you for helping us stay above the rapids. I invite all our audiences to explore—through our Conservatory, our new play development programs, or our multiple InterACT events. A.C.T. offers adventure at every turn.

I look forward to seeing you at the theater.



Jennifer Bielstein
Executive Director

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AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
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PRESENTS

MEN on BOATS

by **JACLYN BACKHAUS**

Directed by
TAMILLA WOODARD

THIS PRODUCTION MADE
POSSIBLE BY

Producer
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Associate Producers
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Playwrights Horizons, Inc. and
Clubbed Thumb produced *Men on
Boats* in New York City, 2016.

Initially developed and produced by
Clubbed Thumb in 2015.

Men on Boats is presented by special
arrangement with Dramatists Play
Service, Inc., New York.

MEN on BOATS

CAST

Frank Goodman, Mr. Asa
ARWEN ANDERSON*

John Colton Sumner
LIBBY KING*

Old Shady
ANNEMARIA RAJALA*

Hall
ROSIE HALLETT*

Hawkins
AMY LIZARDO*

Bradley
KATHERINE ROMANS*†

O.G. Howland, Tsauwiat
LAUREN SPENCER*

Seneca Howland, The Bishop
LISA HORI-GARCIA*

William Dunn
SARITA OCÓN*

John Wesley Powell
LIZ SKLAR*

UNDERSTUDIES

Mr. Asa, The Bishop,
Frank Goodman,
Seneca Howland,
John Colton Sumner
SANTOYA FIELDS*

William Dunn
ROSIE HALLETT*

Hawkins, O.G. Howland,
Tsauwiat
JERRIE R. JOHNSON†

Bradley, Hall, Old Shady
JEUNÉE SIMON*

John Wesley Powell
LAUREN SPENCER*

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CHRISTINA HOGAN*

Assistant Stage Manager
MAGGIE MANZANO*

Stage Management Fellow
MIRANDA RAMOS

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DANYON DAVIS

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CHRISTINE CROOK

Props Master
JACQUELYN SCOTT

Dramaturg
JOY MEADS

Lighting Designer
ROBERT HAND

Vocal Coach
LISA ANNE PORTER

Casting Director
JANET FOSTER, CSA

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ANDY DONALD

General Manager
LOUISA BALCH


Production Managers
JACK HORTON
ROBERT HAND

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ONSTAGE NOW

PHOTO COURTESY JACLYN BACKHAUS.



**“WHAT IS IT ABOUT ADVENTURE STORIES
THAT’S SO EXCITING TO ME? IT’S BECAUSE
I WOULDN’T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE PART.”**

Growing up in Arizona, [playwright Jaclyn Backhaus](#) often flipped through her dad’s copy of John Wesley Powell’s 1869 expedition journal. When she joined Clubbed Thumb’s Early Career Writers’ Group in 2013, she knew that this 99-day journey down the Green and Colorado Rivers was the adventure play she had to write. We sat down with Backhaus before the start of rehearsals to discover her love of history and the creative process.

THE SPIRIT OF THE WATER

AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT JACLYN BACKHAUS

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

At what point did you know *Men on Boats* would feature no men and no boats?

[Laughs] From the very first draft. Halfway through, I started to question why I was writing the play. I started asking, “What is it about adventure stories that’s so exciting to me?” It’s because this story is something that I [as a woman] wouldn’t have been able to take part in. So that initial hypothesis—of casting the play with actors who “wouldn’t be in this story normally”—fell into place very early on.

One of the challenging aspects of this play is portraying the dangers that the crew faces. How did you go about crafting those scenes?

In the early draft of the play, the rapids were one long choral piece; everyone was saying every line all the time. I was trying to capture the spirit of the water with that texture, but it became clear that for the play to feel connected, the rapids had to tell a story of the psyches, minds, and perspectives of the characters who were on them. Each rapid needed to serve a different function. A character needed to leave a rapid feeling differently about their experience on the river. It took awhile to capture that feeling of, “Whoa, is

this what it’s like being on the river?” You don’t know what’s coming, you don’t know how you’re going to get out of the messes, and then [exhales], the relief when it’s over.

What advice do you give creative teams about *Men on Boats*?

I always go back to the advice that Will Davis, the director of the original production, would give the actors: don’t think of what kind of *man* you would be, but what kind of *explorer* you are. That grounds people’s performances and lessens the weight of performing gender or performing a commentary on gender. It makes actors engage a little bit more with the task at hand, of the circumstances of being in each rapid rather than what the piece is trying to say about masculinity or Manifest Destiny. My hope is that the play allows people to forget that it’s seemingly such a big change, and get immersed in the characters themselves.

Several of your plays look at historical tropes through a contemporary lens. What do you think the past can tell us about the present?

It’s something that I’m continually mulling over. With each project, I’m learning more and more about what

history actually *is*, you know, the fact that it’s stories in the same way that I’m telling stories. It was documented and preserved by someone who wasn’t completely objective, who had specific intentions and motivations. That erasure of histories and stories can be very purposeful. That’s part of the reason I gravitate toward writing in a contemporary voice; it helps me to process, continually learn, and highlight that we’re looking at particular stories through a lens that’s not aiming to be objective.

I’ve always loved history and realizing as I’m writing something, “Oh my god, this resonates with my life so much.” Those kinds of things, if we allow them to, will enable us to find more and more connections. There’s something exciting about realizing, “I never really thought about that history *this way*.” Or, “I’ve been to Lake Powell, but I had no idea that there was a guy named Powell.” It’s fun to crack open those connections and then watch them get deeper and deeper and deeper. ■

WORDS ON PLAYS

Want to know more about *Men on Boats*? *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.

Available at the box office and lobby, at the bars, and online at act-sf.org/wordsonplays.



INTO THE UNKNOWN

Powell's 1869 Expedition

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

ONSTAGE NOW

Who They Were

- 👤 Major John Wesley Powell
- 👤 John Colton Sumner
- ▲ William Dunn
- 👤 Captain Walter Powell
- 👤 George Bradley
- ▲ Oramel (O.G.) Howland
- 👤 Seneca Howland
- Frank Goodman
- Andy Hall
- ▲👤 Billy Hawkins

- 👤 **Civil War Veterans: 6**
- ▲ **Mountain Men: 5**
- Experienced River Runners: 0**



How They Navigated

LINING: tying boats together and leap-frogging through a rapid

PORTAGING: carrying the empty boats along the shore

RUNNING: braving the rapid

Grand Canyon
National Park

Lake Mead

Separation Canyon
August 28

What They Rowed

3 oak Whitehall boats
21 feet long, four feet wide
Heavy, round-bottomed

1 pine Whitehall boat
16 feet long



Green River

Colorado River

AZ

NV

WY

UT



Green River Station

May 24



Risks

Drowning
Starvation
Food poisoning
Injury hundreds of miles
from medical assistance
Death

Yampa River

CO



What They Carried

Tents, bedrolls, ammunition, summer clothing, winter clothing, barometers, sextants, thermometers, map-making material, food (rice, flour, beans, coffee, sugar, bacon, dried apples), shotguns, rope, axes, hammers, saws, nails, screws, full mess kit, kettle, traps, gold-panning equipment, cask of whiskey

Total weight: 7,000 lbs
(equivalent to a pair of hippos)



Colorado River

**“We broke many oars and most
of the Ten Commandments.”**

—John Colton Sumner

NM



ONSTAGE NOW

INVENTION AND DISCOVERY

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TAMILLA WOODARD

BY SIMON HODGSON

For theater-maker **Tamilla Woodard**, the audience's experience is her benchmark. "When theater is successful," she says, "we laugh, we cry, we forget where we've been. That's what I'm after."

As the cofounder of PopUP Theatrics, Woodard is rapidly developing a reputation as a director who really draws audiences into her stories, whether in immersive works staged in hotel rooms or on proscenium stages such as A.C.T.'s Rembe Theater. As Woodard prepared for rehearsals, we spoke with her about the voyage of exploration in *Men on Boats*.

What makes *Men on Boats* a show for a Bay Area audience?

The Bay is still a frontier, not only across the physical environment, but also the political and social justice environments. It's a place of adventure, a place where people find unknown territory, and a place where movements start. It's the perfect city for this play.

As you research the journals of these 19th-century explorers, how do you view these characters with a modern-day lens?

I'm intrigued by them, I root for them, and I have compassion for them. I also have the privilege of my modern-day point of view, which allows me to recognize the bias their worldview was based on. I can see the things Powell dismissed, couldn't comprehend, or looked over. It's not that those nuances weren't there. It's that there was no system for him to see what was in front of him. We can't value what we can't understand. If I am unable to recognize you as valuable, you don't "count" to me.

I think of all the Native American tribes the expedition likely encountered. In so many American stories of expansion,

the Native peoples are made villains or written out of the narrative entirely. Although they inhabited, navigated, and took care of the land—and maybe even cared for these adventurers—the white explorers didn't count them in their historic stories of survival. In one of my favorite scenes, the crew asks the Ute tribe leaders—Chief Tsauwiat and his wife, The Bishop—to take on a burden. Because the white explorers don't perceive the measure of their intelligence, the Chief and The Bishop can be as sarcastic and insulting as they want because, ultimately, Powell thinks he's the big shot and they are the savages. This is just one of the many brilliant moments in this play.

How is Backhaus shifting the audience's perspective for adventure tales such as Powell's?

Often, hero stories have been the territory of male, cisgender [a person whose gender identity is the same as the gender assigned at birth] writers, mainly white men. The hero is always the guy who gets to say what happened. It's essential that we make room for other people's experience of history. Jaclyn [Backhaus] proposes a space for an adventure story to be occupied by bodies and psychological experiences that are not those of white men. *Men on Boats* is an invitation to acknowledge that we're all performing gender and we can *unperform* it as well. Power lies in the hands of the person who gets to say what happened. It's critical that we keep our eye on that because people can be shut out of their own narratives.

In what ways can theater-makers help audiences experience untold stories from different communities?

In the script of *Men on Boats*, Jaclyn requires that the cast be made up of "racially diverse actors who are female-identifying, trans-identifying, genderfluid, and/or non-gender-conforming." In a story about white guys conquering the Grand Canyon, this may feel a bit disorienting, but it allows us to see something differently. That disorientation invites illumination, and that recognition spurs laughter. When we laugh, we physically take in more oxygen, and things move through us differently—perhaps more coherently. I like putting an audience in a place that's filled with disorientation and recognition.

What inspires you about American theater today?

Oh gosh! I'm inspired that audiences are beginning to widen in terms of perspective. When I'm sitting in the middle of an audience that actually looks like America, it feels wonderful. I work to create a wider perspective of storytelling and story purveyors, and an audience that has different points of access to these stories—familiarity, curiosity, even disagreement. The more often we can tell each other who we are, the less suspicious we become of each other. Let us deliver stories that represent the entire collection of humanity. Theater is a place where you're reminded that you are of value, that you *count*. And that the person next to you counts too, even if you didn't see them sitting there before. ■

WHO'S WHO IN MEN ON BOATS



ARWEN ANDERSON*
(Frank Goodman, Mr. Asa)

returns to A.C.T., where she has worked on *Heisenberg*, *Let*

There Be Love, *A Christmas Carol*, and *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City: A New Musical* (workshop). Regional credits include *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Verona Project* (world premiere) at California Shakespeare Theater; *August: Osage County*, *Anne Boleyn*, *Circle Mirror Transformation*, *Bellwether* (world premiere), and *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Marin Theatre Company; *An Accident*, *Mrs. Whitney*, *Expedition 6*, *The Rules of Charity* (all world premieres), and *Mauritius* at Magic Theatre; *77%* at San Francisco Playhouse; *Miss Julie* at Stanford Repertory Theater; *Lobby Hero* and *The Shape of Things* at Aurora Theatre Company; *You Know When the Men Are Gone* and *4 Adverbs* with Word for Word Performing Arts Company; and roles with American Stage Festival, San José Repertory Theatre, TheatreWorks, Marin Shakespeare Company, Brava! for Women in the Arts, Marines' Memorial Theatre, Encore Theatre Company, and Central Works Theater Company. Her film work includes *Hog Island*, *Ashley 22*, and *Dark Retreat*. Anderson is a graduate of Wesleyan University.



ROSIE HALLETT*

(Hall) is proud to be making her A.C.T. debut. Her regional credits include *Red Speedo* (Center REpertory

Company); *peerless*, *Native Son*, *The Way West*, and *Thomas and Sally*

(Marin Theatre Company); *The Country House* (TheatreWorks); *Top Girls* and *Harry Thaw Hates Everybody* (Shotgun Players); and four productions and tours to France with Word for Word Performing Arts Company, where she is an associate artist. Hallett earned degrees in drama and English from Stanford University. roselynhallett.com



LISA HORI-GARCIA*
(Seneca Howland, The Bishop) is excited to be making her A.C.T. debut with *Men on Boats*. She

is an actress, director, teaching artist, and collective member of the San Francisco Mime Troupe (SFMT), where she has been a principal actor and collaborator since 2004. Hori-Garcia has worked for theater companies all over the Bay Area. Her most recent theater credits include *The Gangster of Love* (Magic Theatre), *As You Like It* (California Shakespeare Theater), *Madame Ho* (Eugenie Chan Theater Projects), *How a Mountain Was Made* (Word for Word Performing Arts Company), and *Seeing Red: A Time-Traveling Musical* (SFMT). She received her BA from Smith College and her MFA in acting from USC, and is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association and Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists. lisahorigarcia.com



LIBBY KING*
(John Colton Sumner) is a San Francisco-based actor, writer, and mom. Most recently, King co-wrote and

performed in the world premiere of

Patti & the Kid at On the Boards in Seattle. King is a member of the acclaimed Brooklyn theatre company, the TEAM. For over a decade, she has helped author and perform in award-winning and published works. Currently, King and the TEAM are in progress on *Reconstruction*, their upcoming show that likens *Gone with the Wind* to a Confederate monument and explores whether or not it should be torn down. She has been committed to new work throughout her career, performing in premieres across the country, notably *27*, by Abi Morgan; Tectonic Theater Project's *Laramie Project Cycle*; and the upcoming *Theater of the Mind*, a collaboration between 600 HIGHWAYMEN and David Byrne. King is thrilled to be making her debut at A.C.T.



AMY LIZARDO*
(Hawkins) is a Bay Area actor, singer, and teaching artist. Her recent credits include *Quixote Nuevo* with

California Shakespeare Theater, *Romeo and Juliet* with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (School Visit Program), *The Rules* with San Francisco Playhouse, *The Unfortunates* with A.C.T., *The Tempest* with California Shakespeare Theater, *Dogfight* with San Francisco Playhouse, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* with Boxcar Theatre (San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award nominee), and *Party People* with Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Lizardo graduated from San José State University in 2010 with a master's degree in theater.



SARITA OCÓN*
(William Dunn)
makes her A.C.T.
debut with *Men on
Boats*. She was
most recently seen
in Octavio Solis's
Quixote Nuevo,

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's *Everybody*,
and *The War of the Roses*, adapted by
Eric Ting and Philippa Kelly
(California Shakespeare Theater).
Theatrical credits include
performances with Arizona Theatre
Company, Berkeley Repertory
Theatre, Brava! for Women in the
Arts, GALA Hispanic Theatre, Golden
Thread Productions, Los Angeles
Theatre Center, PlayMakers
Repertory Company, Puerto Rican
Traveling Theater, San Francisco
International Arts Festival, San
Francisco Playhouse, ShadowLight
Productions, South Coast Repertory,
Teatro Visión, Ubuntu Theater
Project, and others. Ocón is a recipient
of the Theatre Communications
Group Fox Foundation Resident Actor
Fellowship for Exceptional Merit, the
Richard Henry Epstein Charitable
Foundation Artistic Fellowship,
California Arts Council Local Impact
Award, and the Investing in Artists
Award from the Center for Cultural
Innovation. Ocón received her BA
from Stanford University. She is a
company member of the Ubuntu
Theater Project and HERO Theatre.



**ANNEMARIA
RAJALA*** (Old
Shady) returns to
A.C.T. with *Men on
Boats* after her last
appearance as Mrs.
Anderssen in *A
Little Night Music*.

She was most recently seen by Bay
Area audiences as Morwyn in *Non-
Player Character* at San Francisco
Playhouse, Olivia in *Enemies: Lively
Scenes of Love and Combat* at Golden
Thread Productions, Mama Sid in *The
Fourth Messenger* at Ashby Stage, and

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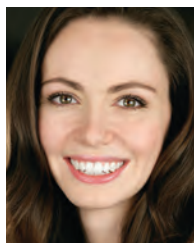
Hedwig 5 in the Boxcar Theatre production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Rajala was born and raised in Finland. She holds a BFA in musical theatre performance from New World School of the Arts. Before her move to the Bay Area, Rajala performed with many South Florida companies, including Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre, Women's Theatre Project, Miami Light Project, Mosaic Theatre, and Hollywood Playhouse, and she was a core company member at New Theatre in Miami. Rajala is a member of Actors' Equity Association.



KATHERINE ROMANS*†

(Bradley) is thrilled to be appearing in her first show at The Strand. Romans is currently an

M.F.A. Program candidate at A.C.T. and will graduate this coming May. Most recently in the Bay Area, Romans appeared in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at Livermore Shakespeare Festival. Her Conservatory credits include *Twelfth Night*, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, *The Changeling*, *The Good Woman of Szechwan*, and *Suddenly Last Summer*. Romans is a graduate of New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study, where she concentrated in political theater. She would like to thank her incredible family, especially her grandmother, Alice, who inspired her love of theater. katherineromans.com



LIZ SKLAR*
(John Wesley Powell) returns to A.C.T., where she graduated from the M.F.A. Program and took classes in the Young

Conservatory as a teenager. She has

performed in *A Christmas Carol* on the Geary stage, among many other student productions, including *The Philistines*. Most recently, Sklar played Soccer Mom in the west coast premiere of *The Wolves* at Marin Theatre Company. Selected Bay Area credits include Annie in *The Real Thing* at Aurora Theatre Company; Desdemona in *Othello* at California Shakespeare Theater; *Trouble Cometh* and *Becky Shaw* at San Francisco Playhouse; *Care of Trees* at Shotgun Players; and *Anne Boleyn*, *The Whale*, *Failure: A Love Story*, *Lasso of Truth*, *Othello*, *Seagull*, and *Bellwether* at Marin Theatre Company. Sklar holds a BA in theater arts from Brown University and an M.F.A. in acting from A.C.T.



**LAUREN
SPENCER***
(O.G. Howland, Tsauwiat) returns to A.C.T. after performing in *King Charles III*.

Spencer has also worked with Campo Santo (*H.O.M.E.: Hookers on Mars Eventually*); Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*Party People*); Marin Theatre Company (*Anne Boleyn* and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*); Crowded Fire Theater (*Good Goods*, *The Late Wedding*, *Blackademics*, and *Mechanics of Love*); the New Strands Festival at A.C.T. (*How to Catch Creation*); San Francisco Shakespeare Festival (*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*); Shotgun Players (*The Rover*); and Just Theater (*A Maze*), among others.



**SANTOYA
FIELDS***
(Understudy) is an actress in the Bay Area and New York City. She was most recently seen

*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States

†Member of A.C.T.'s M.F.A. Program class of 2019

in the remount of *Black Odyssey* (California Shakespeare Theater), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (African-American Shakespeare Company), and *White* (Shotgun Players). Fields was nominated for the Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Performance in a Principal Role in a Play for her performance in *White*. Her off-Broadway work includes *Rachel* (New Brooklyn Theatre) and *Iphigenia Among the Taurians* (Everyday Inferno Theatre Company). Fields has trained at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Conservatory Theater (Summer Training Congress), and Brooklyn Music School.



JERRIE R. JOHNSON*

(Understudy) is excited to be back at The Strand for *Men on Boats*. During her time at A.C.T., Johnson has

been seen as Olga in *Three Sisters*, The Slave Leader in *The Bacchae* of Euripides, Olivia in A.C.T.'s Will on Wheels production of *Twelfth Night*, and many more. Johnson has also written and produced a one-woman show called *The Crooked Room* that she plans to expand after completing her master's degree. Her other regional credits include The Nina in *Airness* and Phoebe and Celia in *As You Like It* at Chautauqua Theater Company. @thablackicequeen



JEUNÉE SIMON*

(Understudy) is a board member at TheatreFIRST, where she performed in *Waafrika 1-2-3*

and *Hela: The PoeticScientific DreamFate of Henrietta Lacks*. Simon understudied the role of Lorinda Pike in Berkeley Repertory Theatre's production of *It Can't Happen Here*. Simon has also worked with Central

Works Theater Company (*Bamboozled*), Town Hall Theatre (*A Civil War Christmas*), Custom Made Theatre Company (*Isaac's Eye*, *The Crucible*, and *Peter/Wendy*), Bay Area Children's Theatre (*Bad Kitty*), Shotgun Players, and the Bay Area Playwrights Foundation. Simon is a proud recipient of the 2017 artistic fellowship from the Richard Henry Epstein Charitable Foundation in partnership with Theatre Bay Area. She is delighted to be a part of *Men on Boats*!

JACLYN BACKHAUS

(Playwright) is a playwright and co-founder of Fresh Ground Pepper. Her play *Men on Boats* was a New York Times Critics' Pick (off-Broadway, Clubbed Thumb, and Playwrights Horizons) after starting in Clubbed Thumb's SummerWorks, and was a Kilroys play in 2015. Other works include *People Doing Math Live!* (Under the Radar Festival at The Public Theater), *The Incredible Fox Sisters* (Live Source), *You On The Moors Now* (Theater Reconstruction Ensemble, and The Hypocrites Theater Chicago), *Bull's Hollow* (Ars Nova), and the musical *Folk Wandering*. She has received commissions from Playwrights Horizons and Ars Nova and is the 2016 Tow Foundation Playwright-in-Residence at Clubbed Thumb. Her work has been developed and showcased with the Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival, Playwrights Horizons, The Public and Joe's Pub, The Ice Factory Festival, (not just) 3 New Plays, The Civilians R&D Group, SPACE on Ryder Farm, Ars Nova's ANT Fest, and The Falcons. She has a BFA from New York University and hails from Phoenix, Arizona. @jaclynbackhaus

TAMILLA WOODARD (Director)

is the associate artistic director of WP Theater. She is the co-founder of PopUP Theatrics, creating immersive and participatory theater for

audiences in Europe, South America, Mexico, and the US since 2007. Her recent work includes *American Dreams*, by Leila Buck (The Cleveland Public Theatre); the critically acclaimed immersive *3/Fifths*, by James Scruggs (3-Legged Dog); *PolkaDots: The Cool Kids Musical* (Atlantic Theatre Company; Off Broadway Alliance Award); and *Miami Motel Stories*, a site-specific immersive work in Miami's historic Little Havana. Her work has also been seen at the Classical Theatre of Harlem, Working Theater, The Cleveland Public Theatre, 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.

NINA BALL (Scenic Designer)

is a designer whose work has been seen at A.C.T. (*The Birthday Party*, *Monstress*, *Chester Bailey*, and *Underneath the Lintel*), as well as California Shakespeare Theater, Shotgun Players, San Francisco Playhouse, San José Repertory Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, Center REpertory Company, Z Space, and Santa Cruz Shakespeare, among many others. Recent honors include a Theatre Bay Area Award for *The Nether*; a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for *My Fair Lady* at SF Playhouse and *Metamorphosis* at Aurora Theatre; and a BroadwayWorld San Francisco Award for *Care of Trees* at Shotgun Players. She is also a company member of Shotgun Players. In addition to theater, Ball also works as a production designer in film and television. Her current and upcoming projects include *My Fair Lady* at SF Playhouse, *The Diary of Anne Frank* at Center REP, and *Hairspray* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. ninaball.com

CHRISTINE CROOK (Costume Designer) designs costumes for theater, dance, opera, and wildly strange performance art. Her recent credits include Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Quartett* (West Edge Opera), *Weightless* (Z Space), *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets* (Shotgun Players), and *Pancho Villa From a Safe Distance* (Ballroom Marfa). Upcoming projects include *Weightless* (Under the Radar Festival at The Public Theater), *Women Laughing Alone with Salad* (Shotgun Players), and *Creditors* (Aurora Theatre Company). Crook also independently presents abstract, design-driven live art and is a co-founder of feminist performance collective Repulsive Women. In 2016, she was awarded a Bridging the Gap Grant for her continued experimentation with costume design during a residency in Berlin with the Institut für Alles Mögliche. She has an MFA in costume design from UC San Diego and teaches costume design at the University of San Francisco and the Academy of Art University.

ROBERT HAND (Lighting Designer) designed *John*, *Monstress*, *The Birthday Party*, and *Chester Bailey*, for which he received the Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Lighting Design (A.C.T.); *La Cage aux Folles*, *Seared*, and *Stage Kiss* (San Francisco Playhouse); *Home in 7*, by choreographer Amy Seiwert, and *Boiling Point*, by choreographer Darrell Grand Moultrie (Atlanta Ballet); and *Peter Pan*, by choreographer Jorden Morris (Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre and Nevada Ballet Theatre). Additional credits include lighting designs for the English National Ballet, North Carolina Theatre, Milwaukee Ballet, Scottish Ballet, *Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues*, and *Scary Movie 5*. He was previously the resident lighting designer for Atlanta Ballet,

where he designed more than 25 new works, many of which remain in their permanent repertoire.

KATE MARVIN (Sound Designer) is a designer, composer, and musician based in New York. Recent work includes *A Doll's House, Part 2* at Actors Theatre of Louisville; *Indecent* at the Guthrie Theater; *Babette's Feast* and *Sotto Voce* at Portland Stage Company; *Crossing Delancey* and *Ugly Lies the Bone* at Alliance Theatre; *Grounded* at Westport Country Playhouse; *Happy Days* at Theatre for a New Audience and Yale Repertory Theatre; *[Porto]* at WP Theater; *Somebody's Daughter* at Second Stage Theater; *Wilder Gone* at Clubbed Thumb; *Don Giovanni* and *Fidelio* at Heartbeat Opera; *The Tempest*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *Second Language* at Target Margin Theater; and *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III* at Trinity Shakespeare Festival. Marvin is an associate artist with Target Margin and Little Lord. She earned her MFA from Yale School of Drama. katemarvinsound.com

JACQUELYN SCOTT (Props Master) works as props master, set designer, and art director for theaters and film companies throughout the Bay Area. Her previous credits include *Vietgone* and *John* (A.C.T.); *She Loves Me*, *Seared*, *Stage Kiss*, *Company*, *Tree*, *Into the Woods*, *Jerusalem*, *Abigail's Party*, and *A Behanding in Spokane* (San Francisco Playhouse); *Fool for Love*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Buried Child*, *The Happy Ones*, *Annapurna*, *The Lily's Revenge*, *The Brothers Size*, *Goldfish*, and *Octopus* (Magic Theatre); *Stories by Emma Donoghue* and *Colm Tóibín* and *Stories by Alice Munro* (Word for Word Performing Arts Company); *Assassins* and *God's Plot* (Shotgun Players); *Hundred Days* and *The Companion Piece* (Z Space); and *American Hwangap* (The Play Company, New York).

She would like to thank Phil Rabe, who helped create the boats in *Men on Boats*. wrenarthouse.com

LISA ANNE PORTER (Vocal Coach) is the head of text and dialects at A.C.T. She has served on the faculties of UC Berkeley, UC Davis, Shakespeare & Company, the Tepper Semester at Syracuse University, Naropa University, California Shakespeare Theater, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre. She was an associate professor of voice, acting, and text in the BFA program at Syracuse University, where in her first year of teaching she was awarded the Most Inspirational Faculty award. She has coached voice and dialect in more than 70 productions nationwide. As a professional actor, she has performed with numerous repertory companies and Shakespeare festivals throughout the country. Porter has an M.F.A. in acting from A.C.T., a BA in theater and American studies from Wesleyan University, and is certified in Linklater voice training.

DANYON DAVIS (Movement Coach) is the head of movement at A.C.T. He formerly served as the head of movement at Stella Adler Studio of Acting, and he's also a former faculty member at the Neighborhood Playhouse, Circle in the Square Theatre School, and HB Studio's Hagen Core Training program. Davis assisted Moni Yakim, founding faculty member and head of movement at the Juilliard Drama Division, for many years. He also performed, taught, and directed at the Guthrie Theater. He is a former collaborator with the SITI Company and a former associate with Bill T. Jones. Davis has coached individuals and taught group workshops in a variety of settings, including school programs, correctional facilities, Middlebury College, the 52nd Street Project, and The Public Theater.

JOY MEADS (Dramaturg), a native of Oakland, comes to A.C.T. from Center Theatre Group, where she served as literary manager/ artistic engagement strategist. Her CTG dramaturgy credits include Rajiv Joseph's *Archduke*, Ngozi Anyanwu's *Good Grief*, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's *Appropriate*, Dael Orlandersmith's *Forever*, Jordan Harrison's *Marjorie Prime* (2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist), Bruce Norris's *A Parallelogram*, Marco Ramirez's *The Royale*, Daniel Alexander Jones's *Radiate*, and Naomi Iizuka's *SLEEP* (a co-commission with Ripe Time, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Yale Repertory Theatre). Previously, Meads was literary manager at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and associate artistic director at California Shakespeare Theater. She has also developed plays with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, New York Theatre Workshop, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Ojai Playwrights Conference, Portland Center Stage, South Coast Repertory, and Campo Santo, among others. Meads is a proud member and co-founder of The Kilroys.

JANET FOSTER, CSA (Casting Director) has cast for A.C.T. for seven seasons, including *Hamlet*, *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, *The Hard Problem*, *King Charles III*, *John*, *Arcadia*, *Stuck Elevator*, *The Orphan of Zhao*, *Napoli!*, *Elektra*, *Scorched*, 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*, *The Monogamist*, *A Cheever Evening*, 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.

CHRISTINA HOGAN* (Stage Manager) returns to A.C.T. after working on *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)*, *Hamlet*, *Monstress*, and *Love and Information*. Her other theater credits include *The Baltimore Waltz*, *runboyrun*, *And I and Silence*, *Hir*, *Arlington*, *Every Five Minutes*, *The Happy Ones*, *Terminus*, *Se Llama Cristina*, and *Any Given Day* (Magic Theatre); *It Can't Happen Here* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Skeleton Crew* and *The Wolves* (Marin Theatre Company); *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Verona Project*, and *The Pastures of Heaven* (California Shakespeare Theater); and *very still & hard to see* (A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program). Hogan has a BA in theater arts from Saint Mary's College of California.

MAGGIE MANZANO* (Assistant Stage Manager) is making her debut on the A.C.T. mainstage, but she is no stranger to A.C.T. Manzano has previously been A.C.T.'s conservatory production and stage management coordinator. She has loved her work as a freelance stage manager in the Bay Area for the past five years. Her previous credits include *Urinetown: The Musical* (A.C.T. Young Conservatory), *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (A.C.T. M.F.A. Program), *brownsville song (b-side for tray)* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Shotgun Players). She would like to thank the amazing community of stage managers from A.C.T. and beyond who have supported her growth up to this point.

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Nailah Harper-Malveaux,
Assistant Director
Leighland Hooks,
Master Technician
Patrick Lawrence,
Head Carpenter
Audrey Morton,
Wardrobe Supervisor

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

Christine Crook, Costume Designer,
Instagram: @christineandthecrook

Robert Hand, Lighting Designer,
Instagram: @RHandLighting

Kate Marvin, Sound Designer,
katemarvinsound.com

Jacquelyn Scott, Props Master,
wrenarthouse.com

Please note: Photos are strictly prohibited during the performance. Photos of the stage are not permitted if an actor is present. Video recording is not permitted in the theater at any time.

@ACTSanFrancisco #menonboats



THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

MEN ON BOATS TEACHING ARTISTS INSPIRE STUDENTS

BY ANNIE SEARS

Men on Boats is a play in all senses of the word. It requires designers to play with the toys of their craft—from paint to lights to fabric to sound waves. It plays with traditional gender roles. It asks that audiences pretend to be somewhere they're not, that actors pretend to be historical figures they're not. But some of the actors in *Men on Boats* are doing more than playing characters; they're also using play to empower local youth.

"As we get older, we go from a playful, no-inhibitions attitude to one of self-consciousness," says current A.C.T. M.F.A. Program actor and teaching artist Katherine Romans, who plays Bradley. "That sense of play happens naturally with junior high students, but we have to reintroduce high schoolers to their own sense of play."

"In a class where it's pretend and where you're surrounded by people who are also taking risks, it's safe to practice expressing emotion," says Lauren Spencer, a local actor and teaching artist who plays O.G. Howland and Tsauwiat. "I find that joy is sometimes the hardest for students to access, and through play, we allow them the space to practice." Both Romans and Spencer are local teaching artists, supplementing their onstage work with classroom work. Sometimes, they partner

with schoolteachers to enrich the core curriculum with theatrical activities. Other times, they lead classes specifically in theater. But in all cases, they craft lesson plans that invite students to explore their talents and personal values through play.

"Being a teacher is hard," says Spencer, "but it's a vulnerable, challenging, and glorious thing to shepherd students as they explore creativity, empathy, and self-confidence." Spencer has been teaching in the Bay Area for eight years. She's worked with organizations including TheatreFIRST, StageWrite, and Midnight Shakespeare at the West Oakland Civicorps, and taught in A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory and Downtown High School residency program, in addition to directing *Black Butterflies*, our 2017 Collaborative Youth Arts Project with Destiny Arts Center. She now develops curricula for several Bay Area organizations. "Teaching is an art form in and of itself," says Spencer. "And like any other art, it requires ongoing development."

Recognizing this need for continual growth, A.C.T.'s Young Conservatory Director Jill MacLean is implementing professional development seminars for her teaching artists, focused on choosing diverse classroom material. Students in our M.F.A. Program also receive training in pedagogy

Want to support local teaching artists? Visit artsedalliance.org/takeaction for resources.

For more information about A.C.T.'s Education & Community Programs, visit act-sf.org/education.



Lauren Spencer (far left) and the cast and production team of *Black Butterflies* (2017).

and cultural humility as part of our Citizen Artist curriculum, and they craft lesson plans for our local residency programs. Romans, for example, has taught in our Downtown High School residency, where she strives to “leave students feeling hungry, curious, and confident.”

Romans and her fellow teaching artists are accomplishing just that. “In their end of semester surveys,” says A.C.T. School Programs Manager Vanessa Ramos, “students at Downtown say that they’ve learned companionship, perseverance, communication, respect, and fun.”

A.C.T. is also a member of the Arts Education Alliance of the Bay Area (AEABA), a partnership between 71 local arts organizations, including the Oakland Symphony, Prescott

Circus Theatre, San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and SF Jazz. AEABA harnesses the Bay Area’s innovation and thriving arts scene to help provide students with the skills to become creative members of their communities. “It’s important to reach out to younger generations,” says Todd Berman, director of AEABA. “A.C.T. is one of the leaders in using the arts to elevate student voices and collaborating with schools across the city. People look to A.C.T. for that creativity and leadership in how effective arts education can be.”

AEABA supports teaching artists by hosting myriad events—from administrator panels on retaining teaching artists to workshops on cultural sensitivity, resource fairs, and teaching artist open calls. A yearly

favorite is Curriculum Slam: teachers have seven minutes to present 14 slides encapsulating one of their lesson plans. Past presentations have included creating sensory boxes for preschoolers and using memes in high school classrooms to expose the problematic online portrayal of people of color. AEABA and A.C.T.’s programs connect teaching artists to one another, and their interaction encourages the sense of play present in their teaching and performing.

“The skill and the craft they bring to the classroom—they’re practicing it onstage,” says Elizabeth Brodersen, A.C.T.’s director of Education & Community Programs. “Teaching artists are essential to the future of arts in schools.” ■



MASTER ARTIST(S)

STUDIO A.C.T. THINKS LOCAL, ACTS GLOBAL

BY SIMON HODGSON

Studio A.C.T. Director Mark Jackson didn't know it at the time, but even as a kid growing up in Placerville, California, he was devising theater productions. "I used to play with my big brother. We'd kick our parents' cars out of the garage and turn it into a stage. We were always making things out of what we found. That continued into my theater-making career."

Today, Jackson is demonstrating the same fearless creativity in conjuring a sparkling new season of theater arts classes for adults. "My aim is to connect Studio A.C.T. to the work on our mainstages," he says. This January, Studio A.C.T. acting students can draw parallels between the art taking place on the Geary stage and their own artistic explorations, by studying the work of playwright Edward Albee in a class that comes with a ticket to Edward Albee's *Seascape*.

This continues the mainstage connection that Jackson established last season, when iconic Bay Area actor, director, and teacher Margo Hall taught Performing Women's Voices. This popular class investigates the work of female playwrights such as *Father Comes Home from the Wars (Parts 1, 2 & 3)* playwright Suzan-Lori Parks.

Alongside these courses, Jackson is introducing Bay Area theater students to a series of expert artists through master classes. In the last few months, Studio A.C.T. students have attended classes with acclaimed Taiwanese

performance artist Pao-Chang Tsai (visiting the city for the San Francisco International Arts Festival) and Thurman E. Scott, the founder of the Actors Theatre Workshop who trained with celebrated acting teacher Stella Adler.

One upcoming master artist this season is performance artist Monique Jenkinson, whose class, *Pry Bars for Creative Jams*, will help dancers, actors, and theater-makers of all stripes to create original work when they're stuck for ideas. In February, look out for a rare master class with Tom Ross, the artistic director of Aurora Theatre Company, who cut his teeth with legendary Public Theater founder Joe Papp. This class will focus on developing producing and directing skills—"Keeping the drama onstage," says Jackson, quoting Ross.

With more master classes from international artists lined up for spring 2019, this is an A.C.T. program that continues to evolve. "Studio A.C.T. is an access point," says Jackson, "for creative people to connect to the work that's going on not only at A.C.T., but also in the world." ■

For more information about Studio A.C.T. classes and to register, visit act-sf.org/studio.

A.C.T. TODAY



Robina Riccitiello (right) and her daughter Kristen at the first rehearsal for *Men on Boats*.

TELLING UNTOLD STORIES

A CONVERSATION WITH
MEN ON BOATS PRODUCER
AND A.C.T. TRUSTEE
ROBINA RICCITIELLO

BY ANNIE SEARS

Robina Riccitiello built a career as a journalist because she cares about stories, especially stories the media overlooks. Five years ago, that passion fueled Riccitiello to join A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees because she saw A.C.T. "unleashing the powerful voices of artists who didn't have many opportunities." Now, she also produces. We caught up with Riccitiello to hear about why she loves being involved at A.C.T.

You produced *The Unfortunates* in 2016, and you're producing both mainstage shows here at The Strand this season. Why do you produce?

Producers get a behind-the-scenes glimpse. You attend the first rehearsal, where the director, playwright, and designers share their vision for the show. After hearing the design presentations for *Men on Boats*, I'm especially excited about the set and

costumes. It's cool that the costume designer was inspired in part by pulp novels. And I'm excited to see *The Strand* transformed into the majestic Grand Canyon. *The Unfortunates* was one of my favorites. It's a fantasy, wartime musical about love, fear, and the plague. Sometimes, it's best to focus on what we don't immediately understand and what makes us squirm. That show challenged audiences and made them discuss what they'd just seen. That's the best part of theater—you can't wait to talk about it after the curtain closes.

Is that why you chose to produce *Men on Boats* and *Her Portmanteau*?

Yes. I love history and stories that challenge our assumptions. *Men on Boats* tells a story based on an important expedition, but turns history on its head by taking iconic figures from the past and dragging them into the future. It's so fantastical—the idea of putting women in these parts that were acted in real life by men. For *Her Portmanteau*, I'm excited to support work by one of our M.F.A. Program graduates. Mfoniso Udofia creates complex characters that teach us about ourselves and our world.

Why is it important to support new works written by women?

The fact that both plays are written by women is secondary to the fact that they are great plays. But yes, bringing new stories that will educate, inform, and create deeper understanding for our audiences is why I serve as an A.C.T. board member. ■

For more information about membership benefits and how you can become the producer of an A.C.T. production, visit act-sf.org/support or contact **Donor Relations and Memberships Manager Hillary Bray** at 415.439.2353 or hbray@act-sf.org.

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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.

PRISCILLA AND KEITH GEESLIN†*

Priscilla is a vice chair of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees and chairs the Development Committee. She serves on the boards of SF General Hospital Foundation, the SF Symphony, Grace Cathedral, and NARAL Pro-Choice America. A principal of Francisco Partners, Keith is the president of San Francisco Opera's board of trustees.

JAMES C. HORMEL AND MICHAEL P. NGUYEN-HORMEL*

James, the first openly gay US ambassador, founded the James C. Hormel Gay & Lesbian Center at the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL). Michael works alongside James on their charitable giving foundation, and has served on the SFPL Commission for two terms. A trustee of A.C.T., Michael is profoundly passionate about the arts and humanities.

TONI REMBE AND ARTHUR ROCK*

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 RICCITIELLO†*

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.

JEFF AND LAURIE UBBEN

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.

KAY YUN AND ANDRE NEUMANN-LORECK†*

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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A.C.T. PROFILES



PAM MACKINNON (Artistic Director) is celebrating her inaugural 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 for Excellence in Direction, Tony and Lucille Lortel nominations). After five years as board chair of Clubbed Thumb, a downtown New York theater company dedicated to new American plays, she sits on its advisory board. She is an artistic associate of the Roundabout Theatre Company, a Usual Suspect of New York Theatre Workshop, 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.



JENNIFER BIELSTEIN (Executive Director) joins A.C.T. with more than 25 years of theater management experience. She is currently president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT)—an organization that represents 74 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 the Lincoln Park Zoo, as well as serving on the boards of the League of Chicago

Theatres, Theatre Forward, 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, and has been recognized as one of Louisville's *Business First*'s 40 Under 40. In 2017, Bielstein was named by *Twin Cities Business* as a Person to Know, and, in 2018, *Minnesota Business* magazine named her as a Real Power 50 member. Bielstein is a graduate of the 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.



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.

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 1127 Market Street at 7th Street, across from the UN Plaza; or at 405 Geary Street at Mason, next to the theater, one block west of Union Square. Walk-up hours are Tuesday–Sunday (10 a.m.–15 minutes after curtain) on performance days, and Monday–Friday (noon–6 p.m.) and Saturday–Sunday (noon–4 p.m.) on nonperformance days. (For Geary 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.

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Groups of 15 or more save up to 50%! For more information call Anthony Miller at 415.439.2424.

AT THE THEATER

A.C.T.'s Strand Theater is located at 1127 Market 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.

A.C.T. MERCHANDISE

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

REFRESHMENTS

Strand Cafe hours are Thursday–Tuesday (8 a.m.–4 p.m.) and Wednesday (7 a.m.–noon) for the general public. Full bar service, sweets, and savory items are available to patrons one hour before performances. You can avoid the long lines at intermission by preordering food and beverages. Bar drinks are now permitted in the theater.

CELL PHONES

If you carry a pager, beeper, cell phone, or watch with 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 415.439.2397 in an emergency.

LATECOMERS

A.C.T. performances begin on time. Latecomers will be seated before the first intermission only if there is an appropriate interval.

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 are located on the basement level; on the ground floor (two ADA toilets behind the box office); and toward the back of the upper orchestra, on mezzanine 2. Gender diversity is welcome at A.C.T. We invite audiences to use the restroom that best fits your gender identity. If preferred, single-user restrooms can be found at the rear of the lobby.



Wheelchair Seating is located at the main cross aisle on the orchestra level, at Box A on the orchestra level, and in the mezzanine.

A.C.T. is pleased to announce that an **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)** is now available in the Strand box office.

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.

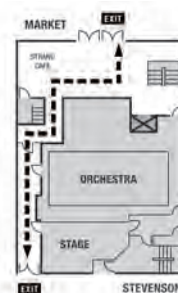


A.C.T. is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

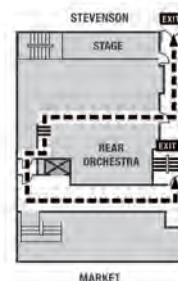


A.C.T. is supported in part by a grant from the Grants for the Arts Tax Fund.

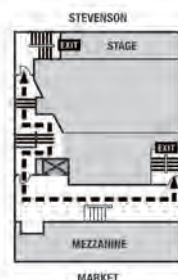
STRAND THEATER EXITS



G



M1



M2

**"Dazzling...If you see it — and you must — you will not be comfortable...
a glorious, scary reminder of the unmatched power of live theater
to rattle, rile, and shake us wide awake."**

—NEW YORK TIMES

fairview

BY Jackie Sibblies Drury

DIRECTED BY Sarah Benson

CHOREOGRAPHY BY Raja Feather Kelly

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