

50
YEARS

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CONSERVATORY
THEATER

SAN FRANCISCO'S PREMIER
NONPROFIT THEATER COMPANY

A Thousand Splendid Suns



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arts programs

FEB 2017
SEASON 50, ISSUE 4

Ferociously Intense and Highly Dramatic



FEB 22-25

MTT conducts John Adams' *Scheherazade.2*

A GRAMMY AWARD-WINNING EVENING

Violinist Leila Josefowicz brings her "wonderfully committed and ferociously intense" (*The Guardian*) playing to John Adams' celebration of female strength, *Scheherazade.2*. Written specifically for Josefowicz, her performance of the work recently garnered her a Grammy nomination for Best Classical Instrumental Solo. Then, Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony perform the work for which they won their first Grammy together, Prokofiev's exquisite *Romeo and Juliet*.

Feb 24 presented in partnership with **sfac** san francisco arts commission



MAR 1-4

MTT conducts Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich

Gautier Capuçon's performances with the San Francisco Symphony are "thoughtful, highly dramatic, and played with precision and grace." (*San Francisco Chronicle*) The acclaimed cellist joins Michael Tilson Thomas for Shostakovich's provocative Cello Concerto No. 1. The Orchestra then plays Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony, the *Pathétique*, known as one of the composer's proudest achievements.



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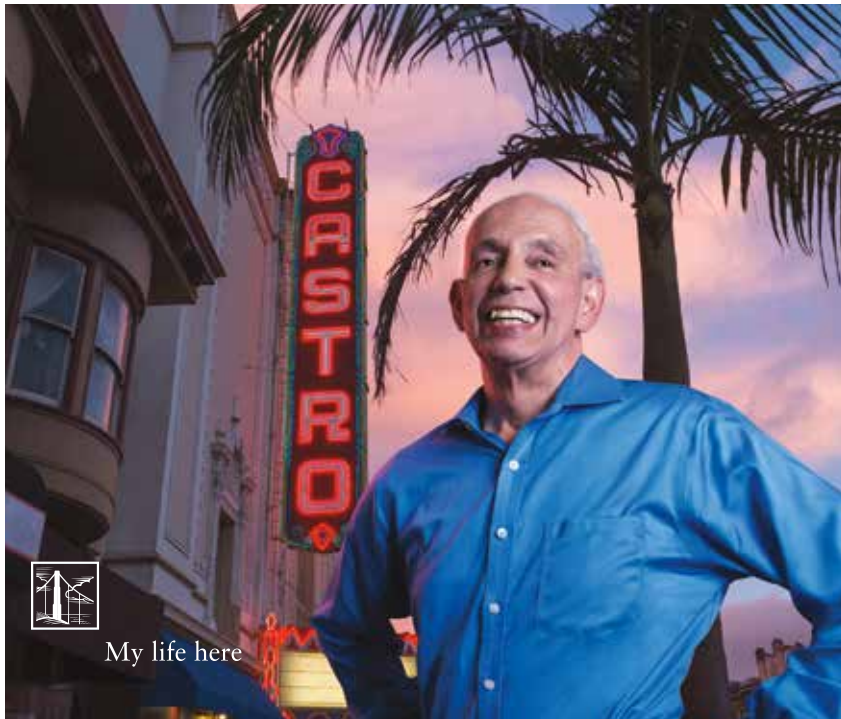


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ACT-SF.ORG

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 engagement with our community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff, we embrace our responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent our rich theatrical traditions and literatures, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. Founded by William Ball, a pioneer of the regional theater movement, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season in 1967. We have since performed more than 350 productions to a combined audience of more than seven million people. Every year we reach more than 250,000 people through our productions and programs.

Rising from the wreckage of the earthquake and fire of 1906 and hailed as the "perfect playhouse," the beautiful, historic Geary Theater has been our home since the beginning. When the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake ripped the roof apart, San Franciscans rallied together to raise a record-breaking \$30 million to rebuild the theater. The Geary reopened in 1996 with a production of *The Tempest* directed by Perloff, who took over in 1992 after the retirement of A.C.T.'s second artistic director, gentleman artist Ed Hastings.

Perloff's 24-season tenure has been marked by groundbreaking productions of classical works and new translations creatively colliding with exceptional contemporary theater; cross-disciplinary performances and international collaborations; and theater made by, for, and about the Bay Area. Her fierce commitment to audience engagement ushered in a new era of InterACT events and dramaturgical publications, inviting everyone to explore what goes on behind the scenes.

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. Meanwhile, our intensive Summer Training Congress attracts students from around the world, and the San Francisco Semester offers a unique study-abroad opportunity for undergraduates. Other programs include the world-famous Young Conservatory for students ages 8 to 19, led by 28-year veteran Craig Slight; 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 their employees' business performance skills. Our alumni often grace our mainstage and perform around the Bay Area, as well as on stages and screens across the country.

A.C.T. also brings the benefits of theater-based arts education to more than 12,000 Bay Area students and educators each year. Central to our ACTsmart education programs, run by Director of Education & Community Programs Elizabeth Brodersen, is the longstanding Student Matinee (SMAT) program, which 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 our increased presence in the Central Market neighborhood marked by the renovation of The Strand Theater and the opening of The Costume Shop Theater, A.C.T. plays a leadership role in securing the future of theater for San Francisco and the nation.

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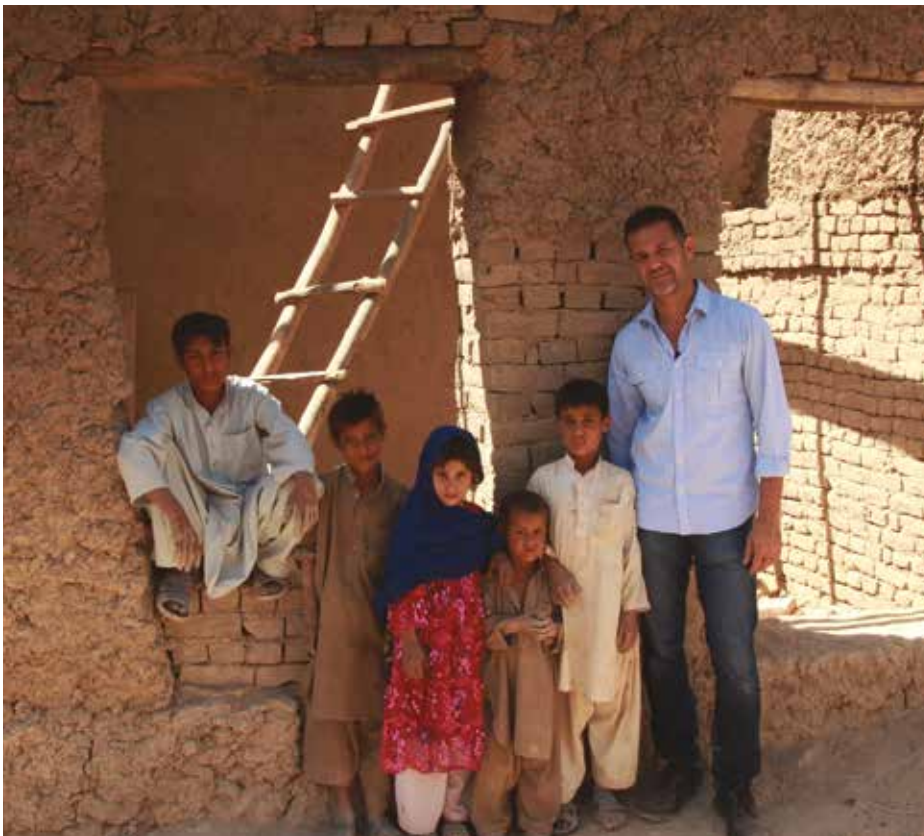
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ABOVE: KHALED HOSSEINI IN AFGHANISTAN. PHOTO BY MICHAEL SIMON. © THE KHALED HOSSEINI FOUNDATION.

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A.C.T. volunteers provide an invaluable service with their time, enthusiasm, and love of theater. Opportunities include helping out in our performing-arts library and ushering in our theaters.

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DON'T JUST SIT THERE . . .



At A.C.T.'s free InterACT events, you can mingle with cast members, join interactive workshops with theater artists, and meet fellow theatergoers at hosted celebrations in our lounges. Join us for our upcoming production of *John* and InterACT with us!

JOHN

AT THE STRAND THEATER

BIKE TO THE THEATER NIGHT

FEB 22, 6:30 PM

Ride your bike to A.C.T. and take advantage of secure bike parking, low-priced tickets, and happy-hour prices at our preshow mixer, presented in partnership with the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition.

PROLOGUE

MAR 7, 5:30 PM

Go deeper with a fascinating preshow discussion with a member of the *John* artistic team.

THEATER ON THE COUCH*

MAR 10, 7:30 PM

Take part in a lively conversation in The Rueff with Dr. Mason Turner, chief of psychiatry at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco Medical Center.

AUDIENCE EXCHANGE*

MAR 14, 7 PM; MAR 29 & APR 16, 1 PM

Join us for an exciting Q&A with the cast following the show.

OUT WITH A.C.T.*

MAR 15, 7:30 PM

Mix and mingle at this hosted postshow LGBT party.

WENTE VINEYARDS WINE SERIES

MAR 28, 7:30 PM

Meet fellow theatergoers at this hosted wine-tasting event.

PLAYTIME

APR 15, 1 PM

Get hands-on with theater at this interactive preshow workshop.

To learn more and order tickets for InterACT events, visit act-sf.org/interact.

*Events take place immediately following the performance

LISTEN!

Check out A.C.T.'s new podcast, *Theaterology*, and listen to InterACT events online!

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MAR 30-APR 23
THE GEARY THEATER



APR 26-MAY 21
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JUN 7-JUL 2
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PHOTO CREDITS: Top Row: *Needles and Opium*: Wellesley Robertson III in *Needles and Opium*. Photo courtesy Ex Machina. Bottom Row: *Battlefield*: Photo by Simon Annand. *A Night with Janis Joplin*: Artwork by Adam Larson.

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to each and every one of you!

We're thrilled to continue A.C.T.'s 50th-anniversary season with a world premiere that we have been developing for several years. The idea of adapting Khaled Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* for the stage began in 2011 when we produced another Middle Eastern play, *Scorched*, by Wajdi Mouawad. Khaled and his wife, Roya, came to see *Scorched*, and we spent a wonderful evening together talking about the many issues and images the play had evoked. Out of that conversation came the idea of creating a stage play from Khaled's extraordinary second novel.

What I was most drawn to in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* was its depiction of three generations of Afghan women, and its unveiling of a friendship between two women who in other circumstances would never have even met, let alone become bonded for life. War has a way of creating strange bedfellows, and when Laila and Mariam are thrust together in Rasheed's house, it is impossible to predict that, over the years, the women will save each other again and again from the deprivations of a violent husband and an even more violent culture. Their journey seemed ripe for theatricalization.

We commissioned Irish Indian playwright Ursula Rani Sarma to create this play for us because of her deep affinity for the culture and because we felt that her poetic imagination would free all of us from being too literal as we approached adapting the novel. Khaled was generous, open-minded, and clear from the beginning that a piece of prose is entirely different from a play, and that he wanted Ursula to adapt the book as she and we saw fit, as long as she retained its essential thematic core. Thus began a multiyear developmental process, through A.C.T.'s New Strands initiative and with the participation of artists from around the country.

There is no formula for making a viable theater piece out of a beloved novel. One has to make choices early on about what the spine of the play is going to be, how the dramatic action will unfold, which characters are going to carry the burden of the story, and what can be told through music and movement rather than exposition. There is less "real estate" in a play than in a novel, so not every thread or every character can fit.

Our decision regarding *Suns* was that the friendship between Laila and Mariam would be the central driver of the play, and that the story would begin at the moment they meet. This is not how the novel is structured: in the book, we meet Mariam and learn about her childhood long before we arrive at the Kabul bombings of 1992, when Mariam's husband Rasheed pulls Laila from the rubble and brings her home. That event became our theatrical starting point, which means that Mariam's story is introduced later, as a way to move the friendship of the two women forward. We also end the play before the novel ends, at the moment when Laila and Mariam's story felt complete to us.

Given our current political climate, it is perhaps fortuitous to be doing a play about Muslim women in Afghanistan. It's a joy to be able to make theater that opens up worlds that are often depicted in stereotype, and we are hugely grateful to the many members of the Bay Area's Afghan community who have helped us along the way as we've developed this piece. After its San Francisco run, this production travels to Canada as our third coproduction with Theatre Calgary. These cross-border collaborations have become increasingly valuable to us as we try to activate the role storytelling can play in the global dialogue. William Ball's initial vision for A.C.T. included a huge appetite for international exchange, so we launch *Suns* in tribute to his original vision and in celebration of 50 years of making theater in the Bay Area.

Meanwhile at The Strand, we're exploring the latest work of one of the most exciting female voices in the American theater, Annie Baker, whose play *John* opens on February 22. We hope you'll join us for that, and for more special events tied to our 50th this spring, including A.C.T.'s birthday celebration at The Geary on March 18, free and open to all.

Meanwhile, enjoy *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and may the year ahead be filled with as much hope and compassion as we can possibly muster.

Best,



Carey Perloff



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JOHN

JOHN

BY
ANNIE BAKER

DIRECTED BY
KEN RUS SCHMOLL

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Revolutionary”**

Slate

“Haunting and haunted”

The New York Times



Georgia Engel
(The Mary Tyler Moore Show)



Ann McDonough



Joe Paulik



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A.C.T.'S 50TH- ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

MARCH 18, 2017
THE GEARY THEATER
415 GEARY STREET

Hermione Gingold and
John McLain at the gala that
opened A.C.T.'s 1967-68 Season.



To celebrate 50 years of A.C.T., we are inviting the community into our historic Geary Theater.

Take a tour behind the scenes of The Geary, observe a Young Conservatory class, see a performance or two by our Master of Fine Arts Program actors, and hear a reading from *New Strands*, our new-works program.

In the evening, join us for a reading of Dylan Thomas's 1954 radio drama *Under Milk Wood*, which was directed by Artistic Director William Ball in A.C.T.'s first season in San Francisco. This heartfelt comedy about the inhabitants of a small fishing town in Wales was a hit when it was performed at The Geary 50 years ago.

Now, with a lineup of A.C.T.'s favorite actors, it's a great way to celebrate five decades of incredible theater in the heart of San Francisco.

All events are free and open to the public.

For more information, visit act-sf.org/birthday.

A.C.T.

CAREY PERLOFF, *Artistic Director*
PETER PASTREICH, *Executive Director*

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THEATRE CALGARY

SHARI WATTLING, *Interim Artistic Director*
COLLEEN A. SMITH, *Executive Director*

PRESENTS

A Thousand Splendid Suns

ADAPTED BY **URSULA RANI SARMA**
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **KHALED HOSSEINI**
ORIGINAL MUSIC WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY **DAVID COULTER**
DIRECTED BY **CAREY PERLOFF**

CREATIVE TEAM

SCENIC DESIGNER	KEN MACDONALD
COSTUME DESIGNER	LINDA CHO
LIGHTING DESIGNER	ROBERT WIERZEL
SOUND DESIGNER	JAKE RODRIGUEZ
MOVEMENT DIRECTOR	STEPHEN BUESCHER
DRAMATURG	MICHAEL PALLER
CASTING DIRECTOR	JANET FOSTER, CSA
CULTURAL CONSULTANT	HUMAIRA GHILZAI
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	KIMBERLY MOHNE HILL
SDC OBSERVER	LYNDSAY BURCH
DIALECT COACH	NANCY BENJAMIN
FIGHT CONSULTANT	JONATHAN RIDER

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BETTY HOENER
JON AND BARBARA PHILLIPS
JOHN RICCIHELLO
JOHN AND SANDRA THOMPSON
DOUG TILDEN
KATHERINE WELCH

CAST

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

BABI	BARZIN AKHAVAN*
LAILA	NADINE MALOUF*
FARIBA	DENMO IBRAHIM*
RASHEED	HAYSAM KADRI
MARIAM	KATE RIGG*
ABDUL SHARIF	JASON KAPOOR*
TARIQ	POMME KOCH*
MULLAH FAIZULLAH	BARZIN AKHAVAN*
NANA	DENMO IBRAHIM*
JALIL	JASON KAPOOR*
WAKIL	JASON KAPOOR*
INTERROGATOR	BARZIN AKHAVAN*
AZIZA	NIKITA TEWANI*
DOCTOR	DENMO IBRAHIM*
ZALMAI	NEEL NORONHA†
ZAMAN	BARZIN AKHAVAN*
TALIB	HAYSAM KADRI
ENSEMBLE	RINABETH APOSTOL*, KAISO HILL*, TERRY LAMB* MELODY PERERA*

UNDERSTUDIES

FARIBA, LAILA, NANA, DOCTOR	RINABETH APOSTOL*
ABDUL SHARIF,	
TARIQ, JALIL, WAKIL	KAISO HILL*
MARIAM	DENMO IBRAHIM*
RASHEED	JASON KAPOOR*
TALIB	POMME KOCH
BABI, MULLAH FAIZULLAH,	
INTERROGATOR, ZAMAN	TERRY LAMB*
AZIZA	MELODY PERERA*
ZALMAI	SHRE TOMAR†

STAGE MANAGEMENT

STAGE MANAGER	ELISA GUTHERTZ*
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	LESLIE M. RADIN*
STAGE MANAGEMENT FELLOW	DANI BAE

A Thousand Splendid Suns is the recipient of an Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. The development of this play was made possible by the Priscilla and Keith Geeslin New Strands Fund and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Fund for New Works. This project is also supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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

†Member of the A.C.T. Young Conservatory

ABOUT THE PLAY



PHOTO BY HELEN WARNER

Strong women dominate the work of award-winning playwright, poet, and screenwriter Ursula Rani Sarma. Throughout her career, the Irish Indian artist has explored complex and resilient female characters in such works as her play *The Dark Things*, her adaptation of Federico García Lorca's *Yerma*, and her upcoming retelling of the biblical story of *Salomé*.

So it is no surprise that she was drawn to the story of Mariam and Laila, the two women at the center of Khaled Hosseini's 2007 novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. It is Hosseini's second of his three novels, the other two being *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) and *The Kite Runner* (2003). Hosseini was inspired to write *A Thousand Splendid Suns* after visiting Afghanistan and speaking with the strong women who live in a country where their rights are often oppressed.

We spoke with Sarma and Hosseini about their experience working on this adaptation at A.C.T.

Why is *A Thousand Splendid Suns* particularly suited for the stage?

URSULA RANI SARMA: The theater is one of the best mediums to explore complex human relationships like the ones at the center of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Like the novel, it is the relationship between Mariam and Laila—trapped in a violent home, reaching out to each other—that forms the spine of the play. The difference is that on the stage, the characters will take on a three-dimensional existence while an audience bears witness to their extraordinary journey. Also, from a practical perspective, the majority of the conflict unfolds indoors in confined spaces, so many of these scenes make for great theater because they are dramatic, tense, and emotionally engaging.

KHALED HOSSEINI: I think there's a sense of immediacy in theater, which simply can't be created elsewhere. On the right night and at the right performance and with the right crowd, the room is permeated with something that's really tangible—very difficult to describe, but very powerful. There's a collective experience that you have with an audience in the theater that is difficult to create anywhere else. And by contrast, I think reading a book is a solitary experience. It's literally a voice in your head helping you to create images for yourself. Everybody can read the same book, but everyone has a different experience. I think people experience different art forms in different ways, and that's wonderful.

What kind of conversations have you had with each other throughout the process?

URS: I spoke with Khaled early on in the process, as it was important to hear his hopes for the adaptation and any specific elements that he felt should be retained. Right from the beginning Khaled was very supportive and generous and he encouraged me to follow my instincts and do whatever I felt was right. This was hugely liberating and meant that I had the freedom to get beneath the skin of the novel and to make the

THE UNIVERSE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

AN INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT
URSULA RANI SARMA AND NOVELIST
KHALED HOSSEINI

BY SIMON HODGSON AND SHANNON STOCKWELL

story feel as though it were my own; something that had to happen for me to breathe life into these characters.

KH: As an author, if you're allowing your work to be adapted into another art form by somebody else, you should divorce yourself from the idea that anything you said or wrote is going to appear in the other format. It's far more interesting to get a peek into somebody else's interpretation of your work. I love seeing how Ursula has worked with structure.

What is this play about?

URS: It's about the immense strength and endurance of women and how they can survive tremendous suffering to keep those they love alive. It is also about how, even in the darkest of times and places, love can grow and sustain the human spirit beyond all pain and hardship. It's about friendship and loyalty, courage and selflessness, grief and violence.

What the play has to say about love, endurance, and survival is very much worth listening to for a contemporary audience. There is beauty and strength at the heart of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, and I feel so proud to be part of its evolution from novel to stage.

Why is this story important to tell today?

KH: We're living in a time when we are inundated, through television and social media and smartphones and everything, with stories from the Middle East, and they all sound the same. They're all stories about guys that behead people, that kill minorities, and brutality and suffering.

I think a story like *A Thousand Splendid Suns* can remind people that every person under a veil, every refugee walking across plains—every single one of those people has a universe inside them, a life, an entire history, and a long, long history of things that they wanted, of hopes that they had. I think that's important to understand: you can't just categorize people under

self-serving umbrellas. These are individual human beings. I think that's what any art form, be it theater or novels or movies, can do; they can bridge that gap and transport you into the shoes of somebody else. And through that experience, you begin to view the group in a richer way.

OPPOSITE
Playwright Ursula Rani Sarma

BELOW
Novelist Khaled Hosseini



PHOTO BY ELENA SEIBERT

WORDS ON PLAYS



Want to know more about *A Thousand Splendid Suns*? *Words on Plays* is full of original essays and interviews that give you a behind-the-scenes look at *A Thousand Splendid Suns*—perfect for reading before the play, during intermission, or when you get home! Proceeds from sales of *Words on Plays* benefit A.C.T.'s education programs.

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SHIFTING SANDS

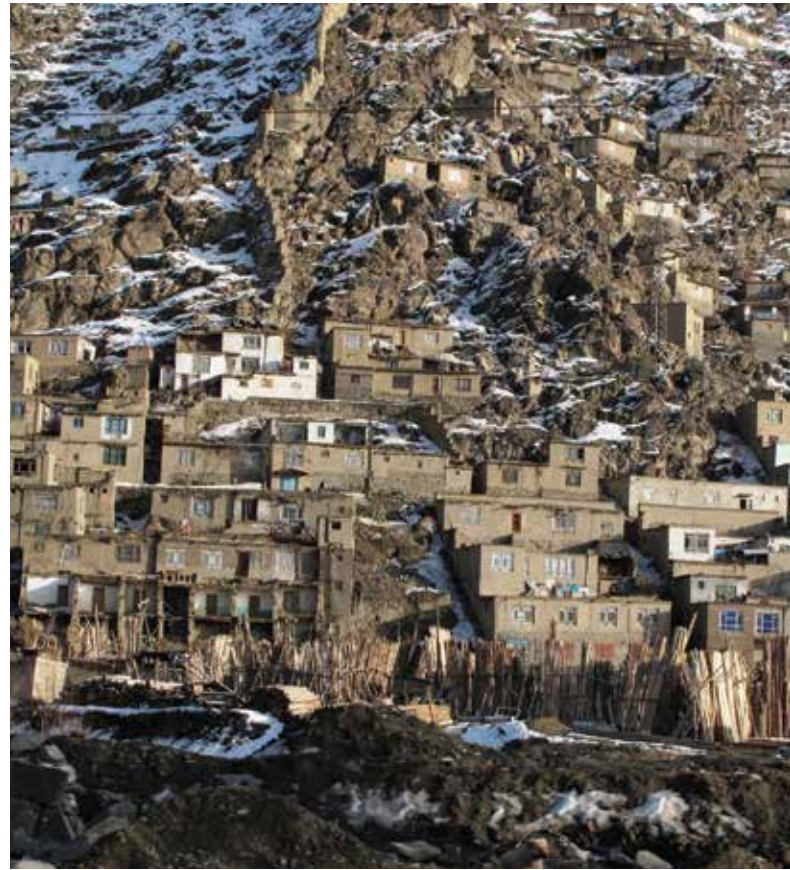
INSIDE THE WORLD OF *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

The characters of Mariam, Laila, and Rasheed may have begun their fictional journey in the mind of author Khaled Hosseini, but their personalities are rooted firmly in their native Afghanistan.

Approximately the size of Texas, Afghanistan is a land of extreme beauty and extreme geographic diversity, ranging from towering mountains to expansive plains to barren deserts. Winters there are harsh, and summers sweltering. In this dramatic landscape live 32.5 million Afghans, a mixture of religions, languages, and ethnicities. One of the tensions between Rasheed and Laila in the play derives from ethnicity—she is Tajik (a minority group), while he comes from the dominant Pashtun community. Another character’s challenge is related to geography: Mariam grows up in Herat, a city in the west of Afghanistan. Forced to move across the country to marry Rasheed, she feels provincial and overlooked in the capital city, Kabul.

Kabul’s location on the Silk Road between Europe and the riches of the East, combined with the country’s abundance of natural resources, has made Afghanistan an enticing prospect for many foreign invaders: Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Great Britain, and, most recently, the Soviet Union. In 1979, the Soviets sent troops into Afghanistan to prop up a failing socialist government, but they were ill-prepared for the



ferocious response of the Afghan people. When the Soviet troops withdrew in 1989, Afghans were hopeful that life would return to normal.

However, many of the militant groups that had fought the Soviets—known as the Mujahideen—turned against each other. The nation descended into civil war. One group shelled Kabul from the surrounding hills, while others fought for control of neighborhoods. “Deadly roadblocks, disappeared neighbors, and decaying bodies were woven into the fabric of daily life, like going shopping or saying your prayers,” says US-based war correspondent Anand Gopal. The Afghan Civil War (1989–96) took the lives of 25,000 civilians. It is during this dangerous period that Ursula Rani Sarma’s adaptation of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* begins.

A BRIEF TIMELINE OF AFGHAN HISTORY

SOVIET UNION INVADES.
THE MUJAHIDEEN FORMS
IN OPPOSITION.



1979



SOVIET UNION WITHDRAWS.
AFGHAN CIVIL WAR BEGINS.

1989

THE TALIBAN SEIZES
KABUL. THE MUJAHIDEEN
KEEPS FIGHTING.



1996



UN PLACES SANCTIONS
AGAINST THE TALIBAN.

1999

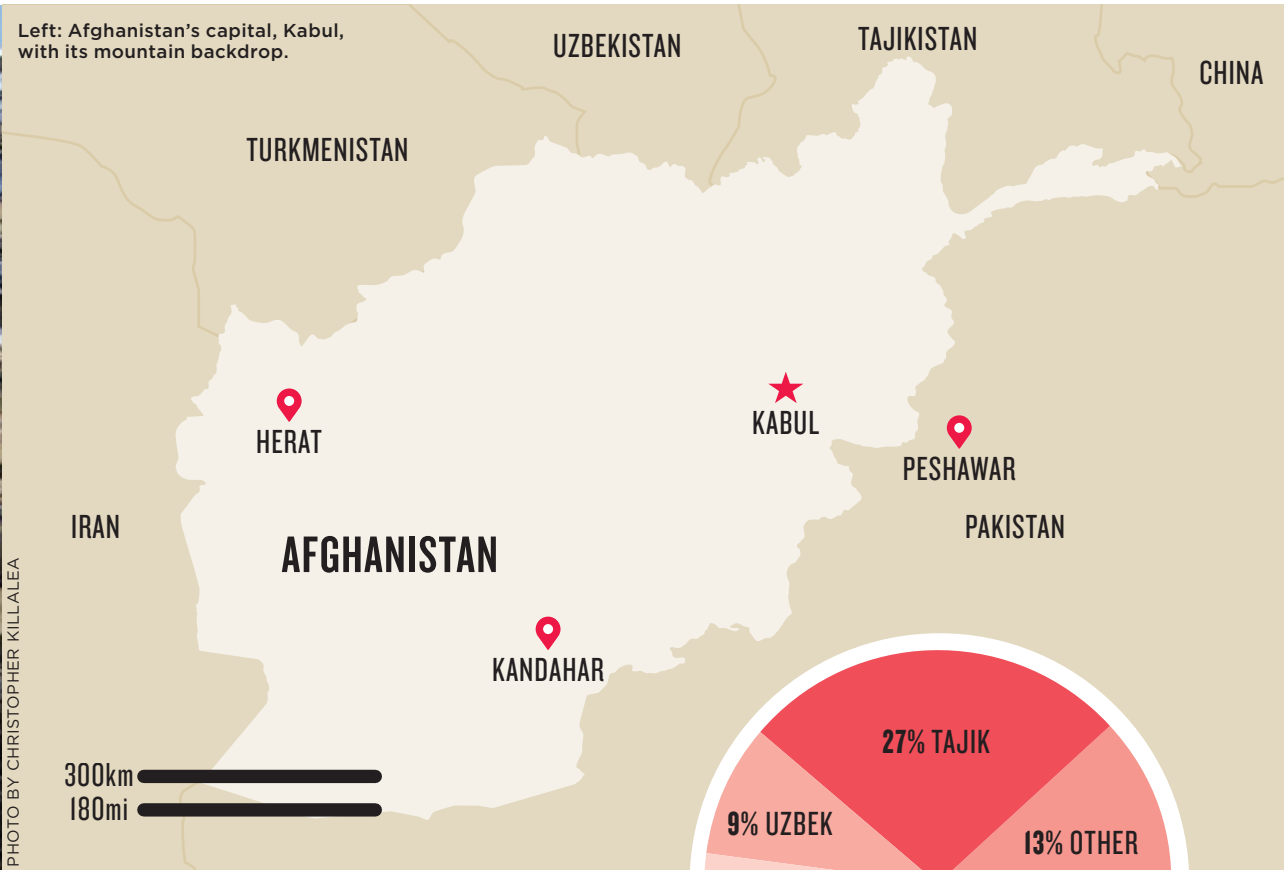
WHEN THE TALIBAN
REFUSES TO GIVE UP OSAMA
BIN LADEN AFTER SAUDI-BASED
AL-QAEDA’S 9/11 ATTACKS, THE US
INVADES AFGHANISTAN.



2001



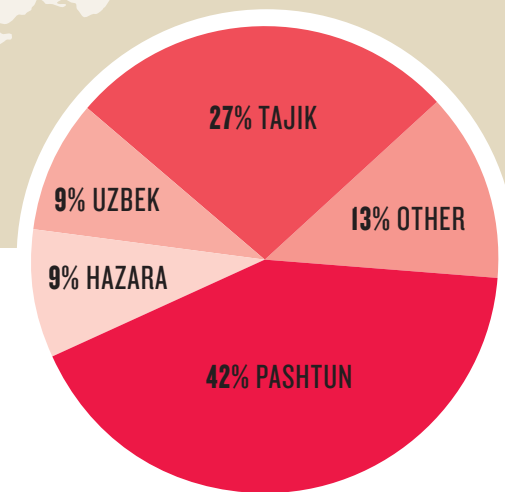
Left: Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, with its mountain backdrop.



Into this bloodshed burst a new group that looked like the answer to many Afghans' prayers for peace: the Taliban. Spreading from the refugee camps in Pakistan in the early 1990s, the Taliban took control of most of Afghanistan by 1996. Many Afghans welcomed it with open arms, seeing in its fierce religious beliefs a solution to the violence that had plagued the country for almost two decades.

The people's celebrations were short-lived. The Taliban believed that impurity and vice were the root cause of the country's problems. Through its Department for the Preservation of Virtue and the Elimination of Vice, the Taliban issued edict after edict banning anything that might entice people to sin. Women were forbidden from working, attending school, and leaving their homes without a male relative to escort them. Even a glimpse of an arm or an ankle could incur brutal punishment. In sports arenas and city squares throughout the country, the Taliban beat offenders, amputated their limbs, and sometimes stoned them to death. This is the political and social world that Mariam and Laila must navigate in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

Since US troops drove the Taliban out of power in 2001, life in Afghanistan has become slightly more stable. Under the new constitution written in 2004, women are granted equal rights. But Afghanistan remains a country under siege. Foreign militant groups such as Islamic State (ISIS) have increased their influence in the nation, launching their own attacks and adding to the body count. The Taliban remains a significant threat in many areas. According to the Pentagon, the Afghan



**ESTIMATED ETHNIC MAKEUP OF AFGHANISTAN
2004–PRESENT**
CIA WORLD FACTBOOK, 2010

government only controls 258 of the country's 407 districts. The central government is weak, unemployment is high, and the economy is struggling. As international attention wanes and troops pull out of the country, will Afghanistan be able to stand on its own, or will the country's decades of war continue?

The Afghan people remain hardworking, resilient, and hopeful. Like Laila and Mariam, many are working toward a brighter future and a time when this Central Asian country will be known more for its beauty than its violent past.

KHALED HOSSEINI FOUNDATION

Based in San Jose, the Khaled Hosseini Foundation is a nonprofit that provides humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan. For more information, visit khaledhosseinifoundation.org.



THE ART OF MAKING ART

THE CREATION OF *A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

Creating a piece of theater is a journey of collaboration, exploration, and serendipity—one that can take years to reach the stage and involve many facets of an arts organization. The idea for adapting Khaled Hosseini's beloved novel for *The Geary* began in 2011 when A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff met Hosseini. She told him of her love for the novel and her desire to see this story of female friendship and resilience on the stage. With his blessing, A.C.T.'s New Strands—a year-round commissioning and development program dedicated to supporting artists in the creation and completion of new works—commissioned Irish Indian playwright Ursula Rani Sarma to write the adaptation.



When Perloff and Sarma first sat down to discuss the adaptation, Sarma’s copy of the novel—filled with hundreds of color-coded Post-it Notes—inspired a long conversation about how to distill an epic novel into a satisfying piece of theater. They quickly agreed that the foundation of the play had to be the complex and unlikely friendship between Mariam and Laila.

Once Sarma had written a draft of the script, A.C.T. gathered the playwright, actors, and creative team for a series of workshops. Sitting around a table and reading through the script was a crucial step in the development of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. From these workshops, Perloff and Sarma were able to pinpoint where the storytelling could be strengthened. “When you can hear a script brought to life by actors, and when you can converse with them about the characters they are playing, it brings an entirely new dimension to the play,” says Sarma.

“CREATING NEW WORK ALLOWS US TO UNDERSTAND THE CULTURE OF OUR TIME.”

A.C.T. ARTISTIC DIRECTOR CAREY PERLOFF

As the *Suns* development process widened to include music and movement, the creative team faced challenges in the specifics of the script. “We had to figure out how to physically evoke things that Sarma had written in the script. ‘The city is starving.’ How do you show that onstage?” says Perloff. Some of those solutions came out of workshops, featuring cast members and actors in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program, led by movement director Stephen Buescher and composer David Coulter, who guided the actors through an exploration of the play’s visual and aural world. As both the student actors and



FROM LEFT
Cast members and M.F.A. Program actors during rehearsal for *A Thousand Splendid Suns*; M.F.A. Program actors Jennifer Apple (left, class of '18) and Adrianna Mitchell (class of '18) in costume.

OPPOSITE
Movement Director Stephen Buescher works with M.F.A. Program actors Jennifer Apple, Oliver Shirley, and Justin Genna (all class of '18) in a workshop for *A Thousand Splendid Suns*.

cast members improvised physical responses to musical and textual prompts, the creative team discovered that some of the more difficult parts of the script could be evoked through movement and sound.

For A.C.T.—a theater founded on dynamic productions, actor training, and community engagement—the last step in the journey was still to come. Thanks to a grant awarded by the Edgerton Foundation, A.C.T. was able to enjoy extra rehearsal time for *Suns*, including a November 2016 event attended by members of the Bay Area Afghan community, enabling them to observe and respond to short scenes, movement, and music. This engagement was followed by an extraordinary day in Fremont, during which the actresses in *Suns* joined a story circle of Afghan women, followed by a large reception sponsored by the Afghan Coalition to share scenes from the play, partake of delicious Afghan food, and talk about the production. The result was an extensive dialogue that not only deepened A.C.T.’s relationship with the Afghan community, but also the creative team’s understanding of the country’s rich culture.

“Creating new work allows us to understand the culture of our time,” says Perloff. “That’s what’s so interesting about the process. It can give you access in a way that nothing else can. The creation of a new play encourages the exploration of so many crucial questions about our contemporary experience: what we think, who we are, who we are in dialogue with, and what is happening in the world, whether it’s three blocks away in the Tenderloin or halfway around the world.”

A close-up photograph of a brass theater mechanism, possibly a part of a stage set or lighting rig, with intricate curved and circular components. The lighting is warm and golden, highlighting the texture and metallic sheen of the brass.

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WHO'S WHO IN A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS



BARZIN AKHAVAN*

(Babi, Mullah Faizullah, Interrogator, Zaman) makes his A.C.T. debut with *A Thousand Splendid*

Suns. Credits include the New York Theatre Workshop national/international tour of *Aftermath*, four seasons with the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and four seasons with Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival. He originated the role of Amir in the world premiere of *The Kite Runner* at San Jose Repertory Theatre/Arizona Theatre Company (San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award nomination for Best Principal Actor). Other credits include Mary Zimmerman's *The Arabian Nights* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, and Arena Stage; *Lidless* and *Inana* at the Contemporary American Theater Festival; *Pericles* at the Guthrie Theater and Folger Theatre; *Twelfth Night* and *Romeo and Juliet* at Seattle Repertory Theatre; *The Poetry of Pizza* at Virginia Stage Company; *The Persian Quarter* at Merrimack Repertory Theatre; *Vestibular Sense* at Mixed Blood Theatre; *The Invisible Hand* at Marin Theatre Company; *Disgraced* at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park; and productions with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Shakespeare Company, and Idaho Repertory Theatre. Film and television credits include *Anniversary*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, and *Smash*. He earned his MFA from the University of Washington's Professional Actor Training Program.



DENMO IBRAHIM*

(Fariba, Nana, Doctor) returns to A.C.T. with *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Recent credits include Noor in the

critically acclaimed West Coast premiere of *Our Enemies: Lively Scenes of Love and Combat* (Golden Thread Productions), Claudio in *Much Ado about Nothing* (California Shakespeare Theater), and Tyra in *I Call My Brothers* (Crowded Fire Theater), for which she won a Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Female Actor in a Feature Role in a Play. She has received numerous grants for her devised work, including support from the National Endowment for the Arts for her solo show, *Baba*, which won a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for Best Original Script. She has collaborated with multi-instrumentalist Carla Kihlstedt and OBIE Award-winning director Rinde Eckert on *Necessary Monsters* (Yerba Buena Center for the Arts). Favorite credits include Bill Irwin's *Scapin* (A.C.T.), Intisar in George Packer's *Betrayed* (Aurora Theatre Company), and Katy in Thomas Bradshaw's *The Bereaved* (Crowded Fire Theater). Ibrahim is a founding artistic director of Mugwumpin. She earned an MFA in Lecoq-based actor-created physical theater from Naropa University and a BFA in acting from Boston University.



HAYSAM KADRI

(Rasheed, Talib) makes his A.C.T. and American theater debut with *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. A native of Calgary, Kadri has

worked at many regional theaters across Canada. Selected credits include *The Crucible*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Enron*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Theatre Calgary); *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Twelve Angry Men*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Black Coffee* (Vertigo Theatre); *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *William Shakespeare's Land of the Dead*, and *The Winter's Tale* (The

Shakespeare Company); and *Cockroach*, *The Motherfu**er with the Hat*, *Shakespeare's Dog*, *Robin Hood*, and *Oliver Twist* (Alberta Theatre Projects). Film and television credits include *The Revenant* and *Hell on Wheels*. Kadri has received Betty Mitchell, Calgary Critics, and Dora Mavor Moore awards for his work. He is the artistic director of The Shakespeare Company in Calgary and program director for Theatre Calgary's Shakespeare by the Bow.



JASON KAPOOR*

(Abdul Sharif, Jalil, Wakil) was born and raised in San Jose. He was last seen at A.C.T. in *The Hard Problem*, and in *Indian Ink* prior

to that. He was most recently seen in *The Invisible Hand* at Marin Theatre Company and in California Shakespeare Theater's production of *Life Is a Dream*. Last spring, Kapoor reprised his role in the world premiere of *Ideation* in the show's off-Broadway run at 59E59 Theaters. His other Bay Area credits include several staged readings with previously mentioned companies as well as San Francisco Playhouse and Z Space. Kapoor received his BA from San Jose State University and his MA from the London Academy of Music & Dramatic Art.



POMME KOCH*

(Tariq) makes his A.C.T. mainstage debut after taking classes with the Young Conservatory as a child. New York credits include a

workshop of a new musical at The Public Theater, *Who's Your Baghdaddy? Or How I Started the Iraq War* (New York Times Critics' Pick), and a rare revival of Jean Anouilh's *Becket, or The Honor of God*. Select regional credits include *The Invisible Hand* at Marin Theatre Company,

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The Admission at Theater J, *Much Ado about Nothing* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, *A Composer Fit for a King: Wagner & Ludwig II* with Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, *Henry V* at Folger Theatre, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* at San Francisco Playhouse and Round House Theatre, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson* at Studio Theatre, and the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. Television credits include *Blue Bloods* and *House of Cards*. Koch graduated from the University of Michigan.



NADINE MALOUF*

(Laila) played the title role in the world premiere of *Salomé*, written and directed by Yaël Farber, at

Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, DC (winner of seven Helen Hayes Awards in 2016). Off Broadway, Malouf most recently appeared in the world premiere of *Ultimate Beauty Bible* (Page 73), *This Is How It Ends* (59E59 Theaters), *The School for Scandal* (Red Bull Theater), *The Who & The What* (LCT3 at Lincoln Center Theater), and *Exile* (Cherry Lane Theatre). Malouf was also a part of the *Les Misérables* 25th-anniversary national tour. Other theater credits include *Scorched* (Syracuse Stage) and *Macbeth* (Royal Academy of Dramatic Art). Malouf has developed new work with Sundance Institute's Theatre Lab, The Public Theater, Lincoln Center Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, and most recently with Simon McBurney. On television, Malouf can be seen in *The Mysteries of Laura* and *Odd Mom Out*. In film Malouf recently played the lead role in the short film *Resolutions*, and other films include *May in the Summer*, *Shame*, and *Static Shock Blackout*. Malouf received her training at Syracuse University and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London.



NEEL NORONHA†

(Zalmi) returns to the Geary stage with *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. He made his Geary debut as part of

the *Indian Ink* cast at age eight, and he was part of *Ah, Wilderness!* the following year. Noronha was introduced to theater at a summer class at A.C.T., where he discovered the world of playwriting and acting, and has since continued to study the facets of acting with the A.C.T. Young Conservatory. He is an avid soccer fan, loves reading mythical fiction and autobiographies, and has a budding interest in geography and chess. He is a fifth-grade student at McKinley Elementary School and lives in San Francisco with his parents and little brother, Dhruv.



KATE RIGG*

(Mariam) is an actor, comedian, writer, and spoken-word artist. Off Broadway, she appeared in *Cygnus* (Women's Project Theater);

The Jammer and *3 Kinds of Exile* (Atlantic Theater Company); *BFE* (Playwrights Horizons); *Dogeaters* (The Public Theater); *The Vagina Monologues* (Westside Theatre); *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told* (New York Theatre Workshop); and *Happy Lucky Golden Tofu Panda Dragon Good Time Fun Fun Show* (La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club). Regional credits include work at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, PlayMakers Repertory Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Mark Taper Forum, and New WORLD Theater. Her television credits include *The Path*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *Family Guy*, *One Night Stand Up*, *Dr. Phil*, *Comedy Central*, and Showtime's *Hot Tamales*. Her film credits include *Race Is the Place*, *That's What She Said*, and *The Naughty Show*. Rigg has had artist

residencies at Center Theatre Group, the Smithsonian, New York Foundation for the Arts, and Comedy Central Stage. She is the lead singer/lyricist for the "rock 'n' roll" spoken-word duo Slanty Eyed Mama. She has written and produced three television shows and many plays. She trained at The Juilliard School.



NIKITA TEWANI*

(Aziza) is a New York City-based actress and a graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where she received her BFA

in drama. She makes her A.C.T. debut with *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, one of her all-time favorite books. Her recent New York theater credits include *The Fall* (Nasrin), which premiered off Broadway at the SoHo Playhouse, and *A Muslim in the Midst* (Priya), which was a finalist at the Thespis Theater Festival. Tewani has also earned credits in TV shows such as *The Affair* (Showtime) and *Falling Water* (USA Network), national commercials, independent films, and global print ads. She is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association and SAG-AFTRA.



RINABETH APOSTOL*

(Ensemble) returns to A.C.T. after *The Hard Problem* and *Monstress*. Recent projects include *Dogeaters* (Magic

Theatre), *Untitled Cambodia Pop Play* (The Ground Floor at Berkeley Repertory Theatre), and *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga* (TheatreWorks New Works Festival). She originated principal roles in the world premieres of *The Kite Runner* (San Jose Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company), *The Cable Car Nymphomaniac* (FOGG Theatre Company), *Fire Work* (TheatreFIRST), *FIRST* (Aluminous Collective), and *Imelda: A New Musical* (East West

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Players). Select credits include roles in *Othello* (Marin Theatre Company), *Aliens with Extraordinary Skills* (B Street Theatre), *Of Mice and Men* (San Jose Repertory Theatre), *Avenue Q* (San Jose Stage Company), and *Red* (TheatreWorks), and collaborations with Playwrights Foundation, Crowded Fire Theater, NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, and The Groundlings (Los Angeles), among others. She will next appear in *peerless* (Marin Theatre Company). Apostol is a company member of PlayGround and Ferocious Lotus and a member of SAG-AFTRA.



KAIISO HILL*

(Ensemble) was born and raised in Berkeley, and he fell in love with acting while part of the A.C.T. Young Conservatory.

He last worked with A.C.T. as part of *Indian Ink* on the Geary stage and *On the T-Train* with A.C.T.'s Stage Coach. Most recently, he played Cassio in California Shakespeare Theater's touring production of *Othello*. He also understudied for Bradley in *Death of the Author* at Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles.



TERRY LAMB*

(Ensemble) has performed recently at Golden Thread Productions in its productions of many stories of the Middle East (*The Most*

Dangerous Highway in the World, *Urge for Going*, *Language Rooms*, *Deep Cut*, and *Night Over Erzinga*). He has also appeared in Frank & Frederick's *Abracadabra* and *Assorted Domestic Emergencies*, and has credits at Magic Theatre (*Fred's Diner*), Central Works Theater Company (*Penelope's Odyssey* and *Bird in the Hand*), Shotgun Players (*Bulrushers*), TheatreFIRST (*Nathan the Wise*, *A Map of the World*, and *The Colour of Justice*), and Aurora Theatre

Company (*Candida*, *Ghosts*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Transcendental Wild Oats*, *The Panel*, and *Widowers' Houses*). Other Bay Area theaters Lamb has worked with include Marin Theatre Company, New Conservatory Theatre Center, Geoffrey Chaucer & Company, Pirandello Project, TheatreWorks, San Jose Stage Company, and The San Francisco Mime Troupe.



MELODY PERERA*

(Ensemble) makes her A.C.T. debut with *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Her credits include work with Contra Costa

Civic Theatre (the Extraordinary Girl in *American Idiot*), the San Francisco Fringe Festival (Susie Geiger in *It Came from Fukushima*), Kaiser Permanente's Educational Theatre Program (Trina in *Peace Signs*; Dani in *The Best Me*), and PCPA Theaterfest (Alcyone, Hunger, and Therapist in *Metamorphoses*; Troll and understudy for Amy in *Little Women*; understudy for Wendy in *Peter Pan*; Kitty and understudy for Lydia Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*). Perera studied at Pacific Conservatory Theatre and Diablo Valley College.



SHRE TOMAR†

(Understudy) makes his A.C.T. debut with *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. He has studied acting with the A.C.T. Young Conservatory

and many other teachers, including Tanya Chisholm, Oscar Curioso, Adrian R'Mante, Geno Segers, Tyler Steelman, and Matt Timmons. In addition to acting, Tomar enjoys hip-hop dance, basketball, flute, and making movies. He is an orange belt in martial arts and was on the principal's honor roll in the 2015-16 school year.

URSULA RANI SARMA

(Playwright) is an award-winning writer of Irish Indian descent. She has written plays for the Abbey Theatre, the Dublin National Theatre, A.C.T., Ambassador Theatre Group, the Traverse Theatre, Paines Plough, and the BBC, amongst many other companies. Recent productions include *Joanne* (Clean Break/Soho Theatre), *Débris* (Théâtre La Licorne), *The Ripple Effect* (Ambassador Theatre Group/London Cultural Olympiad), *Yerma* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Riot* (A.C.T. Young Conservatory/Theatre Royal Bath), *The Dark Things* (Traverse Theatre), and *Birdsong* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin). Sarma has been writer in residence for Paines Plough, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, and the Royal National Theatre, among other companies. She is currently developing plays for the Abbey Theatre, Dublin; the Traverse Theatre; and Djinn Theatre Company. For screen, her work includes *Raw*, *Red Rock*, *Anywhere But Here*, and *Judge Dee*. She is currently adapting the book *Henry's Demons* for BBC 1 and writing an original drama entitled *Guardian* for Channel 4.

KHALED HOSSEINI (Author)

was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. In 1976, his family relocated to Paris. They were ready to return to Kabul in 1980, but by then the Soviet invasion was underway, so the Hosseini family moved to San Jose, California. Hosseini went on to become a doctor, practicing medicine as an internist between 1996 and 2004. He is the author of three award-winning and internationally best-selling novels: *The Kite Runner* (2003), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), and *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013). In 2006, Hosseini was named a Goodwill Envoy to the United Nations Refugee Agency. After a trip to Afghanistan in this position, he was inspired to establish The Khaled Hosseini Foundation, a nonprofit that provides humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan.

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DAVID COULTER (Composer)

is an English-born multidisciplinary artist, musician, composer, director, and educator based in the Bay Area. Since the 1980s, he has directed shows, produced records, and played his musical saw and other assorted weird and less-weird instruments in studios, theaters, and stages and on recordings around the world with the likes of The Pogues, Tom Waits and Robert Wilson, Kronos Quartet, Laurie Anderson, Yoko Ono, Hal Willner, and Gorillaz. Coulter curates and directs numerous multi-artist events. Credits include *Monkey: Journey to the West* (Gorillaz and Chen Shi-Zheng), *Double Fantasy Live*, *Rain Dogs Revisited*, *Discreet + Oblique: The Music of Brian Eno*, *Twisted Christmas*, *In Dreams: David Lynch Revisited*, *Improbable's The Eldership Project*, and *An Anatomy Act*. He is currently touring as co-creator of *Lullaby Movement*, an international song cycle. His most recent project, *Jim Jarmusch Revisited*, premiered at Philharmonie de Paris in December 2016. He was associate musical director and multi-instrumentalist on *The Black Rider: The Casting of the Magic Bullets* at A.C.T. in 2004. He is a visiting lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London. He has played the didgeridoo at the invitation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on a number of official occasions.

KEN MACDONALD (Scenic

Designer) has most recently designed *Our Town*, *Engaged*, *Sweet Charity*, and *Arms and the Man* for the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Other selected credits for the Shaw Festival (14 seasons) include *A Little Night Music*, *Design for Living*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Admirable Crichton*, *Hotel Peccadillo*, and *The Coronation Voyage*. His design for *The Overcoat* (Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company/Canadian Stage) won him an award for design for both the film and the stage version. The show toured for many years from London to Melbourne to Norway to A.C.T. He works most often in tandem with his partner of 36 years, Morris Panych (two-time Governor General's Award-winning

Canadian playwright). They have done more than 100 productions together. Some of those productions written by Panych and designed by MacDonald include *Vigil* (also seen at A.C.T., starring Olympia Dukakis), *The Shoplifters* (Arena Stage/Theatre Calgary), *The Dishwashers*, *Girl in the Goldfish Bowl*, *Sextet*, *Lawrence & Holloman*, and *Earshot* (Tarragon Theatre). MacDonald has designed seven versions of Panych's *Vigil* from Vancouver to Toronto, Victoria, Ottawa, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (the Mark Taper Forum). His opera credits include *Susannah* and *The Threepenny Opera* (Vancouver Opera Association), as well as Verdi's *Macbeth* and Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* (Pacific Opera Victoria and Opéra de Québec). Immediately following this production at A.C.T., MacDonald returns to the Shaw Festival to design *The Madness of George III*.

LINDA CHO (Costume Designer)

has many Broadway credits, including the upcoming musical *Anastasia*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* (Tony Award for Best Costume Design in a Musical, Outer Critics Circle Award nomination), and *The Velocity of Autumn*. Off Broadway, she has designed *The Merchant of Venice* for Theatre for a New Audience and other shows at Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage Theatre, The Public Theater, Classic Stage Company, Drama Department, The Acting Company, and Atlantic Theater Company. Regionally, her designs have been seen at LA Opera, La Jolla Playhouse, Arena Stage, The Old Globe, the Guthrie Theater, Goodman Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Shakespeare Theatre Company, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Williamstown Theatre Festival, Goodspeed Musicals, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and an upcoming production of the Ring Cycle at Seattle Opera. Internationally, Cho has designed costumes at the Royal Shakespeare Company in England and the Stratford Festival in Canada. She received her MFA from Yale School of Drama.

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ROBERT WIERZEL (Lighting Designer) has designed several productions at A.C.T., including *The Realistic Joneses*; *Ah, Wilderness!*; *Indian Ink*; *Napoli!*; *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City*; *The Tosca Project*; *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*; *Rock 'n' Roll*; *Travesties*; and *Happy End*. Wierzel has designed productions with opera companies in New York, Paris, Tokyo, Norway, Toronto, Boston, Seattle, San Diego, Houston, Dallas, Virginia, Florida, Atlanta, Chicago, and Washington, DC, as well as 27 seasons with The Glimmerglass Festival. Broadway productions include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*, starring Audra McDonald; the musical *Fela!* (Tony Award nomination); and David Copperfield's Broadway debut, *Dreams and Nightmares*. Other New York City credits include productions at the New York Shakespeare Festival/The Public Theater, Signature Theatre Company, Roundabout Theatre Company, Playwrights Horizons, Lincoln Center Theater, and Brooklyn Academy of Music. Wierzel's extensive dance work includes 31 years with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. In addition, Wierzel has designed at many major regional theater companies across the country. Upcoming projects include *Dinner at Eight* (Minnesota Opera) and *The Summer King* (Pittsburgh Opera).

JAKE RODRIGUEZ (Sound Designer) is a sound designer and composer based out of the San Francisco Bay Area and works at regional theaters around the United States. Recent credits include *The Christians* at Playwrights Horizons and the Mark Taper Forum; *Monstress* at A.C.T.; *Girlfriend* at the Kirk Douglas Theatre; *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play* at A.C.T. and the Guthrie Theater; *Thieves* at the El Portal Theatre; *X's and O's (A Football Love Story)* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Center Stage in Baltimore; *Superheroes* at the Cutting Ball Theater; *The Christians* and *brownsville song (b-side for tray)* at Actors Theatre of Louisville; and *Emotional Creature* at Signature Theatre Company. Rodriguez is the recipient of a 2004 Princess Grace Award.

STEPHEN BUESCHER (Movement Director) designed movement for *Monstress*, *The Orphan of Zhao*, *Let There Be Love*, *Stuck Elevator*, and *Underneath the Lintel* at A.C.T.; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Private Lives* at Long Wharf Theatre; and *A Christmas Carol* at Trinity Repertory Company. Buescher is the head of movement in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. For the M.F.A. Program, he has directed *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Black Orpheus*; *Una Historia de Amor*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba* (which traveled to the Moscow Art Theatre). He has taught physical theater at Yale School of Drama, Brown University/Trinity Repertory Company, and New York University. He has performed nationally and internationally with Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre, and locally with A.C.T., Shotgun Players, Scott Wells & Dancers, and Deborah Slater Dance Theater. Buescher is a graduate of Dell'Arte International and California Institute of the Arts.

HUMAIRA GHILZAI (Cultural Consultant) brings cultural literacy to film and theater productions to create an authentic portrayal of Afghan people, their customs, and their language for an enriched audience experience. Her stage credits include *The Kite Runner*; *Blood and Gifts*; *Love in Afghanistan*; *The Prepared Table: A Feast of Foods*, *Live Performance*, and *Stories from Iraq, Afghanistan and the F.O.B.*; *Slow Falling Bird*; *Zealot*; *Boy Play*; and *Heartland*. Film credits include *A Merry Friggin' Christmas* and *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*.

MICHAEL PALLER (Dramaturg) joined A.C.T. as resident dramaturg and director of humanities in August 2005, and since then he has dramaturged more than 50 productions and workshops. He began his professional career as literary manager at Center Repertory Theatre (Cleveland), then worked as a play reader and script consultant for Manhattan Theatre Club, and has since been a dramaturg for George Street Playhouse, the Berkshire Theatre Festival, Barrington

Stage Company, Long Wharf Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, and others. He dramaturged the Russian premiere of Tennessee Williams's *Small Craft Warnings* at the Sovremennik Theater in Moscow. Paller is the author of *Gentlemen Callers: Tennessee Williams, Homosexuality, and Mid-Twentieth Century Drama* (Palgrave Macmillan), *Williams in an Hour* (Smith & Kraus), and *A Five-Act Play: Fifty Years of A.C.T.* (Chronicle Books). He has also written theater and book reviews for the *Washington Post*, *Village Voice*, *Newsday*, and *Mirabella* magazine. He recently adapted the text for the San Francisco Symphony's multimedia presentation of *Peer Gynt*. Before his arrival at A.C.T., he taught at Columbia University and the State University of New York at Purchase.

JANET FOSTER, CSA (Casting Director) joined A.C.T. as the casting director in the 2011-12 season. 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 *Lucy*, *Brundibar*, *True Love*, *Endpapers*, *The Dying Gaul*, *The Maiden's Prayer*, *The Trojan Women: A Love Story*, *Floyd Collins*, *The Monogamist*, *A Cheever Evening*, *Later Life*, and many more at Playwrights Horizons. Regionally, she has worked at Intiman Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, Yale Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Old Globe, Center Stage in Baltimore, Westport Country Playhouse, and the American Repertory Theater. Film, television, and radio credits include *Cosby* (CBS), *Tracey Takes On New York* (HBO), Lewis Black's *The Deal*, *Advice from a Caterpillar*, *The Day That Lehman Died* (BBC World Service and Blackhawk Productions; Peabody, SONY, and Wincott awards), and *"T" Is for Tom* (Tom Stoppard radio plays, WNYC and WQXR).

KIMBERLY MOHNE HILL

(Assistant Director) received her MFA in acting from A.C.T. Currently an associate professor of acting at Santa Clara University, Hill continues to direct and coach dialects throughout the Bay Area. Recent directing credits include *When the Rain Stops Falling* and *The Other Place* at Dragon Productions Theatre Company, *Venus in Fur* at San Jose Stage Company, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)* at City Lights Theater Company,

and, most recently, *Arcadia* at SCU. Hill's recent dialect-coaching credits include *Outside Mullingar*, *Triangle*, and *Sweeney Todd* for TheatreWorks; *The House That Will Not Stand* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre; and *The Elephant Man* at City Lights, among others. Additionally, she has published three books for young actors on the subject of dialects: *Monologues in Dialect for Young Actors, Vol. I & II* and *Scenes in Dialect for Young Actors*.

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ELISA GUTHERTZ* (Stage Manager) most recently worked on *King Charles III* and *Chester Bailey* at A.C.T. Her numerous other productions for A.C.T. include *The Realistic Joneses*, *Monstress*, *Love and Information*, *Testament*, *Major Barbara*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *Arcadia*, *The Normal Heart*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, *Endgame* and *Play*, *Scorched*, *Clybourne Park*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *November*, *Boleros for the Disenchanted*, *The Rainmaker*, *A Number*, and *Eve*

Enslers' *The Good Body*, among others. She has also stage-managed *The Mystery of Irma Vep*; *Suddenly, Last Summer*; *Rhinoceros*; *Big Love*; *Civil Sex*; *Collected Stories*; and *Cloud Tectonics* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other productions include *The Good Body* at the Booth Theatre on Broadway, *Big Love* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, and *The Vagina Monologues* at the Alcazar Theatre.

LESLIE M. RADIN* (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to A.C.T. after working on *A Christmas Carol* for the last four seasons and *Napoli!* in the 2013-14 season. She has worked at Aurora Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Center REPeratory Company, and Santa Cruz Shakespeare. She has traveled with Berkeley Rep productions to the Hong Kong Arts Festival and The New Victory Theater in New York. Radin is also the production coordinator for the Aurora Theatre Company. Her favorite past productions include *Aubergine*, *Wittenberg*, *In the Next Room (or the vibrator play)*, *Passing Strange*, and *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*.

SARAH AND TONY EARLEY (Executive Producers) were executive producers for A.C.T.'s *The Last Five Years*, *Major Barbara*, and *Mr. Burns, a post-electric play*. Sarah is the founder and chair of the Belle Isle Conservancy. Belle Isle is the nation's largest island park and sits on 982 acres in the Detroit River. She also serves on the boards of the City Parks Alliance and the San Francisco Botanical Garden. Sarah has a keen interest in education and has served on the board of Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, as well as the board of the University of Detroit Jesuit High School. She is a partner in Cornerstone Schools, an inner-city school network in Detroit that excels in providing quality education for grades K-8. Sarah has a BA from Saint Mary's College, an MBA from San Diego State University, and an associate's degree in landscape design from Oakland Community College. Tony has been CEO of PG&E since 2011. Prior to that, he was CEO of DTE Energy in Michigan. He is on the boards of the Exploratorium and United Way Bay Area. He has also been an active advocate of educational issues as a board member of Cornerstone Schools and the College of Engineering Advisory Council at the University of Notre Dame. Tony holds a BS in physics, an MS in engineering, and a JD, all from Notre Dame.



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(Executive Producer) is directed by Brad and Louise Edgerton. It was piloted in 2006 with Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles when it offered two musicals in development an extended rehearsal period for the entire creative team, including the playwrights. The Edgertons launched the program nationally in 2007, and to date, it has supported 297 plays at more than 50 different art theaters across the country. The Edgerton Foundation received the 2011 Theatre Communications Group National Funder Award.

CELESTE AND KEVIN FORD

(Executive Producers) moved to the Bay Area in 1978 and purchased A.C.T. season tickets to support two classmates from the University of Notre Dame who were enrolled in the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program. The Fords have not missed a production at A.C.T. since. Celeste is the CEO and founder of Stellar Solutions, an aerospace engineering services business, and Kevin is the CFO. Stellar Solutions just celebrated its 21st anniversary and has received numerous accolades, including the prestigious *Fortune* magazine Great Place to Work Award. The company's engineers work on a variety of satellite projects, including the science mission to Mars, commercial communication satellites, and defense and intelligence satellites. Celeste and Kevin have three grown children who join them at A.C.T. productions whenever they are available. Celeste, who was an engineer by day and actress by night in college, currently serves on the A.C.T. Board of Trustees.

JO S. HURLEY (Executive

Producer) is a member of the A.C.T. Board of Trustees. She has been a subscriber since 1970 and a donor since 1975. Also at A.C.T., Hurley is the chair of the Prospero Society; a member of the Board of Trustees' Education & Community Programs Committee, Development Committee, and the Committee on Trustees and Governance; and a trustee host to an M.F.A. Program actor. She is passionate

about supporting A.C.T. as an executive producer as well as in the long term through legacy giving. She often joins the staff in the V.I.P. Lounge, chatting with donors about the Prospero Society and her love of theater. She is also an ardent patron of the San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Opera. She is a member of the advisory board for Women Philanthropists for the University of Kansas and the University of Kansas Endowment Association, and a volunteer at Lima Center (a daytime shelter for the homeless) and the SF-Marin Food Bank.

JERI LYNN AND JEFFREY W. JOHNSON (Executive Producers)

have been supporters of the arts in the Bay Area for many years and executive producers of several A.C.T. productions. Jeri has been an A.C.T. season ticket holder since 1974 and credits a performance of *Cyrano* she saw at A.C.T. as a tourist and the City's other arts venues as her prime motivation for relocating to San Francisco in her twenties. She was very involved in education in Marin County, volunteering in the schools, serving on the school board, and finally working as the chief business official for the Reed Union School District (Tiburon/Belvedere/Corte Madera), retiring in 2003. Jeri has been a member of the Board of Trustees of A.C.T. and has served as a chair of its Education & Community Programs Committee since 2010. For over 30 years, Jeffrey practiced law (specializing in real estate) in San Francisco and thereafter has been involved in real estate development and investment. They have four adult children and two grandchildren.

JOHN LITTLE AND HEATHER STALLINGS LITTLE (Executive

Producers) recently produced *The Last Five Years*, *Indian Ink*, *Venus in Fur*, and *Endgame* and *Play* at A.C.T. Heather is a CPA-turned-writer who worked in investment banking and as the chief financial officer of a company that manages the affairs of professional athletes. A frequent adventure traveler, she writes travel stories as well as



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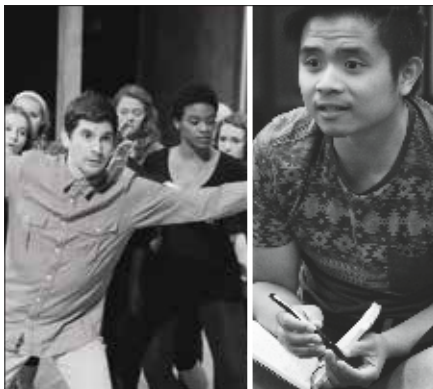
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fiction. She is the author of *Click City* (the novel and fiction serial seen in the *San Francisco Chronicle*) and the novel *False Alarm*. Her short fiction has appeared in *ZYZZYVA*. Heather joined the A.C.T. Board of Trustees in 2011. John previously served on the Asian Art Museum Board of Trustees. He is an entrepreneur and inventor and enjoys adventure travel, skiing, tennis, and photography.

BURT AND DEEDEE MCMURTRY

(Executive Producers) have produced numerous A.C.T. shows, including *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, *A Little Night Music*, *1776*, *Arcadia*, *Maple and Vine*, *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City*, *Vigil*, *Rock 'n' Roll*, and *Happy End*. Deedee is a member of the A.C.T. Emeritus Advisory Board and former co-chair of the Producers Circle. She is on the Art Review Committee for Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, as well as the Arts Advisory Board and the Director's Advisory Board for the Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, both at Stanford University. She is also on the Advisory Committee for Eastside College Preparatory School. An electrical engineer by training and a retired venture capitalist, Burt is a past chair of the Stanford University Board of Trustees and a former trustee of Rice University and the Carnegie Institution for Science.

KATHLEEN SCUTCHFIELD

(Executive Producer) attended Sarah Lawrence College and Yale University and earned her degree in fine arts. She cofounded Until There's a Cure in 1993 and served as president for its first five years; she currently holds the position of secretary/treasurer of the board. She is a trustee emeritus of San Francisco Ballet and was a national committee member of the Whitney Museum of American Art. She has also served on the planning commission of her hometown, Woodside. Scutchfield was a commissioning sponsor of *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City* and *The Tosca Project* at A.C.T.

AARON VERMUT AND ADRIANA LOPEZ VERMUT (Executive

Producers) most recently supported *The Hard Problem*, *The Unfortunates*, *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, *Love and Information*, and *The Orphan of Zhao* at A.C.T. Adriana has served as an A.C.T. trustee since 2013 and is the co-chair of the Education & Community Programs Committee. She is the owner and president of Pica Pica Arepa Kitchen, a Venezuelan restaurant in the Mission District. She previously worked in marketing for a remittances startup and later as a research analyst for RedShift Ventures, a Virginia-based venture capital firm. She is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania. Aaron is the current CEO and former president of Prosper Marketplace. Previously, he was a founder and managing partner for Merlin Securities and principal at New Enterprise Associates. He has an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School. He serves on the boards of the Exploratorium and Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bay Area.

JACK AND SUSY WADSWORTH

(Executive Producers) live in San Francisco. Jack is an advisory director at Morgan Stanley, honorary chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia, and sits on numerous boards. He started Morgan Stanley's technology investment banking practice and venture capital business, leading the Apple IPO. He later became chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia. Jack recently developed Ceyuan Ventures. Susy sits on the board of Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and on the International Committee of The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago. In Hong Kong, she worked at International Institute of Education, Summerbridge, and the Asian Cultural Council. In Brooklyn, she was a high school teacher, volunteered in the mayor's office, and worked at the League of Women Voters, in addition to raising three children. Jack and Susy lead the W. L. S. Spencer Foundation, which focuses on public school and museum education programs that encourage crosscultural understanding. They have eight grandchildren.

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MAKING HISTORY

HOW MICHAEL PALLER TOLD THE STORY OF A.C.T.'S FIRST 50 YEARS

BY SIMON HODGSON

When A.C.T. started planning its 50th-anniversary season, the company's management team, led by Artistic Director Carey Perloff, commissioned a book to celebrate A.C.T.'s half century. There was only one choice as author: A.C.T. Resident Dramaturg Michael Paller. "I think of myself as a synthesizer," he says. "I like pulling information from various disciplines and making a whole. It's really gratifying to see how one thing illuminates another." The result is *A Five-Act Play: 50 Years of A.C.T.*, which will be published by Chronicle Books on April 27.

For the last two-and-a-half years, Paller's office has been a bibliophile's haven, packed to the rafters with old playbills, shelves of red-leather binders, filing cabinets crammed with photographs, and piles of printer's galleys. To research the company's history, the dramaturg has spent months unearthing forgotten documents: theatrical reviews from old Bay Area newspapers, sepia-tinted financial records, dramaturgical packs from touring shows, a 1979 chronicle of A.C.T.'s tour of the Soviet Union. He has mined the basement archives beneath The Geary and interviewed more than 50 former members of the A.C.T. staff and acting company.

Organized approximately by decade, *A Five-Act Play* is a historical retrospective. "The first period, from 1967 to 1979, was an era of triumph, culminating in the Regional Theater Tony Award in 1979." By contrast, says Paller, "The '80s were largely a disaster, with financial troubles, William Ball leaving as artistic

PHOTO BY GANSLER STUDIOS



FROM TOP
A.C.T. founder William Ball (far right) in the early days of the company; A.C.T.'s production of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1976).

director, and ending in the Loma Prieta Earthquake of 1989." Since then, he says, there's been a sense of rebirth—with the renovation of The Geary Theater in the 1990s and the creation of the three-year Master of Fine Arts Program—and regeneration, most recently with the opening of The Strand Theater in 2015.

The most fun Paller had was finding forgotten facets of the company's early days, such as a class designed specifically for A.C.T. company members called Rapid Rate of Utterance. "Ball liked his Shakespeare plays to move along briskly," says Paller. "The class was taught by actor Ken Ruta, who was so adept that it became known as the Ruta Rate of Utterance." Watch the DVD of *The Taming of the Shrew* (the production was taped in 1976 for PBS's *Theater of America*), and you can see the results of Ruta's training. "Even today it's still exhilarating," says Paller. "By the time the production reached television, the company had done it at The Geary for a couple of years. The actors were so well trained, physically and vocally, that they could do anything."

To reserve your copy of *A Five-Act Play: 50 Years of A.C.T.*, visit act-sf.org/fiveactplay.



ODD TIMES

THE A.C.T. MASTER OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM PRESENTS *THE LADY VANISHES*

BY SHANNON STOCKWELL

British socialite Iris Carr is traveling by train across Europe in 1936, where war is brewing and strangers are eyeing each other with distrust. Iris wakes up in a train car after fainting (heatstroke, she claims, although it might very well be a hangover); she wants nothing more than to be left alone, but she is stuck with Mrs. Froy, a governess and a hell of a chatterbox. Iris eventually dozes off again. When she

reawakens, she finds that her new friend has disappeared, and everyone else denies ever having seen the older woman. Is there some kind of conspiracy? Or has Iris gone mad? Through twists and turns of train tracks and plot, *The Lady Vanishes*—performed by A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program actors and adapted by Morris Panych and Brenda Robins from Ethel Lina White’s 1936 novel *The Wheel Spins*—is sure to keep you on the edge of your seat.

Audiences may be more familiar with Alfred Hitchcock’s 1938 film adaptation of *The Wheel Spins*, also called *The Lady Vanishes* (Robins and Panych decided they liked Hitchcock’s title better than White’s). Robins, who loves old movies, was initially inspired by the setting. “When I watched Hitchcock’s film, I thought, ‘Oh, it would be fantastic to see a train



LEFT

Left to right: Basil Radford, Margaret Lockwood, and Linden Travers in Alfred Hitchcock's 1938 film *The Lady Vanishes*.

FOR STUDENT ACTORS, *THE LADY VANISHES* IS A DELIGHTFULLY CHALLENGING PIECE OF THEATER.

onstage,” says Robins, an Ontario-based theater artist. “I felt that it would be compelling to translate to the theater all of the atmospheric elements that Hitchcock’s films are so famous for.” Robins hunted down the source material, found White’s novel, and started the process of adaptation.

After she took a first pass at the script, she partnered with her longtime friend Morris Panych, a prolific theater artist based in Canada who has written more than 30 plays and directed 90 across Canada. He is the recipient of more than 50 awards for his work. He last collaborated with A.C.T. in 2009 when he directed his play *Vigil*. And before that, he staged his and Wendy Gorling’s 2005 adaptation of *The Overcoat*, based on the nineteenth-century short story by Nikolai Gogol.

Together, Morris and Robins worked from her initial adaptation to make *The Wheel Spins* work for the stage. “Morris and I have been friends for 40 years,” says Robins. “He’s a wonderful writer. It’s a great opportunity to work with someone who shares the same aesthetic.”

“We’re looking for something off-base and weird,” Panych says of that aesthetic, especially for *The Lady Vanishes*. “We want there to be the sense that something else is going on, that things are not right.” The setting and the time period of the story adds to that feeling of unease. “We’ve all been on trains, or at least we know what trains look like from film and television, so it feels like a comfortable place for the audience, a place that they recognize,” Robins explains. “And then that’s shattered when officials barge into the compartments asking for passports.”

“*The Lady Vanishes* takes place on the cusp of World War II,” adds Panych. “At that time, there was a lot going on in Europe that wasn’t being paid attention to. Today, we know the catastrophe that awaits.” Robins says, “All of these people on the train are getting glimpses that something’s up, and Iris Carr finds herself smack in the middle of it all.”

As far as protagonists go, Iris Carr is a fascinating one. Although she ultimately saves the day, she’s very flawed and complex—a sort of antihero. “She’s spoiled and she doesn’t care for others’ company,” laughs Robins. “And that’s evident in the book as well. But we kept away from rounding out her rough edges. I appreciate her armor.”

For student actors, *The Lady Vanishes* is a delightfully challenging piece of theater. “Choreographically, it’s very ambitious,” says Panych, commenting on the fact that the setting moves from train compartment to train compartment through carefully coordinated set transitions. The opportunity for genre acting is also going to enable the student actors to practice their acting chops. “Because it’s a thriller,” Panych says, “the actors have to play their cards close to their chests. They have to be very subtle and contained in their performances.”

With *The Lady Vanishes*, A.C.T. audiences will be treated to a deliciously fun Hitchcockian thriller with striking relevance to the world today. After all, as the characters say throughout *The Lady Vanishes*, “These are odd times.” Odd times, indeed.

THE LADY VANISHES

ADAPTED BY **MORRIS PANYCH**

AND **BRENDA ROBINS**

BASED ON THE NOVEL

***THE WHEEL SPINS*, BY ETHEL LINA WHITE**

DIRECTED BY **MORRIS PANYCH**

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Janet Foster, Director of Casting and Artistic Associate

Allie Moss, Artistic Administrator

Ken Savage, Assistant Producer

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Music Directors

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Michael Paller, Director of Humanities

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A.C.T. PROFILES



CAREY PERLOFF (Artistic Director)

is celebrating her 25th season as artistic director of A.C.T., where she has overseen a huge growth in the quality and scope of A.C.T.'s work, helped to rebuild the earthquake-damaged Geary Theater and the new Strand Theater in Central Market, and has forged

collaborations between A.C.T. and theaters across the United States and Canada. Known for innovative productions of classics and championing new writing and new forms of theater, Perloff has directed classical plays from around the world, 10 plays by Tom Stoppard (including the American premieres of *The Invention of Love* and *Indian Ink*, also at Roundabout Theatre Company, and two productions of *Arcadia*), and many productions by favorite contemporary writers such as Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, José Rivera, and Philip Kan Gotanda. Favorite productions include *Hecuba*,

Mary Stuart, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *The Tosca Café*, *The Voyage Inheritance*, *Scorched*, and *Underneath the Lintel*.

Perloff is also an award-winning playwright. Her recent play *Kinship* premiered at the Théâtre de Paris in 2014; *Higher* won the 2011 Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation Theatre Visions Fund Award; and *Luminescence Dating* premiered in New York at The Ensemble Studio Theatre. Perloff's book, *Beautiful Chaos: A Life in the Theater* (City Lights Press), was selected as San Francisco Public Library's One City One Book read for 2016.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the premiere of Ezra Pound's *Elektra*, the American premiere of Pinter's *Mountain Language*, and many classic works. Named a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government, Perloff received a BA Phi Beta Kappa in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford.



PETER PASTREICH (Executive Director)

joins A.C.T. after a 50-year career in arts management. He spent 21 years as executive director of the San Francisco Symphony, a period that included the tenures of music directors Edo De Waart, Herbert Blomstedt, and Michael Tilson Thomas, and during which

the orchestra increased its endowment from \$12 million to \$120 million. Pastreich was the chief administrator responsible for the construction of Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco, and for its acoustical renovation.

Before coming to San Francisco, he spent 12 years as executive director of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and

six years as managing director of the Mississippi River Festival. In addition, Pastreich has done management consulting for the Berlin Philharmonic, Southbank Centre in London, Detroit Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Australia. He has also served as mediator in orchestra and opera union negotiations in Detroit, Louisville, Milwaukee, Phoenix, Sacramento, Seattle, and San Antonio.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1938, Pastreich received a BA in English literature from Yale University in 1959. In 1999, he was made a *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government and was named an honorary member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees by Local 16 of the Stagehands Union.



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. She also successfully launched the San Francisco Semester, a semester-long intensive designed to deepen students' well of acting experience, broaden their knowledge of dramatic literature, and sharpen their technical skills—all while immersing them in the multifaceted cultural landscape of

the Bay Area. Prior to assuming leadership of the Conservatory, Smith was the director of the Program in Theater and Dance at Princeton University, where she also taught introductory, intermediate, and advanced acting. 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, 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 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

Joining our eClub is the best—and sometimes only—way to find out about special ticket offers. Visit act-sf.org/eclub for details. Find us on Facebook and Twitter for other great deals. 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 visit www.act-sf.org/groups.

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.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND RECORDINGS of A.C.T. performances are strictly forbidden.

RESTROOMS are located in Fred's Columbia Room on the lower lobby level, the Balcony Lobby, and the Garret on the uppermost lobby level.



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.

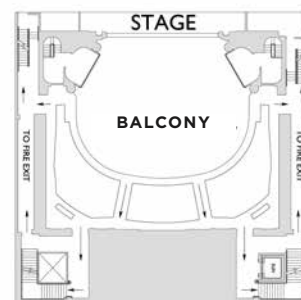
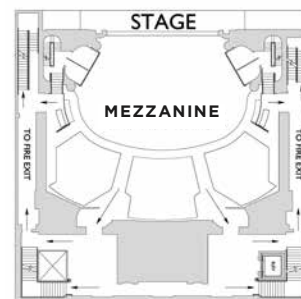
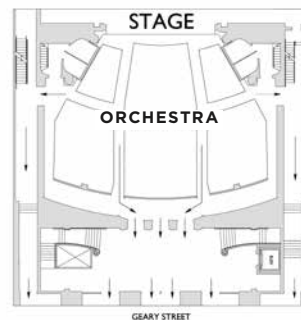


The scenic shop, prop shop, and stage crew are represented by Local 16 of the IATSE.



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

GEARY THEATER EXITS



"It entertains the devil out of you"

—TIME OUT NEW YORK

mm
↑
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HAND TO GOD

BY Robert Askins
DIRECTED BY David Ivers

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↑
ENDS FEB. 4

↑
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Lyrics By Susan Birkenhead
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