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Corporate Office

425 North 85th Street Seattle, WA 98103
p 206.443.0445 f 206.443.1246
adsales@encoremediagroup.com
800.308.2898 x105
www.encoremediagroup.com

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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 and Executive Director Peter Pastreich, 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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MAY 18, 2017—JAN 8, 2018

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Ery Nzaramba in *Battlefield*

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EDITOR

SIMON HODGSON

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

SHANNON STOCKWELL

CONTRIBUTORS

MICHAEL PALLER

CAREY PERLOFF

ELSPETH SWEATMAN

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 *A Night with Janis Joplin* and InterACT with us!

A NIGHT WITH JANIS JOPLIN

AT THE GEARY THEATER

BIKE TO THE THEATER NIGHT

JUN 7, 7 PM

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

KDFC PROLOGUE

JUN 13, 5:30 PM

Go deeper with a fascinating preshow discussion with a member of the *Night with Janis Joplin* artistic team.

THEATER ON THE COUCH*

JUN 16, 8 PM

Take part in a lively conversation in our lower-level lounge with Dr. Mason Turner, chief of psychiatry at Kaiser Permanente San Francisco Medical Center.

AUDIENCE EXCHANGE*

JUN 20, 7 PM; JUN 25 & 28, 2 PM

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

OUT WITH A.C.T.*

JUN 21, 8 PM

Mix and mingle at this hosted postshow LGBT party.

WENTE VINEYARDS WINE SERIES

JUN 25, 7 PM

Meet fellow theatergoers at this hosted wine-tasting event.

PLAYTIME

JUL 1, 12:30 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

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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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

ACT-SF.ORG/VOLUNTEER

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

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HAMLET

by **William Shakespeare**

Starring **John Douglas Thompson**

Directed by **Carey Perloff**

SEP/OCT 2017 AT A.C.T.'S GEARY THEATER

**"[John Douglas Thompson is]
our greatest classical actor."**

THE NEW YORKER

Actor **John Douglas Thompson** returns to A.C.T. to take on one of theater's most iconic roles: Hamlet. Last season, Thompson dazzled Geary audiences in the virtuoso one-man show *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. Now, in one of the highlights of our 2017-18 season, Thompson will play for the first time one of Shakespeare's most complex and heartbreaking characters. In the story of a man who wakes up to find his world upended and his closest friends unworthy of trust, Shakespeare shows us how quickly an orderly kingdom ruled by a loving king can become unrecognizable. This will be A.C.T.'s first Shakespeare production since *The Tempest* reopened The Geary in 1996, so it is a fitting celebration of A.C.T.'s 50th anniversary.

SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS

by **Bess Wohl**

Directed by **Rachel Chavkin**

OCT/NOV 2017 AT A.C.T.'S STRAND THEATER

Top 10 Play of the Year

*THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE GUARDIAN,
THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER, THE ADVOCATE*

On a weeklong silent retreat in the woods, six wildly disparate souls looking for answers find that staying quiet doesn't necessarily bring inner peace. *Small Mouth Sounds* is the acclaimed and wickedly sharp new comedy from Drama Desk Award-winning playwright Bess Wohl that takes dead aim at our most private hopes and fears while skewering the mindfulness business. Under the eye of an unseen guru, these six have gathered to get away from it all. But as they listen to their leader's ruminations (and try to hook up while struggling to meditate without snacks), they learn that silence can indeed be golden. It can also be funny, frustrating, erotic, comforting, and profoundly passive-aggressive. *Small Mouth Sounds* won over audiences and critics alike off Broadway, and its intimate and imaginative storytelling is perfect for The Strand Theater.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

by **Harold Pinter**

Directed by **Carey Perloff**

JAN 2018 AT A.C.T.'S GEARY THEATER

"Delicious, impalpable and hair-raising"

THE SUNDAY TIMES

A.C.T. returns to the world of Harold Pinter for our first staging of his classic comedy *The Birthday Party*, featuring A.C.T. favorite **Marco Barricelli**, Tony Award winner **Judith Ivey**, and Stratford Festival star **Scott Wentworth**. In an undisturbed English seaside town, the inhabitants of a ramshackle boarding house react to the arrival of two unsettling strangers. Where do Goldberg and McCann come from? Who sent them? And why do they keep asking about the sole boarder, piano player Stanley? As the party guests, including flighty Lula and flirty landlady Meg, gather for Stanley's birthday, the desperate pianist is forced to undergo a surreal interrogation. Seething with mystery, danger, and sudden humor, this is signature Pinter, a play of "tantalizing theatricality" (*The New York Times*).

VIETGONE

by **Qui Nguyen**

Directed by **Jaime Castañeda**

FEB/MAR 2018 AT A.C.T.'S STRAND THEATER

**"Hip, high-wire theatricality . . .
sultry sexiness . . . quirky playfulness"**

THE SEATTLE TIMES

A hit off Broadway and at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, *Vietgone* is a contemporary twist on the classic story of boy meets girl. In this irreverent new comedy, three young Vietnamese immigrants leave a war-torn country for an eye-opening journey across the bewildering and foreign landscape that is 1970s America. A vibrant mash-up of pop-culture references and audacious dialogue, this action-packed road trip that instantaneously moves from hilarity to heart-wrenching drama played to sold-out houses at OSF in 2016 and New York's Manhattan Theatre Club. This sexy, sassy, freewheeling ride, backed by its hip-hop and Motown rhythms, will roll into The Strand this spring in an all-new production.

FATHER COMES HOME FROM THE WARS

(Parts 1, 2 & 3)

by **Suzan-Lori Parks**

Directed by **Liz Diamond**

APR/MAY 2018 AT A.C.T.'S GEARY THEATER

"Thrilling . . . a masterpiece"

NEW YORK MAGAZINE

From Pulitzer Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks (*Topdog/Underdog*) comes an explosively powerful and lyrical new play set against the backdrop of the Civil War. In this epic American take on the *Odyssey*, Southern slave Hero faces a terrible choice: to seek his freedom by fighting for the Confederacy alongside his master or to stay home with the woman and people he loves. A poignant and compelling journey in three succinct acts, Parks mixes contemporary wit, folk ballads, and classical traditions to tell a timeless story of freedom, heroism, and belonging. By turns comic and heartbreaking, *Father Comes Home from the Wars* is a mythic journey through the American soul from one of our most accomplished modern playwrights.

PLUS TWO MORE SHOWS TO BE ANNOUNCED!

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Welcome to *Battlefield*! In this letter, I wanted to write to you about my decision to pass the baton to a new artistic director after my 25th-anniversary season next year. I also want to write to you about the magic of Peter Brook, and, equally importantly, about our brilliant Young Conservatory Director Craig Slight, who is retiring in May after 29 years at A.C.T. As I thought about it, I realized that these three things are part of an amazing continuum of discovering, learning, and looking forward.

For director Peter Brook, now in his nineties, the world is always new. Even after decades of creating groundbreaking theatrical productions that defy expectations, Brook has the demeanor of a perpetual student, filled with wonder at the capacity of human beings to imagine and to understand each other in spite of every obstacle. He has spent his career reinventing the form and stripping away artifice to get to the most subtle and essential truths, but his work is also surprisingly filled with joy and life. He doesn't need tricks to keep us engaged. Instead, he manages to uncover the essence of an actor's humanity so that, in watching them, we see ourselves.

Few artists have taken the creative risks Brook has taken, starting over every few years to reimagine the very nature of making theater. In 1973, A.C.T. Artistic Director William Ball invited Peter Brook to bring his legendary *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to The Geary, and the production had a profound effect on the new company. On a recent visit to Paris, I met with Brook at his Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, and we talked about Ball. Brook had fond memories. He remembered one time when Ball said that he had adopted one of Brook's acting exercises for use with the A.C.T. acting company. Ball claimed that it had a huge impact on his actors. Laughing, Brook told me that he couldn't remember ever having done that exercise; he thought Ball had invented it and attributed it to him. Nevertheless, Brook had a deep respect for the experiments Ball was attempting with A.C.T. and was anxious to continue the connection. After the success of *The Suit* at A.C.T. in 2014, Brook agreed not only to bring *Battlefield* to The Geary for our 50th anniversary but also to be in residence at A.C.T. for two weeks, along with his longtime collaborator

Marie-Hélène Estienne. The two of them will conduct workshops and engage with the community in their signature explorations of the human experience. In these polarized times, we feel blessed to have in our midst an artist like Brook, who has always stood for intercultural exchange and understanding.

We are equally blessed to have watched the artistry of Craig Slight evolve over the past 29 years. When I arrived at A.C.T., I was astonished by the sophistication of Slight's work, by his understanding of what it felt like to view the world through the eyes of young people. His commissions of new plays have been daring, complex, funny, and heartbreaking. His classroom work is varied and rigorous; he is with his students in practice and in spirit from the day they start training until long after their graduation from the YC. Slight's love of musical theater has spawned a decade of unforgettable cabaret performances in *The Garret* that rank among the best work A.C.T. has produced. He is the most literate man I know, devouring novels at an astonishing rate and reveling in the beauty of great language. All of us at A.C.T., and the thousands of students he has trained, owe Slight a vast debt of gratitude. He has changed our lives, and we are forever thankful.

Both of these artists have been inspirations to me over the years. When I arrived at A.C.T. as the new artistic director in the fall of 1992, an enthusiastic but relatively untested 32-year-old, I had no real idea of what I was getting into. But I had a deep belief in Ball's founding goal for A.C.T.: to create an ambitious theater, outside of the commercial mainstream, in which training and performance were inextricably linked; a theater that was about both conserving the richness of the past and training the best of the future. It's a simple idea that made complete sense to me back in 1992, and it is what I have tried to sustain over the past quarter century. I have been kept buoyant by the thousands of students in our building, by the passionate artists in our studios, by the fierce engagement of our audience, by the generosity of our board and donors, and by my own restless love of learning and desire to experiment. A.C.T. has given me a chance to grow in ways I never imagined; because we are a school, there seems to be permission here to attempt new ideas and new ways of working and to take risks that many theaters could never attempt.



Slaight and Brook remind me why I fell in love with theater to begin with: they have great passion for the process of excavating truths about the mysterious universe of the human experience. Perhaps because I began my career as an archaeologist, I am at home in the trenches, with dirt in my fingernails, sifting through soil to find nuggets of meaning. And at this moment in my creative career, I am hungry to get back into the rehearsal studio and create work, both as a director and as a writer, without also being responsible for a huge institution. I am also anxious to carve out time to follow the trajectory of our epic production of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, which many of you enjoyed in February. The show has proved to be an international hit, playing to sold-out houses and standing ovations in Canada, and now it is preparing to travel to many theaters across America. This signature A.C.T. production has much to say about the world in which we live, and I am thrilled it is going to have such a long and varied life. Twenty-five years at the helm of a great organization is a gift. I have loved every moment of my time at A.C.T. and I have loved working with all of you. This is a unique and magical organization, and I know it will attract excellent leadership well into the future.

I am truly excited about introducing my 25th-anniversary season, full of work I treasure and artists who are deeply connected to our artistic family. We will open with a production I will direct of *Hamlet*, starring the great classical actor John Douglas Thompson and an extraordinary company of artists in a vivid new exploration of a play about spying, betrayal, family, identity, and truth. The perfect mirror for any moment in which it is produced, *Hamlet* asks both artists and audience to think bigger, to wrestle with complexity, to contemplate the angels. It will be our first Shakespeare production in 20 years and a perfect way to begin this ambitious anniversary season.

At The Strand next fall, we are thrilled to bring you Bess Wohl's imaginative and hilarious new play, *Small Mouth Sounds*. In *Hamlet*'s words, "the rest is silence," and Wohl's play is about a silent retreat in the woods in which six participants going through six different life crises come together to try to heal. In the process, they learn surprising things about themselves. In a city obsessed with mindfulness, *Small Mouth Sounds* is a moving and surprising play for our anxious times.

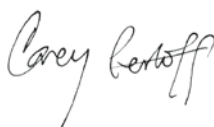
These plays join Qui Nguyen's hilarious and heartbreaking love story, *Vietgone*; Suzan-Lori Parks's epic Civil War play, *Father Comes Home from the Wars*; Harold Pinter's wicked comedy *The Birthday Party* (featuring the return of Marco Barricelli and the Geary debut of Tony Award winner Judith Ivey) and two more exciting productions that we will announce shortly.

May will usher in our amazing New Strands Festival, which will explode in every space of the beautiful new Strand Theater May 17 through 21. Featuring three residencies with writers from Ma-Yi Theater Company in New York—plus the next iteration of the movement-theater piece *Fatherville*, two new musicals, and much more—the New Strands Festival is a free week of creative play that will leave you feeling exhilarated and inspired.

There will be plenty of time over the next 18 months for me to say hello and farewell and thank-you to each of you. In the meantime, there are great theatrical adventures ahead.

Enjoy *Battlefield*!

Warmly,



Carey Perloff





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A.C.T.

CAREY PERLOFF, Artistic Director
PETER PASTREICH, Executive Director

PRESENTS

BATTLEFIELD

BASED ON *THE MAHABHARATA*
AND THE PLAY WRITTEN BY **JEAN-CLAUDE CARRIÈRE**

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY
PETER BROOK AND MARIE-HÉLÈNE ESTIENNE

CREATIVE TEAM

MUSICIAN **TOSHI TSUCHITORI**
COSTUME DESIGN **ORIA PUPPO**
LIGHTING DESIGN **PHILIPPE VIALATTE**

CAST

KAREN ALDRIDGE
(from May 16 until May 21)
CAROLE KAREMERA
(from April 26 until May 14)
JARED MCNEILL
ERY NZARAMBA
SEAN O'CALLAGHAN

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Battlefield premiered on September 15, 2015, at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord.

Production: C.I.C.T. - Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord

Coproduction: The Grotowski Institute, PARCO Co. Ltd./Tokyo, Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg,
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Cercle des Partenaires des Bouffes du Nord

A HUMAN QUALITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH
DIRECTOR PETER BROOK

BY MICHAEL PALLER

I interviewed director Peter Brook in 1988 for *Theater Week* magazine during his visit to New York to mount the International Centre for Theatre Research's production of *The Cherry Orchard* at Brooklyn Academy of Music. In that interview, I wrote of him, "Each word carries the weight of heavily concentrated meaning, the apparently simple and effortless result not only of that moment's train of thought, but of many years of experimentation, of trial and error." In our brief transatlantic phone interview this year, "trial and error" are words that occurred, though the words that appeared most were "gradually" and "suddenly." Brook might protest that I am casting him in the role of a "philosopher with theories," but the repeated use of these words suggests two constants in his approach to theater: the patience that allows inspiration to emerge, unimpeded by preconceptions, and an openness to recognize, when it presents itself, the solution that perhaps one least expected.

It strikes me that the simplicity of *Battlefield* is greater than that of your previous productions. What are you searching for in this lifelong journey of honing down?

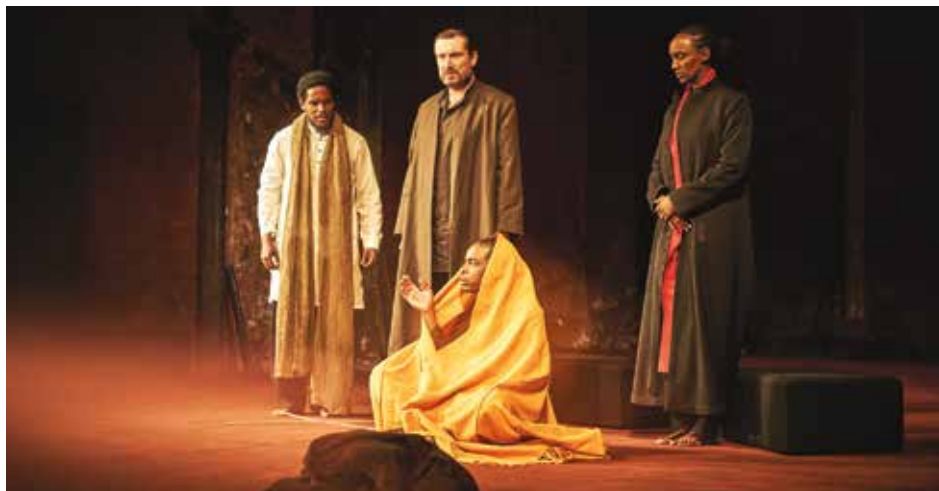
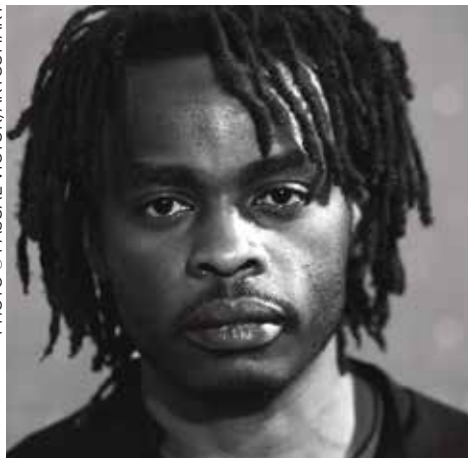
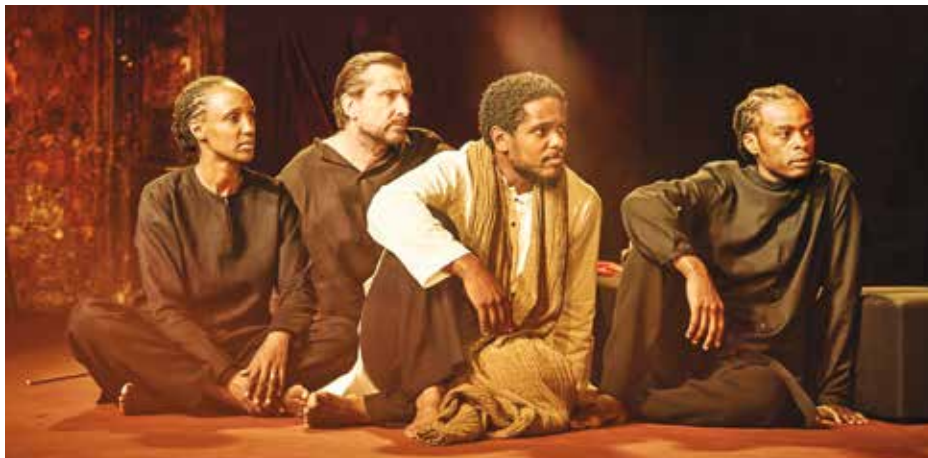
You mustn't try to make me into a philosopher with theories. It's just the opposite. I've always said that I'm not an artist, I'm an *artisan*, which means that—like all artisans, from bakers to shoemakers to weavers—I try to do my trade better, which can

be judged by simple criteria anyone can recognize. When you do something clumsy and wasteful and ugly, it's less good than if it is finer and cleaner.

Over the years, I've never consciously said, "We must look for simplicity." On the contrary, as a young man, I used every device that the theater could give. And I gradually found that, while they were intoxicating and thrilling, there was a human quality that was covered up as a result. And as I gradually became more interested in the human being than in the machinery, I gradually began not to eliminate but to let things drop away by themselves, and I saw that something more was coming through.

You don't make any attempt to set *Battlefield* in any particular time and place. Why is that?

[Specifying time and place would be] as if you took a Shakespeare play or an opera and started with the idea, "We've got to make it contemporary." This leads to the use of modern devices, electronics and projections and video and so on, but those don't make anything contemporary. What makes something contemporary is that you *feel* what the characters are going through. Although the *Mahabharata* was conceived several thousands of years ago, watching *Battlefield*, you suddenly feel that this is today. Today not as you see it, but by



the feeling that you have. A simpler way of putting it: "This is about us."

You've worked for many years with Marie-Hélène Estienne. What gifts does she bring to the work as a co-creator, co-writer, and co-director?

She brings an enormous amount. She brings all sorts of intuitions and a particular degree of scholarship, a knowledge of themes and materials. It is a real duet.

Over the years, I've never seen actors anywhere who are at once as relaxed and working with as much concentration as the members of your company. Could you say a little about how that's achieved?

It's a process. If, for instance, a director tries to be too dominant, he can scare actors and make them tense. I remember a director, still influenced by the war, saying to the actors, "Now, we're going into battle. Over the top!" He was reaching back to the language of the trenches. "We're in the trenches, and here we go, over the top!" That is ridiculous and useless. I know from experience that if I say to the actors, "Relax, now just be relaxed," it at once creates tension. If I say, "Don't be nervous, don't be frightened," that will scare them. But if you work together—and there's no other way and there's no defining that—if you work

OPPOSITE
Director Peter Brook.

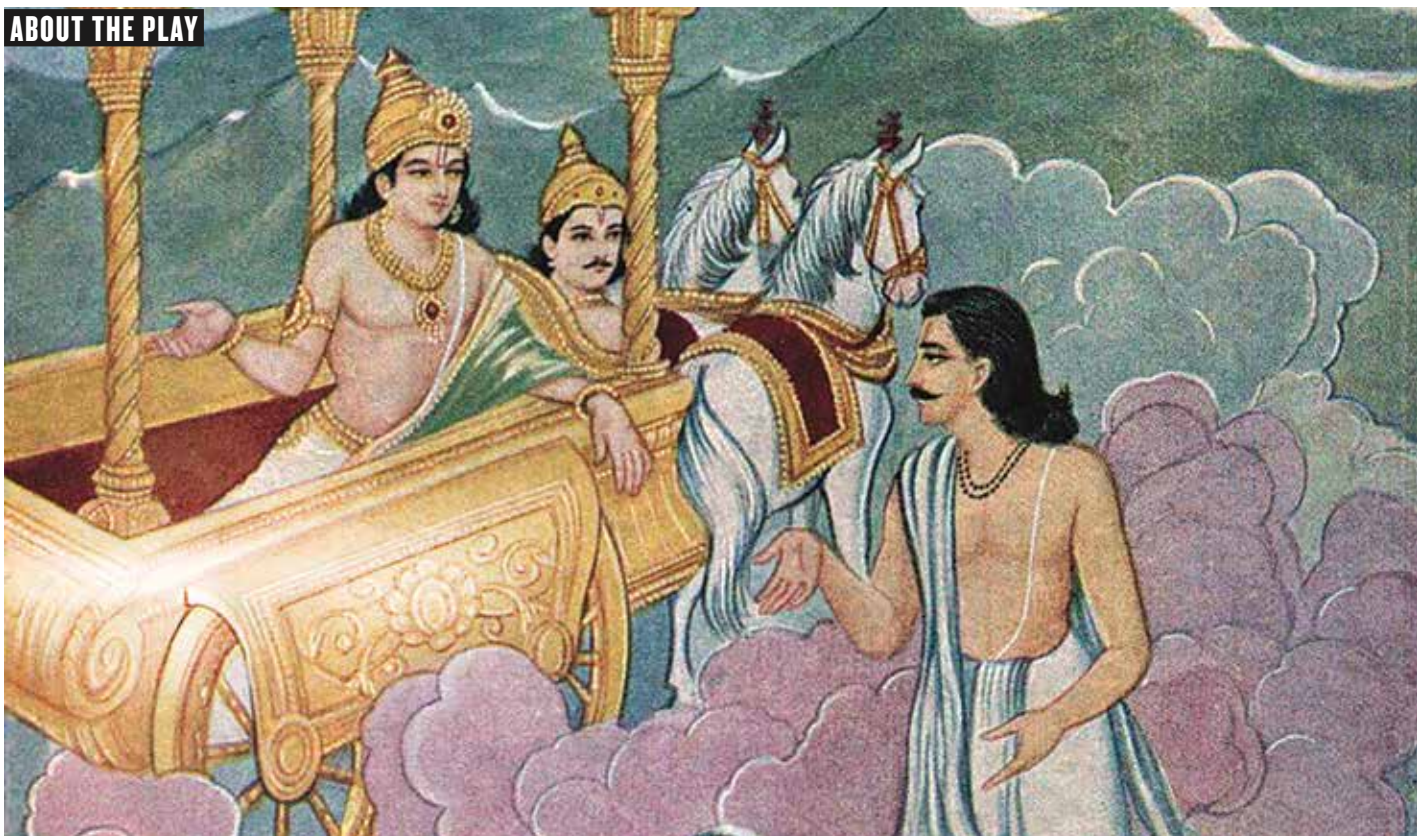
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
(Left to right) Carole Karemera, Sean O'Callaghan, Jared McNeill, and Ery Nzaramba in *Battlefield*; actor Ery Nzaramba; (left to right) Jared McNeill, Sean O'Callaghan, Ery Nzaramba, and Carole Karemera in *Battlefield*; actor Sean O'Callaghan.

together, then that relaxation happens by itself. And before you do anything, you prepare in your own way, you take a little time just to prepare quietly. Just doing a little work each day helps you.

What do you want to do next?

[Laughs] What presents itself! In fact, we are working on something which is much too new and fragile to start talking about. It could fall by the way, it could develop. Recognizing when something falls by the way is the most valuable thing, because then suddenly you find that something else becomes completely clear that was hidden by all the other options. When things just gradually fall away, other things become quite clear. It goes back to what I'm saying all the time: you take a leap, but there's trial and error. You try, and then you see it's an error, and then you try again, and you try something else, and then always, unexpectedly, the solution emerges.

ABOUT THE PLAY



THE WORLD OF BATTLEFIELD

INSIDE THE MAHABHARATA

BY SHANNON STOCKWELL

Indian poet A. K. Ramunajan (1929–93) once declared, “No Hindu ever reads the *Mahabharata* for the first time.” The story has been engrained in the culture of Hinduism for millennia. The ancient epic, with roots as old as four thousand years, has been passed down from generation to generation and is considered one of the foundational texts of the Hindu religion. After thousands of years of existence, it is clear why the *Mahabharata* has endured the test of time. When all is said and done, it is simply a great story. It’s a tale of good versus evil in which good ultimately prevails, yes, but to reduce it to a good-versus-evil tale would be a mistake, because the epic is so much more complex than that. Within its many pages, the reader learns that good can exist within evil, and evil within good. These intricacies are what make the *Mahabharata* so enticing—and always relevant.

THE STORY OF THE MAHABHARATA



1

The lineage of the two warring sets of cousins is set up: the Kauravas (one hundred brothers descended from demons) and the Pandavas (five brothers descended from gods, led by Yudhishthira). The Pandavas are set to inherit the throne of Kuru, a kingdom in northern India, once the king dies.



2

After the king dies, however, the kingdom is instead divided in two, with one half to be ruled by the Kauravas and one half to be ruled by the Pandavas. This is an attempt to reduce the rivalry between the two sets of cousins, but it does not work.

3

The Kauravas challenge Yudhishtira and the Pandavas to a dice game (which is rigged against them). The Pandavas lose and are forced to spend 13 years in exile.



4

After the 13 years are up, the Pandavas return to Kuru, but the Kauravas won't give them back their half of the kingdom. War is inevitable.



5

War breaks out in the city of Kurukshetra. Millions of soldiers are slain in an eighteen-day battle. The Pandavas emerge victorious, and Yudhishtira is to be crowned king of Kuru.



BATTLEFIELD BEGINS

6

Yudhishtira is guilt-ridden about the huge amount of destruction and death the battle caused, and he announces that he will not become king after all. His supporters try to encourage him otherwise, but he continues to resist, so they take him to his grandfather, Bhishma, for advice.



7

Bhishma has a very long conversation with Yudhishtira in which the older man expounds on the details of the *dharma* (duty) of warriors and kings. Bhishma convinces Yudhishtira that, while the war was bloody, it was just. Yudhishtira finally agrees to be crowned king.



8

Yudhishtira proves to be a kind and ethical ruler, but several years after the battle of Kurukshetra, he begins to see inauspicious omens. It is the beginning of the *Kali Yuga* (age of strife).



BATTLEFIELD ENDS

9

Yudhishtira and the remaining Pandavas prepare for the new age by traveling around the world. They die until only Yudhishtira is left.



10

Yudhishtira visits the afterlife, where he finds the Kauravas living like kings and the Pandavas living in hell. Even though they are in hell, Yudhishtira decides that he will spend the afterlife with his brothers, the Pandavas. It is then revealed that he has passed a test, and he and his brothers are transported to heaven permanently.



LIVING, BREATHING THEATER

THE LIFE AND WORK
OF PETER BROOK

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN



PHOTO © PASCAL VICTOR/ARTCOMART

In a career that has spanned almost 80 years, director Peter Brook has pushed the boundaries of storytelling. Led by his innate exuberance, inquisitiveness, and restlessness, he has traveled the world searching for ways to create theater that is alive, fresh, and unrepeatable.

Brook was a force from the moment he began directing for the stage in 1943. He quickly became one of Britain's leading directors, working in the West End and eventually on Broadway. He was tireless, directing as many as five productions a year. But he also felt stifled by the British theater scene, which was ruled by tradition; he wanted living, breathing theater.

In 1961, Brook was asked to join the Royal Shakespeare Company. He accepted, on one condition: that he could have the artistic and financial freedom to experiment. Through trial and error, Brook stripped away the performers' reliance on psychological investigation in favor of physical movement and improvisation. This method of working often made the actors anxious, but they trusted Brook nonetheless. As they tried various exercises, he was their cheerleader, encouraging them to push themselves further. When they began creating productions,

he was their synthesizer, taking a physical movement from three weeks ago and combining it with a vocal technique from yesterday and a text created that morning.

From these experiments grew the revolutionary productions of *The Persecution and Assassination of Marat as Performed by the Inmates of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (1966 Tony Awards for Best Direction and Best Play) and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which won a Tony Award for Best Direction in 1971 and played to sold-out houses at The Geary Theater in 1973.

By 1970, Brook was yearning for even more freedom. He wanted to be able to rehearse something for six months without the pressure of having to produce a finished show at the end. The only way to accomplish this, he decided, was to create his own theater company: the International Centre for Theatre Research (CIRT). For three years, this company traveled to Iran, Africa, and the US, devising theater for whatever audience turned up to see them. Laying down a rug on street corners and in the center of villages, they used old shoes, boxes, and bamboo sticks to tell simple stories.



OPPOSITE
Carole Karemera in *Battlefield*.

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT
Nonhlanhla Kheswa in *The Suit*, at A.C.T. in 2014;
director Peter Brook.

In 1974, CIRT found a permanent home at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris, and the company built upon their experiences abroad to create groundbreaking productions based on stories from around the world. But Brook found himself returning again and again to a text he had first encountered in 1966: the ancient Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata*. After the success of his adaptation of the twelfth-century Persian poem *The Conference of the Birds* in 1979, Brook knew it was time to bring the *Mahabharata* to Western audiences.

It would take Brook, Carrière, and Marie-Hélène Estienne (another of Brook's most valuable collaborators) six years to accomplish this task. The team took several trips to India to see different performances of the *Mahabharata*; musician Toshi Tsuchitori (who also provides music for *Battlefield*) spent two years there learning native instruments. In between rehearsals and performances for CIRT's other productions, Brook's actors participated in workshops, bringing together all of their varied training and experience to tell this epic tale of war and redemption.

The Mahabharata shook the theatrical world, both at its 1985 world premiere in Paris and the 1987 US premiere at Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. The play ran nine hours and received rave reviews. "It is an extraordinary philosophical epic that acknowledges death, destruction and decay while enhancing the mystery of life itself," said *Guardian* critic Michael Billington.

However, the original text of the epic is so long that, in his 1985 production, Brook didn't have time to focus on what happened to the characters after the central conflict. How did Yudhishtira, the new king, pick up the pieces after such a tragedy? What



kind of leader did he become? In 2011, current tragedies—particularly the Syrian Civil War—brought these questions back to Brook with new resonance. He was inspired to create *Battlefield*, which premiered in 2015 before embarking on a world tour.

"We wanted to speak about what happens after the battle," says Brook of *Battlefield*. "On both sides, the leaders go through a moment of profound questioning: the ones who won say 'Victory is a defeat' and the ones who lost admit that 'They could have prevented that war.' In the *Mahabharata* they at least have the strength to ask these questions."

At 92 years old, Brook remains restless and inquisitive. As *Battlefield* graces the Geary stage, Brook is already hard at work on a new piece. The world waits.

WORDS ON PLAYS

Want to know more about *Battlefield*? *Words on Plays* is full of original essays and interviews that give you a behind-the-scenes look at *Battlefield*—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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WHO'S WHO IN *BATTLEFIELD*



KAREN ALDRIDGE

starred in the international tour (2001–02) of *Le costume* (*The Suit*), also directed by Peter

Brook. She originated the role of Mrs. Phelps in the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Matilda the Musical* on Broadway. Chicago theater credits include Margaret in *Tug of War: Foreign Fire*, Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Isabella in *Edward II*, and Love's Labour's Lost at Chicago Shakespeare Theater; *The Trinity River Plays* (Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Best Actress), *The Good Negro*, *The Ballad of Emmett Till*, *The Cook*, and *Proof* (Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Best Actress) at Goodman Theatre; and *The Qualms*, *Clybourne Park*, and Tracy Letts's Pulitzer Prize-nominated *Man from Nebraska* at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where she originated the role of Tamyra. Other notable Chicago roles include Nina in *Seagull* at Writers Theatre and *Far Away* and *In the Blood* (Joseph Jefferson Award nomination for Best Actress) at Next Theatre Company. Her regional credits include productions with the Indiana Repertory Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, A.C.T., Magic Theatre, Aurora Theatre Company, and Marin Theatre Company. Aldridge appears in a guest-star recurring role as Adele Kipling in the Netflix series *The Get Down* (produced and directed by Baz Luhrmann). Other television and film credits include Dr. Kendra Perrington on NBC's *Chicago Fire* and *Chicago Med* and Dr. Ella Harris in the Golden Globe-winning series *Boss* and roles in *Blue Bloods* (CBS), *Unforgettable* (CBS), and Ron Howard's *The Dilemma*.



CAROLE KAREMERA is an actress, musician, choreographer, and director, with a degree in dramatic arts and jazz from the Royal Music

Conservatory in Brussels. She has performed in many theater, dance, and film productions, which have been internationally acclaimed by the public and critics alike. These productions include *Sometimes in April*, *The Bogus Woman*, *If the Wind Moves the Sand*, *Scratching the Inner Fields*, *Rwanda 94*, and *Jazz*. In 2007 she created Ishyo Arts Centre, the cultural hub of the town of Kigali, Rwanda, which offers residencies and professional coaching to local artists and a varied and innovative program to the public. She has directed several theater and music performances that have toured many African and European countries, including *My Little Hill*, *Kura*, *Umuwunyi*, and *Mboka*, and she has coproduced Kina Festival, KigaliUp Festival, and the international Centre x Centre Theatre Festival. Karemera was subsequently the director of the Pan African Dance Festival and deputy secretary general of Arterial Network. She is presently a member of the Rwanda Academy of Language and Culture and of the National Institute of Museums of Rwanda. Since 2014, she has been working on a multidisciplinary triptych on the theme of memory. Karemera is also an activist engaged in the freedom of expression and creation in Africa.



JARED MCNEILL trained at Fordham College at Lincoln Center in New York City where he graduated with a degree in theater and visual

arts in 2008. That same year, he took his first professional role in Chisa Hutchinson's *She Like Girls* at The Lark

in New York. McNeill played various roles in Peter Brook's *11 and 12* and played the role of Maphikela in *The Suit*. Since then, he has performed in August Wilson's *Fences* at Geva Theatre Center and in various chapters of Tarell Alvin McCraney's *The Brother/Sister Plays* at Pittsburgh's City Theater Company, as well as the Bay Area's Marin Theatre Company and A.C.T. Most recently, McNeill was an understudy in Roundabout Theatre Company's production of Stephen Karam's *Sons of the Prophet*, as well as taking on the role of Desmond in Young Jean Lee's *The Shipment* and playing in a recent New York production of Bertolt Brecht's *Life of Galileo*, during which he performed musical numbers on the trombone and harpsichord. He also toured with *The Suit*, directed by Peter Brook.



ERY NZARAMBA

trained as an actor at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles in Belgium and at Birmingham School of Acting in the

United Kingdom. *Battlefield* is Nzaramba's second production with the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, following two world tours of *The Suit*, also directed by Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne. Nzaramba has twice been awarded a Grant for the Arts by Arts Council England in 2012 and 2015 to write his play *Dream of a Nation*. A public staged reading took place at the Theatre Royal Stratford East in London in July 2015. He wrote the one-man play *Split/Mixed* and wrote and directed the short films *To the Naked Eye* (Legacy Film Festival, 2011) and *The Blues Lover* (Portobello Film Festival, 2014). He co-wrote *Flora & Dambudzo* (working title), a feature film shot in 2015, based on the life and work of cult Zimbabwean author Dambudzo Marechera (whom Nzaramba will also star as). Nzaramba's theater credits include *The Suit* (Théâtre

des Bouffes du Nord, world tour); *The Bacchae* and *Blood Wedding* (Royal & Derngate, Northampton); *As You Like It* (Curve); *The Epic Adventure of Nhamo the Manyika Warrior and His Sexy Wife Chipso* (Tricycle Theatre/Tiata Fahodzi); *Split/Mixed* (United Solo Theatre Festival in New York); *The Snow Queen* (Trestle Theatre/British Council, India tour); *The Jew of Malta* (Hall for Cornwall); and *The Three Musketeers* and *The Tempest* (Unicorn Theatre). His film and television credits include *The Gates of Vanity* (feature film, Future Focus Films) and *The Bill* (television, ITV). His radio credits include *43:59: Yara*, *The Torturer's Tale*, *Ball and Chains*, and *When I Lived in Peru* (BBC Radio drama).



SEAN O'CALLAGHAN

comes from Cork, Ireland. He trained at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art under Hugh Cruttwell. He

has just finished working with Alexander Zeldin at London's Royal National Theatre in *Beyond Caring*. He spent five years working at the Royal Shakespeare Company with such directors as Terry Hands, Michael Bogdanov, Michael Attenborough, and Matthew Warchus, and also performed in productions of Shakespeare there. He has appeared in new plays by David Edgar, Anne Devlin, and Nick Dear. O'Callaghan was in the first new play produced at the new Shakespeare's Globe with *Augustine's Oak* and Abi Morgan's new play, *Tender*, at Hampstead Theatre. He is an associate artist with Howard Barker's theater company, The Wrestling School, and has worked with them over a 16-year period touring Europe and Australia. He spent the early part of his career working with Peter Cheeseman at the New Vic in Stoke-on-Trent where he continues to work and where he is now based. O'Callaghan has been in productions in cities throughout the UK, including Liverpool, Manchester, Belfast, Cardiff,

Birmingham, and Plymouth. He recently worked with director Rachel O'Riordan on Conor McPherson's *The Seafarer* and with director John Dove in Edinburgh on Brian Friel's *Faith Healer*. He has won and been nominated for a number of theater awards, including the Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards and the Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland. O'Callaghan has also worked extensively in film and television. His credits include roles in *Maria Graham*, directed by Valeria Sarmiento, and *Bigga Than Ben*, directed by Suzie Halewood. He also won the Granada Film Festival Award for Best Actor. He recently finished a Canadian television series called *X Company*.

TOSHI TSUCHITORI (Musician)

was born in Kagawa, a prefecture of Japan, in 1950 and began performing on Japanese traditional drums at an early age. Since the 1970s he has performed internationally with specialists in free improvisation such as Milford Graves, Steve Lacy, Derek Bailey, and others. He began working with Peter Brook's theater group in 1976 and has since created the music for productions including *Ubu aux Bouffes*, *La conférence des oiseaux* (*The Conference of the Birds*), *L'os de Mor Lam* (*The Bone of Mor Lam*), *Le Mahabharata* (*The Mahabharata*), *La tempête* (*The Tempest*), *Hamlet, 11 and 12*, *Tierno Bokar*, and *The Valley of Astonishment*. He has studied traditional music from all over the world and, for more than a decade, has been researching the earliest strata of Japanese music and presenting the results as musical performances. He has released a series of three recordings of prehistoric Japanese sounds entitled *Dotaku*, *Sanukaito*, and *Jomonko*. Recently he researched and played ancient music in a prehistoric painted cave in France. Tsuchitori has also collaborated with the traditional master musician Harue Momoyama since building a studio together in 1988, working both with local villagers and international artists.



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Tsuchitori has many CD recordings and has written three books: an autobiography called *Spiral Arms*; *The Sounds of Jomon*, a study of the music of prehistoric Japan; and *The Sound of Painted Cave*, about the origins of music.

PETER BROOK (Director and Adaptor) was born in London in 1925. Throughout his career, he has distinguished himself in various genres: theater, opera, cinema, and writing. He directed his first play in London in 1943. He then went on to direct more than 70 productions in London, Paris, and New York. His work with the Royal Shakespeare Company includes *Love's Labour's Lost* (1946), *Measure for Measure* (1950), *Titus Andronicus* (1955), *King Lear* (1962), *Marat/Sade* (1964), *US* (1966), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970), and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1978). In 1971, he and Micheline Rozan founded the International Centre for Theatre Research in Paris, and in 1974, he opened its permanent base in the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. There, he has directed *Timon d'Athènes* (*Timon of Athens*), *Les Ik* (*The Ik*), *Ubu aux Bouffes*, *La conférence des oiseaux* (*The Conference of the Birds*), *L'os de Mor Lam* (*The Bone of Mor Lam*), *The Cherry Orchard*, *Le Mahabharata* (*The Mahabharata*), *Woza Albert!*, *La tempête* (*The Tempest*), *L'homme qui* (*The Man Who*), *Qui est là* (*Who Is Here*), *Happy Days*, *Je suis un phénomène* (*I Am a Phenomenon*), *Le costume* (*The Suit*), *Hamlet*, *Far Away*, *La mort de Krishna* (*The Death of Krishna*), *Ta main dans la mienne* (*Your Hand in Mine*), *Le grand inquisiteur* (*The Grand Inquisitor*), *Tierno Bokar*, *Sizwe Banzi est mort* (*Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*), *Fragments*, *Warum Warum*, *Love Is My Sin*, *11 and 12*, and *Une flûte enchantée* (*A Magic Flute*, opera), and lately *The Suit* (2012) and *The Valley of Astonishment* (2014)—many of these performing in both French and English. In opera, he directed *La bohème*, *Boris Godunov*, *The Olympians*, *Salomé*, and *Le nozze di Figaro* (*The Wedding of Figaro*) at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden; *Faust* and *Eugene Onegin* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York;

La tragédie de Carmen (*The Tragedy of Carmen*) and *Impressions de Pelléas* (*Impressions of Pelléas*) at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris; and *Don Giovanni* for Festival d'Aix-en-Provence. Brook's autobiography, *Threads of Time*, was published in 1998 and joins other titles, including *The Empty Space* (1968), which has been translated into more than 15 languages; *The Shifting Point* (1987); *There Are No Secrets* (1993); *Evoking (and Forgetting) Shakespeare* (1999); and *The Quality of Mercy* (2014). His films include *Moderato Cantabile* (1959), *Lord of the Flies* (1963), *Marat/Sade* (1967), *Tell Me Lies* (1967), *King Lear* (1971), *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1979), *The Mahabharata* (1989), and *The Tragedy of Hamlet* (2002, television).

MARIE-HÉLÈNE ESTIENNE (Director and Adaptor) worked with Peter Brook on the casting for *Timon d'Athènes* (*Timon of Athens*) in 1974 and subsequently joined the International Centre for Theatre Research for the creation of *Ubu aux Bouffes* in 1977. She was Brook's assistant on *La tragédie de Carmen* (*The Tragedy of Carmen*), *Le Mahabharata* (*The Mahabharata*), and collaborated on the staging of *La tempête* (*The Tempest*), *Impressions de Pelléas* (*Impressions of Pelléas*), *Woza Albert!*, and *Hamlet* (2000). She worked on the dramaturgy of *Qui est là* (*Who Is Here*). With Brook, she coauthored *L'homme qui* (*The Man Who*) and *Je suis un phénomène* (*I Am a Phenomenon*), shown at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord. She wrote the French adaptation of Can Themba's short story *The Suit* (*Le costume*) and *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*, by Athol Fugard, John Kani, and Winston Ntshona. In 2003 she wrote the French and English adaptations of *The Grand Inquisitor*, based on Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. She was the author of *Tierno Bokar* in 2005, and of the English adaptation of *11 and 12*, by Amadou Hampâté Bâ, in 2009. With Peter Brook, she co-directed *Fragments*, five short pieces by Samuel Beckett. With Brook and composer Franck Krawczyk, she freely adapted Mozart and Schikaneder's *Die Zauberflöte* into

Une flûte enchantée (A Magic Flute). She shares in the creation of *The Suit* in 2012 and *The Valley of Astonishment* in 2014.

ORIA PUPPO (Costume Designer)

works between Buenos Aires and Paris. In Argentina, she has created sets and costumes for such directors as Diego Kogan (*Martha Stutz*, by Javier Daulte), Rafael Spregelburd (*Modesty*, by Rafael Spregelburd), Roberto Villanueva (*Queen of the Night*, by Thomas Bernhard; *The Goldberg Variations*, by George Tabori), Ciro Zorzoli (*State of Wrath*, based on Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*), and Alejandro Tantanian (*Travellers That Die*, by D. Veronese; *Knives in Hens*, by David Harrower; and *Los mansos*, by Alejandro Tantanian, based on Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*). She also worked as technical director for the Buenos Aires International Festival from 1999 to 2007. Puppo has also taken part in Alejandro Tantanian's creation of *Romeo and Juliet*, by William Shakespeare (Théâtre de Lucerne, Switzerland), Tiziano Manca's opera *La gabbia* (Stuttgart Theater, Germany), and *Amerika*, based on Franz Kafka's novel, and *The Threepenny Opera*, by Bertolt Brecht (National Theatre of Mannheim). For the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, she acts as the technical director for works by Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne, including *Tierno Bokar*, based on the novel by Amadou Ampathé Bâ, and *Une flûte enchantée (A Magic Flute)*, co-created with Franck Krawczyk). She was also costume co-designer for *The Suit*, based on the novel by Can Themba. Recently, she did the decor for Handel's *Resurrection*, directed by Lilo Baur, at the Paris Opera Atelier Lyrique, and she designed sets and costumes for Jean Genet's *The Maids*, directed by Ciro Zorzoli with Marilú Marini in Buenos Aires.

PHILIPPE VIALATTE (Lighting Designer)

started at the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in 1985 as a light operator on *Le Mahabharata (The Mahabharata)*, also directed by Peter Brook. He assisted Jean Kalman for the lighting design of *Woza Albert!* and *La tempête (The Tempest)*, directed by

Brook. Since the creation of *L'homme qui (The Man Who)* in Paris in 1993, he has designed the lights for Brook's plays in the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord: *Qui est là (Who Is Here)*, *Je suis un phénomène (I Am a Phenomenon)*, *Le costume (The Suit)*, *Hamlet*, *Far Away*, *La mort de Krishna (The Death of Krishna)*, *Hamlet*, *Ta main dans la mienne (Your Hand in Mine)*, *Tierno Bokar*, *Le grand inquisiteur (The Grand Inquisitor)*, *Sizwe Banzi est mort (Sizwe Banzi Is Dead)*, *Fragments*, 11 and 12, and recently, *Une flûte enchantée (A Magic Flute)* and *The Valley of Astonishment*. He travels with all these plays on tour and redesigns and adapts the lighting design to each space.

DAVID EDEN PRODUCTIONS, LTD. (US Tour Producer)

has been one of the leading American organizations devoted to producing international work in the United States for more than 30 years. Most recently, David Eden Productions has produced tours for Druid Theatre Company, the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, the Maly Drama Theatre, Théâtre de la Ville, Ensemble *Basiani* from the Republic of Georgia, the Gate Theatre in Dublin, and Batsheva Dance Company. David Eden Productions has produced tours for The Public Theater, Martha Clarke, Declan Donnellan, Propeller, Rezo Gabriadze, Piccolo Teatro di Milano, London's Royal Court Theatre, the Russian Patriarchate Choir of Moscow, the State Ballet of Georgia, and Bolshoi Ballet. David Eden Productions has worked on special projects with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, American Dance Festival, and Jacob's Pillow Dance.

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IN MEMORIAM: JOAN SADLER

A.C.T. mourns the loss of Joan Sadler, one of our most energetic and beloved board members, who passed away on Sunday, March 26. Joan had been a part of A.C.T.'s family since 1966, first as a volunteer, then as secretary and vice president of the company's fundraising foundation. When A.C.T.'s founding artistic director William Ball retired in 1986, Joan was active in A.C.T.'s reorganization, serving as president of the newly formed A.C.T. Board of Trustees from 1987 to 1989.

After her retirement, Joan served on A.C.T.'s Conservatory Committee. She was particularly inspired by the role the Conservatory plays in contributing to the strength of A.C.T. and the culture of San Francisco. In 2002, she established the annual Joan Sadler Award, given to



a third-year A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program actor for his or her exemplary work as a student who represents the highest standards of theatrical art. In 2013, Joan received the A.C.T. Benefactor Award for her tireless support of and enthusiasm for the next generation of theater artists.

"Joan was one of the true 'founding mothers' of A.C.T.," says Artistic Director Carey Perloff. "It was she who always said that the most important thing

about A.C.T. was its focus on the future. She was passionate about the M.F.A. Program and watched the success of our graduates with incredible pride. I think the reason Joan seemed vital and young to me well into her nineties was the joy she took in the new, in risk-taking, in artistic dreams and bold adventures. She delighted in watching the creative process. I know she is looking down on us now with those sparkling eyes and that enormous grin, urging us to keep the great experiment alive. Bless you, Joan!"

50
YEARS

A.C.T.
AMERICAN
CONSERVATORY
THEATER

**"ROCKS
THE HOUSE!"**

THE NEW YORK TIMES

**"WILD AND
JOYOUSLY
RAUCOUS"**

THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

"ELECTRIFYING!"

VARIETY

BEGINS JUN 7

A NIGHT WITH janis joplin

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY RANDY JOHNSON

LIKE A COMET THAT BURNS TOO BRIGHTLY TO LAST, Janis Joplin exploded onto the music scene and, almost overnight, became the queen of rock 'n' roll. The unmistakable voice, laced with raw emotion and Southern Comfort, made her a headliner from Monterey to Woodstock. This spring, A.C.T. invites you to share an evening with the woman and her influences in the hit Broadway musical *A Night with Janis Joplin*. Fueled by such unforgettable songs as "Me and Bobby McGee," "Piece of My Heart," "Cry Baby," and "Summertime," along with a remarkable cast and stunning performances, *A Night with Janis Joplin* is a musical journey celebrating Janis and her biggest musical influences—icons like **Aretha Franklin, Etta James, Odetta, Nina Simone, and Bessie Smith.**

While 2017 marks five decades of A.C.T., it is also the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love, an unprecedented cultural phenomenon in which thousands of young people flocked to San Francisco to celebrate peace, understanding, and free love. *A Night with Janis Joplin* is the perfect way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Summer of Love. "The Summer of Love changed so much in our culture and let all of us be ourselves," says the show's writer and director Randy Johnson. *A Night with Janis Joplin* being at A.C.T. is a homecoming and a love letter to the life of Janis Joplin and the city where it all began."

THE GEARY THEATER | ACT-SF.ORG/JANIS | 415.749.2228



PHOTO BY KEVIN BERNIE

THROUGH YOUNG EYES

A CELEBRATION OF YOUNG CONSERVATORY
DIRECTOR CRAIG SLAIGHT

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

Over the last 29 years, the A.C.T. Young Conservatory has undergone a theatrical and organizational revolution, spearheaded by Craig Slight—teacher, writer, theater maker, and leader—who steps down this May after nearly 30 years of service as director of the YC.

When Slight joined A.C.T. in 1988, he immediately recognized that the young students, aged 8 years to 19 years, needed material they could really sink their teeth into. “As a major regional theater, I felt we needed to provide new work for this age group,” says Slight. “The actors are a little young for *Death of a Salesman*, but they need something more sophisticated than *Babar the Elephant*. What could they work on?”

By commissioning professional playwrights to write plays for young actors, Slight soon discovered that there was a wide range of topics to be explored. From the home front during World War I (*The Life to Come*) to Amish country (*Fields of Gold*), teenage angst (*Punk Rock*) to living dolls (*The Automata Pietà*), the young students who have come through A.C.T.’s doors have met every challenge. With these works, they have been given a lens through which to view their own lives in new ways and a stage on which to discover themselves.

To date, more than 40 new works have been developed and produced by the YC through the Grace McGill New Plays Program. “Craig Slight’s groundbreaking work commissioning and producing a remarkable number of new plays for students has reshaped the landscape of theater education,” says Timothy Mason, the YC’s first playwright-in-residence. “The value of his contribution to the lives of young people is incalculable.”

This process has not only provided these young actors with new material to work on, but it has also brought them into contact with leading theater professionals. Students have collaborated with playwrights like Academy Award winner Horton Foote (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) and Tony Award winner Simon Stephens (*The Curious Case of the Dog in the Night-Time*).



OPPOSITE

Young Conservatory Director Craig Slight.

ABOVE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT

Haleyann Hart in *I'm Still Standing*; The cast from *Riot*; Quincy Corsello in *Fields of Gold*; Rachel Cunningham and Ryan Semmelmayr in *Bright Young People*.

The Grace McGill New Plays Program went international in 1999, with the YC becoming the first American young actor group to perform at the Royal National Theatre in London. Since then, A.C.T. has also partnered with the University of the Arts in Zurich, Switzerland; Theatre Royal Bath; and His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen, Scotland. Through an exchange program, YC students have acted alongside students from these international theaters here in the Bay Area and overseas.

The legacy of the commissioning program has not only benefited the Young Conservatory but has also made an impact across the whole of A.C.T. When Artistic Director Carey Perloff was searching for the perfect playwright to adapt Khaled Hosseini's *A Thousand Splendid Suns* for the stage, it was Slight who recommended Ursula Rani Sarma, who had written *Riot* for the YC in 2010.

"There's really no one in the American theater quite like Craig," says Perloff. "His teaching and direction are deft, specific, and

full of illumination. He combines rigor and love of the craft with incredible compassion and a sense of play. The result is a unique ability to unlock the creative potential of young people in moving ways. He is with those young actors in practice and in spirit from the day they start training until long after their graduation from the YC; indeed, there are YC alums on Broadway and in the industry today who cite Craig as their formative influence and who have stayed in touch with him throughout their careers. For them and for me, Craig has always set the bar."

Thank you, Craig, for your brilliance, your infectious laugh, and your dedication to the Bay Area's young artists.

Want a way to say thanks to Craig? Make a donation to A.C.T. and help endow the YC Chair in his name!

Visit act-sf.org/slight for more information.



PHOTO BY JESSICA KATZ

FUTURE THEATER

A.C.T. STRENGTHENS ITS ROOTS IN SAN FRANCISCO'S TECH SECTOR

BY SIMON HODGSON

The Bay Area has always been a home for innovators, risk-takers, and thinkers-outside-the-box. It's no wonder, then, that two of the greatest industries in San Francisco are technology and the performing arts. The two fields have more in common than meets the eye. "One common thread between the performing arts and technology sectors is that we are all creators and makers," says A.C.T. Associate Artistic Director Andy Donald.

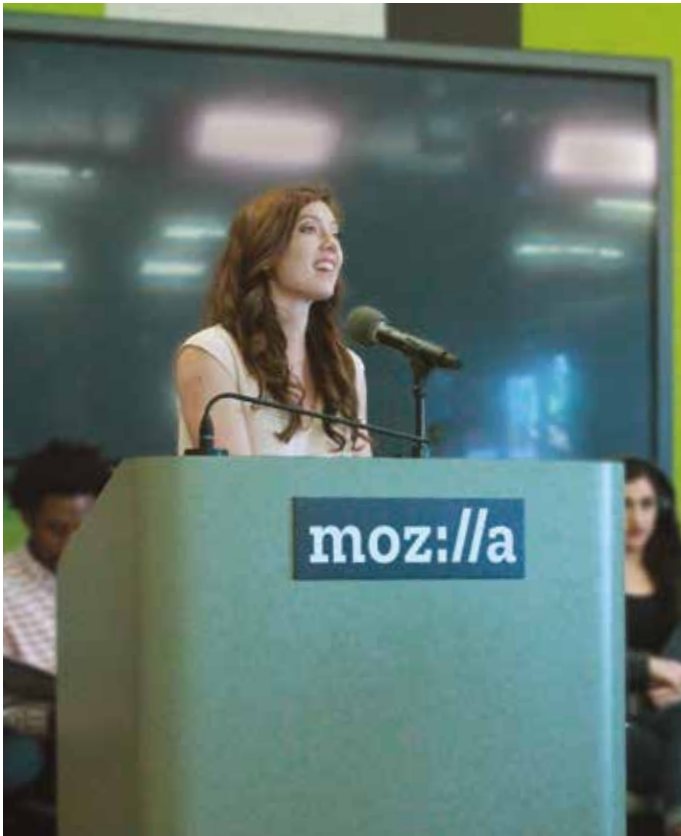
Because the team at A.C.T. recognizes this profound connection, our work is already woven into the Bay Area's technology sector in many ways. This is apparent in mainstage productions, like *Love and Information*, about the challenges of connection in the Internet age. Our Professional Development Training Program has worked with companies such as Google, Cisco, and Pandora. And last February, Community Artistic Director Tyrone Davis brought *Every 28 Hours*, a production about police brutality and racism in America, to Google's headquarters.

But the similarity between technology and theater is especially apparent when it comes to play development, says Donald: "The

new-play process shares a lot with technology development: internal trial and error, peer and audience feedback, public brainstorming, and beta testing." To explore this shared creative DNA, A.C.T. has forged a new-play partnership with nonprofit tech company Mozilla. So far this spring, we have produced two readings, performed by M.F.A. Program actors and hosted at Mozilla's Embarcadero offices, in which Donald's artistic team presented and received feedback on new tech-related plays. They're gearing up to present one more.

Before the partnership with Mozilla started, A.C.T. Assistant Producer Ken Savage visited companies including Facebook, Pandora, Google, and Dolby to further research the tech community's point of view when it came to the performing arts. "I discovered that tech folks are excited to be active participants in the creation of an artistic production," says Savage. "They ask questions about our shows, want to know how things work, and say they'd go to more theater events if they knew about them."

Bolstered by this knowledge, the A.C.T. artistic team looked for a tech company with whom we could build a long-term collaboration, and they found the perfect partner in Mozilla, introduced to A.C.T. by Christopher Hollenbeck (on the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program Board of Directors). Best known for its Firefox web browser, Mozilla's mission is to make the Internet safer and more accessible for future generations. Because it is focused on the future, the team at Mozilla was particularly motivated to work with the young M.F.A. Program actors, emerging playwrights, and new plays. All of these factors came together to create the reading series at Mozilla.



Through the collaboration, Mozilla team members get to influence future theater makers. They also gain the opportunity to compare creative notes with artists at a major Bay Area arts organization as engineers and designers observe new ways of eliciting and incorporating audience/user feedback. “We’re confident that this collaboration will lead to insights about how to generate inspiration through the study of another creative process,” says Mozilla Chief Marketing Officer Jascha Kaykas-Wolff. “It also might force us to think about how we evolve our style of working in the open to generate more productive feedback.”

The partnership benefits A.C.T. as well. It gives our M.F.A. Program actors the chance to develop their skills of working with new plays and emerging playwrights. These student actors also get to flex their community-engagement muscles as they discuss the play with Mozilla team members following the reading, using art as a framework for conversations about technology.

And the A.C.T. artistic team gets an opportunity to develop new work reflecting contemporary San Francisco that might end up on our mainstages, or as a production for the Conservatory. The feedback from the tech audience contributes directly to the play’s development; after the reading of *Today Is My Birthday* (the first play to be staged in the series), Mozilla team members made suggestions about adjusting the length of the tweets in the play (of which there were many), while also mentioning how much they related to the professional uncertainty of the main character.

The new collaboration with Mozilla is made possible in part by a Doris Duke Charitable Foundation grant that A.C.T. received to



OPPOSITE

The cast and creative team of *Today Is My Birthday*, by Susan Soon-He Stanton.

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT

M.F.A. Program actor Lily Narbonne (class of 2018) in *clickshare*, by Lucas Kavner; The cast of *Today Is My Birthday*.

“ONE COMMON THREAD BETWEEN THE PERFORMING ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY SECTORS IS THAT WE ARE ALL CREATORS AND MAKERS.”

A.C.T. ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ANDY DONALD

promote theatergoing among San Francisco’s Asian American tech workers. As part of this grant, A.C.T. also established the Asian stARTup Council, a group of Asian American and Asian tech workers, artists, and arts administrators who are invited to our mainstage productions to advise on how to engage tech workers with the arts.

We hope that the Bay Area will always be a home for creativity. By connecting the arts and technology, A.C.T. is developing the playwrights, the actors, and the audience that will create the theater of tomorrow.

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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.

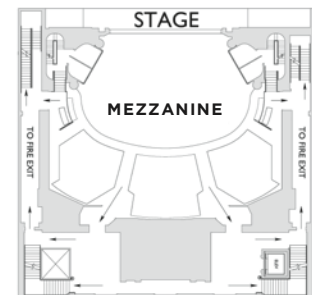
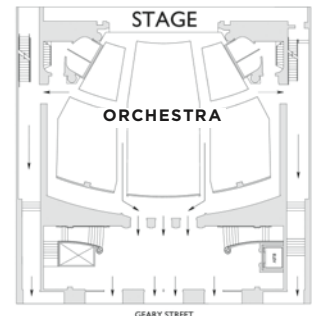


The scenic shop, prop shop, and stage crew are represented by Local 16 of the IATSE.



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

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