



# THE HARD PROBLEM

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OCT-NOV 2016  
SEASON 50, ISSUE 2

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From top: Photo courtesy of South Coast Repertory; photo by Matt Wade; photo by T. Charles Erickson; photo by Captblack76/Shutterstock.

A portrait of a middle-aged man with glasses and a dark sweater, smiling slightly. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

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425 North 85<sup>th</sup> Street Seattle, WA 98103  
p 206.443.0445 f 206.443.1246  
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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.

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EDITOR  
**SIMON HODGSON**

ASSOCIATE EDITOR  
**SHANNON STOCKWELL**

CONTRIBUTORS  
**MICHAEL PALLER  
CAREY PERLOFF  
TOM STOPPARD  
ELSPETH SWEATMAN**

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## VOLUNTEER!

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:**  
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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 *A Christmas Carol* and InterACT with us!

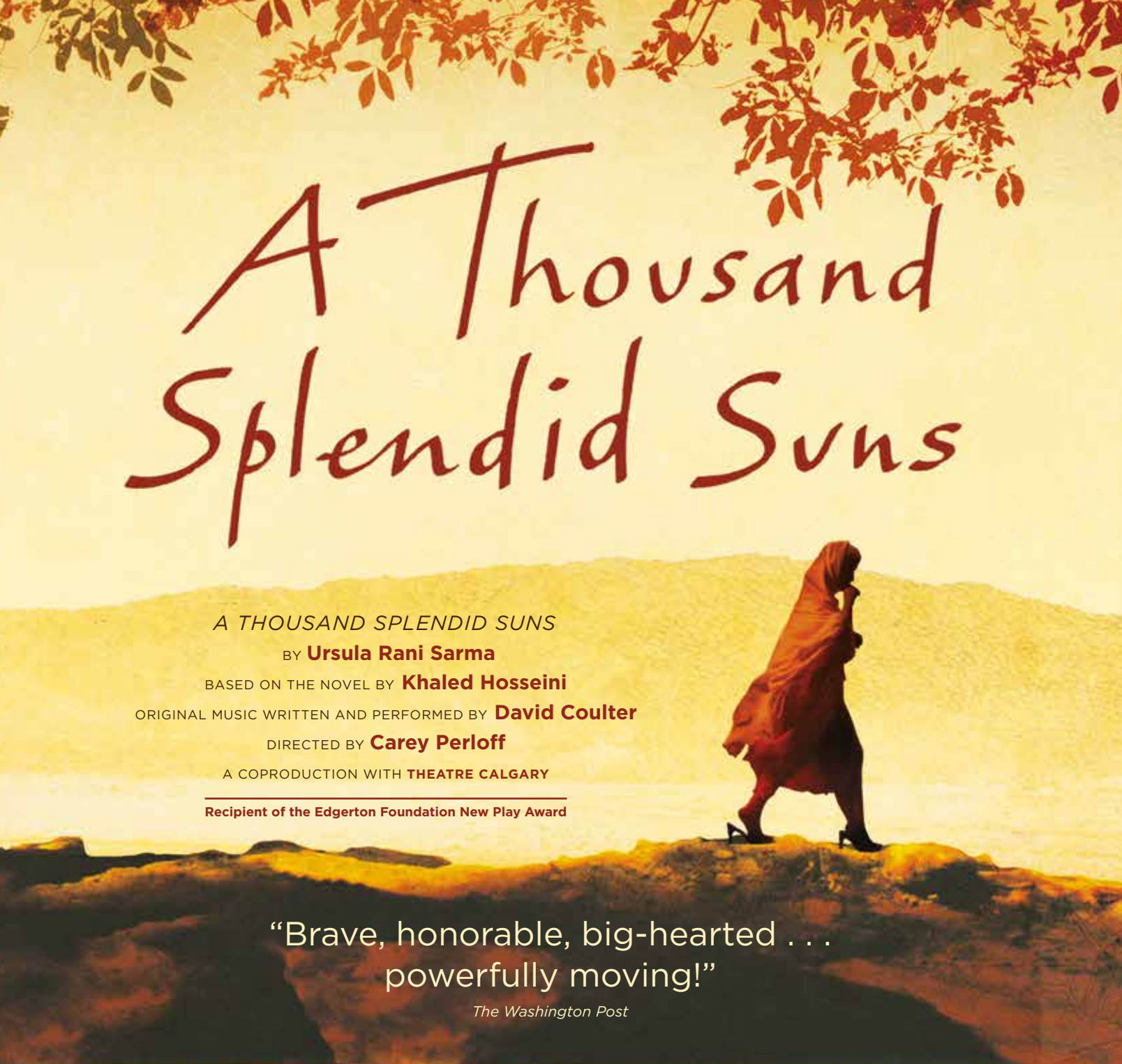


***A CHRISTMAS CAROL***  
AT THE GEARY THEATER

**BIKE TO THE THEATER NIGHT**  
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Get hands-on with theater at this interactive preshow workshop.

To learn more and order tickets for InterACT events, visit [act-sf.org/interact](http://act-sf.org/interact).



# A Thousand Splendid Suns

A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

BY **Ursula Rani Sarma**

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **Khaled Hosseini**

ORIGINAL MUSIC WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY **David Coulter**

DIRECTED BY **Carey Perloff**

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*The Washington Post*

A.C.T. is thrilled to announce the world-premiere theatrical adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's best-selling novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. The epic story of three generations of Afghan women and their remarkable resilience, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is set amidst the war-torn streets of modern-day Kabul. Beautiful Laila, unmarried and pregnant, is forced to wed her older neighbor when her family and home are torn apart.

After she forges an extraordinary and unlikely friendship with Mariam, her husband's first wife, the two women find the hope and strength to raise a new generation. This stunning new production will feature live music from renowned composer and saw player David Coulter. “Hosseini's writing makes our hearts ache, our stomachs clench, and our emotions reel” (*USA Today*).

**BEGINS FEB 1**  
THE GEARY THEATER

# FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The work of Tom Stoppard is almost synonymous with A.C.T.'s 50 years. Long before I arrived here as artistic director, his plays were beloved by Bay Area audiences, who had enjoyed *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Hapgood*, and *Travesties* on the Geary stage. I met Stoppard when we produced the first American production (outside New York) of his glorious *Arcadia*, and that meeting was the start of one of the longest and most fruitful artistic collaborations of my career. There's no one I have more fun working with than Tom, in part because each of his plays requires a deep dive into unfamiliar territory. I learned about chaos theory from *Arcadia*, the second law of thermodynamics from *Hapgood*, the history of Czech politics from *Rock 'n' Roll*, the love poetry of A. E. Housman from *The Invention of Love*, the fall of the Raj from *Indian Ink* . . . and that's only the beginning. Stoppard's capacious mind manages to absorb huge chunks of intellectual and psychic history, and to create deeply felt characters and situations.

So when I learned he was working on brain science, I knew we'd be in for a fascinating ride. Stoppard has always wrestled with consciousness and the limits of materialism: in *Rock 'n' Roll*, the radical grad student Lenka says to Max, "What you like about brains, Max, is that they all work in the same way. What you don't like about minds is that they don't. To you consciousness is subversive—because your thing is the collective mind. But politics is over. You're looking for the revolution in the wrong place. Consciousness is where it's at now. We have to discover our human mystery in the age of technology."

"Discovering our human mystery in the age of technology": a wonderful charge to take up, and a perfect summation of the story behind his newest play, *The Hard Problem*, in which a young psychologist struggles to reconcile her own personal feelings about the human mind with the objective "truths" of her discipline. If there's nothing more to our brains than gray matter, how is it possible to understand love, faith, sorrow, and the imagination? Where do feelings come from, and how can they be explained in a material world? Of what use is consciousness, and how did it develop from an evolutionary point of view? If everything can be predicted according to a rational model of the universe, how do we explain the irrationality of love or desire? In science, in the financial markets, in all of human life,

these questions confound. "Every now and then, the market's behavior becomes irrational, as though it's gone mad, or fallen in love. It doesn't compute. It's only computers compute," says Amal, a young investment analyst in *The Hard Problem*.

The intersection of philosophy and neuroscience provides food for thought not only for the characters in *The Hard Problem*, but for all of us wrestling with similar quandaries in the real world. In preparing for this production, we have collaborated with the Exploratorium (whose excellent exhibit on the Prisoner's Dilemma is a perfect complement to this play), with scientists from UC Berkeley, with financial wizards, and with specialists in altruism and egoism. Stoppard has been in residence with us for nearly the whole rehearsal process, and his insights and wisdom in the room are always a gift. We're incredibly grateful that, as part of A.C.T.'s 50th anniversary, we are able to celebrate the ongoing work of this remarkable playwright with you.

This production also celebrates our Conservatory (two of the cast members are current M.F.A. Program actors, one is an M.F.A. Program alum, and one is a student in our Young Conservatory), which has been a central part of A.C.T.'s mission from its inception. Simultaneous with *The Hard Problem*, an all-M.F.A. Program version of *The Taming of the Shrew* is playing at The Strand in honor of William Ball's landmark production in 1973. *Shrew* will be followed by *Spooked at the Strand*, our all-over-The-Strand Halloween extravaganza in support of scholarships for M.F.A. Program actors. A.C.T. students form the creative engine of the entire organization. Indeed, I am convinced that a central reason A.C.T. has survived and flourished for 50 years in spite of all obstacles is that it has always had one foot firmly planted in the future. "The discovery of our human mystery in the age of technology" is in the hands of the next generation of artists, administrators, and audiences who have taken up the cause of live theater and who are its future. This one's for you.

With best wishes,



Carey Perloff  
Artistic Director





# ONLY@THE STRAND

## MARTIN MORAN

What happens when a mild-mannered Manhattanite shows up at his dad's Vegas funeral and ends up in a fight with his fuming stepmom? OBIE Award-winning Broadway actor and writer Martin Moran digs deep into his own story of abuse, forgiveness, and love in two different autobiographical shows: *All the Rage* and *The Tricky Part*.

**NOV 29-DEC 11, 2016**

**"Emotion-stirring territory that you don't often visit at the theater"**

*The New York Times*

**"Always entertaining and often affecting"**

*The New York Daily News*



Photo by Joan Marcus

## THE SKIVVIES: HOLIDAY ROADKILL

The Skivvies, Broadway's Lauren Molina and Nick Cearley, are the hottest act in NYC, and anything but typical. Literally stripping to their skivvies, performing hilarious mashups of pop songs and classics such as "Blue Christmas" on an array of quirky instruments, The Skivvies take on holiday music with such creativity and originality that you'll feel like you're hearing old standards for the first time.

**DEC 22-23, 2016**

**"Undie rock, with a soupçon of Broadway"**

*The New York Times*

**"The Skivvies leave it all on the floor"**

*The Wall Street Journal*



Jacqueline Patton Photography

## ON BECKETT

Master clown Bill Irwin returns to The Strand after his sold-out performances last December to present a limited-engagement run of evenings dedicated to the Irish playwright: poems, prose, and plays; his own reflections on Beckett after 50 years of performing the great playwright's work; and of course a little soft-shoe shuffle.

**JAN 10-22, 2017**

**"Irwin knows his Beckett . . . and Beckett's affinity for clowns is famous"**

*The San Francisco Chronicle*



Photo courtesy of Bill Irwin

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# A.C.T.

CAREY PERLOFF, Artistic Director  
PETER PASTREICH, Interim Executive Director

## PRESENTS

# THE HARD PROBLEM

BY TOM STOPPARD  
DIRECTED BY CAREY PERLOFF

## CREATIVE TEAM

SCENIC DESIGN BY  
**ANDREW BOYCE**

COSTUME DESIGN BY  
**ALEX JAEGER**

LIGHTING DESIGN BY  
**RUSSELL H. CHAMPA**

SOUND DESIGN BY  
**BRENDAN AANES**

ORIGINAL MUSIC BY  
**NICK PERLOFF-GILES**  
AND **BRENDAN AANES**

DRAMATURG  
**MICHAEL PALLER**

CASTING  
**JANET FOSTER, CSA**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
**ALLIE MOSS**

## CAST

(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

SPIKE **DAN CLEGG\***

HILARY **BRENDA MEANEY\***

AMAL **VANDIT BHATT\***

LEO **ANTHONY FUSCO\***

JULIA **SAFIYA FREDERICKS\***

URSULA **STACY ROSS\***

JERRY **MIKE RYAN\***

CATHY **CARMEN STEELE†**

ELAINE **JULIE ADAMO\*\***

BO **NAREA KANG\*\***

## UNDERSTUDIES

HILARY, JULIA, ENSEMBLE  
**JULIE ADAMO\*\***

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**RINABETH APOSTOL\***

SPIKE, AMAL, ENSEMBLE  
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*†Member of the A.C.T. Young Conservatory*

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**JEFF UBBEN**

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A black and white portrait of Tom Stoppard. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He has dark, wavy hair and is wearing a dark, textured jacket over a light-colored shirt. His right hand is raised near his face, with fingers slightly curled. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf.

**ABOUT THE PLAY**

# CHAOS AND RATIONALITY

AN INTERVIEW WITH TOM STOPPARD

BY SIMON HODGSON





Every single decade at A.C.T., patrons have been treated to a Tom Stoppard play. The consistency underlines not only the deep veneration for Stoppard by A.C.T.'s audiences, but also the playwright's own affection for this theater. But if you read consistency and see repetition, think again. This is a playwright whose work defies taxonomy, leaping from philosophical paradoxes to political dissidence, social justice to evolutionary biology, murder mysteries to landscape gardening. *The Hard Problem* is no exception when it comes to Stoppard's usual diversity of subject matter. Jumping from consciousness to hedge funds with the connective tissue of chaos throughout, his first new play in more than a decade will feel both brand new and intimately familiar to A.C.T. audiences. While Stoppard was preparing for this production of *The Hard Problem* with Artistic Director Carey Perloff, we caught up with him for a quick Q&A.

**Why did you choose to set *The Hard Problem* in 2008?**

For a long time I thought I might try and write a play just about the financial crunch and why it happened. I was reading a lot about different things, including the financial crisis, and in my usual manner I looked for a way in which disparate subjects like consciousness and finance could impinge in the same play, which rather defined the date. In the end, I saw it would just fill out one small corner of the play, but a play about consciousness and a play about the financial crunch are really two different plays in an ideal world and I still wish I could have written both of them.

**Can you talk a little about the ideas of chaos and rationality, which affect both the stock market and Hilary's intellectual exploration?**

For a long time during my intelligent years, from about 1950 to 1995, the computer was considered to be a paradigm for the human brain. A lot of people still think that it is, and I found that I was resisting the idea.

It seemed to me that the fact that the market behaves irrationally from time to time was an indication that it wasn't controllable through algorithms, and that human behavior was a dimension which couldn't be captured by maths. So I can see where, in a strange Venn diagram, a story about consciousness would overlap with a story about somebody who was trying to win in the marketplace.

I have to tell you, by the way, that my so-called knowledge of computer science is way out of date. You know the machine which beat Garry Kasparov at chess in 1997, Deep Blue? It worked in a completely different way from AlphaGo, the computer which beat the world champion at Go in 2016. I'm still trapped in my Deep Blue period.

**Are there any characters in *The Hard Problem* that you feel close to?**

I definitely feel close to Hilary. Or she is close to me. Particularly in terms of her questioning what is supposed to be a given, and her questioning this particular given, that there's no more to us than meets a scanner.

**What's your own take on the debate around consciousness?**

The predictable answer is that the play is the answer to your question. I have a habit of writing plays in which two points of view are being argued, and it's part of my job to try and give as good an argument as I can come up with for the side I don't really agree with.

**Consciousness is a subject you've been digging into since *Jumpers* (1972). What is it about this subject that draws you in?**

It's really that I was interested in fundamental moral premises and consciousness was a byproduct. Actually, *Jumpers* is rather close to *The Hard Problem*, only [the issues are] dealt with in terms of farce.

**Is *The Hard Problem* your way of playing out those fundamental moral premises?**

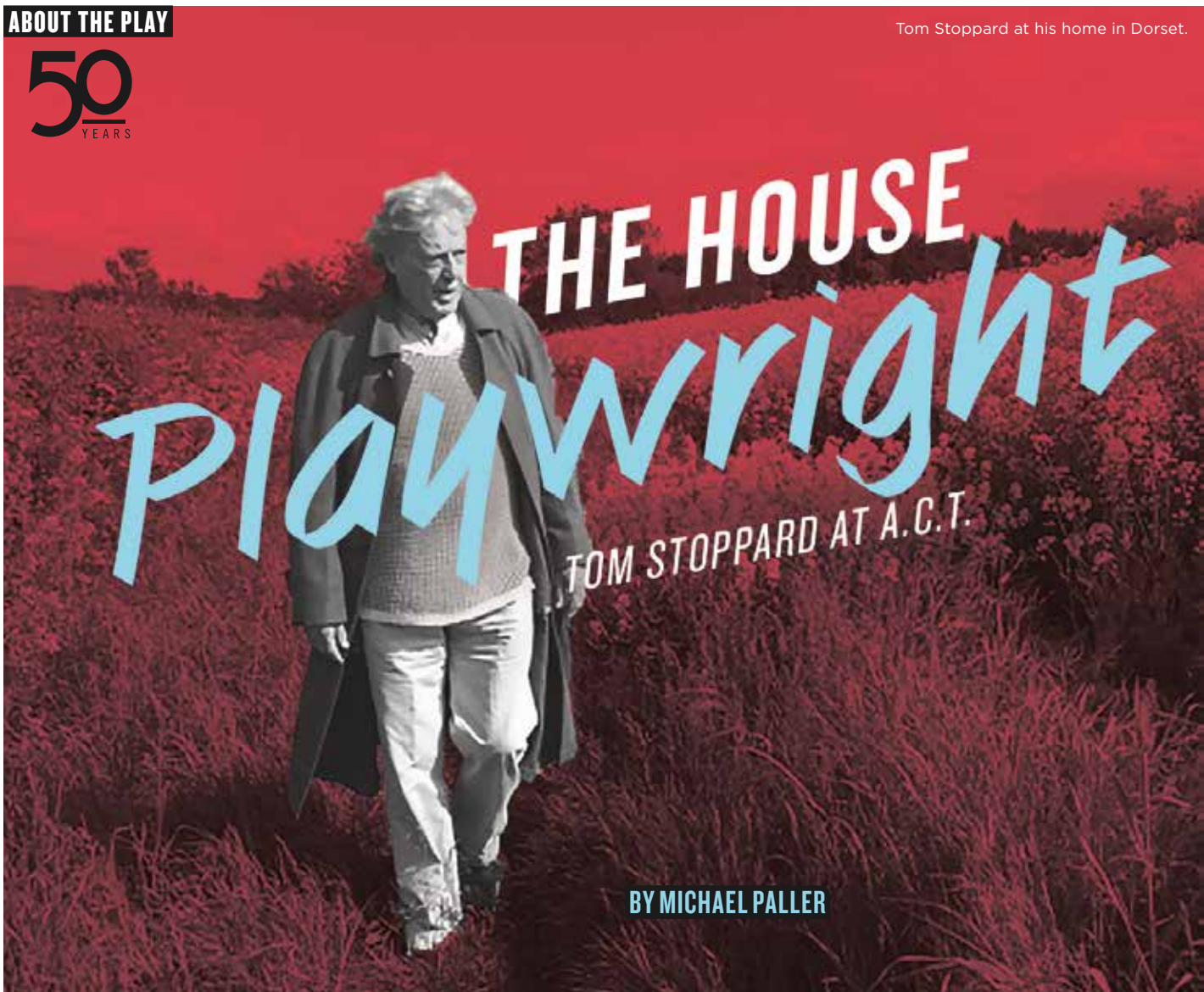
Yes. George Moore in *Jumpers* 45 years ago said that it's rather important with moral rules that they can't be changed at will like the laws of tennis. I don't think I've made much progress beyond that. But I don't think anybody's come up with the final word.

**Why is *The Hard Problem* a stage play?**

It's what I do. I consider writing for the stage to be my main purpose in life. I was in my teens when it struck me that to be the author of a play was a splendid thing and a star beyond my firmament. To me, the whole business of live theater is unique and irreplaceable.

**What is it about A.C.T. that keeps you coming back?**

It's a deeply attractive place. A.C.T. is a theater where an audience can come back time and again and see some of the same actors in different roles. It's the first kind of theater I was seriously exposed to when I was 20 years old. And of course, there's Carey [Perloff, artistic director]. Carey is an enthusiast. She's been a faithful director and a faithful friend for a long time. What I like about working with her is that she thinks theater is serious and important, which is a nice thing to hear when you're working in it.

50  
YEARS


# THE HOUSE

## Playwright

TOM STOPPARD AT A.C.T.

BY MICHAEL PALLER

Tom Stoppard and A.C.T. have had a long, rewarding relationship. The first appearance of a Stoppard play at The Geary occurred during the company's third season in 1969. Since then, A.C.T. has mounted 17 more productions of his plays (including this production of *The Hard Problem*); 10 have been directed by Carey Perloff. Only Shakespeare, with 21, has had more productions at A.C.T.

Stoppard's A.C.T. debut was his first big hit, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, in which he turns *Hamlet* inside out. In Shakespeare's play, the two courtiers, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, have minor roles before they are sent by Hamlet to their mysterious offstage deaths. In *Rosencrantz*, they are the principal characters, bewildered by their lack of agency and forever trying to keep up with the story. Like virtually all of Stoppard's plays, it's a comedy about very serious things.

The production was directed by A.C.T. founder William Ball. He had done *Hamlet* the previous season and revived it in the fall of 1969 in a series of student matinees. His *Rosencrantz*

reportedly marked the first time that the two plays were done in the same season with the same director and cast, who reprised their *Hamlet* roles in *Rosencrantz*. Longtime subscribers will remember Paul Shenar as Hamlet, Izetta Smith as Ophelia, Ray Reinhardt as Claudius, and Angela Paton as Gertrude. James Milton and Philip Kerr were Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, respectively. *Rosencrantz* also gave Ken Ruta one of his first signature roles at A.C.T., The Player. *Rosencrantz* was a roaring success, and the production was revived in each of the following two seasons.

As was his habit, Ball didn't regard Stoppard's text as something to be taken literally. He interlarded large portions of *Hamlet*, including the "To be or not to be" soliloquy and the Hamlet and Ophelia scene; he cut and rearranged *Rosencrantz* to make room. Audiences didn't seem to mind and critics didn't seem to notice.

By 1977, A.C.T. had staged *Jumpers* and *Travesties*, as well as Stoppard's translation of Federico García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* (which was the first A.C.T. mainstage production

to be directed by a woman, company member Joy Carlin). That year, Stoppard told the *San Francisco Chronicle* that he was happy to do a Q&A for the A.C.T. audience during the *Jumpers* run, because “I am, after all, the house playwright.”

Following productions of *Night and Day* (1981), *The Real Thing* (1987), *Hapgood* (1990), and a revival of *Rosencrantz* (1995), Stoppard’s long-term lease at A.C.T. began. That year, Carey Perloff was determined to open her fourth season as artistic director with his new play, *Arcadia*. When pursuing the producing rights through the usual channels (the producers of the New York production, who controlled the American rights, and Stoppard’s agent in London) failed to shake them loose, she began writing Stoppard herself, who replied, as she recalls in her book, *Beautiful Chaos*, “with great warmth and generosity.” After several letters, as well as repeated appeals to New York and London, Perloff received a call informing her that the rights were hers.

The production was acclaimed, and a new Stoppard era was underway. Since then, A.C.T. has produced almost all of his subsequent plays: *Indian Ink* (the American premiere in 1999, and again in 2015); *The Invention of Love* (the American premiere in 2000), and *Rock ‘n’ Roll* (2008), as well as revivals of *Night and Day* (2002), *The Real Thing* (2004), *Travesties* (2006), and *Arcadia* (2013).

Perloff is at the opposite end of the spectrum from Ball when it comes to regarding a playwright’s text as either central to a production or a mere jumping-off point. For her, a script is more like the US Constitution: she’s determined to get at the writer’s original intent, but allows herself to interpret and to ask for the occasional amendment. For his part, Stoppard is not a

playwright who feels that his texts are inviolable. He believes that they’re not even texts, but rather events that occur at a specific moment, and so can, and should, within reason, be adjusted to fit the needs of a specific production. Stoppard enjoys being in rehearsal; Perloff loves having smart people in the room. Both are happy to take good ideas from anyone.

Their close collaborations have resulted in some significant textual revisions. In *Rock ‘n’ Roll*, a scene between Max and Jan, who confess that each passed information about the other to the Soviets during the Cold War, was written in language so coded that it was difficult for the actors to follow exactly what was occurring and what was not being said. Stoppard decoded it just enough to allow for understanding, but not so much that he betrayed the characters’ cautious way of broaching a painful topic.

When *Indian Ink* had its New York premiere in 2014, Stoppard insisted that Perloff direct. That gave them the chance to rethink the final scene, which had never satisfied either of them. Perloff recalls, “[The original ending] resolved the political storyline, but ended on a recorded quote from Emily Eden that Flora [the main character] was reading on the train, rather than ending with some resolution between her and [her probable lover] Nirad Das. The love story felt shortchanged. So when we knew we were going to revive it, we sat in Tom’s kitchen in London and figured out a way to reimagine the ending.” That production, with the new ending and other minor revisions, is what A.C.T. audiences saw in 2015.

A.C.T. has seen a great many changes in 50 years. One constant has been the ongoing presence of plays by Tom Stoppard. Is it too much to ask for more of the same for another 50?

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**STOPPARD ENJOYS  
BEING IN REHEARSAL;  
PERLOFF LOVES  
HAVING SMART  
PEOPLE IN THE ROOM.**

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Tom Stoppard and Carey Perloff at A.C.T. in 2004. Photo by David M. Allen.





# FROM TOM STOPPARD'S DESK

BY TOM STOPPARD

**THE HARD PROBLEM** is what the Australian philosopher David Chalmers called the mystery of consciousness; that is, the problem of explaining the phenomenon that we have subjective First Person experiences. At this moment, I am conscious of these five sensations among many others: I can see that my coffee is in a mug decorated with red hearts; I can *taste* that I have sweetened it; I can *smell* woodsmoke; I can *hear* voices outside in the garden; and I can *touch* my dog.

These five sensations I owe to “the five senses” which are associated with parts of the body. But there is more. From my coffee mug alone I also have the concepts of decoration, red, and heart-shaped. Simultaneously, I have the concept of time (I have a deadline) and of self-reproach (I’ve missed it). And another thing: I have no dog! I can *imagine* petting a dog.

In a 2014 TED talk, Chalmers observed, “I want a scientific theory of consciousness that works. We’ve got this wonderful great chain of explanation where physics explains chemistry, chemistry explains biology, biology explains parts of psychology. But consciousness doesn’t seem to fit into this picture. Faced with an anomaly like this, radical ideas may be needed.”

Excerpt from a program article written by Tom Stoppard for the National Theatre’s production of *The Hard Problem* in 2015.

# THE HARD CONCEPTS

**UNPACKING THE IDEAS OF THE HARD PROBLEM**

BY SHANNON STOCKWELL



**ALTRUISM** is the concept of acting in the interest of others. The existence of altruism is a subject of much debate within the fields of psychology, philosophy, evolutionary biology, and economics. Is it better to be altruistic, as opposed to egoistic (acting in one’s own self-interest)? Are organisms even *capable* of being altruistic, or do we always act egoistically whether we like it or not? Some scientists, especially in the fields of evolutionary biology and economics, argue that egoism is

either the right way to behave or the only way we *can* behave. However, others point out that there are clear examples in nature of organisms acting altruistically, and that the existence of altruism cannot be ruled out altogether. Also, there are recent discoveries in the fields of evolutionary biology and economics which prove that, while behaving egoistically may benefit the individual, it may be better for society as a whole if we all behave altruistically.

**THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA** is an example of game theory invented by Merrill Flood and Melvin Dresher in 1950. Let's say John and Stacy both get arrested for the same crime. The sheriff goes to John and Stacy separately and offers them a chance to evade jail time if they betray their partner, while ensuring that John and Stacy cannot communicate with each other before making their decisions. Here are the possible results of that deal:

|       |              | JOHN  |   |
|-------|--------------|---|---|
|       |              | RAT OUT STACY                                       | STAY SILENT   |
| STACY | STAY SILENT  | <b>JOHN<br/>NO TIME</b><br><b>STACY<br/>3 YEARS</b> | <b>JOHN<br/>1 YEAR</b><br><b>STACY<br/>1 YEAR</b>   |
|       | RAT OUT JOHN | <b>JOHN<br/>2 YEARS</b><br><b>STACY<br/>2 YEARS</b> | <b>JOHN<br/>3 YEARS</b><br><b>STACY<br/>NO TIME</b> |

1

If John betrays Stacy and says that she committed the crime, but Stacy stays silent, then John will get no time in prison, while Stacy will get three years.

2

If Stacy betrays John and says that he committed the crime, but John stays silent, then Stacy will get no time in prison, while John will get three years.

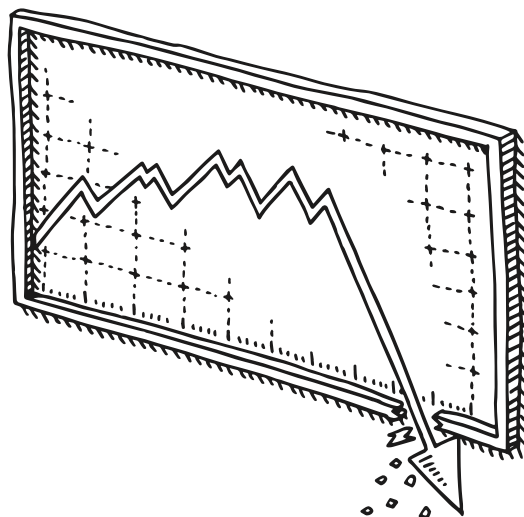
3

If they both betray the other, then they'll each get two years in prison.

4

If they each stay silent, then they'll both get one year in prison.

Mathematically, the Prisoner's Dilemma proves that, if you are put into this situation, you'll personally have a better outcome if you decide to betray your partner. It's worth noting, however, that there is no option in the Prisoner's Dilemma to confess that you did the crime yourself and leave your partner out of it—a serious oversight, in the opinion of *The Hard Problem's* Hilary.



**THE 2007–09 FINANCIAL CRISIS** is explored in *The Hard Problem* because of Tom Stoppard's intense curiosity about the chaos of systems that humans believe they can control and predict. This crisis was the world's worst economic downturn since the 1930s. It resulted in millions of home foreclosures and job losses, wiped trillions of dollars off stock markets from London to Shanghai, and forced leaders worldwide to invest billions to support a series of failing banks. Its roots lay in a series of government decisions across Europe and North America in the 1980s and '90s to remove various legal restrictions on the way banks moved and lent cash.

As financial institutions were allowed to lend more money than ever, they took bigger risks and spread their debts across other banks. In the United States, much of that speculative investment was poured into the real estate market, which had risen steadily for 50 years. Banks felt so confident in housing's upward trajectory that they sold high-risk mortgages to potential homeowners with bad credit. But when the prices of those houses crashed, the stock market plummeted. Not only did the homeowners lose everything, so did the banks that had offered them mortgages. And because of the legal changes across the financial industry, it wasn't just one bank that went bankrupt, it was a series of banks across multiple countries. The result: global economic meltdown.

## WORDS ON PLAYS



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

AVAILABLE IN THE BOX OFFICE AND LOBBY, AT THE BARS, AND ONLINE AT [ACT-SF.ORG/WORDSONPLAYS](http://ACT-SF.ORG/WORDSONPLAYS).

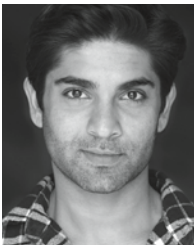
# WHO'S WHO IN THE HARD PROBLEM



## **JULIE ADAMO\*\***

**(Elaine)** is a third-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. Her most recent Conservatory productions include

*Cardenio* (Susan), *Macbeth* (Malcolm), *The Belle's Stratagem* (Miss Ogle/Kitty Willis), and *The Skin of Our Teeth* (Mrs. Antrobus). Some of her regional credits include Carly in *reasons to be pretty* with the Workshop Theater Group. Adamo holds a BS in theater performance from the University of Evansville and is the recipient of The Bert and LeAnne Steinberg Leadership Award.



## **VANDIT BHATT\***

**(Amal)** returns to A.C.T. with *The Hard Problem*. His recent professional highlights in New York include *Indian Ink* (Roundabout

Theatre Company); *The Djinn of Eidgah* (The Play Company); *Harper Regan* (Atlantic Theater Company); *Other Farmers' Fields* (The Public Theater); *Skin*, Youngblood's Asking for Trouble play festival, and *The Unusual Love Life of Bed Bugs and Other Creatures* (Ensemble Studio Theatre); *Bike America* (Ma-Yi Theater Company); and *The Great Recession* (The Flea Theater). Select regional theater highlights include *Indian Ink* (A.C.T.) and *Disgraced* (Arizona Theatre Company). Film credits include *Ripped* with Russell Peters, *42 Seconds of Happiness* (currently making its festival rounds; winner of Best Feature Film at Women Texas Film Festival and Best Ensemble Cast at the Harlem International Film Festival), and several short films. You can watch Bhatt get knocked out by Sting on *The Michael J. Fox Show*, and you may catch a glimpse of him in the current season of *Younger*.



## **DAN CLEGG\***

**(Spike)** was last seen at A.C.T. as the title character in *Chester Bailey, Snobby Price* in *Major Barbara*, and Young Scrooge in *A*

*Christmas Carol* (2010). Other Bay Area credits include *Tribes* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Verona Project* (California Shakespeare Theater); *Blue/Orange* (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre); and a number of productions with the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program, from which he graduated in 2011. Before moving to San Francisco, Clegg lived in Montreal, where he performed in *The Rocky Horror Show* (Théâtre Olympia), *Equus*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Woman in Black* (McGill University's Players' Theatre). He is also a writer and voice actor for PullString, an entertainment company based in San Francisco.



## **SAFIYA FREDERICKS\***

**(Julia)** was most recently seen in the world premiere of *Aubergine* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other

recent credits include *Much Ado about Nothing* at California Shakespeare Theater, *Blackademics* at Crowded Fire Theater, *Once on This Island* at TheatreWorks, and the title role in *Antigone* at San Jose Repertory Theatre. Past favorite productions include *The Civilians' In the Footprint* and *By Hands Unknown* at the New York International Fringe Festival. Fredericks received a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award nomination for her role as the Witch in *Into the Woods* at San

Francisco Playhouse. She plays the female lead in the film *America Is Still the Place*, which is currently making its festival rounds. She studied at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and UC Irvine.



## **ANTHONY**

**FUSCO\* (Leo)** is an A.C.T. Resident Artist and a proud member of Actors' Equity Association who has lived in San Francisco since

1999. A few favorites from his 40-plus A.C.T. productions are *Indian Ink*, *Arcadia*, *Clybourne Park*, *The Homecoming*, *At Home at the Zoo*, *Dead Metaphor*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Three Sisters*, *Race*, *November*, and *The Rainmaker*. Fusco most recently appeared in A.C.T.'s productions of *A Christmas Carol* (Ebenezer Scrooge); *Ah, Wilderness!*; and *Love and Information*. Other Bay Area credits include *Sister Play* at Magic Theatre; *You Never Can Tell*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Pygmalion*, *Candida*, *Arms and the Man*, *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, and *The Importance of Being Earnest* at California Shakespeare Theater; and *The Intelligent Homosexual's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism with a Key to the Scriptures* and *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Fusco was in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* and *The Real Inspector Hound* on Broadway, and has performed in many off- (and off-off-) Broadway productions and at regional theaters across America. He trained at Juilliard and The Barrow Group School.

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

\*\*Member of the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program class of 2017

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



**NAREA KANG\*\***

**(Bo)** is in her final year of the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program and makes her Geary Theater debut with *The Hard Problem*. She was

most recently seen as Stephano in *The Tempest* at the Livermore Shakespeare Festival. Recent Conservatory credits include Camila in *Cardenio*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and Lady Hardy in *The Belle's Stratagem*. Kang holds a BA in business from the University of Washington and has worked as an actor, teaching artist, and producer in Seattle and San Francisco.

**BRENDA MEANEY\* (Hilary)**

returns to A.C.T., where she previously appeared onstage in Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* and David

Ives's *Venus in Fur*, for which she received a San Francisco Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award. Other credits include *The New Morality* (Mint Theater Company); *Incognito* (Manhattan Theatre Club); *And a Nightingale Sang* (Westport Country Playhouse); *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Caryl Churchill's *Owners* (Yale Repertory Theatre); Lewis Black's *One Slight Hitch* (Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater); *Basin* (Abbey Theatre Studio/Anu Productions); and *The Way of the Language: Voices from the War on Terror* (Project Arts Centre, Dublin). Television credits include Yvonne in *Love/Hate* (Raidió Teilifís Éireann), Anna in AMC's *Hell on Wheels*, and the comedic web series *Inappropriate Jane Austen*. Meaney is a recent graduate of Yale School of Drama.

**STACY ROSS\***

**(Ursula)** returns to A.C.T., having previously appeared in *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *The Constant Wife*, *The Gamester*, and *The*

*Rivals*. She has appeared in productions

at Berkeley Repertory Theatre (*Cloud Nine*; *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play*; *The Green Bird*), Aurora Theatre Company (*Gideon's Knot*, *Hedda Gabler*), and San Jose Repertory Theatre (*Major Barbara*, *Hannah and Martin*), as well as at Marin Theatre Company, TheatreWorks, Arizona Theatre Company, Center Stage in Baltimore, and Magic Theatre (*Any Given Day*, *Terminus*). She was most recently seen as Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing* at California Shakespeare Theater and in the rolling world premiere of *The Thrush & the Woodpecker* at Custom Made Theatre Co. She is a member of PlayGround, Symmetry Theatre, and Actors' Equity Association.

**MIKE RYAN\***

**(Jerry)** is making his third appearance at A.C.T., where he has also appeared in *Napoli!* and *Indian Ink*. Other Bay Area credits include

productions at Aurora Theatre Company (*Anatol*), San Jose Repertory Theatre (*Game On*, *Bill W. and Dr. Bob*, *Legacy of Light*), Jewel Theatre Company (*What the Butler Saw*, *One for the Road* and *The Lover*, *Hello and Goodbye*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Doubt*), and 14 seasons at Santa Cruz Shakespeare. Regionally, he has worked at Laguna Playhouse, The Pasadena Playhouse, Denver Center Theatre Company, Geva Theatre Center, La Jolla Playhouse, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and Shakespeare Dallas. He received his BFA from Southern Methodist University and his MFA from UC San Diego. Ryan is the artistic director of Santa Cruz Shakespeare and has appeared in all three of the new company's seasons.

**CARMEN STEELE+ (Cathy)**

returns to A.C.T.'s Geary Theater in *The Hard Problem*. Steele recently played Iris in *The Nether* at San Francisco Playhouse.

Previous roles include Young Kim in *Show Boat* with San Francisco Opera,

which was televised on PBS and distributed worldwide on DVD, and performing with A.C.T. in *A Christmas Carol* for two holiday seasons as Tiny Tim and one season as Little Fan. This summer, Steele completed the month-long Advanced Shakespeare Workshop with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, building on previous class roles, which include Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew*, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Ariel in *The Tempest*. She has studied acting and musical theater with A.C.T. since 2011. Steele is a seventh-grade student at Katherine Delmar Burke School.

**RINABETH APOSTOL\***

**(Understudy)** was last seen at A.C.T. in *Monstress*. Earlier this year she appeared in *Dogeaters* (Magic

Theatre), Lauren Yee's *Untitled Cambodia Pop Play* (The Ground Floor at Berkeley Repertory Theatre) and Min Kahng's *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga* (TheatreWorks New Works Festival). She originated principal roles in the world premieres of *The Cable Car Nymphomaniac* (FOGG Theatre Company), Lauren Gunderson's *Fire Work* (TheatreFIRST), *The Kite Runner* (San Jose Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company), *FIRST* (Aluminous Collective), and *Imelda: A New Musical* (East West Players). Her regional credits include *Othello* (Marin Theatre Company), *Aliens with Extraordinary Skills* (B Street Theatre), *Of Mice and Men* (San Jose Rep), *Avenue Q* (San Jose Stage Company), *Red* (TheatreWorks), and collaborations with Playwrights Foundation, Crowded Fire Theater, NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, and The Groundlings (Los Angeles), among others. Select film and television work includes *Lit*, *Quitters*, *Her Path Home*, recurring roles on Whoopi Goldberg's *Just for Kicks* (Nickelodeon), *Girltrash!* (Showtime), *Give Me Grace*, and numerous commercials and voice-over spots. Apostol is a company member of

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## JASON KAPOOR\*

**(Understudy)** was born and raised in San Jose. He was last seen at A.C.T. in *Indian Ink* and later this season will

return to the Geary stage in the world premiere of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. 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*. Earlier this year 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 and Dramatic Art.



## DAVID PRETE\*

**(Understudy)** makes his San Francisco debut with *The Hard Problem*. His Chicago acting credits include *The Sign in Sidney*

*Brustein's Window* at Goodman Theatre, *My Name Is Asher Lev* and *Spill* (Jeff Award nomination) with TimeLine Theatre Company, *Golden Boy* with the Griffin Theatre Company, and *Antigonick* with Sideshow Theatre Company. Prete also starred in the off-Broadway premiere of *On the Line* at Cherry Lane Theatre, which was produced by Mike Nichols. Prete's Chicago directing credits include *Fat Pig* and *Three Sisters* (assistant director) at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, and *I and You* (2014 Harold and Mimi Steinberg/American Theatre Critics Association New Play

Award winner) at Redtwist Theatre. Prete was also a founding member of Water Theatre Company where he performed in *Speed-the-Plow*, *Waiting for Lefty* and *Still Waiting*, and *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*. His critically acclaimed books of fiction, *Say That to My Face* and *August and Then Some* (Chicago Tribune Editors Pick), were published by W. W. Norton & Company.



## ATHENA VON BOTHMER†

**(Understudy)** performed in *A Christmas Carol* at A.C.T. in 2014 and 2015. She won gold medals for her

monologue and duo scene at the 2015 and 2016 California Educational Theatre Association's Middle Stage Fest. She is an eighth-grade student at The Hamlin School. She has been in Hamlin's chorus for five years and Hamlin's theater program for six years. Among other performances, von Bothmer played the lead (Napoleon) in Hamlin's production of *Animal Farm*. She attended Hamlin's Shakespeare camp in Oregon in 2014 and 2016. She has competed at the United States Open Music Competition for the past two years as a level 6 pianist. She also competed at nationals for rhythmic gymnastics in 2014 and 2016, and was in *The Nutcracker* in 2012 and 2013 at the San Francisco Ballet, where she trained for four years. She also plays on Hamlin's varsity volleyball team.

## TOM STOPPARD (Playwright)

is an award-winning playwright based in London. His plays include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, *Jumpers*, *Travesties*, *Night and Day*, *The Real Thing*, *Hapgood*, *Arcadia*, *Indian Ink*, *The Invention of Love*, *The Coast of Utopia*, and *Rock 'n' Roll*. His adaptations include *Undiscovered Country* (Schnitzler), *On the Razzle* (Nestroy), *Rough Crossing* (Molnar), *The Seagull* (Chekhov), *Henry IV* (Pirandello),

\*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

*Heroes* (Sibleyras), *Ivanov* (Chekhov), and *The Cherry Orchard* (Chekhov). Screen credits include *Brazil*, *Empire of the Sun*, *Enigma*, and *Shakespeare in Love* (winner of the Academy Award for best original screenplay). His recent work includes *Anna Karenina* for the screen, *Parade's End* for television, and *Darkside* with Pink Floyd for radio.

**ANDREW BOYCE (Scenic Designer)**

is a designer based in Chicago and New York City working in theater, opera, film, and television. New York credits include work with Lincoln Center Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, Atlantic Theater Company, Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, The Play Company, Playwrights Realm, Cherry Lane Theatre, and others. Regional credits include work with Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Alliance Theatre, Asolo Repertory Theatre, California Shakespeare Theater, Curtis Opera Theatre, Dallas Theater Center, the Geffen Playhouse, Goodman Theatre, the Kirk Douglas Theatre, Magic Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, TheatreWorks, Westport Country Playhouse, and Yale Repertory Theatre, among others. Boyce is a member of Wingspace Theatrical Design and a graduate of Yale School of Drama. He is currently an assistant professor in the Northwestern University Department of Theatre.

**ALEX JAEGER (Costume Designer)**

has designed costumes for *Arcadia*, *Major Barbara*, *4000 Miles*, *Maple and Vine*, *Once in a Lifetime*, *The Homecoming*, *November*, *Speed-the-Plow*, *Rock 'n' Roll*, and *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play (a coproduction with the Guthrie Theater) for A.C.T.; *Fred's Diner*, *A Lie of the Mind*, *Buried Child*, *Se Llama Christina*, *Bruja*, *What We're Up Against*, *Oedipus el Rey*, *Goldfish*, *Mrs. Whitney*, *Mauritius*, and *Or*, for Magic Theatre; *Two Sisters and a Piano* for The Public Theater; *Amadeus*, *Zealot*, *All My Sons*, *True West*, *Nostalgia*, and others for South Coast Repertory; *A Wrinkle in Time*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *August: Osage County*, *Cat on a Hot Tin*

*Roof*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Handler*, *Stop Kiss*, *Fuddy Meers*, and *Dead Man's Cell Phone* for the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; *Other Desert Cities* and *A Parallelogram* for the Mark Taper Forum; and *The Nether*, *The Paris Letter*, and *Eclipsed* for the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Other credits include many productions with Studio Theatre (Washington, DC) and the Geffen Playhouse. Jaeger is the recipient of several design awards, including two LA Ovation Awards, three Back Stage Garland Awards, and four Drama-Logue Awards.

**RUSSELL H. CHAMPA (Lighting Designer)** has worked or is currently working on many projects, including *The Light Years* (Playwrights Horizons), *Othello* (California Shakespeare Theater), *Rain* (The Old Globe), *The Unfortunates* (A.C.T.), and *Thresh/Hold* (Pilobolus). Broadway credits include *China Doll* (Gerald Schoenfeld Theater), *In the Next Room, or The Vibrator Play* (Lyceum Theater at Lincoln Center Theater), and *Julia Sweeney's God Said "Ha!"* (Lyceum Theater). New York



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credits include productions at Lincoln Center Theater, New York Shakespeare Festival/The Public Theater, Second Stage Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, Vineyard Theatre, Atlantic Theater Company, and New York Stage and Film. Regional theater credits include work with Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Arena Stage, The Wilma Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Trinity Repertory Company, the Mark Taper Forum, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

**BRENDAN AANES (Sound Designer and Original Music)** has designed sound for a variety of performances. Recent productions include *The Unfortunates* and *Chester Bailey* at A.C.T.; *Othello* at California Shakespeare Theater; *Triangle* (Theatre Bay Area Award for Outstanding Sound Design), *The Life of the Party*, *Confederates*, and *The Lake Effect* for TheatreWorks; *Fire in Dreamland* at Kansas City Repertory Theatre; *The Way West* at Marin Theatre Company; *Rapture*, *Blister*, *Burn* at Aurora Theatre Company; *The Hundred Flowers Project* (Will Glickman Award for Best New Play) at Crowded Fire Theater; *Mutt: Let's All Talk about Race* at Impact Theatre; and *Abigail's Party*, *Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson*, and *The Aliens* at San Francisco Playhouse. He also worked as the associate designer on *Old Hats* at Signature Theatre Company and Kneehigh Theatre's *Tristan & Yseult* (national tour).

**NICK PERLOFF-GILES (Original Music)** graduated from Columbia University in May. He writes under his own name as well as the pseudonym Wingtip. He has released music with Atlantic Records, Sony, and Warner Music. He has performed as a musician and DJ on stages across the country, and this fall, he will be on tour throughout the United States and Canada to support his new single, "Rewind."

**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 the forthcoming *A Five-Act Play: Fifty Years of A.C.T.* (Chronicle Books). 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*,

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*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).

**MEGAN Q. SADA\*** (Stage Manager) has worked on A.C.T.'s *The Last Five Years*; *The Realistic Joneses*; *Ah, Wilderness!*; *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play (a coproduction with the Guthrie Theater); *Testament*; *Napoli!*; *Underneath the Lintel*; *Arcadia*; *Dead Metaphor*; *Elektra*; *Endgame* and *Play*; *Once in a Lifetime*; *Clybourne Park*; *Round and Round the Garden*; and *A Christmas Carol*. Other theater credits include *The Other Place*, *Annapurna*, *The Brothers Size*, *Oedipus el Rey*, *Goldfish*, and *Or*, (Magic Theatre); *Life Is a Dream*, *Blithe Spirit* (assistant director), *The Verona Project*, *King Lear*, and *Man and Superman* (California Shakespeare Theater); and *The Velveteen Rabbit* (ODC Theater).

**CHRISTINA LARSON\*** (Assistant Stage Manager) most recently assistant stage-managed *The Last Five Years* and *The Unfortunates* at A.C.T. Other credits as production assistant include *King Lear* (California Shakespeare Theater), *Sister Play* (Magic Theatre), *Tribes* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre), and *Macbeth* (California Shakespeare Theater).

**JEROME L. AND THAO N. DODSON** (Executive Producers) have been A.C.T. supporters for many years. Jerome, a graduate of UC Berkeley and the Harvard Business School, is president of Parnassus Investments, the nation's largest mutual fund complex committed to ethical and environmental guidelines in all the funds it manages, which he founded in 1984. He currently serves on the boards of San Francisco Opera and A.C.T. Thao and Jerry have established scholarship funds for music education at the San Francisco Symphony, for undergraduate education at UC Berkeley, and for high school education for 125 girls in Vietnam.

**CHRISTOPHER AND LESLIE JOHNSON** (Executive Producers) were both born and raised in the Bay Area and have been supporting A.C.T. since 2002. They were executive producers on *The Realistic Joneses*, *A Little Night Music*, *Napoli!*, *Round and Round the Garden*, *Rock 'n' Roll*, *Blackbird*, and *Curse of the Starving Class*. Directors of the Hurlbut-Johnson Fund, the Johnsons support many Bay Area organizations and endowed the Hurlbut-Johnson Chair in Diabetes Research at UCSF. Leslie is the cofounder and president of Epic Transitions, a Bay Area-based nonprofit dedicated to providing transformational trek experiences to young adults in need of support with life direction.

**AARON VERMUT AND ADRIANA LOPEZ VERMUT** (Executive Producers) most recently supported *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.

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# HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO A.C.T.

## A LOOK AT OUR 50TH-ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

BY SHANNON STOCKWELL

### TOM STOPPARD IN CONVERSATION WITH CAREY PERLOFF

What better way to celebrate 50 years of A.C.T. than a conversation with Tom Stoppard, one of A.C.T.'s favorite playwrights? Stoppard, who was already at A.C.T. to attend rehearsals of *The Hard Problem*, took the Geary stage with Artistic Director Carey Perloff and neuroscientist Linda Wilbrecht on October 3 in a free event that was open to the public. The discussion covered everything from the themes of *The Hard Problem* to Stoppard's long and fruitful relationship with A.C.T. "There are one or two theaters around with whom I have what the English call a 'special relationship,'" said Stoppard, "and A.C.T. is one of them."



LEFT TO RIGHT: Tom Stoppard and Carey Perloff (photo courtesy Carey Perloff); Annette Bening, Carey Perloff, Mark Harelik, and director Nancy Carlin (photo by Stefan Cohen); crowd gathering in Fred's after *Dear Liar* (photo by Stefan Cohen).





### BIRTHDAY PARTY

A.C.T. looks forward to its official 50th birthday party on January 21, 2017, which will take place at The Geary Theater. To celebrate, we will open our doors at 9 a.m. sharp, the exact time The Geary opened back in 1967. Visitors will be invited to explore the historic theater and to enjoy complimentary snacks and beverages. Prominent San Francisco community figures will join guest artists to reflect on the history of A.C.T. and to look forward to great things yet to come. Then everyone will be invited to sing “Happy Birthday,” and yes—there will be cake!

### SHARE YOUR A.C.T. STORY

As we celebrate A.C.T.’s 50th anniversary, we want to hear from the most important members of the company: you, our audience. Some of you have been with us since the beginning, and others have just joined us this year. No matter when you started coming to our theaters, we want to say thank you for being here, and we want to hear your stories about your time at A.C.T. Was there a production that you loved? A play you thought you were going to hate but ended up enjoying? Was your first experience of A.C.T. a student matinee and you’ve continued to come back? Did you meet someone special here? What does A.C.T. mean to you?

We’ve set up multiple ways for you to tell us your stories. You can visit [act-sf.org/shareyourstory](http://act-sf.org/shareyourstory) and follow the instructions there or send a letter to:

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***We can’t wait to hear from you!***

### DEAR LIAR

One of the ways we’re celebrating 50 years of A.C.T. is by looking back at what we’ve created and helping it return to the stage. This was the impetus behind producing a reading of *Dear Liar*, by Jerome Kilty, which was staged in A.C.T.’s first season in 1967. The reading, which took place on October 2, featured two actors with whom A.C.T. has strong relationships: Annette Bening, who graduated from the A.C.T. Advanced Training Program in 1983, and Mark Harelik, who was an A.C.T. company member in the ’80s. The play, about the letters written between George Bernard Shaw and his muse, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, sparkled on the Geary stage in this invite-only free event directed by Nancy Carlin.



Ryan Williams French (far left), class of 2015, in *Mr. Burns*, a post-electric play on the Geary stage.

# THE A.C.T. LAB

## HOW THE M.F.A. PROGRAM HELPS A.C.T. DEVELOP

BY ELSPETH SWEATMAN

### TEN A.M.: CLOWN CLASS. ONE P.M.: SCENE REHEARSAL.

Eight p.m.: perform alongside leading professional actors in A.C.T. mainstage productions. Such is the daily life of a third-year A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program actor.

This fall, these young artists have been treading the boards at The Geary. Actors Emily Brown and Alan Littlehales were understudies for *King Charles III*, and this production of *The Hard Problem* features Narea Kang as Bo and Julie Adamo (who also understudies Hilary) as Elaine.

"It is invaluable for our students to be in the rehearsal room with seasoned professionals," says Director of Casting Janet Foster, who casts the M.F.A. Program actors in mainstage productions. "It gives them an up-close look at how directors and actors communicate with each other in rehearsal. They see the actors working in harmony to create the vision of the playwright and the director."

From the moment they enter the program, students strive to step into the rehearsal room for one of the shows in A.C.T.'s subscription season. This opportunity is one of the reasons actors flock to A.C.T., the only freestanding theater in the country that offers a master of fine arts degree in acting. Littlehales says, "One of the main reasons I chose to train at A.C.T. was the opportunity to act on the Geary stage with the big dogs."

*A Christmas Carol* is one such production where M.F.A. Program actors get to work with professionals. In fact, says Smith, "A role in *A Christmas Carol* is one of the signature features of our M.F.A. training." Students not only work toward their coveted Actors' Equity cards, but they also have the opportunity to be mentored by professional actors and to be mentors themselves to the Young Conservatory actors in the cast. Look out for the class of 2017 in this year's production of *A Christmas Carol*, opening November 25.

The opportunity to appear in an A.C.T. mainstage production makes the M.F.A. Program a singular experience for student actors, but aside from being one of the most acclaimed actor training programs in the country, the M.F.A. Program is also a vital part of the creative climate at A.C.T. "The Conservatory is sometimes referred to as 'the lab' or 'the research and development wing,'" laughs Conservatory Director Melissa Smith. Indeed, the M.F.A. Program provides





LEFT TO RIGHT: Danielle Herbert, Eddie Lopez, and Lauren Hart (M.F.A. Program class of 2016) in *The Unfortunates*, performed on the Strand stage.

a plethora of talented, inventive, and willing actors; the A.C.T. artistic staff happily invites them to participate in staged readings, which are necessary when exploring works-in-progress that are being considered for production at A.C.T.

These staged readings allow the artistic team to get a better sense of these works, but they also let students experience the process of theatrical development firsthand—an invaluable opportunity for any actor. “It’s rewarding to be a part of that process and know that you had a hand in bringing a play to life,” says Kang, who took part in a reading of Federico García Lorca’s *Yerma*, adapted by Melinda Lopez, at the inaugural New Strands Festival earlier this year.

These readings provide yet another opportunity for M.F.A. program actors to play and create alongside veteran actors. Earlier this year, the students got to perform a staged reading of *The Winter’s Tale* alongside John Douglas Thompson. Smith recalls that the Tony Award-winning actor stopped in the middle of the reading. “He turned to [M.F.A. Program actor] Julie Adamo, whose comic timing was consistently hitting the mark, and said: ‘You’re really funny! I’d better up my game.’”

Student actors are also involved in the development of shows that are slated to appear on our mainstages. A series of workshops were held to hone the script of *The Unfortunates*, which was performed at The Strand last spring; M.F.A. Program actors played key roles in these readings. And last year, some M.F.A. Program actors took part in movement workshops for A.C.T.’s upcoming production of *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. In fact, some mainstage shows—*The Rainmaker* (2007), *Once in a Lifetime* (2011), and *Happy End* (2005)—actually began as M.F.A. Program productions.



TOP: Narea Kang, class of 2017 and Maria-Christina Oliveras during a reading of *Yerma*, at A.C.T.’s New Strands Festival. BOTTOM: Emily Brown, Alan Littlehailes, and Albert Rubio, class of 2017, in class with Nancy Benjamin on the Geary stage.

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**“ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS I CHOSE TO TRAIN AT A.C.T. WAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT ON THE GEARY STAGE WITH THE BIG DOGS.”**  
**M.F.A. PROGRAM ACTOR ALAN LITTLEHALES**

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“A.C.T. is a unique institution,” says student actor Emily Brown. “As a young artist, it has been invaluable to practice every aspect of my craft in a space like The Geary, which is so expansive, initially intimidating, and ultimately transformative. When I graduate from this program, I know I will be equipped to tackle any stage I may perform on, whether it’s a large regional theater, an outdoor amphitheater, or a Broadway house.”



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Allie Moss, *Artistic Administrator*  
Ken Savage, *Assistant Producer*  
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Annie Baker, Mike Bartlett, David Byrne, Jean-Claude Carrière, Peter Brook, and Marie-Hélène Estienne; Robert Lepage; Carey Perloff and Paul Walsh; Ursula Rani Sarma; Tom Stoppard

## Directors

Peter Brook and Marie-Hélène Estienne; Robert Lepage; Dominique Lozano; David Muse; Carey Perloff; Ken Rus Schmoll; Alex Timbers

## Choreographers

Val Caniparoli, Annie-B Parson

## Composers/Orchestrators

Mark Bennett; David Byrne, Fatboy Slim, Tom Gandey, and J Pardo; David Coulter; Karl Lundeberg, Nick Perloff-Giles and Brendan Aanes

## Music Directors

Daniel Feyer

## Designers

John Arnone, Andrew Boyce, Marsha Ginsberg, Ken MacDonald, Daniel Ostling, *Scenic*  
Jessie Amoroso, Beaver Bauer, Linda Cho, Alex Jaeger, Jennifer Moeller, *Costumes*  
Lap Chi Chu, Russell H. Champa, Robert Hand, Nancy Schertler, Robert Wierzel, *Lighting*  
Brendan Aanes, Mark Bennett, Jake Rodriguez, *Sound*

## Coaches

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Jeffrey Crockett, *Voice & Text*  
Stephen Buescher, *Movement*  
Jonathan Rider, Danielle O'Dea, *Fights*  
Daniel Feyer, *Music*

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Elisa Guthertz, Megan Q. Sada, Karen Szpaller, *Stage Managers*  
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## PETER PASTREICH

*Interim Executive Director*

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Kelly Koehn, *Accessories & Crafts Artisan*  
Chantrelle Grover, *First Hand*  
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*Conservatory Director*

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Stephen Buescher, *Head of Movement, Director*  
Jeffrey Crockett, *Head of Voice*  
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Michael Paller, *Director of Humanities*  
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Andy Donald, *Arts Leadership*  
Julie Douglas, *Improv*  
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Nick Gabriel, *Acting, Director*  
Giles Havergal, *Director*  
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Lauren English, *Acting and Audition Technique*  
Francie Epsen-Devlin, *Musical Theater*  
Paul Finocchiaro, *Acting*  
Nick Gabriel, *Acting*  
W. D. Keith, *On-Camera Acting*  
Drew Khalouf, *Speech and Diction*  
Jessica Kitchens, *Acting*  
Trish Mulholland, *Auditioning*  
David Prete, *Movement and Directing*  
Kari Prindl, *Alexander Technique*  
Mark Rafael, *Acting*  
Patrick Russell, *Acting, Movement, and Clown*  
Rebecca Struch, *Acting*  
Laura Wayth, *Acting*

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Dan Griffith, *Movement*  
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Deborah Leamy, *Musical Theater*  
Dominique Lozano, *Director, Acting*  
Christine Mattison, *Dance, Choreographer*  
Vivian Sam, *Musical Theater, Dance*  
Dan Seda, *Musical Theater*  
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A.C.T. thanks the physicians and staff of the Centers for Sports Medicine, Saint Francis Memorial Hospital, for their care of the A.C.T. company: Dr. Victor Prieto, Dr. Hoylond Hong, Dr. Susan Lewis, Don Kemp, P.A., and Chris Corpus, Clinic Supervisor.

## ACCREDITATION

A.C.T. is accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), 985 Atlantic Avenue, Suite 100, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation and the U.S. Department of Education.

# 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 country and in 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, ten 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 Beckett, Pinter, José Rivera, and Philip Kan Gotanda. Favorite productions include *Hecuba*, *Mary Stuart*,

*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *The Tosca Café*, *The Voyageur 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), has been 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 (Interim**

**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

6 years as managing director of the Mississippi River Festival. In addition, Pastreich has done management consulting for the Berlin Philharmonic, the South Bank Centre in London, the Detroit Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and the 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 crafted to deepen the students' well of acting experience, broaden their knowledge of dramatic literature, and sharpen their technical skills—all the while further 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 Theater 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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.

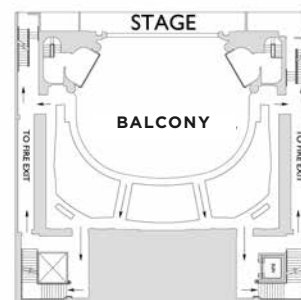
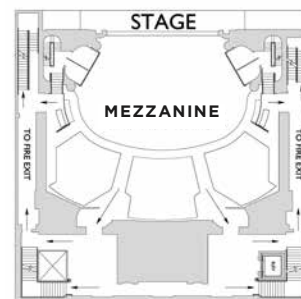
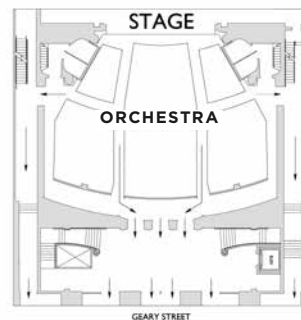


The scenic shop, prop shop, and stage crew are represented by Local 16 of the IATSE.



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

## GEARY THEATER EXITS





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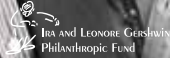
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Clockwise from top Andy Lucien, Clinton Roane, Brittany Bellizeare, Reggie D. White, and Jasmine St. Clair (Photo by Jim Carmody)

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