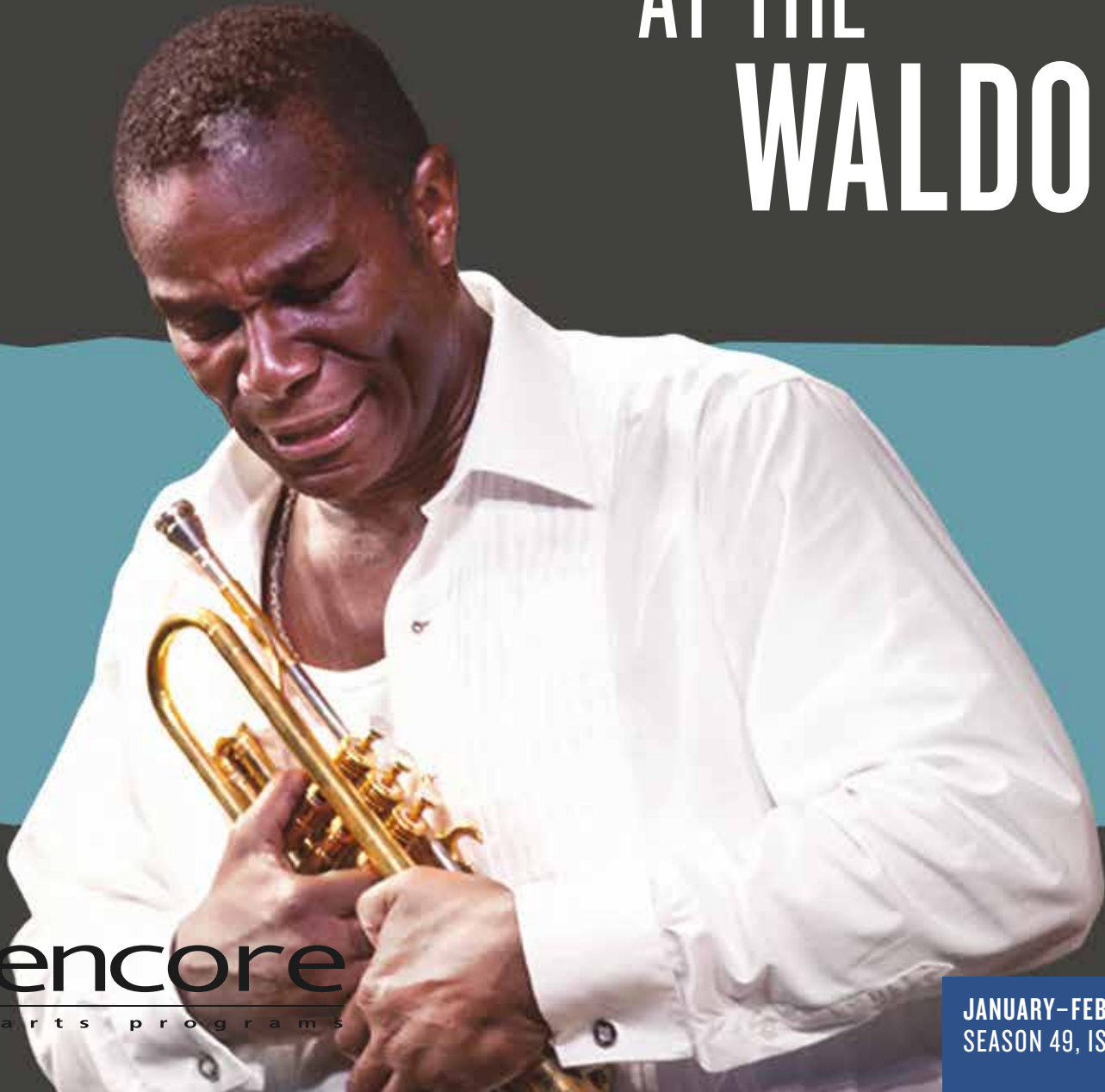


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SAN FRANCISCO'S THEATER COMPANY

American Conservatory Theater, San Francisco's Tony Award-winning nonprofit theater, nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training, and an ongoing engagement with our community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff, we embrace our responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent our relationship to the rich theatrical literature and traditions that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of our creative work. Founded by pioneer of the regional theater movement William Ball, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season in 1967. Since then, we've performed more than 350 productions to a combined audience of more than seven million people. We reach more than 250,000 people through our productions and programs every year.

Rising from the rubble of the catastrophic earthquake and fires of 1906 and immediately hailed as the "perfect playhouse," the beautiful, historic Geary Theater has been our home since the beginning. When the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake ripped a gaping hole in the ceiling, destroying the proscenium arch and dumping tons of debris on the first six rows of orchestra seats, the San Francisco community rallied to raise a record-breaking \$30 million to rebuild it. The theater reopened in 1996 with a production of *The Tempest* directed by Perloff, who took over after A.C.T.'s second artistic director, gentleman artist Ed Hastings, retired in 1992.

Perloff's 23-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 "locavore" theater—theater made by, for, and about the San Francisco 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 46-year-old Conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, is at the center of our work. Our three-year, fully accredited Master of Fine Arts Program has moved to the forefront of America's actor training programs, and our intensive Summer Training Congress attracts enthusiasts from around the world. Other programs include the world-famous Young Conservatory for students ages 8 to 19, led by 25-year veteran Craig Slight, and Studio A.C.T., our expansive course of study for adults. Our alumni often grace our mainstage and perform around the Bay Area, as well as stages and screens across the country.

A.C.T. also brings the benefits of theater-based arts education to more than 10,000 Bay Area school students 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 in-depth study materials to Bay Area schools and community-based organizations.

With our increased presence in the Central Market neighborhood marked by the opening of The Costume Shop theater, the renovation of The Strand Theater across from UN Plaza, and the launch of our mobile Stage Coach initiative, A.C.T. is poised to continue its leadership role in securing the future of theater for San Francisco and the nation.

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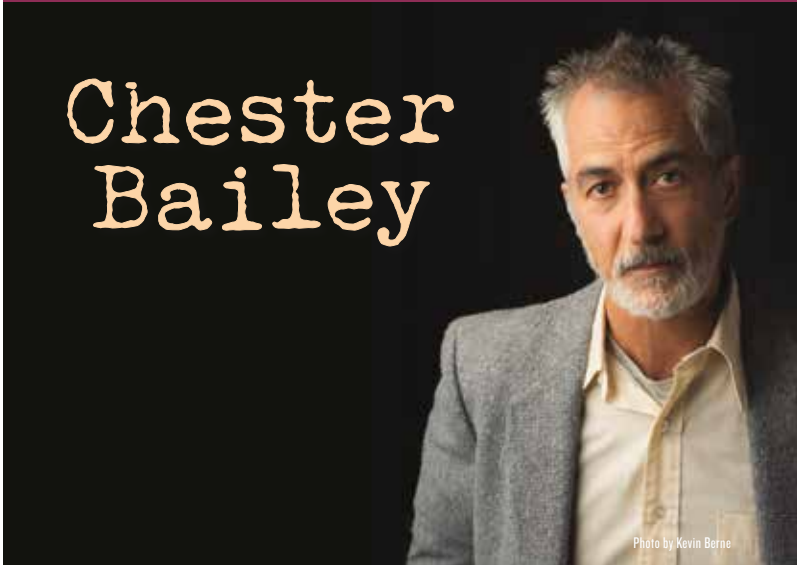


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DON'T JUST SIT THERE . . .



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 *The Unfortunates* and InterACT with us!

The Unfortunates

AT THE STRAND THEATER

BIKE TO THE THEATER NIGHT

Feb 3, 6:30 PM

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

PROLOGUE

Feb 16, 5:30 PM

Go deeper with a fascinating preshow discussion and Q&A with a member of the *Unfortunates* artistic team.

THEATER ON THE COUCH*

Feb 19, 7:30 PM

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

AUDIENCE EXCHANGE*

Mar 1, 7 PM; Mar 16 & Apr 3, 2 PM

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

OUT WITH A.C.T.*

Mar 9, 7:30 PM

Mix and mingle at this hosted postshow LGBT party.

WENTE VINEYARDS WINE SERIES

Mar 15, 7:30 PM

Meet fellow theatergoers at this hosted wine-tasting event.

PLAYTIME

Apr 9, 12:45 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.

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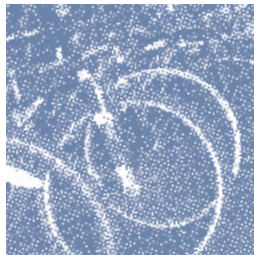


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A.C.T. volunteers provide an invaluable service with their time, enthusiasm, and love of theater. Opportunities include helping out in our performing-arts library and ushering in our theaters.

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Jeff McCarthy, William Paterson, and Barbara D'Erlickson in *Burned Child*; photo by William Gansten



Nicholas Pelczar and Nick Gabriel in *Arcadia*; photo by Kevin Berne



Ann Weldon and Ray Reinhardt in *The Rose Tattoo*; photo by Hank Kranzler



Bill Irwin in *Fool Moon*; photo by Ken Friedman

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Firdous Bamji in *Indian Ink*; photo by Kevin Berne



Lise Bruneau and Garret Dillahunt in *Angels in America*; photo by Ken Friedman



Anthony Fusco and Nicholas Pelczar in *A Christmas Carol*; photo by Kevin Berne



Olympia Dukakis as the tragic queen Hecuba; photo by Ken Friedman

A.C.T.'S

50th

Anniversary Season

INFORMATION COMING SOON



Fredi Olster and Anthony S. Teague in *The Taming of the Shrew*; photographer unknown



Gregory Wallace, Steven Anthony Jones, and Jonathan Sanders in *Master Harold... and the boys*; photo by Kevin Berne



Patrick Tovatt and (Miss) Michael Learned in *Tartuffe*; photo by Gansten Studios



BD Wong in *The Orphan of Zhao*; photo by Kevin Berne

FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Happy New Year, and welcome to *Satchmo at the Waldorf*!

John Douglas Thompson is one of the great treasures of the American theater. He is an actor whose work spans the Shakespeare canon, American classics such as *The Iceman Cometh*, contemporary plays, and, recently, all six hours of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*. Several years ago, when I learned that he was starring in a one-man play about Louis Armstrong, I was determined to see the production, which opened at Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven under Gordon Edelstein's astute direction.

As it turned out, my ticket was for the day after Hurricane Sandy, and it took me nearly five hours to travel from New York to New Haven to see the play. Every time the train ground to a halt to remove debris from the tracks, we witnessed more destruction, and I wondered why I was making such a herculean effort just to see a play. But when I finally arrived and immersed myself in Terry Teachout's fascinating tale of passion, prejudice, and rivalry in the jazz world, I was completely seduced.

John's charisma and ability to transform into radically different characters led me on a journey I thought I knew but actually didn't know at all. It's the story of the aesthetic clash between two titans determined to leave their legacies intact in a fractious and competitive world in which obstacles of race and class are everywhere. For me, the play illuminated what lay behind the smiling façade of one of America's greatest musicians, exposed the humiliations and struggles he endured as a black man on tour, and imagined the future of a great art form as it sought to break free of its traditions. At the end of the show, I went backstage and asked John to come to San Francisco with *Satchmo*. And here he is.

I was particularly interested in bringing *Satchmo* to A.C.T. because San Francisco is one of the great jazz cities in America, with a long tradition of supporting both traditional and avant-garde jazz. We are delighted to be partnering with SFJAZZ (with whom we last collaborated on Philip Kan

Gotanda's play *After the War*) to create a variety of events around *Satchmo*, and to bring jazz and theater audiences together to explore this fascinating story.

January is not only a month of jazz and John Douglas Thompson. It is also the season in which we present our first-ever New Strands Festival, a four-day celebration of projects curated by A.C.T. Director of New Work Beatrice Basso. With the advent of our Strand Theater, A.C.T. has deepened its commissioning program and broadened its commitment to new work in many exciting ways. From January 21 to 24, we will share a variety of projects in progress: readings of plays, selections of movement-theater pieces, video work, and even aerial dance. We hope you'll join us for this free festival and become involved with some of the many rich possibilities in store for us in future Strand seasons. If you missed the festival, check out a recap after the event on the A.C.T. blog at blog.act-sf.org.

Speaking of The Strand, we have just completed a wonderful run of *Monstress* and are gearing up for *The Unfortunates*, a blues musical that originated at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and now threatens to blow the roof off The Strand. We are so grateful to all of you who have come to support the work at The Strand—we know change is hard and that the routines of getting to a theater in Central Market are completely different from your Geary routines, in terms of parking, access, and nearby restaurants. Many of you have taken the time to give us feedback about your experiences in and around The Strand. That information is incredibly useful to us, and we continue to explore everything from curtain times to café food. So please keep the comments coming; my hotline number is 415.439.2459, and I promise that if you call, one of us will get back to you as soon as possible.

It's hard to believe that next season is A.C.T.'s 50th anniversary. How can that be, when we feel so young? We are in the midst of planning many events and productions to commemorate this landmark event, as well as thinking about ways to "renew our vows" and re-commit to Bill Ball's original vision: magnetic productions, lifelong learning, actor training, and a deep engagement with the community. Stay tuned for more details as our planning progresses.

And now—enjoy *Satchmo*!

Best,
Carey Perloff
Artistic Director



WHAT'S NEXT AT THE GEARY

The REALISTIC

JONES ES

BY WILL ENO

DIRECTED BY LORETTA GRECO

In a small American town, two couples who live next door to each other share the same last name—and much more—in this comedy that had Broadway audiences and critics howling with delight. Soon after the Joneses meet each other, they discover they are suffering from a similar malady, which leads to a surreal deterioration of language and communication. This results in a complex game of wits that makes ordinary conversation an extraordinary adventure. In Will Eno's inventive new play, what seems like a series of routine encounters between small-town neighbors becomes a captivating look at how impossible it is for words to capture feeling, and how miraculous it is for human beings to truly know each other.

"A TENDER, FUNNY AND TERRIFIC NEW PLAY . . . UNMATCHED BY ANYTHING THIS SEASON!"

The New York Times

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SATCHMO

AT THE WALDORF

BY **TERRY TEACHOUT**

DIRECTED BY **GORDON EDELSTEIN**

STARRING **JOHN DOUGLAS THOMPSON**

SCENIC DESIGN BY **LEE SAVAGE**
COSTUME DESIGN BY **ILONA SOMOGYI**
LIGHTING DESIGN BY **KEVIN ADAMS**
SOUND DESIGN BY **JOHN GROMADA**
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR **TYRONE DAVIS**

CAST

LOUIS ARMSTRONG,
JOE GLASER, MILES DAVIS **JOHN DOUGLAS THOMPSON***

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A.C.T. dedicates our 2015-16 season to the loving memory of our beloved colleague and associate artistic director, Mark Rucker, who contributed immeasurably to the life of A.C.T.

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

**Deceased

FROM THE

BATTLEFIELD

TO THE

ALL STARS



A Biography of Louis Armstrong

BY | SHANNON STOCKWELL

Louis Armstrong was born on August 4, 1901. He grew up in New Orleans in the neighborhood of black Storyville, a district so known for violence and crime that it was often called the Battlefield. But the neighborhood was also full of dance halls and honky-tonks, and it is often said that this is where jazz was born.

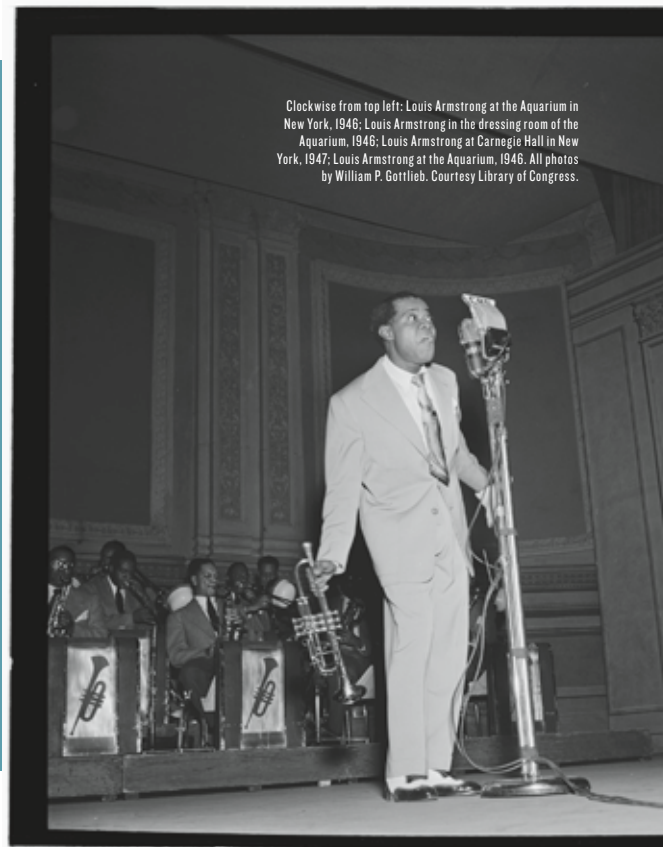
Armstrong, a boy born with a natural ear for rhythm and melody, couldn't help but absorb the music surrounding him. Though his family was desperately poor, he got his first cornet when he was less than ten years old, and he began to teach himself to play. When he was a teenager, he fell under the tutelage of famed cornetist Joe Oliver. Armstrong replaced his mentor in a band when he was just 19, and in 1922, he went to Chicago to play in Oliver's Creole Jazz Band.

Armstrong had played in many other bands by this point, and he had established himself in the jazz communities of New Orleans, Chicago, and New York as a musical genius, capable of impeccable phrasing and innovative rhythms. But in Chicago in 1925, he solidified his place in jazz history when he began to record with the Hot Five.

As Armstrong's fame grew, so did his list of problems. By 1934, he was in hiding in Europe. He was in trouble with New York gangsters, who were threatening him into playing at their club. His old manager was suing him for breach of contract. His wife was divorcing him and suing him for six thousand dollars. And his lip had split, a result of hitting as many as 200 high Cs in a row. In short, Armstrong needed help. He got it from Joe Glaser.

Armstrong had met Glaser in 1926 when he played a gig at Chicago's Sunset Café, owned by Al Capone and managed by Glaser. Armstrong was impressed by Glaser's business savvy, so he called upon him when he needed help in 1935. From that moment on, Glaser handled the business side of things while Armstrong focused on blowing his horn.

Since the early '30s, Armstrong had been decidedly big band oriented, and this remained the popular style throughout World War II. But in the economic aftermath of the war, venues simply couldn't afford to pay so many musicians, and big bands fell out of style. Seeing the writing on the wall, Glaser and Armstrong put together a small band, which was a huge success. Louis Armstrong and His All Stars would continue to play under this title for the rest of Armstrong's life.



Clockwise from top left: Louis Armstrong at the Aquarium in New York, 1946; Louis Armstrong in the dressing room of the Aquarium, 1946; Louis Armstrong at Carnegie Hall in New York, 1947; Louis Armstrong at the Aquarium, 1946. All photos by William P. Gottlieb. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Armstrong had established himself in the jazz communities of New Orleans, Chicago, and New York as a

**MUSICAL GENIUS,
CAPABLE OF IMPECCABLE
PHRASING AND
INNOVATIVE RHYTHMS.**

The All Stars had a grueling tour schedule, which matched Armstrong's incredible work ethic. But so many years of traveling and performing caught up with him, and his health began to fail in the late 1950s. Armstrong died on July 6, 1971. His effect on American music is tangible even today. Biographer James Lincoln Collier writes: "In the music of the twentieth century, the presence of Louis Armstrong is simply everywhere, inescapable as the wind, blowing through the front door, seeping in the windows, sliding down the chimney. He is a mountain in the path: you can go over him or around him, but you cannot avoid his effect."



COOL VERSUS FOOL

CRITICISMS OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG

BY | SHANNON STOCKWELL



At the beginning of his career, Louis Armstrong successfully walked the thin line between art and entertainment. His jazz recordings with the Hot Five were regarded as some of the most influential in music history, but at the same time, the records contained enough of his distinctive singing and comedy to attract those who weren't jazz aficionados. By the end of the 1930s, however, it was clear that Armstrong's music had become decidedly pop oriented. As he grew more popular with mainstream audiences, jazz scholars turned up their noses. Among these purists, the consensus was that Armstrong no longer had the same technical proficiency that he once did, his repertoire was stale, and he had sacrificed musicality for mainstream entertainment value.

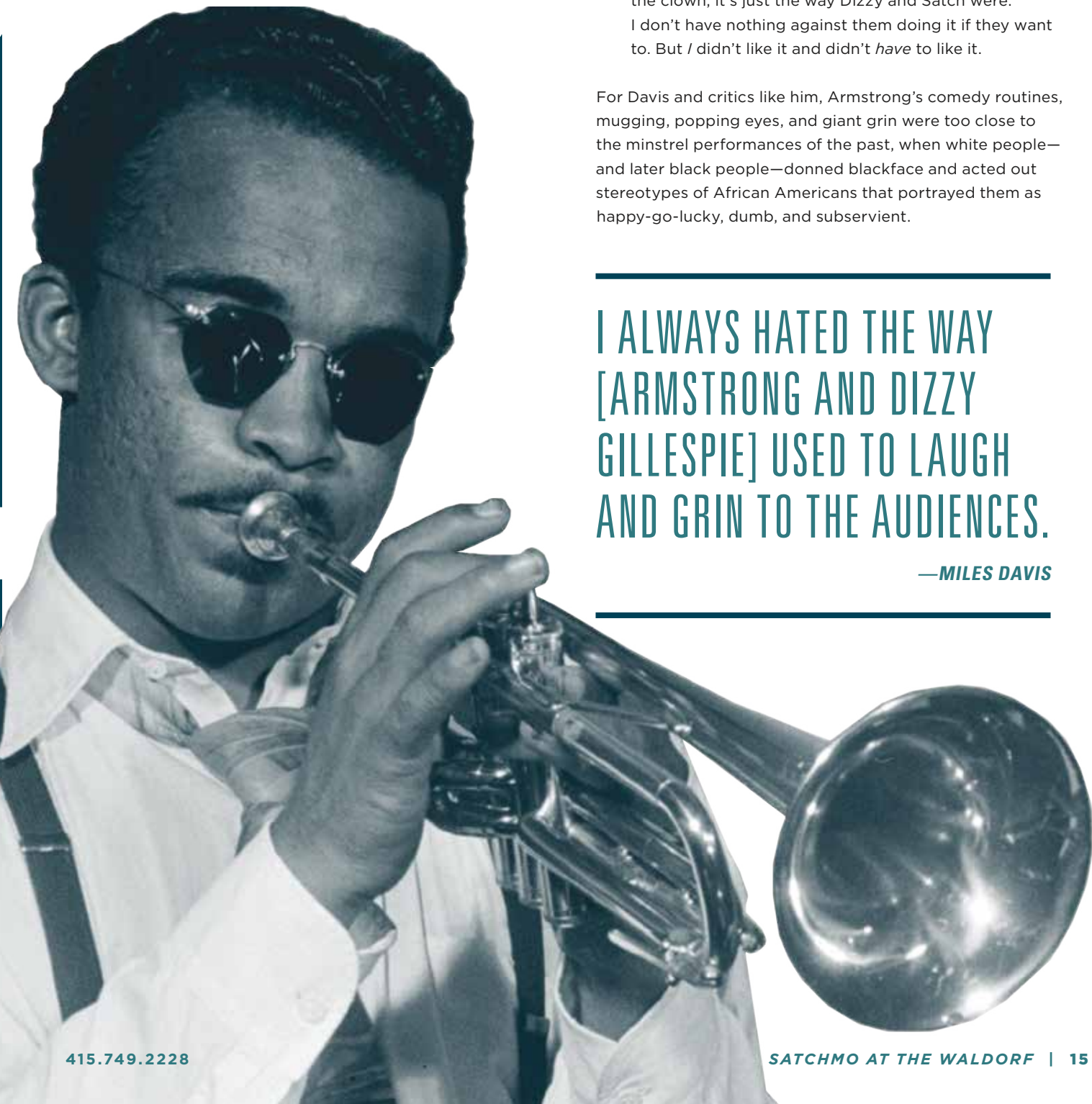
By the 1940s, young black jazz musicians who had once admired Armstrong found themselves with similar criticisms, but they believed Armstrong had sold out in another way. They believed he had sold out his race. They called him an "Uncle Tom," an insult that implied a black person was overly subservient and compliant in order to please white people. Jazz trumpeter Miles Davis said:

I always hated the way [Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie] used to laugh and grin to the audiences. I know why they did it—to make money and because they were entertainers as well as trumpet players. They had families to feed. Plus they both liked acting the clown; it's just the way Dizzy and Satch were. I don't have nothing against them doing it if they want to. But I didn't like it and didn't *have* to like it.

For Davis and critics like him, Armstrong's comedy routines, mugging, popping eyes, and giant grin were too close to the minstrel performances of the past, when white people—and later black people—donned blackface and acted out stereotypes of African Americans that portrayed them as happy-go-lucky, dumb, and subservient.

I ALWAYS HATED THE WAY
[ARMSTRONG AND DIZZY
GILLESPIE] USED TO LAUGH
AND GRIN TO THE AUDIENCES.

—MILES DAVIS



Armstrong's critics weren't entirely wrong. He *had* been influenced by minstrelsy. Many black Americans who grew up at that time were, because minstrel shows were among the most popular form of entertainment at the turn of the twentieth century. In the world of Armstrong's youth, minstrelsy was often white people's primary exposure to images of black men, so white people came to expect minstrel-character behavior from actual black men. And because of the white-supremacist social system of the time, black men were forced to assume the behavior that white people expected of them. By taking on minstrel characteristics like subservience and docility, these black men were actually donning a form of protection. According to sociologist Joel Dinerstein, "Hiding one's feelings under the grinning black mask was a survival skill of great importance to all black males up through World War II; a black man could get lynched for pretending to be on equal terms with a white man under almost any circumstances."

As time went on, black American culture began to shift. During the 1920s and '30s, many African Americans living in the South sought work opportunities in cities in the Northeast and Midwest. The Great Migration, as the phenomenon came to be called, instilled hopes for opportunity and economic freedom in many of these black Americans. These improved conditions suggested that there was hope that further social change was on the way.

"TO BE COOL WAS . . . TO BE CALM, EVEN UNIMPRESSED, BY WHAT HORROR THE WORLD MIGHT DAILY PROPOSE [SUCH AS] THE DEADENINGLY PREDICTABLE MIND OF WHITE AMERICANS."

—AMIRI BARAKA

Change was coming, but slowly. Although the Northeast and Midwest were marginally less racist than the South, black people still faced discrimination in employment, housing, and nearly every other part of their lives. Some young African Americans, however, had gotten a *taste* of improvement, and the potential of better conditions was enough to make it clear that a happy-go-lucky minstrel attitude was no longer appropriate. A demeanor was needed that was antithetical to the docile, compliant stance that white people had expected of them for so long. The answer was "cool."

Writer and activist Amiri Baraka said, "To be cool was . . . to be calm, even unimpressed, by what horror the world might daily propose [such as] the deadeningly predictable mind of white Americans." "Cool" meant that one was reserved, quiet, and in control—a countenance in direct opposition to the exuberant stage manner of Louis Armstrong.

The philosophy of cool was particularly important to a new genre of jazz that began to appear in the mid-'40s. Bebop was a response to mainstream pop jazz, which was dance music—fun and easy to listen to. Bebop was different. Like "cool," bebop did not exist to entertain white audiences. To young African American jazz lovers, this was preferable to the ingratiating presence of artists like Armstrong. Some of the major originators of bebop, like trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, were heavily involved in promoting the rights of African Americans, and bebop came to be associated with rising black political consciousness. This also set up a contrast to Armstrong, who often proclaimed, "I don't get involved in politics. I just blow my horn."

Armstrong saw himself as an entertainer, first and foremost. He felt he was in the business of making people happy. But he also felt that his entertainment value—the very thing jazz purists and young black musicians criticized—was actually the most powerful weapon in his fight for equality among the races. He knew most of his fans were white, and he knew many of them could very well be racist. Any member of his white audiences "may go around the corner and lynch a Negro," he said. But he didn't believe that entertaining racist white audiences encouraged them to be more racist. In fact, he felt it had the opposite effect: "While they're listening to our music, they don't think about trouble. What's more, they're watching Negro and white musicians play side by side. And we bring contentment and pleasure. I always say, 'Look at the nice taste we leave. It's bound to mean something.'"

WORDS ON PLAYS



Want to know more about *Satchmo at the Waldorf*? *Words on Plays*, A.C.T.'s renowned performance guide series, offers insight into the plays, playwrights, and productions of the subscription season with revealing interviews and in-depth articles.

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A Major-Key Artist

*An Interview with
Terry Teachout*



It is a Sunday evening in 1964. An eight-year-old boy plays in the backyard of his small-town Missouri home. His mother leans out the door and tells him to come in. When he walks inside, he sees that the television is on. His mother says, “I want you to watch this. I want you to see this man, because he won’t be around forever.” On the screen are Louis Armstrong and His All Stars, playing “Hello, Dolly!” on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. The boy is entranced.

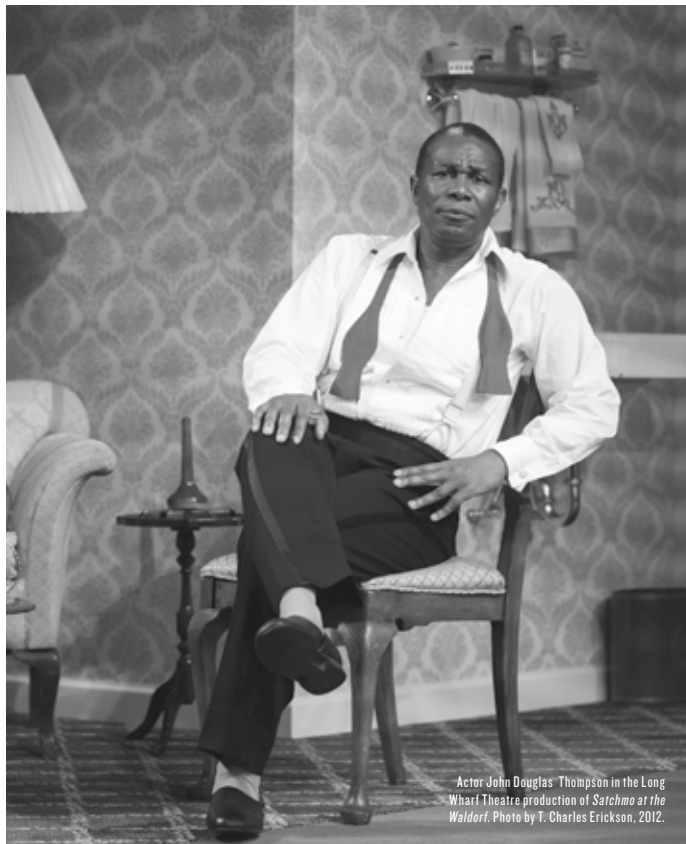
This is Terry Teachout’s first memory of the music of Louis Armstrong. Teachout later went on to become a jazz musician, a music critic, the theater critic for the *Wall Street Journal*, the author of *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong* and several other biographies, a blogger, a librettist, and the playwright of *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. We caught up with Teachout to talk about the inspiration behind his first play, the complexity of Louis Armstrong, and the pure joy of Satchmo’s music.

BY | SHANNON STOCKWELL

WHAT IS IT ABOUT JOE GLASER'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ARMSTRONG THAT IS RIPE FOR THE STAGE?

Even in the first draft of the play, *Satchmo at the Waldorf* was already about the complex relationship between Armstrong and Glaser, who was Armstrong's manager throughout most of Armstrong's career. Glaser started managing Armstrong in 1935. From that moment on, the nature of the relationship between them snapped into focus. Armstrong wanted to be able to go onstage every night and perform without having to worry about what to pay the members of the band or who the bass player should be or where they were going to play the next night. He simply wanted, as he liked to say, to blow his horn. Glaser made that possible. He told Armstrong where to play and chose the members of the band and gave Armstrong advice about how to present himself as a popular entertainer. And Armstrong trusted his judgment.

In the 1930s and the early '40s, this kind of relationship wasn't looked at askance. But that generation gave way to a more politically conscious generation of black musicians, like Dizzy Gillespie and Miles Davis, and the way that Armstrong talked about Glaser in public made them uncomfortable. [Armstrong] always called him "Mr. Glaser," and he made it clear that Glaser was the boss. Alongside this generational shift, younger blacks became ill at ease with Armstrong's stage manner, which they saw as ingratiating to the point of obsequiousness.



Finally, the world of music itself was changing after World War II. The traditional jazz that Armstrong played gave way first to bebop and then to rhythm-and-blues and rock-and-roll. As a result, Armstrong lost most of his black audience. He became a person who, for the most part, played for white people in white nightclubs and concert halls.

Armstrong was aware of this. It was something that genuinely troubled him and that he didn't understand, because he felt, correctly, that he had been a figure of real importance in terms of seeking out opportunities for his people. He couldn't understand why anybody would want to condescend to him simply because he liked to be entertaining and make other people happy.

It was Armstrong's growing awareness of this conflict that I put at the center of the play. Most one-person plays about historical figures are plays in which we spend an hour and a half with that person, standing stage center, telling you what a great guy he was and what great things he did. I don't like plays like this—they're too static—and didn't want to write one. I wanted to write a conflict-driven play in which Armstrong is actively trying to come to terms with what happened between him and Glaser.



WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO MAKE THIS A ONE-PERSON SHOW?

I first imagined that the play would be performed by one person, who would switch between the roles. Once I read the second draft, I asked myself, “Is this really a play for two actors?” And almost immediately, I said, “No, it’s not.” I knew that having the play done by one actor who has to cross a racial line to play the part of Glaser was what would give the play its dynamism.

In a sense, Armstrong and Glaser are two sides of the same coin. It’s as though the same actor is playing Othello and Iago. Glaser is Armstrong’s dark shadow. He was connected with the Mob. He did the dirty work that Armstrong didn’t want to do and didn’t even want to know about. My Glaser explicitly talks about all this at the end of the play; by aligning himself with mobsters, he had made it possible for Armstrong to go onstage and be the fundamentally radiant, optimistic figure that he was as a performer. Glaser never *actually* talked about anything like that, of course. This is the fictional part of the play. But I imagined a Glaser who somehow felt he had, in a sense, sacrificed himself, his moral integrity, for Armstrong.

So, once I accepted that the play was going to be performed by one person, I knew I had something that, if I could make it work, would be very exciting theatrically. And when [actor] John [Douglas Thompson] and [director] Gordon [Edelstein] had the idea of adding Miles Davis to the mix—well, that just made it even more volatile.



Actor John Douglas Thompson in the Long Wharf Theatre production of *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. Photo by T. Charles Erickson, 2012.

IN *POPS*, THE EPIGRAPH IS A QUOTE FROM ARTIST CONSTANTIN BRĂNCUȘI THAT SAYS, “DON’T LOOK FOR OBSCURE FORMULAS, NOR FOR *LE MYSTÈRE*. IT IS PURE JOY I’M GIVING YOU.” WHAT DOES THAT QUOTE MEAN FOR YOU AND FOR ARMSTRONG’S LIFE?

I have described Armstrong as a major-key artist. I don’t mean that he was naïve. He *really* understood how hard the world could be—remember the life he had as a child in Storyville. But his orientation, even when playing the blues, was essentially an affirming one. He accepts the good and the bad of the world, and, through his art, transmutes it into something beautiful. And what you feel listening to this music, what he wants you to feel, what he felt playing it, is pure joy.

I might add that you don’t have to understand music theory to appreciate Armstrong’s music. It’s always fascinated me that, even though he was a very sophisticated musician, he never talked about his music in musical terms. He always talked about it in straightforward, often autobiographical terms. So even though it’s useful as a musician to understand how he put together “West End Blues,” the theory of it is not relevant to the experience.

That’s also how I want you to feel watching *Satchmo*. There’s a great deal of conflict and tension in this play. We see Armstrong’s capacity for rage. But the play doesn’t end in anger. It ends in acceptance and joy, and that is true to the spirit of Armstrong and his great art.



In a sense, Glaser and Armstrong are two sides of the same coin. It’s as though the same actor is playing Othello and Iago.

TERRY TEACHOUT



the man behind the horn

*An Interview with
John Douglas Thompson*

BY | SIMON HODGSON

John Douglas Thompson has been acclaimed as “our greatest classical actor,” by the New Yorker, in recognition of his powerful performances in such classics as Othello, Richard III, Tamburlaine the Great, and The Emperor Jones. We sat down with Thompson to talk about research, reel-to-reel audiotapes, and how watching Edward G. Robinson helped him prepare for his performance in his first one-man show—Satchmo at the Waldorf.



Actor John Douglas Thompson.
Photos by T. Charles Erickson.

WHAT DREW YOU TO THE ROLE OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG?

Terry Teachout, who is the drama critic of the *Wall Street Journal* and the author of *Pops* [a 2009 biography of Armstrong], approached me and asked me if I would do a workshop of the play. I had no particular interest in Louis Armstrong, but I felt the play was interesting, so I did the workshop. It was over the course of preparing to do *Satchmo* at Shakespeare & Company that I fell in love with Armstrong.

At the Louis Armstrong Archive at the Queens College library in New York, they gave me access to these reel-to-reel audiotapes. He was a big fan of the reel-to-reel machine, he carried it with him everywhere. Concerts, parties, conversations with critics, interviews—he audiotaped pretty much his whole life. Listening to those tapes, I received a much more alive Armstrong, who was not concerned with his public persona. You hear how he felt about musicians; women (because he was a philanderer); race; political figures, black and white. What *Satchmo* excavates is that real Armstrong, in juxtaposition with the public Armstrong. And they're very different men.

DO YOU SEE HIM AS A SHAKESPEAREAN CHARACTER?

I see his life as Shakespearean. He's very Falstaffian. The journey that Falstaff takes to his death: the loss of his integrity, his pride. Had I not done the amount of Shakespeare that I've done, I could never have tackled this role physically, mentally, or emotionally.

HOW DO YOU CHOOSE A PLAY AND A ROLE?

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

I look for characters that have an Achilles heel that the character is conscious or unconscious of. Then I look for a catharsis that gives the character some evolution. Once I've found that, I start upon a course of rigorous research. If it's a Shakespeare play, I read all the different editions and adaptations of that play, and I also study other productions to see what other people have done.

During the process, I find some music that is what I would consider the character's theme song. That's a mysterious process, because I don't actively seek it. It's just something that speaks to me. I also set up situations in which I have the character that I'm working on talk to other characters that I've worked on. I try to imagine those conversations, even if the characters are from different centuries. It helps me find that particular character's place in the universe of the play.

WHAT HAS IT BEEN LIKE WORKING ON A ONE-MAN SHOW AND COLLABORATING WITH DIRECTOR GORDON EDELSTEIN AND WRITER TERRY TEACHOUT?

This is the first one-person play I've done. I have never had such a close-knit collaboration. I've had great collaborations, don't get me wrong, but they've never been as intimate as *Satchmo*. The intimacy came because it was one performer, one playwright, one director. We all exchanged disciplines as we worked. Sometimes I would direct something, or Terry would give me an acting thing, or Gordon would give Terry an acting thing. It was quite beautiful.

I can also say it's the most lonely feeling in the world to work on a one-person show. It's devastatingly, heartbreakingly lonely. Because it's just you up there, and you're required to do everything as if there were ten of you. Doing the performance night after night demands a great deal of stamina and rigor. Just physical rigor.

WHEN SATCHMO TAKES PLACE, LOUIS ARMSTRONG IS AN OLD MAN AT THE END OF HIS CAREER. HOW DO YOU BUILD THAT PHYSICAL CONDITION INTO YOUR CHARACTERIZATION?

I studied a lot of Armstrong on film, from the late 1960s to his passing, just to get an idea of his countenance, how he maintains himself in space and in opposition to other people. As an actor I started to think of other people of that age and how they move. I studied my father—not that my father's sick or ailing, but he is in his early 80s—and I watched how he moved. That source of movement is in my DNA.

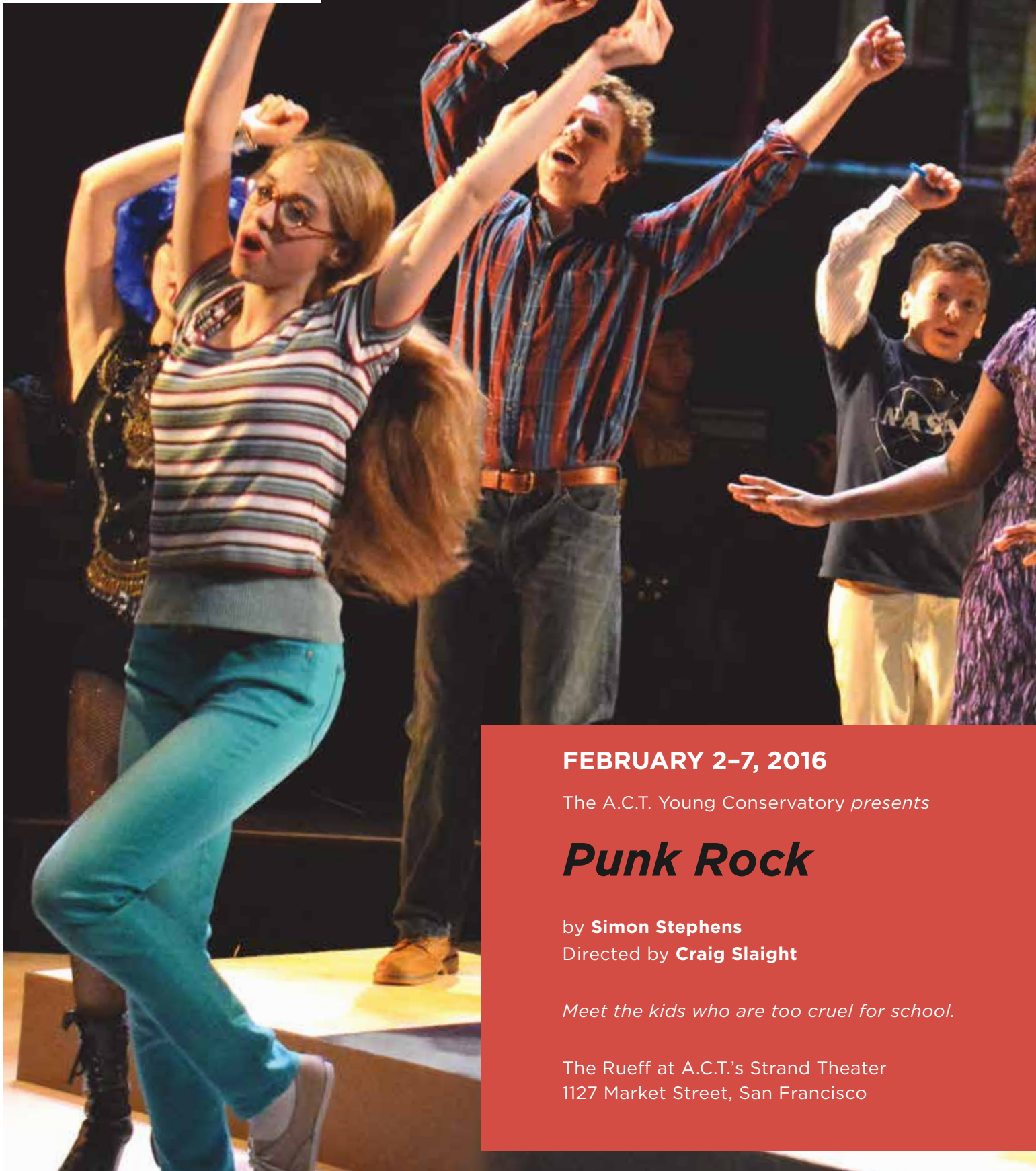
HOW ABOUT RESEARCHING JOE GLASER?

There's not much on film of Glaser. He was well under the radar. But there were pictures and some audio. Glaser was a big guy, very forceful, aggressive. I started to look at gangster movies from that period, particularly *Little Caesar* [1931], starring Edward G. Robinson. I used Robinson as my template for Glaser. How he holds himself. His toughness, his level of aggression, his emotional state, his pathos. Because there was so little on Glaser, Robinson became my bridge.

IS IT A CONSCIOUS CHOICE FOR YOU TO STAY IN THEATER?

Theater is my primary medium. If good opportunities from television and film came along, of course I would look at them. I obviously want to work in all three mediums. But I would never leave theater. Theater is my heart.

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WHO'S WHO

in SATCHMO AT THE WALDORF



JOHN DOUGLAS THOMPSON*

(Louis Armstrong, Joe Glaser, Miles Davis) was last seen as Ira Aldridge in *Red Velvet* at

Shakespeare & Company and as Robert Lowell in *Dear Elizabeth* at Women's Project Theater. Broadway credits include *A Time To Kill*, *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Kevin Kline, and *Julius Caesar* with Denzel Washington. His off-Broadway credits include *The Iceman Cometh* with Nathan Lane and Brian Dennehy at Brooklyn Academy of Music (OBIE, Drama Desk, and Audelco Awards); *Tamburlaine the Great* at Theatre for a New Audience (OBIE, Drama Desk, and Audelco Awards); *Satchmo at the Waldorf* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards) at the Westside Theatre, the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Shakespeare & Company, The Wilma Theater, and Long Wharf Theatre; *King Lear* with Sam Waterston at The Public Theater; *Macbeth* (title role) and *Othello* (OBIE, Lucille Lortel, and Joe A. Callaway awards) at Theatre for a New Audience; *The Forest* with Dianne Wiest at Classic Stage Company; *The Emperor Jones* at The Irish Repertory Theatre (Joe A. Callaway Award and Lucille

Lortel, Drama League, and Drama Desk award nominations); and *Hedda Gabler* at New York Theatre Workshop. Regional credits include *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* at the Mark Taper Forum (Ovation Award); *Antony & Cleopatra* with Kate Mulgrew at Hartford Stage; *Othello*, *Richard III*, *King Lear*, and *Mother Courage and Her Children* with Olympia Dukakis at Shakespeare & Company; *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* at The Wilma Theater (Barrymore Award); and productions at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, Trinity Repertory Company, the American Repertory Theater, and Yale Repertory Theatre. His television and film credits include *Madam Secretary*, *Person of Interest*, *Wolves*, *The Bourne Legacy*, *Glass Chin*, *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Conviction*, *Michael Clayton*, *Midway*, and *Malcolm X*. Thompson is a recipient of the 2015 Samuel H. Scripps Award for extraordinary commitment in promoting the power of language in classical and contemporary theater, and the 2013 Robert Brustein Award for sustained excellence in American theater.

TERRY TEACHOUT (Playwright)

is the drama critic of the *Wall Street Journal*, the critic-at-large of *Commentary*, and the author of "Sightings," a biweekly column for the *Friday Journal* about the arts in America. He also writes about the arts on his blog, "About Last Night." *Satchmo at the Waldorf*, his first play, premiered in 2011 in Orlando, Florida, and has since been produced off Broadway and throughout America. He will make his professional directing debut in May with Palm Beach Dramaworks's production of *Satchmo*; the play will also be performed this season in Chicago and Colorado Springs. His books include *Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington*, *Pops: A Life of Louis Armstrong*, and biographies of George Balanchine and H. L. Mencken. He has written the libretti for three operas by Paul Moravec: *The Letter* (premiered by The Santa Fe Opera), *Danse Russe* (premiered by Philadelphia's Center

City Opera Theater), and *The King's Man* (premiered by Kentucky Opera). He played jazz bass professionally in Kansas City before becoming a full-time writer. He lives with his wife, Hilary, in New York City and Connecticut.

GORDON EDELSTEIN (Director)

makes his A.C.T. directorial debut with *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. His Broadway credits include *The Road to Mecca*, starring Rosemary Harris, Jim Dale, and Carla Gugino, and *The Homecoming*, starring Roy Dotrice and Lindsay Crouse. His off-Broadway credits include *Satchmo at the Waldorf* (Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle awards); *My Name Is Asher Lev* (Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Off-Broadway Play); *The Glass Menagerie*, starring Judith Ivey (Lucille Lortel Award); as well as work at Roundabout Theatre Company, Second Stage Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, and many others. Edelstein is in his fourteenth season as the artistic director of Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut, where he has directed dozens of plays, including four world premieres by Athol Fugard, and a wide range of classical and new work, including his own adaptations of *Uncle Vanya* and *A Doll's House*. Next season at The Old Globe and Long Wharf, he will direct the world premiere of *Meteor Shower*, a new comedy by Steve Martin. This past summer, he directed six-time Tony Award winner Audra McDonald in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* at the Williamstown Theatre Festival, his fourth production of O'Neill's final masterpiece. Edelstein has received numerous Connecticut Critics Circle awards and earned an Emmy Award nomination for his direction of the CBS movie *Abby, My Love*.

LEE SAVAGE (Set Designer) has worked in New York on *The Muscles in Our Toes*, *Sunset Baby*, and *Thinner Than Water* (Labyrinth Theater Company); *Collapse* (Women's Project Theater); *All-American* (LCT3); *The Dream of the Burning Boy* and *Ordinary Days* (Roundabout Theatre Company);

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

Oohrah! (Atlantic Theater Company); *The Bereaved* (Partial Comfort Productions); and *punkplay* (Clubbed Thumb). His regional credits include work at Asolo Repertory Theatre, Chautauqua Theater Company, Dallas Theater Center, The Glimmerglass Festival, Goodman Theatre, the Guthrie Theater, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Washington National Opera, Westport Country Playhouse, The Wilma Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, and others. His international credits include the Gate Theatre (Dublin, Ireland) and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Savage received a Helen Hayes Award for *Much Ado about Nothing*. He was nominated for Helen Hayes awards for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard III* (Shakespeare Theatre Company). He received the Connecticut Critics Circle Award for *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow* (Yale Repertory Theatre). He is a member of Wingspace Theatrical Design and a contributor to *Chance Magazine*. Savage studied at Rhode Island School of Design and has a B.F.A. and M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama, where he is a faculty member.

ILONA SOMOGYI (Costume Designer) makes her A.C.T. debut with *Satchmo at the Waldorf*. Somogyi has been designing costumes for productions across the United States and the world for nearly 20 years. Recent work on the West Coast includes *Marjorie Prime* and *Clybourne Park* (Mark Taper Forum) and *Three Sisters* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre). In the past year she has designed *Pride and Prejudice* (Center Stage in Baltimore); *Grey Gardens*, starring Betty Buckley and Rachel York; *Gloria* (Vineyard Theatre); *Disgraced* (directed by Gordon Edelstein at Long Wharf Theatre and transferring to the Huntington Theatre Company in Boston); *Pump Boys and Dinettes* (Weston Playhouse Theatre Company in Vermont); and *King Hedley II* (Arena Stage in Washington, DC). Favorite recent projects include *My Name Is Asher Lev* (Long Wharf Theatre and the Westside Theatre), *The World Is Round* (Ripe Time), *A Soldier's Tale* (Carnegie Hall), *Smokey Joe's Café* (Arena Stage), and *Nice Fish* (the Guthrie Theater, continuing to the American Repertory

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Theater and St. Ann's Warehouse). Somogyi is a faculty member and alumna of Yale School of Drama.

KEVIN ADAMS (Lighting Designer) has designed lighting and scenery for theater, opera, dance, solo performance, and film. He has received four Tony Awards for his work on Broadway, which includes *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, *American Idiot*, *Spring Awakening*, *Everyday Rapture*, *Next to Normal*, *Hair*, *Passing Strange*, *The 39 Steps*, *Take Me Out*, and *Hedda Gabler*. He has designed solo shows for John Leguizamo, Eve Ensler, Eric Bogosian, Sandra Bernhard, Anna Deavere Smith, Kate Mulgrew, Kevin Bacon, Rachel Rosenthal, and John Fleck. Off-Broadway work includes the original production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, the revivals of *Rent* and *Carrie*, and new works by Edward Albee, Christopher Durang, Richard Greenberg, Kander and Ebb, Tony Kushner, Terrence McNally, and Neil Simon. He has also designed at the Metropolitan Opera, the Donmar Warehouse, London's West End, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Steppenwolf, Yale Repertory Theatre, New York City Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Janet Jackson's music video for her song "If," and the HBO miniseries *Mildred Pierce*, directed by Todd Haynes.

JOHN GROMADA (Sound Designer) has composed music or designed sound for more than 35 Broadway productions, including *The Elephant Man*, *The Trip to Bountiful* (Tony Award nomination), *The Best Man* (Drama Desk Award), *Clybourne Park*, *Seminar*, *Man and Boy*, *The Road to Mecca*, *The Columnist*, *Next Fall*, *A Bronx Tale*, *Prelude to a Kiss*, *Proof*, *Sight Unseen*, *Rabbit Hole*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Twelve Angry Men*, and *A Few Good Men*. Previously at A.C.T., he composed the score for *Hedda Gabler* and designed sound for *Old Hats*. His other New York credits include *Dada Woof Papa Hot*, *Incident at Vichy*, *Ripcord*, *Domesticated*, *Old Hats*, *My Name Is Asher Lev*, *Measure for Measure* (Delacorte Theater), *The Orphans' Home Cycle* (Drama Desk and Henry Hewes Design awards), *The Screwtape Letters*, *Shipwrecked!* (Lucille Lortel Award),




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The Singing Forest, Julius Caesar, The Skriker (Drama Desk Award), *Machinal* (OBIE Award), and many more. His regional theater credits number more than 300 at major regional theaters and abroad. Film and television credits include the score for the television film version of *The Trip to Bountiful* and the upcoming *Showing Roots*.

DICK DALEY* (Stage Manager)

has stage-managed many shows at A.C.T., including *Between Riverside and*

Crazy, A Little Night Music, Indian Ink, The Orphan of Zhao, 1776, Gem of the Ocean, Happy End, Travesties, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Waiting for Godot, and the world premieres of *A Christmas Carol* and *After the War*. Other regional credits include *Dr. Faustus*, written and directed by David Mamet, and *The Opposite of Sex: The Musical* (Magic Theatre); *River's End, Bus Stop, Communicating Doors*, and *The Last Schwartz* (Marin Theatre Company); *Macbeth* and *Henry V* (Commonwealth

Shakespeare Company); *Twelfth Night* (Los Angeles Women's Shakespeare Company); *King Lear* and *Henry V* (The Company of Women); *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui; Ain't Misbehavin'*; and *The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me*. Before moving to San Francisco, Daley was the production manager at Emerson College in Boston for seven years and oversaw the B.F.A. production/stage-management program.

ELISA GUTHERTZ* (Assistant Stage Manager)

most recently worked on *Monstress, Love and Information, Testament, Major Barbara, Underneath the Lintel*, and *Arcadia* at A.C.T. Her numerous other productions for A.C.T. include *4000 Miles, The Normal Heart, The Scottsboro Boys, Endgame and Play, Scorched, Once in a Lifetime, Clybourne Park, Marcus; or The Secret of Sweet, The Caucasian Chalk Circle, November, Boleros for the Disenchanted, Rich and Famous, The Rainmaker, A Number*, and Eve Ensler's *The Good Body*. She has also stage-managed *The Mystery of Irma Vep; Suddenly, Last Summer; Rhinoceros; Big Love; Civil Sex; Collected Stories; and Cloud Tectonics* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other productions include *The Good Body* at the Booth Theatre on Broadway, *Big Love* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, and *The Vagina Monologues* at the Alcazar Theatre.

BARBARA BASS BAKAR AND GERSON P. BAKAR

(Executive Producers) have been involved with A.C.T. for three decades and have produced numerous plays, including *Vigil, Gem of the Ocean, After the War, Souvenir*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Barbara is founder and president of Achieve, a high school scholarship and enrichment program for underserved students from low-income families. She was chair of and is currently on the UC San Francisco Board of Overseers, and she is on the Board of Visitors at UC Berkeley. She has been president and CEO of Emporium-Weinstock's; CEO and chair of I. Magnin; and a director of Starbucks Corporation and DFS Group,

Ltd. Barbara is an emeritus trustee of A.C.T. and was on the Board of Trustees from 1992 to 2010. Gerson is a major real-estate developer in the Bay Area who has been instrumental in the growth and success of a number of nonprofit organizations such as San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, BRIDGE Housing (a leading nonprofit housing-development firm), the new Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, and the UC San Francisco Mission Bay Campus.

PRISCILLA AND KEITH GEESLIN (Executive Producers)

have produced the A.C.T. shows *Old Hats*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City*, *Scapin*, *The Tosca Project*, *Curse of the Starving Class*, and *The Rivals*, among others. Priscilla has been a member of the A.C.T. Board of Trustees since 2003 and currently chairs the Development Committee. She also serves on the boards of San Francisco General Hospital Foundation, the San Francisco Symphony, Grace Cathedral, and NARAL Pro-Choice America. A principal of Francisco Partners, Keith is the president of San Francisco Opera's board of trustees.

BURT AND DEEDEE MCMURTRY (Executive Producers)

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

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TIM MOTT AND PEGAN BROOKE (Executive Producers)

have produced many shows at A.C.T. Mott is a serial entrepreneur and private venture capital investor. He is the principal at Mott Ventures and the vintner at Blue Farm Wines. Previously, Mott co-founded Electronic Arts, Macromedia, Audible, and All Covered, and he was chairman, CEO, or MD at those companies. Mott serves on the boards of California College of the Arts in San Francisco and the nexStage Theatre in Sun Valley, Idaho. Brooke is an artist who works in paint, video, and poetry. She is also professor emerita at San Francisco Art Institute. Her work is owned by the Guggenheim Museum, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Des Moines Art Center, and many private collectors.

NION T. MCEVOY AND LESLIE BERRIMAN (Executive Producers)

are longtime subscribers to A.C.T. McEvoy is the chairman and CEO of Chronicle Books and of the McEvoy Group. He joined Chronicle Books in 1986 and served as editor-in-chief of the adult trade division until he acquired the company in 2000. McEvoy previously worked in the business affairs departments of Wescom Productions and the William Morris Agency in Beverly Hills. He is a graduate of UC Santa Cruz and UC Hastings College of the Law. He is a commissioner for the Smithsonian American Art Museum and serves on the boards of SFJAZZ and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where he is a member of the Photography Accessions Committee. He has two sons and a daughter, and plays drums with the elusive rock band Rough Draft. Berriman is a publishing professional in the education arena. Most recently, she was executive editor in the higher education division of Pearson, where she acquired, developed, and published integrated book and media programs for students in undergraduate college courses in the applied sciences. Previously, she managed educational publishing

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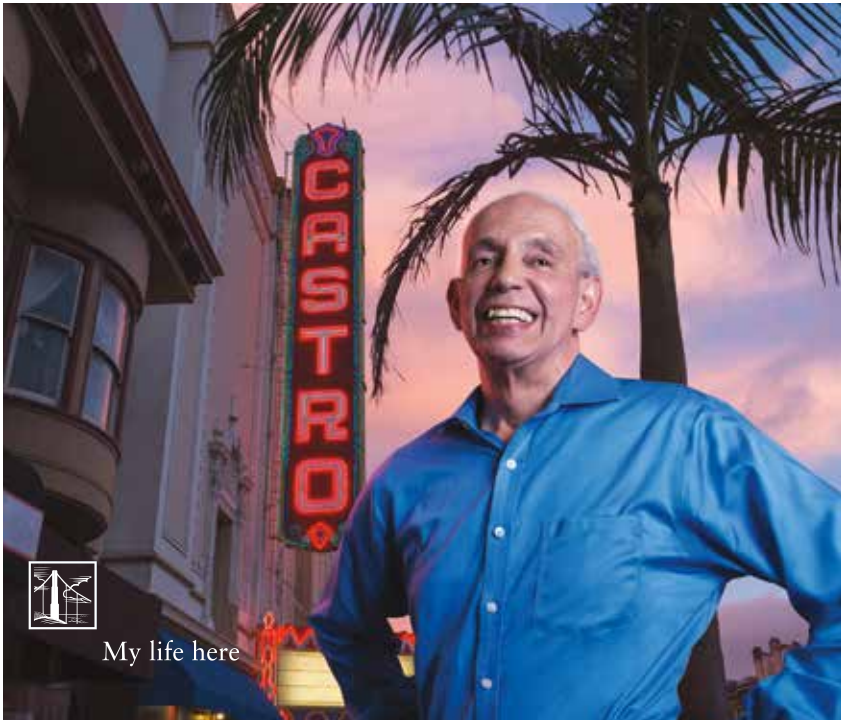


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Gustavo believes in giving back. He sits on several boards and manages duties as vice president of the SF Commission on Aging and Adult Services. Under the pen name “Tavo Amador” he also writes for the *Bay Area Reporter*. With roots still deep in the Castro, he loves to walk the city and find the stories that connect us all. See why his sense of community extends far beyond his address here at San Francisco Towers. To learn more, or for your personal visit, please call 415.447.5527.



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programs in world languages at HarperCollins Publishers and McGraw-Hill Education, and in psychology at John Wiley & Sons. She has a B.A. in linguistics from Binghamton University and an M.A. in French from Middlebury College. She serves on the board of the Grabhorn Institute, which is the nonprofit arm of Arion Press, publisher of limited edition letterpress books.

**ADRIANA AND AARON
 VERMUT (Executive Producers)**

most recently supported *The Orphan of Zhao* and *Love and Information* 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 M.B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School. He serves on the boards of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Bay Area and the Exploratorium.

**BARRY WILLIAMS AND
 LALITA TADEMY (Executive Producers)**

have supported A.C.T.’s *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *Let There Be Love*, *The Scottsboro Boys*, and many other productions. Williams founded Williams Pacific Ventures, Inc., a real-estate and private equity investment and consulting firm, in 1987. He serves on various public and not-for-profit boards. Williams is on A.C.T.’s Emeritus Advisory Board and served as a trustee from 1998 to 2010. Tademy, a former vice president of Sun Microsystems, Inc., is a *New York Times* bestselling author, and has published three critically acclaimed historical novels: *Cane River* (an Oprah’s Book Club pick), *Red River*, and *Citizens Creek*.

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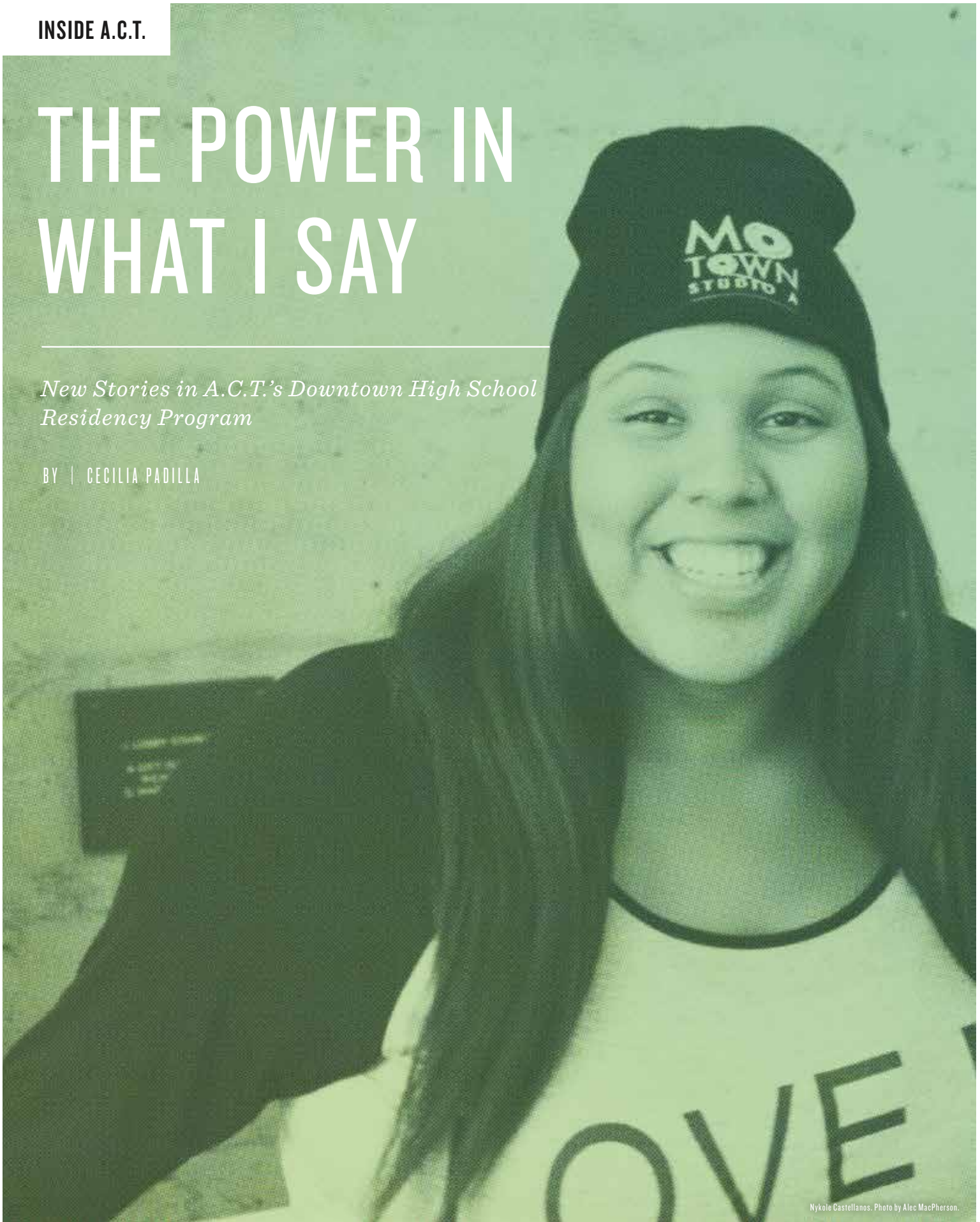
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THE POWER IN WHAT I SAY

*New Stories in A.C.T.'s Downtown High School
Residency Program*

BY | CECILIA PADILLA



Nycole Castellanos. Photo by Alec MacPherson.

“THEATER ALLOWS YOU TO TELL A STORY IN THE WAY YOU want others to perceive you,” says Nykole Castellanos, a student in A.C.T.’s ACTsmart Intensive Residency at Downtown High School (DHS). For her, theater has become the pen for writing her life story.

Castellanos is a 17-year-old senior at DHS, a project-learning-based continuation school in the San Francisco Unified School District that serves young people who have not experienced success in traditional comprehensive public schools. Since 2011, A.C.T. has partnered with DHS’s Acting for Critical Thought project—led by teachers Eunice Nuval and Robert Coverdell—to engage students academically and artistically through the study of theater. Castellanos is one of many who benefit from A.C.T.’s growing Education & Community Programs; inspired by the success of our partnership with DHS, we now also have long-term in-school residencies at Ida B. Wells Continuation High School, Hilltop Special Services Center (for pregnant and parenting teens), and AccessSFUSD: The Arc (for transition-age youth with developmental disabilities), and after-school programs at Bessie Carmichael K-8 School and the Tenderloin Boys & Girls Club.

Students in DHS’s Acting for Critical Thought project attend weekly acting classes at A.C.T., see A.C.T. performances, and write original monologues and short plays that they perform in A.C.T. venues. Nuval and Coverdell work with students to think critically about social justice issues found in plays produced on A.C.T. stages that affect their lives. Past projects have explored displacement, gender roles, family, resistance, social justice, housing justice, and immigration. DHS students receive support from tutors provided by 826 Valencia, who are trained by A.C.T. playwrights, to write their own monologues and short plays inspired by those themes. Most recently they focused on themes found in *Between Riverside and Crazy*, which they saw at A.C.T. last fall. The students enjoyed workshops with members of that cast, as well as classes with students and faculty in A.C.T.’s Master of Fine Arts Program.

Because the DHS curriculum is founded on project-based learning, students receive instruction in math, science, and social studies, which they integrate into their plays in addition to fulfilling English language arts standards in their writing and performance. At the end of the semester, the students perform and produce a final exhibition for schoolmates, friends, and family at the A.C.T. Costume Shop or in The Rueff.

“THEATER BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER,
PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

NYKOLE CASTELLANOS

826 Valencia then publishes their monologues and plays in publicly available volumes. Castellanos finds this opportunity to tell stories transformative. “Storytelling is a way for people to come together,” she says. “Theater brings people together, people from all walks of life.”

In addition to acting and playwriting, DHS students are introduced to offstage theatrical career possibilities through A.C.T.’s residency program. Workshops with A.C.T. staff provide insight into backstage careers like theater production, marketing, and graphic design. Some students are inspired to pursue the field of theater education and apprentice in A.C.T. programs after graduation. For Castellanos, it’s about paying it forward. Twice a week, she works at the Excelsior Boys & Girls Club, where she teaches young children theater fundamentals. “I get to teach them the things I learn in class with A.C.T. It brings something out in everybody.”

“

I CAN GET MY MESSAGE ACROSS
IF I APPLY AN ACTOR’S PRESENCE TO MY SPEECH.
IT GIVES ME MORE POWER IN WHAT I SAY.

NYKOLE CASTELLANOS

Castellanos has acquired life skills from studying theater. She says that delivering monologues in class has given her new confidence when it comes to public speaking: “In class, I was reading a monologue that I hadn’t read before. I was making sure I looked up from the paper a couple of times—making eye contact with the audience. I used to have a real fear of public speaking. But now I know that I can get my message across if I apply an actor’s presence to my speech. It gives me more power in what I say.”



Nykole Castellanos performing in the Downtown High School production of *Break Every Chain* at The Rueff in A.C.T.’s Strand Theater. Photo by Jay Yamada.



THE SONG OF SURVIVAL

The *Unfortunates* comes to A.C.T.

BY | SHANNON STOCKWELL

FOR ALMOST ALL OF HUMAN EXISTENCE, WE HAVE USED song to come together—in celebration, yes, but also in the face of sorrow and despair. This courage cultivated by music courses through *The Unfortunates*, a mythical journey filled with harmonies that send shivers up your spine and make you want to cry and dance and live.

The Unfortunates tells the story of tough-talking Big Joe, whose confidence and bravery drive him to enlist as a soldier. But his spirit is tested when he is taken prisoner by the enemy and his friends are mercilessly executed in front of his eyes. Big Joe's final moment on earth explodes into a fever dream in which he has gigantic fists and falls in love with a woman with no arms, all while a deadly plague threatens the lives of the already downtrodden. In this world, Joe learns that the only way to endure the insurmountable grief is by unclenching his fists, holding on to the people who love him, and cherishing the harmonies they make together.

A project almost six years in the making, *The Unfortunates* was created by Jon Beavers, Kristoffer Diaz, Casey Hurt, Ian Merrigan, and Ramiz Monsef. Beavers, Merrigan, and Monsef were part of a hip-hop a capella band called 3blindmice. When

Monsef came to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) in 2010 to perform in *Hamlet*, the group—joined by blues and gospel singer-songwriter Casey Hurt—worked on a special Midnight Project, in which actors are given a chance to work on a personal project outside of their busy schedule. From this collaboration was born *The Unfortunates*, a gritty, surreal journey through musical Americana.

After seeing *The Unfortunates* at OSF, A.C.T. staff members were exhilarated. Text messages, e-mails, and phone calls pinged back and forth between A.C.T. and OSF about getting this offbeat epic to The Strand Theater. A.C.T. fostered the show for two years through New Strands, our play-development and commissioning program. Now, after all the texts and workshops, *The Unfortunates* will land at The Strand this spring.

“These last two years of writing and development were deeply influenced by the energy of working in San Francisco at A.C.T.,” says Merrigan. “For that to culminate with a run in The Strand is beyond exciting.”

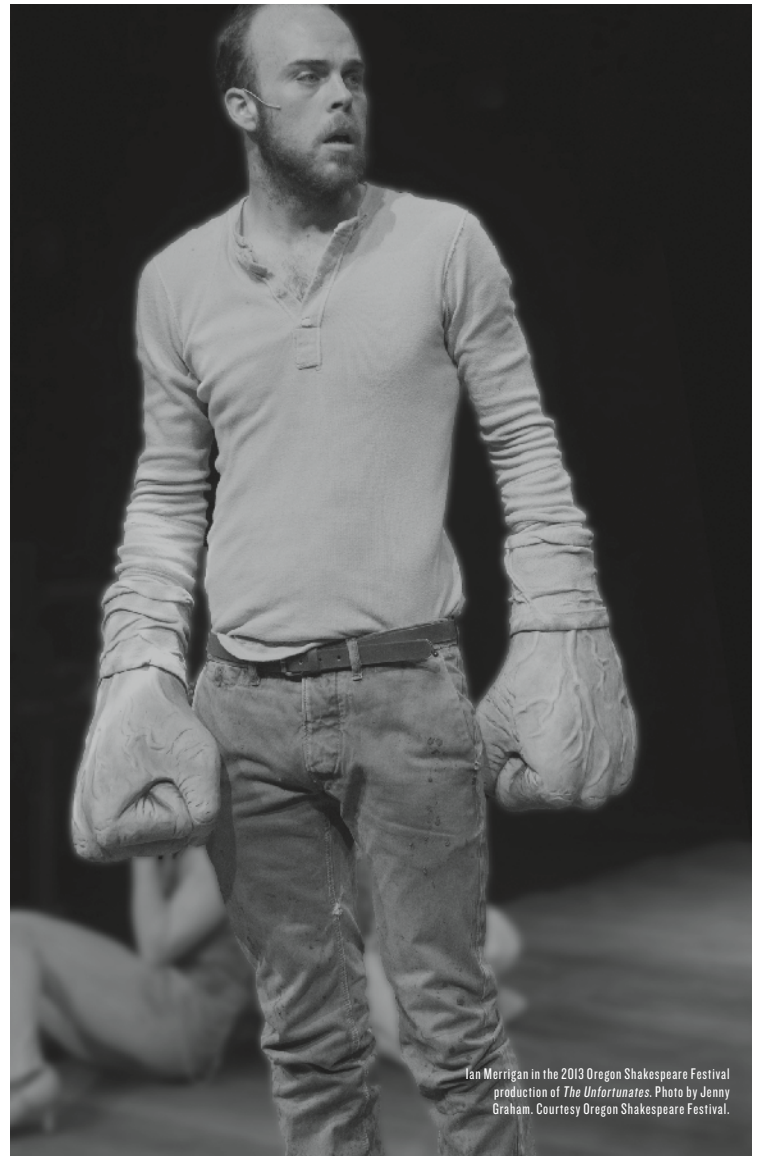
“The energy of San Francisco never ceases to thrill, intrigue, and surprise us with its constant swirl of endlessly eclectic

Left to right: Ramiz Monsef, Jon Beavers, and Ian Merrigan, three of the five creators of *The Unfortunates*. Photo by Thomas Moore.



“THESE LAST TWO YEARS OF WRITING AND DEVELOPMENT WERE **DEEPLY INFLUENCED BY THE ENERGY OF WORKING IN SAN FRANCISCO AT A.C.T.**”

IAN MERRIGAN



Ian Merrigan in the 2013 Oregon Shakespeare Festival production of *The Unfortunates*. Photo by Jenny Graham. Courtesy Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

influences,” says Beavers. “I can’t wait for the Bay Area to feel and hear that echoed back to them in this bizarre and beautiful piece of theater.”

The songs of *The Unfortunates* span a series of uniquely American musical genres, from folk to bluegrass, blues to gospel, jazz to hip-hop. The play is inspired by “St. James Infirmary,” a song that has evolved over the centuries from an Irish folk song called “The Unfortunate Rake.” You can trace the multiple mutations as the song made its way from Ireland in 1790 to an unknown African American blues musician in the beginning of the 1900s. As you do, it becomes clear that the song is a stunning example of how our music is built upon centuries of collaboration and cultural exchange. Music cannot exist without community. Born of this notion, *The Unfortunates* shouts from the gutter: We need community in order to sing. We need to sing in order to survive.

***The Unfortunates* runs from February 3 through April 10 at The Strand Theater, located at 1127 Market Street. To purchase tickets, visit act-sf.org/unfortunates or call 415.749.2228.**

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Following the wildly successful concert presentation at The Geary Theater in spring 2015, *The Last Five Years* receives a brand-new, fully staged production that will close out The Geary's 2015-16 season. Jason Robert Brown, the Tony Award-winning composer of *Parade* and *Honeymoon in Vegas*, brings us this powerful and intimate musical about two twenty-something New Yorkers, struggling actress Cathy and rising novelist Jamie, who dive headfirst into a marriage fueled by the optimism that comes from finding "the one." From one of the most imaginative voices in musical theater, the play features a unique structure in which Cathy's journey is sung from end to beginning, and Jamie's from beginning to end. The lovers' individual accounts reveal that navigating the waters of love and matrimony can prove daunting. Packed with humor, ravishing romance, and an exuberant score, *The Last Five Years*, directed by Michael Berresse, takes an unforgettable look at the hope that love will endure the test of time.

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LEADERSHIP IN THE ARTS

An Interview with Nion McEvoy

BY | SIMON HODGSON

Photo © Najib Joe Hakim

NION MCEVOY COMES FROM SAN FRANCISCO ARTS ROYALTY. His great-grandfather founded the de Young Museum and ran the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He is chairman of Chronicle Books and commissioner for the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and he serves on the boards of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and SFJAZZ. A longtime musician and music fan, he is one of the executive producers of A.C.T.'s production of *Satchmo at the Waldorf*.

Are you a Louis Armstrong fan?

Yes! I grew up as a drummer so I started listening to jazz when I was young. I have a band and we play a couple of events a year. I know a little bit about Louis Armstrong's story. I'm looking forward to seeing *Satchmo*.

As chairman of Chronicle Books, what changes have you seen in storytelling?

There's a spectrum from the artisanal to the robotic, from the analogue to the digital. We've all been experimenting with that range in different ways. In music, from

unvarnished acoustic to pure electronica. In theater, Carey's experimented with different ways of telling stories and incorporating more technology. In San Francisco, of course, that whole gamut is intensively explored, in everything from museums to books to entirely digital ventures.

Your family has a great history of commitment to the arts in San Francisco. How do you see the arts evolving here?

People have looked to San Francisco for leadership in the arts for a long time. That's part of what brings people here. In the '50s the city was friendly to the Beats; in the '60s, it was the rock music scene. We have great arts organizations, like A.C.T., San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco Opera, and the museums. Historically, there's been that sense of everybody being able to rub elbows and be part of the fabric of the city, although we're in danger of losing our bohemian edge in the current boom. It's important to have a strong local theater. A.C.T. has been a key part of the Bay Area community for a long time. I like the direction it's taking, like opening The Strand Theater on Market Street. Carey's done a great job.

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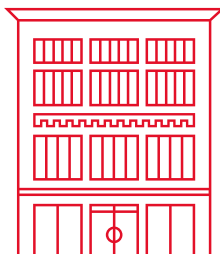
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A.C.T. thanks the physicians and staff of the Centers for Sports Medicine, Saint Francis Memorial Hospital, for their care of the A.C.T. company: Dr. Victor Prieto, Dr. Hoylond Hong, Dr. Susan Lewis, Don Kemp, P.A., and Chris Corpus, Clinic Supervisor.

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 (A.C.T. Artistic Director) is celebrating her 24th season as artistic director of A.C.T. This fall, she directed *Monstress*, adapted by Philip Kan Gotanda and Sean San José from the short stories by Lysley Tenorio. Last season, she staged the New York premiere of Tom Stoppard's *Indian Ink* at Roundabout

Theatre Company (nominated for a Lucille Lortel Award for Best Revival) before bringing the show to A.C.T. Recent A.C.T. productions also include *Testament*, *Underneath the Lintel*, *Arcadia*, *Elektra* (coproduced by the Getty Villa in Malibu), *Endgame* and *Play*, *Scorched*, *The Homecoming*, *Tosca Café* (co-created with choreographer Val Caniparoli; toured Canada), and Racine's *Phèdre* in a coproduction with the Stratford Festival. Known for directing innovative productions of classics and championing new writing for the theater, Perloff has also directed for A.C.T. José Rivera's *Boleros for the Disenchanted*; the world premieres of Philip Kan Gotanda's *After the War* (A.C.T. commission) and her own adaptation (with Paul Walsh) of *A Christmas Carol*; the American premieres of Tom Stoppard's *The Invention of Love* and *Indian Ink*, and Harold Pinter's *Celebration*; A.C.T.-commissioned translations/adaptations of *Hecuba*, *The Misanthrope*, *Enrico IV*, *Mary Stuart*, *Uncle Vanya*, *A Mother*, and *The Voyage Inheritance* (adapted by David Mamet); the world premiere of Leslie Ayvazian's *Singer's Boy*; and major revivals of *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *The Government Inspector*, *Happy End* (including a critically acclaimed cast album recording), *A Doll's House*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *Old Times*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Antigone*, *Creditors*, *The Room*, *Home*, *The Tempest*, and Stoppard's *Rock 'n' Roll*, *Travesties*, *The Real Thing*, and *Night and Day*. Perloff's work for A.C.T. also includes Marie Ndiaye's *Hilda*, the world premieres of Marc Blitzstein's *No for an Answer* and David Lang/Mac Wellman's *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, and the West Coast premiere of her own play *The Colossus of Rhodes* (Susan Smith Blackburn Award finalist).



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. She has also taught and directed in the M.F.A. Program, Summer Training Congress, and Studio A.C.T. Prior to assuming leadership of the Conservatory, Smith was the director of theater and dance at Princeton University, where she taught

Perloff is also an award-winning playwright. Her play *Kinship* premiered at the Théâtre de Paris in October 2014 in a production starring Isabelle Adjani and Niels Schneider and was produced at the Williamstown Theater Festival last summer, starring Cynthia Nixon and directed by Jo Bonney. *Waiting for the Flood* has received workshops at A.C.T., New York Stage and Film, and Roundabout Theatre. *Higher* was developed at New York Stage and Film, won the 2011 Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation Theatre Visions Fund Award, and received its world premiere in February 2012 in San Francisco. *Luminescence Dating* premiered in New York at The Ensemble Studio Theatre, was coproduced by A.C.T. and Magic Theatre, and is published by Dramatists Play Service. *The Colossus of Rhodes* was workshopped at the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference, premiered at Lucille Lortel's White Barn Theatre, and was produced at A.C.T. in 2003.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the world premiere of Ezra Pound's *Elektra*, the American premiere of Pinter's *Mountain Language*, and many classic works. Under Perloff's leadership, CSC won numerous OBIE Awards, including the 1988 OBIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiere of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot's opera *The Cave* at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music.

A recipient of France's Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres and the National Corporate Theatre Fund's 2007 Artistic Achievement Award, Perloff received a B.A. Phi Beta Kappa in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fulbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for seven years, and teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. Perloff is on the board of the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Sarasota, Florida, and is the proud mother of Lexie and Nicholas. Perloff is the author of *Beautiful Chaos: A Life in the Theater* (City Lights, March 2015).

introductory, intermediate, and advanced acting. She has taught acting classes to students of all ages at 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., California Shakespeare Theater, and Berkeley Repertory Theatre; in New York at Primary Stages and Soho Rep; and in England at the Barbican Theatre (London) and Birmingham Repertory Theatre. Smith holds a B.A. from Yale College and an M.F.A. 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.

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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.

A.C.T. MERCHANDISE

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

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

LISTENING SYSTEMS

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

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.



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A.C.T. is pleased to announce that an **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)** is now available on site.

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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.

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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.



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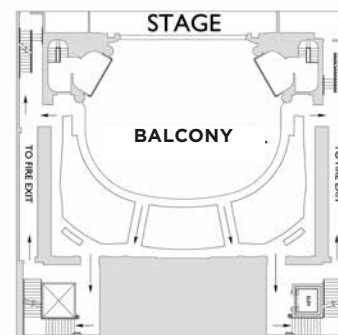
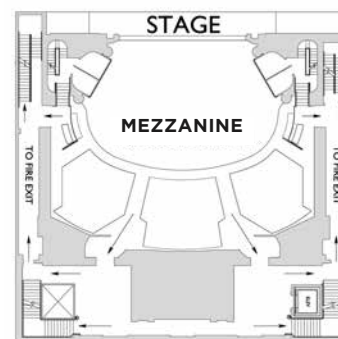
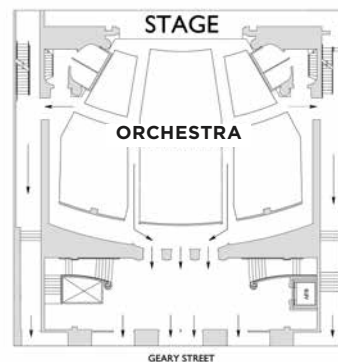


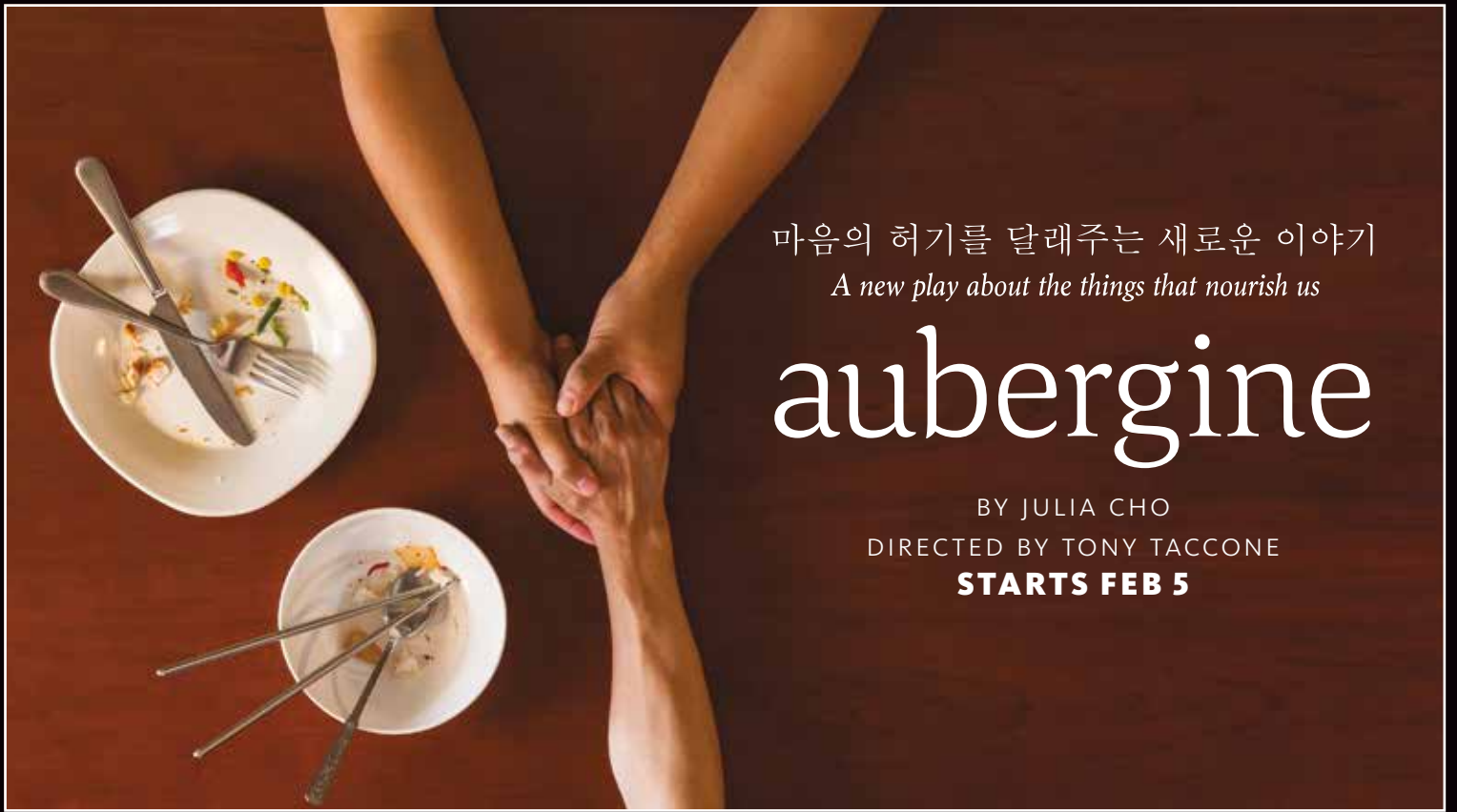
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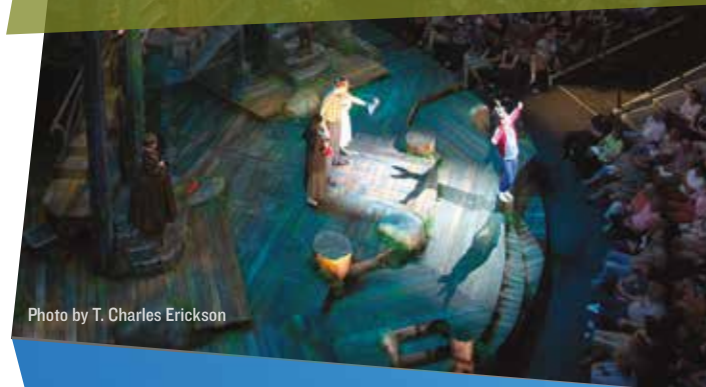


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