the difficulty of crossing a field

a new opera in seven tellings

music by David Lang  libretto by Mac Wellman

directed by Carey Perloff
music direction by Peter Maleitzke
movement by Francine Landes
performed by Kronos Quartet

Theater Artaud • Mar 22–24, 2002

A.C.T.  american conservatory theater  carey perloff, artistic director  heather kitchen, managing director
A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In 1913, a 71-year-old American satirist, abolitionist, and newspaperman from San Francisco walked into the Mexican desert and disappeared.

Years earlier, that writer, Ambrose Bierce, had written an extraordinary story entitled “The Difficulty of Crossing a Field” (first published in 1893), in which a slave owner in the antebellum South (Selma, Alabama, to be precise) walks into a field and disappears. This story was the catalyst for the new opera you are seeing today.

Few people remember that Bierce, in addition to creating the remarkable Devil’s Dictionary, was the author of the story (“The Moonlit Road”) that eventually, in its Japanese form, became the now-classic tale “Rashomon.” In Bierce’s crystalline, epigrammatic short stories, as in “Rashomon,” what concerns the author is less the “truth” of what has occurred than the ripple effects of that occurrence upon a community at large. “Nothing is so improbable as what is true,” wrote Bierce. “It is the unexpected that occurs; but that is not saying enough; it is also the unlikely”—one might also say the impossible.” Bierce’s work is filled with ghosts, which he defined as “the outward and visible sign of an inward fear.” His work resonates with the collision between the relentless logic of the mundane, everyday world and the terrifying seismic shifts that sometimes occur beneath the surface of that world.

Perhaps this is why Bierce’s writing provides fertile ground for music-theater. Beneath the simple, declarative statements of the characters in this opera lies the horror of secrets and lies. Bierce’s story is, in part, about the end of slavery, and about the huge fissure that opened up in American culture when the gap between reality and morality finally grew so wide that it cracked the country open. Mac Wellman’s libretto is full of these images: “Then there is a gap, or a gulf, in the factual evidence, and, consequently, in the truth,” says the Magistrate. “I think today would be the perfect day to drop into the hole of not talking,” says the Williamson Girl. Into that gulf, into the “black hole of history,” fall all our clichés, our rationalizations, our secret knowledge, our family stories. A man walks into a field and disappears. Everyone around him (his wife, his child, his slaves) has his or her own story of why that disappearance means, of why it had to happen, and of what can happen now that there is a “hole” where a man used to be. No one knows the truth. Perhaps there is no truth. But there are infinite possible consequences.

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The Difficulty of Crossing a Field would not have been possible without the extraordinary support of Phyllis C. Watts. The difficulty of crossing a field was developed during Mac Wellman’s residency at A.C.T., which was supported by the National Theatre Artist Residency Program. Administered by Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the American nonprofit theater, the grant program is funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts. During its development process, this project was also funded by a Theatre Communications Group/MeetLife Foundation Extended Collaboration Grant. Additional support was generously provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Fleishhacker Foundation, and Creative Work Fund.

The world premiere of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field is made possible by the generous support of Phyllis C. Watts.
DAVID LANG’s (Composer) work is being heard more and more by audiences around the globe: in performances by such organizations as the Santa Fe Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and Kronos Quartet; at Tanglewood, the BBC Proms, the Musica Biennale, the Settembre Musica Festival, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival, and the Almeida, Holland, Berlin, Strasbourg, and Huddersfield festivals; in theater productions in New York, San Francisco, and London; in the choreography of Twyla Tharp, La La Human Steps, Nederlands Dans Theater, and the Royal Ballet; and at Lincoln Center, the South Bank Centre, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Barbican Centre, and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). Recent projects include the amplified orchestral piece The Passing Measure (named one of the best CDs of 2001 by the New York magazine). Grind to a Halftime for the San Francisco Symphony; the opera Modern Painters; the evening-length piano solo Psalms without Words; and the comic book opera The Carbon Copy Building, with cartoonist Ben Katchor, Bob McGrath and the Ridge Theater, and composers Michael Gordon and Julia Wolfe (which won the 2006 OBIE Award for best new American work).

Liang has been honored with the Rome Prize, the BMI Music Theater Prize (Musica), a Kennedy Center/Friedheim Award, the Reeve Fellowship with the New York Philharmonic, and grants from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1999 he received a Bessie Award for his music for choreographer Susan Marshall’s The Most Dangerous Room in the House, performed live by the Bang on a Can All-Stars at BAM’s Next Wave Festival.

MAC WELLMAN’s (Librettist) recent plays include Description Beggarly, or the Allegory of Whiteness (commissioned by the Actors Theatre of Louisville for its 2001 Humana Festival) and Jennifer Richter. He has received numerous honors, including National Endowment for the Arts grants in 1985, 1987, 1990, 1991, and 1994 and an OBIE Award (best new American play) for Bad Penny, Terminal Hop, and Crowder. In 1991 he received another OBIE for Sinfully Forever. His most recent books are Cellephane, a collection of plays (PAJ/John Hopkins University Press), and Miniature, a book of poems (Rockroof Books). He is the Donald I. Fine Professor of Playwriting at Brooklyn College.

CAREY PERLOFF (Dresser) assumed artistic leadership of A.C.T. in June 1992 and is currently in her tenth season as artistic director. Known for directing innovative productions of classics and championing new writing for the theater, Perloff has staged for A.C.T. the American premieres of Tom Stoppard’s The Invention of Love and Indian ink, the first American production of Harold Pinter’s Celebration and The Room, new A.C.T.-commissioned translations of Noceda, The Misanthrope, Enrico IV, Mary Stuart, and Uncle Vanya, the world premieres of Leslie Ayvazian’s Singer’s Boy, acclaimed productions of The Threepenny Opera, Old Times, Arcadia, The Rose Tattoo, Antigone, Creators, Home and the Tempest, and the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program’s world premiere production of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer. In May she will direct A.C.T.’s Geary Theater production of Michel Tremblay’s For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again, featuring Olympia Dukakis and Marco Barricelli. Last summer her play The Colossus of Rhodes received its world premiere at Lucille Lortel’s White Barn Theatre and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackson Award.

Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of the 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 The Birthday Party, and many classic works. Under Perloff’s leadership, Classic Stage won numerous OBIE Awards for acting, direction, and design, as well as the 1988 OBIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premieres of Steve Reich and Beryl Korot’s opera The Cave at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music. Perloff received a B.A. 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. M.F.A. Program.

KRONOS QUARTET—David Harrington, John Sherba, Hank Dutt, and Jennifer Culp—has emerged as a vital voice for new work since its inception in 1973. Known for its unique artistic vision and fearless dedication to experimentation, Kronos has been commissioning new work since its earliest days. More than 450 pieces have been written or arranged for the group, whose extensive repertoire ranges from Alban Berg, Albert Schinckle, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Morton Feldman to Hildegard von Bingen, Charles Mingus, and Antonio Maria. Kronos also has ongoing creative relationships with such composers as Terry Riley, Franz Sch-Az-Zadeh, and Oskar Kolberg. Kronos has collaborated with countless artists from all over the globe. Kronos has recently premiered, or will soon premiere, works written for the group by Ellen Fullman, Philip Glass, Michael Gordon, Gun Wenberg, Melissa Hui, Willem Jeths, John King, David Lang, Matmos, Heimut Dehning, Gabriela Ortiz, P. G. Phan, Stephen Proutman, Steve Reich, Patric Vasko, Aleksandra Vrabel, and Julia Wolfe.

Kronos performs more than 100 concerts annually throughout the world in concert halls, clubs, and at jazz festivals. Recent tours have included appearances at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Kennedy Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival, Moscow’s Conservatory of Music, the Prague Spring International Music Festival, the Sydney Opera House, Southern California’s Ecstatic Orange Festival, London’s Royal Festival Hall, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, La Scala, the Théâtre la Ville in Paris, and Vancouver’s Chan Centre for the Performing Arts.

The quartet records exclusively for Nonesuch Records, and the group’s recorded performances have been heard throughout the world on radio and television, in films, and in live dance and theater performances. Of Kronos’s nearly 30 recordings, six have received Grammy Award nominations.

PETER MALEITZEK (Music Director) has served as music director for Geary Theater Productions of A Christmas Carol, The First Picture Show, and The Threepenny Opera at A.C.T., as well as last fall’s A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program world premiere production of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer at Zeum Theater. Maleitzeck made his concert piano debut in Paris’s Salon Phelip in 1975. He completed a master’s degree at the University of Michigan, studying with Leon Fleisher. He has toured the United States and Europe as a pianist/locandist; an active studio player, he has worked for all the major television networks. Maleitzeck has numerous other regional music direction credits, including Gypsy, A Little Night Music, Rag, and The Most Happy Fella, and was conductor of San Francisco’s Phantom of the Opera. He studied conducting with George Meyer, worked as musical assistant to Michael Tilton Thomas, and was resident conductor of the Tuscan Music Festival, Italy. Maleitzeck is on the A.C.T. Artistic Council and teaches in the A.C.T. M.F.A. Program. He is currently music director on the new musical The Count of Monte Cristo.

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NANCY SCHERTLER (Lighting Designer) designed the Broadway productions of Abbey’s Song and Bill Irwin’s Fool Moon and Large/Large New York (for which she earned a Tony Award nomination). Off-Broadway credits include Texts for Nothing at Classic Stage Company, The Birds of the Moon at New York Theatre Workshop, and Falsehoods and Fears at Playwrights Horizons. She has also worked extensively at regional theaters throughout the United States, including Fool Moon and Texts for Nothing at A.C.T., as well as productions at the Huntington Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre Center, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Roundabout Theatre Company, Seattle Repertory Theatre, The Shakespeare Theatre, and Arena Stage, where she is an associate artist. Her opera works includes Don Giovanni and The Daughter of the Regent for Boston Lyric Opera and Cool Hot Love at the California Institute of the Arts, at Wolf Trap Opera Company. Schertler has received numerous Helen Hayes Award nominations and an American Theatre Wing Design Award nomination.

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PENNY B. LIGHTNESS (at San Jose Repertory Theatre; Evita with American Musical Theatre of San Jose; Funny Face, Babes in Arms, and Dear World with 42nd Street Moon. A Little Night Music at Lampighters Music Theatre; Chicago at Pacific Repertory Theatre; and The Night of the Iguana and The Wizard of Oz at Center Rep. She is completing her B.A. in theater arts at San Francisco State University, she is also studied with the British American Drama Academy and the A.C.T. Summer Training Congress.

RANDALL GREMLINSON (Armour When, Andrew) originated his roles in the concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. He has also been seen at A.C.T. in The Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff) and A Christmas Carol. He spent five years performing in the San Francisco Opera production of The Phantom of the Opera. Other local theater credits include Big River and South Pacific (American Musical Theatre of San Jose) and Sunday in the Park with George (TheatreWorks). As a recitalist, he received the Jan de Gaetani Prize (Naumburg Awards).

MICHELLE E. JORDAN (Old Woman, Chorus), a Bay Area native, has performed in Ain’t Misbehavin’ at Oakland Ensemble Theatre; Go Down, Harley; Hi Hat; and Dreamgirls (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award) at TheatreWorks; Cole’ at Theatre on the Square; Tune the Grand Up (Drama-Logue Award); and Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. She was a featured vocalist with the New Traveling Voices, touring Europe in the 1980s, and is featured on the CD Triumph of the Human Spirit. Jordan has also been the choir director for East Bay Church of Religious Science in Oakland, which has performed in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Aczua (Ghana), and New York (Carnegie Hall). She studied at Cal State Hayward and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and teaches in East Bay schools.

FREDERICK MATHEWS (Chorus) has appeared to great acclaim in many concert and opera stages. A North Carolina native who recently relocated to the Bay Area, he has been seen in a variety of roles with the San Francisco Opera (where he serves as a tenured member of the Opera Chorus), including the Corporal, opposite Kathleen Battle and Frank Lipardo, in Donizetti’s La Fille du régiment Ein Diener in Berg’s Lulu, the Official Registrar in Puccini’s Madame Butterfly; the Auction Buyer in Rake’s Progress; Marschallin Lackey in Der Rosenkavalier; and Imate #5 in the world premiere of Dead Man Walking; which is now available on CD. Matthews is also featured in the Academy Award-winning documentary In the Shadow of the Stars, produced by LightSail Films.

JULIA MIGENES (Mrs. Williamson) began her Broadway career in the original cast of Fiddler on the Roof (with Zero Mostel) and playing Maria in West Side Story. Her opera career was launched with her much-acclaimed performance as a substitute in the title role of Lucrezia at the New York Metropolitan Opera. Migenes then appeared in Geneva in the title role of Maurizio Bittar’s Salome, followed by Bittar’s title character in Francesco Rosi’s film treatment of Carmen (Migenes received a Grammy Award for the sound track). She has appeared in the major opera houses and the world’s major opera houses and the world and recorded more than 20 albums. Among her most recent recordings are Vienna, conducted by Lalo Schifrin (a gold record six months after its release); Man of La Mancha, conducted and arranged by Paul Gasimov, with Placido Domingo, Samuel Ramey, and Mandy Patinkin; Robert Stolz and The Music of Franz Lehar for BBC; and Donizetti’s Catterina Cornaro. Migenes has performed her one-woman show, Diva on the Verge, in French throughout France and French-speaking countries and is preparing a Spanish version for a Latin American tour. She also interpreted The Seven Deadly Sins and Happy End at the Zurich Festival Theatre in Madrid. Last spring, she created Passions Latinas, a choreographed recital of classical and traditional Latin music which she performed at the Paris Olympia and will present at the Royal Festival Hall in London this spring.

JACOB MING-TRENT (Boy Sam), a tenor, is a second-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program, where he has performed in Mourning Becomes Electra and The King and I. Before attending A.C.T., he performed in and around Pittsburgh and the New York area. Favorite productions and roles include Jesus Christ Superstar (Herod), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Thiseus), The W! (Lion), and Godspell (Judas).

ANIKA NONI ROSE (Virginia Creaper, Chorus) originated her role in A.C.T.’s concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. She has also been seen at A.C.T. in productions of The Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff), Tartuffe, and Jesus Christ Superstar (Herod). She appeared on Broadway as Rusty in Footloose and received a 2001 OBIE Award for her performance in the world premiere of El’s Comm’ out Broadway at New York’s Vineyard Theatre. She also received a 1998 Backstage West/Drama-Logue/Guild Award and a Dean Goodman Choice Award for Valiyy Song at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other local theater credits include Afloat; Blasphemy; A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Thiseus); The W! (Lion); and Godspell (Judas).

DAVID RYAN SMITH (Chorus) is a second-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program, where he has performed in Fallen Angels, Mourning Becomes Electra, Putting It Together, and Fathers and Sons. Last summer he appeared in the Bay Area Playwrights Festival workshop of Motherhouse, by Victor Lobato. He received his B.F.A. in theater performance from the University of Evanville.

FRED WINDHOP (Chorus) has performed leading roles in more than 50 operas, including Radames in Aïda, Don Jose in Carmen, Manrico in Il Trovatore, Cavadorossi in Tosca, and Rodolfo in La Bohème, among many others. In 1997 he sang the role of Des Grieux in Berkeley Opera’s Manon Lescaut and Turiddu in Oakland Lyric Opera’s Cavalleria Rusticana. Recent performances also include L’Pikton in Madame Butterfly at Sonoma Community Center, Cavadorossi in San Francisco Lyric Opera’s Tosca, and Rodolfo in Berkeley Opera’s La Bohème. Miller has been a full-time member of the San Francisco Opera chorus since 1995.

KATE STEWART (Stage Manager) has stage-managed numerous productions for A.C.T., including Bucket Chief, Ray Fever, A History of the American Film, Hotel Paradiso, Julius Caesar, Orwell, and, most recently, Singer’s Boy. In New York, she worked as a stage manager, company manager, and production manager for many theaters, including Circle Repertory Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, the American Opera Center at the Juilliard School, and Lincoln Center Theater. Favorite productions include The House of Blue Leaves at Lincoln Center, Crimes of the Heart at Manhattan Theatre Club, and Scandal, Michael Bennett’s final production. She was also a stage manager for The Phantom of the Opera’s two-year run in San Francisco.

AMBROSE GWINNETT BIERCE (b. 1842, Meigs County, Ohio—d. 1914, Mexico?), an American newspaper columnist, satirist, essayist, and author of sardonic short stories and novels, settled in San Francisco after being injured fighting in the Civil War. A staunch critic (nicknamed “Bitter Bierce”) and an enigmatic figure, he soon developed a reputation as the West Coast literary arbiter. His “Phatter” column for the San Francisco Examiner specialized in attacks on fads of all kinds. He is perhaps best known for his numerous short stories, collected in Tales of Soldiers and Civilians (1891; revised as In the Midst of Life, 1892). Bierce’s death remains a mystery. Weary of American life, he went to Mexico during Pancho Villa’s revolution in 1913 and disappeared. He is presumed to have been killed during the siege of Ojinaga in January 1914.
MARCO BARRICELLI (Mr. Williamson, Presiding Magistrate), an A.C.T. associate artist and company member, has appeared in The Beard of Avon (as Edward de Vere), Celebration and The Room, Einenvo. W (title role; Dean Goodman Award), Geraldine Glen Ross (Dean Goodman Award), The Invention of Love (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award; Dean Goodman Award), Long Days’ Journey into Night, Hedda, Mary Stuart, Insurrection, Holding a Heart, The Streetcar Named Desire, and The Rose Tattoo (Drama Logue Award). Theatre credits also include Tamara on Broadway, Silence with the Japanese theater company Suburuban, the title role of NAmbled, Henry V, Richard III, and many other plays at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and productions at the Guthrie Theater, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, South Coast Repertory, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Huntington Theatre Company, Missouri Repertory Theatre, Intiman Theatre, Virginia Stage Company, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Arizona Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, and the Utah, California, and Illinois Shakespeare festivals, among others. Screen credits include "L.A. Law," Romeo and Juliet, and 11th Hour. A graduate of The Juilliard School, Barricelli teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. 

PAMELA DILLARD (Chorus), a mezzo-soprano, performed the title role of Carmen with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the title role of Oberlin’s La Belle Helene with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She has performed major and supporting operatic roles with the San Francisco Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Opera Columbus, and other regional houses. She has also sung with several major symphonies, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, and Colorado Symphony. She has worked with many renowned conductors, including Donald Runnicles, Seiji Ozawa, Keith Lockhart, John Williams, and Yves Leter. Dillard can be heard on the CDs Watch and Play Spirituals, and Art Songs by Black Women Composers (Koch International Classics) and Preachers’ Favorites (Music for Little People) and on the soundtrack of Steven Spielberg’s Amistad (Sony Records). 

MARIE ANNE DOBBS (The Williamson Girl) originated this role in A.C.T.’s concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. Last fall at A.C.T., she was seen in James Joyce’s The Dead. Theatre credits also include the concert performance of Polly Pen’s Her Lightness at San Jose Repertory Theatre; Evita with American Musical Theatre Company of San Jose; Funny Face, Babes in Arms, and Dear World with 42nd Street Moon. A Little Night Music at Lamplighters Music Theatre; Citizen at Pacific Repertory Theatre; and The Night of the Iguana and The Wizard of Oz at Center Rep. She is completing her B.A. in theater arts at San Francisco State University; she has also studied with the British American Drama Academy and the A.C.T. Summer Training Congress. 

RANDALL GREMILLOIN (Armor Wearer, Andrew) originated his roles in the concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. He has also been seen in A.C.T. in The Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff) and A Christmas Carol. He spent five years performing in the San Francisco performance of The Phantom of the Opera. Other local theater credits include Big River and South Pacific (American Musical Theatre of San Jose) and Sunday in the Park with George (TheatreWorks). As a recitalist, he received the Jan de Gaetani Prize (Naumburg Awards). 

MICHELLE E. JORDAN (Old Woman, Chorus), a Bay Area native, has appeared in Ain’t Misbehavin’ at Oakland Ensemble Theater; Go Down Garvey, Hi Hat Hatte, and Dreamgirls (Bay Area Theatre Critics’ Circle Award) at TheatreWorks; Cole’ at Theatre on the Square; Tune the Grand Up (Drama Logue Award); and Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom at the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. She was a featured vocalist with the New Traveling Voices, touring Europe in the 1980s, and is featured on the CD Triumph of the Human Spirit. Jordan has also been the choir director for East Bay Church of Religious Science in Oakland, which has performed in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Acacia (Ghana), and New York (Carnegie Hall). She studied at Cal State Hayward and the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and teaches in East Bay schools. 

FREDERICK MERRICK (Chorus) has appeared to great acclaim in many concert and opera stages. A North Carolina native who recently relocated to the Bay Area, he has been seen in a variety of roles with the San Francisco Opera (where he serves as a tenured member of the Opera Chorus), including the Corporal, opposite Kathleen Battle and Franklopardo, in Donzetti’s La Fila del regimiento Ein Diener in Berg’s Lujo; the Official Registrar in Puccini’s Madame Butterfly; the Auction Buyer in Rake’s Progress; Marschallin Lackey in Der Rosenkavalier; and Imme 5 in the world premiere of Dead Man Walking, which is now available on CD. Merrick is also featured in the Academy Award-winning documentary In the Shadow of the Stars, produced by Light-Sail Films. 

JULIA MIGNEES (Mrs. Williamson) began her Broadway career in the original cast of Fiddler on the Roof (with Zero Mostel) and playing Maria in West Side Story. Her opera career was launched with her much-acclaimed performance as a substitute in the title role of Lucrea at the New York Metropolitan Opera. Mignees then appeared in Geneva in the title role of Maurice Bejart’s Salome; followed by Bieit’s title character in Francesco Ros’s film treatment of Carmen (Mignees received a Grammy Award for the soundtrack). She has appeared in all the major opera houses and world tours over the last decade. Among her most recent recordings are Vienna, conducted by Laio Schifrin (a gold record six months after its release); Man of La Mancha, conducted and arranged by Paul Garamigni, with Placido Domingo, Samuel Ramey, and Mandy Patinkin; Robert Stroz and The Music of Franz Lehár for BBC; and Donizetti’s Caterina Cornaro. Mignees has performed her one-woman show, Diana on the Verge, in French throughout France and French-speaking countries and is currently preparing a Spanish version for a Latin American tour. She also interpreted The Seven Deadly Sins and Happy End at the Zanella Theatre in Madrid. Last spring, she created Passions Latines, a choreographed recital of classical and traditional Latin music, which she performed at the Parks Olymie and will present at the Royal Festival Hall in London this spring.

JACOB MING-TRENT (Boy Sam), a tenor, is a second-year student in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program, where he has performed in Mourning Becomes Electra and The King Slayer. Before attending A.C.T., he performed in and around Pittsburgh and the New York area. Favorite productions and roles include Jesus Christ Superstar (Herod), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Thiboe), The W.O. (ION), and Godspell (Jesus). 

ANIKA NONI ROSE (Virginia Creaper, Chorus) originated this role in A.C.T.’s concert presentation of The Difficulty of Crossing a Field in 1999. She has also been seen in A.C.T. productions of Threepenny Opera (directed by Carey Perloff), Tarvit, and Resurrection/Mr. Henderson. She appeared on Broadway as Rusty in Footloose and received a 2001 OBIE Award for her performance in the world premiere of El’s Corner at Broadway’s New York Vineyard Theatre. She also received a 1998 Backstage West/Drama-Logue Garland Award and a Dean Goodman Choice Award for Valley Song at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Other local theater credits include Abolitionsupersaver’s Watermelon with Thad Description of New Langton Arts and Hydrolife, or the Death of Dr. Brower at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Rose received her M.F.A. from the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. She guest-stars this month as Money on NBC’s “Third Watch.”
AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER nurtures the art of live theater through dynamic productions, intensive actor training in its conservatory, and an ongoing dialogue with its community. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Carey Perloff and Managing Director Heather Kitchen, A.C.T. embraces its responsibility to conserve, renew, and reinvent its relationship to the rich theatrical traditions and literatures that are our collective legacy, while exploring new artistic forms and new communities. A commitment to the highest standards informs every aspect of A.C.T.’s creative work.

Founded in 1965 by William Ball, A.C.T. opened its first San Francisco season at the Geary Theater in 1967. In the 1970s, A.C.T. solidified its national and international reputation, winning a Tony Award for outstanding theater performance and training in 1979. During the past three decades, more than 300 A.C.T. productions have been performed to a combined audience of seven million people; today, A.C.T.’s performance, education, and outreach programs annually reach more than 250,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1996, A.C.T.’s efforts to develop creative talent for the theater were recognized with the prestigious Jujamcyn Theaters Award.

Today A.C.T. is recognized nationally for its groundbreaking productions of classical works and bold explorations of contemporary playwriting. Since the reopening of the Geary Theater in 1996, A.C.T. has enjoyed a remarkable period of audience expansion and renewed financial stability. The company continues to produce challenging theater in the rich context of symposia, audience discussions, and community interaction.

The conservatory, led by Melissa Smith, now serves 3,000 students every year. It was the first training program in the United States not affiliated with a college or university accredited to award a master of fine arts degree. Danny Glover, Annette Bening, Denzel Washington, and Winona Ryder are among the conservatory’s distinguished former students. With its commitment to excellence in actor training and to the relationship between training, performance, and audience, the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program has moved to the forefront of America’s actor training programs, while serving as the creative engine of the company at large.

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Scene construction and painting, properties, costumes, and wigs were provided by A.C.T. shops and staff.

Theater and Performance Crew
Master Carpenter Tom Tischler
Stage Hand Blake Mansnip
Master Electrician Jared O’Hirsh
Light Board Operator Michael Ford
Audio Master/Sound Operator Garth Hemphill
Audio Assistant Andy Lipnick
Wardrobe/Wigs Grace Lee, Janice Stephenson
Technicians Phillip Trevino, Lisa Hori-Garcia, Dylan Mills, Lydia Baldwin, Cliff Caruthers, Alex Jimenez, Ralph Cutler
Rehearsal Pianist Steve Sanders

A.C.T. Resident Associates
Producing Associate Jennifer Caleshu
Lighting Design Associate Kimberly J. Scott
Scenic Design Associate Dustin O’Neill

A.C.T. gratefully acknowledges the contributions of everyone on the A.C.T. staff who helped make this production possible.

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