Well

by

Lisa Kron

Directed by Leigh Silverman

A.C.T. | encore
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THE SET-UP

The business of ethics, the ethics of business—the drive to get ahead at the expense of those you love most—the thrilling comedy of David Mamet, who cracks open Harley Granville-Barker’s 1905 classic. The stage adaptation in a world-premiere in a world-premiere adaptation for A.C.T.

PERLOFF

VOYSEY

THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE

MAR 18-APR 17 Geary Theater

by Harley Granville-Barker | ADAPTED BY David Mamet | DIRECTED BY Carey Perloff

Lilies in Bloom at Zeum Theater

A.C.T. core acting company member Gregory Wallace makes his A.C.T./Zeum Theater debut in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program’s production of Lilies, Michel Marc Bouchard’s romantic drama about the passionate love between two young men at a Catholic boys’ school in rural Canada in 1912. After a correspondence between A.C.T. and Theatre Rhythmoceros, is being performed at Zeum in repertory with Steve Gossch’s Female Transport; both productions feature members of the MFA Program’s class of 2009, performing alongside professional actors. We caught up with Wallace to discuss Lilies.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO?

GW: As an artist, I am always looking for a new direction to work in. My character, the Countess de Tilly, is very complex, and the play is staged in a highly unusual manner. I also find the idea of an African-American man playing a French woman to be incredibly fun.

WHAT IS IT LIKE WORKING WITH A.C.T.’S M.F.A. STUDENTS, MANY OF WHOM YOU’VE TAUGHT IN THE CLASSROOM?

I have known these students for almost three years now—taught them, directed them, and watched them grow as artists—and they may be surprised to hear I’m learning as much from them as they ever did from me.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE AUDIENCE CAN EXPECT FROM LILIES?

This is a very dangerous play to come into with preconceived notions, even if you are familiar with the film version. The audience should expect to see an exquisite, challenging, and deeply layered play. And they should save a lot of time afterwards to debate the show with their friends; this is definitely a play that will follow you home at the end of the night.

In repertory at

Zeum Theater:

LILIES

by Michel Marc Bouchard | Translated by Linda Cabotau

Directed by Serge Denoncourt

Produced with Theatre Rhythmoceros

MAR 10-APR 2

FEMALE TRANSPORT

by Steve Gossch

Directed by Anne Kaudman

MAR 8-APR 3

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WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT LILIES?
CA: As an artist, I am always looking for a new direction to work in. My character, the Countess de Tilly, is very complex, and the play is staged in a highly unusual manner. I also find the idea of an African American man playing a French woman to be incredibly fun.

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Translated by Linda Gaboriau
Directed by Serge Denoncourt
Produced with Theatre Rhinoceros
MAR 10-APR 2

FEMALE TRANSPORT
by Steve Gotch
Directed by Anne Kaufman
MAR 8-APR 3

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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

On the first day of rehearsals for William in San Francisco, Lisa Kron said that if pressed to describe her new play in one sentence, she would say that it explores the “challenges of empathy.” I love that articulation, because it encapsulates much of what is both moving and hilarious about this remarkable piece: how do we empathize with illness in a culture obsessed with wellness?

We spend an enormous time in American culture obsessing about health, while at the same time behaving in all kinds of ways guaranteed to promote sickness. In particular, we love to talk about “stress” (a word I don’t remember hearing uttered as a child). We seem convinced that if we could just eliminate stress, we would give birth to the healthy, healthy culture we imagine we have in ourselves to create—but probably wouldn’t recognize if we found ourselves a part of it.

Into this context arrives Lisa Kron’s hilarious and apt new play William, which she and her collaborators have continued to develop since their sold-out run at The Public Theater in New York a year ago. It is always a great pleasure to engage in such vigorous new work, and recently that engagement has taken place at every level of A.C.T.: January saw Freya Thomas’s new adaptation of Regnard’s 17th-century farce The Gammerel delight audiences here at the Geary, while the English-language premiere of Hilda, a mysterious new French play by Marie Delrieu, opened at Zeum, where we have been developing and producing many new plays.

At the same time, our third-year Master of Fine Arts Program students workshoped several plays by outstanding writers: Amy Freed, an A.C.T. alumna and author of the delightful The Board of Ave., Stuart Thompson, a wonderful Scottish playwright; and Russell Lee, from upstate New York. And as you read this, we are hard at work collaborating with David Mamet on his brilliant A.C.T.-commissioned adaptation of Granville-Barker’s 1905 play The Fugitive Hare, which begins its world-premiere run at the Geary on March 18.

We hope the invigorating spirit of Lisa Kron’s William will inspire you to come back and see other work at A.C.T. You are a crucial part of A.C.T.’s efforts to support exciting new artists at every stage of their careers, and for that we are deeply grateful. Have a wonderful time with William.

Yours,

Caroly Perloff
A.C.T. Artistic Director
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Yours,

Carly Perloff
A.C.T. Artistic Director
ABOUT A.C.T.

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 Executive 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 270,000 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. In 2001, to celebrate A.C.T.'s 35th anniversary and Perloff's 10th season, A.C.T. created a new core company of actors, who have become instrumental in every aspect of its work.

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 financial stability. In 2001, A.C.T. began producing alternative work at Zeum Theater, which now serves as a venue for student productions and exciting new plays. 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 actor 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.

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American Conservatory Theater was founded in 1965 by William Ball.

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Artistic Director 1986–92

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american conservatory theater
Carey Perloff, Artistic Director • Heather Kitchen, Executive Director

presents

Well

by Lisa Kron
Directed by Leigh Silverman

Scenery by Allen Moyer
Costumes by Miranda Hoffman
Lighting by Christopher Akerlund
Sound by Garth Fenton
Dramaturg by John Dias
Casting by Jordan Thaler/Heidi Griffins
San Francisco Casting by Meryl Lind Shaw

The Cast
Lisa Kron
Ensemble
Lisa Kron
Sashak Amira Eklona
Jayne Hoadley
A-mon Rhead
Joel Van Liew
Welker White

Understudies
For Lisa Kron, Jayne Hoadley, and Welker White—Stacy Ross
For Sashak Jvila Eklona—Dawn-Elin Fraser
For A-mon Rhead—David Ryan Smith
For Joel Van Liew—Loren Nordlund

Stage Management Staff
Martha Donaldson, Stage Manager
Elisa Gutierrez, Assistant Stage Manager
Susan Martin, Intern

Additional Credits
Elizabeth Williamson, Assistant Director

Well will be performed without an intermission.

Original New York production by The Public Theater
Maria Manos, Executive Director • George C. Wolfe, Producer

A workshop production of Well was commissioned by The Public Theater with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Lucille Lortel Foundation as part of New York's annual play reading festival. Developed with the assistance of the Sundance Institute Theatre Laboratory. Well is a project of the Creative Capital Foundation.

This production is sponsored in part by

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Dramaturg

John Dias
Casting by Jordan Thaler/Heidi Griffiths

San Francisco Casting by Meryl Lind Shaw

THE CAST
Lisa Kron
Ensemble

The cast includes:
Sasha Aricka Ekolu
Jaye Hoadley
A-rin Rice
Joel Van Liew
Walker White

UNDERSTUDIES
For Lisa Kron, Jayne Hoadley, and Walker White—Stacy Ross
For Sasha Aricka Ekolu—Dawn-Elin Fraser
For A-rin Rice—David Ryan Smith
For Joel Van Liew—Loren Norland

STAGE MANAGEMENT STAFF
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Elisa Guthertz, Assistant Stage Manager
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This production is sponsored in part by EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Hilton
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IDENTITY CRISIS

BY ELIZABETH BRODERSEN

Lisa Kron appears to be having an identity crisis. Recognized on the one hand as a performer of wryly poignant, self-revelatory one-woman shows, she also has a devoted following, particularly in San Francisco, as a member of the irreverently avant-garde ensemble The Five Lesbian Brothers. In Well, Kron's most recent theatrical experiment, her worlds collide, as Lisa the solo artist shares her onstage life with a dramatic community of her own making.

As with all of Kron's solo work, the facts portrayed in Well are true. Growing up as a white Jewish girl in a significantly African-American midwestern suburb of Lansing, Michigan—where her mother, Ann Kron, was the founder and longtime leader of the West Side Neighborhood Association—Kron found herself something of an outsider. She turned her considerable creative energy to performance. "I always thought of myself as a performer," Kron has said. "I don't know why. I never did school plays or anything, but when I was in junior high school, I set myself a conscious mission to figure out how to make myself really funny. I wanted people to say, Lisa Kron is the funniest person I ever met." I did a study of what was funny and what was obvious and how to be funny and likable at the same time, which can be a particularly difficult line for girls to tread."

Forced to leave college by chronic exhaustion and ill health, Kron checked herself into the alcohol unit of Chicago's Homan Hospital for the diagnosis and treatment of various food and environmental allergies. She later moved to New York City to pound the pavement as an actor, paying her dues with roles in summer stock, soul-sucking auditions, and uninspiring plays. Eventually she found her way to the WOW Cafe collective on the Lower East Side, a haven for female artists with unruly attitudes, where she discovered that "any woman who puts in time can do her own show." After surprising herself with the success of an impromptu variety-night performance, Kron realized she had found her niche. Dedicating herself to the search for a way to make her unique brand of storytelling work onstage, she experimented with a vaudevillian variety of performance styles, developing a quirky flair for the first-person monologue into an art form that illuminates the murky territory between historical fact and personal remembrance with impeccable comic timing and a fearless capacity for self-mortification.

Meanwhile, Kron joined with fellow WOW alumns Maureen Angelos, Bobbi Davy, Dominique Dibble, and Peg Healey to form the theater company The Five Lesbian Brothers, creating a series of dashingly comic plays (Voyage to Lesbos, Bride of the Moon, The Secretaries, and Brave Smiles [the latter three presented to acclaim at San Francisco's Theatre Rhinoceros throughout the 1990s]) that skewer conventional contemporary images of women. In the course of collaboration, Kron found her way to dramatic structure and form.

With the monologues 101 Homiliating Stories (in San Francisco at the late, lamented Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint in 1995)—about a succession of comic adventures ranging from junior high school gym class to the excruciating world of the law firm temp, told as a series of painfully hilarious specatcles at a high school prom— and the OBIE Award-winning 2.5 Minute Ride (Magic Theatre, 1998)—in which Kron reports on a devastating trip she made to Auschwitz with her father—Kron hit her stride as a solo performance artist. Finally, in Well, Kron has expanded the solo form to bring the ensemble (and her mother) onstage with her. The experiment appears to have succeeded: Well premiered at New York's Public Theater in March 2004 to resounding acclaim, making its way onto the "ten-best" lists of the country's leading critics and earning a host of nominations and awards. Kron spoke to us as Well was about to go into rehearsals for its West Coast premiere at A.C.T.

ELIZABETH BRODERSEN: I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU DEVELOPED WELL OVER THREE YEARS, AT WORKSHOPS WITH THE DIRECTOR (LEIGH SILVERMAN) AND A DRAMATURG (JOHN DIA). DID THEIR INVOLVEMENT HELP YOU MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM SOLO PERFORMER TO "SOLO PERFORMER WITH OTHER PEOPLE ONSTAGE WITH YOU?"

LISA KRON: I don't think I knew quite what this was going to be when I started. One of the first workshops was at Long Wharf Theatre. The first week it was a solo and the next week it had other people in it. There were audience members who came both weeks. The first week they said, "I can't picture this not being a solo." The next week they said, "I can't imagine this without other characters."

I started, as I always do, by writing short, anecdotal pieces. Then, with the collaboration of Leigh and John I started the long process of fitting out how to shape the piece and turn it into a play. I had a notion that there was some thematic relationship between this group of stories about the hospital and this group of stories about the neighborhood I grew up in. It took a really long time to figure out how to knit them together into a play.

I always develop my plays with collaborators, because, for whatever reason, I don't have the ability to picture a narrative arc in my head. Maybe it's because I started out as a performer rather than a writer. I only know what I have when I see it reflected back. I have to keep putting it out in front of an audience, and I have to be in constant discussion with a dramaturg or director. With Well, Leigh and John and I would talk for hours and then I'd go off and write, I'd bring my writing back to them, and then we'd talk more. The complicated structure of the piece was developed through that collaboration. Because I'm in the piece I'm never able to watch it, of course. I depended totally on their eyes to help me understand where the piece was at any given point. And, because of my work with the Lesbian Brothers, I'm very used to working collaboratively.

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO POSSIBLE TO LEARN, EACH OF THE BROTHERS WRITES ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS—HOW PAINFUL IT CAN BE TO SHARE YOUR INDIVIDUAL WORK-IN-PROGRESS WITH EACH OTHER AND EXPOSE IT TO "HEARTFELT DISCUSSION AND CRITICISM SO PAINTED, IN FACT, THAT YOU WOULDN'T IF MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T PUT YOURSELVES THROUGH IT ANYMORE." I FIND THAT TENSION BETWEEN SOLO CREATION AND COLLABORATIVE PROCESS VERY INTERESTING. Well, that was very early in our process. As we developed as a company we really learned to be frank with each other, but in ways that were kind and respectful. For instance, we disagree often but we never interrupt each other while in discussion. And we don't throw out ideas. Even when ideas seem crazy we keep them in consideration as we work. I've certainly learned a great deal of humility working with the Brothers. It has happened many times that an idea I privately thought was stupid and would never work in front of an audience has turned out to be the perfect thing.

I think humility is a very useful thing in making art. And of course, ego is very useful, as well. It's what compels you to get onstage in the first place. The tension between those two things—ego and humility—is central to my work, I think. I came to New York thinking I knew a lot about theater—which was ridiculous, of course. I had studied theater in college and then I toured with a national repertory company, so I thought I knew all

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IDENTITY CRISIS

BY ELIZABETH BRODERSEN

Lisa Kron appears to be having an identity crisis. Recognized on the one hand as a performer of wryly poignant, self-revelatory one-woman shows, she also has a devoted following, particularly in San Francisco, as a member of the irreverently avant-garde ensemble The Five Lesbian Brothers. In Well, Kron's most recent theatrical experience, her worlds collide, as Lisa the solo artist shares her onstage life with a dramatic community of her own making.

As with all of Kron's solo work, the facts portrayed in Well are true. Growing up as a white Jewish girl in a significantly African-American midwestern suburb of Lansing, Michigan—where her mother, Ann Kron, was the founder and longtime leader of the West Side Neighborhood Association—Kron found herself something of an outsider. She turned her considerable creative energy to performance. "I always thought of myself as a performer," Kron has said. "I don't know why. I never did school plays or anything, but when I was in junior high school, I set myself a conscious mission to figure out how to make myself really funny. I wanted people to say, Lisa Kron is the funniest person I ever met." I did a study of what was funny and what was obvious and how to be funny and likable at the same time, which can be a particularly difficult line for girls to tread."

Forced to leave college by chronic exhaustion and ill health, Kron checked herself into the alcohol unit of Chicago's Havenuin Hospital for the diagnosis and treatment of various food and environmental allergies. She later moved to New York City to pound the pavement as an actor, paying her dues with roles in summer stock, soul-walking auditions, and unsupervised plays. Eventually she found her way to the WOW Cafe collective on the Lower East Side, a haven for female artists with unruly attitudes, where she discovered that "any woman who puts in time can do her own show." After surprising herself with the success of an impromptu variety-night performance, Kron realized she had found her niche. Dedicated herself to the search for a way to make her unique brand of storytelling work onstage, she experimented with a vanguardian variety of performance styles, developing a quirky flair for the first-person monologue into an art form that illuminates the murky territory between historical fact and personal reminiscence with impeccable comic timing and a fearless capacity for self-mortification.

Meanwhile, Kron joined fellow WOW alumns Maureen Angelos, Baba Dow, Dominique Dibbell, and Pug Hensley to form the theater company The Five Lesbian Brothers, creating a series of darkly comic plays (Voyage to Lesbos, Bride of the Moon, The Secretaries, and Brave Smiles [the latter three presented to acclaim at San Francisco's Theatre Rhinoceros throughout the 1990s]) that skewer conventional contemporary images of women. In the chaos of collaboration, Kron found her way to dramatic structure and form.

With the monologues 101 Homiliating Stories (in San Francisco at the late, lamented Josie's Cabaret & Juice Joint in 1995)—about a succession of comic adventures ranging from junior high school gym class to the excruciating world of the law firm temp, told as a series of painfully hilarious speackacts at a high school prom— and the OBIE Award-winning 2.5 Minute Ride (Magic Theatre, 1998)—in which Kron reports on a devastating trip she made to Auschwitz with her father—Kron hit her stride as a solo performance artist. Finally, in Well, Kron has expanded the solo form to bring the ensemble (and her mother) onstage with her. The experiment appears to have succeeded: Well premiered at New York's Public Theater in March 2004 to resounding acclaim, making its way onto the "ten-best" list of the country's leading critics and earning a host of nominations and awards. Kron spoke to us as Well was about to go into rehearsals for its West Coast premiere at A.C.T.:

ELIZABETH BRODERSEN: I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU DEVELOPED WELL OVER THREE YEARS, AT WORKSHOPS WITH THE DIRECTOR (LEIGH SILVERMAN) AND A DRAMATURG (JOHN DIAO). DID THEIR INVOLVEMENT HELP YOU MAKE THE TRANSITION FROM SOLO PERFORMANCE TO "SOLO PERFORMER WITH OTHER PEOPLE ONSTAGE WITH YOU?"

LISA KRON: I don't think I knew quite what this was going to be when I started. One of the first workshops was at Long Wharf Theatre. The first week it was a solo and the next week it had other people in it. There were audience members who came both weeks. The first week they said, "I can't picture this not being a solo." The next week they said, "I can't imagine this without other characters."

I started, as I always do, by writing short, anecdotal pieces. Then, with the collaboration of Leigh and John I started the long process of figuring out how to shape the piece and turn it into a play. I had a notion that there was some thematic relationship between this group of stories about the hospital and this group of stories about the neighborhood I grew up in. It took a really long time to figure out how to knit them together into a play.

I always develop my plays with collaborators, because, for whatever reason, I don't have the ability to picture a narrative arc in my head. Maybe it's because I started out as a performer rather than a writer. I only know what I have when I see it reflected back. I have to keep putting it out in front of an audience, and I have to be in constant discussion with a dramaturg or director. With Well, Leigh and John and I would talk for hours and then I'd go off and write, I'd bring my writing back to them, and then we'd talk more. The complicated structure of the piece was developed through that collaboration. Because I'm in the piece I'm never able to watch it, of course. I depended totally on their eyes to help me understand where the piece was at any given point. And, because of my work with the Lesbian Brothers, I'm very used to working collaboratively.

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about what you can and can't do onstage. When I got to WOW I found all these people making theater who didn't know anything about any of those rules. They didn't even learn their lines before they went onstage. And it was a million times more compelling than anything I had seen or imagined. Since then I have been completely interested in what happens when people who don't know the rules of the theater make theater. Theater is a volatile form, which is what fascinates me about it—the energy that can be released from that volatility. It seems that when the rules are broken, that's when you can really feel the theater experience, feel the aliveness of it. I'm always interested in work that feels like...This is happening right now in this room, in this moment. The feeling of witnessing a singular event in real time—that's the thing you can't experience in any other medium.

YOU'VE ALSO TALKED ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AUDIENCE IN YOUR WORK, THAT YOU ARE TRYING TO MAKE THE THEATER EXPERIENCE A "PRIVILEGED" ONE FOR THEM. THE TELLING OF YOUR STORY ITSELF BECOMES AN IMMEDIATE, PRESENT EXPERIENCE FOR THE AUDIENCE, RATHER THAN ONE OF PASSIVE OBSERVATION.

The pitfall of autobiographical solo performance is that the audience will witness you reliving an experience rather than having an experience themselves. I think that's what gives this particular form a bad name. Someone asked me once what the difference is between autobiographical solo work and therapy and I said, "Therapy is for you—a performance is for the audience." When I teach solo performance, I always have to try to get students to "show, not tell." I try to get them not to say, "I was scared." Or "I'm the saddest day of my life," but to leave the editorializing out, tell only what happened, search for the most specific details. Don't tell me, "I was scared." Tell me, "I was scared." I said "I saw my sister backed up against the garage door. The hair on her arms was standing up. My brother was grasping my arm and he whispered to me that he had peed his pants." Okay, that's a bad example—but the point is—if you paint a true picture of what happened, an honest picture, the audience will see you were scared, rather than having to take your word for it. And they will relate, they will have their own experience. And ultimately taking the audience through an experience of their own is the point of good autobiographical work.

IN THE INTRODUCTION TO 2.5 MINUTE RIDE you write about your desire to create "SOLO WORK THAT IS ALSO THEATER, WHAT IS SOLO WORK, WHAT IS THEATER, AND WHY IS ONE NOT THE OTHER?" I think solo performance can be theater. But I think it's hard to do, because what happens in theater is that a character wants or needs something and then struggles against obstacles to get it. That's dramatic action. But what is the dramatic action in a solo show? What does the performer need? What is standing in her way? [Playwright] Maria Irene Fornes once said something about how in solo performance the main character is always passive. I wanted to make theater in the autobiographical solo form so I had to figure out: How do I use myself as a character who actually has an agenda that the audience can see and question? In a theatrical experience, you can see a character's hidden motives, even when she can't see them herself. You can also see the looming obstacles. That's the fun and tension of drama. For me, that's the challenge of solo performance—to make something happen that the audience can see but the person standing onstage cannot.

And there is also the act of storytelling—which is actually not an act but an interaction. The storyteller shapes her story as she watches it being received by the listener. When you tell a story, you don't relive it in your own head—you look in another person's eyes and paint the picture in their head. That's a circuit: that's not a closed door.

AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS HOW SUCCESSFULLY THE STORY IS RENDERED IN THE LISTENER'S MIND, NOT IN YOURS.

Right. And then ultimately there's the knowledge, which is something I'm fundamentally interested in—and I think it comes up in all of my plays; it certainly comes up in 2.5 Minute Ride—that somebody else's experience is not your experience. I think that's what distinguishes art from entertainment, frankly. Art supplies something like 25%, and then the viewer completes the picture. It's that dynamic interaction that elevates it.

WHAT IS WELL THEN?

Well is a play with all the elements of that form in the traditional sense. But it's also a solo show in that the whole piece is grappling with the issues that are dealt with in the play. During the run in New York I had people say to me in talkbacks after seeing the play, "Lisa, you should really listen to what the character of Kay had to say in that speech," And I'd say, "Well, I actually know what she said—I wrote that speech." That's what underlies the play's metaphysics. The character of "Lisa" is one aspect of me. But the real me is the whole play.

SO HOW DOES YOUR MOTHER FEEL ABOUT WELL? HOW HAS THE PLAY AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

The development process was not easy for either of us. Particularly for her. She didn't ask for this—it was my choice to put my life onstage. It was her choice. It would be a lot to ask of anyone. She was very, very generous, but the process was hard on her. She feels very good about the play now even though it's not how she would choose to represent herself.

She came to New York for a week and saw the show six times; she and Jayne [Houdyshell] have become great friends and Jayne went to Lansing last summer to visit. My mom now has a very sophisticated understanding of the play. She said to me, "There's a way in which I feel that it's not really about me." And I said, "Well, you're right. It's not about either one of us, it's a certain way.Generic.

"That's the complexity of the play. It tells the audience it's not about us, and then it is about us, but ultimately, it's not about us. »
about what you can and can’t do onstage. When I got to WOW I found all these people making theater who didn’t know anything about any of those rules. They didn’t even learn their lines before they went onstage. And it was a million times more compelling than anything I had seen or imagined. Since then I have been completely interested in what happens when people who don’t know the rules of the theater make theater. Theater is a volatile form, which is what fascinates me about it—the energy that can be released from that volatility. It seems that when the rules are broken, that’s when you can really feel the theater experience, feel the sickness of it. I’m not always interested in work that feels like that. This is happening right now in this room, in this moment. The feeling of witnessing a singular event in real time—that’s the thing you can’t experience in any other medium.

You’ve also talked about the importance of the audience in your work, that you are trying to make the theater experience a “primary” one for them. The telling of your story itself becomes an immediate, present experience for the audience, rather than one of passive observation. The pitfall of autobiographical solo performance is that the audience will witness you reliving an experience rather than having an experience themselves. I think that’s what gives this particular form a bad name. Someone asked me once what the difference is between autobiographical solo work and therapy and I said, “Therapy is for you—a performance is for the audience.” When I teach solo performance, I occasionally do, I try to get students to “show, not tell.” I try to get them not to say, “I was scared.” Or “It was the saddest day of my life,” but to leave the editorializing out, tell only what happened, search for the most specific details. Don’t tell me, “I was scared.” Tell me, “I saw my sister backed up against the garage door. The hair on her arm was standing up. My brother was gripping my arm and he whispered to me that he had peed his pants.” Okay, that’s a bad example—but the point is—if you paint a true picture of what happened, an honest picture, the audience will see you were scared, rather than having to take your word for it. And they will relate, they will have their own experience. And ultimately taking the audience through an experience of their own is the point of good autobiographical work.

In the introduction to 2.5 Minute Ride, you write about your desire to create “solo work that is also theater.” What is solo work, what is theater, and why is one not the other?

I think solo performance can be theater. But I think it’s hard to do, because what happens in theater is that a character wants or needs something and then struggles against obstacles to get it. That’s dramatic action. But what is the dramatic action in a solo show? What does the performer want? What is standing in her way? (Playwright) Marie Irene Fornes once said something about how in solo performance the main character is always passive. I wanted to make theater in the autobiographical solo form so I had to figure out: How do I use myself as a character who actually has an agenda that the audience can see and question? In a theatrical experience you can see a character’s hidden motives, even when she can’t see them herself. You can see the character, just the character, her: the fun and tension of drama. For me, that’s the challenge of solo performance—to make something happen that the audience can see but the person standing onstage cannot.

I’m also interested in the act of storytelling—which is actually not an act but an interaction. The storyteller shapes her story as she watches it being received by the listener. When you tell a story, you don’t relive it in your own head—you look in another person’s eyes and paint the picture in their head. That’s a circuit, that’s not a closed door.

And the most important thing is how successfully the story is rendered in the listener’s mind, not in yours. Right. And then ultimately there’s the knowledge, which is something I’m fundamentally interested in—and I think it comes up in all of my plays, it certainly comes up in 2.5 Minute Ride—that somebody else’s experience is not your experience. I think that’s what distinguishes art from entertainment, frankly. Art supplies something like 25%, and then the viewer completes the picture. It’s that dynamic interaction that elevates it.

What is it? What is it? Well, it’s a play with all the elements of that form in the traditional sense. But it’s also a solo show in that the whole piece is grappling with the issues that are dealt with in the play. During the run in New York I had people say to me in talkbacks after seeing the play, “Lisa, you should really listen to what the character of Kay had to say in that speech.” And I’d say, “Well, I actually know what she said—I wrote that speech.” That’s what underlies the play’s metaphysics. The character of “Lisa” is one aspect of me. But the real me is the whole play.

So how does your mother feel about 2.5 Minute Ride? How has the play affected your relationship?

The development process was not easy for either of us. Particularly for her. She didn’t ask for this—it was my choice to put my life onstage. It was her choice. It would be a lot to ask of anyone. She was very, very generous, but the process was hard on her. She feels very good about the play now even though it’s not how she would choose to represent herself.

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SAIDAH ARRLEKUNA (Ensemble) performed in Wail at the Public Theater. Other off-Broadway credits include Fabulation at Playwrights Horizons, The Square (dir. Lisa Peterson), A Streetcar Named Desire at New York Theatre Workshop, Home, and Jeff Whitty’s The End of Sight Project. Regional theater credits include Yale Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage, Actors Theatre of Louisville/Human Festival 2000, and The Guthrie Theater, among others. Film credits include The Terminal, Alfie, and Happy Accidents. Television: "Hope & Faith," "Queens Supreme" (dir. Tim Robbins), "Sex and the City," and "Law & Order." She received her M.F.A. from University of Minnesota/Guthrie Theater and was a member of Sundance Theatre Lab 2003. www.saidah.net.

JAYNE HODGSHILL (Ensemble) most recently played Virginia in The Clean House at the Wilma Theater. Off-Broadway credits include Wail (Public Theater), Much Ado about Nothing (New York Shakespeare Festival), Frightening Birds (Playwrights Horizons), True Love (Zipper Theater), and Attempts on Her Life (Soho Rep). Regional theater credits include productions at Yale Repertory Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Missouri Repertory Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Geva Theatre Center, the Asolo Theatre Company, McCarter Theatre, the Group Theatre, Studio Arena Theatre, and many others. Major roles include Linda Lovin’s Death of a Salesman, Martha (With Friends of the Actors and Stage Managers employed in this production are members of Actors Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States). VTOOD WOEFt, Big Mama (Cat on a Hot Tin Roof), The Nude (Korn and Jupiter), Kate (Broadway Bound), Lady Bracknell (The Importance of Being Earnest), and the title role of Shirley Valentine. Film and television credits include "Law & Order," "Trinity," "Third Watch," Garden State, Changing Lanes, and Mind in Manhattan. Hodgshill received a 2003-04 OBIE Award for Wail.

LISA KRON (Lisa Kron) has been writing and performing theater in New York and around the country since moving to New York from Michigan 21 years ago. Wail, her most recent play, premiered at The Public Theater in spring 2004 and was named one of the ten best plays of the year by The New York Times, The Associated Press, The Newark Star Ledger, Backstage, and The Advocate. Her solo play 2.5 Minute Ride received an OBIE Award, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle nominations, an L.A. Drama-Logue Award, and the GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) Media Award for best off-Broadway play and was named the best autobiographical show of 1999 by The New York Press. It premiered at La Jolla Playhouse in 1996 and in New York at the Public in 1999. Other presentations include the Barbican Theatre in London, Baltimore Center Stage, A Contemporary Theatre in Seattle, American Repertory Theatre, Hartford Stage, and Trinity Repertory Company’s Pipeline Lab. Kron’s other solo works include 101 Humiliating Stories (Drama Desk nomination), and Martha, which she co-wrote with and for choreographer/performance Richard Move. Kron is also a founding member of the OBIE and Bessie award-winning theater company The Five Lesbian Brothers, whose newest play Godspell at Palm Springs, will premiere this summer at New York Theatre Workshop with Leigh Silverman directing. Kron is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Cal Arts/Alpert Award in Theater, an NEA/TCG Playwriting fellowship, and a Creative Capital Foundation Grant. As an actor, Kron has appeared off Broadway in plays including Worth Street Theater’s acclaimed revival of Larry Kramer’s The Normal Heart, Eve Ensler’s The Vagina Monologues, and Paul Rudnick’s The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told. An anthology of Kron’s plays, as well as the anthologized plays of The Five Lesbian Brothers, are available from Theatre Communications Group, who will also publish Wail in spring 2005.

A-MEN RASHIED (Ensemble) makes his A.C.T. debut in Wail. Recent credits include Sweet Daddy/Black Cop in Melissa Van Peperbeek’s Ain’t Supposed to Die on a Natural Death at Classical Theatre of Harlem, Sterling in Pulling the Lever with the Rising Circle Theatre Collective, and Autojous in The Winter’s Tale with New York Classical Theatre. Off-Broadway credits include Portico with the Culture Project and the Judge in the OBIE Award-winning production of Jean Genet’s The Blacks at Classic Stage Company. He has also been involved with the Solow Tank at the Ohio Theatre, New York Stage & Film at Vassar, and Lincoln Center’s Director’s Lab. Television credits include "As the World Turns" and the Narrator in the Fox animated movie special. In addition to performing in various histories and tragedies for the Oregon and California Shakespeare Festivals, he played Ariel in the memorable San Francisco Shakespeare Festival production of The Tempest, directed by Albert Christiansen and featuring Sydney Walter as Prospero. San Francisco credits also include the role of Tim Allgood in the original recording-breaking run of Noise Off, directed by Richard Seyd, at the Marines Memorial Theatre. He has also appeared in several musicals, most recently the award-
Who's Who


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A-MEN RASHEED (Ensemble) makes his A.C.T. debut in Wali. Recent credits include Sweet Daddy/Black Cop in Tzeitboum's Melvin Van Peebles Ain't Supposed To Die A Natural Death at Classical Theatre of Harlem, Sterling in Pulling the Leaver with the Rising Circle Theatre Collective, and Autolycus in The Winter's Tale with New York Classical Theatre. Off-Broadway credits include Porgy with the Culture Project and the Judge in the OBIE Award-winning production of Jean Genet's The Balcon at Classic Stage Company. He has also been involved with the Solano Tank at the Ohio Theatre, New York Stage & Film at Vassar, and Lincoln Center's Director's Lab. Television credits include "As the World Turns" and the Narrator in the The Altar movie special. Recent plays include Declassified (Huntington Theatre Company) and the Obie Award-nominated production of The Tempest, directed by Richard Tuckman and starring Sydney Walter as Prospero. San Francisco credits also include the role of Tim Allgood in the original recording release of Notin' Off, directed by Kristin Seyd, at the Marines Memorial Theatre. He has also appeared in several musicals, most recently the award-winning production of A.C.T.'s Master of Fine Arts Program. She has performed at many Bay Area theaters, including the Magic Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Shutterbug Players, and Encore Theater. As a director, her work has been seen on U.S. and world premieres at Theater Rhinoceros (Single Spade), Berkeley Repertory Theatre (Fools de la Nuit), and Campo Santo (Dave Eggers's Sacramento, Fist of Rocks) and is currently the speech writer for the A.C.T.'s M.F.A. Program.

LOREN NORDLUND (Understudy) has performed multiple characters in the comedies Greater Tuna (San Francisco, Kansas City) and On the Foge (Marin Theatre Company), as well as in several productions by San Francisco's award-winning literary theater company, Word for Word. In addition to performing in various histories and tragedies for the Oregon and California Shakespeare Festivals, he played Ariel in the memorable San Francisco Shakespeare Festival production of The Tempest, directed by Albert Kalinack and featuring Sydney Walter as Prospero. San Francisco credits also include the role of Tim Allgood in the original recording break-up of Nothin' Off, directed by Kristin Seyd, at the Marines Memorial Theatre. He has also appeared in several musicals, most recently the award-winning...
Who’s Who

winning premiere of In, Prances of Argel at the East Theatre. Notland received his acting training from San Francisco State University.

STACY ROSS (Understudy) was last seen at A.C.T. as Madame Prelète in The Gamester and as Barbara Fawcett in The Constant Wife. Her recent work also includes productions with San Jose Repertory Theatre (Major Barbara), Center Stage in Baltimore (Midsummer), the Aurora Theatre Company (Man of Destiny, Hilda Gather), TheatreWorks (Book of Days), and the California Shakespeare Theatre (Arms and the Man, The Comedy of Errors, Henry IV parts 1 and 2; and Hamlet).

DAVID RYAN SMITH (Understudy) recently understudied Joe Mantello’s production of Tale Me Out at Seattle Repertory Theatre and the Golden Gate Theatre. Other regional theater credits include The Three Sisters, The Difficulty and The Convert. The actors’ and stage manager’s name mentioned in this production are members of Actors Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

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Cruzdza, Sileno, Cunxun, Emilo, and The Skirker. For Broadway he has designed The Piano Lesson, Philadelphia, Here I Come! Seven Guitars (Tony nomination), and The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife. Other recent credits include Andrei in Tatunami at TFANA/BAM, The Light in the Piazza for the Goodman Theatre, A Midsummer Night’s Dream for SITI/San Jose Repertory Theatre, Bori Gudmone for Hamburgische Staatsoper, and Giulio Cesare at Houston Grand Opera. He has received the OBIE Award for sustained excellence and the Michael Merritt Award in design and collaboration.


Martha Donaldson (Stage Manager) was the stage manager for Wall at the Public Theatre in New York. Other off-Broadway credits include: A Number, Hilda Gather, Far Away, Homedown/Enchanted, Alice in Bed, A Streetcar Named Desire, Trelaw at Pope Lick Creek, The Gimmick, Bright Lights Big City, and Merry Suicidal Mansion all for New York Theatre Workshop; Mabu Mines Doll/’Hour at St. Ann’s Warehouse; Talking Heads at the Minetta Lane Theatre; In the Penal Colony for Classic Stage Company; Julius Caesar for the New York Shakespeare Festival; Trojan Women: A Love Story and I, P. Morgan Saves the Nation for En Garde Arts; and Cloud Tannen at Playwrights Horizons. She also worked on the Broadway production of James Joyce’s The Dead and the National Tour of The Vinyl Magnolias. Regional credits include: Our House, GeVa Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and PCPA Theatrefest.

ELISA GUTHERTZ (Assistant Stage Manager) most recently worked on Eve Ensler’s The Good Body at the Booth Theatre on Broadway. Her numerous productions for A.C.T. include The Good Body, Leave James, Waiting for Godot, The Three Sisters, The Minstrels, Long Day’s Journey into Night, Tartuffe, Mary Stuart, The Rose Tattoo, and 4 Streetcar Named Desire. She has also stage-managed The Mystery of Irma Vep, Suddenly Last Summer, Rhinoceros, Big Love, Circle Sea, Collected Stories, and Cloud Tannen at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Favorite productions include Big Love at Brooklyn Academy of Music and The Regina Magnolias at the Akustik Theatre.

SPECIAL THANKS TO
Mary Harper
Katherine Peter Kounor

In addition to The Public Theater and Dixon Place, Wolfe has been developed with the support of Baltimore CenterStage, Long Wharf Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, and Hartford Stage.
WINNING PREMIER OF LA PRINCESA DE ARGEL At the East Theatre, Noland received his acting training from San Francisco State University.

STACY ROSS (Understudy) was last seen at A.C.T. as Madame Prétèrite in The Gastronome and as Barbara Fawcett in The Constant Wife. Her recent work also includes productions with San Jose Repertory Theatre (Major Barbara), Center Stage in Baltimore (Midsummer), the Aurora Theatre Company (Man of Destiny, Hilda Gudlaug), TheatreWorks (Book of Days), and the California Shakespeare Theatre (Arms and the Man, The Comedy of Errors, Henry IV Parts 1 and 2, and Hamlet).

DAVID RYAN SMITH (Understudy) recently understudied Joe Mantello’s production of Take Me Out at Seattle Repertory Theatre and the Golden Gate Theatre. Other regional theatre credits include The Three Sisters, The Difficulty. The actors and stage managers employed in this production are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Dancers and Stage Managers in the United States.

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16 American Conservatory Theater

Who’s Who

CRESCIDA, SILENTO, CUNNING, ETIOL, AND THE SKIRLER. For Broadway he has designed The Piano Lesson, Philadelphia, Here I Come!, Seven Guitars (Tony nomination), and The Tale of the Allergist’s Wife. Other recent credits include Poirot at TFANA/BAM, The Light in the Piazza for the Goodman Theatre, A Midsummer Night’s Dream for SITI/San Jose Repertory Theatre, Boris Godunov for Hamburgische Staatsoper, and Giorgio Gersh at Houston Grand Opera. He has received the OBIE Award for sustained excellence and the Michael Merritt Award in design and collaboration.

GARTH HEMPHILL (Sound Designer) is in his eighth season as A.C.T.’s resident sound designer. He has designed more than 150 productions, including most recently for A.C.T., The Gastronome, The Real Thing, A Matter of Life, A Death, Waiting for Godot, Las Liones, Dangerousness, The Three Sisters, The Constant Wife, The Dazzle, American Buffalo, Lackawanna Blues, Night and Day, Buried Child, For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again, The Glass Menagerie, Billetd’s, The Board of Ascension, and The Roman. He has also co-produced and managed the production of A.C.T.’s production of The Dazzle at the Booth Theatre. He has received numerous productions for A.C.T. include The Good Body, Love Letters, Waiting for Godot, The Three Sisters, The Misfits, Long Day’s Journey into Night, Tartuffe, Mary Stuart, The Rose Tattoo, and A Streetcar Named Desire. He has also stage-managed The Mystery of Irma Vep, Suddenly Last Summer, Rhinoceros, Big Love, Ciliz Ses, Collected Stories, and Cloud Tannen at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Favorite productions include Big Love at Brooklyn Academy of Music and The Regina Monologues at the Aukzar Theatre.

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A.C.T. Profiles

CAREY PERLOFF (Artistic Director) of A.C.T., who is celebrating her 25th year as artistic director of A.C.T., most recently directed A.C.T.’s acclaimed production of Stoppard’s The Real Thing, Constance Congdon’s Mother (adapted from Gotz’s Vasia Zizakis), Ibsen’s A Doll’s House, and Strindberg’s Miss Julie at the Actors’ Shakespeare Festival. Perloff received a B.A. in classics and comparative literature from Stanford University and was a Fullbright Fellow at Oxford. She was on the faculty of the Thasian School of the Arts in New York University for seven years and teaches and directs in the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program. She is the proud mother of Leile and Nicholas.

HEATHER KITCHIN (Executive Director) since joining A.C.T. in 1996, has strengthened the organization’s infrastructure and oversees the company’s expansion to include the development and performance of new work and the addition of a third year to A.C.T.’s acclaimed Master of Fine Arts Program. Her decision to undertake an M.B.A. degree from the Richard Ivey School of Business at the University of Western Ontario followed a 15-year career in stage, tour, and production management ranging across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Credit includes the Stratford Festival, Charlottetown Festival, Theatre New Brunswick, New Play Centre, Vancouver, and Neptune Theatre in Halifax. As general manager of The Citadel Theatre, Kitchin managed a five-theater performing arts complex and school that annually produced 16 productions, an International Children’s Festival, as well as a Teen Festival. As a member of the executive committee of the Edmonton Performing Arts Consortium, Kitchin authored the benchmark study Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts in Edmonton. An active community member, Kitchin served on the boards and executive committees of the Commonwealth of the United States, the board of the National Conservative Theatre Fund in New York. She is a past member of the San Francisco Leadership Board of the American Red Cross, the Board of Big Brother Big Sisters, San Francisco and the Peninsula, and the Salvation Army Auxiliary in Edmonton. She has also participated on peer review panels for Theatre Communications Group, Canada Council of the Arts, and Performing magazine’s Business and the Arts Awards. The San Francisco Business Times recently named Kitchin one of the 20 most influential women in the Bay Area public sphere.

MELISSA SMITH (Conservatory Director) oversees the administration of the A.C.T. Conservatory’s Master of Fine Arts Program. In addition to serving as the master acting teacher of the M.F.A. Program, Smith joined A.C.T. in 1998, following a career that included work in San Francisco and New York City. As a director, she has performed in numerous off-off Broadway plays and at regional theaters in New York, California, and Chicago. In 2004, Smith toured London and Birmingham (U.K.) in Berkeley Repertory Theatre’s production of Continental Divide. Smith holds a B.A. in English and theater from Yale College and an M.F.A. in acting from the Yale School of Drama.

JAMES HAIRE (Producing Director) began his career on Broadway with Eva Le Gallienne’s National Repertory Theatre. He has also stage-managed the Broadway productions of And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little and Georgette (a musical by Carole Bayer Sager), and a Teen Festival. As a member of the executive committee of the Edmonton Performing Arts Consortium, Kitchin authored the benchmark study Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts in Edmonton. An active community member, Kitchin served on the boards and executive committees of the Commonwealth of the United States, the board of the National Conservative Theatre Fund in New York. She is a past member of the San Francisco Leadership Board of the American Red Cross, the Board of Big Brother Big Sisters, San Francisco and the Peninsula, and the Salvation Army Auxiliary in Edmonton. She has also participated on peer review panels for Theatre Communications Group, Canada Council of the Arts, and Performing magazine’s Business and the Arts Awards. The San Francisco Business Times recently named Kitchin one of the 20 most influential women in the Bay Area public sphere.

A.C.T. PRESENTS AMERICAN PREMIERE OF HILDA AT ZEUM

Bringing the best writing from around the world to American audiences is an important component of A.C.T.’s mission, whether it’s Paul Waldb’s wonderful new translation of Ibsen’s A Doll’s House last season at the Geary Theatre, our intercontinental coproduction of The Black Rider—the 2004-05 season’s triumphant opener—and this spring’s upcoming A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program presentation repertory of Sir Lely’s Hilda at Zeum Theatre, January 28-February 26, directed by A.C.T. Artistic Director Carey Perloff.

An exciting collaborative venture between A.C.T. and French theater producer Laura Poli—producer of Hilda’s world premiere production at Théâtre de l’Atelier, in Paris in 2002—Hilda is a poetic thriller charting the mysterious and destructive relationship between a desperately lonely mother, Mrs. Lemarchand, and the man, Hilda, who hires her to care for her children. Hilda is the first play by French-Senegalese novelist Ndiaye, whose work has been hailed in Paris for its emotional intensity and unsettling psychological depth ever since she published the first of her eight novels at age 17 in 1994. Like Ndiaye’s novels and short stories, the play’s deceptively simple dialogue creates a riveting portrait of the insidious motivations pulsating beneath the current of modern-day class relations and explores several of the author’s recurring themes—the surprising seductiveness of control, the ways intimacy can mask brutality, and the secretly cruel nature of relationships based on power.

I met with Laura Poli in Paris last spring, and she showed me the Hilda script she had premiered a year before,” says Perloff. “I immediately knew that it was something special, and that it deserved to be part of A.C.T.’s First Look series. I didn’t know anything about Ndiaye when I first read the script, but I hit me powerful right off the page. It seems to grow out of the same tradition as some of my favorite writers. It’s incredibly potent language and operates on many levels; it’s a mystery, there is something Pinteresque about it, and there is also something both suggestive and threatening, like a David Lynch film—it tells a haunting story of consuming obsession. Ndiaye gets at the heart of what happens when one person devours the soul of another, in effect what happens to the enduser as well as the enslaved.”

Ellen Karas, who made a memorable A.C.T. debut in 2003 in the title role of The Constant Wife, returns to A.C.T. in the role of the scheming Lemarchand, and A.C.T. Associate Artist and core acting company member Marco Barricelli (seen most recently at A.C.T. in To Stop the Blood) plays Hilda’s husband, Frank, joined by Laurens Grace (A Mother, Les Liens Dangereux A.C.T.), “I am fascinated with the transition actors make from working in the expansive Geary Theatre, where you have to make sure everything reads across 40 feet, to the intimate scale of a much smaller theater,” says Perloff. “A play like Hilda needs a small space like Zeum to heighten its intensity, so that in some way you feel claustrophobic, like you are in this woman’s mind. It packs a punch.”

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ZEUM THEATER

TICKETS ON SALE THROUGH FEBRUARY 26.
www.aact.org • 415.749.2427

WHO DOES HILDA REALLY BELONG TO, FRANK? IF YOU WANT TO PLAY GAMES WITH ME, FINE, BUT JUST REMEMBER THAT PEOPLE LIKE ME ALWAYS WIN, FRANK, AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU ALWAYS LOSE.

—Mrs. Lemarchand, Hilda

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19 Bull
A.C.T. Profiles

CAREY PERLOFF
(Artistic Director) of A.C.T., who is celebrating her first season as artistic director of A.C.T., most recently directed the acclaimed productions of Stoppard’s The Real Thing, Constance Congdon’s Mother (adapted from Geiss’s Vua Zihuatema), Ibsen’s A Doll’s House of the San Francisco Theater Company and Harold Pinter’s The Homebody in the home setting. A.C.T. commissioned translations of Hebbel, the Minotaur, Enrico IV, Mary Stuart, and One Man, Two Guvnors, the world premiere of Leslie Ayvazian’s Singer’s Boy, and acclaimed productions of The Threepenny Opera, Old Times, and Winter’s Tale. Her work at A.C.T. also includes the world premieres of Marc Blitzstein’s No for an Answer, David Lang/Mac Wellman’s The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, and the West Coast premiere of her own play The Colosseum of Rhodes (a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Award). Her new play, Luminance Dating, was developed under a grant from The Ensemble Studio Theatre/Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science & Technology Project, was workshopped last summer at New York Stage and Film, and will premiere this fall at Ensemble Studio Theatre. She spent July at the Sundance Institute developing Philip Ken Gomidas’s new play After the War. This season at A.C.T. she will also direct a new adaptation by David Mamet of Harley Granville-Barker’s The Honey Insatiates and Marie Ndiaye’s Hilda. Before joining A.C.T., Perloff was artistic director of Classic Stage Company in New York, where she directed the world premiere production of Brecht’s Mother Courage, the American premiere of Pinter’s Mountain Language and The Birthday Party, and many classic works. Under Perloff’s leadership, Classic Stage won numerous OBIIE Awards for acting, direction, and design, as well as the 1988 OBIIE for artistic excellence. In 1993, she directed the world premiere of Steven and Beryl Koon’s opera The Cave at the Vienna Festival and Brooklyn Academy of Music.

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(Executive Director), since joining A.C.T. in 1996, has strengthened the organization’s infrastructure and oversaw the company’s expansion to include the development and performance of new work and the addition of a third year to A.C.T.’s acclaimed Master of Fine Arts Program. Her decision to undertake an M.B.A. degree from the Richard Ivey School of Business at The University of Western Ontario followed a 15-year career in stage, tour, and production management ranging across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Credits include the Stratford Festival, Charlottetown Festival, Theatre New Brunswick, New Play Centre, Vancouver, and Neptune Theatre in Halifax. As general manager of The Citadel Theatre, Kitchen managed a five-theater performing arts complex and school that annually produced 16 productions, an International Children’s Festival, and a Teen Festival. As a member of the executive committee of the Edmonton Performing Arts Consortium, Kitchen authored the benchmark study Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts in Edmonton. As an active community member, Kitchen serves on the boards and executive committees of the Commonwealth Club of California and the League of Resident Theaters and as the board of the National Corporate Theatre Fund in New York. She is past member of the San Francisco Leadership Board of the American Red Cross, the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters, San Francisco and the Salvation Army Auxiliary in Edmonton. She has also participated on peer review panels for Theatre Communications Group, Canada Council of the Arts, and Fonds magazine’s Business and the Arts Awards. The San Francisco Business Times recently named Kitchen one of the 20 most influential women in the Bay Area public arena.

MELISSA SMITH
(Conservatory Director) oversees the administration of the A.C.T. Conservatory’s Master of Fine Arts Program. In Spring 2005, Smith was named to the newly created position of Conservatory’s Summer Training Program, and Studio A.C.T., in addition to serving as the master acting teacher of the M.F.A. Program. Before joining A.C.T., Smith served as director of the program in theater and dance at Princeton University where she taught acting for six years. Also a professional actor, she has performed in numerous off-Broadway plays and at regional theaters throughout the United States. In 2004, she toured London and Birmingham (U.K.) in Berkeley Repertory Theatre’s production of Continental Divide. Smith holds a B.A. in English and theater from Yale College and an M.F.A. in acting from the Yale School of Drama.

JAMES HAIRE
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BECOME AN A.C.T. CORPORATE PARTNER

A.C.T. is pleased to offer our Corporate Partners Program to companies interested in sustaining live theater, arts education, and outreach programs in our community. A.C.T.’s Corporate Partners Program features memorable entertainment opportunities for your clients and employees, including discounted tickets to performances, use of event space for your special occasion, and prominent recognition of your support before the eyes of thousands of theatergoers. Different levels of partnership are available for companies of all sizes. You can support the arts and elevate your company’s profile at the same time.

To find out more about participating in A.C.T.’s Corporate Partners Program, contact Carolyn Winter at 415.439.2449 or cwinter@act-sf.org.

DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS . . .

As patrons of A.C.T., we all know how wonderful it feels to escape from our busy lives for a few hours and let ourselves succumb to the powerful art of live theater. We also have witnessed how much blood, sweat, and resources are needed to bring a production to the stage night after night.

But have you ever wondered exactly how much it costs to get a play from page to stage? For example, did you know that it costs more than $600 a week to dry clean costumes for a large show like *The Black Rider*? Or that the fabric alone for a backdrop such as the one seen in *The Gamemaster* can cost upwards of $1,000?

By making a gift to A.C.T., you can contribute to the details that bring our shows to life. Listed below is a selection of a variety of such opportunities. Please make your donation today!

Your gift of $75–$149 would help cover the cost of . . .

- Non-union rubber soles for three pairs of costume shoes
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SUMMER TRAINING CONGRESS

Application deadline May 2

STUDIO A.C.T.

Spring Session: March 21–June 6

YOUNG CONSERVATORY

Winter/Spring Session: February 7–May 16

Information: 415.439.2350 / www.acasteantraining.org

NEXT AT A.C.T. AT ZEUM

This spring brings an exciting new collaboration among members of the A.C.T. core acting company and the third-year students of A.C.T.’s acclaimed Master of Fine Arts Program. Presented in rotating repertory, these two plays exploring issues of power, gender, and desire will be your last chance to see the emerging stars of A.C.T.’s graduating class in full-scale production before they launch their professional careers.

**FEATute TRANSPORT**

by Steve Cavan • Directed by Anne Kaufmann

March 6–April 3

In *Female Transport*, six women convicts are confined below deck on a ship traveling for the six-month journey from England to the new penal colony of Australia. As the women face the challenges of surviving captivity, disease, and oppression in the hands of a sadistic crew, they forge unlikely alliances and discover moments of humanity and hope within captivity. *Female Transport* features members of the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program and A.C.T. core acting company members Steven Anthony Jones.

**A Lullaby**

by Michel Marc Bouchard • Translated by Linda Gaboriau

Directed by Serge Denoncourt

Produced with Theatre Rhinoceros

March 10–April 2

Lyric, cultural, and complex, *A Lullaby* tells the tale of a Quebecoise nun in a Parisian hospital at the end of the 19th century. A battle of wills and strength between a nun and a hospital patient leads to a viene and passion for life and love. *A Lullaby* features members of the A.C.T. Master of Fine Arts Program and French actors, including A.C.T. core acting company member Gregory Wallace.

In repertory: March 8–April 3

Zeum Theater

4th and Howard streets, San Francisco

Pursue your passion at A.C.T. Enroll Today!

SUMMER TRAINING CONGRESS

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W04–05 A.C.T. CONSERVATORY PERFORMANCEs

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20–19

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Schwartz

Book by Roger O. Hirson

Musical Direction by Peter Malick

Staged by Nathan Bayard

in Ford’s Columbus Room, Geary Theater

**Once in a Lifetime**

24–31

by Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

Directed by Margaret Bodell

**Lullaby**

25–30

by Michel Marc Bouchard

Translated by Linda Gaboriau

Directed by Serge Denoncourt

Produced in association with Theatre Rhinoceros

**Female Transport**

by Steve Cavan

Directed by Anne Kaufmann

**Our Town**

29–30

by Thornton Wilder

Directed by W. D. Keith

**Schoolgirl Figure**

30–31

by Wendy MacLeod

Directed by Dominique Lorenzo

**Broken Hallelujah**

4–12

by Stewart Macdonald

Directed by Craig Slaight

**Shed a Little Light**

7–17

by Louise Erdrich

Directed by Karolyn Owings

Musical Direction by Kristy Wige

Musical Arrangements by Blaine Plank

All performances at Zeum Theater, unless otherwise noted. Tickets $10–$45.
For Your Information

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
A.C.T.'s administrative and conservative offices are located at 30 Grant Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94104, 415.854.3200. On the Web: www.act-sf.org

BOX OFFICE AND TICKET INFORMATION
Grady Theater Box Office
Visit us at 409 Grady Street at Mission, next to the Grady Theater, one block west of Union Square. Box office hours are 12–8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, and 12–6 p.m. Sunday and Monday. During nonperformance weeks, business hours are 12–6 p.m. daily. Call 415.749.24TC and use your Visa, MasterCard, or American Express card. Or fax your ticket request with credit card information to 415.749.2291. Tickets are also available 24 hours/7 days on our Web site at www.aact-sf.org. All sales are final, and there are no refunds. Only current subscribers enjoy priority seat selection and last-ticket insurance. A.C.T. gift certificates can be purchased in any amount online, by phone or fax, or in person at the box office.

Discounts
Half-price tickets are sometimes available on the day of performance at TIX on Union Square. Half-price student and senior rush tickets are available at the box office two hours before curtain. Matinee senior rush tickets are available one hour before the day of the performance for $10. All rush tickets are subject to availability, one ticket per valid ID. Student and senior citizen subscriptions are also available. A.C.T. often offer one Pay What You Wish performance during the regular run of each production.

Group Discounts
For groups of 20 or more, call Edward Budworth at 415.423.2973.

At the Theater
The Grady Theater is located at 454 Grady Street. The auditorium opens 30 minutes prior to curtain. Bar service and refreshments are available one hour prior to curtain.

A.C.T. Merchandise
A.C.T.-branded wear—clothing, jewelry, videos, travel maps, and other novelty items—as well as books, scripts and Wind on Plays, are on sale at the cemetery desks in the main lobby and at the Grady Theater Box Office.

Refreshments
Full bar service, sandwiches, salads, and other 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. There is also a wine bar in the main lobby. Enjoy the long lines at intermission by preordering food and beverages in the lower- and third-level bars. Food and drink are not permitted in the auditorium.

Beepers
If you lose a page, beret, cellular phone, or watch with alarm, please make sure that it is set to the 6:00 position while you are in the theater. Or you may leave it and your seat number with the house manager, so you can be notified if it is found.

Perfumes
The perfumes found in perfumes, colognes, and second-hand dermots, 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 cell phones with those who may need to reach you and have them call 415.423.2396 in an emergency.

A.C.T. performances begin on time. Loominates will be seared before the first ten minutes of the production unless there is an appropriate interval.

Listening Systems
Headssets designed to provide clear, audible sound anywhere in the auditorium are available for free of charge in the lobby before performance. Please turn off your headsets while 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.

Wheeler chairing is available on all levels of the Grady Theater. Please call 415.749.24TC in advance to notify the house staff of any special needs.

AFFILIATIONS
A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theaters and Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage employees in the United States. 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 the League of Resident Theaters, Resident Bay Area, Union Square Association, San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau. A.C.T. is a participant in the National Theatre Artist Residency Program, administered by Theatre Communications Group and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Ssdc
The director is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Inc., an independent national labor union. A.C.T. is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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