

FEBRUARY 2023

A.C.T. PRESENTS

THE HEADLANDS

BY CHRISTOPHER CHEN

DIRECTED BY PAM MACKINNON



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Encore Media Group

1631 15th Ave W.

Suite 219

Seattle, WA 98119-2796

206.443.0445

info@encoremidiagroup.com

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THIS IS YOUR THEATER, SAN FRANCISCO

American Conservatory Theater is an essential gathering place that brings artists and communities together to inspire and provoke. Now in its fifth year under the leadership of Tony Award-winning Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon and Executive Director Jennifer Bielstein, A.C.T. is charged with fulfilling its mission to engage the spirit of the San Francisco Bay Area, activate stories that resonate, promote a diversity of voices and points of view, and empower theater makers and audiences to celebrate liveness. A.C.T. is a Tony Award-winning nonprofit theater serving almost 200,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area annually through theater, training, education, and community programs. The organization values inclusion, transformational learning, participation, and rigorous fun.

In January 2022, A.C.T. welcomed more than 23,000 people to experience the show *Freestyle Love Supreme*, created by Thomas Kail, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Anthony Veneziale. Thanks to lead support from Salesforce, with additional support provided by the Koret Foundation and a number of generous donors, we were able to provide more than 15,000 highly subsidized tickets for free or only \$5–10 to people and organizations throughout the Bay Area. We explored every corner of the Strand theater with the experiential *Fefu and Her Friends* by Maria Irene Fornés, directed by Pam MacKinnon, building community as audiences connected with each other in traversing the theater. In the fall, we welcomed the 7 Fingers to A.C.T. with *Passengers* and were treated to acrobatic feats and a poignant story, and welcomed Bill Irwin back to A.C.T. with his entertaining exploration of Samuel Beckett and his work, *On Beckett*. And we

closed out the year with the return of our beloved holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, which *Aisle Say* called “a theatrical and spiritual uplift unlike any other.”

A.C.T. is steadfastly committed to transformative learning through its Conservatory, which offers a robust array of theater-based classes and training programs, including Studio A.C.T., the Young Conservatory, Summer Training Congress, San Francisco Semester, and Institutional Professional Development. These programs help participants discover their inner artistry, while also training the artists who will shape the cultural landscape of our society. While the Conservatory’s MFA Program ended with the Class of 2022, we honor and celebrate the tremendous impact the program has had on individual artists and on American theater as a whole.

In addition, our Education & Community Programs bring theater and arts education curricula to schools and community-based organizations across the Bay Area. For an entire decade, these programs have provided annually close to 20,000 young people and educators from around the region with opportunities to experience the transformational potential of dramatic storytelling, critical thinking, and creation through collaboration, and have fostered the artists and audiences of the future.

American Conservatory Theater is your theater, San Francisco. Welcome!

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“In this world we tend to hear, ‘This is how it's supposed to be,’ but I wanted to be a rebel artist. I wanted to take all of that apart and mash it together and make it my own, and I've been able to do that here, and it's been wonderful.” —Katherine Bahena-Benitez, SFS Alum (Fall 2021)

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Final deadline

Spring 2024: Jan 22–May 10, 2024

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Early-bird discount (save \$2500 on tuition)

Nov 10, 2023

Most serious consideration

Dec 22, 2023

Final deadline

Learn more and apply at act-sf.org/sfs



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EDITOR

SYCHE PHILLIPS

CONTRIBUTORS

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SHANNON R. DAVIS
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SYCHE PHILLIPS
LAUREN YEE

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WELCOME TO A.C.T.'S TONI REMBE THEATER!

We're thrilled to celebrate the renaming of our beloved landmark theater in recognition of a transformational gift from an anonymous donor in honor of Bay Area arts philanthropist Toni Rembe. This renaming is a part of A.C.T.'s long-range strategy to raise much-needed revenue in order to continue delivering first-rate theater, training, and education programs to the San Francisco Bay Area community, safeguarding the future of the organization for generations to come.

Toni Rembe has been central to the health and well-being of the Bay Area theater scene for decades. Says A.C.T. Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon, **"Toni's wide-ranging artistic taste and appreciation of artists and the special act of audiences coming together for a story make her a true theater lover. Her generosity and commitment to Bay Area culture and artmaking is unparalleled."** Toni's involvement with A.C.T. has been historic and long-reaching. She has served as a member of A.C.T.'s Board of Trustees for over 20 years, including tenures as Board President and Chair.

The Toni Rembe Theater will forever serve as a testament to Toni's decades-long contributions to the arts community, and we are tremendously grateful to honor her in this manner. This renaming gift will allow A.C.T. **to invest in capital improvements to our theater spaces so we can better serve our community—including audience members like you—by enhancing our ability to mount world-class productions, improve the patron experience, and increase accessibility to performances and programming.**



Photo by Kevin Berne



ABOUT TONI REMBE

Toni Rembe is president of the van Löben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, a private foundation specializing in the promotion of social justice through legal services and advocacy; a co-founder and advisory board member of the Rock Center for Corporate Governance at Stanford University; a founding member of the Theatre Communication Group's National Council for the American Theater; and a member of the board of A.C.T. and the Immigrant Legal Resource Center. She is a retired partner at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, where she served as a member of the firm's governing executive committee and the managing partner of its tax practice. Toni was the first woman partner at Pillsbury and one of the first woman partners at any major law firm.

Toni formerly served as chair of the Presidio Graduate School, President of the Commonwealth Club of California, co-chair of Corporate Women Directors International, on the boards of the Magic Theatre and Mills College, and the business advisory board of UCSF Medical Center. Toni also served as a director of several public companies, including AT&T Inc., AEGON NV., Potlatch Corporation, Transamerica Corporation, Pacific Telesis, Safeco Corporation, and APL Ltd.

FROM THE ARTISTIC + EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

WELCOME TO THE TONI REMBE THEATER AND THE WORLD OF CHRISTOPHER CHEN!

In the early depths of the pandemic, having to cancel the play you are about to see, A.C.T. commissioned San Francisco-based playwright Chris Chen to write in a hurry-up fashion an “interactive zoom play.” The artistic team had been quite taken by a few interactive magic and mentalist shows produced over Zoom, specifically at the Geffen Theater in LA. We appreciated their intimacy, their fulfillment in a date night, their fun. We wanted to do something more A.C.T. than that but equally fun—a real play. So I approached Chris with a deadline, a fee, a firm rule of one actor, and a notion of what I called a “puzzle play.” We unpacked that vague term together, and within a couple days he signed on with an idea about a reformed con artist who would take each Zoom audience through a series of exercises in order to build community. The con used for good, not ill. The audience would hopefully share of themselves and in a twisty way grow together.

We quickly cast Bay Area actor Stacy Ross and were off to the races. And the small but mighty event of *Communion* became real.

Chris used many of Stacy’s own autobiographical details. We saw her early actor headshot; we replicated her picture frame workshop as a small set at the Strand Theater, pretending until a last minute reveal that she, like the rest of us, was at home. It is a brilliant and immediate piece of writing. It was upsetting for some audience; powerfully emotional for others; and a lark on a Thursday night for still others. The eleventh-hour exercise in the play placed strangers from around the country—because digital theater breaks down geography—in small Zoom rooms together to talk philosophically or casually: to commune. That was the pay off. To commune. If virtually. These conversations sometimes led to strangers asking to keep in touch over the credits at the show’s end.

June 2021 seems so long ago, but I can feel it still. The melancholy and the fun.

Now, we get to bring you another of Chris’s “puzzle plays,” this time a noir, again with an unreliable narrator, but Henry Wong is trying to figure things out, while he seems to have less control of the world than the fictional Stacy Ross over Zoom. I hope *The Headlands* also prompts communion—those post-show conversations both philosophical and casual that can carry you and your friends and family out into the streets of your city, or around a table in Fred’s, our bar downstairs.

The Headlands is a deeply personal play, with shards of other folks’ autobiographies and the specificity of neighborhoods and childhood memories. It also remains a new play, having only been produced once before at Lincoln Center’s smallest theater, LCT3, in New York in Spring of 2020. Chris came into auditions and rehearsals for A.C.T.’s production eager to continue his journey with the play, to tweak the dialogue for the rhythms of these particular actors. I am a thrilled director to be in an ongoing process—two plays in, and many more to go—with this great playwright of San Francisco and am happy to share with you *The Headlands*.



Pam MacKinnon,
Artistic Director

DEAR FRIENDS,

In *The Headlands*, our hero Henry recalls, “I remember playgrounds, friends, the beach, all kinds of museums. I remember San Francisco so vividly: the bustling Mission District, the wild foliage of Golden Gate Park.”

There is something so exciting about producing a show that takes place solidly in San Francisco, a beautiful, ferocious, living city that is constantly changing and yet somehow so familiar. When you watch *The Headlands*, you’ll recognize the neighborhoods and landmarks that are discussed and sometimes shown on stage. You’ll feel that special groundedness that comes when the setting onstage and the setting right outside the theater are one and the same.

Throughout this program, you’ll see nods to San Francisco and specifically to our neighborhood and the community in which A.C.T. exists. You’ll see an interview between two SF locals: Christopher Chen interviewed by fellow playwright Lauren Yee, who brought us *The Great Leap* in 2019 and who is one of our currently commissioned writers. You’ll read about our partnership with Shaping San Francisco and the walking tours they’ll be presenting throughout the run of *The Headlands*. You’ll learn more about the genre of noir, and how it grew out of San Francisco and how it inspired Chris to write this play.

San Francisco is an incredible city, made up of inspiring, hardworking people. A.C.T.’s mission is to engage the spirit of this area and the people in our community, to activate stories that resonate with you all, to promote a diversity of voices and points of view, and to empower theater makers and audiences to celebrate liveness. This is your theater, San Francisco!

And of course, we couldn’t do it without you. So if you enjoy *The Headlands*—please, tell a friend about it! If you decide to come back for another show this season (and we hope you will), bring someone with you. Like so many businesses, we’re still building back after the pandemic shutdowns, and your recommendation, your word of mouth, is invaluable to us.

Thank you for choosing to spend some time with A.C.T. Enjoy the show!



Jennifer Bielstein,
Executive Director



PHOTO BY KEVIN BERNE

ACTOR TRAINING FOR ALL AGES



Photo by Jay Yamada



Ages 8-19

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Check out upcoming sessions:

Spring Session: Mar 18-May 13
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Winter Session: Jan 17-Mar 13
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**PAM
MACKINNON**
Artistic Director

**JENNIFER
BIELSTEIN**
Executive Director



PRESENTS

THE HEADLANDS

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Benefactors:

Helen and Roger Bohl;
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This production of *The Headlands* is
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THEATRE FORWARD

THE HEADLANDS

By **Christopher Chen**
Directed by **Pam MacKinnon**

THE CAST

KEIKO SHIMOSATO CARREIRO	Pat/Older Leena
SAM JACKSON	Jess
CHARLES SHAW ROBINSON	Walter/Detective
ERIN MEI-LING STUART	Leena
JOMAR TAGATAC	Tom
PHIL WONG	Henry
JOHNNY M. WU	George

UNDERSTUDIES

WILL DAO	Henry, Tom
KHALIA DAVIS	Jess
BRIAN HERNDON	Walter/Detective
ALEX HSU	George, Tom
JENNY NGUYEN NELSON	Leena
MIYOKO SAKATANI	Pat/Older Leena

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KATIE CRADDOCK & JANET FOSTER, CSA	Casting
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LOUISA LISKA	Director of General Management & Operations
AMY DALBA	General Manager
MARTIN BARRON	Director of Production

Commissioned and Produced by Lincoln Center Theater, New York City, 2020

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.

Recording notice: The videotaping or making of electronic or other audio and/or visual recordings of this production, or distributing recordings on any medium, including the internet, is strictly prohibited.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTOPHER CHEN

By Lauren Yee

Edited by Katie Craddock

One January evening, beloved San Franciscan playwrights Lauren Yee and Christopher Chen met over Zoom. Chris was at home in the Outer Sunset (a setting of *The Headlands*), where a massive windstorm raged outside; Lauren was in New York City, where it was quite late and her young children were ostensibly asleep. While their imaginations and sensibilities are wonderfully distinct, both Chris's and Lauren's works are marked by their San Francisco upbringings. We at A.C.T. are superfans of both; we are proud to have produced Lauren's *The Great Leap* and Chris's *Communion*, and were thrilled when they agreed to have a conversation for this program, musing on Chris's creative inspirations, evolving relationships with home, and the moody mystery of our city.



Lauren Yee: San Francisco weather makes me think about noir.

Christopher Chen: Yes. Obviously, there's the fog. And the hills—they can hide things, like the fog does. All the little neighborhoods have their own little mysteries going on inside. San Francisco is such a noir-y city, especially the Sunset

District, with all its not-quite-uniform, suburban-like Eisenhower 1950s houses side by side. It's not a sunny picket-fenced suburb. Your paint is chipping off because of the water damage. It's a bit mysterious, a bit desolate. Everything is a little weather-beaten. Surfers say Ocean Beach is more rugged and wild than other surfing beaches around. It's beautiful here, but there's something wild and feral just under the surface.

LY: There is a certain wildness to the city which is tied to the American identity. The American idea of "going West"—problematic in its own way—that journey stops in California; San Francisco is the end of that road, of that dream. Of course, *The Headlands* is a San Francisco play, but what was the germ of the idea? What did you intend to write when you started?

CC: I set out to write the ultimate Chris Chen play: something that encompasses my personal obsessions and passions and loves. As a big film fan, I took the San Francisco mystery *Vertigo*

as inspiration. I threw my idol Kazuo Ishiguro into the mix—his use of genre and unreliable narrators. And I love using multimedia in fun ways in theater. It's sometimes given a bad name, but when used innovatively, it's thrilling. The film noir idea fit neatly with the multimedia design.

LY: In your stage directions about the video projections, you built a kind of sandbox with space for your collaborators to play around with the exact images.

CC: I came to theater initially because I wanted to be a director. So I have these directorial fantasies on the page, with the understanding that a director is going to take what's written and lift it up by making it their own. My stage directions include images like the details of a Sunset District house, or a person's eye, or a piano playing. I want it to feel immersive—almost like a movie that's being created before our eyes.

LY: How would you characterize San Francisco audiences?

CC: In the theater scene in San Francisco—audiences and makers alike—there's this generosity and an open spirit here. I think a lot of San Franciscans have a kind of pioneering spirit; new things are rewarded here. I'm a Bay Area audience member, too, so I write for myself.

LY: We both went to Lowell for high school. And we met because—

CC: —you reached out to me as a young theater entrepreneur after you graduated. You organized a young playwrights' conference.

LY: I didn't do so much theater while I was at Lowell. I never wanted to be an actor; I was never in the school play.

CC: How did you stumble into theater, then?

LY: In high school, I found an email in my father's inbox from Asian American Theater Company. I thought, "I could write a play," and they chose my play as one of their readings of short plays about Lunar New Year. Your experience at school is very different when you're doing *The Crucible* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—classics you're interacting with but not creating yourselves. I thought, "I'm gonna make my own theater company."

CC: Your plays all have a spunky inventiveness about them, a do-it-yourself kind of aesthetic. There's a makeshift attitude, like "Come on, let's put together a play." How would you define your relationship to San Francisco? It pops up in your plays.

LY: Because it's a place where I don't currently live, writing about San Francisco is my way of going home. It's a place where I've gotten to work artistically, which is gratifying. I feel it in a longing for home—like the Chinese food in San Francisco feels very specific to me, and I can't quite get it other places; even places that have Cantonese populations and those foods, it just doesn't quite taste the same.

What would be your ideal day in the city?

CC: I love taking long urban walks. One walk I take is more or less the length of California Street, starting in the Richmond District and going to the Ferry Building. San Francisco is unique because it has so many amazing little neighborhoods tightly packed together. The past and new energy coincide. It doesn't seem to be dominated by one thing or another.

LY: Any favorite Sunset District businesses you want to shout out? Where should people go for a snack?

CC: A standby called Old Mandarin serves Islamic Chinese food—it's on Vicente, close to my house. And there's a place on Taraval, Kingdom of Dumpling (which on Yelp is called Asian American Food Company), where you can get dumplings wholesale.

LY: I have this theory that all writers have a primal or ur-story we return to over and over. For me it's families and secrets—intergenerational stories and revealing the truth. Do you have a sense of what is your ur-story?

CC: I also gravitate towards the search for truth, though it comes out in a different way. Something is nagging at the characters and causes them to go pull a thread. And the thread keeps pulling and pulling and pulling with no end in sight; they keep getting deeper and deeper into whatever they're picking at. They're searching for something beyond their status quo. Sometimes they find it, sometimes not, but the journey is the thing. The meaning I go back to is that they should be in the present more, and be aware of their blinders.

LY: I also think of your work as though there are many locked boxes inside of one another.

CC: There's always something structural that has to happen to surprise people. My main philosophy as a writer is surprise.



Christopher Chen

WHO'S WHO IN THE HEADLANDS



KEIKO SHIMOSATO CARREIRO (Pat/Older Leena) is a

Collective and Board Member with the Tony

Award-winning San Francisco Mime Troupe. Since 1987, she has been an actor, designer, co-writer, and director there. Carreiro has performed at theaters throughout the Bay Area, including Berkeley Repertory, A.C.T., Magic Theater, Aurora Theatre Company, Word for Word, and Center Rep. Carreiro was nominated for a Shellie for "Best Actor in a Lead Role" in *Sisters Matsumoto* at Center REP. She is thrilled to be working on this play by Chris Chen and simultaneously making her debut on the Toni Rembe mainstage.



SAM JACKSON (Jess) is a San

Francisco based actor, vocalist, and teaching artist who is thrilled to be making her debut on the Toni Rembe

Theater stage. Her works include film, commercial, and stage acting as well as live and recorded vocal performance. While forever a student of her craft, she began her deep work at SFSU where she received her BA in Theatre performance. Her most recent stage acting credits include Marin Theatre Company's *Two Trains Running* (Risa), Cal Shakes's *Lear* (Cordelia/Comic), and Aurora Theatre Company's *The Incrementalists* (Raz/Marteen) and *Father/Daughter* (Miranda/Risa). Jackson would like to send her deepest gratitude to her family (blood & chosen) for their love,

support, and moments of sanity in this ever wild life. IG: @little_miss_sj (she/they)



CHARLES SHAW ROBINSON (Walter/Detective) has

appeared at A.C.T. in Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia*, directed by

Richard E. T. White. Other favorite moments, people, and places: the role of the Father in Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*, directed by Les Waters, and Swan in *It Can't Happen Here*, directed by Lisa Peterson (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); Leonard in *Seminar*, by Theresa Rebeck, directed by Amy Glazer (San Francisco Playhouse); Shag in Bill Cain's *Equivocation* (Marin Theatre Company), Jasson Minadakis, director; Iago in *Othello* (California Shakespeare Theatre), directed by Tom Markus; Mark Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, directed by John Houseman (Old Vic Theatre); and *Public Enemy: Flint* (Unicorn Theatre), directed by Purni Morell, with and for the residents of Flint, Michigan. For all my colleagues, co-conspirators, and playmates: so much thanks.



ERIN MEI-LING STUART

(Leena) is a multidisciplinary theater and performing artist. She recently co-directed and

choreographed *Natasha, Pierre, and The Great Comet of 1812* at Shotgun Players. Stuart has performed with theater companies around the Bay Area. Some favorite productions include *Kill the Debbie Downers*, *Iron Shoes*, and *brownsville bong (b-side for*

tray) at Shotgun Players, *Monument or Four Sisters (a Sloth Play)* at the Magic Theater, and *The Lady Matador's Hotel* at Central Works Theater Company. Film credits include *The Girl in Golden Gate Park*. Stuart is a proud company member of Shotgun Players and Detour Dance. More at erinmstuart.com.



JOMAR TAGATAC (Tom)

recently appeared at A.C.T. in *A Christmas Carol*. He was recently seen as Edmund in *Lear* at Cal Shakes and

Harry in *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin* at SF Playhouse. Other credits include Bob in *Wintertime* (Berkeley Rep), Gordon Hirabayashi in *Hold These Truths*, Mark in *Art* at San Francisco Playhouse, and DJ Loki in *Today is My Birthday* (Theater Mu). At A.C.T. he played Mr. Botard in *Rhinoceros*, Playwright and others in *Vietgone*, Fortinbras in *Hamlet*, and Fortunado in *Monstress*. Bay Area credits include George in *The Language Archive* (TheatreWorks), Actor 1 in *King of the Yees*, Actor 3 in *Tiny Beautiful Things*, Daniel in *You Mean to Do Me Harm* (San Francisco Playhouse); Quang in *Vietgone* (Capital Stage Company); Banquo in *Macbeth*, Jacques in *As You Like It*, *Life is a Dream*, and other roles in *Everybody*, and *The War of the Roses* (CalShakes), *The Happy Ones*, and *Dogeaters* (Magic Theatre). Jomar is a recipient of a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for Principal Actor in a Play, and TBA Award for Outstanding Performance in a Featured Role. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from A.C.T. (he/him)



PHIL WONG
(Henry) is making his A.C.T. mainstage debut with *The Headlands* and was last seen on the Toni Rembe stage as a guest artist with

Freestyle Love Supreme. Regional credits: *Revenge Song* (Louis) and *The Tempest* (u/s Stephano) at Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Local credits: TheatreWorks, California Shakespeare Theater, San Francisco Shakespeare Festival, Word for Word, Shotgun Players, Bay Area Children's Theater, The EXIT, Lamplighters, Killing My Lobster, Hillbarn Theatre, Los Altos Stage, Palo Alto Players, and Ray of Light. Wong is also the co-founder (along with Dan Wolf) of Bay Area Theatre Cypher, a collective of local hip hop theatre artists. (he/him)
@phillywongsteak



JOHNNY M. WU
(George) is making his A.C.T. debut. Other theater credits include *The Headlands* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Noises Off* (Guthrie

Theatre), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (La Jolla Playhouse), and *Chinglish* (Broadway and Goodman Theatre). Wu's notable films include *A Journal For Jordan* (Sony Pictures, Dir. Denzel Washington), *Tracers* (Lionsgate Films), and *Limitless* (Universal Pictures). Wu's TV credits include *Chicago Med*, *Manifest*, *New Amsterdam* (NBC); *The Other Two*, *High Maintenance* (HBO); *Blue Bloods*, *Kevin Can Wait*, *The Good Wife*, *Person of Interest*, *Cold Case* (CBS), and *24* (FOX). Wu earned his MFA from UC San Diego. He is on faculty at Yale School of Drama. johnnywu.tv IG: @johnny_m_wu (he/him)



22/23
SEASON

US PREMIERE

William Kentridge's *SIBYL*

With music composed and conceived by Nhlanhla Mahlangu and Kyle Shepherd

William Kentridge, concept and director

Part 1: *The Moment Has Gone*
Part 2: *Waiting for the Sibyl*

Myth, magic, music, movement, and mesmerizing imagery combine in revered South African visual artist William Kentridge's newest production. Inspired by the Greek myth of the Cumaean Sibyl, Kentridge's chamber opera wrestles with the human desire to know our future and our helplessness before powers and technologies that obscure that knowledge from us.



An *Illuminations*: "Human and Machine" event.
calperformances.org/illuminations

Mar 17-19
ZELLERBACH HALL

WEST COAST PREMIERE

Michel van der Aa's *Blank Out*

Michel van der Aa, composer, film and stage director
Miah Persson, soprano
Roderick Williams, baritone (film)
Netherlands Chamber Choir (film)
Klaas Stok, conductor

In van der Aa's singular creation, what is real and now melds with what is remembered and what is felt as soprano Miah Persson and baritone Roderick Williams reveal a shared trauma, inspired by the life and work of South African poet Ingrid Jonker.

"An astonishing tour de force."
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An *Illuminations*: "Human and Machine" event.
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Apr 28-29
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WILL DAO (u/s Henry, Tom) was seen most recently at A.C.T. on the Out Loud virtual stage as Cornelius Hackl in *The Matchmaker*. His credits include

the World Premiere of Chris Chen's *The Hundred Flowers Project* (Crowded Fire Theater); *Final Boarding Call* (Ma-Yi Theater Company/WP Theater/Playwrights Foundation/Powerhouse Theater); *The Chinese Lady* (Magic Theatre/Denver Center for the Performing Arts); *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Snow in Midsummer* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Vietgone* (OSF/Seattle Repertory Theatre/ L.A. Theatreworks); *The Paper Dreams of Harry Chin*, *King of the Yeas* (San Francisco Playhouse); *The Crazyed* (Central Works); *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* (Bay Area Children's Theatre); and *Language Rooms* (Golden Thread Productions/Asian American Theater Company). willdao.com. IG: @thewilldao. ILYM, MGS. (he/him)



KHALIA DAVIS (u/s Jess) is a multidisciplinary artist and Artistic Director of Bay Area Children's Theatre where she recently led the world

premieres of *A Kids Play About Racism* and *The Imaginaries: An Immersive Musical*. As a director and arts educator, she has worked with prominent theaters all over the country. Partial performing credits include New Victory Theatre, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, The Story Pirates, CalShakes, Bay Area Children's Theatre, Aurora Theatre, 42nd Street Moon, and Center Repertory Theatre. BA in Theater Arts from the University of Southern California. khaliadavis.com (she/her)



BRIAN HERNDON (u/s Walter, Detective) was just seen as Mr. Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol* at A.C.T. Regional

credits include *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Rags*, *A Little Princess* (TheatreWorks); *Pass Over*, *Oslo*, *Shakespeare in Love*, *Failure: A Love Story* (Marin Theatre Company); and *The Merchant of Venice*, *Cabaret*, and *Eurydice* (City Lights Theater Company). Herndon performed with the San Francisco Shakespeare Festival for five seasons, playing Dromio of Syracuse, Iachimo, Launce, Don John/Dogberry, and Trinculo/Sebastian. He studied at the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre and holds an MFA in Acting from the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. (he/him)



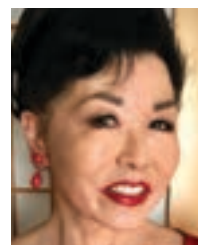
ALEX HSU (u/s George, Tom) is thrilled to return to A.C.T. after last appearing in *Tales of the City: A New Musical*. Hsu is Bay Area-based, and

has toured with Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*, directed by Walter Bobbie, and *The King and I*, starring Stefanie Powers, directed by Baayork Lee. Regional credits include *The Great Leap* (San Jose Stage), *Miss Saigon* (Westchester Broadway), *Gypsy* (American Musical Theater of San Jose), *Pacific Overtures* (TheatreWorks), *Me and My Girl* (Marin Theatre Company), and *A Chorus Line* (Broadway by the Bay). Favorite choreographic projects include *Flower Drum Song* (Palo Alto Players) and *Evita* (Broadway by the Bay).



JENNY NGUYEN NELSON (u/s Leena) is a recent graduate of the MFA Brown Trinity Acting Program. Credits include

Somebody in Everybody, *Hermia in A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Cal Shakes); *Ghost of Christmas Past* (Trinity Repertory Theater); *Mordecai the Great in I'll Be in My Hannukah Palace* (ARS Nova ANT Fest); and *Illy in Regretfully so the Birds Are* (Clubbed Thumb). She is so unbelievably thrilled to be back in the Bay Area and thanks her husband Ian and her dog Marty for all the support. jennynguynnelson.com IG @Bratwurst_Banhmi



MIYOKO SAKATANI (u/s Pat/Older Leena) is thrilled to be making her A.C.T. debut. She has worked with Magic Theatre,

TheatreWorks, San Francisco Playhouse, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, and off Broadway's AlphaNYC Theatre. She performed her solo piece at the Marsh Theatre regarding her family's immigration and WWII internment. Film credits include the award-winning Samuel Goldwyn film *East Side Sushi*. As founder of Playland Productions, Sakatani has produced short films, stage plays, and co-directed *Silent City* by Dan Wilson with a diverse hearing and deaf cast performing in ASL with closed captions. Endless love and gratitude to Richard and dearest friends. (she/her)

CHRISTOPHER CHEN

(Playwright) is a San Francisco native whose works include *Caught*, *Communion*, *The Hundred Flowers Project*, *The Late Wedding*, *Mutt*, *Passage*, *You Mean To Do Me Harm*, and the Audible play *The Podcaster*. Chen is a USA Fellow, the recipient of an Obie Award, the Steinberg

Award, the Lanford Wilson Award, the Sundance Institute/Time Warner Fellowship, the Paula Vogel Award, the Glickman Award, and the Ollie Award. He currently has commissions at Playwrights Horizons and Portland Center Stage. As a screenwriter, Chen co-wrote *The Accidental Getaway Driver* (2023 Sundance Film Festival) and has an overall deal at Amazon TV. (he/him)

PAM MACKINNON (Director)

See bio on page 30.

ALEXANDER V. NICHOLS (Scenic & Projection Design)

a Bay Area native, designs lighting, scenery, and projections for theater, opera, music, and dance both nationally and internationally. He returns to A.C.T. for his 22nd production; previous productions include *Testament of Mary*, *Stuck Elevator*, *The Homecoming*, and *Blood Knot*. Nichols's Broadway credits include *Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, Carrie Fisher's *Wishful Drinking*, and John Leguizamo's *Latin History for Morons*. Recent projects include *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Fidelio*, and *The Barber of Seville* for the San Francisco Opera, Yuri Possokhov's *Stravinsky Violin Concerto* for San Francisco Ballet, and *Mon île, mon couer* and *Dear San Francisco* for Le Sept Doigts de la Main. alexandervnichols.com

LYDIA TANJI (Costume Design)

is happy to return to A.C.T. Past productions include *After the War*, *The Rainmaker*, *Curse of the Starving Class*, *Round and Round the Garden*, *Marcus: Or the Secret of Sweet, Dead Metaphor*, *Napoli*, and *Let There Be Love*. Regional credits include Berkeley Repertory Theater, Magic Theatre, TheatreWorks, Manhattan Theatre Club, Arena Stage, Syracuse Stage, Children's Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Dallas Theater Group, Seattle Repertory Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Mark Taper Forum, and South Coast Repertory

Theater. Film credits include *The Joy Luck Club* and *Hot Summer Winds*. Awards include six Bay Area Theatre Critics Awards and two Drama-Logue Awards. Recently she co-produced *Vanishing Chinatown: The World of The May's Photo Studio* which has aired on KQED and KVIE.

WEN-LING LIAO (Lighting Design)

is happy to be back. Her previous credits with A.C.T.: *Gloria* and *Vietgone*. Selected credits: *Little Shop of Horrors* with TheatreWorks Silicon Valley; *A Christmas Carol* with Denver Center for the Performing Arts; *Ah, Wilderness!* at Hartford Stage; *Quixote Nuevo*, *House of Joy*, and *Winter's Tale* with California Shakespeare Company; 44th Humana Festival (*Are You There?*, *Nicole Clark is Having a Baby*, and *Flex*) with Actors Theatre of Louisville; *The Catastrophist* and *The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley* at Marin Theatre Company. She earned her MFA from University of California, San Diego. Wenlingliao.com (she/ her)

LEAH GELPE (Sound Design)

previously sound designed *Wakey, Wakey* at A.C.T. NYC credits include: *My Broken Language* and *Night is a Room* (Signature), *Log Cabin*, *Antlia Pneumatica*, *Grand Concourse*, *The Big Meal*, and *Circle Mirror Transformation* (Playwrights Horizons), *Mary Jane* and *The Invisible Hand* (New York Theater Workshop), *The Harvest*, *Slowgirl*, and *What Once We Felt* (LCT3), *Cardinal* (Second Stage), *God's Ear* (The Vineyard), *Saved* (TFANA), and more. Regional credits include A.C.T., Guthrie, Long Wharf, Berkeley Rep, Yale Rep, ART, and Intiman. Honors include Lucille Lortel Awards for Outstanding Sound Design (*Mary Jane* and *Slowgirl*), Connecticut Critics Circle Award (*January Joiner*), NEA/TCG Career Development Program.

BYRON AU YONG (Composer)

created music for *Stuck Elevator* (A.C.T., International Festival of

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Arts & Ideas, Nashville Opera); *The Orphan of Zhao* (A.C.T., La Jolla Playhouse); *Madame Ho*, by Eugenie Chan (Cameron House, Exit Theater); *Port City*, by Christopher Chen; and *The War of the Roses*, directed by Eric Ting (Cal Shakes). Additional works include *Activist Songbook* (Asian Arts Initiative); *Piano Concerto—Houston* (Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts); and *Turbine* (Mendelssohn Club of Philadelphia). Honors include a Creative Capital Award and Sundance Institute Time Warner Foundation Fellowship. Au Yong is an Associate Professor at the University of San Francisco.

JOY MEADS (Dramaturg), a native of Oakland, is director of dramaturgy and new works at American Conservatory Theater. A.C.T. credits include *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Communion*, *Testmatch*, *Wakey, Wakey*, *Sweat*, *Men on Boats*, Edward Albee's *Seascape*, *Her Portmanteau*, *The Great Leap*, and *Rhinoceros*. Prior to A.C.T., she was literary manager/artistic engagement strategist at Center Theatre Group. CTG credits include *Archduke*, *Good Grief*, *Appropriate*, *Forever*, *Marjorie Prime* (2015 Pulitzer Prize finalist), *A Parallelogram*, *The Royale*, and *Sleep* (also: Brooklyn Academy of Music and Yale Repertory Theatre). Previously, Meads was literary manager at Steppenwolf Theatre Company and associate artistic director at California Shakespeare Theater. Meads is a co-founder of The Kilroys. (she/her)

KATIE CRADDOCK (Casting) is delighted to kick off her first season at A.C.T. She spent the last seven years at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, where she supported season planning, casting, and dramaturgy, mentored artistic fellows, moderated postshow discussions, taught playwriting and dramaturgy to teens, served on the board/staff antiracism taskforce, and facilitated the making of new plays at The Ground Floor, Berkeley

Rep's Center for the Creation and Development of New Work. Her favorite casting processes there included *Wintertime*, *Office Hour*, *The Good Book*, and many thrilling projects at The Ground Floor. Favorites so far at A.C.T. include *A Christmas Carol* and this very production of *The Headlands*. (she/her)

JANET FOSTER, CSA (Casting) has been casting for over 35 years. Eight and a half of those years were at A.C.T. and included working with directors Pam MacKinnon, Carey Perloff, Mark Lamos, Mark Rucker, Sam Pinkleton, Tamilla Woodard, Annie Kaufmann, Loretta Greco, and many more. Ms. Foster's career prior to A.C.T. was in NYC. It started as an assistant to the late Stanley Soble and continued with over nine years at Playwrights Horizons, first as Daniel Swée's assistant and then as casting director. After leaving PH, she spent the rest of her time in NY as a freelance casting director. She has worked on Broadway, off-Broadway, off-off Broadway, film, TV, and more regional theaters than you can shake a stick at. Film/TV and radio credits include *Tracy Takes On NY*, *The Deal*, *The Day That Lehman Died* (Peabody, Sony and Wincott Award winner), and *T is for Tom* (Tom Stoppard radio plays for WNYC & WQXR). Podcasts include *Life/After*, a GE Theater podcast, *Passenger List* (Webby Award) featuring Kelly Marie Tran and Patti LuPone, and *Steelheads* for the BBC.

NATALIE GREENE (Intimacy) is an artist and educator working at the intersection of dance, theater, and community engagement. At A.C.T. she is the Associate Director of Education and a member of the EDI Committee. As a choreographer and intimacy director, Greene has worked with 42nd St. Moon, Alter Theater, Aurora Theatre Company, Center Repertory Company, California Shakespeare Theater, Custom Made Theatre,

Mugwumpin, Shotgun Players, and Portland Center Stage. Her dance/theater choreography has been presented by California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco Airport, ODC Theater, Dance Mission Theater, San Francisco City Hall, Danspace (NYC), and Baryshnikov Arts (NYC). (she/her)

ELISA GUTHERTZ (Stage Manager) has been a stage manager in the San Francisco Bay Area for 30 years. Most recently she stage managed *Remember This The Lesson of Jan Karski* and *the ripple, the wave that carried me home* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre. Some of her many shows at A.C.T. include *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Toni Stone*, *Testmatch*, Edward Albee's *Seascape*, and *Sweat*. Other credits: *Sanctuary City* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Arena Stage. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* at A.C.T., The Old Globe, and Theatre Calgary. *Big Love* at Long Wharf Theatre, Goodman Theatre, and Brooklyn Academy of Music. *The Good Body* with Eve Ensler at A.C.T. and the Booth Theater on Broadway. *The Vagina Monologues* with Eve Ensler at Alcazar Theatre.

CHRISTINA HOGAN (Assistant Stage Manager) returns to American Conservatory Theater after working on *Fefu and Her Friends*, *Gloria*, *Top Girls*, Edward Albee's *Seascape*, *Men on Boats*, and *Hamlet*. Her other theater credits include August Wilson's *Two Trains Running*, *Pass Over*, *Georgiana and Kitty*, *Brilliant Mind*, *Skeleton Crew*, and *The Wolves* (Marin Theatre Company); *Sanctuary City* and *It Can't Happen Here* (Berkeley Repertory Theatre); *Lear* (Cal Shakes); *In Old Age*, *The Baltimore Waltz*, *runboyrun*, and *And I and Silence* (Magic Theatre); and *Ripped* (Z Space). Hogan has a BA in theater arts from Saint Mary's College of California. (she/her)

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Emily Betts,
Production Assistant

Ben Chau-Chiu,
Assistant Director

Patrick Chew,
Language Consultant & Coaching

Griffin Harwood,
Lighting Associate

Enkidu Khan,
Production Assistant

Sam Kusnetz,
Associate Sound Designer

Scenic Construction by
**California Shakespeare
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A.C.T.'S HOW TO GET AHEAD IN THEATER MAP:

**LEARN AND
HONE YOUR
CRAFT**



**GET CONNECTED
TO THE THEATER
COMMUNITY**

**EXPAND YOUR NETWORK OF
THEATER PROFESSIONALS,
MENTORS, COLLABORATORS**



**PARTICIPATE;
SEE PERFORMANCES,
VOLUNTEER, WORK
PERFORMANCES**

A.C.T. is YOUR Theater – An essential gathering place where passionate people connect and grow.

A.C.T. staff and volunteers enjoy free seats at performances, work closely with A.C.T.'s Audience Experience professionals, have access to discounts for training, parking, and purchases at our theaters – all while mixing and mingling with theatrical luminaries from around the world.

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PAM MACKINNON:

OUR STEPH CURRY OF NEW PLAYS

BY KATIE CRADDOCK



UPI / Alamy Stock Photo

Over the course of her career, A.C.T.'s Artistic Director Pam MacKinnon has developed close, longstanding collaborations with playwrights and shepherded many new plays through their inaugural productions. She began working with Clubbed Thumb—a downtown New York theater company devoted to developing and producing “funny, strange, and provocative new plays”—at its inception in the 90s, directing world premieres by writers like Chuck Mee, Carson Kreitzer, Deborah Eisenberg, Erin Courtney,

and Gina Gionfriddo and eventually chairing its Board. She thrives on formal experimentation and is drawn to theatrical stories spanning (or defying) genres, from dreamy, funnysad musicals (*Amélie* at Berkeley Rep and on Broadway) to biographic tales of extraordinary yet under-acknowledged women (2020's *Toni Stone* here at A.C.T.) and beyond.

Pam recently helmed the world premiere of *Downstate* by Bruce Norris, with whom she has a decades-long

partnership, journeying with the piece from *Steppenwolf* in Chicago to the National in London to Playwrights Horizons this fall, where it enjoyed an extended run. Bruce recalls meeting Pam “around 1998, when I was still an actor, playing a gay Republican in a Wendy Wasserstein play on Broadway, while Pam was completing her time as Assistant Director on the musical *Tommy*. We often found ourselves in late-night arguments at some random theater bar. She’s very funny, and there’s few things I value more in a person than their ability to make me laugh. With her patience and keen intelligence, she has been able to endure my personality, and together we’ve managed to make work of which I’m incredibly proud.”

The Headlands marks a second collaboration in a newer artistic relationship with Christopher Chen, with whom Pam last collaborated on *Communion*, an interactive Zoom piece produced by A.C.T. in the summer of 2021. Chris recalls Pam inviting him to the theater for an introductory meeting shortly after she became our artistic director. “She was very proactive about engaging with the Bay Area theater community at large—something I really admire about her. We chatted about San Francisco history and bonded over our love of the S.F. book *Season of the Witch*. She’s stayed true to this community spirit; she is a true champion of local Bay Area artists.”

“With *Communion*,” he notes, “the remote theater thing was a new experience for both of us, so we were really learning it together, and exploring what was possible. What made the experience creatively



Francis Guinan, Glenn Davis, Susanna Guzmán, Eddie Torres (facing upstage), and K. Todd Freeman in *Downstate* at Playwrights Horizons, photo by Joan Marcus

fulfilling was Pam's instinctive openness. This is one of her hallmarks: an open, collaborative process that organically leads to a firm artistic stamp on each project. She starts with finding the right collaborators whom she really trusts, then opens the floor to them to engage with the process—so much so that actor Stacy Ross's personal stories ended up in the final draft. The same is true with *The Headlands*. Actors are emboldened to try things and pursue their impulses—which, in Pam's rooms, somehow mostly turn out to be the right impulses. It's a testament to the professional creative space she sets up. Everyone just seems to be galvanized and rowing in the same direction."

As distinct as these works are in form and content, certain patterns emerge when you look at plays like *Downstate* and Bruce's *Clybourne Park*; Chris's *Communion* and *The Headlands*: Everyone and no one is right. Trust can be both impossibly foolish and deeply necessary. Arguments cut with burning clarity, then twist, meander, obscure, and transform. Laughter comes from surprise, relief, recognition, or deep discomfort. Memory is slippery.



Stacy Ross in A.C.T.'s production of Christopher Chen's *Communion*, June 2021

I had the good fortune to see a preview of *Downstate* the day after auditions for *The Headlands*. Like *The Headlands*'s Henry, I knew *Downstate*'s character Andy was trying to make sense of traumatic childhood events, but not much else. As we walked to the theater, I asked Pam whether Bruce

was continuing to revise the script; she said yes, he was making some small changes—in part, so the characters would speak with less fluent precision, stumbling or revising their thoughts as do we all when communicating extemporaneously. As exhilarating as major-overhaul rewrites can be



Erin Mei-Ling Stuart and Jomar Tagatac at *The Headlands* rehearsal. Photo by Sarah Sugg.

(fresh endings; new characters!), this type of detailed refining during previews is thrilling in its own right: led by Pam, the actors' understanding of their character and the story deepens as they tease out the nuance of each rephrasing, rehearsing in the daytime and then embodying the fresh text before an audience that same night. Bruce remarks that Pam "is to conversation what an outside shooter is in basketball—she waits on the perimeter until the perfect moment, then wins the argument with a three-point dagger." The same may be said of her direction, in which meticulous moment-to-moment work accumulates to an unexpected emotional or intellectual punch.

Set in a group home shared by four men convicted of sex crimes, *Downstate* immediately subverts your expectations—in part because of its ingenious construction, and in part because the acting is so expertly grounded and richly layered. We could see some tension in audience members' shoulders, hunched near their ears, as they settled into their seats and

braced themselves for the difficult subject matter. In the first minute, Pam's cast had them laughing, against all odds. There were also moments of palpable discomfort—gasps of shock and revulsion, for instance, at a simple yet seismic hand placed on another's shoulder. It was at turns devastating, hilarious, maddening, and hopeful, and called to mind a question posed in Chris Chen and Pam's first collaboration: "Can communion be achieved in the face of infuriating odds?"

With *The Headlands*, Chris and Pam continue to mine quandaries raised in *Communion*. Stacy Ross's "Stacy" character in that piece shares the material concerns of George in *The Headlands*, albeit fifty years hence: how can one scrape together a sufficient living to survive in San Francisco? How might that pressure shape our principles and choices? Like Stacy, *The Headlands*'s Tom wonders about insiders and outsiders, togetherness and isolation, and how to determine whether intimate disclosures are true or false. Chris's characters long

for closeness, but inevitably their relationships develop fractures. Without giving too much away, as with *Communion*, you'll find that neither Pam nor Chris shy away from invoking a big reaction. While they rehearsed this west coast premiere of *The Headlands*, Chris continued to tweak his script, revising in response to the rhetorical style of Phil Wong as our narrator Henry, and to questions raised as the cast studied the material. Chris notes that through his "open and creatively trusting" relationship with Pam, he is "part of the collaborative process with the actors. Because she puts so much trust in her actors, my job changes too—not as the playwright dictating words, but as an active team player. In her room, the actors oftentimes come up with better solutions to script issues than I ever could on my own. And as she coordinates the multitudinous video and set design components, she draws the actors into how the pieces come together, so they are aware of the big, holistic picture of the piece as they rehearse. When they try new things creatively in scenes, they are almost like choreographers as well as dancers. Pam has a firm, visionary guiding hand, and draws all collaborators into that vision."

FINDING THE UNTOLD STORIES: SPOTLIGHT ON SHAPING SAN FRANCISCO

BY SYCHE PHILLIPS

In early talks around promoting *The Headlands* and finding community partnerships, A.C.T.'s artistic team hit upon the idea of a walking tour of San Francisco. It fits in nicely with the way the script presents a tour of local spots—from the Marin headlands to Lands End to the In-N-Out in Daly City. A.C.T.'s Director of Community Connections, Shannon R. Davis, reached out to Shaping San Francisco.

"They were immediately excited about collaborating," says Shannon. "They asked to see the script right away, read it within a day or two, and understood the feeling the play evokes. They ran with our idea, and quickly came up with some different concepts for us to consider." The most ambitious of these concepts included a three-hour, noir-themed tour that would start with a view of the Marin headlands and finish up at the doors of the Toni Rembe Theater, just in time to see a performance of *The Headlands*.

After some discussion, we landed on a one-hour tour through San Francisco: a custom-built Noir-ish wander called "Through the Fog: San Francisco's Hidden Histories." This tour takes patrons through Polk Gulch's literary and queer history, into the Tenderloin to explore jazz, migrations, and SRO housing, and explores the mist-covered landscape with infrastructural highlights designed to activate the spirit of the San Francisco Bay Area. Shaping San Francisco is offering the three-hour tour as part of their Spring 2023 public events to interested parties on Saturday, March 4.

In many ways, Shaping San Francisco is an ideal candidate for our community



partnerships. When looking for partners, Shannon thinks about our "dating profile." "Who is a good fit for the work we're looking to do in our community at this moment? It's not about charity in our community work—it's reciprocal, mutual, and artistic in nature. We're looking to partner with local service organizations and nonprofits who are already doing work in community engagement and enhancement that aligns with our own, and looking for ways we can beneficially support each other."

"Shaping San Francisco is doing great work," she continues. "Their general tours are pay what you can, to allow as much financial access as possible. They work with diverse communities, have co-presented queer performative history tours, and offer customized tours to specific groups (like they're doing with us) to make sure that each group gets the exact type of in-depth information and experience that they need or want. It's an outdoor, physical experience of the city. It's fun and informative. They find the untold stories and illuminate them in an interactive way, just like theater. They're exploring and lifting up the beauty of San Francisco and its people."

About Shaping San Francisco

Serving the City for 25 years, Shaping San Francisco, under the direction of Chris Carlsson and Lisa Ruth Elliott, is a participatory community history project documenting and archiving overlooked stories and memories of San Francisco. Shaping San Francisco has presented 18 years of public programming including talks and tours investigating the intersections of San Francisco's histories—social, cultural, ecological, technological, architectural, and more. A digital archive first created in 1998, Foundsf.org, operates as an open source online historical resource for information on the City's past and a place to share one's own memories. Learn more at shapingsf.org and Foundsf.org.

The Headlands Walking Tours

Sat, Feb 18
Sun, Feb 19
Sat, Feb 25

All tours start at 11:30 a.m. For more information, visit act-sf.org/HeadlandsWalk

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Leontyne Mbele-Mbong, Stacy Ross, and Lisa Anne Porter in *Fefu and Her Friends*. Photo by Kevin Berne.



Kaisha Desselaines-Wright and Dina Sok in *Passengers*. Photo by Kevin Berne.

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As the Bay Area's leading theater, A.C.T. provides unique partnership opportunities to the business sector, including visibility before an affluent and influential audience, entrée to creative and dynamic spaces for client entertaining and business meetings, and exceptional artistic insiders' experiences like backstage tours, meet-and-greets with artists, and so much more. Member companies support the artistic mission of A.C.T., including A.C.T.'s investment in helping to develop the next generation of the Bay Area's creative and empathetic workforce through our vibrant artist training and education and community outreach programs serving over 20,000 young people each year. For more information, please contact Associate Director of Development Nicole Chalas at nchalas@act-sf.org or 415.439.2337.

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By **Qui Nguyen**
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A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group,
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A.C.T. PROFILES



PAM MACKINNON

(A.C.T. Artistic Director) is in her fifth season as A.C.T.'s fourth artistic director. She is a Tony, Drama Desk, and Obie award-winning director, having directed upwards of 75 productions around the country, off Broadway, and on Broadway. Her Broadway credits

include Beau Willimon's *The Parisian Woman* (with Uma Thurman), David Mamet's *China Doll* (with Al Pacino), Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles* (with Elisabeth Moss), Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance* (with Glenn Close and John Lithgow), Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia*

Woolf?, and Bruce Norris's *Clybourne Park*. Her most recent credits include world premieres of Bruce Norris's *Downstate* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, London's National Theatre, Playwrights Horizons), Lydia R. Diamond's *Toni Stone* (Roundabout Theatre Company, A.C.T., and Arena Stage), Kate Attwell's *Testmatch* (A.C.T.), Edward Albee's *Seascape* (A.C.T.), Christopher Chen's *Communion* (A.C.T.), and María Irene Fornés's *Fefu and Her Friends* (A.C.T.). She has been recognized as among the 25 Most Influential San Franciscans of 2020 by *San Francisco Magazine*, along with Jennifer Bielstein. Pam is the most recent past president of SDC, the national union representing stage directors and choreographers, and remains on their board. (she/her)



JENNIFER BIELSTEIN (Executive

Director) joined A.C.T. in 2018. She serves on the boards of Theatre Forward and TCG (Theatre Communications Group), is a member of the International Women's Forum, the Advance SF Advisory Panel, and the leadership team of the SF Arts

Alliance, was part of Mayor Breed's Economic Recovery Task Force, and is the immediate past-president of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT)—an organization that represents 76 theaters nationwide—having previously served as LORT's vice president; chair of its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee; secretary; and on multiple union negotiating teams. She has been recognized as among the 25 Most Influential San Franciscans of 2020 by *San Francisco Magazine*, along with Pam MacKinnon, and as one of the Most Influential Women in Bay Area Business by the *San Francisco Business Times* in 2021.

Before relocating to the Bay Area, Bielstein was the managing director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, managing director of Actors Theatre of Louisville, and executive director of Writers Theatre in Chicago. She has also worked for Steppenwolf Theatre Company, About Face Theatre, Northlight Theatre, and the Lincoln Park Zoo, as well as served on multiple arts and civic boards. She has received the Center for Nonprofit Excellence's Pyramid Award of Excellence in Leadership, has been recognized as one of Louisville's *Business First's* 40 Under 40, by *Twin Cities Business* as a Person to Know, and by *Minnesota Business* magazine as a Real Power 50 member. Bielstein is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, attended Stanford's Graduate School of Business Executive Program for Nonprofit Leaders in the Arts, and has an MBA from Bellarmine University, where she received the MBA Faculty Merit Award, was inducted into the honor society Beta Gamma Sigma, and in 2021 was recognized as a Distinguished Alumna. (she/her)

ABOUT THE THEATER

MAILING ADDRESS

415 Geary St
San Francisco, CA 94102

ONLINE: act-sf.org

BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

A.C.T. BOX OFFICE

Address: 405 Geary Street and
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Visit our website for hours of operation

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AT THE THEATER

The lobby opens one hour before curtain. The theater opens 30 minutes before curtain.

REFRESHMENTS

Join us in Fred's Columbia Room & Nancy's Bar on the lower level, or the Sky Bar on the 3rd floor, to enjoy a full, relaxed bar and treats experience. You'll find delicious ready-to-drink cocktails, soft drinks, and snacks at one of our lobby Quick Bars.

PHOTOGRAPHY & RECORDING

Audience members may take photos in the theater before and after the performance and during intermission. If you post photos on social media or elsewhere, please include the designer names listed on the lobby board. Please note: Photos are strictly prohibited during the performance. Video recording is not permitted in the theater at any time.

MOBILE DEVICES

If you carry a mobile device, including a phone, tablet, or watch with alarm, please make sure to completely turn them off while in the auditorium. Vibrating devices still produce audible sounds in a quiet auditorium. Text messaging during the performance is disruptive and not permitted.

PERFUMES

The chemicals found in perfumes, colognes, and scented aftershave lotions, even in small amounts, can cause severe physical reactions in some individuals. As a courtesy to fellow patrons, please avoid the use of these products when you attend the theater.

LATECOMERS

A.C.T. performances begin on time, so it is important to arrive with enough time to comfortably get settled and enjoy the show. Latecomers will be held in the lobbies until an appropriate late seating opportunity is called. Latecomers with seats in the first five rows will also be reseated to the best available seats as late arrivals in those rows are disruptive to the entire theater. Late coming parties may or may not be seated together based on availability of new seating where moving seats is required.

LISTENING SYSTEMS

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

AFFILIATIONS

A.C.T. is a constituent of Theatre Communications Group, the national organization for the nonprofit professional theater. A.C.T. is a member of Theatre Bay Area, the Union Square Association, the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, and the San Francisco Convention & Visitors Bureau.



A.C.T. operates under an agreement between the League of Resident Theatres and Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.



The Director is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.



The scenic, costume, lighting, and sound designers in LORT theaters are represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE.



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



A.C.T. is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



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

RESTROOMS

Gender diversity is welcome at A.C.T. We invite audiences to use the restroom that best fits your gender identity or expression. If preferred, a single-user restroom can be found on the 5th floor.



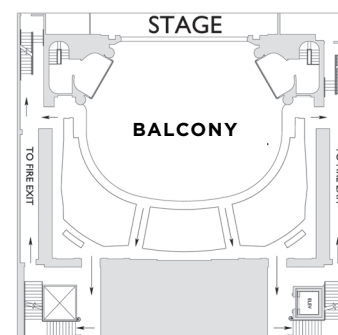
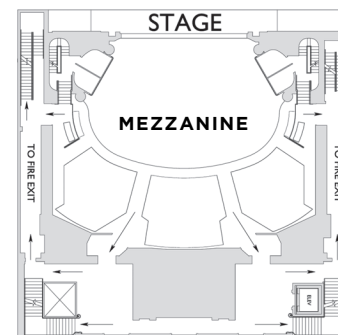
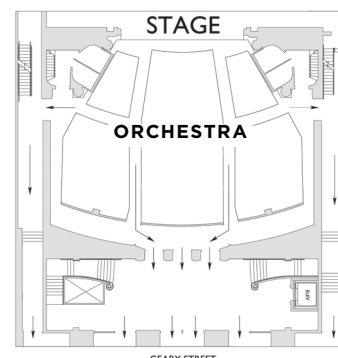
Wheelchair-accessible restrooms are located in Fred's Columbia Room on the lower lobby level, and the Garret on the uppermost lobby level.

An **Automatic External Defibrillator (AED)** is available in the house management closet in the street level lobby.

LOST AND FOUND

If you've misplaced an item while you're still at the theater, please look for it at the merchandise stand in the lobby. Any items found by ushers will be taken there. If you've left the theater, please call 415.439.2471 and we'll be happy to check our lost and found for you. Please be prepared with the date you attended the performance and your seat location.

THEATER EXITS



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As part of our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion at A.C.T., we are in the process of building a meaningful relationship with the local Indigenous community. As part of this we begin by honoring the lands upon which we do our work. We would be proud to offer deep gratitude to the tribal band of Ramaytush Ohlone peoples and their lands that cover Northern California and down the Pacific coastline. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 1700s, the Ramaytush Ohlone numbered approximately 1500 persons, and made their life on the sacred lands. Only a few families survived and still remain. Those descendants make up the membership of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone (ARO) today. We honor the Ohlone as a people, their resilience, and all they have done and continue to do in maintaining sacred and ancestral lands, ceremony, and communities to this day.

**"[A] highly entertaining
comedy of kitchen
nightmares."**

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FEATURING SONGS BY **DENGUE FEVER**
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FEB 25—APR 2



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